

*The Life of Commander
Sir Edward Nicholl*

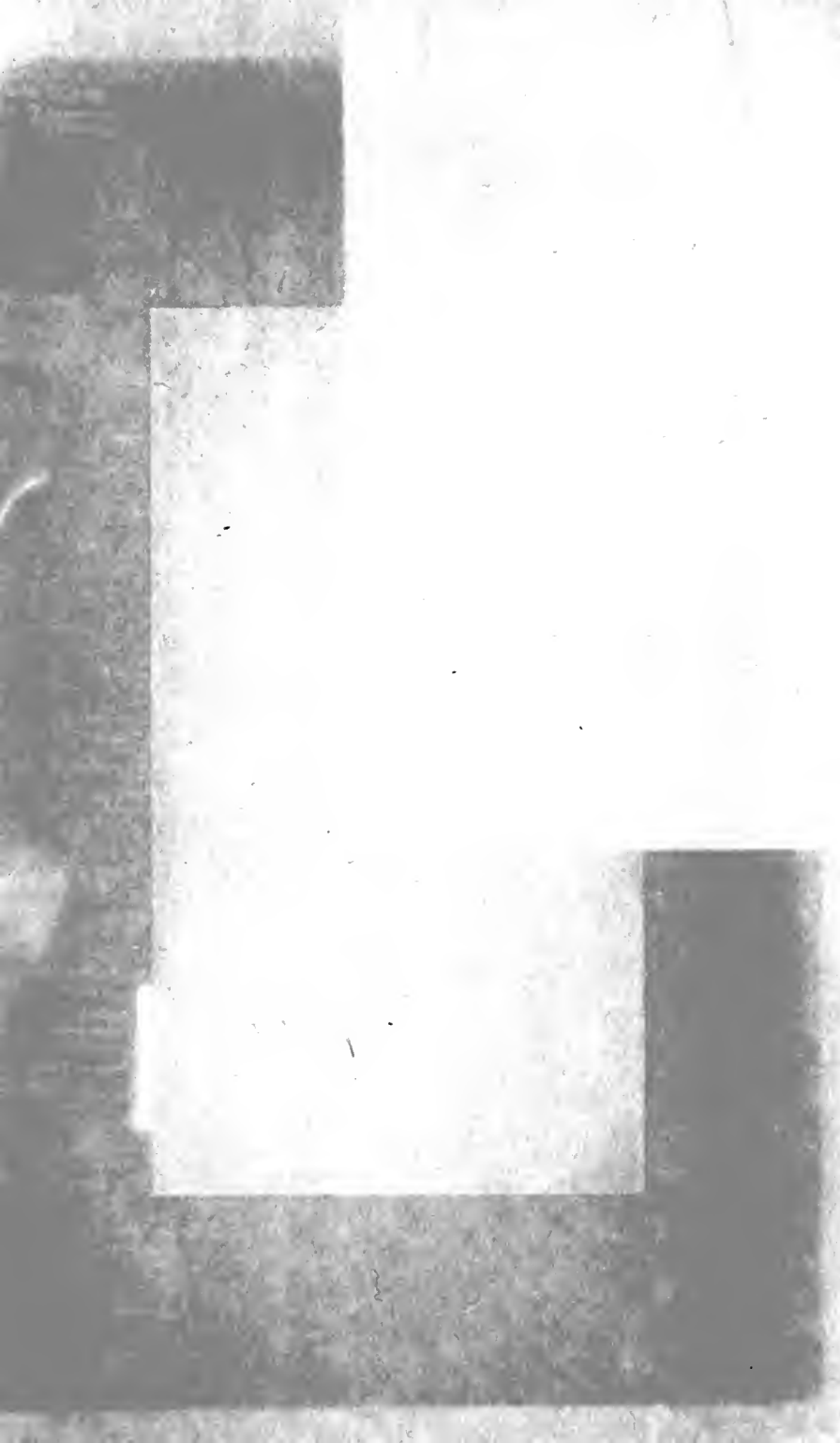
R.N.R., M.P.

Edward Nicholl

XIII A 1. B.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

June 1925.

to Sir Herbert C. Main,
C.B.E.

With very sincere appreciation
& regards from

Edw. Nicholl.

THE LIFE OF COMMANDER
SIR EDWARD NICHOLL, R.N.R., M.P.





COMMANDER SIR EDWARD NICHOLL, R.N.R., M.P.

Frontispiece

THE LIFE OF COMMANDER SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

R.N.R., M.P.

5

BY

T. C. WIGNALL

WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

W. C. WIGNALL
AND
LONDON

MILLS & BOON, LIMITED
49 RUPERT STREET
LONDON, W. 1



Published 1921

ABROGLIO TO VIRU
ZEBORA ZOLTA
YRORLI

714
566.9
N 5 W 6

LIBRARY SETS

We live in deeds, not years ; in
Thoughts, not breaths,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs.
He most lives who thinks most, feels
The noblest, acts the best.

PHILIP JAMES BAILEY.

DEC - 6 1948

HARDING

380341

CONTENTS

	PAGE
EXPLANATORY NOTE	xvii
INTRODUCTION	xxi
MILESTONES (THE STORY IN BRIEF)	xxvii

CHAPTER I

Ancestry and parentage—Childhood memories—The little house at Pool—An anecdote—The hole in the ceiling—Early years in Cornwall—The first job—A schoolmaster and an inkpot—The young time-keeper—A Redruth drummer-boy—Trevithick's engine—An apprentice at Carn Brea—A speculation—Swindon—Making ends meet—A happening fraught with consequences	1
---	---

CHAPTER II

A "moonlight flit"—West Hartlepool—A rough experience—Off to sea—Promotion to second engineer—A freemason—An awkward situation—Facing the music—The Board of Trade certificate—Shore work at Newport—Back to sea again—The youthful engineer—A glance forward—The chance that was taken—The Royal Naval Reserve—A broken promise—Resignation and a letter—A new career	13
--	----

CHAPTER III

A partnership that fell through—Surveys and insurance—The first balance-sheet—A moment of depression—The ray of sunshine that was real—A post	
---	--

	PAGE
as Marine Superintendent and consulting engineer —The reward for saving money—Some inventions —A lecturer to engineering students—Selected for a £1000 a year position—Earthquakes and hail- storms—Sir Richard Tangye—The turning-point in a career—A shipowner for fourpence! . . .	23

CHAPTER IV

A fateful meeting—The peer, the engineer, and the clergyman who didn't like cigars—"I owe you fourpence"—Lord de Blaquiere—A jocular re- mark and its result—A suggestion from Mr. Jones —An offer—The way to become a shipowner— Two disappointments—A curse on Consols—The story of a fountain pen—The turret ship—The answer to opportunity	32
---	----

CHAPTER V

An order that could not be obeyed—A quick decision— Champion of the British seaman—A clear state- ment—Some appreciations—One hundred weeks —A postcard sent to shareholders	42
---	----

CHAPTER VI

The first turret steamer of the "Hall" Line—Her maiden voyage—A working account—"R.N.R. men preferred"—A record—The second turret— Secrets of success—The third turret and four others—The London Coliseum—Other activities— A personal narrative—A break with the bank— Sir Edward Holden's offer	52
--	----

CONTENTS

xi

CHAPTER VII

PAGE

The Cardiff City Council—The representative for the South ward—The way to fill up odd moments—Nazareth House—The beginnings of a big crusade—The seamen's boarding houses of 1908—An interview—The first inquiry—A resolution—Letters of thanks—Some practical suggestions—Justification—An appeal to Parliament—A City Council committee's resolution	64
--	----

CHAPTER VIII

P.P.I. policies—An undesirable state of affairs—Gambling on overdues—The exposure of an evil—A prompt demand—A visit to the Board of Trade—The deputation—A quick result—A tribute in verse—A successful assault-at-arms—The vexed problem of the load-line—Revolutionary proposals—The Bute leases—A champion of the rights of lease-holders—In the public eye—"Another docks tickler"—Profits of the "Hall" Line—Two illuminated addresses	82
--	----

CHAPTER IX

Resignation as a Councillor—The invitation that was not sent—A key returned—The bombshell—What a newspaper thought—An extract from the minutes of the Cardiff City Council—Restlessness—The Cardiff Naval Brigade—The main idea—A check—The Admiralty's explanation—The first parade—Another balance-sheet—The progress of the "Hall" Line—A strike story—A quiet year—A Cardiff motorist—Agriculture and its attractions—A Cornish dinner—A toothsome menu—An incident at Monte Carlo—A collection of centimes, a remark—and the "Nicholl luck"—A	
--	--

xii LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

	PAGE
boom in shipping—A prophecy that came true—A helping hand—The “Hall” Line in 1913—The price paid for a paper rose—A wonderful miniature railway—The laying-up of ships—The aisles of Time	103

CHAPTER X

The outbreak of war—The ships of the “Hall” Line and Nicholl Steamships, Ltd.—The chief examination officer—Three years’ work—Letters of all kinds—A strong protest—A note that brought censure—The reply—Another protest—Suggestions on the submarine service that were adopted—Items from a diary—A request to be released—What other people thought—An application for a medal—The man who gets least—A plain statement—The curse of red-tape	133
--	-----

CHAPTER XI

Knighted for war services—Some letters received—A splendid gift—The physical well-being of the child—Petrol Control officer—A letter to the Press—The difficulties of giving away £50,000—“When I am boxed up”—The “Edward Nicholl” Home—Conditions of the founder’s gift—An ambition realised—Other benefactions	160
---	-----

CHAPTER XII

The second big crusade—Spies in Bristol Channel ports—The sinking of the “Glenart Castle”—A reply from Mr. W. Brace, M.P.—Facts and figures—What four ship-joiners had to say—Corroboration from the police-courts—The Admiralty’s answer to a question—Averting a strike—Dr. Macnamara’s statement—Positive proof—A new order—The	
--	--

CONTENTS

xiii

	PAGE
scandal of the excessive provisioning of ships— Departure from the shipping world—Why thirteen steamers were sold—A matter of patriotism—A big deal with Messrs. Furness, Withy and Company —Letters to shareholders—The transfer of the Cardiff “ Hall ” Line—A letter and telegram to the President of the Board of Trade	178

CHAPTER XIII

Parliament—Member for the Penryn-Falmouth Divi- sion—On the kerb at Westminster—Racing for a seat—An amusing incident—Should a Member of Parliament be bled ?—A parliamentary letter bag —Trouble over a subscription—“ Cussed, dis- cussed and held-up ”—A ten months’ record— Out of his element—One reason why Sir Edward Nicholl will be remembered—A view of Parlia- ment	206
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV

Littleton Park—How it was purchased—Success after thirty-seven failures—A wonderful old house— Where King William IV sought distraction and King Henry VII hunted—A fascinating tablet— The sailor who turned farmer—Shorthorns, Guern- seys, and chickens	228
---	-----

CHAPTER XV

The “ Nicholl Luck ”—Some accidents—A Trades Union Congress luncheon—Another at Redruth— A speech—A favourite motto—His lucky day— Financial speculations—Hobbies—Sport—Love of children—A dinner to the Prince of Wales—The singer who forgot his glasses—The “ M.P. engine- driver ”—Conclusion	236
---	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, R.N.R., M.P.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The house at Pool, Cornwall, where Sir Edward Nicholl was born	4
The Redruth Volunteer Band (Sir Edward Nicholl seated in the front row, on the left)	8
Sir Edward Nicholl in his early days as a drummer-boy in the Redruth Volunteer Band	12
Sir Edward Nicholl at various ages	18
Sir Edward Nicholl's Father and Grandfather	26
Sir Edward Nicholl driving to his Cardiff office, 1906	42
The s.s. "Grindon Hall," one of the steamers of the Cardiff "Hall" Line	58
Nazareth House children at "The Nook," Cardiff	100
The Cardiff Naval Brigade (Sir Edward Nicholl in the centre)	110
A portrait study of Sir Edward Nicholl in naval uniform	134
Sir Edward Nicholl and the Officers, N.C.O.'s and Men of the Severn Defences	148
Officers of the Bristol Channel Examination Service (Sir Edward Nicholl in centre of bottom row)	158
A group which includes Sir Edward Nicholl, Lord Charles Beresford, and Mr. Dan Radcliffe (standing right)	166
Sir Edward Nicholl setting out to do work connected with the Examination Service	176
Sir Edward Nicholl in Court Dress	188
The Edward Nicholl Home, Cardiff	196
The Edward Nicholl Wards at the King Edward VII Hospital, Cardiff	200

xvi LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

	FACING PAGE
Sir Edward Nicholl and one of his numerous small friends .	218
Littleton Park, Shepperton, Middlesex, showing south-east elevation	228
Sir Edward Nicholl on the footplate of the engine he drove during the railway strike, 1919	244

PICTORIAL APPENDIX

	PAGE
Littleton Park, Shepperton, Middlesex	1
The Hall, Littleton Park	2
A view of the grounds, Littleton Park	3
The dining-room, Littleton Park	4
The library, Littleton Park	5
The ball-room, Littleton Park	6
The billiard-room and conservatory, Littleton Park	7
The cattle-houses, Littleton Park	8
Shorthorns at Littleton Park	9
Some of the chicken-houses, Littleton Park	10
The river and water-wheel, Littleton Park	11

EXPLANATORY NOTE

THE main difficulty in the compilation of this volume was in finding some particular person to whom it could be dedicated. So many names presented themselves that for a time it looked as though one page at least would have to be devoted to the many who are entitled to be regarded as Sir Edward Nicholl's friends. In despair, the author presented the problem to Sir Edward, in the hope that a solution would be found. This was the written reply :—

Now you have indeed struck the middle wicket ! I have such a host of friends that the mere thought of attempting to single out any one perplexes me. I feel like the widow who was asked to part with one of her nine children. A kindly sympathiser, anxious to help her, offered to adopt one. She pondered the point for many days, but in the end she found that she loved them all alike. To part with one was out of the question.

I find myself in much the same position. Who, of all my many friends, should I single out ? There are perhaps those who will remark, when they come to the end of this book, that Mr. Henry Radcliffe should have been selected. " But for him," I can almost hear the reader saying, " what

would have become of Edward Nicholl ? ” Quite ! It is just possible that but for Henry Radcliffe I might have become a second Cecil Rhodes, or, on the other hand, I might to-day have been the manager of an engineering works or something of that kind. But take it from me, my dear biographer, I should have been on top somewhere.

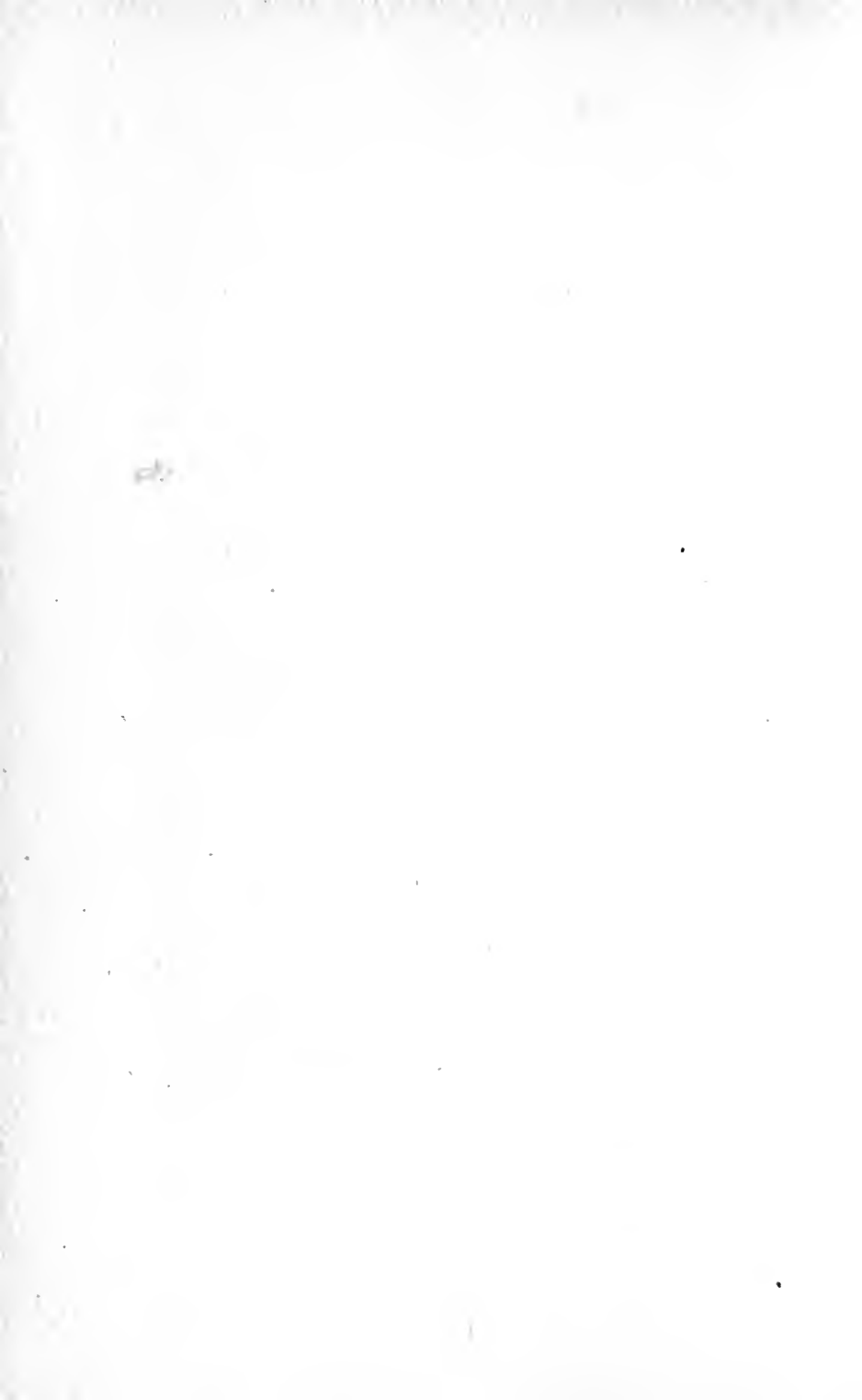
It was, of course, Mr. Radcliffe who stopped me from spending my savings on a voyage to South Africa. He told me, very rightly, that fortunes were made in South Wales as well as South Africa. As a prophet, I take off my hat to Mr. Radcliffe.

I am reminded of another story. Years ago I had a call from Mr. Richard Cory, one of Cardiff's very rich men. Hardly had he seated himself in my office when a lady, collecting for some church or chapel, knocked at the door. On learning her errand I referred her to Mr. Cory. “ You have dropped in at a most opportune moment,” I remarked. “ Let me introduce you to Mr. Richard Cory, the great philanthropist.” For a moment the lady looked at Mr. Cory. Then, “ The Lord has been very good to you, Mr. Cory,” she said. “ Yes,” answered Mr. Cory, a little ruefully, “ and I have been very good to the Lord ! ” Which means, of course, that although South Wales has done much for Mr. Radcliffe, he, in turn, has done much for South Wales, his ships giving employment to thousands.

But if I do not pick him out as the man to whom this book should be dedicated, it is solely because so many other good friends occur to my

mind. There is Mr. William P. Annear, for example. It was in his garden, one Saturday afternoon, in the long ago, that my first prospectus was drafted. I owe Mr. Annear a great debt of gratitude. Then, too, there is my late employer, Mr. William Jones. To me he was more like a father than an employer; he was responsible for the happiest ten years of my life. There is nothing I would not have done to have served him. Out of the myriad names that occur to me I feel I must mention Mr. Joe Frazer (one of my dearest friends), Mr. Dan Radcliffe, who was always to the fore in advice and hospitality, Lord Glanely, Mr. John Cory, Sir Herbert Cory, Bart., M.P., Mr. John Hocking, of Redruth, Sir William Diamond, Lord de Blaquiere, Sir William Seager, M.P.—always encouraging when things looked black—Mr. Frederick Knight, who invested the first £3000 with me when I became a shipowner, Mr. Richard Christopher, another good friend who must have invested £20,000 with me, and Mr. Richard Richards, the genial manager of the London City and Midland Bank, and better known to his intimates as “Dicky Dick.”

Whom shall I select from all these? I would rather be spared the very difficult task. Instead I would say: These are my friends. To them, and to many more unnamed, this book is dedicated.



INTRODUCTION

IF any excuse is needed for this volume, it will be found in Carlyle's oft-quoted saying that "there is no life of a man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort, rhymed or unrhymed." The fallacy that no man's biography should be written until he is dead still exists; but if a career can be sketched so that it will act as a stimulus, as an incentive to one just starting on life's journey, or if the mere reading of that which has been collected gives satisfaction to only one or two, then the life of every man who has achieved something ought to be prepared long before he seeks his rest. It is largely in the hope that these pages will prove encouraging to some who are on the threshold of a career that the book has been written.

This is a story of a life lived to the full; of setbacks; of black moments; of periods of sunshine; of chances taken; of grim, grinding endeavour. It is a tale of a man who, from his earliest days, was determined to step away from the crowd. That he succeeded is not remarkable, for he mixed ability with courage, business acumen with honesty, and clear-sighted vision with hard, never-ending toil.

It has been rightly said that Sir Edward Nicholl is the architect of his own fortunes. He inherited nothing save brains and the fighting spirit, yet he built for himself a position in the world which only the few attain. Full years, brave years, were those he gave to the great steamship line which he controlled; but he lent himself quite as readily and quite as whole-heartedly to the State when England called for men of his kind; whilst his brief but breezy career as a City Councillor of Cardiff was only rivalled by the energy which he later displayed in ridding the country of spies.

It is always fascinating to bring together the threads of a well-lived, successful life, but when the threads are in reality splendid strands of unflagging zeal, then the fascination is at least trebled. The compilation of this volume has been such a pleasure that it can only be hoped that some of the enjoyment derived by the writer will be shared by the reader.

My work was made comparatively easy by the circumstance that Sir Edward has always been remarkably methodical. Busy men, as a rule, do not keep a record of passing events; they have so little leisure. Sir Edward Nicholl found time to do all sorts of unusual things. When it was decided that this biography should be undertaken he handed me a number of books and documents that, when sifted, were a complete narrative in themselves. I am indebted to him for the readi-

INTRODUCTION

xxiii

ness with which he placed all the necessary material at my disposal, as I am to the editors of the various newspapers and journals from whose pages I have so frequently quoted.

LONDON, *December*, 1920.

MILESTONES

MILESTONES

(THE STORY IN BRIEF)

- 1862 (June 17th). Edward Nicholl born at Pool, Cornwall.
1865. Early Schooldays at Pool.
Removal to Redruth.
1872. Telegraph Messenger-boy, Letter-stamper, and
Sorting-clerk at Redruth Post Office.
1874. Assistant Timekeeper at Carn Brea Railway
Works.
Drummer-boy in the Redruth Volunteer Band.
Choir-boy at Redruth Church.
Member of the Redruth Choral Society.
1876. Engineering Apprentice at Carn Brea.
Student at Camborne Science and Art School.
1880. Apprentice at the Great Western Railway Works
at Swindon.
1881. Member Swindon Town Band and Orchestral
Society.
Assistant Master at Swindon Science and Art
Schools.
Member of the Orchestra of the Swindon
Dramatic Society.
1882. Journeyman at Messrs. Thos. Richardson's, West
Hartlepool.
Third Engineer s.s. "Wave."
Second Engineer s.s. "Portugalette."
1883. Foreman at Ship-repairing Yard and Foundry
of Messrs. Richards & Hopkins, Newport, Mon.

xxviii LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

1883. Became a Freemason.
Chief Engineer s.s. "Ross."
Foreman at Ship-repairing Yard of Messrs. Lang
& Williamson, Newport, Mon.
Member Newport Fire Brigade.
Chief Engineer s.s. "Ancient Briton."
1884. Chief Engineer s.s. "Gwenllian Thomas."
Shipwrecked on the Spanish Coast near Bilbao.
Brought vessel back to the Tyne.
1885. Chief Engineer s.s. "W. I. Radcliffe."
1889. Granted a Commission in the Royal Naval
Reserve.
- 1886-1893. Chief Engineer s.s. "Llanberis" and four
other steamers owned by Messrs. Evan Thomas,
Radcliffe & Company.
1893. Appointed Assistant-Superintendent and Con-
sulting Engineer to Messrs. Evan Thomas,
Radcliffe & Company.
First start in business.
Member of the Institute of Naval Architects.
First Partnership at Newport.
Partnership dissolved.
Started new business at 21, High Street, New-
port, and West Bute Street, Cardiff.
Resigned from Newport Fire Brigade.
Agent for typewriters, etc., and for Insurance
Companies.
1894. Appointed Marine Superintendent and Consult-
ing Engineer to Messrs. W. & C. T. Jones,
Cardiff.
Member Institute of Mining Engineers.
- 1895-1903. Lecturer on Engineering subjects at Cardiff
College.
Started "Hero" Metal Company, Ltd., Chair-
man of Directors.

- 1895-1903. Patented a movable grain division for the carriage of grain cargoes.
Invented Tramway Life-saving Appliance.
Selected for a post worth £1000 per annum.
Salved s.s. "Chas. T. Jones" at Constantinople.
Superintended the building and fitting of nine steamers for Messrs. W. & C. T. Jones.
Made many trips abroad.
Met Sir Richard Tangye.
1903. Met Lord de Blaquiere on railway journey between Cardiff and London.
Decided to become a Shipowner.
Signed an agreement to remain with Messrs. W. & C. T. Jones for five years, on condition that time was given to work up own business.
- 1904-1907. Launch of the s.s. "Whateley Hall," first turret ship of the Cardiff "Hall" line, the "Eaton Hall," "Grindon Hall," and "Tredegar Hall."
Founded the "Nicholl Prizes" for Students at the City of Cardiff Technical Schools.
Bought the "Welbeck Hall" and started the "Silksworth Hall" and "Haigh Hall."
Chairman Reconstruction Committee, London Coliseum.
Member Cardiff Shipowners' Association.
Member Cardiff Chamber of Commerce.
1907. Member Cardiff City Council.
Interviewed Mr. Gladstone on Miners' Eight Hours Bill.
Opposed Taff Vale Railway Bill in the House of Lords.
Member of the Committee Bureau Veritas Registration Society.

xxx LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

1907. Director Penarth Pontoon Company, Taff Vale Railway.
Appointed Arbitrator Welsh Coal Charter.
1908. President Nazareth House, Cardiff.
Chairman Cardiff Docks Conservative Association.
Opened Offices at Newport, Barry, and Port Talbot.
Revealed the condition of affairs prevailing in Seamen's boarding houses at Cardiff.
Started campaign against "P.P.I." Policies.
Organised Assault-at-Arms for Nazareth House.
1909. Submitted proposals to solve the problem of the load-line.
Raised the question of the Bute Leases at Cardiff City Council.
Presented with an Illuminated Address by the Inmates of Nazareth House.
Bought s.s. "Windsor Hall."
1910. Resigned from Cardiff City Council.
Founded Cardiff Naval Brigade.
Member of the Royal Institution of Cornwall.
Member Shipowners' Protecting and Indemnity Association.
Bought s.s. "Standish Hall."
1912. Vice-President Cardiff Shipowners' Association.
Bought first motor-car.
President Cardiff Union and Glamorganshire Agricultural Society.
President Cardiff Cornish Society, and gave a banquet to 530 guests.
Vice-President Miners' Hospital, Redruth.
President Cardiff Engineering Technical Society.
Sold "Welbeck Hall."

1913. Statement issued of profits made by the "Hall" Line.
s.s. "Cardiff Hall's" first voyage.
Paid One Hundred Guineas for an "Alexandra Day" rose.
1914. Elected Chairman Cardiff and Bristol Channel Shipowners' Association.
Built a model railway at "The Nook," Cardiff.
Advocated the construction of a new dock at Cardiff.
Fought the proposal to lay up ships.
Nicholl Steamships, Ltd., started.
Appointed Chief Examining Officer and Commander Bristol Channel Examination Service.
Member of the Committee of the Navy League.
1915. Chief Examination Officer Bristol Channel.
1916. Knighted for War Services.
Gave £10,000 to King Edward VII Hospital, Cardiff.
Offered £50,000 to King Edward VII Hospital, Cardiff, for Maternity and Child-welfare Homes.
Founded the Edward Nicholl Home for Waifs and Strays.
Elected Member Carlton Club, London; Constitutional Club, London; Glamorgan County Club, Cardiff.
Pricked by H.M. the King for High Sheriff of Glamorgan.
Nominated J.P. for Glamorganshire.
1917. Resigned appointment as Chief Examination Officer Bristol Channel, and appointed Petrol Control Officer for South Wales and Monmouthshire.
Sold the Cardiff "Hall" Line & Edward Nicholl Steamships, Ltd., and so severed connection with shipping.

xxxii LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

1917. Started campaign against spies being allowed to wander at will on docks.
1918. Resigned appointment as Petrol Control Officer. Elected Member of Parliament for Penryn—Falmouth Division.
Bought Littleton Park, Middlesex, and became Lord of the Manor of Littleton.
Chairman of several Committees in the House of Commons.
Vice-President Royal Cornwall Polytechnic.
President of the Merchant Seamen's League.
1919. Drove a Passenger Train during Railway Strike between Swindon, Reading, and London.
Chairman Political Committee London Constitutional Club.
Member of the Committee, Beecham Trust, London (Dunlop Pool).
1920. Nominated President Royal Cornwall Show, 1921.
Attempted to settle Coal Strike by bringing together Mr. W. C. Bridgeman, M.P., and Mr. W. Brace, M.P., at Littleton Park.
Member Shorthorn and Guernsey Societies of Great Britain.
Chairman Committee Seamen's War Memorial Convalescent Home, Limsfield.

*Hon: Commandant Metropolitan
Special Constabulary.*



THE LIFE OF COMMANDER SIR EDWARD NICHOLL, R.N.R., M.P.

CHAPTER I

Perseverance and tact are the two great qualities most valuable for all men who would mount, but especially for those who have to step out of the crowd.—DISRAELI.

EDWARD NICHOLL was born at Pool, a tiny Cornish village between Redruth and Camborne, on June 17th, 1862. It is on record that the day was one of gorgeous sunshine—I mention the matter partly to emphasise the remarkable memories of the good people with whom I conversed in the autumn of 1920, and partly to put point to the ancient saying that sunshine always attends those who are born in the sunshine. The new arrival was a lusty infant, and thoroughly typical of his stock. It is still said by those who remember his swaddling clothes days, that his first considered effort was to make perfectly clear that what he wanted he wanted very badly indeed, which is perhaps only another way of saying that when he used

2 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

his lungs he promptly drowned the creaking noises of the little mine tramcars which ran outside his door.

Of his own people no one is better qualified to speak than Sir Edward himself. I extract the following from a short statement which he wrote at my request :—

The first entry in the old family Bible in my possession is dated October 28th, 1697. It appears, however, that my ancestors can be traced back to a still earlier date, for my old friend, John Chellew, of Falmouth, whilst examining some records, came across the following in the Phillack Parish Register :

November 15th, 1573.—James, son of Edward Nicholl, to Elinor, daughter of Robert Jenkin.

By this it would appear that the name Edward has been in the family for many generations.

The original owner of the Bible lived at St. Ives, Cornwall, and married one Ann Bennett, by whom he had 26 children. . . . I well remember my grandfathers. My paternal grandfather was an auctioneer and estate agent at Redruth ; my maternal grandfather, James Mitchell, was a well-known engineer, and lived at Perranwell, near Falmouth, where the family of John Michael Williams had large engineering works. Some 600 men were employed, and it is a point of interest that many celebrated Cornishmen—including Sir Robert Harvey, of Drumlanrig,

near Totnes—served their apprenticeship there. My grandfather was manager of these works.

My father was, for the whole of his life, employed, first as draughtsman, then as chief accountant, on the Cornwall Railway. When a very young man he was associated with the great engineer, Brunel, in the building of Saltash Bridge, and then, successively, he became identified with the old West Cornwall Railway, the South Devon and West Cornwall Railway, and finally with the Great Western Railway, when the latter acquired the line. He retired from the service of the Great Western Railway at the age of 65, and died at Plymouth in his 73rd year.

My mother—to whose influence and loving care I will never be able to pay sufficient tribute—was one of the sweetest women who ever lived. Always ready to foster my ambitions, she did more to set my feet on the path to success than anyone else. She died at my house in the 83rd year of her age, in 1915.

Our family was a large one, but that may not be regarded as remarkable, for many children, has been a sort of tradition with the Nicholls as far back as can be traced. . . . I can still remember incidents in my life at Pool, where I was born, although I could have been no more than three years of age when my father and mother decided to remove to Redruth. I recollect being carried to a small school at Pool, but it seems to me now that I must have been sent there to be kept out of mischief, for I was much too young to learn anything. But the house where I was born, and

4 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

the school and the little village street, are as green in my memory now as are things that happened in the days when I was old enough to store memories. Because I left Pool as a child, however, I have always been considered as a product of Redruth, and it is a fact that my affections naturally centre around Redruth more than in the village in which I first saw the light.

I had an unexpected opportunity of testing Sir Edward's memory when we visited Pool in September, 1920. He had told me of things that had happened when he could not have been more than two years of age, and, if the truth be told—for I had harked back myself, and had found that my recollections really started when I was about ten—I was inclined to think that he was using me for his favourite pastime of leg-pulling. (It may be remarked here that had Sir Edward become a professional raconteur instead of a business man he would certainly have attained fame, if not fortune. I once heard him tell an open-mouthed company of distinguished people why it was he particularly wanted to become Speaker of the House of Commons. His deadly earnestness, his serious face, his apparent revelation of a hidden and long-cherished desire, held everyone spell-bound for many minutes. And then, with a phrase, Sir Edward raised a laugh the echo of which must have been heard miles away. He explained that he wished to become Speaker so



THE HOUSE AT POOL CORNWALL, WHERE SIR EDWARD NICHOLL
WAS BORN

To face page 4



721.411

that he could turn a bulldog on to a certain member of the House of Commons who had become notorious for the readiness with which he sprang to his feet to talk on any conceivable subject. It was the choicest example of leg-pulling—of which he is a master—I had ever encountered. It was one of the joys of a thoroughly remarkable evening.)

We arrived at Pool at an hour in the morning when housewives are said to receive visitors with ill-concealed sniffs of displeasure. We must have been fortunate, for we were welcomed at Ada Terrace by a lady who, if a little flustered—and naturally—was ready and anxious to show us all we wanted to see.

The house in Ada Terrace is to-day exactly as it was sixty years ago. Three steps from the front door lands one in the main street; the six tiny rooms are as unpretentious as the exterior. But there was no denying the wistfulness with which the man who had been born there viewed it. His thoughts at that moment were not revealed to his companion, and perhaps they have no place in this volume, but it has been remarked by some writer that no one is able to look at the home of his childhood without experiencing a thrill that nothing else on earth can stimulate.

The present occupier of the house remembered Sir Edward,

6 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

“This is where you spent your baby days,” she exclaimed as with a comprehensive gesture she indicated the small front room where we stood.

“Yes,” came the answer,—a trifle low, as though the man who spoke was still diving back into the dim past. “Yes, I well remember this room. But it’s the other one next door that is clearest in my mind. Is the hook still in the right-hand corner of the ceiling?”

“The hook? The hook?”

The present occupier of the house in Ada Terrace looked disturbed. It was all too obvious that she had never seen a hook in the ceiling of the room next door.

“Yes,” answered Sir Edward. “We used to have a hammock swung from the ceiling. There was a large hook in the right-hand corner.”

Upon investigation we found that, although the hook had long since gone the way of all things, the marks of the hole into which it was screwed were still visible.

“Wonderful,” murmured the lady of the house, or words to that effect, as she stepped away and bestowed a look of absolute awe on her visitor. I agreed. It was wonderful. Men who can remember trifling things like hooks and hammocks are most certainly entitled to looks of awe.

But haven’t we here the beginnings of an explanation? Are not memories and a regard for details links in the chain that carry one to success? It would seem so in the case of Sir Edward Nicholl,

I have since discovered that all his life he has set great store on details. If I were asked to select his most prominent characteristic, I would vote for his methodical ways. But his attention to details would come a close second.

And—lest carping critics should complain that this book is inclined to wander—let it be written here that, although an attempt will be made to deal with incidents and happenings in their chronological order, the chief aim of the writer is to sketch adequately a life which has been as full of incident as an egg is full of meat.

Because of that there must be wanderings; little digressions that may seem of no account. It would be easy to deal with dates and occurrences, but this is not intended to be a biography in the accepted sense of the word. It is, rather, a running narrative of the career of one who has made good. No set plan will be followed; if an anecdote, or happening, occurs to the memory and it is apropos, it will be included; but the main purpose is to create a mind picture. I want those who read to see Sir Edward Nicholl as I have seen him; as I believe he is. Flattery, or any attempt to gild the lily, will be avoided like the plague. This is a plain, unvarnished story, but if at the end it is said by only a few that the man as he is has been but dimly seen, nearly all that the writer has set out to do will have been accomplished.

8 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

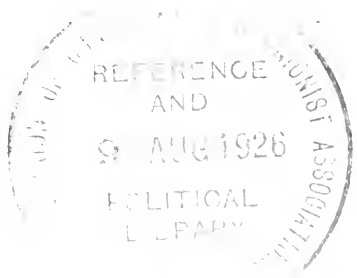
Edward Nicholl's early years in Redruth were those of the average boy. He attended school, he played games, he experienced all the small woes of the youthful male. He is chiefly remembered by his intimates for his absolute refusal to be sat upon. Even in those days he was a champion of others. His friends found in him a stalwart supporter whenever boyish troubles broke out, but he arrived at his tenth year with no more than a moderate number of battles to his credit. That he was a diligent scholar is asserted by those in the best position to judge; indeed, it is said that at ten years of age he "wrote a fist"—the phrase is not mine—that would have done credit to one very much older. And he had a head for figures. That fact, too, is vouched for, and is not in the least difficult to believe.

He was still under eleven years of age when he started his working career. It was a holiday job, stamping letters at the local post office and delivering telegrams. Sir Edward admits that he was very proud of himself at that period. He was earning two shillings and sixpence per week, but the fact that he was actually at work gave him more satisfaction than the tiny wage. The schoolboy has yet to be born who thinks that work is a less enjoyable pastime than lessons. But it is pleasant to record that when young Edward gave up his post to return to school the local postmistress reported that he had proved



THE REDRUTH VOLUNTEER BAND.

(Sir Edward Nicholl seated in the front row on the left)



REFERENCE
AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL
LIBRARY

COMMUNIST PARTY

himself to be one of the most willing workers the office had known.

His twelfth birthday was, in its way, a minor tragedy. He celebrated it by throwing an inkpot at the head of his schoolmaster, after being unjustly thrashed. He never saw the school again, except from the outside, for next day he entered the Carn Brea Railway Works as an assistant timekeeper. His starting wage was five shillings per week. At about the same time he became a drummer boy in the Redruth Volunteer Rifle Corps, a choir boy at Redruth Church, and—in case he had any odd moments—he further indulged a taste for music by joining the Redruth Choral Society.

“He was a ruddy faced, pleasant-mannered little lad in those days,” said one who knew him well, in answer to my question. “As a drummer-boy he was one of the finest we ever had in Redruth. I have always wondered since whether there has ever been just such another drummer-boy. To see him stalking up the Redruth main street beating his drum was one of the sights of the old town.”

Two pleasant years were spent timekeeping, drumming, and singing. There was plenty to do at Carn Brea. The assistant timekeeper's principal duties were to collect the tickets after the workmen had deposited them in a box, enter up times, replace the tickets on the boards, check,

and keep the necessary time-sheets. There were also lots of odd jobs in the general office, but it was the drawing office that called loudest to the boy. He spent much of his time there; it was in the drawing office, as a matter of fact, that his imagination was first stirred by hearing the story of Richard Trevithick's famous engine.

There is a little hill that runs down into the main street of Redruth. It was there that Trevithick made his early experiments; there, too, that the young timekeeper allowed his dreams to run riot. The result was that when he was about fourteen years of age he entered the engineering and loco. shops of the Great Western Railway at Carn Brea as a full-blown apprentice under the late Sir Daniel Gooch.

Industry and close application were apparently his chief characteristics at this stage of his life. He joined the Camborne Science and Art classes, and at fifteen obtained a prize from the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society for a longitudinal section and plan drawing of a locomotive engine. At the same time he made his first speculation in mining shares. That, however, did not produce any prize; on the other hand, some hard-earned money changed pockets.

It is a point of interest, however, that at fifteen he was capable of being tempted by the prospect of a financial flutter. He has had many since, but it is doubtful whether any has given him so much

worry as that first one in Cornish mining shares. I am reminded that just before this book was started he was asked to take over—almost lock, stock, and barrel—one of the biggest Cornish mines. It was a proposition that did not particularly appeal to him, but I still wonder whether his mind went back to that first little block of shares. I think it is very likely.

At sixteen he was doing the work of a man, but as it was work that appealed to him he made no complaint. His evenings he spent in study. He obtained certificates from the Camborne Science and Art School for advanced machine drawing, for geometry, and for model and free-hand drawing. No other student approached him in these three subjects, and for two years he continued to attend the school and to capture a goodly number of the prizes offered.

At eighteen he left home for the first time. He was sent to Swindon to complete his apprenticeship. When the notices were posted up at Carn Brea that the apprentices were to leave, Mr. John Hocking, a well-known mining engineer of Redruth, sent young Nicholl this letter. It is dated October 14th, 1880 :—

The bearer, Mr. Edward Nicholl, has never been in our employ, yet we had hoped, as one of the promising young men of our neighbourhood, that an opportunity would arise of our being able to offer him some place to his advantage ; but

we understand from him that he has now the opportunity of doing better elsewhere, and it therefore gives me pleasure to be able to certify, from many years' personal knowledge of him, of his general good character. From many conversations I have had with his late foreman, Mr. Finney, I have been led to think that we should have had the services of an intelligent and trustworthy young man, had we a vacancy to offer, and I have pleasure in commending him to his future employers.

Armed with this excellent testimonial, young Nicholl journeyed to Swindon, to find that he was expected to live on eleven shillings per week. He quickly discovered that that was impossible. He sought permission to work overtime, and eventually made ends meet by putting in time and a quarter. Later still, so as to provide money for little luxuries, he joined the Swindon Town band, and became an assistant master at the Science and Art Schools. All this resulted in another eight shillings per week—and it has to be remembered that on winter evenings the young apprentice played the big drum, the side drum, the cymbals, and the triangle in the orchestra of the Swindon Dramatic Society!

And then, straight out of a clear sky, came a happening that was destined to have big consequences.



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL IN HIS EARLY DAYS
As a drummer boy in the Redruth Volunteer Band

To face page 12



CONGRESSIONAL
REFERENCE
AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL
LIBRARY

INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS



CHAPTER II

Chance will not do the work—chance sends the breeze,
But if the pilot slumber at the helm,
The very wind that wafts us towards the port
May dash us on the shelves. The steersman's part
Is vigilance, blow it rough or smooth.—SCOTT.

HE was twenty—a “growing lad,” with an appetite that was never completely satisfied—when it dawned on him that for 15s. per week he was doing precisely the same work as the man in the next pit, who was drawing 33s. per week. Discontent came hard on the heels of discovery; he was becoming more hungry every day. There was a small matter of a ring that had to be paid for; and eventually, hearing that there was a boom in shipbuilding in the North of England, the apprentice adopted what to him at the time seemed a reasonable course. To use his own words:—

I decided on a moonlight flit. I journeyed to West Hartlepool, and arrived there one ghastly Monday morning without a copper in my pocket. I applied for work at Messrs. Thomas Richardson & Co., describing myself as a journeyman fitter. The luck must have been with me, for I was interviewed by Sir Thomas himself, who intro-

duced me to his foreman, and gave instructions that I was to start at once. I actually commenced work the next morning, the agreement being that I should work overtime two nights in each week.

My experiences, however, were of a rather rough nature. I was called upon to join the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. I had no great objection to doing so, but as I had definitely made up my mind to go to sea when the chance offered I did not see the necessity. Things, as a consequence, were made unpleasant for me, and I was forced to engage in a good many fights. There was a set-to with someone nearly every day. There was always one on the overtime night.

I stuck it for three months, and then, very reluctantly—despite the fact that I had had a very hard time—I gave up my job, and accepted a berth as third engineer on the s.s. “Wave,” owned by Messrs. Ropner & Co. She was bound for the Baltic. The offer was made to me on a certain Saturday morning, and I sailed that night. My wages were £9 per month. When I was introduced to the captain—a man named Whitburn—the first thing he asked me was whether I was a Cornishman. On my replying in the affirmative, he mentioned that he himself was from Devoran. “We shall get on well together,” said Captain Whitburn as he shook my hand. I am glad to say we did.

I made two voyages on the “Wave,” and returned to Newport, Mon., at the end of the

second. There I was offered, and accepted, the berth as second engineer on the s.s. "Portugalette," a two-thousand tonner, at £12 per month. It was when I was ashore at Newport, at this time, that I was made a Freemason. My lodge was the "Albert Edward, Prince of Wales."

Some years later the "moonlight flit" from Swindon came back at the ex-apprentice like a boomerang. He was twenty-one, and his main ambition at the time was to pass the Board of Trade examination. It looked plain sailing, but on presenting himself he was informed that there were several formalities to be complied with. The first, and most important, was to produce certificates as to general character, etc., for the time of his apprenticeship. This was a poser. Sir Edward continues:—

Having left Swindon before completing my articles—I had been bound for seven years—I was up against it with a vengeance. For a time I was at a loss what to do, but finally I decided to take the only course possible under the circumstances, which was to face the music. I accordingly travelled down to Swindon, saw Mr. Riley, the secretary to the General Manager, and, after expressing my regrets, I laid all my cards on the table. The lecture he gave me will last to my dying day, but in the end he promised to speak to Mr. Carlton, the General Manager. "But," remarked Mr. Riley, "be sure you do not see him

until he has had his lunch." That was a piece of advice—I almost regard it as a well-timed warning—which I have since not only remembered, but acted upon whenever I have sought a favour.

After lunch I was shown in to the General Manager. As I expected, he gave me a severe dressing down, but he was kindness personified, and I left the office, not only with a reference signed by Mr. Dean, the Chief Locomotive Superintendent, but with a recommendation to all and sundry that I was a good and capable workman. My certificate therefore being satisfactory, I quickly obtained my first Board of Trade certificate. It should be explained that the Board of Trade allowed a man to become second engineer on a steamer whose nominal horse-power did not register more than 99. My steamer was 150 n.h.p. So much for registration and for Board of Trade regulations—and evasions!

After putting in the necessary time to qualify as a chief engineer I obtained my next certificate, and almost immediately after I was offered a position as foreman in a ship repairing works at Newport, Mon. I accepted, but only remained ashore for three months. Then I signed on as chief engineer of the s.s. "Ross," of Cardiff, a steamer owned by Messrs. John Cory & Sons. At that time I was—on the authority of the Shipping Master at the Board of Trade Office—the youngest chief engineer who had ever sailed from the port of Cardiff. My appearance was so youthful, indeed—if I was not actually a beardless boy, I

was very nearly so—that on arrival at the Black Sea port, Sulina, I was approached and asked, to my intense annoyance and indignation, if I was the engineer's steward. Never was my pride so terribly mangled!

I should have mentioned that during my stay ashore I became engineer of the Newport Fire Brigade. When I glance back now it seems to me that I was always on the look out for things that would fill up my spare time. I suppose that, in addition to being ambitious, I was restless.

I spent a very pleasant time on the "Ross," but after some months I again quitted the sea and accepted another berth as foreman of a ship-repairing firm. I remained ashore for the winter, but with the spring came another call from the sea. I was anxious, too, to get in time to qualify for another Board of Trade certificate, so on this occasion I went off as chief engineer of the s.s. "Ancient Briton." I stayed with her eight months.

As will be seen from this, the ex-apprentice—who had never completed his articles—had managed to do very well for himself. The letter from Mr. Dean, of the Engineer's Office of the Great Western Railway, written on August 12th, 1882, had helped very considerably. It is well worth giving:—

I hereby certify that Edward Nicholl entered the service of the Great Western Railway Company at Carn Brea and was apprenticed on the

18 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

17th June, 1876, to the engine fitting. He was transferred to Swindon to complete his apprenticeship on the 23rd October, 1880, and has been employed here up to the present time. During the time he has been at Swindon he has been very steady and attentive to his work and is a good workman.

One can only wonder what Mr. Dean would have thought if some prophet had whispered in his ear that the day was to come when the ex-apprentice was to be labelled by the Press of England as "the Millionaire M.P. who drove a Passenger Train during the 1919 Railway Strike!"

Soon after leaving the s.s. "Ancient Briton" Edward Nicholl became identified with a well-known firm of Cardiff shipowners, Messrs. Evan Thomas, Radcliffe & Co. He was offered the post as chief engineer of the s.s. "Gwenllian Thomas." The first trip was to Gibraltar, but later, when proceeding to Bilbao to load, the ship ran ashore on the Spanish coast in very dirty weather, and for some time looked like becoming a total wreck.

The chief engineer could not have known it at the time, but this happening was destined to become one of his early chances. He was largely responsible for refloating the vessel and for taking her into Bilbao dry dock. She was patched up there, and it was then that the great opportunity came. He was asked if he would attempt to run the steamer to Messrs. Palmer's ship repairing

works on the Tyne. It was a risky job, for the ship was badly damaged, and there was no certainty that the patched plates would hold. But that was the period of his life when the engineer was a whole-souled believer in the "nothing venture, nothing win" policy. He consented to make the attempt, and after many weary and trying days got his charge to the Tyne. But not before the unfortunate "Gwenllian Thomas" had again made the acquaintance of dry land. In the English Channel the captain ran her high and dry on the Banks during a moderate gale. She floated with the next tide, but on arrival in port the captain "floated" too.

By then the young Cornishman had obtained a First Class, or Chief Engineer's Certificate, which entitled him to take charge of any steamer afloat. He was handsomely rewarded by the owners and underwriters of the "Gwenllian Thomas," and was further recompensed by the owners by being given the chief engineer's berth on six successive steamers. In all he was with the firm of Messrs. Evan Thomas, Radcliffe & Co. for something like ten years. To show their complete satisfaction they made a definite promise, in 1889, that when they found it necessary to engage an Assistant Superintendent, he should have the first refusal.

Before he was thirty Edward Nicholl was holding a commission in the Royal Naval Reserve.

20 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

He was one of about thirty engineers so distinguished, and, naturally, he had come to the conclusion that he was thoroughly capable of holding any superintendent's job. The promise of the firm he had served so faithfully and well was to mark another milestone in his career.

In 1893, whilst chief engineer of the s.s. "Llanberis," he landed in New York, to find awaiting him a letter from his owners, but signed by a *new superintendent!* That day, as he admits, was one of the most unhappy and uncomfortable of his life. Without waste of time he despatched a letter to the owners informing them that they had either forgotten their promise or, through circumstances over which they had no control (for investments then, as now, went a long way in obtaining positions in shipping firms), had been forced to appoint another superintendent. He concluded his letter by resigning, the resignation to take effect when the vessel arrived at a "home" port.

On the way over the engineer gave almost as much time to his thoughts as he did to his engines. South Africa—thanks mainly to the late Cecil Rhodes—was booming at the time, and his imagination being captured—he felt, in addition, that he had been done out of a job that had been definitely promised him—he decided to go to the Cape. At Cardiff, however, he found this letter :—

4, DOCK CHAMBERS, CARDIFF.

22nd Aug., 1893.

DEAR SIR,

I have your letter, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to give you the best testimonials, but I also desire that you should not go to South Africa, as it were, on an unsatisfactory errand, and I shall be glad if you would kindly run down to see me to-morrow to tell me your prospects and intentions, and possibly I might be able to suggest something that might be to your advantage.

Yours faithfully,

HY. RADCLIFFE.

The interview was a thoroughly pleasant one, and it resulted in the chief engineer being offered £50 per annum retaining fee. He was further promised half the firm's outside surveys (all of which, at that time, were being done by Messrs. J. Hallett & Co.), whilst he was allowed to engage in any other business he liked. It was an excellent chance, but it was made all the better by the offer of a room in the offices of Messrs. Evan Thomas, Radcliffe & Company.

"Fortunes are made in South Wales as well as South Africa," remarked Mr. Radcliffe as he shook hands with his engineer. That happens to be one of the truest remarks ever made.

On August 23rd, 1893, Edward Nicholl, ex-telegraph messenger, ex-drummer-boy, ex-appren-

22 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

tice, ex-chief engineer, started out towards a new career as Assistant Superintendent and Consulting Engineer, Nautical Expert, Member of the Institute of Naval Architects, Member of the Institute of Marine Engineers, Engineer Royal Reserve, etc. etc. etc. He had an imposing list of "additional remarks" to print on his cards, but all he had by way of finance was an assured income of £50 per year and less than £200 in ready cash.

It wasn't too easy in those days to rattle one penny against the other. But the ex-messenger, etc., was his own man. There were clouds around in plenty, but he refused to see them.

He looked instead at the sunshine. It must have been then that he picked up the habit.

CHAPTER III

Every man who can be a first-rate something—as every man can be who is a man at all—has no right to be a fifth-rate something ; for a fifth-rate something is no better than a first-rate nothing.—HOLLAND.

A WEEK or so after his satisfactory interview with Mr. Hy. Radcliffe, Edward Nicholl was approached by a young gentleman named Brown. He had a proposition to make. It was this : For £50 down and another £50 in six months the nautical expert who was willing and anxious to do any man's job was offered a partnership in a firm whose speciality was agencies. It looked like a good thing, and down went the £50. The document drawn up was, in part, as follows :—

Partnership started under the title of Brown & Nicholl, Newport and Cardiff, agents for Petroleum Engines, Rope and Oil Merchants, Commission agents, Insurance brokers, Consulting Engineers, House and Insurance Agents, etc. etc. etc. . . .

Things, however, did not turn out quite as satisfactorily as the new partner had hoped. As a matter of fact, the arrangement came to an end in less than a month. Many things happened in

that time, including a very hectic scene in a South Wales office. It was the partner known as Nicholl who did most of the talking; the other, known as Brown, did almost all the listening.

In the months that followed, in addition to attending to his two offices—one at Cardiff and one at Newport—Edward Nicholl made many surveys for Messrs. Evan Thomas, Radcliffe & Co. Various insurances, too, were bringing in some money. He apparently thought a day ill-spent when he did not tell some man or other of the uncertainty of life. He invariably finished up by extolling the virtues of Life Insurance, and of his own office in particular. Much of his Life Insurance work was done in the evenings. But he was very wary of people who came to him with glib tales of possible partnerships. Many did, but he always cut short the conversation by trying to sell them something. He was an agent for everything; his was the “pushful agency” in excelsis. At the end of six months he presented himself with the following balance-sheet:—

Received from agencies .	£107	10	6	
Retaining fee from				
Radcliffes	25	0	0	(6 mths.)
			<hr/>	
Total	£132	18	6	

It wasn't a large income, even for the glorious days before the war, but he made it do. Troubles and trials came in battalions at this period, but

26 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

ACCIDENTAL INSURANCE

<i>Sum Assured.</i>	<i>Name.</i>	<i>Date of Payment.</i>	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
300	Rico	May	0	10	6			
300	Ring	June	0	7	6			
300	Adams	June	0	7	0			
250	Parfitt	August	0	14	6			
1000	Swanson	August	0	14	6			
300	Pugh	August	0	10	6			
300	James	August	0	7	6			
200	Price	November	0	6	6			
								3 18 6
								67 10 6
Life Insurance Business, £4000 in sums assured for the six months								40 0 0
								107 10 6

On the 11th of January, 1894, a trifle disconsolate, very worn, suffering from a hideous headache, and for the first time in his life on the verge of throwing up the sponge—a number of broken promises had made things look very black indeed—he journeyed to Cardiff. To use a present-day expression, he was “fed to the teeth.” He had reason to be, for the sunshine on which he had banked to such an extent had so completely disappeared that it could no longer be seen.

It was an incidental remark from his typist that roused him from his gloom. A young gentleman had made two calls at the office, and had mentioned on each occasion that Mr. Radcliffe was most anxious to see Mr. Nicholl. Mr. Nicholl naturally wasted no time in visiting Mr. Radcliffe. The latter received him in genial fashion. He had a fairy-like story to tell. The night



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL'S FATHER



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL'S GRANDFATHER



before, on his way home from church, he had encountered a certain Mr. Henry Jones. This Mr. Jones not only had three steamers, but intended building more. His great trouble was, however, that he had no superintendent. The firm itself had no practical experience of shipping; one partner had spent part of his life in America and had been through the Civil War; whilst the other, a brother, had given most of his time to soldiering in India.

“ I thought of you at once,” said Mr. Radcliffe, “ and of course I mentioned your name. I told Mr. Jones you were certain to get on. But I added that before anyone could get into a good berth it was necessary for him to come ashore and get the coal dust off his clothes. Now, does it interest you? If so, I'll take you over to Jones' office, introduce you, and speak a word on your behalf. We may want you ourselves in a while, but if you can come to terms with Jones I advise you to do so.”

Sir Edward forgets what he said or did on that momentous morning in 1894, but it is permissible to suppose that he prefaced his introduction to Mr. Jones by giving three of the loudest cheers on record. It has to be remembered that he was on the point of throwing up the sponge; and then, like a bolt from the blue, came the very kind of job he had always hungered for. He got it without trouble, at £250 per annum, with a

28 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

promise of £50 with each new steamer. Mr. Radcliffe's reply when he heard all about it was as follows :—

4, DOCK CHAMBERS, CARDIFF.

11th *January*, 1894.

MR. ED. NICHOLL,
30, West Bute Street, Cardiff.

DEAR SIR,

I am in receipt of your memo., and am pleased to note that you have been engaged by my old and esteemed friends, Messrs. Jones. I am sure you will do your best for them, and I am very glad that the result that I most desired has come about. Of course, I could not have hoped that it would have been attained so early.

Wishing you every success in your new position,
Yours faithfully,

H. RADCLIFFE.

The remainder of the story is, again, best told in Sir Edward's own words :—

After I had come to a satisfactory arrangement and had signed an agreement with Messrs. Jones, I was asked how long it would take me to wind up my own business. I said about three months. I did not want them to know that what they had described as my business had in reality been a most unhappy and doubtful struggle. I there-upon went back to my office, wrote to the various agencies, notified the insurance company of what I had done, found employment for the three girls

I employed, sold the goodwill—I asked a man for £100 and received £10—called a cab, and took home the chairs, linoleum, and table. Then, without loss of time, I started out to do my first work for my new firm.

I was given an office of my own, and I discovered that, as the Consulting Engineer and Marine Superintendent, I was in sole charge of repairs, victualling, stores, wages, bunkers, and building. I had plenty to do, but, with a brighter outlook, I went at my task with considerable pleasure. I first dealt with details. I carefully examined the statistics which were put before me, found many wasteful loopholes, and at the end of twelve months I showed a saving, as compared with previous management, of over £2000 on the three steamers then being operated. I was rewarded with a present of £50, and £50 rise in salary.

It was just after this that I discovered that I was of an inventive turn of mind. I patented a contrivance which I called a “Movable Grain Division for the Carriage of Grain Cargoes,” and another thing I thought of was a tramway life-saving appliance. I spent a lot of time on this latter, and I might have made money out of it but for the fact that a man in America patented a similar invention at about the time that I was making an application to patent mine.

Later still I became a member of the Mining Institute, and the first paper I read was to an audience made up of engineering students. Then, a year or so after I joined the firm of Messrs.

W. & C. T. Jones, I saw an advertisement for a Superintendent and Consulting Engineer to one of the largest passenger and shipping firms in the United Kingdom. I applied for the position and was asked, with two others, to present myself for a personal interview. On hearing of this my firm offered me £400 and a further £50 rise with each new steamer to remain with them, and I accepted, only to find later that I had been selected for the post advertised at £1000 per annum. One of the letters I received at this time was from Messrs. Evan Thomas, Radcliffe & Co. It was as follows :—

“ As we understand you are applying for an important position, it is with the greatest pleasure that we testify to the satisfactory manner in which you discharged your duties while in our employ for a period of eleven years as Chief Engineer of many of our steamers, and latterly as Assistant Superintendent Engineer. You are particularly energetic, intelligent, and scholarly—indeed, we think we should be correct in stating that you are the best scholar we have had in our employ. We feel sure that if you secure the appointment your employers will have every reason to be satisfied with the way in which you are able to discharge your duties.”

By then I had become very interested in preparing lectures for students. I made it a rule to deliver at least three every winter to those who were studying at the College and Institute of

Marine Engineers. At first my subjects were engineering, but after a while I also delivered lectures on aircraft. I did this for six years. Meanwhile I made many trips abroad. I had an adventure with Tewfika Bey at Constantinople, I encountered an earthquake at the same place, when over four thousand lives were lost ; I was in one of the most violent hailstorms ever experienced in Vienna ; and I again visited Constantinople to raise and repair the s.s. " Charles T. Jones," and was once more complimented by my owners and the underwriters.

By 1903 I had superintended the building of about nine or ten steamers for the firm, and I was then in receipt of a very good salary. Feeling a little tired, I went on a short holiday to Cornwall. There I met Sir Richard Tangye. I recollect that our conversation turned to shipping, and I still remember his final remark. " Why not start for yourself ? " he said. " You would do well." I believe that my answer was that I had no capital.

Here we reach the most interesting stage in Sir Edward's career. It is more than a milestone ; it is a turning-point. He was, at least, at the parting of the ways after his conversation with Sir Richard Tangye. A casual meeting in a railway carriage with a man who found himself without sufficient money to buy a paper did the rest. It may be said, with truth—and without the least intention of being humorous—that one man in the world became a shipowner for fourpence !

CHAPTER IV

In life there are meetings which seem
Like a fate.

MEREDITH.

IN the late summer of 1903, after his hurried trip to Cornwall, Edward Nicholl found it necessary to make a journey to the Continent. It was his custom to travel first-class, even in those days. Had he been content with a corner seat in a third smoker, it is possible that he would still be a Superintendent and Consulting Engineer at Cardiff. When the train arrived at Bath a footman opened the door of the carriage and deposited a bag in one of the corners. Later a gentleman, considerably out of breath, fell into the train just as the guard blew his whistle. He rushed to the window, shouted to a newsboy, and then discovered, to his obvious annoyance, that he had no money. One of his travelling companions immediately offered some, the papers were bought, and the incident ended, for the moment, with this remark from the penniless newcomer: "Thanks very much. I owe you fourpence."

It is conceivable that the distance to London

might have been covered without another single word being spoken. It is the English way, especially in first-class compartments. But there was a clergyman in the carriage who strongly objected to smoking. The man who had nearly missed his train badly wanted a cigar, and so did the man who had lent him money. Finally, after a little argument, the clergyman, who detested the smell of smoke, left his seat and bounced into another compartment. And so the floodgates of conversation between the man who hadn't any money and the man who had were opened. Floodgates of this kind are easily opened when an attempt is made to thwart two men who want to smoke.

The topics of the day were first discussed. Then the engineer was surprised by his companion telling him that he was "one of the unfortunate people who wore a coronet." He mentioned no name—merely said he was a peer of the realm, and added the further information that he was bound for the Mediterranean on a yachting trip. The engineer replied to this by saying that he was on the way to Rotterdam on some business connected with a steamer.

That brought the talk around to shipping. He who had just managed to catch the train remarked that, although his interests in shipping were slight, he yet had some shares in Messrs. Annings, a Cardiff shipping firm. Did his fellow-

traveller know the firm? His fellow-traveller did; and, what was more, spoke very highly of the firm, and added that he was thinking very seriously of starting business on his own account at an early date.

“Then why not do so at once?” said his lordship. “You look like the kind of man who would do well. Let me know when you make up your mind and I’ll try and help you, if I can.”

When Paddington was reached the engineer offered to advance some more money. The peer, however, stated that his carriage was waiting and that he was in no need of money, as he would soon be at his club. He did, however, ask his new acquaintance for his card. All that the engineer was certain about as he left the station was that he had been in conversation with a nobleman whose name he did not know. He had handed over his card, but his lordship had not followed suit.

Let Sir Edward continue the story:—

I was away some weeks, but the moment I returned to Cardiff, being very anxious to know who my peer friend was, I sought out one of Messrs. Anning’s clerks, put a point-blank question to him, and was informed that the shareholder peer was Lord de Blaquiere, of The Cowans, Bath. An hour or so later, while talking to my employers’ sons, I was, as usual, asked if I had had any exciting adventures on my trip.

I casually mentioned that I had travelled to London with my friend Lord de Blaquiere. My word was apparently doubted, and I thereupon related part of the incident. I said I was so very friendly with Lord de Blaquiere that I lent him money. The elder of the two then said—I well remember his remark :

“ Why, if you have so many influential and wealthy friends, do you not start in business for yourself ? ”

I replied that but for the kindness of their respective fathers, and the additional fact that they had no one but myself to look after their ten steamers, I would have done so long before.

This perfectly jocular remark was duly reported at head-quarters during the week-end, and on the Monday morning the senior partner came into my office and, very nicely and tactfully, expressed the hope that I was quite satisfied with my position. I told him, quite honestly, that I was. He then astonished me by saying he had been informed that I was friendly with Lord de Blaquiere, and that he had been rather expecting to hear that I was contemplating starting on my own account. He wanted to know if I was *very* friendly with Lord de Blaquiere. My reply was : “ Yes, fairly. He has promised to help me when I do start on my own.”

“ Really,” said Mr. Jones, “ you are very fortunate in your friends. Is it true that you also know Sir Richard Tangye ? ”

“ Quite,” I replied. “ I know him very well.”

Then Mr. Jones put a question which hit me so hard that it nearly knocked me down. It was thoroughly unexpected. "How much money do you think you could command from your friends if you do start?" he asked.

I hadn't the remotest notion. Truth to tell, the point had not even occurred to me. But I replied: "Oh! about £10,000, I think, sir."

"In that case," said Mr. Jones, "you would be very unwise not to start on your own account. We started on much less."

"Really," I remarked, for the want of something else to say.

"I am telling you the truth," continued Mr. Jones. "Now, let me explain what we are prepared to do. If you care to start a ship, or ships, we shall be pleased to help you. We will invest £1000 in each steamer, and further, we will do all your clerical work free of charge in this office, and you can call on all our shareholders to help you. But there is one condition."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"That you sign an agreement not to leave us for at least five years," answered Mr. Jones. "We will guarantee that your salary will never be less than it is at present. All we really ask is that you devote whatever time you have to our ships. Your own ships will come first, of course, and you shall have an assistant."

I could have danced a jig right there and then. Could anything have been finer, from my point of view? I readily consented to sign the agreement, and it was drawn up on the same afternoon

(July 17th, 1903). It came to my mind as I attached my name to the document that the loan of fourpence to a peer, a clergyman who hated smoking, and a casual remark to my employers' sons had all conspired to make me a shipowner. Years after, when I met Lord and Lady de Blaquiere at Brighton, I interested them immensely by telling them that but for the fact that I had once lent his Lordship fourpence I would probably never have become a shipowner.

It was not until after I had signed the agreement that I realised that I was up against it with a vengeance. It was easy enough talking about commanding £10,000 from my friends, but it soon dawned on me that I was probably in for a very difficult time. The first letter I wrote was to Lord de Blaquiere. He did not reply. Then I wrote to Sir Richard Tangye. He answered that he was not interested in shipping investments and was too old to do as I asked.

I was not disconcerted by these happenings, however. In fact, my determination to go through with the thing to the end received a fresh impetus. I decided to take a trip around the country—to spy out the land, so to speak.

The first man I saw listened very attentively to all I had to say, but he thoroughly wet-blanketed my hopes by explaining that, but for the fact that he had recently invested £10,000 in Consols (then about £113), he would have put in a similar amount with me. I cursed Consols roundly. I think I had every right to. Then I played one of my trump cards.

“ I particularly want your interest, sir,” I said. “ It is my intention to name the first steamer the ‘ Whateley Hall,’ after your house. In addition, I shall name any other steamers after the famous halls of the country.”

That interested him.

“ Yes,” he said, after a little hesitation. “ I certainly like the idea of that, and I’ll admit I have faith in you. On second thoughts, I am inclined to come in with you to the extent of £3000.”

“ Thank you, sir,” I replied. “ You are very good. I shall leave Birmingham a happy man. May I take it that you will give me the cheque now ? ”

“ I am afraid I can’t do that,” was the answer. “ I have my cheque-book here, but my clerk has gone, and I really don’t know where to find a pen. But I’ll post the cheque to you first thing on Monday.”

“ Excuse me one moment,” I exclaimed as I dashed out of the room. I had noticed a small office at the bottom of the stairs. I rushed in, borrowed pen and ink, ran upstairs again, and walked away with the cheque in my pocket. But I have never been without a filled fountain-pen since that day.

My capital then consisted of the house I lived in, about £1500 saved, and a cheque for £3000. The house soon found its way into the strong room of the bank—not literally, of course—and everything else I possessed, including the dog kennel, became the property of the London, City, and Midland Bank.

Just about this time it was reported to me that a London firm, Messrs. Dillon, had a steamer for sale, second-hand. Through the Cardiff agent I was offered the boat for £26,000. I went to London to buy, if possible, or to discover the best selling terms, but to my consternation Messrs. Dillon repudiated their agent and said their price was £28,000, and not £26,000. The deal, as a result, did not materialise.

Very shortly after Sir Edward became interested in "turret" ships, which were then creating something of a sensation in shipping circles. Money, it should be mentioned, was coming in rapidly as the result of the circulars he had sent out to likely shareholders.

For the benefit of the uninitiated, it may be said that the turret was not exactly a new idea—rather was it one modernised. The first ship fitted with a turret was the American Federal vessel "Monitor," which was built after Ericsson's plans in 1862. The first British boat to be fitted with a turret was the "Royal Sovereign" in 1862-64. But these were war vessels, and to fit freight-carrying ships with turrets was not attempted until a very much later date—until, indeed, turrets went out of fashion and were superseded by barbets. In more recent years, particularly in America, turrets were much favoured, and there are instances on record of ships being fitted with one turret above another, each revolving independently.

The reintroduction of the turret—for that is what it was—swiftly captured the imagination of the new shipowner. Quite by chance he was approached by Messrs. Doxfords, of Sunderland, and asked by them to go in for one of their new design ships. They could not have chosen a more appropriate moment. The new shipowner's head was ringing with the word "turret"; he saw possibilities in them, and within a week he was on his way to Newcastle.

But he had developed canniness by that time. He saw Messrs. Doxfords, asked for an estimate for a 6000-ton steamer, and followed up by interviewing the representatives of twelve other firms. Messrs. Doxfords, however, happened to be the lowest tender, and it was accepted. They contracted to build a steamer of 6400 tons dead weight, to be delivered in eight months. One thousand pounds was to be paid down, £9000 on delivery, the remainder to be paid as quickly as possible, over a period of five years—4½ per cent on unpaid balances after the steamer's delivery, etc.—the builders to repay 5 per cent interest to the owner on all amounts paid before delivery. In addition to buying one vessel the new owner took an option on an additional four, the said option to be good for three years. The full purchase price for each steamer was £34,000.

It is anticipating the end a little, but it may be mentioned that within a very short time the now

rising shipowner had bought all four steamers, had contracted for four more, and had incidentally bought two second-hand vessels. In addition he had sold two on the stocks, and had made his first big deal of £4000 by cancelling two orders at the request of Norwegian buyers. Another sale of two more within a year, for a like amount, made him the possessor of over £10,000, all of which was invested in his own vessels.

Opportunity had knocked at the door, but it had most certainly been answered.

CHAPTER V

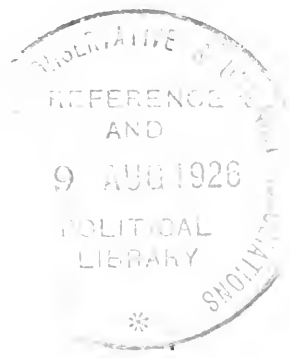
Men who undertake considerable things, even in a regular way, ought to give us ground to presume ability.—BURKE.

IT was when his income was more than that of either of his employers, or of that of their sons put together, that Edward Nicholl had his first disagreement with the firm he had served so faithfully and well. The trouble was not of his making. He had been too successful, and the office, as a consequence, was not the most pleasant place to live in. One of the partners had died and the other, Mr. William Jones—whom Sir Edward speaks of as one of the best and one of the kindest employers in the world—was by no means well, and only infrequently turned up at the business. The rupture came very suddenly, as these things have a habit of doing. The new shipowner was in his room attending to his duties, when a clerk entered to say that the youngest son had issued instructions that he was to proceed to Newcastle at once.

There were a variety of reasons why the journey could not be undertaken that day, one of them being that the engineer-shipowner had two steamers of his own in dry dock at Cardiff. The



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL DRIVING TO HIS CARDIFF OFFICE, 1906



LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE AND POLITICAL LIBRARY

REFERENCE AND

AND

9 AUG 1928

POLITICAL LIBRARY

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



upshot of it all was that there were a few heated words, and Edward Nicholl packed up and took offices elsewhere.

About this time—the early months of 1906—he was busy championing the cause of the British seaman. It had been said by those who wanted to excuse themselves that British sailors were hard to find. Aliens, according to their view, were a necessity. The director and manager of the Cardiff “Hall” Line—which was the name of Edward Nicholl’s firm—exploded this theory in an interview which was printed in the “Western Mail.”

“By giving twenty-four hours’ notice,” he said, “to the Board of Trade officials, and posting the notice at the Cardiff offices of the Board of Trade, I have never yet had any difficulty in obtaining an all-British crew. I would strongly advocate that we should be compelled to carry 75 per cent Britishers for our national safety. That would give our commerce a security which it does not possess at present, and I maintain it can be done if a sufficient inducement is held out to tempt men to join the Mercantile Marine by paying them an equivalent of what they would get for shore labour. Those people who point to the fact that years ago the wages of sailors ranged from £2 10s. to £3 per month should not forget that the cost of living has advanced, that education has become compulsory, and so forth. The modern

seaman should be paid at least enough to keep a wife and family respectably. How can that be done on £3 5s. to £3 10s. per month? A self-respecting Britisher would rather beg or starve than go to sea under such conditions. The shareholders of shipping companies might take up the matter, and instruct the managers of their property to give preference to Britishers; whilst underwriters also, to safeguard their own interests, might insist on the employment of a large percentage of Britishers.

“The problem is not an insoluble one. I have already urged the payment of a better wage. This would be greatly facilitated if the nation itself did something. Let us penalise every foreign vessel entering a United Kingdom port to the same extent and as vigorously as is done with the British steamer; let us fix the load-line, cargo, storage, measurement, certificate dues, etc., regulate the lights, boats, belts, buoys, and generally, where existing legislation handicaps the Britisher, treat the alien similarly, and let us have a new light load-line law. The alien not only takes our cargoes at the same rate of freight as we can obtain, but even trades around our coasts under a foreign flag and escapes practically all these restrictions affecting British ships. Let these obstacles to our progress and commerce be removed, and it will then be found that British owners can and will employ more Britishers.”

Sir Edward to-day is as much an advocate of the British sailor as he was when he was a ship-owner in 1906. Most of his words, written many years ago, have a ring of truth to-day. In the same issue of the "Western Mail" he also had a kindly word to say about apprentices. That was followed, some time later, by a shipping journal publishing the following:—

The commercial supremacy of Great Britain will be maintained so long as we have among our captains of commerce men who take a practical interest in the technical education of our country. Cardiff is indeed fortunate in possessing one of these public-spirited men in the person of Councillor Edward Nicholl, R.N.R., the Managing Director of the Cardiff "Hall" Line of steamers, which are so well known throughout the shipping world, and are considered the most economical steamers afloat, each company averaging to date about 20 per cent per annum interest on its capital.

The success of the Cardiff "Hall" Line of steamers must be attributed to Councillor Nicholl's wide technical knowledge and practical experience, for he was trained as an engineer and was for several years at sea in the highest position of his profession. He is also the author of several engineering papers, and is regarded as an authority on all nautical subjects.

To encourage the apprentices of our city to become equipped at the outset of their profes-

sional careers with a first-class technical education, Councillor Nicholl has generously founded the "Councillor Nicholl's prizes," amounting to £25 annually, to be given to the meritorious students of the City of Cardiff Technical Schools in the following subjects: Practical geometry, machine drawing, theoretical and practical mathematics, theoretical mechanics, mechanical engineering, electricity and magnetism, and electrical engineering.

But that, perhaps, is travelling a little ahead of the story. Lots of things had happened before these prizes were founded, but no occurrence was anything like so extraordinary as the rapid progress of the Cardiff "Hall" Line. Away back in the dim past of 1906—January 12th of that year, to be precise—the "Maritime Review" was saying:—

Elsewhere in these columns we have commented on the commercial activity of Mr. Edward Nicholl, but through lack of space our remarks had to be curtailed, somewhat disappointingly. Just here no such reasons apply, and, being in reminiscent mood, we shall pursue the subject a little further. That is to say, we are looking back over the work of a hundred weeks in the history of this journal—its first hundred weeks, too; and that is a period that leaves its mark, providing any mark is to be anticipated.

Exactly the same thing applies with the

individual, and in our retrospective glance we note that in our very first issue we published our opinions of the man who, first among Cardiff shipowners, backed his belief in the possibilities of the big dividends that are to be earned by those who work the turret steamers. . . . Now, when Mr. Nicholl first essayed his trial of the turret—if we may put it thus—it was when this type of steamer was busily engaged in fighting down the antagonism of the old school of ship-managers ; when sections of the alleged “ Shipping Press ” were waxing sarcastic when one of the type had come to grief, were posing as wits because somebody or other had prattled to them of the similarity between half-tide rocks and turret steamers ; when quite a number of the “ fancy ” were walking around with a non-committal look spread over their expressive countenances ; at that time then, we, as sailormen, and Mr. Nicholl as a shipowning expert, declared our beliefs in the possibility of the “ new ship. . . . ”

The result ? Well, most of our older contemporaries have not been above shaping their theoretical courses from the wrinkles gained by our practical experience. That is the result as far as journalism is concerned. Where the shipping investor came in we shall show you later on. . . .

As you will have observed, the pooh-poohing referred to had no effect on us—neither had it on Mr. Nicholl. . . . The head of the Cardiff “ Hall ” Line has succeeded in a most phe-

nomenal manner ; in the same direction we have cause for no complaint. Why is this ? Well, we leave the reasons, which crystallise around ourselves, to you ; but on yet another red-letter day in our career we are willing to state that Mr. Nicholl has succeeded because he knows his business ; has used no meretricious aids to win success ; has appealed to his supporters in a clean and straightforward manner ; has fulfilled his promises ; and has therefore deserved—although he never pretended that he could command—success.

In this connection we quite realise that several of the older established owners claim that they “thought” about the possibilities of the turret steamer before Mr. Nicholl came on the scene. They did, in point of fact ! But while they were thinking, our friend acted ; and, gloss over the idea as you might, could, would, or should, the fact remains that he was leader in this new break at Cardiff. For the matter of that he is still leading, will probably go on leading ; has shown by actual result that his belief in the advantages of the turret steamer was justified ; the older hands have been “getting over each other” in a mad desire to do likewise. . . .

To-day, more than at any other epoch in the history of the shipping industry, the successful ship manager is he who plays the game. There must be no shinnannakin ; no attempt at concealment ; no tarradiddles ; no undue reappearance of new tail-end shafts in the balance-

sheets ; and no terribly frequent regrets for the non-appearance of dividend cheques when other competitors—under the same or less favourable conditions—are “ sending ’em out at the end of each voyage.” That is mainly why Mr. Nicholl has succeeded. He has made no promises that have not been fulfilled. As a matter of fact, he had understated his ability, and his supporters are the better pleased in consequence. . . . The really successful ship-owner, then, is he who is hardest to “ draw.” He appears to be too busy to give you a word. He lives as nearly altogether on dividends and their earning as makes but little difference. Mr. Nicholl is of that persuasion.

“ Could we have a photo of one of the ‘ Hall ’ boats ? ” “ Certainly, with pleasure. I’ll ask the photographer to send you one.” It came—so did the photo of himself. Next, we asked for a few points that would be of interest to our readers. A deprecatory shrug of the shoulders, and a “ You already know all there is to know ” is supposed to meet the case. Our next attempt is to secure some figures ; and we are given the post-card which this original ship manager sends to all his shareholders, month by month. Its tale is exactly that which you will prefer, for it treats of dividends. Indeed, we cannot do better than reproduce it herewith, in which case you will be taking Mr. Nicholl’s words instead of ours. Here you are :—

s.s. "Whateley Hall."

Voyage Nos. 1 to 5.

From July 9th, 1904, to October 31st, 1905, total profit £6213 19s. 2d. Paid in dividends, £2800. Carried to Reserve, £2337 7s. 9d. Since the steamer left the builders, and not for one isolated voyage, the profit is equal to $23\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum. All dividends are free of income tax.

s.s. "Eaton Hall."

Voyage Nos. 1 to 6.

From August 5th, 1904, to October 7th, 1905; total profit, £6055 7s. 3d. Paid in dividends, £2900. Carried to Reserve, £2022 0s. 10d. Since the steamer left the builders, and not for one isolated voyage, the profit is equal to 22 per cent per annum. All dividends are free from income tax.

s.s. "Grindon Hall."

Voyage No. 1.

From September 26th, 1905, to November 20th, 1905—56 days—paid a dividend of £1 10s. per £50 share, and the voyage left a profit equal to 30 per cent per annum.

Our s.s. "Tredegar Hall," same size, same specification, price £34,000, includes all so-called "extras" and has been well applied for. Prospectus on application. We refused a profit

of £3000 on this contract ; the shareholders get the full benefit of this. The shares in this steamer are now nearly all allotted.

Is it necessary for us to extend the theme further than this ? We believe it is not, and we have merely taken up the work of this enterprising ship manager to justify our remarks one hundred weeks ago. At that time some of our contemporaries couldn't see any promise in Mr. Nicholl, as he had no "past." We, as nautical people proper, could—and did. This is our excuse for treating you to a discussion on one of Cardiff's youngest and certainly most phenomenally successful steamer managers.

CHAPTER VI

The busy world shoves angrily aside
The man who stands with arms akimbo set
Until occasion tell him what to do ;
And he who waits to have his task marked out
Shall die and leave his errand unfulfilled.

LOWELL.

SO that this story may have some semblance of sequence it is now necessary to go back a few months. The first steamer of the "Hall" Line was known as the "Whateley Hall." She was a turret, of course. It is interesting to record that when the first of her kind was launched one South Wales journal, in most emphatic language, declared that "when the third wave strikes her broadside she will be no more." The "Whateley Hall" was the hundredth turret to be built and launched by Messrs. William Doxford & Sons, of Pallion, Sunderland. Edward Nicholl & Co., Cardiff, were the owners.

The "Whateley Hall" was six times larger than the first of her class to be built, and she was the very first to be laid down to the order of a South Wales firm. Among those at the launching ceremony were the Mayor and Mayoress of Sunderland (Councillor and Mrs. H. J. Turnbull),

Mr. Jenneson Taylor (Chairman of the Wear Commission), Mr. and Mrs. Runciman, and Mr. Edward Nicholl. The ship was christened by Miss Knight, daughter of Mr. Frederick Knight, of Whateley Hall, Birmingham (from whom Sir Edward had received the first £3000). The lady was presented with a diamond bracelet, the gift of the owner; whilst Mrs. William Jones, of Cardiff, was also given a bracelet—"Mrs. Jones being the wife of the gentleman for whom I have worked, and who has given me every assistance in starting for myself," as the owner gracefully phrased it.

Although the "Whateley Hall" was by no means huge, she was at least made noteworthy by being the largest of her kind. She had a dead weight capacity of 6,400 tons, a draught of 22 ft. 6 in., whilst her indicated horse-power was 1350, which gave her a loaded speed at sea of nine to eleven knots an hour on a low consumption of coal. Her dimensions were $342\frac{1}{4}$ ft. by $46\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $27\frac{1}{2}$ ft. One point that deserves to be made is that the owner gave special instructions that attention was to be given to the accommodation and general comfort of the officers, engineers, and crew. Even bathrooms were provided, and it is no exaggeration to say that the men of the "Whateley Hall" were better catered for than any other body of seamen then afloat.

Her first voyage was to Port Said with coal, and from Nicholaieff to Rotterdam with maize,

wheat, and barley. That it was a highly successful trip is best indicated by the balance-sheet sent out to the shareholders at the time. It will be found set-out on the following page.

As the "Maritime Review" remarked on October 12th, 1904, the figures were remarkable. The dividend, as will be seen, worked out at a little better than 10 per cent, after paying interest on debentures and after putting away the useful sum of £168 9s. 11d. for the redemption of debentures and reserve. It was no wonder that the shareholders walked about with smiling faces.

But the dividend was not the only thing of interest. Before his ship sailed, the General Manager of Edward Nicholl & Co. made a valiant attempt to man her with Britishers. He caused to be posted up outside the Cardiff Shipping Office the following announcement:—

WANTED, twelve good British sailors and firemen for the "Whateley Hall." Constant employment for good men. Wages, £4 per month. R.N.R. men preferred.

That was not only a step in the right direction, but it was one that made the shipping quarters of Cardiff positively buzz. Here is another paragraph from a South Wales paper which is well worth giving. It speaks for itself:—

We are modest people at Cardiff, hence we are somewhat disinclined to shout about our

THE "WHATELEY HALL" STEAMSHIP COMPANY, LTD., CARDIFF, IN ACCOUNT WITH
ED. NICHOLL & CO., MANAGERS.

Working account from July 9th to September 30th, 1904, Cardiff to Port Said with coals,
and Nicholaieff to Rotterdam with maize, wheat, and barley.

Dr.	Voyage No. 1. 84 days.			Voyage No. 1. 84 days.			Cr.
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
1904 Disbursements at:							
July 9. Sunderland	22	7	5				
" 19. Cardiff	225	17	9				
Aug. 15. Port Said	221	10	8				
" 31. Nicholaieff	232	5	11				
Sept. 2. Constantinople	70	15	5				
" 27. Rotterdam	242	0	3				
				1014	17	5	
" 30. Wages				418	14	7	
" 30. Bunkers				442	10	10	
" 30. Stores				78	18	7	
" 30. Provisions				135	5	0	
" 30. Insurance				500	6	11	
" 30. Management Comm.				83	3	4	
				2673	16	8	
Interest on Debentures				185	18	8	
Interim Dividend at £1 per share				400	0	0	
Balance to Redemption of Debentures and Reserve				168	9	11	
				3428	5	3	
							3428 5 3

1904:

By Freight on Coals, Cardiff to Port Said 1249 14 11
Freight on Grain, Nicholaieff to Rotterdam 2076 18 4
Mat Money 22 13 2
Sundry Discounts, Passenger Fares, Interest, etc. 78 18 10

smartnesses. Sometimes, however, a record is made which, in common fairness, should be narrated. Here is one: "The 'Whateley Hall' arrived in the Bute Docks on Friday last at 10 a.m. She loaded 5250 tons of cargo, 1000 tons of bunkers, and sailed for Venice at 9.30 on the following morning (Saturday). When a steamer loads up 6350 tons and sails in less than twenty-four hours, one hardly knows which to congratulate most—the Bute Docks people or the enterprising head of the Cardiff 'Hall' Line, Mr. Edward Nicholl. Again—and this is another record in the right direction—the same 'Whateley Hall' secured a full crew of British sailors and firemen, who were paid the full rate ruling at Cardiff for that class of desirable workmen. We are wondering whether this is an instance where the fates smile indulgently on the man who has a sufficiency of 'whiteness' to practise what some of his colleagues merely preach—Live and let live."

The second "turret" to be launched was the "Eaton Hall." She was christened by Miss Nellie Coward, daughter of Mr. P. H. Coward, of Cardiff, and by a curious chance her first voyage was identical with that of her sister ship. She carried coals to Port Said, and wheat, rye, barley, and oats from Nicholaieff to Rotterdam. She made a profit of £1133 2s. 8d., which allowed of a dividend being paid of nearly 14 per cent per annum, after payment in full of all expenses, in-

surance, and fully providing for interest on debentures and redemption fund.

But, lest it be thought that it was all plain sailing for Edward Nicholl & Co. at this time, it should be pointed out that the firm was made the target for a good deal of stinging—and thoroughly unfair—criticism. There was one paper in particular which seemed to find real joy in throwing cold water on the efforts of the new firm. But it was the balance-sheets which spoke loudest. The shareholders were drawing excellent dividends, and naturally they could afford to laugh at the cheap sneers of those who in reality were annoyed because their prophecies had been made to look ridiculous.

One of the secrets of success of the firm was that it possessed the knack of getting its cargoes discharged with express speed. The “Eaton Hall,” for example, arrived in London one Wednesday afternoon at 4 o’clock. She discharged 5600 tons, left the Thames on Saturday afternoon, and was docked at Cardiff at 8 o’clock on the following Monday evening. This was the sort of thing that made other owners’ mouths water. No wonder the profits were piled one on top of the other; there was a “live wire” at the head of the business who saw that things were done.

In three voyages the “Whateley Hall” made a profit of £4615. The profits on her third trip,

which was to the Plate and back, yielded £3 for every £50 share. There was no other steamer in England at the time which could show a result anything like so satisfactory. The "Whateley Hall" managed to make herself noteworthy, too, by salvaging the Middlesborough steamer "Broadgarth"; she had run aground in the Black Sea. In the Admiralty Court later Mr. Justice Barnes awarded the owners of the Cardiff vessel £1125, the master £175, and the crew £200.

The third ship of the Line was the "Tredegar Hall," but by 1907 the firm were running no less than seven. They were as follows:—

- s.s. "Whateley Hall."
- „ "Eaton Hall."
- „ "Tredegar Hall."
- „ "Welbeck Hall."
- „ "Grindon Hall."
- „ "Silksworth Hall."
- „ "Haigh Hall."

Just prior to this, however, the head of the "Hall" Line had transferred part of his interest and attention to music-halls. He became interested in the London Coliseum, which, after starting well, got into difficulties. Several meetings of the shareholders were held of which he was Chairman, and eventually he also became Chairman of the Reconstruction Committee. In addition, he was a Member of the Chamber of



THE SS, "GRINDON HALL"
One of the steamers of the Cardiff "Hall" Line



Commerce (and its Council), a member of the Shipowners' Association, Director of the "Hero" Metal Company, and President of the Cardiff Technical Engineering Society. Long before 1907, when the "Hall" Line had so established itself that even critics had buried their pens, he was one of the busiest men in a city of busy men.

In the summer of 1907 came the break with Messrs. Jones & Co. New offices were found at 4, Dock Chambers, Cardiff, and within a week or so the "Welbeck Hall" was bought and the "Silksworth Hall" and the "Haigh Hall" contracted for. Sir Edward's own story of this period is full of interest:—

I severed my connection with Messrs. Jones—through no fault of mine, I may say—on July 17th, 1907. . . . By the end of the year we had seven ships, over a quarter of a million capital, and a dead-weight carrying capacity of over 44,000 tons. In addition, I had contracted for several more vessels. We experienced no difficulty at all in getting shareholders. On the other hand, we were sometimes embarrassed by the applications we received. It was an enviable position, but even so there happened about this time an incident worth recording. It brought me into conflict with my bank.

I had heard that at Penarth Docks there was a steamer for sale. The owner—or, at any rate, the largest shareholder—had crossed over. I went

and saw the vessel, and was so impressed with her generally good condition that I immediately sent a telegram asking to be informed of her price. The reply was : " Our Principal will be in town to-morrow, Hotel Victoria. Want £12,000."

For some little time the London and Provincial Bank, through their manager, had been paying me little attentions, which perhaps is the way of banks when one is doing well. The manager had remarked to me on more than one occasion that if his bank could ever be of any service they would be most happy to oblige. I kept the offer in my mind.

After seeing the vessel at Penarth I went to my own bank manager and told him I was on the point of buying a new ship. Would it be all right ? He replied :

" Well, you know, shipping is not much favoured by our Directors at the moment, but as you are going to London to-morrow call at the head office and see Mr. Madders, the General Manager. I think it will be all right, but don't forget your overdraft is a bit on the heavy side as it is."

My reply was : " Yes ; but keep in your mind that you are well covered. You have everything I possess."

I saw Mr. Madders next day. It was just after lunch, and I was ushered into his office with great ceremony.

" Sit down, will you ? " he remarked.

" No thanks," I answered, " I'm in a great hurry. I presume they have wired or spoken

from Cardiff that I want to write a cheque for £10,000 or £12,000 ? ”

“ That is so.”

“ Well, will it be all right ? ”

“ Um—ah ! This is such short notice, you know. But we have a Directors’ Meeting on Friday. It is Wednesday to-day. Can you wait ? ”

“ No, I’m afraid I can’t. Besides, I’m very surprised that you want me to wait until Friday. I have to make up my mind before five o’clock to-day. You really surprise me. It is such a paltry sum.”

Mr. Madders smiled over at me.

“ You are cross to-day,” he remarked.

“ I shall be in a minute,” I answered. “ Please remember that I have not come here begging. You will have ample security.”

By this time there were several clerks in the room, and it seemed to me that the General Manager was distinctly uncomfortable. I realised that it was up to me to indicate plainly that I wanted the money, so I said :

“ You will drive me elsewhere if you are not careful. I know two places where I can get the money at once.”

“ Where are you staying ? ” asked Mr. Madders.

“ The Metropole,” I replied.

“ Very well,” he remarked. “ I will ring you up before four o’clock and let you know.”

I returned to the Metropole Hotel just as the clock was striking four, and was told that Mr. Madders had been inquiring for me. I got him

on the phone, and was then informed that he regretted very much that he could not give me a definite answer until after the Directors had met on the Friday.

I walked straight across to the desk and wrote the following wire to the London & Provincial Bank, Cardiff :

“ Writing cheque on you for about £1000 deposit, balance about £10,000. Home to-morrow, when I will transfer to you all accounts, my own and ships.—NICHOLL.”

I carried out my intention, and then the fun began. The London City & Midland Bank did all in their power to get me back again, and one of the first things they told me was that anything reasonable that I asked would find them perfectly willing to meet me.

And now let me digress for a moment. The point of the foregoing story is that some years later, at the luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel, London, to celebrate the amalgamation of the “ Joint ” with the London City & Midland Bank, the late Sir Edward Holden, after the meeting, said :

“ Gentlemen, lunch is to be served in the adjoining room. I want Sir Edward Nicholl to sit on my right, and Mr. McKenna on my left.”

During the lunch he asked me what were my intentions. I replied that I had not decided. He then exclaimed :

“ Well, my boy, if you do start again, and a *million* is of any use to you, you can always have it ! ”

It was much too good a chance to miss, and I reminded Sir Edward of the £10,000 incident. What he said then I think I had better keep to myself.

I may add that within three months of the transfer of my account to the London & Provincial Bank I was back again with the London City & Midland, with reasonably unlimited credit.

It comes to my mind now that in October of 1920, when I was discussing financial matters with Sir Edward, the question of overdrafts was raised. I think I asked him how far a man could go in that direction.

“I assure you,” said Sir Edward in reply, “that at this moment my large interests in War Loans, Oils, Dunlop Shares, etc., have caused me to have a bigger overdraft than ever I had before in my life.”

It was an interesting answer; but the real point is that the London Joint City & Midland Bank—the largest in the world—has for years allowed him any credit he desired.

CHAPTER VII

When a man dies, they who survive him ask what property he has left behind. The angel who bends over the dying man asks what good deeds he has sent before him.—KORAN.

IN the early days of 1907 came an offer to become a member of the Cardiff City Council. The head of the "Hall" line was so completely surrounded with business at the time of the first invitation that he did not feel justified in accepting. A little later, however, he was offered a seat unopposed, and in November, 1907, he was elected to the City Council as the representative of the South Ward. His career as a Councillor is still well remembered. In three years he was responsible for more sensations than are most men in a lifetime.

He was immediately appointed Vice-Chairman of the Technical Committee and made a member of the Watch Committee. In addition, he also took the place of the late Sir Thomas Morel on the London Committee of Bureau Veritas. So as to fill up any spare moments—busy men always manage to do so—he also accepted the appointment as delegate to the Associated Chambers of Commerce in London, became an arbitrator under

the Welsh Coal Charter, and did a few other odd jobs like interviewing Mr. Gladstone, then the Home Secretary, on the Miners' Eight Hour Bill and by opposing the Taff Vale Railway Bill, in the House of Lords, on behalf of the Cardiff ship-owners. The wonder is that he had any time left to breathe.

In 1908 he was elected to the Finance, Health, and Education Committees of the Cardiff City Council, and on May 17th of the same year he opened offices at Newport, Barry, and Port Talbot. At almost the same time he became President of Nazareth House and Chairman of the Cardiff Docks Conservative Association. According to one of his friends, he rarely allowed himself more than four hours for sleep. The statement is probably exaggerated, but it is easy to believe.

As a Councillor the member for the South Ward was a success from the start. He had always possessed the knack of quickly grasping details, but it was not until the late summer of 1908 that he really came into the public eye. Let me quote a report of the "South Wales Echo." It deals with the meeting of the Health Committee in September, 1908 :—

Serious statements regarding the method of licensing seamen's boarding-houses were made at to-day's meeting of the Cardiff Health Committee (Dr. Robinson in the Chair). Councillor

E. Nicholl asked how licences were granted to boarding-house keepers in Bute Road. He had, he said, had several complaints about the conduct of these houses on Sunday evenings when persons were passing to and from church. Men were sitting on the doorsteps playing cards, and the pavement very often was in a dirty condition. He asked the question because licences were granted to persons who, he would consider, were likely to turn them into houses of ill-fame.

The Medical Officer of Health (Dr. Walford) : “The Committee grant licences after having obtained a certificate of good character from the Police.”

Councillor Chappell : “Ah! That’s the point!”

Dr. Walford, continuing, said that the matter Councillor Nicholl mentioned was certainly a police matter. What Councillor Nicholl spoke of would be no infringement of the seamen’s lodging-house regulations, but would be a matter for the police.

Councillor Chappell : “What Councillor Nicholl says has a lot of truth in it. Is it not a fact that this great report of character from the police is no better than this—that the police know nothing against the applicant? The woman may be as corrupt as you like, and we do not care.”

The Chairman : “That is so.”

Councillor Chappell : “It is high time that we tried to raise the standard of lodging-houses,

for the people who hold the licences are guaranteed to the public as holding houses fit to receive seamen—and seamen need protection as much as anybody else.”

Councillor Nicholl made some startling statements as to what went on in some houses, adding that he had it on good authority that young girls in these houses, when only fifteen or sixteen years of age, were married to foreigners—and this was not the worst.

Councillor Chappell urged that further inquiries should be made in regard to the character of the applicants.

Further discussion followed, and on the motion of Councillor E. Nicholl it was decided that each applicant and his wife must appear in person before the Committee, and there must be a joint police-inspector report about the character of both men and women.

Councillor Nicholl subsequently expressed his intention to personally visit the lodging-houses, Dr. Walford stating that members of the Committee had this power.

That was only the beginning, the preliminary to one of the breeziest periods ever experienced by the Cardiff City Council. Next day the inhabitants did little else but discuss what had already become known as the “Nicholl Crusade.”

The Councillor followed up his speech by making a tour of inspection of twenty-two

sailors' boarding-houses in Bute Road and adjoining thoroughfares—the heart of Cardiff Docks. This is what the reporter of the “Western Mail” had to say about his subsequent meeting with Councillor Nicholl:—

He coughed like a man who had inadvertently swallowed an unwholesome thing.

“I feel as if the things were after me still,” said he, “the creepy things. Excuse me!”

Then he added, in response to a further query, that he did not believe Dr. Walford or the Chairman of the Health Committee knew anything about the matter from their own personal knowledge.

“They could not know the facts and pass them,” said he.

Fresh from the purlieu wherein our sailor visitors are crowded when ships leave them to the mercies of Cardiff, the head of the Cardiff “Hall” Line spoke feelingly and with indignation.

He glanced at his notes.

“Here you are.” He coughed again. “The unfortunate girl was crying,” he interjected. “She is only twenty-two and has two black babies. Her father is a well-known business man. The man who keeps the house where she lives is a coloured seaman. He thrashes her so unmercifully that the police have to stand between her and murder. The case is notorious, and she cried while she told me her story. He is tired of her. Yet the man is passed as fit and

proper to conduct a boarding-house. He wants to get rid of the woman, too, because she is not alluring enough now that she has those two half-caste babies."

The folded sheet of notes happened to have that particular folio uppermost when Mr. Nicholl picked it up. It was, however, the record of only one out of twenty-two houses he visited.

"The first house I visited," he subsequently explained, "was comparatively typical for one of its class. It was a Chinese house of fair repute. Here are my notes: Twenty-four beds in four small rooms. The men fully dressed in the various rooms, and the atmosphere thick as cake—worse than stifling. You can imagine what it was like. Cooking in the same room as the baggage, boxes, etc. Utensils all about the room. The ceilings black with grime, where they were not glistening with cockroaches. The boarders busy playing cards or smoking opium. One English girl kept by the proprietor.

"One English girl and twenty-four Chinamen in the same house," commented Mr. Nicholl. "And the keeper of the house says he is not married!

"Not far off," he continued, "is a house kept by a Russian Finn. It was quite clean, and most orderly and decent. So was an English house close by. Around the corner, however, I deviated from my proper quest and went into a Chinese laundry. It was filthy. The back-

yard was filthy, the rooms were filthy, everything was filthy; and laundry clothes—clean clothes, mind you—were hanging on lines over it all, to be dried and aired.

“The next place I entered was a Greek boarding-house.” Mr. Nicholl here again referred to his notes. “It was very decent save for the fowl-pen in the backyard, which was insanitary.

“The next sailors’ boarding-house I entered was a Spanish house. There were nine beds in one room—a room only about eighteen feet by twelve feet. Two English girls were apparently the only persons in charge. One was twenty-two; the other about thirty. These were seemingly the licensed managers of a sailors’ common lodging-house.

“Bad, you say? Look here! The twenty-first house I visited out of the twenty-two was, like the first, a Chinese house. The proprietor has an English wife. The servant girl—an English girl of twenty-one—had been victimised by a Greek boarding-house master where she was previously, and she was thrown on the streets. The Chinese boarding-house master then took her in, and there she is. Nineteen boarders,” added Mr. Nicholl, sententiously.

“What condition was the house?”

“Very decent indeed, in most respects. That is to say, it was very clean by comparison. In the backyard lime had been scattered to disguise the smells made by accumulations of dirt, and the top story was naturally a trifle dirty.

But all things considered, it was a decent house.

“ Wholly different was another house, where everything was simply hideously dirty. It was terrible,” he repeated, “ and it is impossible to get away from the things and the smell. My companion lifted a lump of something—it may have been carpet or matting, or a rug, or anything—off the floor ; and they all began to creep about everywhere. I can almost hear them tramping now.

“ And there were eight beds in the place—a garret. Eight beds, and they say Cardiff is a lovely and slumless city !

“ Another house I was in had an English girl in charge, with a yellow baby in her arms. She was stated to be the boarding-master’s wife. The house was dirty. It was not, however, so bad as one house kept by a black man, where not only the house was dirty, but the white women who lived there, with the five boarders, were even dirtier.”

To another newspaper reporter this statement was made :—

“ Several young English girls at these houses admitted to me that they were not married to the men who are supposed to be their husbands—that circumstances had driven them to their present mode of life. Just imagine a girl of fourteen being allowed to live in a house crowded with men of a certain nationality.

What scenes she must witness ! I came across a most heartrending case of a young English-woman being forced by circumstances to live amidst conditions that cattle would revolt at.

“ I intend to pursue this matter to the end and to call for drastic treatment. Some of the houses do not offer more accommodation than is necessary for a private house ! The statements I made at Tuesday’s meeting of the Health Committee were mild compared with what I saw this morning, and I was accompanied by a witness.

“ I am not coming out in November,” concluded Councillor Nicholl, “ so that I am not seeking advertisement or cheap notoriety, but calling attention as a public man to a grave scandal and insanitary evil—an evil which must be wiped out with all the speed possible.”

A good deal of activity was manifested in certain quarters as a result of these interviews, but Councillor Nicholl was by no means satisfied. At the next meeting of the Health Committee the Crusader returned to the attack. As a consequence it was decided to inquire into the allegations. One of the witnesses examined was Inspector Holden, who seems to have had a somewhat lively time at the hands of Councillor Nicholl. Here is an example of the cross-examination. It is taken from a newspaper report :—

Mr. Nicholl continued the inquiry by asking Inspector Holden a few questions :

“ You said last time,” he remarked to the Inspector, “ you knew of no licensed boarding-masters keeping slop-shops, but you knew there were three or four *unlicensed* men keeping slop-shops ? ”

“ That is so.”

“ Do you know of any licensed boarding-master keeping a slop-shop ? ”

“ No, I do not ! ”

“ Well,” exclaimed Mr. Nicholl, “ I do not profess to be Sherlock Holmes, but it seems to me a most extraordinary thing that you cannot see beds, or dungarees, stacked in a room, and soap and matches, which are there in large quantities, because they are to supply all the men boarding there. You give me a lot of trouble denying what you must know to be true, but everything you deny I will prove.”

Holden said he knew a certain man who was a licensed boarding-house keeper in Bute Street.

“ Is he keeping a slop-shop ? ” Mr. Nicholl asked.

“ No, sir,” was the answer.

Mr. Nicholl : “ Then I can tell you that he has been keeping a slop-shop for years. That man deals with a well-known firm of clothiers, and here is the book which shows it.”

The book was handed to the Committee for their inspection,

Holden repeated that he had known nothing about it.

Mr. Nicholl : “ Do not say that you do not know. If you do not, all I can say is that you are not fit for your job. You must go in with your eyes shut.”

Holden : “ I never saw any evidence.”

Mr. Nicholl : “ Then what good you are as an Inspector the Lord only knows. You would not be kept in private employ for two minutes. You try to make me look ridiculous in the eyes of the Committee by stating that what I say is not a fact. If you don't know these things I don't think you are keeping your eyes open.”

Mr. John Chappell said he was convinced that Mr. Nicholl was justified for every statement he had made to the Committee.

Needless to remark, the allegations made by Councillor Nicholl were hotly denied in some quarters. But meanwhile the newspapers were inundated with letters calling upon the authorities to take immediate and drastic action. In the main people were on the side of the man who had revealed a state of affairs that, to say the least, was astonishing. What particularly roused the citizens of Cardiff was the knowledge that cholera was raging in the East ; it was publicly stated that Cardiff, and especially that quarter of it where the foreign seamen lived, was peculiarly liable to an outbreak of the disease, especially as

cholera was also reported to have made its appearance on the Continent. Councillor Nicholl capped all his previous efforts by later discovering a boarding-house, licensed to hold twelve, where seventy-eight Chinamen lived !

He made mention of the fact at a meeting of the Cardiff City Council on October 12th, 1908. It resulted in a somewhat heated scene, but at the outset he moved the following resolution :—

That as and from the 12th October, 1908, all the powers, duties, authorities, and discretions vested by law and bye-laws in or exercisable by the Council, through the Health and Port Sanitary Committee, with regard to seamen's boarding-houses in the city of Cardiff (including the granting or not granting of licences, the suspension or revocation of licences, and the ordering of legal proceedings for breaches of the law or bye-laws herein), be transferred to and vested in the Watch Committee (subject to the Council); provided that the Health and Port Sanitary Committee shall be responsible to the Council as heretofore for the sanitary arrangements of all seamen's boarding-houses. That so much of the resolutions of 9th November, 1907 and 1908, and any other resolution or resolutions inconsistent herewith be revoked.

Most of his letters at this time contained thanks and congratulations for his efforts to do away with a very vile condition of affairs. Nor

was he denied Press tributes. One Cardiff paper printed this :—

One of the most pleasing incidents in yesterday's investigation by the Cardiff Health Committee into the conduct of boarding-houses was the magnanimous tribute paid to Mr. Edward Nicholl, the pioneer of the Crusade, by Dr. Smith. Mr. Nicholl has ridden rough shod over all the rules of conventional procedure in making out his case, but right through the piece he has convinced everybody of his absolute sincerity and his singleness of motive in aiming at a reform which will help materially to restore the good name of Cardiff, not only locally, but all over the world. He has done more good in a month than the pious Cardiff Citizen's Union are likely to accomplish until they adopt another name.

Councillor Nicholl did not content himself with criticism ; he was ready to offer practical suggestions for reform. The speech which he had not found an opportunity of delivering before the full Council was later delivered and seized upon by the newspapers, and so presented with the publicity it deserved. It revealed an abominable state of affairs. The conditions in the house where the seventy-eight men slept were filthy in the extreme. No fewer than twelve breaches of the bye-laws had been proved. Boarding-houses that had no licences were openly kept ; in some

places not a washing utensil was seen. The suggestions for reform were these—they are given as they were written at the time :—

Put the police on the heels of the boarding-masters. Let the medical officers visit every boarding-house to see that the sanitary arrangements are in accordance with the bye-laws, and not rely on subordinates.

Close immediately all insanitary houses or withdraw the licence.

Let there be closer supervision, and inspection of unlicensed houses ; no sailors' boarding-house to be run without a licence.

Let all boarding-house masters appear before the Chief Constable or the Watch Committee, or both, so that the latter may judge from the language test and other circumstances whether they are fit and proper persons to conduct boarding-houses ; and ascertain, at the same time, the number of women and children, and whether married or single, living in the houses ; and point out to them the penalty of disobeying the bye-laws.

Instantly withdraw every licence from those considered unfit to manage a house.

Let there be systematic, regular, and thorough inspection upstairs and down, and day and night, and an occasional visit by a rota of members of the Committee.

“ Prompt action ” was the cry of every one

after this speech had been printed. One of the Welsh papers devoted a column to the matter.

There exists in respect of certain houses (it said, in conclusion) kept by foreigners a state of things—in relation to English girls secured as servants—that cannot be described in a newspaper ; and even if the statements of the letters received be greatly exaggerated they nevertheless show the urgent need of constant inspection, the closest supervision, and immediate inquiry. At the special meeting which the Health Committee has called it is most urgently to be desired that Councillor Nicholl will see his way to attend and give to the Committee the particulars which have come into his hands, so that he may convince any doubters upon that Committee both of the neglect of the past and of the imperative need of prompt action.

In the end Councillor Nicholl was not only justified, but thanked for his public-spirited action. At the final meeting of the Health Committee some extraordinary admissions were made by officials. Books that had been provided for a particular purpose had not even been opened—Mr. Nicholl had discovered that some of them had not been initialled or signed for years ! He found, too—this as the result of a fortunate meeting with an acquaintance—that a “ rush ” order had been

given to a local printer to deliver some hundreds of registration books.

After a sitting of three and a half hours there was complete unanimity that the member for the South Ward had proved his charges up to the hilt. The matter was later taken up in the House of Commons by Mr. Renwick, who represented Newcastle-on-Tyne; and Mr. Churchill, in reply to a question, made this statement:—

“ I am aware of the allegations which have been made as regards the seamen’s boarding-houses at Cardiff, and understand that they are not without foundation. I have been in communication with the local authorities, and am informed that urgent attention is being given to the matter with a view to securing a vigorous administration of the bye-laws regulating boarding-houses. I am taking steps to obtain information as regards the state of seamen’s boarding-houses at the other seaports in respect of which the Board of Trade have approved bye-laws, and the whole matter will receive careful consideration.”

Councillor Nicholl was unquestionably the man of the moment. At a certain meeting of the Public Works Committee, Alderman Carey, after referring to the request of certain householders in Stoughton Street that the name of the thoroughfare be changed, seriously suggested that it be called Nicholl Street. Other people came along

with disclosures. The original crusader was in the meantime overwhelmed with suggestions, and thanks, and threats ; but the chief result, as one speaker mentioned at a meeting of the Cardiff City Council in December, was that the boarding-houses “ are now parlours and drawing-rooms compared with what they were a few months ago.”

There was a demand that the Local Government Board be called upon to hold an inquiry, but the City Council, after some discussion, decided against. But at the same meeting the following resolution was unanimously passed :—

That the General Purposes Committee having had through its several members a précis of the evidence recently taken by the Health Committee, *re* seamen’s boarding-houses, licensed and unlicensed, offer its respectful thanks to Councillor Nicholl for the information in relation thereto which he was able to put before the Committee, expresses its regret at the laxity of administration referred to on the part of certain officials in respect to this matter, which reflects seriously on the officers concerned, and warns them that any repetition of such laxity will be visited with the severity the cases call for. That this Committee also hears with great satisfaction that the Health Committee has in hand such rearrangement of the departments as is calculated to cause it to be

worked more efficiently in the future than it has in some instances in the past.

So ended an affair that, for a time at least, made Cardiff one of the most talked of cities in the land.

CHAPTER VIII

Fame comes only when deserved, and then
It is as inevitable as destiny, for it is destiny.

LONGFELLOW.

THE cleansing of seamen's boarding-houses, however, was not the only matter that Councillor Nicholl was interested in. He helped materially in bringing to light another condition of affairs that was undesirable in the extreme. On the 20th August, 1908, the following paragraph appeared in the London "Daily Telegraph" :—

Mr. Edward Nicholl, shipowner, brought under the notice of the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce yesterday the matter of P.P.I. policies on shipping, and asked the Chamber to appeal to the President of the Board of Trade for an inquiry into the matter. It was, he said, a very serious matter. When they heard in the streets that one of their own boats had been insured it would no doubt affect the firm's insurances. A man was not allowed to insure another life unless he could show some interest in it. The same principle should apply to ships. Mr. Trevor S. Jones said Cardiff had been rather the hotbed of these P.P.I. policies, and

it was really time that the business was put a stop to.

It was agreed to support the resolution of the shipowners on the subject.

This question of gambling on overdues had been previously raised at the monthly meeting of the Cardiff Shipowners' Association by Mr. Nicholl, and he had then made some extraordinary statements. He mentioned, for example, that only that morning, when on his way to the Docks, he had been told that P.P.I. policies had been taken out on one of his own steamers. He could not protest too strongly, he said, against outsiders taking "lines" on his vessels in this way, and he further announced his intention of communicating with Mr. Winston Churchill, the President of the Board of Trade, the Committee of Lloyds, and companies insuring vessels, on the subject. He also intended to inform Lloyds that, as he had no interest in the appointments of masters of his vessels beyond their qualifications, he would be willing to allow them to appoint the captains, so as to remove any suspicions that might exist, though for his own part he had no suspicion of any kind so far as his officers were concerned.

This speech started a discussion that brought out some very remarkable facts. As an illustration of what some shipowners thought, particu-

larly as it tended to increase the ordinary terms for insurance on vessels selected by the speculators (or “wreckers,” as one speaker called them), it was related that a certain shipowner, hearing that P.P.I. policies were being taken out on one of his vessels, discharged the whole of his crew, including the captain, and laid the vessel up.

It was generally felt by those at the meeting that, in the interests of the ship’s-officers who might be charged with being in collusion with outsiders, that the practice of issuing these policies to those who had not got a *bona fide* interest should be stopped, and this resolution—for presentation to the President of the Board of Trade, to the Committee of Lloyds, and to all the other Shipowners’ Associations of the kingdom—was unanimously passed :—

That the Association strongly deprecates the gambling that is taking place in P.P.I. policies whereby insurers gamble in vessels in which they have no interest, to the detriment of shipowners and other legitimate insurers, and trusts that the Board of Trade will devise some means to counteract this evil.

A week or so later a largely attended meeting of Lloyds’ underwriters passed a similarly worded resolution, and later still it was announced that the President of the Board of Trade had con-

vened a Conference of Shipowners and Underwriters for December 17th, 1908, to deal with the whole question of speculative insurance.

Discussing the step taken by the underwriters, "The Times" said :—

The speakers at the meeting, it is understood, thought that if underwriters would steadily set their faces against what is really a practice of gambling in ships, legislation would be unnecessary. But it will be noticed that, whatever may be the moral weight attaching to the resolution, it has no binding force, and in some quarters it is thought that an Act prohibiting insurance by persons wholly unconnected with either ship or cargo would be salutary and would cause no real inconvenience to the mercantile community. In this connection the fact deserves to be emphasised, for it is often not understood, that P.P.I. policies are largely used in business, and when taken up by persons having some indirect interest in the venture no great objection can be raised against them ; the policies which underwriters are now almost unanimous in condemning are those effected by persons (even office-boys and shop-assistants have been known to effect them) having no interest, direct or indirect, and which of late have sometimes been distinguished by the lettering N.Q.A. (no questions asked). In any case, general satisfaction is expressed that the members of Lloyds have condemned a practice for which nothing good can be said.

From this authoritative statement it will be seen that Mr. Nicholl had raised a point that was not only of interest to shipowners, but to the community at large. He had brought into the light of day what in reality was a pernicious and dangerous practice; he had revealed a state of affairs that, to say the least of it, was a distinct menace. As he pointed out, the amount of business done in P.P.I. policies had not only had the effect of raising the rates for legitimate insurance to shipowners, but in the cases of owners of small boats had made it either impossible for them to insure their boats at all, or else only permitted them to do so at almost prohibitive rates.

He was of opinion that there were evidently a number of men, especially at Cardiff Docks, who had made this class of speculative insurance a business. They appeared to select boats which were under mortgage, in many cases because their share capital had not been entirely subscribed or which were known to be trading at a loss. In addition they had looked up the records of the captains, and sometimes gambled in such policies when the captain had lost one or more ships. They undoubtedly had wonderful sources of information, and had consequently brought off a number of *coups*.

When it dawned on the Press of the country that something had been uncovered that was a

very real danger they took up the matter with enthusiasm.

“ P.P.I. policies,” said one paper, “ introduce an unhealthy and immoral influence into maritime affairs. We make no appeal to the harpies who deal in spotted steamers to desist. But we do appeal to the Government to step in and rigidly limit the sphere of their activities. The man who puts a sovereign on a horse expecting it to win is a saint compared with the man who puts £50 or £100 on a ship expecting it to be lost. Yet the former is under the surveillance of the police, and his agent is liable to arrest ; whilst the latter is given free play for his profession. This is a scandal which cannot be prolonged.”

As was fitting, Mr. Nicholl was selected by the Cardiff shipowners to represent them on the Conference. The other shipowners were : Mr. F. S. Watts (London), Mr. H. Fermie (Liverpool), and Mr. R. J. Dunlop (Glasgow). The four underwriters were : Sir John Luscombe (Chairman of Lloyds), Mr. R. B. Lemon (Institute of London Underwriters), Mr. W. J. Maclellan (Glasgow), and Mr. Joseph Pemberton (of the Reliance Marine Insurance Company, and Chairman of the Liverpool Underwriters' Association).

The first meeting—it was in reality more in the nature of an informal talk—was held in London on December 17th. Mr. Churchill was accompanied by Sir N. Llewellyn Smith (Permanent

Secretary to the Board of Trade), Sir W. Howell (Head of the Marine Department), and Mr. Cunliffe Owen (Solicitor to the Board). The proceedings were strictly private and lasted for two hours. No formal speeches were made and no resolutions submitted; but, after considerable discussion, Mr. Churchill put forward certain ideas which in the main were covered by the proposals first submitted to the Cardiff Shipowners' Association by Mr. Nicholl. The meeting then adjourned to discuss the position as it was affected by Mr. Churchill's statements.

And now to the sequel. On May 17th, 1909, the Cardiff "Evening Express" published this interesting paragraph:—

Mr. Edward Nicholl, of the Cardiff "Hall" Line of steamers, who was the first to move in the matter of P.P.I. policies, received a letter to-day from the Board of Trade enclosing a copy of the Marine Insurance (Gambling Policies) Bill now introduced to Parliament. Special attention is drawn in the letter to the clauses, section one, sub-section (1), introduced with a view to prohibiting masters and other persons who have some interest in a vessel from speculating on her by taking out P.P.I. policies. Provision is made in sub-clause eight for the application of the Bill to Scotland.

It will be recollected that the Bill is the outcome of the agitation raised by Mr. Nicholl and first brought to public notice by his letter to

the "Western Mail." It was then actively pushed forward by the Cardiff Shipowners' Association and the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce, with the support of other similar organisations in the kingdom, Mr. Nicholl being selected to represent the Cardiff bodies in consultation with the President of the Board of Trade. In this capacity Mr. Nicholl has journeyed to London on several occasions.

The Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Churchill, Mr. Runciman, and Mr. Tennant, provides that if any person effects a contract of marine insurance without having any *bona fide* interest, direct or indirect, either in the safe arrival of the ship in relation to which the contract is made or in the safety or preservation of the subject-matter insured, or a *bona fide* expectation of such an interest, or if any person in the employ of the owner of a ship not being a part-owner of it, effects a contract in relation to the ship, and the contract is made "interest or no interest," or "without further proof of interest than the policy itself," or "without benefit of salvage to the insurer," or subject to any like term, the contract will be deemed to be one by way of gambling on loss by maritime perils, and the person effecting it will be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for six months or a fine up to £100, and in either case to forfeit any money received under the contract. Brokers through whom and insurers with whom such contracts are effected will incur like penalties if they act

knowing that the contracts are by way of gambling on loss by maritime perils.

This Bill was carried through both Houses of Parliament and put on the Statute Book in the record time of two months. Mr. Churchill himself admitted that it was one of the most necessary Bills ever passed.

This, as was remarked in another paper, was a distinct feather in the cap of Mr. Nicholl. With his customary thoroughness he had first revealed an evil, and had then pushed forward until the evil was removed. No wonder a correspondent with a sense of humour—not to say the fitness of things—was tempted to send the following to a Cardiff journal. The Welsh National Pageant was being discussed at the moment, and the correspondent obviously had the boarding-houses scandal particularly in his mind. The document read:—

Here is another suggestion for the Pageant Committee. Councillor Edward Nicholl, R.N.R., as Hercules, cleaning out the Augean stables; he is clothed in leopard skins, has a club swinging over his shoulder, and is seen sweeping before him with a broom a flock of alien boarding-house masters.

Councillor Nicholl :

When you've shouted, "Cymru, Cymru, good old Cardiff's rigger team!"

When you've cheered the new Lord Mayor with ready mouth,
Will you kindly stop and listen while I tell you what I've
seen

'Mongst those beggars in the Ward that's known as "South"?
For I've been down among 'em, in the state that's called
"incog.,"

And I tell you 'tain't perfoom'ry that I like;
And the houses might perhaps do for a kennel for my dog
If he ain't a too partic'lar sort of tyke.

Cooks' sons, Dagos' sons, sons of a blasted Moor,
Bringing their filth and their rags with them, and filling up
Tiger Bay,

Each of 'em doing his dirty work
Behind an unopened door.
Chuck 'em out for your credit's sake,
To-day, to-day, to-day!

Your new Town Hall's all right, but I'll make it useful, too,
And some of those inside must get the sack.
For I'm coming to its Council to denounce the alien crew,
And I've got the Cardiff voters at my back.
The inspectors did it casual, they must do it thorough now,
And when the law is broken they must fine 'em,
And make the scum of nations to our regulations bow,
And must clear the mess those beggars left behind 'em.

Cooks' sons, niggers' sons, blooming sons of a gun,
Soiling our city's fair good name and
Nobody looking their way.
We've had enough of their dirty work and the cleaning up's
begun—
Their little game must come to a stop to-day, to-day, to-day!

Even cleaning out filthy dens and putting a
stop to the activities of gamblers in ships did not
occupy the whole of Mr. Nicholl's time. He found
moments to conduct students over his ships, to

enter the lists again as a champion of the British sailor ; to support Lord Ninian Stuart when the latter stood for the City Council ; to take a very active part in the proposed Taff-Bute-Rhymney Railway combine ; to lend a hand to the Cardiff Docks Soup Kitchen ; to welcome Jim Driscoll, the boxer, on his return from America ; to help very materially in organising a successful assault-at-arms for Nazareth House (of which Institution he was then the Chairman of the Committee) ; and to submit proposals which he believed would do much to solve the vexed problem of the load-line.

These proposals were, in the main, in the nature of being revolutionary. The year had been a comparatively bad one for shipowners, and the position had been aggravated by the introduction of an increased load-line in order to meet German views. A conference of shipowners had gone so far as to suggest laying up a sixth of the tonnage of the world, but Mr. Nicholl's proposals were designed to obviate the necessity.

His first suggestion was to take a certain percentage of the tonnage—5 or 10 per cent off the dead weight carrying capacity of all steamers then running—instead of one-sixth of the total laying up. Secondly, he suggested that all steamers within the conference should totally ignore the Board of Trade load-line and, instead, be marked with a conference load-line, thus

taking off 5 or 10 per cent of the then load-line, or else going back to the old Plimsoll line. Thirdly, he proposed that conference surveyors be appointed in all ports to watch the loading and to report to the Committee boats submerging the mark, and that steamers found to have submerged the mark should pay all freights received from that extra cargo into a conference pool towards expenses. If desired by the conference committee, owners would be required, at any time, to produce their bills of lading to show what cargoes they had carried, the conference to give one, two, or three months' notice to reduce the percentage carried to $2\frac{1}{2}$, after pooling the excess freight, such notice to be immediately transmitted to every loading port in the world, so that no one could take advantage and increase the cargo for a week or two from the given date. The final proposition was that all boats which were in the control of the conference should for a time pay a large proportion of the excess freight they received into a pool to meet the surveyor's and other charges.

Mr. Nicholl contended that if these proposals were adopted hundreds of officers and men would be kept in employment, freights would immediately rise, and some of the steamers laid up would be released.

Nor was this all. In some phenomenal fashion he found time to bring up a matter that was of

great importance to Cardiff. That was the question of the Bute leases. He had discovered that there was a belief in existence that the Marquess of Bute was disinclined to consider a renewal of Cardiff building leases of which he was ground landlord and which were then drawing to a close. In the neighbourhood of the Docks many of the leases of property only had about thirty years to run. In several cases they were mortgaged under mortgages of many years' standing, and some of the mortgagees were calling in their money, owing to the shortness of the term which was left. Even the owners of premises which were not mortgaged were feeling nervous; they felt that, unless they could extend their leases or get them renewed on fair and reasonable terms, in a short number of years the properties would pass away from their families altogether.

“Deriving the enormous income which the Marquess of Bute does from his Cardiff property” (said Mr. Nicholl in an explanatory letter to the Lord Mayor—he was unable to be present at the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the City Council owing to an appointment with the President of the Board of Trade), “I should myself expect that he would favourably consider the extension or renewal on proper terms of the expiring leases to his tenants.

“If the Marquess should, however, decline to renew or extend the expiring leases granted by

his grandfather, then I hold a very strong view that this must seriously prejudice not only the owners of the properties, but the interests of the city itself; and it seems to me, now that the Council is asked, by a resolution, to aid the Marquess in relieving himself of his extensive interests in the Cardiff Railway Company, that this is a proper time for learning his Lordship's intention as to Cardiff leases.

“ If he adopts the attitude that leases shall not be extended or renewed, then this would be such a very serious blow, in my opinion, to Cardiff, that I should have to consider carefully whether, in the circumstances, I ought to support the Amalgamation Bill.

“ My own strong opinion is that the Marquess, on the matter being fully and clearly brought before him—and no one could do this more ably than yourself—would act fairly and reasonably to his tenants; but I do think—and I feel very strongly on the point, and hence my attitude—if the Council is to give its support and its help to the Marquess to relieve himself of his liability and his responsibility as a dock owner, that, in view of the statements currently made as to a disinclination on his part to renew or extend expiring leases, there should be some assurance given before the Council pledges itself to give its support.”

Attached to the letter was this resolution :—

That, in view of the importance of the matter

to many citizens of Cardiff, and in view of its importance with reference to the growth and prosperity of the city itself, the Council approach the Marquess of Bute with regard to his Lordship's intention as to the renewal or extension on fair and equitable terms of Bute ground leases which are drawing to a close. Also, that the Marquess be approached to consider, in his own interests and that of the City, the expediency in the future of granting leases for industrial purposes for longer terms than are now granted by the Bute Estate; also that it be a direction to the Parliamentary Committee, in view of the early hearing of the Bill, to abstain from pledging the Council to support the Bute, Taff, and Rhymney Amalgamation Bill until his Lordship's views have been obtained.

The resolution—"put before the City Council by Councillor Nicholl with that energy and directness for which the Docks representative has already become famous"—as one newspaper stated in a lengthy article, was generally looked upon as of vital importance to the future welfare of not only the trading community, but also to the whole of the working and general population of the city and port. "If Councillor Nicholl" (continued the reporter) "can now bring the City Council to a proper view of their imperative duty in this matter he will indeed deserve well of his fellow-citizens."

Councillor Nicholl did, but not before another newspaper had printed a very strong leading article on the subject. Part of it said :—

In his letter read at the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Cardiff Corporation, Councillor Nicholl neither minimised nor magnified the facts of the case, but sets them forth in a manner that he who runs may read, and should rouse every ratepayer in Cardiff to bring pressure to bear on those who are the custodians of the welfare of the city. . . . “Forethought” showed yesterday that among the main effects resulting in Cardiff from the present impossibility of securing freehold land, or land on leases of sufficient length to justify the necessary capital expenditure, are that the great coal and shipping trades, with all their ancillary industries, are being carried on in small dwelling-houses entirely unsuitable for office purposes ; that whilst millions have been spent on the docks and railways in order to develop the trade of the city, the erection and modernisation of offices from which that trade must be carried on has been rendered absolutely impossible ; and that during the past ten years the city has suffered from a chronic state of depression in all the industries connected with building, absolutely and entirely due to the fact that the building which would be done if freehold land were obtainable or existing leases were renewable has been entirely prevented. There is no question as to these facts. They

cannot be disputed, and they are such that they cannot be tolerated if the interests of the port are to be safeguarded.

Councillor Nicholl formally moved his resolution at a meeting of the Cardiff City Council on April 5th, 1909. In his speech he said that it was generally believed that there were two millions advanced on properties in Cardiff; in his opinion nearer fifteen millions had been advanced by banks and private loans. He knew one man who was willing to spend £80,000 at once on buildings in James Street if Lord Bute would grant him a satisfactory renewal of the leases. Councillor Nicholl wound up by suggesting that the Lord Mayor be asked to approach Lord Bute and ask for his Lordship's views. After much discussion the whole question was referred to the Development Committee.

By this time—and particularly as the result of his attitude in the matter of the Bute leases—Councillor Nicholl was so much in the public eye that it may be said, without exaggeration, that he was quite one of the best known men in South Wales. In less than a month he was responsible for what one of the papers called “another docks tickler.” This had to do with the caretaker of the Cardiff Sailors' Home; and then, on top of that, came another exposure of the kind of den that masqueraded as a model lodging-house in Mary Ann Street.

The "Evening Express" was very near to the mark when it said: "One can never guess what will be the next thing to catch the vigilant eye of Mr. Edward Nicholl." Councillor Nicholl, as a matter of fact, was all out to do the best he could for the city of his adoption. He called attention to the shameful way in which the Mental Hospital was made a peep-show and a place of entertainment for laughing, jeering passers-by; he made mention of the filthy way in which certain ice-cream vendors manufactured their ware; and all the time he was attending to his own particular job, which was making profits for his shareholders.

In June, 1909, he issued the following statement. It dealt exclusively with the vessels of the "Hall" Line:—

"Whateley Hall," profit from June 9th, 1904, to February 13th, 1909	£ 15,380
"Eaton Hall," profit from August 5th, 1904, to January 22nd, 1909	17,987
"Grindon Hall," profit from September 26th, 1905, to November 27th, 1908	12,978
"Tredegar Hall," profit from August 26th, 1906, to October 24th, 1908	5,734
"Silksworth Hall," profit from July 22nd, 1907, to September 11th, 1908	4,461
"Haigh Hall," profit from July 22nd, 1908, to February 13th, 1909	1,834
"Welbeck Hall," profit from May 18th, 1907, to August 30th, 1908	2,872

100 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

The actual dividends paid on the capital of the fleet—excluding the “ Welbeck Hall ”—averaged $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum, in addition to which considerable amounts had been paid off debentures. The “ Welbeck Hall,” which carried no debentures, was responsible for an average dividend of $16\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum.

Which, taken anyhow, was by no means a bad result for a man whose activities were so many and so varied that it was generally believed that he had found the secret of doing without sleep altogether. One of his minor achievements was to break all records for a Nazareth House assault-at-arms. A total sum of £550 was handed to the Lady Superior.

In token of this effort Councillor Nicholl was given an illuminated address. It read :—

To Edward Nicholl, Esq., Chairman of the Committee of the Assault-at-Arms, in aid of Nazareth House, Cardiff.

DEAR SIR,

It is the earnest desire of the sisters and inmates of Nazareth House to thank, in a fitting manner, both you and the gentlemen of the committee of the Assault-at-Arms for your noble efforts on behalf of this Institution. To do so adequately we cannot, nor can we give you the slightest proof of our gratitude—except you take as such the love of our childish hearts, which you have won by your repeated acts of kindness to us,



NAZARETH HOUSE CHILDREN AT "THE NOOK," CARDIFF



1921

apart from what you have done with regard to the Assault-at-Arms.

It must be apparent to those interested in the work of Nazareth House—the mighty effort made by the devoted self-sacrificing members of the Committee to bring the Assault-at-Arms to the high standard it has this year achieved, the members having worked with even greater devotedness to surpass the wonderful results of former years. In you, dear Sir, we have found a kind and sympathetic friend whose heart is ever ready to help the needy, and one who shows his love for children in a very practical form. That the Divine Lover of little children may reward you is the earnest prayer of all at

NAZARETH HOUSE.

This address—it was beautifully executed by the sisters of the Institution—to-day occupies the place of honour in the library at Littleton Park. To show they were not forgetful, the sisters sent another in 1920. It is, if anything, more beautiful than the first. It expresses the following sentiments:—

SIR EDWARD NICHOLL, K.T., M.P., R.N.R.

Sir,

We feel it imperative that we should try to express in some way the deep gratitude we feel for the generous help you have given, and the kindly interest you have shown towards us for such a number of years.

Many messages of thanks we know you must receive from those who have benefited by your liberality—for your charity extends to many—but none could be warmer or more sincere than those coming from the sisters, old people, and children of Nazareth House, Cardiff, where your name is associated with so many pleasant memories.

When looking back over past years—how many Red-Letter Days there have been—we realise they have been made such by a kind visit or a noble act of generosity by our benevolent benefactor Sir Edward Nicholl.

Though we have not the pleasure of seeing you so often now, still we know we are not forgotten, and one of our happiest thoughts is, that we hope to see you soon again.

A return for your charity we know you do receive, for He who faithfully rewards the least kindness done will surely hear the prayers offered on your behalf, from so many grateful hearts at Nazareth House, Cardiff.

CHAPTER IX

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight.
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

LONGFELLOW.

COUNCILLOR NICHOLL'S connection with the Cardiff Corporation came to an end in July, 1910. The story—or, at least, that part of it which led up to his resignation—is a rather singular one.

Soon after the death of King Edward, at a City Council luncheon, he threw out the suggestion that the vacant plot in front of the City Hall should be used to erect a statue to the dead monarch. After asking the Lord Mayor and the Council to consider the matter he promised to donate one hundred guineas towards the cost, and even went further by guaranteeing to collect some thousands of pounds from his friends. At the request of the Mayor, Councillor John Chappell, he repeated this offer at a full meeting of the Council, when the proposition was formally discussed. It was then pointed out that the plot of land Councillor Nicholl had in his mind was being

reserved for the erection of a memorial to the late Marquess of Bute, and Mr. Nicholl, after some discussion, was finally asked to interview Lord Merthyr (then Sir William Thomas Lewis), so as to see whether the site could be obtained.

Councillor Nicholl did so, and clinched matters by producing a plan of the proposed statue. The result was that Lord Merthyr gave permission, on behalf of the Marquess of Bute, for the statue to be erected on the site selected.

At the next meeting of the Council, when the details of the scheme were again considered, it was proposed that the memorial be national instead of local. The idea was that a letter should be sent to all the Welsh mayors, asking them to attend the meeting, over which Lord Plymouth would preside. This meeting was eventually convened, but, as usual, it was preceded by a luncheon—and to this Councillor Nicholl was not invited!

Naturally, he was annoyed. He said so, in plain words, during a subsequent telephone conversation with Councillor Chappell. In addition, he made it perfectly clear that he would resign on the morrow. "Active business men are not wanted on the Council," he remarked to the Lord Mayor, "and that is the reason why they are so seldom seen there. It is no place for me, anyway." It subsequently transpired—the information was conveyed to Mr. Nicholl with lightning

speed—that at a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee it was proposed that he be invited, but one or two members—for reasons that are not quite apparent to this day—raised an objection, and the net result was that he was not asked.

Councillor Nicholl rightly felt that he had been dealt with in an ungenerous spirit by his colleagues, and, as has been said, he decided to sever at once his connection with the Corporation. He did so by means of the following letter to the Town Clerk :—

DEAR SIR,

Enclosed please find key to the side entrance of the City Hall, which was given to me on my election as City Councillor.

I also desire you to strike my name off the list of City Councillors, to save postage of the various documents continually being sent, as it is my intention to take no further interest in Corporation matters, and, in any case, I shall certainly not contest my seat again.

The Lord Mayor is thoroughly conversant with the reason of this immediate resignation.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

EDWARD NICHOLL.

The “ Express ” called it a “ City bombshell,” and indeed it was all that. To many people it

was unthinkable that the man who had done so much should thus drop out; the Lord Mayor must have thought the same, and he made every effort to induce Mr. Nicholl to reconsider his decision. The Father of the Council, Alderman Bevan, also went to his office and begged him to think things over. Then the newspapers took a hand. The "Evening Express" indicated popular opinion in this leading article:—

Though he has only sat on the Cardiff City Council since November, 1907, there is not a member of the Corporation better known than Mr. Edward Nicholl, who has always pursued an independent and fearless policy, regardless of personal consequences. One need only recall his crusade with regard to seamen's lodging-houses to be reminded of the kind of stuff that the member of the South Ward is made of, and nobody could have caused a greater sensation by resigning than this intrepid watcher of the public interests on the City Council. In fact, the ratepayers can ill afford to lose one who has looked so well after their interests on a body where the officials are allowed a liberty that is dangerous because of the corresponding lack of knowledge in aldermen and councillors who have to trust them so implicitly. I am going to say nothing of the merits of the reason put forward by Mr. Nicholl for his sudden resignation, but after saying much that can be regarded as flattering

(and deserved), it has to be added that if that gentleman has a fault it is his rather hasty temper. And I trust, with very many more who have the interests of the city at heart, that, on reflection, Mr. Nicholl will allow his resignation to be withdrawn. In the interests of health and sanitation alone Mr. Nicholl ought to be persuaded to continue a good work that has only just begun.

But Mr. Nicholl was adamant. Under the circumstances he could not have been otherwise. There should never have been any question about sending him an invitation to the luncheon. He was the father of the scheme; he should have been the first person thought of.

In finally accepting the resignation the City Council, however, did a very graceful thing. They sent Mr. Nicholl this very interesting document:—

Extract from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council of the City of Cardiff held on the 11th day of July, 1910.

A letter dated the 1st July was received from Councillor Nicholl resigning his seat as a Councillor for the South Ward and enclosing the fine (£5). Resolved:

That the resignation be accepted with great regret and that this Council place on record its great appreciation of the excellent services ren-

dered by Councillor Nicholl to the City and Port of Cardiff.

Resolved :

That the five pounds be returned to Mr. Nicholl.

Truly extracted,

J. L. WHEATLEY,
Town Clerk.

Mr. Nicholl rested for three days. Then his extraordinary desire to be perpetually doing something again took command, with the result that his activities broke out in an entirely new direction. He ceased to be a Councillor on the 11th of July ; on the 14th he founded the Cardiff Naval Brigade. The idea had been simmering in his mind for some time, and now, with at least five minutes to do with as he liked, he set himself to the task of benefiting the youth of the city. His scheme was built up on ambitious lines ; it was his intention, if possible, to raise a battalion of one thousand boys who would be encouraged to take an interest in everything that appertained to sound discipline and manliness, while at the same time giving them healthy, robust exercise and the ability, if necessary or desirable, to fall in line for their country's defence, either on board ship or for home defence.

It was part of the plan that the Admiralty were to be asked for the necessary rifles and guns. Heavy gun-drill was to be one of the exercises. The class of youth desired was the lad about

sixteen years of age, but there was also to be a cadet corps for younger boys. The whole idea, as Mr. Nicholl himself put it at the time, was to fill the gap in which certain youths found themselves—too old for the Boy Scouts and too young for the Territorial Army.

The idea caught on like wildfire. When the youngsters of the city were told that they would be fitted out with uniforms that would be complete in every detail—an exact reproduction of the British bluejacket's clothes—they were stirred to their depths. Over sixty lads presented themselves for enrolment at the first meeting; and a day or so later the first hundred mark had been passed.

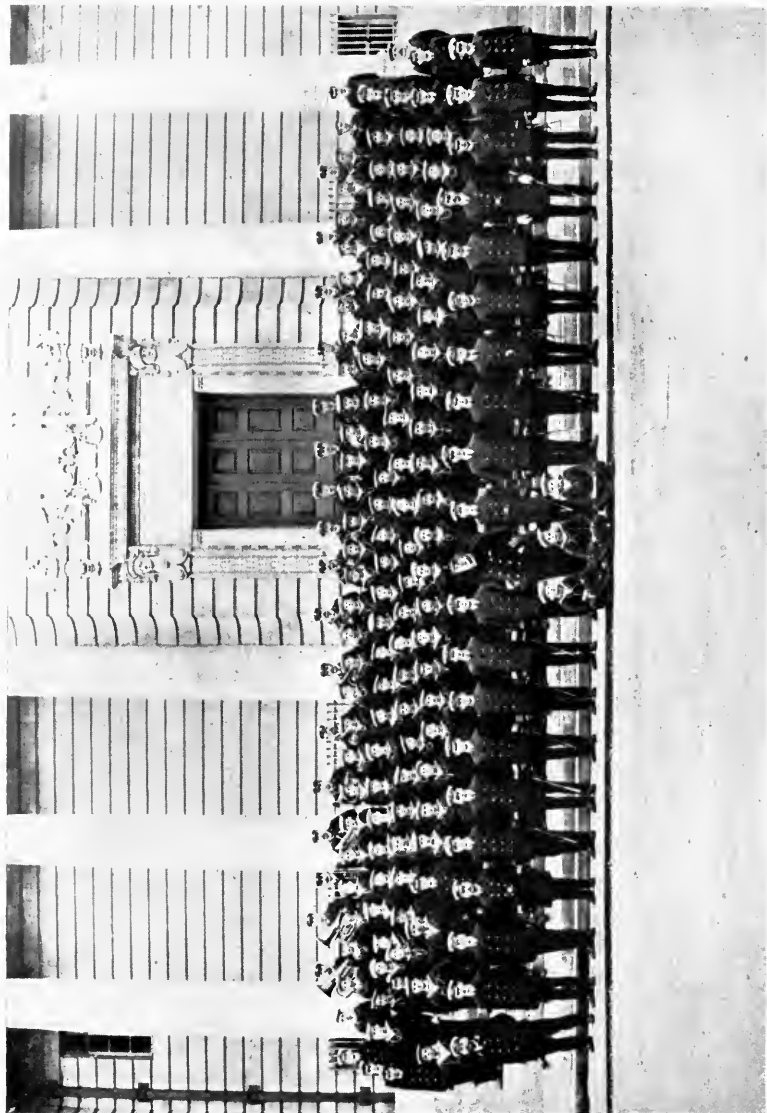
Then came a check. It was provided by the Admiralty. In the House of Commons, in the late days of July, Mr. McKenna was asked whether an application for the loan of two seven-pounder guns for the Cardiff Naval Brigade had been refused by his department on the ground that no guns were available for supply; whether guns had been lent to volunteer Naval Brigades in other localities, including those of inland towns; under what conditions guns and rifles were supplied; and, in view of the maritime importance of the chief town in South Wales, and the fact that 115 cadets and 60 artificers had already been enrolled in the Cardiff Naval Brigade and the desirability of affording encour-

agement to the movement, would he reconsider the Cardiff application ?

Mr. McKenna, in a written answer, said the reply to the first and second points of the question was in the affirmative. With regard to the third point, if the status of the organisation was satisfactory, suitable guns were lent *when available*, according to priority of application. Rifles were lent to the Lads' Brigades by the Admiralty. As to the fourth part, no suitable guns were available, the stock being entirely exhausted. A number of applications from other towns had also been refused.

It was a decided set-back, but the ardour of the organiser of the Brigade was not in the least damped. He provided substitutes for the guns that were not forthcoming, and recruits continued to roll in. But some of the newspapers, whilst cordially recommending the Naval Brigade, were for ever harping on the loss that the City Council had sustained.

His new work (said one) may well act as ample compensation for his vacated seat on the Corporation, though it is still hoped that the needs of the city will call the ex-member for the South Ward back to his work in Cathays Park. Cardiff is not too well served with men of the type of Mr. Nicholl, who was ever a terror to weak-kneed officials and indifferent servants of the municipality. However, no one



THE CARDIFF NAVAL BRIGADE
(Commander Sir Edward Nicholl in the centre)



CONSERVATIVE &
REFERENCE
AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL
LIBRARY



is anxious to fall into his place until November, and the City Council must remain weakened until the fireworks month arrives.

The first outdoor parade was held on the 12th August, 1910. The Brigade was then 160 strong—despite the fact that it was only a month old—and the youngsters made a brave display as they marched through the streets, headed by their own brass band.

Referring to the parade, and the action of the Admiralty in refusing guns, the “Express” said :—

It is to be hoped that Mr. Edward Nicholl and his friends who are helping to provide a strong contingent for the Cardiff district will not be discouraged by this absurd disregard of one of the strongest needs of the country, but that, in spite of the drawback, the Brigade will go on until the thousand members are obtained.

Mr. Nicholl, so far from being discouraged, was never more cheery. The time he had previously given to the City Council was now devoted to training the lads, and it wasn't long before Cardiff became quite accustomed to the spectacle of a smart band of youngsters marching through its streets. In September the membership was 250, and in that month excellent premises were secured in the St. Mary's Hall, at the rear of the

Morgan Arcade. By then there was a new artificer section composed entirely of engineer's apprentices. They were the special pride of Commander Nicholl; it was he, indeed, who entertained and instructed them with lectures on naval engineering, aerial navigation, wireless telegraphy, and kindred subjects.

By December the numbers had swelled to nearly three hundred, and in that month the first church parade service was held at St. John's Parish Church. Just before Christmas the first annual dinner took place at the Golden Cross Hotel, Custom House Street, the principal speakers being Commander Nicholl and Chief Constable McKenzie.

The founder thought the time had now arrived to issue a balance-sheet. It was circulated on Christmas Eve, and contained the information that two hundred rifles and signal flags had been purchased, that a hall (already much too small) had been rented and furnished at £100 per annum, and that, in addition, a brass band of twenty-eight members had been fully equipped and clothed, and that there was also a complete ambulance section. The income and expenditure account from the 21st July to the 15th December showed that the income (made up mainly of donations) was £444 2s. 3d., and that the expenditure was £456 9s. 10d.

All that needs to be added is that many of

these lads, who were trained when war seemed very far away, rendered signal service to their country when the German Emperor and his countrymen ran amok. As the founder of the Brigade remarked to me on one occasion: "When I asked Mr. Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, to give me a gun or lend me a gun for the Cardiff Naval Brigade—it was then the best-equipped organisation of its kind in the country, with its 250 boys and instructors, and its band of 35—he said that boys were not wanted, and that the Navy was sufficiently recruited from the various training ships. He did want them later. Almost every member of the Cardiff Naval Brigade joined up when the call came."

But to return for a moment to the steady progress of the "Hall" Line. In 1909 and 1910 the "Windsor Hall" and the "Standish Hall" were acquired. The "Welbeck Hall" was sold, and a new one of the same name contracted for. In July, 1911, came a shipping strike. It was made memorable by many violent scenes, but just before it was settled a quite noteworthy tribute was paid to Mr. Nicholl. Captain Tupper, of the Seamen's Union, declared that the head of the "Hall" Line had proposed a minimum wage of £5 for seamen at the meeting of the Cardiff Ship-owners' Association, when a rate of £4 10s. was fixed. He had had occasion, he remarked, to

attack Mr. Nicholl, and he wished now, in fairness to that gentleman, to announce publicly that Mr. Nicholl had stuck out, though unsuccessfully, for a decent wage.

Let me tell a strike story of my own. It was related to me by one who was very much concerned in a certain arbitration at Cardiff some years ago. The two sides had met to try to come to some arrangement. Hours and hours had been spent in fruitless argument, until at last an absolute deadlock was reached. The meeting was on the point of breaking up when Mr. Edward Nicholl stalked into the room.

“What’s all this damned nonsense?” he ejaculated. He had come a long way to get rid of his explosive statement and, as usual, he had the facts of the case at his finger-tips. “What’s all this damned nonsense?” he repeated, glaring at the employers’ representatives. “Give the men what they want. They’re entitled to it. Then we’ll all go and have lunch!”

And it was given, there and then. Cardiff was probably saved that day from one of the worst strikes in its history. There are certain people who still think that the man who saved the position on that occasion would have made an excellent arbitrator. Having noted his efforts on other occasions, I am inclined to subscribe to the opinion. In any case, the art of arbitration would have gained in breeziness, as well

as in something that may best be described as unorthodoxy.

The year 1911 was one of the quietest in the shipowner's career. He did the maximum of work in his office, but his appearances in the lime-light of public affairs were few and far between. It is on record, however, that he spent a lot of money at a Cardiff Baby Show. In addition to his other donations, he gave half a sovereign to everybody who did not win a prize. This uncommon sympathy with the unsuccessful happens, to my certain knowledge, to be one of his specialities. I was once forced to stand in a damp field in Cornwall while he wrote out cheques for every band in a competition that had failed to win a prize!

In 1912 he was elected President of the Cardiff Shipowners' Association, and in the same year he succumbed—after holding out valiantly—to the motor-car craze. It was said that he shared with Mr. Charles Radcliffe the distinction of being the only shipowner in Cardiff without a car. Both surrendered at about the same time.

The aimlessness of the youth of Cardiff again appealed to him, and he lent his assistance to a movement that was designed to provide the metropolis of Wales with a training-ship. It was about this time, too, that he became interested in agriculture; at any rate, I have a photograph before me of the Committee of the Cardiff Agri-

cultural Society, and Mr. Edward Nicholl, as the President, is in the dead centre of the front row, with the late Mr. F. H. Gaskell on his right and Mr. Iltyd Thomas on his left. There is an old adage that when sailors find themselves at a loose end they turn to farming. It has come true in this case. One of my clearest memories is of an ex-drummer boy building a chicken house down Shepperton way. He knows a cow when he sees one, too; but chickens are the things that are nearest to his heart—after children, of course.

To remind his friends that he was a Cornishman, Edward Nicholl gave a dinner in October of 1912. It is still talked about by the fortunate people who were there. It was to celebrate his appointment as President of the Cardiff Cornish Society. The newspapers gave it columns, and it was not until the reports of the function appeared that it was discovered that Cardiff was peopled with Cornishmen who had made good. There was Mr. Nicholl, of Pool and Redruth; Mr. John Cory, J.P., of Padstow; Mr. Newton, of Liskeard; Mr. John Chellev, of Falmouth; Mr. Chenalls, of St. Just; Dr. Mitchell Stevens, of St. Ives; Mr. H. A. Griffen, of St. Austell; Councillor Pethybridge, of Launceston; Mr. Herbert Cory (now Sir James Herbert Cory, M.P.), of Padstow; and Mr. G. C. Downing, Col. Hand-

cock, Dr. Blight, and Mr. F. S. Higman. They were all at the banquet, together with other notables like the Lord Mayor of Cardiff (Sir John Courtis), Sir William Treloar, Sir William Dunn, Alderman Lewis Morgan, Mr. R. S. Read (Mayor of St. Ives), Mr. A. B. Lyne (Mayor of Bodmin), Mr. W. J. Tatem (now Lord Glanely), Mr. Lynn Thomas, Mr. J. L. Wheatley (Town Clerk of Cardiff), Sir William Crossman, Mr. Dan Radcliffe, Alderman C. H. Bird, the late Lord Rhondda, Alderman Richards, Alderman Trounce Mr. Richard Cory, and very many others. In fact, it was the biggest function of its kind Cardiff had known. Over 530 guests sat down to a dinner of Cornish delicacies—Cornish pasties (despatched that very morning by special train from Redruth) of course being on top of the list in capital letters.

But let the menu speak for itself. It was a booklet, really, for the first two pages were given over to pictures depicting the Pier-head, Cardiff; the City Hall, Cardiff; University College, Cardiff; Richard Trevithick, his engines, the first trial of Trevithick's locomotive in London in 1808; and a twentieth-century six-coupled G.W.R. Co.'s express engine of 1912. Next came the programme of music, which was performed by the Redruth String Band, who were specially brought over for the occasion; and then followed

118 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

a list of things that were eatable and drinkable, as follows :—

WINES.	MENU.
Sherry : Amontillado.	Helford Oysters.
Hock : Johannisberg.	Clear Newquay Soup. Porthscado Broth.
Claret : Chateau Palmer 1893.	Mevagissey Pilchards. St. Ives Turbot, Carbis Bay Sauce.
Champagne : Cliquot 1904. Bollinger 1904.	CORNISH PASTIES (despatched from Redruth this morning).
Port : Dows 1896.	Bodmin Beef. Brown Willy Sauce. Falmouth Chicken and Boiled Tongue.
Liqueurs : Grande Chartreuse.	Roast Carn Brea Pheasant. Dressed Dolcoath Salad and Tin- croft Chips.
Brandy.	Bolitho Junket and Cornish Cream.
Whisky.	Redruth Jelly.
Apollinaris : Soda.	Cornish Ice Pudding.
Ginger Ale.	Dessert. Coffee.

The next page gave the list of toasts—the King, the Duke of Cornwall, the County of Cornwall (responded to by Mr. Thurston C. Peters), the

City and Port of Cardiff, and the Visitors. Then a list of singers—who were again specially imported—with songs all redolent of the delectable Duchy. Mr. Maynard (Redruth) sang “Tre-lawney” and “The Cornish Land”; Miss Irene Ellis (Lizard), “In the West Countree” and “In Praise of Cornwall”; Miss Freda Hoskins, “Cornwall” and “Watchman”; Mr. W. H. Juleff (Redruth), “One and All” and “Pasties and Cream.” The Male Quartette (St. Ives), “Comrades in Arms” and “When the Tide comes in”; and Mr. G. F. Thomas Peter (Perran-ar-Worthal) and Mr. Kitto gave recitations. Another page was devoted to Cornish choruses, and the remainder of the booklet to the names of guests. Occupying the chair was Mr. Edward Nicholl, R.N.R. He saw to it that a little Welsh atmosphere was provided by engaging a number of young ladies to distribute the cigars and cigarettes. All were dressed in correct Welsh costumes.

It was a great evening. To start with, it was the President’s fiftieth year. He celebrated his half-century in a thoroughly practical way by making an appeal to his guests for the Cripples’ Home founded by Sir William Treloar, and by starting the collection with twenty-five guineas. The total amount collected, by the way, was £121 6s.; but this sum was later augmented by gifts of £10 10s. each from four gentlemen present,

and one hundred guineas from an anonymous donor.

The Mayor of Bodmin—a well-known journalist—wrote a three-column article when he returned home. It wasn't all about the dinner, but he did not forget to mention that the function would live in his memory for the rest of his life. "Never," said one of the Cardiff dailies, "has the annual Cornish banquet been on such a lavish scale and attended with such success." The banquet, it should be added, was held in the famous City Hall, which was the only place available with sufficient accommodation. It was very kindly lent by the Council for the occasion.

Mr. Nicholl spent part of the winter of 1912 seeking the sunshine. I find his name among the diners at the Hotel Metropole, Monte Carlo, which reminds me that when he returned the rumour flew around the Docks that he had won something like £90,000. The true story may be told now. In his hotel Mr. Nicholl met a rather boastful American who was for ever talking about his triumphs at the tables. He eventually prevailed upon the Cornish-Welshman to accompany him to the tables and to play as he played. Mr. Nicholl lost, and so did the American—not once, but many times. It was the same next day, and the next, and the next. The American invariably had some excuse to offer, such as "this

isn't my favourite table," or "there are too many people distracting my attention."

His companion eventually became tired of all this, but it was against his grain to allow Monte Carlo or an American to get the better of him. He decided to see what his luck would be when the American was not at his side, and that evening, as on many previous occasions, the fates smiled on him. The amount of money he won was not very considerable, but before leaving the Casino he changed it (mentally) into centimes, and then it sounded quite a lot!

The first man he met in the hotel lobby was the American. Mr. Nicholl switched on his largest smile.

The American became interested.

"Been over to the tables?" he asked.

Mr. Nicholl nodded. The smile was larger than ever.

"Any luck?"

"Oh! fair."

"Won a little, eh?"

"A trifle."

"How much?"

"Eh—let me see. Oh! about thirty-four thousand."

The American promptly flew through the door to spread the glad tidings. It naturally never occurred to him to ask whether the 34,000 represented pounds or centimes. By the morning

Monte Carlo was discussing the fortunate ship-owner from Wales who had won £50,000 at the tables ; by evening time the amount had jumped to £70,000. When Cardiff first heard about it, it was £90,000 ; and the man who had mentally changed his winnings into centimes returned home to find his office choked up with begging letters ! And down at the Docks everybody was talking about the “ Nicholl Luck ” !

There was a boom in shipping by the time 1913 arrived. The “ Hall ” Line issued a card to the effect—this was in January—that dividends had been paid amounting to £25,500 on nine steamers, averaging $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on an investment of £100 in each steamer. In addition to this, £35,762 had been put to reserve. The profits of the “ Welbeck Hall,” however, were not included. This vessel was purchased on May 8th, 1907, for £11,000, and the profits to December 1st, 1912, were over £16,573. She was sold for £13,500 odd, which, as someone said, was not bad for five years’ work on one steamer.

The shipping correspondent of one of the Cardiff papers, dealing with the boom, remarked : “ The prosperity of the shipping trade during the past twelve or eighteen months has frequently been referred to, and the high levels which freight rates maintained indicate to some extent the phenomenal profits which have been made. Cardiff owners have had their full share of the

improvement which shipping has experienced, and there is every prospect of freights continuing on a very good, although perhaps not so high, a level as during the past year or so. The boom has lasted better than was generally expected, and covers a longer period than the last one. Of course, the profits of various firms have varied considerably, but it is estimated that vessels have earned on an average for 1912 net profits of about £10,000 each. There are in Cardiff about 60 shipowning firms, and on this basis, reckoning the number of vessels at 350, which is a conservative estimate, the profits work out at £3,500,000."

It is worth recording that the first to prophesy the boom was Mr. Nicholl. In a statement issued to his shareholders as far back as 1910, when things were not too bright, he said: "There is a general feeling that the acute depression so long experienced in the shipping world is now lifting, and that before long we shall see better times."

The "Maritime Review" commented on this as follows:

"We sincerely hope that Mr. Nicholl will be as correct as usually applies with his manipulation of shipping property. That he has been, there or thereabouts, in the past cannot be gainsaid."

Six months later the "Daily Mail" announced that the "Hall" Line, of nine steamers, had made a profit for the year ended in June of £112,742, which worked out at £12,500 per steamer.

Almost every day the papers were commenting on the readiness with which Mr. Nicholl gave friendless boys a start in life. There was a lad named George Wilson, sixteen years of age, who walked from Liverpool to Cardiff. Mr. Nicholl gave him a berth on one of his ships. Another boy appeared at the local police-court to answer a charge of playing pitch-and-toss. A day later Chief Inspector Bingham told the magistrates that Mr. Nicholl had come forward with an offer to fit the lad out entirely and to give him a chance in life on one of his vessels. The boy, who eagerly accepted the offer, was discharged. This kind of thing was practical charity—it appealed to the public mind; but hardly a day went by but that Mr. Nicholl was asked to subscribe to something or another, or to do a good turn to someone who had fallen by the wayside.

He gave cups to boating clubs, both in Cardiff and Cornwall—to which county he was now turning more and more; he several times bore the whole of the expense of the outing of 250 children from Nazareth House. He renewed his offer of prizes to students at the Cardiff Technical Schools, and he did lots more that was never heard of.

By the middle of 1913 the "Hall" Line owned ten vessels. Some idea of the profits made up to this time may be gathered from this statement, which, as usual, was sent to shareholders :—

Steamer.	Period.		Capital.	Gross Profits.	Per cent per annum.
	Yrs.	Mos.			
			£	£	
"Eaton Hall" . . .	9	0	20,000	41,578	23
"Whateley Hall" . . .	8	9	20,000	42,983	24 $\frac{1}{4}$
"Grindon Hall" . . .	7	8	20,000	41,720	27
"Tredegar Hall" . . .	6	8	20,000	31,997	24
"Silksworth Hall" . . .	6	0	30,000	39,166	21 $\frac{1}{2}$
"Welbeck Hall" . . .	5	7	11,500	16,573	25 $\frac{3}{4}$
"Haigh Hall" . . .	4	8	30,000	33,433	23 $\frac{3}{4}$
"Windsor Hall" . . .	2	8	20,000	21,591	40 $\frac{3}{4}$
"Standish Hall" . . .	0	10	25,000	13,185	63 $\frac{1}{4}$
"Cardiff Hall" . . .	0	7	25,000	11,607	79 $\frac{3}{4}$
			£221,500	£293,833	

It should be remembered that each vessel was owned by a separate company and that the original cost of the steamers, which had a dead-weight carrying capacity of 70,850 tons, was £391,000.

July 10th, 1913, was Alexandra Day at Cardiff. It was the first of its kind. One of the rose sellers was the Lady Mayoress of Cardiff, and to her Mr. Nicholl handed a cheque for one hundred guineas in exchange for a little pink paper flower.

The following letter was received by the Lord

126 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

Mayor of Cardiff (Alderman Morgan Thomas) a week or so later :—

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE,

July 26th, 1913.

DEAR LORD MAYOR,

I am desired by Queen Alexandra to thank you for your letter of the 23rd inst. regarding the results of the celebration of "Alexandra Day" at Cardiff upon the 10th inst., and to say how pleased and interested Her Majesty is to hear that the efforts of the Lady Mayoress and the Ladies of your City have been so successful.

The fact that so substantial a sum is to be handed over to the King Edward VII Hospital and to the Institution of the Poor Cripples' Society is most satisfactory, and must be very gratifying to all those who have by their devoted and unselfish work done so much to assist the Lady Mayoress and her Committee in the great cause of Charity.

Her Majesty hears with much interest of Mr. Edward Nicholl's most generous donation to the fund.

I am, etc.,

HENRY STREATFIELD (Colonel),
Private Secretary.

In January, 1914, the Cardiff and Bristol Channel Shipowners' Association elected Mr. Nicholl their Chairman. It was a deserved honour, but even now, as head of one of the most

prosperous shipping firms in the country, he was inclined to hanker after the days when he tinkered with steam-engines. He still says that a locomotive fascinates him as much as anything else in the world. But it was a child who put into his head the idea of building a model railway in his garden. The boy wanted a puffer train, and it was immediately supplied. It did not, however, satisfy the child's mind; what he desired was "a great, big, long puffer train." It was that phrase that brought into being one of the most complete miniature railways ever built.

The track was an elevated one, running around the rustic portion of the grounds at "The Nook," Mr. Nicholls' house near Roath Lake, Cardiff. It was a little over 200 ft. in length. The starting-point was the summer-house, designated Cardiff, and stations *en route* represented Newport, Severn Tunnel, Chepstow, Gloucester, Bristol, Stapleton Road, Magor, Marshfield, and Roath. There were bridges and tunnels galore, and in some places the track was an actual model of structures over which a train would pass.

No detail was omitted. This, in itself, was typical of Mr. Nicholl. "If you are doing a job, do it well," happens to be one of his favourite sayings. There were turn-tables, water tanks, signals, telegraph wires, height gauges, level indicators, buffer stops, cattle lairs, and electric lamps. The train itself was a magnificent model.

It generated its own steam motive-power, and besides passenger coaches there were guards' vans, tar waggons, oil tanks, lime trucks, and even a miniature stock of coal. In the main stations there were milk churns and a variety of other things common to a railway platform, whilst even familiar advertisements had not been omitted. The sleepers were the real creosoted kind, with chairs, and the brass rails were fixed in position with tiny wedges. Many months were occupied in constructing the novelty, and it need hardly be said that it gave pleasure, not only to the many youngsters who gazed wide-eyed at it, but to those of an older generation who happened to be guests at "The Nook."

In March of 1914 Mr. Nicholl led a movement that had as its main idea the construction of a new dock at Cardiff. But he was principally occupied at this period in again fighting a proposal—he had been up against it in earlier days—to lay up steamers so that freight rates might be improved. There had been another slump in rates, and the old-fashioned scheme of laying up a proportion of tonnage had once more been pushed into the foreground.

Mr. Nicholl fought it tooth and nail. He stuck to his opinion that, as shipowners were responsible for bringing their tonnage into being, they were responsible for it when the lean periods arrived. His own firm possessed modern boats,

and they had all proved most remunerative to the shareholders. The previous depression had been successfully weathered, and, for himself, he was content to face the lean period with equanimity. He instanced the fact that the vessels of the "Hall" Line were chartered right up to April, in which month freight rates would probably improve owing to the opening of the Baltic and other trades.

"Why should a firm which possesses new boats, and the ability to run them at a profit to the shareholders, be compelled to submit to a tax to support older boats which would lay up—boats which would earn more by laying up, and by being indemnified, than they would by being in active commission?" he asked. "It is all a question of competition, ability, and capital. Some owners can run successfully through depressions, while others, through the age of their boats and through financial circumstances, find it impossible. My firm will not ask for alms even if the depression becomes more acute. I am quite confident of the future. At the present time my boats are able to pay good dividends for the shareholders. It is all a question of the survival of the fittest. I have no faith in laying-up schemes. Besides, if other shipowners cannot proceed, why should I be compelled to pay for their sustenance?"

Mr. Nicholl was by no means alone in this view.

He was supported by, among others, Sir Burton Chadwick (Chairman of the Liverpool Shipowners' Association, and head of Messrs. Joseph Chadwick & Sons), Mr. T. P. Harrison (Messrs. Rankin, Gilmour & Co.), Mr. J. Howard Glover (Mercantile Steamship Company), Mr. J. F. Wilson (West Hartlepool), Major Hopkins (Weidner Hopkins, Newcastle), and many others. In fact, the majority of shipowners held the same view as Mr. Nicholl. Liverpool, in particular, was dead against the project, and so was Glasgow. The scheme naturally died a natural death when the war came.

Prior to that, however (in November, 1913), a new company was started, called The Nicholl Steamships, Limited. It was formed with a capital of £150,000, in £1 shares, to acquire the steamers "Westoe Hall," "Bland Hall," and "Albert Hall," then building. Messrs. Edward Nicholl & Co. were the first Directors and Managers. The company was really in addition to the ten single companies under the control of Messrs. Edward Nicholl & Co. These had a capital of more than half a million pounds, so that the total capital of the firm, with the new company, was over £700,000. When it is remembered that the first vessel of the Cardiff "Hall" Line—which now numbered thirteen—was started in 1904, some idea of the progress made will be obtained. In addition to sums set aside, dividends averaging

over 10 per cent had been paid. Mr. Nicholl's ambition now was to build up a large fleet of steamers under the title of The Nicholl Steamship Co., Ltd.

The "Maritime Review"—as was only natural under the circumstances—gave itself a pat on the back by publishing, on July 17th, 1914, the following:—

THE AISLES OF TIME

Never mind worrying with the poetical phase of the subject. On this occasion we haven't time. But harking back over the past, we note that, on February 17th, 1904, we wrote :

"There is an old saw which says : 'He will never set the Thames on fire,' and it is generally used in a contemptuous sense, as expressing the belief that the 'he' referred to will never do very much for himself—nor for anyone else. The old lilt, however, can never be fairly used in connection with Mr. Edward Nicholl."

There you are, and recent happenings emphasise the fact that, if you see it in these columns—yes, it is so ! What are the recent happenings ? Why, the registration of Nicholl Steamships, Ltd., and of which the dominating genius is—yes, the same Mr. Edward Nicholl. . . . Wherefore, the old lilt referred to above may not be used in connection with Teddie of that ilk. It's nice to be able to say "We told you so." It is also somewhat gratifying to

know that, in our earlier endeavour, we did not give approbation to that which the vulgar style a “stumer.”

And then came the war—and with it what is perhaps the most interesting period of Mr. Nicholl’s life.

CHAPTER X

I do love
My country's good, with a respect more tender,
More holy, and profound, than mine own life.

CORIOLANUS.

ON August 1st, 1914, Mr. Nicholl was Chairman of the Shipowners' Association and one of the largest shipowners in the West of England. He was head of the Cardiff "Hall" Line and of Nicholl Steamships, Ltd. The fleet represented practically 100,000 tons dead weight, and had cost over half a million. Here is the list of ships:—

Steamer.	Tons dead weight.	Cost. £
"Whateley Hall" . . .	6,400	34,500
"Eaton Hall" . . .	6,400	34,500
"Tredegar Hall" . . .	6,400	34,500
"Grindon Hall" . . .	6,400	34,500
"Silksworth Hall" . . .	8,250	45,500
"Haigh Hall" . . .	7,112	45,500
"Cardiff Hall" . . .	8,200	37,750
"Welbeck Hall" . . .	7,500	57,500
"Westoe Hall" . . .	6,500	52,600
"Windsor Hall" . . .	8,200	31,500
"Bland Hall" . . .	8,200	57,500
"Albert Hall" . . .	8,200	56,500
"Standish Hall" . . .	7,200	37,750
	<hr style="width: 100%; border: 0.5px solid black;"/>	<hr style="width: 100%; border: 0.5px solid black;"/>
	95,012	560,100

134 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

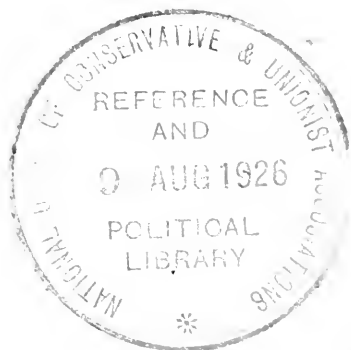
In addition, there had been bought two second-hand steamers, whilst one new one—which was afterwards replaced—had been lost. The grand total of dead-weight tonnage was therefore 107,500; the capital totalled £620,000. And all in ten years! And all, let it be emphasised, off Mr. Nicholl's own bat. The latter is the point to keep in the mind. As the achievement of a long life the result would be remarkable; as a ten years' effort it is positively amazing.

Mr. Nicholl went into the war with the same energy that he had displayed in earlier days on the Cardiff City Council. He offered himself in any capacity; at fifty-two he was quite ready to shoulder a pack or help to stoke a warship. He was almost immediately appointed Deputy Chief Examining Officer for the Bristol Channel, and on the 21st August he was nominated to serve on the Board of Arbitration ordered by the Royal Proclamation of August 3rd to deal with matters arising out of the requisition by the Government of vessels for the Government service.

That he did the work of examination well is evidenced by the fact that within a month or so he was appointed Chief Examining Officer and Commander of the Bristol Channel Examination Service. For three years he led a life that was strenuous in the extreme. As he himself graphically puts it, he was in his job up to his neck, and the newspapers of the period pay testimony to



A PORTRAIT STUDY OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL IN NAVAL UNIFORM



the thoroughness of his methods. In July, 1917, alone, he and his officers examined, spoke to, gave signals to, or passed up 1392 vessels. From August, 1914, to September, 1917, he and his officers dealt with over 55,000 vessels. But the complete table explains everything. Here it is :—

BRISTOL CHANNEL EXAMINATION SERVICE,
BARRY ROADS

Vessels boarded, examined or spoken, given signals, and passed up for Bristol, Avonmouth, Portishead, Cardiff, Barry, Newport, Penarth, and Sharpness.

From August, 1914, to September, 1917.

Vessels.	Total Number.
British	36,683
Norwegian	6,374
French	4,937
Spanish	1,871
Greek	1,567
Italian	886
Swedish	689
Dutch	465
Belgian	524
Danish	548
Russian	446
Portuguese	150
American	81
Uruguayan	38
Japanese	51

136 LIFE OF SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

Vessels.	Total Number.
Roumanian	16
Chilian	7
Finnish	6
Peruvian	2
Brazilian	23
Argentine	8
Mexican	4
Canadian	11
Chinese	1
TOTAL	55,388

6-inch gun fired "bring to" rounds	251
12-pounder gun fired "bring to" rounds	203
Aliens arrested or reported to Customs	738
Fines imposed on masters and pilots for disobeying Examination Service orders	£607

But chasing steamers and keeping a watchful look-out was only part of the job. There were hundreds of letters to be dealt with; police-courts to be attended; lights to be carefully regarded. Some of the letters received were so remarkable that I can do no better than give samples of one or two that were addressed to Commander Nicholl:—

DEAR SIR,

Are you aware that there is a thoroughbred German aboard a light-vessel in the British Channel? I don't know anything about the chap only that he is a German, and as we are at war

now with his country I thought you would like to know.

That meant a rapid trip out to the Channel—for nothing, it may be said. But this was the kind of note—next to those dealing with mysterious lights, of which there were dozens—that gave the Examination Officer most trouble. It was from a pilot:—

DEAR SIR,

At 11 p.m. on the night of the 5th February I was cruising in cutter, with the Nash lights bearing about N.W. by N. about six miles. I was just turned in when one of my men came down and told me there was a submarine close to us and to come up quick. I jumped up and went right on deck, and on the port side I saw something in the water, very much like the conning tower of a submarine. It appeared to be about five feet above the water, and seemed to be coming towards us, but I heard no sound from it. It suddenly seemed to alter its course, and disappear to the northward. I boarded steamer for Avonmouth next morning, leaving orders for the man to report what he saw, at Barry, which he did.

Commander Nicholl suffered severely from people who were for ever seeing flashing lights. Most of them had a habit of writing him when dirty weather was blowing up; he spent many a bad night cruising up and down the Bristol

Channel looking for lights which sometimes turned out to be the real thing, but which more often did not. But he had his own views about the Examination Service—strong views, as the following letter, written on the 21st February, 1917, to Colonel Turner, O.C. Severn Defences, demonstrates :—

SIR,—Examination Service. I desire to place on record that I am of opinion that the Examination Service, as at present carried on at Barry, is very unsatisfactory, unsafe, and unprotected in the presence of floating mines, or when the battery is hidden by fog.

Admiral Dare reported from Milford Haven on September 2nd, 1916, in answer to a letter of mine addressed to the Commander-in-Chief, Devonport :

“That he did not consider it necessary to station one of H.M. ships at Cardiff, for the protection of the upper reaches of the Bristol Channel. Since taking over the command of this area, there has not been any report of an enemy vessel to the eastward of a line joining Nash Point and Hurtstone Point; at any rate, nothing reliable.”

We now have something to report that must be considered very reliable, viz. the discovery of mines laid quite 12 miles to the east of Nash Point, and the presence reported of an enemy submarine above the Nash, and considerable loss

of life from enemy mines. Two mines that were recently seen floating could not be destroyed for the want of a firearm. The examination steamers are not even now (they were at first) provided with a rifle in case of emergency to destroy a mine or repel an attack, and the patrol steamer "Saxon" does not carry a signaller. I regret, therefore, as Chief Examination Officer, to report as above, and to request that two signallers, at least, with rifles, should be carried on the "Saxon," and the present signallers on the two examination steamers "Ilona" and "Sylvia" provided with rifles.

In addition, it is desirable that a boat carrying a useful gun, and able to keep the sea in all weathers, should be sent to patrol the upper reaches of the Bristol Channel, above the Nash.

Unless the above precautions are adopted I am apprehensive that a further and more serious calamity will happen.

A month or so before this Commander Nicholl had communicated direct with the Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth—several remarks were, I believe, addressed to him for daring to do such a thing—but he felt so strongly on the subject that he believed it was his duty to go to the fountain head. His letter read:—

SIR,—A 'phone message from Commander Brown, Swansea, this afternoon requests me to

report on the best place for resting and storing three petrol patrol boats, which he is considering sending to this examination area for watching the Channel south of the Breaksea Lightship. I would suggest that these craft are very costly and unsuitable for this service, owing to the strong tides, and the very exceptional weather in the Channel during the winter would compel them to seek shelter half the time.

We should welcome a warship that could keep the sea in all weather, and consider such protection should have been stationed this side of the Nash from the outbreak of war. I am informed the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce are holding a meeting to-morrow to petition the Admiralty on this matter.

I shall be glad to know, Sir, if in addition to my examination duties you desire me to take any part in the working or storing of the craft referred to by Commander Brown. I consider petrol boats entirely unsuitable, both in size and armament, to afford the necessary protection for the enormous coal, docks, and shipping interests at Cardiff, Barry, Newport, and Bristol.

We are now paying twenty-two thousand pounds per annum for the three examination steamers, and I most respectfully submit that any further expense should now be in the direction of more reliable and adequate protection, which cannot possibly be unless we have a warship that can keep at sea under all weather conditions,

The reply of Admiral Dare, to whom the question was referred, is worth giving. He reported:—

1. I have not had any official intimation that motor boats are to be attached to the Naval Base at Swansea, but have heard from Commander Brown verbally that it is the intention of their Lordships to station twelve of the craft at his base.
2. With regard to the remarks of Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, R.N.V.R., the following observations are made in reply to your minute :
3. I do not consider it necessary to station one of H.M. ships at Cardiff for the protection of the upper reaches of the Bristol Channel. Since taking over the command of this area (Feb. 15th) there has not been any report of the presence of an enemy vessel to the eastward of a line joining Nash Point and Hurtstone Point—at any rate, nothing reliable.
4. The motor boats are not considered good sea boats, but they might prove useful in these upper reaches, where they could obtain shelter in an emergency.
5. The motor boats will, of course, receive their orders from the S.N.O. Swansea, and I understand that the only point at issue is the question of a supply of petrol at Cardiff for these boats working in that district.

6. The Examination Service, with which Sir Edward Nicholl is concerned, does not appear to be the proper department for undertaking any measures in connection with these boats.
7. The question of maintaining stocks of petrol will, in a great measure, depend upon the dispositions of these twelve boats. From what I can gather, it is the intention of the S.N.O. Swansea, to work them from four different ports (sub-bases). Until this is definitely settled it is not possible to venture any suggestion with regard to the maintenance of supplies. It may be considered necessary to have four different depots, but I imagine that the necessary stocks will be maintained by means of tank cars on rails. It is presumed that the Admiralty will arrange (after consultation with the responsible authorities) for adequate supplies.

That, of course, was nothing more than an invitation to Commander Nicholl's fighting strain. He proved, beyond doubt, that he was right ; but it cannot be said, with truth, that he got all that he wanted. At this same time he was much concerned on account of the fact that many newspapers were publishing the movements of steamers, especially those homeward bound. He addressed the following characteristic letter to Sir Joseph Maclay, the Controller of Shipping :—

In the early days of the war the attention of newspaper editors all over the country was called to the danger of publishing the "Movements of Shipping," and for a time the leading papers refrained from publishing "Shipping Movements." Now, alas! and for what reason no one seems to know, vital information is at the enemy's disposal—East or West, North or South, we inform them of the near approach of a liner or tramp.

I have before me a London halfpenny paper, and it gives the dates of sailings from various ports of homeward bound steamers to the number of at least a dozen. Any sailor will inform you when the steamers should pass a given point. The value of these steamers and their cargoes would be about five millions at to-day's prices, and we are so ill advised as to give this information to the enemy. Most of these sailings are about December the . . . , time enough to allow a submarine to go from Germany to meet them.

Where is the Censor? Who is responsible? What folly—madness is perhaps the better term! Recently we were all informed that the Government had purchased huge quantities of grain in India and Australia. Are we going to inform the enemy what these sailing dates are?

No one to-day would willingly risk the lives of those on board, not counting ship and cargo, just to read that "blank" steamer had sailed from to on

Some short time ago a submarined crew that I assisted to land stated that the commander of the submarine said that he knew they were coming, and handed some papers to the master of the steamer in which the date of his steamer's sailing was mentioned. Need more be said? Surely we owe the officers, engineers, sailors, and firemen of the great Mercantile Marine more consideration, not to mention passengers, and the various units of soldiers and sailors joining up from all over the world.

By the publication we risk all—we gain nothing.

In the new Government there is still an office to be filled, and a very necessary one, viz. a Censor of Shipping Movements, and I would suggest it be forbidden to allow the "Movements of Steamers' arrivals, or Sailings and Steamers in Dock" to be published—sent all over the world for the sometimes certain benefit of the enemy, and too often cause the loss of many valuable lives, ship, and cargo—during the period of the war.

That, again, had the desired effect. But by then the submarine menace had become a very real one. Commander Nicholl prepared a document that not only dealt with the whole question, but offered practical suggestions. After showing the percentage of aliens carried on several cargo vessels, the document continued:—

NOTES *re* SUBMARINE MENACE AND SUGGESTIONS,
BY EDWARD NICHOLL, R.N.R., CHIEF EX-
AMINATION OFFICER, CARDIFF.

1. LOOK-OUT. At present unreliable.

Aliens in f'c'sle deck ratings are quite 50%.

The LOOK-OUT watch should be divided. Half-hour duration only, and from a crow's-nest on the foremast, or other fitting, the same as on whale ships.

A GOOD REWARD *paid for sighting a periscope*, if in time to avoid damage. (This reward is always paid on whale ships for sighting a whale.)

For SIGHTING A PERISCOPE, say £10, if submarine avoided; and £5000 to be divided amongst the crew to sink or capture a submarine.

2. Issue letters of marque (if not roving commission), preferably to British R.N.R. men; give them suitable armed trawler.

MEET PIRATE WITH PIRATE. Say "*Flower*" class sloop under any flag, anyhow; allow them to draw stores and munitions Madeira, Azores, Portugal, Gibraltar, etc., and pay a BIG REWARD for destruction of enemy submarine. Reward to be paid by lays (per cent to crew), say up to £10,000. A decoration is good, but to the sailor £500 as his share will result in a keener look-out and a better fighting spirit.

3. DARKENING SHIP. Extremely careless at present, and a much more serious view should be taken. Inspection made before leaving port and inspection at sea by an officer at the end of each watch. Many seamen are of opinion that navigation lights put out are all that is required. Vessels are otherwise often too brilliantly lighted. If reliable seamen cannot be found for "LOOK-OUT," the Government should supply sight-tested R.N.R. men, especially in big liners and large cargo boats.
4. Have we sufficient representatives of *sea experience* from the Mercantile Marine at the Admiralty, whose view would be listened to? If not, there should be.
5. Have an *efficient gun* on each cargo steamer, not less than 4", to carry ten thousand yards (5 miles).
6. At present Cardiff and district has no means of practical instruction. Chatham gunnery course too far and no time. We should have a local "Chatham Institute"—nearly 50% of the country's tonnage comes to this Channel.
7. There should be no work carried on, on any vessel's deck, when within 500 miles of land.
8. Why (when with convoy) not discharge oil, grease, tar, fish oil, anything to blind periscope, all going astern and around for miles?

This would blind him and make him rise to clean, etc., and would certainly help to check his accuracy in torpedo work.

The suggestions were so good that they were almost all adopted at a later date. Ships were darkened, rewards were offered, guns were mounted, and oil used to blind periscopes.

From Commander Nicholl's diary I have selected one or two observations which show clearly that he had much to contend with at this period. The items are as follows :—

1. Found that a German was employed on one of the "Trinity" boats. He was afterwards removed to a lightship. I reported the matter, but the reply was that the man was naturalised, and nothing was done.
2. Discovered, after I had reported and arrested several ships' masters and pilots for various offences under the Defence of the Realm Act, that police-court magistrates had no jurisdiction over these so-called military matters. Military regulations did not allow of offenders being court-martialled. Result—nothing done.
3. Reported to me that a man had been observed on a certain mud hopper intently examining, through binoculars, the defences at Lavernock and Penarth. At once communicated with the police, and a little later one of the crew of the mud hopper, who

admitted he was a German, was arrested. When he was brought before the magistrates he claimed that he was naturalised. He was discharged and, I am told, almost immediately rejoined the hopper.

4. I fired at, and stopped, a steamer which tried to run past. Found the mate had a German wife. She had visited Germany three times during the war, and her father and brother were in the German Army. The man was charged, but the case was dismissed.
5. Complained of the fact that on two colliers, which were in touch with the fleet, there was a German mate who carried an English master's certificate, and a German fireman. Both naturalised, and nothing done.
6. Boarded a Swedish steamer on arrival at anchorage. She reported that she was carrying 4000 tons of cargo. Found she was fitted with wireless, and that she also carried about 60 fathoms of mine-sweeping gear. Questioned the wireless operator, and he told me that he could hoist his aerials and be in working communication in twenty minutes at a range of 300 miles. I suggested putting a guard on board. The key of the wireless room was taken away, but was returned a day or so later. Nothing done.
7. Reported to me that three foreigners, calling themselves Belgian refugees, had called at the Battery with a request to be shown the



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL AND THE OFFICERS, N.C.O.s, AND MEN OF THE SEVERN DEFENCES

To face page 148



CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST ASSOCIATION
REFERENCE AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL LIBRARY

LONDON



guns, etc. They were allowed to depart in peace.

8. H.M.S. "Scotia" reported that shore signals had been observed at a point between Porlock and the Foreland. The information was simply passed on. Nothing else done.
9. A very impudent but naturalised German has made a point, from the commencement of the war, of sailing about in a small motor launch. He was eventually warned not to come within a certain distance of the shore. He paid no attention and was fired at. An order was also issued that his launch was not to leave the dock. A little later this man was employed with his own launch to do certain work which allowed him to run around to all the transports and fleet auxiliaries. The port was in a ferment, and when a strike was threatened the man was persuaded to resign. Later still he applied for work to the Pilotage Office, saying he was a British subject. The following week, when I went down to the dock, I saw one of the examination boats coming in. There was much trouble on board, because the German had been taken on as one of the crew. All the men of the Patrol Service threatened to strike, and I immediately told the German to go ashore. When I reported the matter subsequently, the reply I got was that nothing could be done.

10. Discovered that a naturalised German was living on one of the Bristol Channel islands. Four coastguards, with signalling apparatus and expensive lights, have now been sent to the island, apparently to watch this one man.
11. Told to-day that, after examining a Swedish steamer, one of my officers had a bucket of hot ashes thrown over him. He, too, heard this remark: "Good-bye, you ———! When next we return, the German flag will be flying over this ——— country!" Are we fighting the war with kid gloves on?

In June, 1917, Commander Nicholl felt that the needs of his country were so great that he could do better work outside the Examination Service. He therefore addressed the following letter to the Officer Commanding Severn Defences:—

SIR,
Examination Service.—The Service in Barry Roads is now so well established that my duties have become simply of a routine character, and almost entirely clerical, more especially since the arrival of armed drifters, trawlers, and M.L.'s in this area.

I am of opinion that my services could be better employed in the national interest in many other directions, and the duties of my present office—now almost negligible—could be carried on by the Officer in Charge of the Battery or the Officer in Charge of the Trawlers.

I am therefore tendering my resignation after practically three years' service, during which time over fifty thousand vessels have been examined and passed up through the Barry Roads.

I beg you will forward my request, and release me as soon as possible.

The resignation was eventually accepted, but before that happened the following letters were received.

Captain W. J. Down, R.N., wrote from the Naval Base, Swansea :—

I deeply regret to hear from the Officer Commanding Cardiff and Barry Garrison that you have been obliged to resign your appointment as Chief Examination Officer. May I be permitted to express my high appreciation of the most excellent services you have rendered to the country during the time you have held this appointment.

General Sir Pitcairn Campbell wrote from Government House, Chester :—

You will by this time have had the letter about your resigning your appointment. I shall be very sorry to lose your valuable help and must thank you so much for all you have done. If we ever want your advice, I feel sure you won't mind our asking it.

Colonel Marindin, of the Severn Command, sent this note from the Wilton Hotel, London :—

I was very sorry not to see you before my hurried departure from Cardiff so as to be able to thank you for all the work you did in connection with the Examination Service. It really was of the greatest value to me, for it saved me having to do it myself at a time when, as you know, I was a good deal overworked.

From what I saw of the Examination Service when I was at Barry, the smooth way in which the whole thing was working was chiefly due to your labour.

I would have written earlier, but, as you will understand, one is pretty busy taking over a new and somewhat difficult job.

Again many thanks, and the best of luck.

It was then suggested that the retiring Examination Officer was entitled to the Royal Naval Reserve decoration. When the matter was brought before Colonel J. Aspinall Turner, the Officer Commanding the Cardiff and Barry Garrison, he at once addressed a letter to the Registrar-General, General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen, London. It was as follows:—

Our Chief Examination Officer, Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, is retiring at the end of the present month.

He has held the office of Examination Officer since the war started, and, according to your letter addressed to me dated December 7th,

1916, had served 11 years 9½ months in the R.N.R.

He has carried out his duties here with great satisfaction to all concerned, is resigning after over three years' service, and I can highly recommend him for the decoration.

His resignation from the R.N.R. was compulsory, following his then employment.

That started a correspondence that would have been funny if it had not dealt with a matter of importance to a considerable number of men. Back came a request for details. The reply pointed out that the applicant was appointed Engineer, R.N.R., on the 31st December, 1889, and had retired on the 17th October, 1901, and that his total service was 15 years 7 months. To this the Registrar-General said: "Time of retired service does not count as commissioned service required under Article 210 of the R.N.R. Regulations (Officers) for the decoration." Col. Turner then asked to be informed if the officer's failure to comply with the regulations was due to the fact that his length of service—though sufficient in point of years—had not been continuous. The reply was in the affirmative, and a day or so later this letter arrived. It was addressed to the Colonel-Commandant, Cardiff and Barry Garrisons:—

With reference to your letter of the 5th inst., recommending Acting-Commander Sir Edward

Nicholl for the award of the Royal Naval Reserve Decoration, I am requested by the Admiral Commanding Coast Guard and Reserves to inform you that this officer's case has been fully considered, and it is regretted that he is ineligible under the Royal Naval Reserve Regulations for the Decoration.—C. JONES, Registrar-General.

This view, however, was so contrary to general opinion that it was eventually decided to refer the matter to the Admiralty, and this letter, signed by Captain Grant, R.N. (Senior Naval Officer, Bristol Channel), was forwarded. The date was 13th March, 1918 :—

Acting-Comdr. Sir Edward Nicholl, R.N.V.R.
(Engineer, R.N.R., Retd.).

Submitted :

1. This officer served 11 years 9½ months in the Royal Naval Reserve. At the outbreak of hostilities he was appointed Chief Examining Officer for Bristol Channel ports, and held that office continuously till the end of September, 1917.
2. His Commission in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve is dated 1st February, 1915, although he commenced his duties on the outbreak of war.
3. It is submitted that this officer may be specially considered for the award of the R.N.R. Decoration and be allowed to count his com-

bined service, which considerably exceeds the fifteen years laid down, as qualifying time for the R.D.

4. It is observed that Sir Edward Nicholl was strongly recommended for the R.D. at the time of his relinquishing the appointment of Chief Examining Officer, but had not then completed fifteen years' combined service, this being apparently the reason for the non-approval of the award.
5. His services were of the utmost value, as is shown by letters (copies attached) from various officers concerned, and, in view of what has come to my knowledge since assuming this Command, I desire to add my strong recommendation that the Decoration should be awarded to Sir Edward Nicholl as a special case.

The answer from the Admiralty—dated 21st May, 1918—was, for some reason, sent direct to the officer concerned. It read :—

With reference to a recommendation which has been received from the Senior Naval Officer, Bristol Channel, that you might be awarded the R.N.R. Officers' Decoration, I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to inform you that they regret that, as you have not served the necessary period in the Royal Naval Reserve, the regulations do not permit of this Decoration being conferred upon you.

I am also to inform you that, as your present

appointment on the Petrol Executive is not under the Admiralty, it is necessary that your temporary commission as Acting-Commander R.N.V.R., which was granted in respect of your appointment as Chief Examining Officer at Cardiff, should be terminated in accordance with the general practice.

Your Commission has, accordingly, been terminated from the 20th inst., and I am to request that you will forward it to the Admiralty for cancellation, after which it will be returned to you to retain as a memento.

I am, etc.,

CHARLES WALKER.

Up to that time Sir Edward had not been particularly interested. This letter, however, aroused the battling instinct that had been born in him. He made a personal application to the Admiralty, was told that the decision arrived at could not be departed from, and then wrote this letter to Dr. Macnamara :—

I feel more annoyed at troubling you than I do at the attitude taken up by your subordinates in positively refusing even to consider my services R.N.V.R. It is, to say the least, discouraging to a volunteer. I did not ask for any employment R.N.V.R. I was retired R.N.R., and, I thought, joined up again in that category; and, voluntarily, I am still working unpaid for Mr. Long, visiting Naval, Army, Air, and Civilian depts.,

trying to save petrol. This is a grievance I am sure you will put right.

On the 19th June, 1918, Dr. Macnamara replied :—

I return the enclosures to your letters. I understand that the whole matter has been gone into afresh, and that you have been informed that the grant to you of the R.N.R. Officers' Decoration is not practicable.

The matter ended there. But doesn't the correspondence rather put point to the assertion (it was a very favourite saying during the war) "that the man who does his darndest gets least" ?

Sir Edward, as is only natural, has very strong views on the subject. I asked him, on one occasion, to give me a statement on this question of decorations. He wrote :—

I first became a Naval Reserve officer in 1889. At that time there were only thirty of us altogether, for only men with sea service and the highest Board of Trade certificates were eligible. There was, of course, no pay for this service, and it was a condition of enlistment that when an officer's business or employment was of such a nature that he could no longer put in his drills that he should send in his resignation and go on the retired list. After $11\frac{1}{2}$ years I found it inconvenient to attend drills, and therefore resigned ;

but when the war came I threw up everything and offered myself in any capacity. I was, as you know, appointed Chief Examination Officer, and I gave myself body and soul to the work. I left my business to be carried on by my staff.

When I reported myself at Devonport, I was told by Admiral Sir George Egerton—with whom I spent the night at Admiralty House—that, as my duties were executive and not engineering, it would be necessary for me to wear R.N.V.R. uniform, which meant the plain braided sleeve instead of the “crossed.” That did not make the slightest difference to me—I wore my R.N.V.R. uniform with pride—but I was totally unaware at the time that it would make all the difference in the world when the time came for decorations to be awarded.

In all, I put in $15\frac{1}{2}$ years' service with the R.N.R. and the R.N.V.R. I believe that I was entitled to the decoration, but immediately it was applied for, the curse of the Service, red-tape, crept in. I have always felt, and still feel, that we in this country suffer from nothing so much as from red-tape. It is responsible for millions of money, millions of lives, and it gives rope to an amount of ineptitude, indifference, and ignorance that is appalling. Red-tape is the main asset of officials who have been pitchforked into office. It may be found everywhere: in Government offices, in municipal offices, and in the Services. Influence is too often the blood-brother of red-tape. Merit rarely counts.



OFFICERS OF THE BRISTOL CHANNEL EXAMINATION SERVICE
(Sir Edward Nicholl in centre of bottom row)



The decoration I was entitled to was not awarded because no precedent for such a thing could be found. Of course there was no precedent ! But there was no precedent for an engineer officer R.N.R. being placed in charge of a fleet of examination steamers as Executive Officer. R.N.V.R. was a creation of the war. The bit of ribbon I had earned is absolutely valueless, but I would have been proud to wear it, if only to show that for many years of my life I had served in the Reserve Forces. It is a great satisfaction to me to remember that, in addition to my 15½ years' service in the R.N.R. and R.N.V.R., I also did seven years as a volunteer.

Red-tape strangles everything. I remember that during the war a tailor was appointed as a shell inspector. Influence got him the job. Another man, who I believe knew something about gramophones, was given an important job to look after petrol supplies. Again, as Sir Matthew Wilson stated in the House of Commons, a piano-tuner was appointed as an agricultural expert ! Red-tape is draining away the nation's life blood. Square plugs are fitted into round holes ; men who are not worth their salt are given important posts simply because they can pull influential strings. The country is rotting under officialdom, and red-tape is the curse of every State department !

Strong words, perhaps—but who will say they are not true ?

CHAPTER XI

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow-creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.—ANON.

THE ex-drummer boy's services were recognised, however. On June 3rd, 1916, he was knighted by his Majesty King George at Buckingham Palace. Congratulations poured down on "The Nook" in such a stream that for some days the new knight was overwhelmed. There were dozens of telegrams and hundreds of letters; some of these latter must have given Sir Edward particular pleasure. I feel I cannot do better than quote a few of the more noteworthy. There was, for example, this communication from the Town Clerk of Cardiff:—

I have the honour and pleasure to send you the following resolution unanimously passed by my Council on the 5th inst., viz.—

"That the heartiest congratulations of the City Council and the Citizens of Cardiff be tendered to Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, a former member of the Corporation, upon the honour conferred upon him by His Majesty the

King; and that this Council record their sincere wishes that he may be spared in health and strength to carry on his public work on behalf of the City, to the technical education and charities of which he has always given such generous and loyal support; and on behalf of the nation in the service of which he has devoted himself so unselfishly and patriotically. Permit me also to add the congratulations of myself and staff.

Yours very faithfully,
J. L. WHEATLEY.

The Secretary of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society wrote:—

On behalf of my Board of Directors I desire to heartily congratulate you on the distinguished honour which has been bestowed on you by His Majesty the King. We know of your interest in the welfare of everything that appertains to the men of the sea, and we earnestly pray that you may long be spared to enjoy this well-merited honour.

This was from Mr. Frank S. Higman, the Hon. Secretary of the Cardiff Y.M.C.A. :—

The boys at the depot wish me to add their congratulations, for they appreciate your thought of them in giving them the hut, and no one is more pleased at the recognition you have received than they.

Mr. J. M. Madders, joint General Manager of the London City and Midland Bank, Ltd., wrote :—

Nothing has given me more personal pleasure than to see how the Government has acted in the right way and recognised the valuable work that you have been doing for the nation since the outbreak of war. I am quite sure that if our Chairman, Sir Edward Holden, had been here to-day he would have wished to be joined in this expression of pleasure.

This was from a corporal in the Royal Garrison Artillery :—

At the time the newspapers reached me with the news we were in action, and as the guns belched forth their souvenirs for the Huns I allowed myself to think they were firing salvoes to celebrate your knighthood. I feel proud to be an employee of one of Cardiff's leaders of commerce whom His Majesty has been graciously pleased to honour.

Captain E. R. G. R. Evans (the famous explorer) wrote as follows :—

I am writing to send you my best congratulations on your knighthood. Well done! I have not, and never will, forget your kindness and generosity in connection with the (Scott) Antarctic Expedition.

There was also one from a certain Right Hon. Member of Parliament. It read :—

The happiest day of my life ! Your knighthood and my Silver Wedding.

Needless to say, the Silver Wedding was not forgotten !

A few weeks later the “ Western Mail ” made the following announcement :—

In recognition of the knighthood conferred upon him by His Majesty the King, Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, the Cardiff ship-owner, has made the splendid gift of £10,000 towards the extension scheme of King Edward VII's Hospital at Cardiff. When the special appeal was made on behalf of the hospital in March last Sir Edward offered, on behalf of his firm, to contribute £5000 if five others would do likewise within three months. The new gift, it is understood, is made without any condition.

The extension scheme will include the provision of new children's wards, eye wards, a maternity flat, and orthopædic wards. The provision of children's wards is of great importance. At the present time the accommodation for children is so taxed that many cannot receive the attention desired. It is in the national interest, of course, that everything possible should be done to promote the physical well-being of the child, especially at a time when, as recently announced, only 90

out of every 100 children reach their second year, 86 their third year, and 84 their sixth year.

In addition to this most generous donation, Sir Edward Nicholl since last midsummer has given over £3000 to various charities, including £1000 to the Hamadryad Seamen's Hospital.

Sir Edward recognised his knighthood in many other ways. He endowed a scholarship of £2000 at the Cardiff Technical Schools ; he offered £100 to the first Cardiff man to win the Victoria Cross ; he bore the cost of the annual treat of the Redruth Town Mission Sunday School ; he sent £110 to Nazareth House ; he paid 100 guineas for another " Alexandra Day " rose ; he built a spacious hut for soldiers at Cardiff Barracks which cost £700 ; he guaranteed the £5000 that was necessary as the nucleus for the establishment of a War Savings bank ; and, in memory of his mother, he renewed and repaired the bells of Llanishen Church, in which parish he then lived and where his mother was buried.

Before his many gifts to charity are dealt with, however, it should be mentioned that soon after leaving the Examination Service he became the Petrol Control Officer for the whole of South Wales and Monmouthshire. It was a responsible position, as this letter shows :—

H.M. PETROLEUM EXECUTIVE,
8, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2,
11th December, 1917.

SIR,—I am directed by Mr. Walter Long to inform you that you have been appointed Area Economy Officer for South Wales and Monmouthshire. A schedule of the principal Naval, Military, and Air Service stations in this area will be forwarded to you in due course.

2. The object which Mr. Long has in view in appointing Economy Officers is to effect economy in the consumption of petrol in His Majesty's Services and by civilians, by preventing waste or improper use, through the co-ordination of control and by appeals to individual users.

3. With this aim it is desired that you should, as far as possible, take steps to keep yourself informed of the extent and efficiency of the arrangements adopted to ensure economy, and to use your influence to promote reforms where these appear necessary or desirable.

4. It is recognised that in carrying out these duties you must be given ample discretionary power, and Mr. Long is confident that he can rely upon your good judgment in avoiding any action which might bring you into conflict with the responsible officers of the various Services or with the Petrol Controller.

5. Arrangements are being made with the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Air Board, in accordance with which these Departments will

inform the respective Commanding Officers that they may receive a visit from you at any time, and will instruct them to afford you information and facilities for observation.

6. It is desired that you should report progress in writing to this Department for Mr. Long's information from time to time, giving particulars of any instances of waste or improper use which may have come to your notice, and of such measures as you may find it judicious and practicable to take in reference thereto.

I am, etc.,

JOHN CADMAN, D.P.E.

Sir Edward applied to this post the same eagerness and the same unremitting energy that he had previously given to the work of examination in the Bristol Channel. He conceived the notion that the best way to make his ideas known was by circulating a letter to the Press. This communication was the result:—

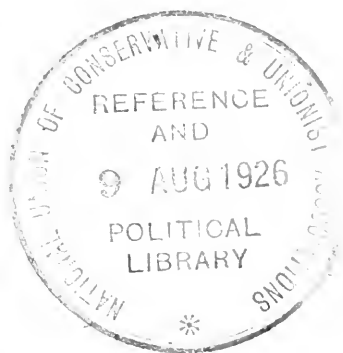
PETROL ECONOMY AND THE COUNTRY'S SUPPLIES

Very few people realise, or consider, the serious and isolated position this country occupies with reference to its petrol supplies. Every gallon of petrol has to be water-borne and brought to this country and France, and its constant supplies are more necessary and vital to-day than ever before in the history of this country. Our oil-driven



A GROUP WHICH INCLUDES SIR EDWARD NICHOLL, LORD CHARLES BERESFORD
AND MR. DAN RADCLIFFE (STANDING RIGHT)

To face page 166



craft, our Air Services, cannot move without it, and to-day, when so much depends upon our aircraft, both in defending these shores, observations, and defences abroad, it behoves every loyal citizen to economise and conserve, in every possible way, the use of petrol.

No one likes police-court proceedings, and, when the position is realised, these should not be necessary.

When it is realised that the Admiralty, the Army, the Air and Civilian Services, the Home Office, the Treasury, the Board of Trade, and various other Departments have all to be consulted and brought into co-operation and in working agreement with a new Department of the State, viz. H.M. Petroleum Executive, it will be readily realised how confusion may appear to exist and orders often reissued, amended, or cancelled.

There are certainly very great hardships to motorists, especially when licences have been taken out and supplies are left in private garages ; but the general position is the one to consider, and every motorist should be on his honour only to use petrol when absolutely necessary, and neither draw nor claim petrol for purposes of hoarding.

In addition to Admiralty and Air Services, there is, of course, the very great demand of the Army, ambulance, and civilian motor services ; the Air Services alone in this country consume enormous quantities.

Every submarine commander makes a dead set against oil steamers, and they are easily distinguished from other craft ; hence the seriousness of maintaining our supplies.

Abuses there always are and, with the thoughtless and careless, always will be, and any cases brought to the notice of the authorities on proof will be very severely dealt with ; but the curtailing of joy riding and other economies have resulted during the last three months in a very satisfactory and substantial saving of petrol. This will be very considerably improved upon during the next three months, if the same careful economy is observed, which must be very satisfactory reading to all those interested in the maintenance of our petrol supplies for our Navy, Army, Air, and civilian services, and without which all the air-craft built and building would be absolutely useless.

The conserving of petrol to-day is as vital to every citizen of this Empire as the conserving of food or the output of munitions.

That he rendered excellent service is proved by the following letter from Sir John Cadman's secretary. It was written on the 29th July, 1918 :—

I am directed by Sir John Cadman to thank you for your letter of July 26th, and to say how much he regrets that the circumstances to which you refer will prevent your continuing to act as

Area Economy Officer for the Cardiff district. Sir John Cadman has asked me to convey to you his great appreciation of the services which you have rendered to the Department, and to thank you for your ready assistance and the time which you have so willingly given to the work.

From reports which have reached him he feels sure that the energetic action which you have taken has caused a great improvement in the manner in which the regulations are enforced in the Cardiff district, and he has no doubt that a great economy in petrol will be effected. I am to add that Sir John Cadman would have written to you personally had not your letter arrived when he was on the point of leaving for a short holiday.

But to return to Sir Edward's many charitable bequests. I only wish I could give a complete list; that being impossible, I can only briefly refer to those gifts which, for the want of a better term, may be called the most important.

For years it had been his great wish that a home should be built where the unmarried mother would have skilled and kind attention. On November 3rd, 1916, Mr. Walter Long visited Cardiff to open a ward in the King Edward VII Hospital. Sir Edward was one of the speakers, and in the course of his remarks he said:—

The children should be saved and the mothers cared for, and I am prepared to foot the bill to

build such a home as the one I have in my mind. All I ask is that a few simple conditions be observed. No questions must be asked at the front door. I care not whether the mothers be Roman Catholics, Protestants, Hindoos, or Mohammedans. Whilst there is a bed vacant no one must be refused admission. I want to feel that I have done some good in the city of my adoption. There is no man in Cardiff prouder of the city of his adoption than I am, and its beautiful institutions ; but I think this institution stands out pre-eminent above all others. We are proud of the beautiful City Hall, the Museum, and all the other additions, but the great and good work carried on here cannot be compared with the others in magnitude and importance. So I told Major Maclean whilst travelling to London on one occasion that it was my ambition to do something like that one day, and I should like to put up a building to be known as my building. I quite saw difficulties—but I have no doubt they will be overcome—in the way of its endowment. Well, I said I would be prepared to give £50,000 to put up such a building if they would agree in turn to two or three simple conditions : If they could find a generous landowner to give the ground ; if they would agree that it should be for maternity and children. If some poor girl comes to the hospital, she is not to be turned away from the front door. If some poor girl is in trouble and wants assistance, she must come—never mind who she is, or

what she is, or where she comes from. She must have the best attention, and the child afterwards be looked after. If these conditions are agreed to—they can take whatever religion they like, the mothers can select that ; this is a religious work and a great work of religion, but they should not be asked their religion at the front door—if these few conditions are complied with, then the building can be completed in three or four years, and you may count on me to foot the bill.

The difficulties did arise. That, perhaps, was to be expected. And it was to be expected, too, that Sir Edward, as a business man, would go about the matter in a business-like way. He caused the following letter to be sent to Colonel Bruce Vaughan, who was the Vice-Chairman of the King Edward VII Hospital :—

Maternity Hospital and Child Welfare Department, King Edward VII Hospital. In reference to Sir Edward Nicholl's promised gift of Fifty Thousand Pounds for the purpose of providing a suitable building for the above scheme, he has requested me to state that the conditions governing same should be placed on record, and ratified, by the Hospital Authorities, before anything is done in starting same.

Conditions :—

- (A) The £50,000 to be expended on the building and the furnishing of same, according to plans, estimates, and contracts, to be ap-

proved of by the Hospital Authorities, the Cardiff Health Committee, and my client. Such building not to be utilised for the proposed new Nurses' Home. If, however, as appears by the Annual Report for 1916, the building and furnishing would run into about £32,000, and not £50,000, then the balance remaining to be disposed of as my client shall think fit, either in connection with King Edward VII Hospital or for some other outside philanthropic object.

- (B) The freehold of the site to be acquired by the Hospital Authorities from some generous landlord.
- (C) A statement in writing showing the proposed objects of the scheme and the manner of working same.
- (D) An assured income sufficient to cover the proper maintenance and upkeep of the scheme when in full working order.

Reading the discussion which took place at the Cardiff Health Committee on the 21st inst., and as reported in the issue of the "Western Mail" of the 22nd inst., on the question of Maternity and Child Welfare, it would appear as if some overlapping and friction might be created. This, of course, must not obtain, otherwise the beneficent effect of my client's generosity and high-minded motives would be, if not frustrated, at least impaired.

£10,000 *Gift*. Another matter he spoke to me

about was this additional gift. This appears in the Annual Report as £10,500. As this is not correct, please see that it is rectified, and likewise made clear, that it is for a Wing to be called the "Sir Edward Nicholl Wing," and not as a contribution to the general funds of the Hospital.

You will, I am sure, appreciate that this letter is written solely with the view of avoiding the possibility of any future misunderstanding.

Yours faithfully,

W. L. YORATH,

Solicitor.

That started a somewhat lengthy correspondence. The many letters have no place here ; nor, indeed, is there room for them, but the whole matter may be summed up by saying that Sir Edward's conditions were not observed. Objection, for example, was raised to the housing and rearing of illegitimate children in the King Edward VII Hospital, and this caused Sir Edward to state publicly that if illegitimate children were to be barred he would use the money he had offered to build a home elsewhere.

That, actually, is what he did. He was so anxious to do something for the little ones that he gave orders in 1917 for a temporary place to be erected, and later still he presented £20,000 for a new building to be built, and this, at the present moment, is in course of construction.

From the beginning he insisted that the centre

should be a place of refuge and hope for unmarried expectant mothers. In pursuance of this point of view he called in the Cardiff branch of the Waifs and Strays Society, and soon after Lord Tredegar helped the scheme very considerably by presenting three acres of land on which to erect the home. A committee of ladies, with Mrs. Robinson at their head, have rendered most excellent service, and for some time now (1920) thirty mothers and their babies have had the care and attention they so badly needed.

The conditions of the Founder's gift are as follows :—

THE EDWARD NICHOLL HOMES

(Founded 1918)

1. The Founder—Sir Edward Nicholl—will expend the sums necessary, up to £20,000, for the erection and equipment of three buildings, to be named the EDWARD NICHOLL HOMES (one for babies, and one each for boys and girls over two or three years old), subject to the raising and investment in trust securities of an Endowment Fund of not less than £20,000 for its assured maintenance, and to the gift of a Freehold Site.
2. The Homes will be under the auspices of the “Church of England Waifs and Strays Society.”

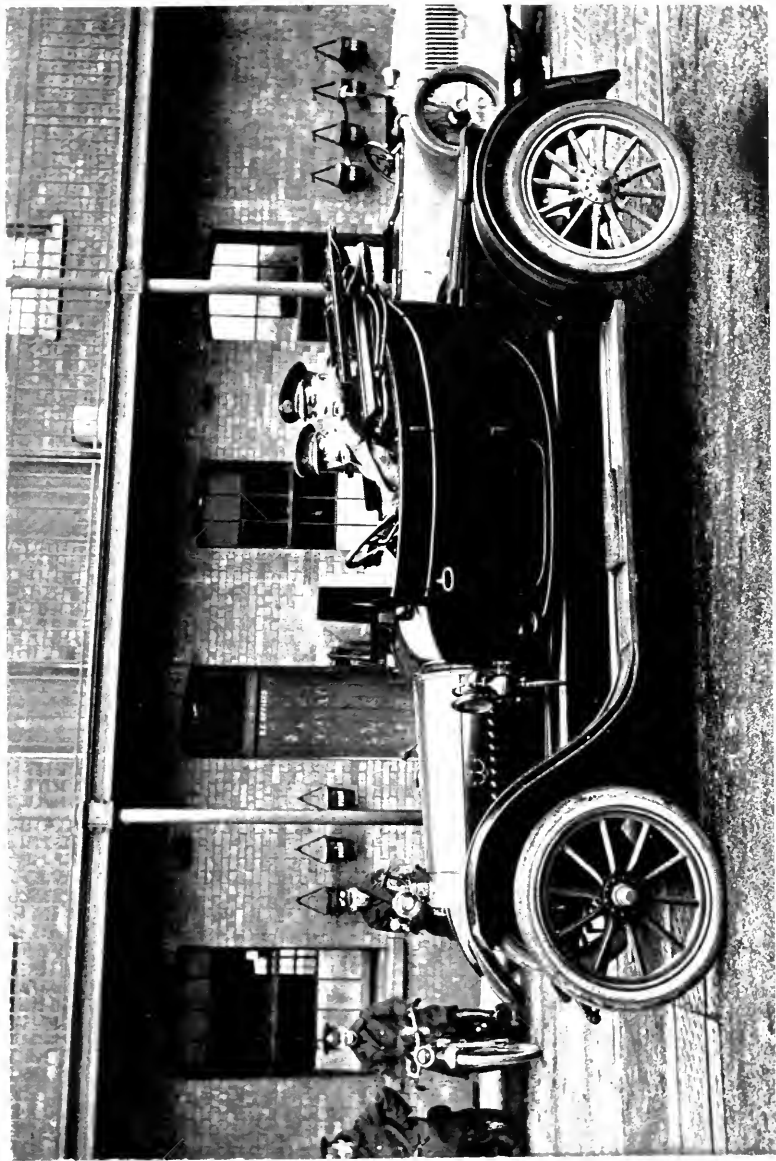
3. Until the buildings can be erected and occupied after the war a temporary Home will be acquired, to be maintained from the interest earned on investments of the Endowment Fund, supplemented by voluntary contributions, the funds of the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society, and if necessary, by Sir Edward Nicholl, to an amount to be agreed, pending the expenditure on the buildings.
4. Local architects must be allowed to compete for the design of the three Homes (on premiums offered by the Founder). The selection to be entrusted to experts chosen by him ; and local builders to tender for the contract for the buildings, which are to be commenced as soon as possible after the war.
5. The objects of the Homes are to combat the evils of Baby Farming, and of infants being " Foster-Mothered " by undesirable persons ; to help poor mothers anxious to find a good home for their babies and, generally, to protect and safeguard infant life.
6. The responsible parent must undertake, in every case possible, to contribute a reasonable sum weekly, or monthly, towards the child's maintenance, the amount to be decided by the Case Committee after considering all the circumstances.
7. No baby (*whether the parents be married or unmarried*) is to be refused admission whilst

there is a vacant cot and the circumstances are such as to justify immediate admission ; preference always to be given to the children of sailors or soldiers killed or incapacitated in the War.

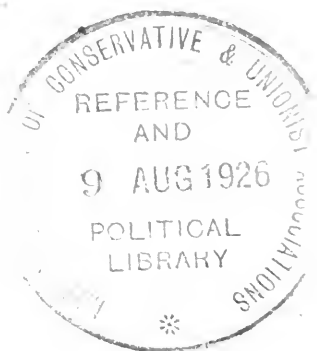
8. No questions of the Religious Beliefs (if any) of the parents are to be inquired into or discussed, but it is understood that while children remain in the Homes they will be brought up in the Faith of the Church of England.
9. A parent may visit his or her child on reasonable visiting days, and at reasonable hours, in accordance with the approval of the House Committee and Matron.
10. The Institution must never be allowed to run into debt, or undertake liabilities more than the Endowment Fund, voluntary subscriptions, and " The Church of England Waifs and Strays Society " will provide and allow for its continuous maintenance.

And so the ambition " to have a lasting memorial when I am boxed up " was realised. There is to-day, at the King Edward Hospital, Cardiff, a " Sir Edward Nicholl Wing," whilst the " Edward Nicholl Home " is beginning to do the good work the founder always hoped it would do.

I can only briefly refer to the remainder of Sir Edward's benefactions. He gave a reredos to St. John's Church in memory of Lord Kitchener ; he made a very practical gift to the policemen of



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL SETTING OUT TO DO WORK CONNECTED WITH THE EXAMINATION SERVICE



OF CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST ASSOCIATIONS
REFERENCE AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL LIBRARY



Cardiff by presenting them with a five-acre field to be used as small holdings ; he made possible the provision of a playground for Redruth children ; he made many other gifts to Redruth—the residents of the town, in recognition, conceived the happy idea of, in turn, presenting Sir Edward with a replica of the drum he had once played in the old Volunteer Band ; he subscribed £200 towards the County of Cornwall War Memorial ; when the “ Evening Express ” Fund for Welsh Soldier Prisoners in Germany struck a bad patch he livened up general interest in the movement, or, as the “ Express ” termed it, “ came to the rescue,” by sending a cheque for one hundred guineas ; and (although this was not a charitable effort) he gave a lead to others by investing £300,000 in War Loans on the occasion of the Government’s first appeal. Later still he headed the list of his constituency in Cornwall with £25,000, and at the end he had invested altogether £500,000 in War Loans. Which, viewed from any standpoint, is a very remarkable record for a private individual.

“ His latest contribution ” (said one newspaper writer, in referring to a particular gift) “ places him in the front rank of benefactors. The hope that he may be spared to derive immense gratification from the good work that his gift renders possible will be shared by all his fellow-citizens and admirers.”

CHAPTER XII

Who does the best his circumstance allows
Does well, acts nobly, angels could no more.

YOUNG.

SIR EDWARD severed his connection with shipping in 1917; but before I deal with that important stage in his career let me first refer, as briefly as possible, to what I may call his second big crusade. It roused the whole country; it resulted in newspapers devoting much space to his very pointed remarks, and it eventually caused the Cabinet to make an inquiry into his charges.

From the beginning of the war he had firmly believed that South Wales—and especially certain ports—was full of spies. In 1917 he presided over a big public meeting which Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, who was his guest at the time, attended; but it was not until 1918 that he compelled people to listen to what he was saying.

On a certain Sunday in March he addressed a gathering at Newport. "I have no doubt there are spies in Cardiff," he said. "I even feel sure there are aliens present at this meeting. I advise seamen not to talk too freely about their work

and their ships. How is it that the commander of a submarine can say to a torpedoed crew: 'You left Barry at ten o'clock on Sunday morning. Where the hell have you been?' Germans are walking around all the docks from Bristol to Swansea."

He went on to say that he was prepared to state that the German submarine which had sunk the "Glenart Castle" knew she had left Newport, and he demanded that aliens should not be allowed to enter the docks. "There are spies in every port," he declared, "and no vessel leaves unknown to the submarines at the mouth of the Channel."

As was to be expected, this speech was given considerable publicity. A day or so later the point was raised in the House of Commons, Major Hunt tabling questions in which he urged that steps should be taken to prevent any alien from entering any dock.

Mr. William Brace answered Major Hunt on behalf of the Home Secretary. It was a typical Parliamentary reply. The Department was not aware of the statement, but the Admiralty were being consulted on the subject. Aliens, said Mr. Brace, were generally excluded from all docks and areas in which docks were situated, admission to which was regulated by the naval and military authorities. Aliens forming part of the crews of neutral ships' could not be altogether excluded

from the docks, but they were not allowed to land unless they came from a friendly port, and then only under conditions which were strictly enforced.

The answer satisfied Sir Edward as little as it satisfied everyone else, which is to say that it did not satisfy at all. He was speaking with knowledge, but confirmation of his remarks came in a flood in the shape of countless letters. There was, for example, this letter from a prominent Cardiffian :—

I observe from to-day's papers that your old question as to spies existing in the Bristol Channel has again been brought up in the House of Commons, and I infer therefrom that those in authority do not believe what has been stated. I heard on Saturday last that on a certain ship in the Channel here there has for a number of years been an unnaturalised German who has two daughters employed in the Post Office and who until some time since were engaged in the telephone operating department, but I presume, in consequence of their nationality, were removed from such department and put down to the counter; that the family in their own house speak nothing but German, that the wife is also German, and that they have spent their holidays over in Germany and, in fact, have been over there since the war broke out. Possibly, however, this information is well known to you; but if, on the other hand, you should require any

further facts to corroborate same and will let me know, I will endeavour to get you such information as you may require, as, of course, I quite realise that the above statement must be accurate and bear the test of strong cross-examination.

This was a still more extraordinary letter :—

In conversation with a dock pilot yesterday on the subject of aliens in Cardiff Docks, he mentioned that the most accurate information of ships' movements up and down the Bristol Channel is obtained by ships' stores runners of all nationalities from coastguards. From personal experience I have on many occasions rung up (a number and exchange were given) and obtained news of ships passing up and down Channel, without ever being asked who I represented. If the coastguards are so lax, is it not possible that the movements of steamer sailings is obtained by aliens through this source? All reporting of ships' movements by telephone should be stopped.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Western Command (General Pitcairn Campbell), in a reply letter to Sir Edward, said he quite agreed " that there is a lot of spying going on at all our ports, and in many of the big towns too, but we are doing better than we did about it "; whilst the Secretary of the British Empire Union wrote as follows :—

Seeing your letters in the papers with regard to spies in every port in the Bristol Channel, I write to know if our Union can be of any assistance to you in taking this matter up. I have sent information to the authorities time after time with regard to signalling going on in the Bristol Channel, also on the south coast of Devonshire and Cornwall, but no attention seems to be paid. Aliens are allowed to live all round the coast, and, as you say, have free access to our ports, and it is criminal folly, when so many lives are being lost by the action of U-boats, that such a state of things should be allowed to exist.

I see that you have prepared a list of Germans and aliens who have the free run of the docks. Could you let us have a copy of this list ?

Another letter was signed "Devonian." This was one of the few that were anonymous. It read :—

I trust you will excuse the liberty of me addressing you, and that anonymously. It is my firm opinion that the G.W.R. route to Fishguard is much frequented by spies, in civilian attire and in naval uniform ; and would suggest, if possible, a much stricter surveillance, also interrogation, of foreigners travelling by that route.

Quite recently I travelled by early mail train from Cardiff, and in the compartment was a person wearing naval officer's uniform who spoke English, but the accent was unmistakably Ger-

man. Where there are so many of our fighting men travelling it would be easy for such a person to gain much desired information, as sailor-men are, as a rule, not of a suspecting nature and would unwittingly give information to one wearing the uniform of their own class.

Of all the letters received, however, the most remarkable was from a well-known Swansea solicitor. He wrote :—

As you know, I am generally interested in your public activities, as well as in yourself personally, and I have followed with considerable interest the attention that Parliament is giving to your public statement respecting uninterned aliens.

My partner, Mr. —, is likewise interested, and whilst journeying to London the other day he met four ships' joiners who had been working in Cardiff Docks, and he entered into a conversation with them with the purpose of obtaining their views upon the matters that you have raised. They were men who had been working in other ports, and they volunteered the statement that there was absolutely no supervision at Cardiff Docks and that they could go in and out of the docks in Cardiff carrying any parcel without being challenged, which was something new for them, as in other ports they had always to show their identity cards, permit, etc.

Mr. — asked them if they were prepared to state that in writing, and they did so. I am en-

closing the statement signed by the men whereon are their addresses in full if you care to communicate with them further. They were evidently responsible men, and were prepared to back what they say.

The document read :—

We the undersigned hereby declare as follows:—

1. We are ship-joiners by trade, and left London for Cardiff on 21st February last to pick up the " Highland Laddie " for general repairs.
2. The boat was in Alexandra Dock.
3. We are now on the train returning home after completing our work.
4. We went about Cardiff, and in and out of the Dock, to and from our work, and were *never* asked to produce our registration cards, exemption cards, or photographs, and we say, further, that we were never challenged in any way except that at night-time the policeman on duty at the Dock would ask us the name of the boat we were working on.

T. W. Arnold, 95, Essex Rd., Manor Park, E.

H. E. Manning, 91, New City Rd., Plaistow, E.

C. F. Dudley, 52, Bignold Rd., Forest Gate, E. 7.

H. Gibbs, 16, Norfolk Rd., East Ham, E.

On the day that this letter was posted a Swedish dock-gate man at Newport and a Russian residing in the Uskside town were charged with collecting, recording, and communicating information in

respect to the movement, description, and disposition of ships at Newport, of such a nature as was calculated to be of use to the enemy. Detective-Superintendent Tanner, in his evidence, said that the Swede had made this amazing statement: “ It is an understood thing to give information about the sailing of ships, and the people pay 1s. 6d. per week for such information.” Ten days later, at Highgate, a Russian was charged with failing to notify his change of address. The man’s explanation was contained in the following terse statement: “ I am on the run.” An identity book found on him showed that he had travelled extensively in South Wales and the North. His visits to South Wales were confined to dock centres.

Lieut. Stoodley, R.N.V.R., also supplied some very useful information. He was engaged in the Examination Service at the time; and then Captain A. L. Petherbridge, D.S.C., came forward with some first-hand facts. He stated:—

I was master of the steam trawler s.s. “Hatsuse” of Cardiff. I was attacked and sunk whilst trawling by a German submarine on October 14th, 1916, 260 miles west of Lundy Island. All the crew taken on board the submarine, and then transferred to a Norwegian steamer, “ Older,” of Bergen. Whilst on board the German commander informed me that we were the only three trawlers then used out of Cardiff, instead of

twenty. He then stated the other seventeen were on war service, and asked me if he was correct. I answered in the affirmative. He also told me that we only had dummy guns on board ; which was correct. He asked me where the other trawlers were, as he expected to find us altogether, as usual. He was somewhat disappointed, as he had come some distance to bag us. He asked me some questions concerning some patrol boats, and some destroyers which searched for submarines, and, of course, I did not tell him anything correct. He then called me a damned liar, and told me he knew more about it than I did. We were on board four days and four nights, until we were captured by H.M.S. " Otway," auxiliary cruiser, and after the Germans were taken on board as prisoners we were sent to Stornoway on board the s.s. " Older." The German commander and his crew are still prisoners of war in England.

Sir Edward was thus in possession of sufficient information to make even the Cabinet believe that he had aired a subject that was of outstanding importance. But he was by no means certain that the authorities would act with promptitude, and as a consequence he got into touch with an official at the Home Office whose views coincided with his own. This lengthy reply letter was the result : —

I much regret that a malign fate seems to have prevented my seeing you at the Home Office, as

I should have liked to do. However, I have had a long talk with Mr. Brace, and he is anxious that I should write to you.

As you probably know, THE COMPETENT NAVAL AUTHORITY and COMPETENT MILITARY AUTHORITY have now added to the existing order regulating access to ships *a new clause prohibiting aliens entering Cardiff Docks or Barry Docks without a permit*. I fear that the conditions will prevent everyone entering the Docks being scrutinised, but there will be pickets, I understand, in the Docks who will challenge people for their papers. I hope this will have a deterrent effect, at any rate, but you will realise the difficulties inherent in the question.

I think you mentioned the case of the London Docks to Mr. Brace. They are in a peculiar position, as the Docks themselves constitute a prohibited area, while the neighbourhood of the Docks, like the rest of London, is non-prohibited. Now, under the Aliens Restriction Order no alien can enter a prohibited area without an Identity Book, and, by agreement between the Metropolitan and the Port of London Authorities Police, aliens entering the Docks are required to be in possession of an Identity Card instead of the regular Identity Book. But here, again, with the thousands of dock labourers, etc., entering the Docks, close scrutiny of everyone is impracticable, though the Port of London Authority's Police do their best.

Unfortunately, in London the Docks are only

one-half of the problem, as there are miles of open wharves where ships lie, and it is practically impossible, without regiments of troops, to guard them properly—and the troops are not available.

So far as the Home Office is concerned, our task lies in the movements of alien seamen off and on their ships. At a very early stage in the war I pressed for military guards to be placed on ships trading with neutral European ports, as it was through such ships that the chief danger lay of information being conveyed to enemy agents. I was met with the answer—reasonable enough in the circumstances—that the trained men were wanted at the front, and the untrained men could not be spared from the camps. Later on, when the R.D.C. was formed, I pressed again, and was strongly supported by M.I. 5. This time we were successful, and now some 1100 men of the R.D.C. are guarding these ships at all points in the United Kingdom to which they come. Further, I was instrumental in getting the competent Naval Authorities and competent Military Authorities to make orders under the Defence of the Realm Regulations regulating the access from the shore to the ship in these cases—such access being just as important as access from the ship to the shore.

When these ships from neutral European ports were very numerous, as they were for some time after war broke out, we found it was impracticable to prevent the master landing for ship's



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL IN COURT DRESS

To face page 188



REFERENCE
AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL
LIBRARY



business. Now that they have fallen off in number, in conjunction with M.I. 5 and with all the Departments concerned, I have worked out a scheme which will have the effect of preventing *anyone* landing from such ships. This is being gradually applied all round the coast, and in this way I hope that all chance of communication with enemy agents in neutral countries through such ships will disappear.

I am afraid this is a long and scrappy letter, but I hope you will find it of some interest.

Other people had by this time become interested in the matter. Among them was Mr. J. Havelock Wilson, M.P., who made statements that were even stronger than those Sir Edward had been responsible for. All the time the Admiralty were denying that there was any evidence to show that there were spies in the Bristol Channel ports. That induced Mr. Ronald McNeill, M.P., to put a point-blank question to the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Mr. McNeill asked if the attention of the First Lord had been called to a speech delivered at Newport by Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, President of the Merchant Seamen's League, and whether, in view of the fact that this officer declared that he spoke as Examination Officer for the Bristol Channel, his demand that aliens should not be allowed to enter the Docks would be complied with. Would the First Lord say what steps

he proposed to take to remove the danger referred to ?

Dr. Macnamara's reply was everywhere labelled as thoroughly unsatisfactory. It was as follows:—

My attention has been called to the utterances referred to. Sir Edward Nicholl is being asked for an explanation of his statements. If the statement is true that there are spies in every port of the Bristol Channel, it was certainly Sir Edward Nicholl's duty to report the fact to his superior officer with all the information in his possession. The circumstances of the Docks at Cardiff are well known and are constantly engaging attention on the part of the local Naval and Military authorities and the Home Office, and are at the present time receiving consideration. My hon. friends may rest assured that every practicable procedure is being adopted for reducing the danger from the presence of aliens in the port.

There happened to be two "hon. friends" in the House of Commons that day who found themselves unable to rest assured. One was Major Hunt, and the other Mr. G. Faber. Major Hunt asked whether Dr. Macnamara was aware that the attitude of the Government in allowing aliens to infest ports was very greatly resented, and that officers openly said that if they were allowed a free hand they could catch most of the spies themselves.

Mr. Faber followed by making this very pertinent remark : “ After three and a half years, has not the right hon. gentleman’s department got beyond the stage of serious consideration ? ” To which Dr. Macnamara replied, in the time-honoured way : “ It was not in our hands until recently, but in the hands of the War Office.”

A few weeks later the “ South Wales Daily News ” summed up the matter very neatly by saying in a special article :—

Despite the official answer (of the usual official style) which has been made to the disclosures of Sir Edward Nicholl concerning the activities of spies in South Wales, particularly at the Docks, the movement to exercise closer supervision and keep stricter surveillance is progressing. Sir Edward Nicholl has compiled and submitted detailed evidence as to the serious existence of the spy system, and has also furnished facts concerning aliens who have perfect freedom of access to the Docks, some of them acting as hawkers or canvassers for business, and others being in association with shipping work. These facts give full reason for the conviction that stricter oversight—indeed, actual exclusion of at least certain persons—is eminently desirable in the national interest, and that the liberty of access hitherto enjoyed by them to the Docks and to other sources of information should be extinguished. In view of the agitation which is arising and the accumulating evidence as to the effectiveness of the

spy system, it has been determined to persevere in South Wales with the effort to put a stop to these activities. Sir Edward Nicholl knows that workmen from other parts of the country can be brought to the Docks and set to work without investigation as to their *bona fides*, and this is another point to which official attention is being directed, seeing the risk thus entailed of undesirable persons getting valuable information.

So strong was the feeling at Cardiff that it was only by Sir Edward's efforts that a serious strike was averted. The local sailors and firemen were so incensed at what was regarded as the feeble policy of the Government that they actually decided to tie up the shipping of the port. It was only by the active intervention of Sir Edward that the unrest was appeased; he promised to go all out in an effort to rid the country of the undesirables.

He was as good as his word. In May, Major Hunt again raised the question in the House of Commons. He asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether an explanation had been received from Commander Sir Edward Nicholl.

Dr. Macnamara replied :—

It is due to Sir Edward Nicholl that I should say that my reply of May 1st (1918), stating that he had been asked for an explanation by the War Office, which had not been received, was in-

correct. The War Office appears to have written to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, under whom Sir Edward Nicholl had been serving, and that officer replied that Sir Edward Nicholl had ceased to hold his appointment under him on September 1st, 1917. The request for an explanation did not, therefore, reach Sir Edward Nicholl as I presumed it had done. Had it done so, I am sure he would have forwarded forthwith the grounds upon which, on March 3rd, he expressed the opinion already referred to. I have recently, however, had an opportunity of going into the matter pretty fully with Sir Edward Nicholl and hearing from him the grounds for his belief, stated on March 3rd, that there were spies in the Bristol Channel. *His statement, except in one particular, does not, in fact, add to the information possessed by the Admiralty.*

The italics are mine. Considering that two months earlier Dr. Macnamara had said that there was *no* evidence that there were spies in the Bristol Channel, comment would seem to be superfluous. That very day, however, a new order under the Defence of the Realm Act applying to the port of Cardiff was advertised in all the local papers. It re-enacted the old order restricting the right of persons to board vessels trading with neutral European ports, and included an entirely new order prohibiting aliens from going on the Cardiff Docks area without

obtaining a permit from the police. Further drastic orders were issued in the weeks that followed, and finally Sir Edward's charges were definitely proved by an admission by the Foreign Office, in the course of official correspondence bearing upon the losses of ships by submarine attacks, that the Germans had stated that they had received from an agent at Cardiff such information as had enabled a certain submarine to work with success.

In June it was announced that Mr. Lloyd George was taking a hand in the matter—it is worthy of mention that only a day or so before Sir Edward had sent him a lengthy and quite-to-the-point telegram—and the new policy that Sir Edward had all along advocated came into force a little later. One of the most important orders issued was that all the business of a neutral vessel trading with a neutral European port was to be conducted aboard and not ashore. That meant the withdrawal of the quite unsatisfactory order whereby aliens were allowed to land on production of a permit signed by an Aliens' Officer.

The crusade was justified, and so was the man who had first started it. I am inclined to think that in getting the Cabinet to move as he did Sir Edward accomplished the biggest thing of his career. His first crusade was purely local; his second was national. That both were crowned with success says much for his pertinacity and for

his determination not to be swerved from his purpose.

This humorous paragraph, taken from a weekly journal of the period, tells its own tale :—

(Dr. Macnamara has made inquiries, and there are no German spies in the Bristol Channel ports, after all. I am awfully glad to hear it ; and I do hope the German spies who said they were not German spies were telling the truth.)

The cause of certain things to trace, our Dr. Macnamara wise proceeded to a certain place in search of certain German spies. He took the “doubtfuls” to his side : “Are you of German kin and kith ?” “Mein Gott !” they angrily replied. “Our names are Brown, and Jones, and Smith !” “I’ll try again,” said Dr. M. “These worthy men bore British names ! It’s infamous, suspecting them of getting up to sinful games !” He asked another little gang : “You’re natives of a German town ?” Indignantly their voices rang : “Our names are Smith, and Jones, and Brown !” “Dear me !” our noble friend exclaimed. “How very awkward, is it not ? I’m really feeling quite ashamed for bothering you such a lot !” And then he turned to gang the third, and in apologetic tones addressed them thus : “You’ll give your word that you are Smith, and Brown, and Jones ?”

One more short reference, and I am done with his habit of striking the right nail on the head—

or with his habit of crusading, if that better expresses it. He called attention to the scandal of the excessive provisioning of ships, and made it perfectly clear that large quantities of foodstuffs were passing out of the country in the guise of ships' stores. Potatoes were particularly scarce. Yet one foreign steamer was allowed to sail with over thirty tons.

This news item from the "Western Mail" tells the rest of the story:—

It was reported to the Cardiff City Council on Monday that the Board of Trade had, since the 1st inst. (February, 1917), put into operation new regulations with regard to the victualling of ships, based on the terms of the resolution passed by the Food and Fuel Committee of the Cardiff Corporation, of which Dr. S. N. W. Thomas is Chairman.

Dr. Thomas said the Food and Fuel Committee could congratulate themselves on having taken so successful a part in the bringing about of the new regulations.

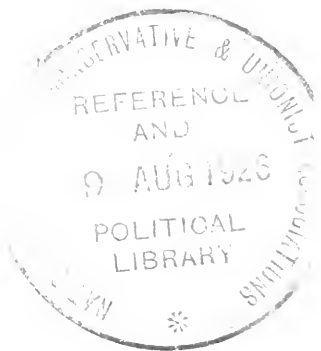
Alderman Iltyd Thomas: "You ought not to take the credit from the 'Western Mail,' which was a week in front of you."

Dr. Thomas: "Thank you. Alderman Thomas has given me an opportunity of saying that we did follow the lead so well given by the 'Western Mail.'"

NOTE.—And on our part we may add that the "Western Mail" took its lead from Sir Edward



THE EDWARD NICHOLL HOME, CARDIFF
(This picture was taken at the opening ceremony)



Nicholl, who was the first to discover this serious leakage in our food supply.

.

I opened this chapter with a reference to Sir Edward's departure from the shipping world, and it will be fitting to close with a short statement dealing with the reasons that led up to his decision. Let it be first said, however, that getting out was a much more simple matter than getting in. He had started with next to nothing; he finished with a property that, in the words of the shipping journals, was worth considerably over one million pounds. Patriotism was at the back of the motive which impelled him definitely to cut his connection; he wanted, above all things, to devote the whole of his activities to his country. Things were going badly with the Allies just at that time. The submarines were doing very much as they liked; whilst in France and on other fronts our men were having a very hard time indeed. To make things still more difficult, the "Hall" Line was deprived of almost all its staff. In May, 1917, only one accountant was left, whilst all the prominent heads of departments were on War Service.

It was not until he had viewed the matter from every angle that Sir Edward made up his mind. In ordinary circumstances he would have shouldered the burden and run the business on his own,

as he had done before. But the call of his country was so insistent that he felt he could not be content unless he threw his whole weight into the struggle. He decided to sell. It was a wrench ; but it was the only thing to do.

The Nicholl Steamship Company—in many ways the baby of the firm, for it was only started in 1913—was disposed of to Messrs. Furness, Withy & Company for a price which allowed of a clear profit of over £300,000. It was one of the biggest deals of the period, and naturally it came in for considerable attention. But when it was completed, the Cardiff “Hall” Line, with its nine up-to-date steamers, still remained intact. For six months or more Sir Edward carried on the business of the firm—for all his staff had been called up—without assistance. What with his Examination Service duties and the myriad things that managed to crop up every day he was worked almost to a standstill.

In May, 1917, he came to the big decision : the business he had founded had to go. In addition to his other multifarious activities he had become President of the Merchant Seamen’s League, of which Lord Charles Beresford was the Vice-President. The first big meeting was held at the Albert Hall, London, and after that Sir Edward presided at, and addressed, others at Liverpool, Derby, Bristol, Cardiff, Brighton, East Ham, Falmouth, Truro, and Redruth. On the 22nd of

the month he addressed a letter to the shareholders. After pointing out that, in consequence of the great depletion of the staff, he was finding it very difficult to carry on, he wound up as follows :—

The firm is therefore left with a very insufficient office staff, and we are handing over the management of the steamers to other managing owners, and for the duration of the war our senior is attending solely to his official duties. In view of this, we think it right to give you an opportunity of selling your shares in the various companies, and think a fair offer would be twice the nominal value of the shares in the several companies. If you are willing to accept this offer, will you be good enough to let me know by return of post, and we will at once prepare transfers. We think it right to point out to you that the several contracts with the companies make provision for our successors in the management; but we should not like to transfer the management and our shareholders' interests without first of all giving the shareholders an opportunity of parting with their shares at prices which show a very substantial profit. Should we receive no reply, we shall presume that you do not desire to sell your shares and that you elect to go over to the new management.

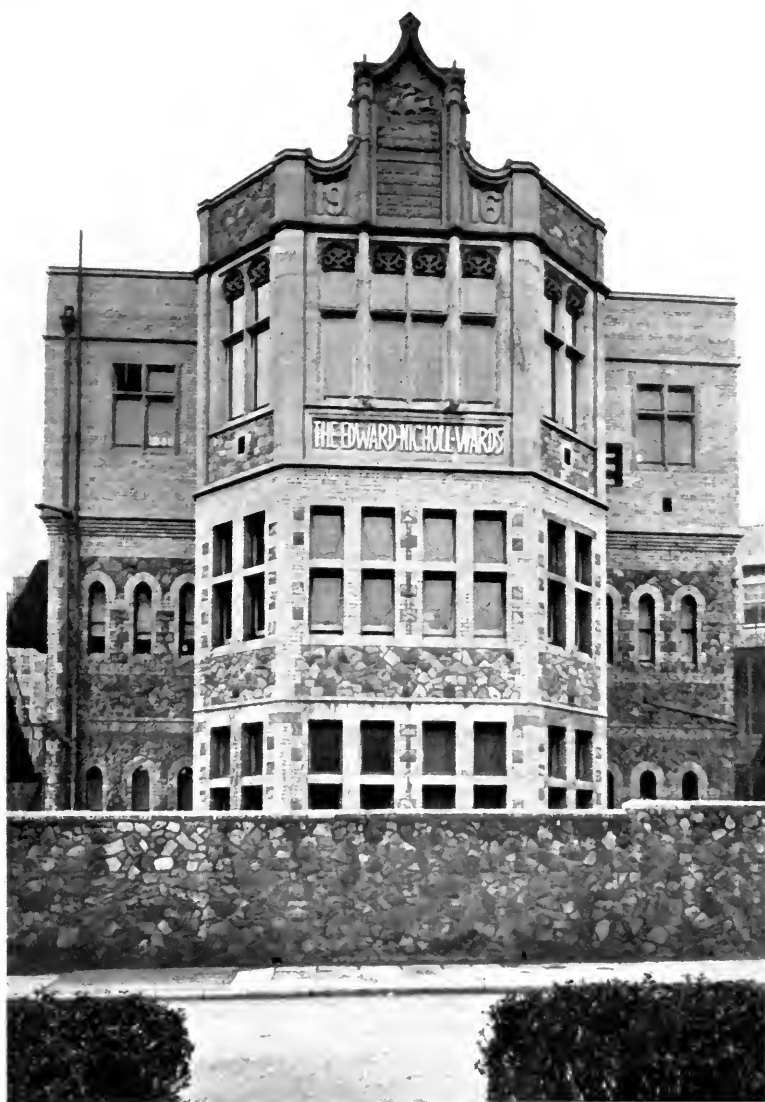
It was all over Cardiff next day, and in Docks circles at least the letter created a mild sensation.

One of the Cardiff newspapers headed its paragraph as follows : " Big surprise. Huge shipping deal. Sir Edward Nicholl sells. Patriotic resolve." It was known by then that the purchasers were the Hansen Steamship Co., Ltd., and the " Western Mail," in its comments, said :—

The purchasers are the Hansen Steamship Company, Ltd., a private company, the principal partners being Messrs. S. W. Hansen (the Chairman of the Cardiff Shipbrokers Institute) and Mr. Vyvyan Robinson. The purchase terms have not been disclosed, but it is understood that the vessels of the Cardiff (" Hall ") Line, aggregating about 56,000 tons d.w., and capitalised as single Ship Companies at about £200,000, are worth on the open market well over a million pounds sterling.

The deal will increase the steamers under the control of the Hansen Company to thirteen, aggregating over 80,000 tons d.w.

Messrs. Edward Nicholl & Company previously owned fifteen steamers, but certain vessels were purchased a little while ago by Messrs. Furness, Withy & Company, Ltd., and the vessels remaining vary in age from thirteen years down to about two years. It is understood that the reason for the sale is the fact that the naval duties of Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, as Chief Examining Officer for the Bristol Channel, require all his attention. He has therefore given up his private business to



THE EDWARD NICHOLL WARDS AT THE KING EDWARD VII HOSPITAL, CARDIFF



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
REFERENCE AND

9 AUG 1926

POLITICAL
LIBRARY

SM * SVC

enable him to give his sole attention to his work for the State.

The Cardiff "Echo," dealing with the same subject, remarked:—

Men who have been accustomed to live up to the motto, "By industry we flourish," have not hesitated to subscribe to the doctrine that by the sacrifice of individuals nations live. Lord Rhondda and Mr. Leonard Llewellyn readily left their great commercial interests to devote themselves to the organisation of the State, and now we have Sir Edward Nicholl parting with a great fleet of steamships in order that he also may devote the whole of his energy to promoting the welfare of his country by helping in the successful prosecution of the war. Incidents like these prove that amongst the leaders of industry there are those who realise that the fulfilment of a patriotic purpose is a greater and nobler aim than the mere accumulation of wealth, and, both by their unflagging work and their fine example, they render their countrymen an invaluable service.

Only one other newspaper opinion need be quoted. One of the leading Cornish papers said:—

Commander Sir Edward Nicholl never did things by halves. The sensational step taken by him in leaving the shipping world, in which he was a leading figure, recalls some of the

other occasions on which he startled the public. When a member of the Cardiff Corporation, Sir Edward was not content with calling attention to the seamen's boarding-house grievance. He tore the thing up by the roots and replanted a better system. As President of the Cornish Society in Cardiff he signalised his term of office by giving his co-members and friends the biggest banquet the city had known.

The eight steamers that the Hansen Company were taking over were the "Welbeck Hall," the "Haigh Hall," the "Standish Hall," the "Cardiff Hall," the "Windsor Hall," the "Whateley Hall," the "Eaton Hall," and the "Tredegar Hall." It is doubtful whether the shareholders were altogether pleased when they read their letters—there could have been no pleasure in the realisation that they were losing a man who had done so much for them—but there must have been many a smile on May 26th, 1917, when they received yet another letter. It read:—

On the day following the posting to you of the letter of the 22nd inst. we were offered firm, for immediate acceptance, for such shares in the several companies as we might be enabled to transfer to proposed buyers, a price equal to two and a half times their nominal value. This offer we have accepted for our own holding. We have received this morning from shareholders a very large number of acceptances of our offer to buy

their shares at twice the nominal value, but we shall pay to all shareholders who have accepted our offer of the 22nd inst. the net sum per share received in respect of the offer *accepted by us of two and a half times the nominal value.*

As one of the shipping journals remarked, the original offer compared very favourably with the average market price of local shipping shares. Only five of the twenty-one unquoted shipping securities on the Cardiff Stock Exchange stood at a premium of 100 per cent or more, the average price of the other sixteen being 31s. Shareholders were thus offered £2 10s. for each £1 original value of their shares. It need hardly be said that they were not slow in forwarding their acceptances.

And so the head of one of the most phenomenally successful enterprises Cardiff had ever known slipped out of business. "He is the architect of his own fortune," said one writer, in bidding him farewell; "and he is proud of his early struggles. In the early days of the war he offered the authorities all his steamers upon any terms they chose to offer."

It is Sir Edward's belief to-day that, had a suggestion he made when he was still a shipowner been carried out, profiteering, as it is now understood, would not have been given its start. In 1915 he sent this telegram—which really ex-

plains itself—to the President of the Board of Trade :—

Re Houston's proposal in the House yesterday. Would rather suggest as a shipowner that the Government constitute every shipowner's office in the country Government controlled office. Returns of single ship companies, or amalgamated companies end of each six months, certified by chartered accountant to be sent your office. A fixed rate of 20 per cent, or as agreed, to be allowed as profit. All in excess to be taken by Government. Any steamer not coming up to agreed profit owing to Government service, or difficulties, this the Government make good. I am now in charge Examination Service, Bristol Channel, but would gladly volunteer take charge such a Department duration of war, if meets with approval, if arrangement could be made release here.

He elaborated his point in a letter written the same day. It read :—

DEAR MR. RUNCIMAN,

I took the liberty of to-day sending you what I am afraid you would consider a rather long wire, confirmation enclosed. I feel so strongly on this point, and as there are so many jealousies and difficulties in serving all ship-owners alike with reference to transports, etc., my view is, the course suggested herewith would give general satisfaction, more especially when I

read that in the House of Commons Mr. Houston was going to ask that the tax on the profits of shipping be withdrawn from the Budget proposals.

The country has to get the money from somewhere, and no one to-day is in a better position than the shipowner to bear a full share of the cost of the war.

The only effect this letter had was to cause someone to dictate two formal replies. Nothing more was ever heard of the matter.

CHAPTER XIII

As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench, the Ministers reminded me of those marine landscapes not unusual on the coast of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes.—DISRAELI.

POLITICS did not really interest Sir Edward until he was left at a comparatively loose end in 1918. The war was over, he was out of business, and he found time hanging heavily on his hands. It had been suggested to him on many occasions that he ought to stand for Parliament, but he never lent a particularly attentive ear until he was approached by the Sailors' and Firemens' Union. They wanted him to contest Cardiff as a seamen's candidate. After considerable hesitation, Sir Edward accepted, and it is quite likely that he would have fought but for the fact that one of his oldest friends and former employers was the sitting member. The latter, it should be explained, had announced his intention of retiring; he, however, changed his mind when the General Election came, and Sir Edward could not find it in him to fight one with whom he had been on friendly terms for years.

It was, I believe, Mr. Walter Long who eventually induced him to put himself forward as a candidate. Sir Edward was invited to contest a Cornish constituency—Penryn and Falmouth. He stood as a Coalition Unionist, and his opponent was Sir Arthur Carkeek, who, naturally enough, was none too well pleased when—as was once said to me in Cornwall—“he discovered who he was up against.” It was the return of the native with a vengeance.

Sir Edward was returned by a majority of 235. It was a near thing, but it needs to be emphasised that even his friends were doubtful about the result. Up to the last moment it was firmly believed that Sir Arthur Carkeek, who from the start had held an enormous advantage (he was Chairman of several Committees on the Cornwall County Council), had secured the majority of votes, so that in polling 235 votes more than his opponent Sir Edward did something that was a most distinct addition to the many feathers in his cap. He contested the seat following the Redistribution—a seat that had been looked upon as a great Liberal stronghold. Winning it was a very distinct triumph.

He began his parliamentary career in a way that was typical of him. He had made up his mind to be the first M.P. to take his seat, and so as not to be late he arrived at Westminster at half-past five in the morning, under the impres-

sion that the doors opened at 6 a.m. Finding that admission was denied him at that early hour, he returned to his club, but was back again long before the doors opened, and, as a matter of fact, waited on the kerb until eight o'clock. By a short head he just defeated Sir Harry Brittain, the Member for Acton, who had entered by another door.

That, however, was but the first of a series of amusing happenings. The custom in the House of Commons is that members can only reserve seats by placing cards upon them before prayers. This is done each day. If the member, after claiming the seat, fails to attend prayers he automatically loses it, and it can be taken by anyone who desires it.

At 2.45 Sir Edward duly attended prayers. Hardly had he taken his seat when Sir Henry Dalziel came along to say that he had occupied that particular place for thirty years. Would Sir Edward, under the circumstances, be generous enough to vacate it? Sir Henry explained that he had to reply to the Address from the Throne and could not very well speak from any other seat.

Sir Edward moved at once, and that day, as there was a full House, he had to sit on the gangway steps. On the next day he selected another seat on the opposite side of the House. Before he could make himself thoroughly comfortable he

was faced by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who observed that the seat was his. He (Mr. O'Connor) was the Father of the House, and, in any event, that particular portion of the Chamber was reserved for the Irish Party.

The Member for Penryn and Falmouth moved again, and this time to a very uncomfortable spot. But the climax was reached on the third day. He reached the House at an early hour, booked his seat, attended prayers, and then settled himself to listen to questions. Up came Sir Philip Magnus. By that time Sir Edward felt like a shuttlecock. He sat fast.

"My seat," said Sir Philip.

"Mine," answered Sir Edward.

There was a whispered argument, and finally, to the intense enjoyment of those who were watching, Sir Philip turned on his heel and marched away.

"Only dynamite will get me out of this," said Sir Edward, tapping the bench. "I have given way twice; I stop here now."

And he did. As a matter of fact, he has retained the seat—which is immediately behind the Prime Minister—ever since. He has a trick of his own which he invariably employs when anyone tries to capture it. He never argues or protests; all he does is to plant himself on the intruder's knees. It never fails.

And now let me deal with a phase of parlia-

mentary life that, in my opinion at least, requires a little ventilation. It may be summed up in this one sentence: Should a Member of Parliament be bled?

It has been my unfortunate lot, on more than one occasion, to have to wade through countless—and ridiculous—appeals from people who seem to imagine that an M.P. is put on the earth simply to dive into his money-pocket; to answer letters on every conceivable subject; to interview people with grievances; to waste valuable time in trying to convince certain folk that there is a limit to a man's resources. There is nothing in the world more remarkable than an M.P.'s letter-bag. When all the circulars, all the demands, all the appeals and resolutions of crank organisations are thrown aside there usually remain a fine batch of letters. It is no exaggeration to say that quite half of them are requests for financial assistance. An M.P. needs the wealth of the universe to satisfy everyone.

For sheer, unadulterated nerve some of the letters that are sent about touch the limit. Appeals from churches and chapels and from similar organisations are, perhaps, to be expected; they may even be called legitimate. It is the others that make men angry, and they, unfortunately, are in the majority. They pour down on an M.P. like water descending from the cracked bottom of a bucket.

Sir Edward had not been a Member of Parliament many minutes before he was snowed under with demands and appeals. And what has happened since? I have had an opportunity of examining his correspondence, and I can say, without exaggeration, that some of the requests are positively numbing. Letters have come from every corner of his constituency. He has been called upon to buy War Loans, War Bonds, and War Savings Certificates; to take a heavy financial interest in Cornish tin mines; to develop and resuscitate clay mines; to provide money for quarries; to build an abattoir; to help every kind of society and organisation that the mind of man could invent. He has had appeals from the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Salvation Army, the Church Army, the Belgian, Austrian, and Armenian Relief Funds, and from almost every hospital from Devonport to Penzance.

Any local effort on behalf of some well-known charitable work meant that he was immediately overwhelmed. Not only has he been asked to start collecting books for every conceivable kind of club, institute, reading-room, or sports organisation, but also for Dr. Barnardo's Homes, for the Waifs and Strays Society, for the Sir William Treloar Homes, for the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, for St. Dunstan's, for various missionary societies, and for the Boy Scouts, the

Sea Scouts, the Girl Guides, and the Boys' Brigades. Every football and cricket club in his constituency seems to have made him either a President or Vice-President, and, in addition, he has been requested to provide funds or cups for race meetings, cattle shows, band contests, horse shows, horticultural shows, dog shows, fanciers' exhibitions, and a variety of other things.

If a church or chapel needed a new organ or an old one repaired, or a fresh heating apparatus, or anything else of the kind, he was communicated with without delay. He has been asked to do something for countless bazaars and sales of work, and as for school treats—well, it does seem that these are held all through the year in Cornwall! It has to be remembered, too, that he sits for a Division which has a sea front of over forty miles. That means that he has received significant information about dozens of regattas.

Those in need of loans write to him without hesitation. In some cases the appeals are for small sums, but in one case at least he was invited to forward £500. He was told that he was expected to contribute to memorials that were to be erected in almost every town and village of a constituency which has fifty polling stations; he was informed that certain bands wanted new uniforms or new instruments; that money was needed for singing festivals (for the Cornish, like

the Welsh, are very musical); that this or that was to be done in a certain place, and that it was up to him to forward a cheque.

It must have been taken for granted, when he was elected, that he had an inexhaustible supply of money. He was apparently looked upon—he still is, for that matter—as the one man who could fulfil every hope, desire, or need of certain of his constituents. He has been requested to find boarders for lodging-house keepers, to procure employment for the workless, to arrange apprenticeships for boys in every industry, from engineering to seafaring; to buy ponies, carts, traps, motor-cars, bicycles, tricycles, invalid chairs; to look after the old and the infirm. It was mentioned, in one letter, that he could be sure of the support of the farmers if he would erect a certain building that they felt they needed. The cost was £6000.

When will it be realised that, in addition to his duties at Westminster, the average Member of Parliament has to spend hours reading through the enormous number of letters and resolutions that are forwarded him. Sir Edward's post bag averages between forty and fifty letters a day, and, in addition, there are always at least a dozen newspapers. Everyone, of course, expects an answer by return. Let me give some samples of the letters the Member for Penryn-Falmouth has received.

This may be called number one :—

DEAR SIR,

I wrote you some time ago on behalf of a poor woman I know who through the War is in slight difficulties, and a little help now would be her salvation. I mentioned in my letter £50 but since then she has been able to bring it down to £40. Any amount would be a help to her, however small. I daresay there are many such, but this I know is a most deserving case. I might add I gave my first vote (of which I am very proud) to you and hope you will long be our Member. I am sure Truro is looking forward to your visit in April or May.

Number two is a little longer :—

SIR,

I am writing this quite unknown to my husband, but as he is so upset about his misfortune I felt grieved myself to see him he is a man nearly 60 years of age and served $2\frac{1}{2}$ years in India and Aden during the War being a territorial for over 36 years. After he came home he saved up his little pocket money and bought 2 pigs thinking it would help in our living, and they seemed to have done very well up to a few days ago when something took the largest one and it suddenly died a pig worth between 8 and ten pounds so I thought that perhaps you could send us a little donation to help to replace it we are 5 in family to live out of his earnings £2. 12/- a

week so you can see it is a terrible loss on a poor man. I quite understand you are plagued terrible by those begging but I am not out for making money it is a case of replacing a big loss on one who cannot.

Number three is quite short :—

YOUR HONOUR,

I am asking you if you can send a Donation towards our Skittle Team. In helping us to succeed in getting twelve medals for our Players it will be thankfully received and there are your own supporters this being the first we have asked for. Trusting you will Do your Best.

Number four is a quite lengthy document :—

DEAR SIR,

I hope you will excuse the liberty I am takeing in writeing you this letter as I know you must be very busy. In the first Place I must tell you who I am and where I am from befor I ask a favour of you. I am not from falmouth I was borne in I except you knew my Grandfather he worked all his time in Redruth in the house that Mr. — of the — live in now. my Mother and father are dead. I have 2 Aunts living in — and when the Election was on they wrote me to vote for Sir Edward as they know Him well Sir I am telling you this so that you shant think I am a froude. as I am going to ask you to be so kind as to do me a kiendness

and that is if you will lend me 15 pounds as I have been ill for a long time. My husband joined up 4 days after war was declired. I do not know the name of the first ship he was on, but he offered hisself for the —— and was on her from the start to finish he was demobilised in Jan. 13th 1919 and was out of work until June and then was out again the second week in Oct. until the 19th of Jan. this year. I was in bed ill 9 week and then the Dr. ordered me to Hospital and I was there 5 week and have been ill again since Xmas and with my illness and my husband out of work it took all the bit of money he had and I had to go behind with my rent and rates and I have no one that I could ask to do me a kiendness for a little while to give me a chance to get on my feet again. I have a pound a week and shall be able to take in sawing soon now I am getting better if you would be so kind as to lend me the 15 pounds as my house is sold and I have notice to go out on the 25th of the month my old landlady is dead and the house had to be sold if she was liveing she would let me pay as I could. I want to stay here if I could until the end of the year until my husband come back he have gone through enough in the war without comeing home to no house I have always had my own little home and I dont mix with anyone I keep to myself when my husband come home we shall move somewhere where there is more shipping. If Dear Sir you will do me this kiendness I will pay you back every month as much as I can, and if

at any time there is anything I could do for you, or work for you in any where I shall be only too pleased to do anything for your kiendness, I have never known what it was to be in want befor and I have been worried afrid they will turn me out that I thought on you.

I will Pay you back sir if you will be so kind as to lend it me. once again I must ask you to excuse this long letter.

The above, I may mention, was an appeal that was promptly answered. Letter number five was a different sort of request :—

SIR,

Seeing the donations are small for our Regatta I am appealing to you for a something toward it, this is the first time we have asked you for any subscription on any occasion. The Regatta will come off on the 30th of this month, if you have anything to give I shall be pleased to get it in a few days.

Number six has a musical ring :—

SIR,

I have been asked by the members of the Brass Band to ask you to kindly assist in providing a sum of money for the purchase of a Double B flat Bass, which will amount to about £30 the Band has done a great deal of good work in the village which is very much appreciated. I trust therefore that in the circumstances you

will kindly pardon me for taking the liberty of asking for your kind assistance towards the object referred to.

Number seven—the last—has at least an excellent finish :—

DEAR SIR,

I have taken the farm at —— and as everything is so expensive and I have a lot of Green crop probably enough to feed 20 Bullocks this winter if I had the money to buy them I have bought 18 Bullocks 10 Breedings ewes 20 pigs 40 Fowls 2 horses I would like to know if you could lend me £500 to help me stock the Farm up full I will pay you again soon as possible only I was in a little farm and the landlord want it for himself I am a married man. wife and two children and a Church member and a teetotaler if you could do me a faver I should be delighted and would ever remember you in the future as a friend in need is a friend indeed and I have a great interest in farming and have a passion for making progress.

But what happens when the sorely tried M.P. gets so sick and tired that he puts his foot down ? In nine cases out of ten he is immediately labelled as mean and uncharitable. He is told, in effect, that a seat in the House of Commons is an expensive luxury, and that if he wishes to retain it he must expect to be bled.



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL

And one of his numerous small friends

To face page 218



Sir Edward had only been a Member of Parliament for a couple of hours when he was called upon by four people who all wanted subscriptions for something or another. Next, a lady, who did not think it worth while to give her name, asked for £50; and then, in succession, he was requested to provide a dinner for the officials at a show, and to purchase, among other things, a horse and cart, a cot, and a wooden leg! In less than twelve months he had over three hundred appeals for subscriptions. And then, quite suddenly, the storm broke. Sir Edward had courage enough to resent being regarded as a sort of automatic shoveller-out of money.

“ Because he refused to maintain some political clubs, the members of which pay four shillings per year for their billiards, papers, politics, and comforts,” said a Cornishman with whom I discussed the affair, “ Sir Edward has been ‘cussed,’ discussed, boycotted, talked-about, lied-about, lied-to, and ‘held-up’ in some of the local papers, all because he wouldn’t supply £480 per annum ! ”

It was at the annual meeting of a Unionist Club that it was reported that Sir Edward had failed to pay his subscription. The members, after hearing the Treasurer’s long statement, decided that they would not elect him as their President.

There was a laugh hidden away somewhere in this, and the London newspaper reporters were

quick to see it. They interviewed Sir Edward, and the papers, generally, devoted columns to what eventually became a topic of the day. It transpired that Sir Edward had asked the Committee of the Unionist Club what another President had given them, and on being told that the amount was £5 he immediately offered to give the same. But that, apparently, was not enough. What was wanted was a sufficient sum to pay the rent, and provide papers and other things. Sir Edward declined on the grounds that his majority was such that he was not entitled to think that he had won the seat for all time. The amount required was £480.

The club habitués were told plainly, but politely, that it was their duty to pay for their own amusements. For four shillings per year they seemingly wanted a club where they could play billiards, enjoy their papers, and generally pass a pleasant evening. In a word, Sir Edward jibbed. He said, in effect, that he did not care whether he was elected President or not, nor did he much care whether he represented the Division. He declined, as one paper put it, to be "blackmailed in this fashion." He received, he said, six or seven begging letters every morning, and they spoilt his breakfast. He intended to spend his money as he liked, and if they were not prepared to take what he gave them they could do the other thing.

This characteristic outburst definitely placed the fat in the fire. The topic, of course, was one that exactly suited the London Press, and they ran it for all it was worth. Such headlines as the following were common during the next few days :—

“ M.P.’s Stand against Blackmail.” “ Refusal to be Bled.” “ Calls on M.P.’s.” “ Millionaire’s stand-up Fight.”

The Lobby Correspondent of the “ Western Mail ” summarised Parliamentary opinion very excellently by writing :—

Sir Edward Nicholl’s stand-up fight with his supporters in the Cornish Division he represents has created immense interest in the House of Commons. Some people were saying to-night that he must have imperilled his seat in the event of an early election. Perhaps he has, but, in any case, Sir Edward Nicholl is not the kind of man to allow a question like that to interfere with his independence of judgment or courageous method of dealing. He would have no difficulty in finding another seat, though it may be hoped that the decent people of his Constituency will recognise that this constant blackmailing of M.P.’s does not make for purity in public life or for honesty in political work. If matters develop into a stand-up fight between Sir Edward Nicholl and his supporters, he has a good deal of other information to give

upon the subject. I hear he was actually approached the morning after the result of the poll was declared with a view to his undertaking liabilities amounting to £480 for clubs and billiard premises in and around Falmouth. His reply was that he thought the life of the Government rather precarious and his own majority too small to afford an assurance that he was to be a Member for life. That is just like Sir Edward Nicholl.

In the main, the newspapers were on Sir Edward's side. One Cornish organ, representing Liberal views, took a very decided stand and incidentally mentioned one or two items of information which were very much to the point. The writer said, in part :—

Falmouth in the past has admittedly been spoon-fed from the political standpoint. No member, Liberal or Tory, has been able to hold Falmouth without he has paid for it. Falmouth has a very bad reputation in this respect, and I for one am delighted to see that Sir Edward Nicholl is not going to be bound by the demoralising practices of the past. I remember on one occasion going to the borough with my car to take voters to the poll for the Liberal candidate. Before the day was far advanced I was asked to go to certain "local pubs." to fetch them. That was more than even I could stand—fetching Liberal voters from the "pubs." So I packed off home.

This, from another Cornish paper, is particularly interesting:—

When the annual meeting of the Divisional Council of Penryn-Falmouth Division met at Truro, Mr. Oscar Blackford inquired the amount of Sir Edward Nicholl's annual subscription, and the answer was that the Member's was the largest individual subscription. Mr. S. Purcell remarked that as an Association they ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. I. P. Crewes asked: "Was it derogatory to the Division because they had an exceptionally generous man in the Member?"

Mr. Purcell answered that such a large constituency Association ought to be self-supporting. Canon Groves said that in one part of the Division there was a complaint because Sir Edward did not give; and here they were complaining because he gave too much.

Sir Edward faced his constituents without loss of time and, as was to be expected, every effort was made to pour oil on troubled waters. Resolutions were passed thanking him for his gifts, and generally it was made clear to him that the dissatisfied only represented a very small minority, which was as it should be, for I have reason to know that he has given very liberally indeed to Cornwall, and to the Penryn-Falmouth Division in particular.

I asked him to let me see his list of donations

for the first ten months of 1920—he had previously subscribed thousands of pounds in various directions—and I found that in January and February he wrote cheques for nearly £5500. In March, April, and May he expended £150; in June and July over £140; in August, September, and October nearly £230. That means that in ten months alone he made gifts amounting to over £6000. Add to this little items like £140 for a playground, £200 for a sanatorium, £500 for a hospital, £90 for a Discharged Soldiers' Fund, £100 for a show, £100 on the occasion of a disaster, £100 for a band contest, £60 for various cups, £1000 for a War Memorial, £50 for a girls' club, £50 for an ex-soldiers' club, £105 for a bazaar, £105 for another War memorial, and a large sum which went to meet the expenses connected with the defence of a Cornishman who had been accused of murdering a German who had assaulted his daughter, and it will be seen that Cornwall hadn't much to complain of.

Cornwall, as a matter of fact, didn't complain, as this paragraph from a paper which had opposed him during the election shows:—

Special interest attaches to Sir Edward's munificence to Redruth, for which he has received the thanks of the Redruth Urban Council. Many may have been puzzled by the fact that this retired Cornish shipping magnate, who gave away something like £100,000 for

hospital and kindred purposes before leaving Cardiff, should have quarrelled with Falmouth Unionists, accusing them of blackmail, and saying that the appeals for money he received every morning spoiled his breakfast.

The explanation is not that this Cornish knight wishes to hoard his fortune, or that he has changed his nature as soon as he enters Parliament. It only means that he is a warm-hearted, choleric, impulsive, and masterful Cornishman, who can be led, but not driven, and who will not pay out money to ease the pockets of Falmouth Unionists who are quite well able to contribute a reasonable amount to the upkeep of the club.

Hard upon the back of declaring that he will spend his money as he chooses, Sir Edward goes to Redruth and increases his gift to £5000, which ensures the enlargement of the West Cornwall Miners' Hospital and the carrying out of the War Memorial. Anyhow, Sir Edward has proved that, although begging letters may spoil his breakfast, drawing cheques for £5000 or £50,000 doesn't spoil his dinners.

Let it be whispered, however, that Sir Edward found the House of Commons very little to his liking. From the beginning he was out of his element; there was too much talk and far too little accomplished. It was hardly to be expected that he would be a meek-and-mild follower of his Party. That would have gone very much against

the grain, and the truth is that there was nothing he detested more than to be ushered, like a suddenly captured sheep, into a particular lobby. More often than not—"out of sheer cussedness," as someone once told me—he made a bee-line for the other lobby.

Here is his own view of Parliament. I quote it from a speech he once delivered at a dinner party in the House of Commons :—

Whenever I look at the Government benches I am impressed by the fact that we have a Coalition of lawyers. There are no less than twenty-four of them on the Treasury Bench. Let us have a coalition by all means, but let it be a coalition of the best business brains in the country. Some of the men on the Treasury Bench are undoubtedly able, but lawyers are not always the best business men. To have a lawyer at the head of the Board of Trade, for example, is wrong. Every Department of State should have at its head a man who is thoroughly conversant with the details of his particular office. . . . But, to refer again to the curse of the country, officialdom—I detest it more than I can say. Yet there are men, both inside and outside the House of Commons, who would add to the present unhappy conditions by nationalising mines and railways, and shipping and docks, and that notwithstanding the fact that since the telephone service was nationalised it has become a charge upon the State, instead of being a dividend-paying com-

mercial concern. From any more State control, and from the creation of more officials, may the good Lord deliver us.

It may, indeed, be well set down here that of all the things he has undertaken, that which he likes least is politics. But in the years to come, when Members of Parliament are discussed, the name of Sir Edward Nicholl will always crop up, if only for the fact that he was one of the very few M.P.'s of his time who rarely missed prayers. It used to be said, as a matter of fact, that on the very few occasions when he was absent that the Chaplain found it difficult to proceed with the service. He seemed to realise that Sir Edward's presence was necessary.

CHAPTER XIV

An acre in Middlesex is better than a Principality in Utopia.—MACAULAY.

IT is a far cry from Pool, in Cornwall, to Shepperton, in Middlesex. There is, too, a wide difference between a six-roomed cottage, a berth on board ship (with a room 6 ft. by 12 ft.), and an estate of 900 acres; quite as much, in fact, as there is between a drummer-boy and a Lord of the Manor. Sir Edward Nicholl, however, has bridged the distance that separates the former from the latter, or, to put it more clearly, he has had the felicity of experiencing the emotions that come to both.

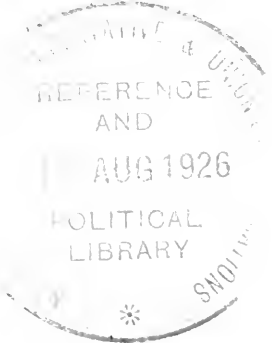
In 1918, just before the General Election, he purchased one of the most historic residences in the country—Littleton Park, Middlesex.

For months he had been searching the county for a place that would suit him. In all he visited and inspected thirty-seven, but it was not until he blew in—I use the phrase advisedly—on Sir Woodman Burbidge, head of Harrods, that he found what he wanted.

“What I wish to buy,” said Sir Edward, “is



LITTLETON PARK
(Showing south-east elevation)



some place where I can walk straight in and hang up my hat. Got anything like that ? ”

Sir Woodman, who was his father’s executor, mentioned Littleton Park.

“ Can I buy it as it stands ? ” asked Sir Edward.

“ You can, ” said Sir Woodman.

“ Everything — furniture, grounds, cattle-houses, poultry, pigs, etc. ? I mean, can I go straight in and hang up my hat ? ” persisted Sir Edward.

“ Practically, ” answered Sir Woodman.

Within a few hours Sir Edward was the owner of the famous old place where kings and queens had often found entertainment. One wonders if, when he hung up his hat, his mind went back to the hole in the ceiling in the little house at Pool.

The photographs at the end of this book give a very much better idea of the property than anything that could be written. But one or two facts of interest may be mentioned. The house was built, if not from the plans, at all events under the direction of Sir Christopher Wren, and through varying vicissitudes it has retained that quality of Dutch solidity and dignified repose which the great architect contrived to impart to Kensington Palace and to Hampton Court. There is a lake two and a half miles long ; a deliciously quaint little church ; and boat-houses

and summer-houses that were once used at Buckingham Palace and Windsor by Queen Victoria and members of the Royal Family.

The principal hall is one of the outstanding features of the place. Its walls are encased in oak and hung with trophies of the hunt, old weapons, and rare curios. Along its sides are carved oak chests and quaint settees bearing priceless china and beautiful bronzes. Round the top of the hall is a spacious gallery lined with oak. In all there are fifty-two rooms, and of these perhaps the walnut room, fitted with carved wood that once adorned Walsingham House, is the finest, although for real comfort the owner's den would be hard to beat.

In the manor hall there are panels representing historic naval and military events. These were formerly in Burlington House. Out on the lake there are three ornamental boat-houses and many pavilions ; but the great glory of the place is the grounds. Here King William IV sought distraction from the affairs of State ; here, too, King Henry VII took part in many a brilliant hunt. One can drive for four miles without leaving the park ; whilst in the church of the estate one may gaze on the shell-torn colours of the Grenadier Guards which were placed there in 1855 by General Wood, whose ancestors, for more than three centuries, had their home at Littleton. But to me the most interesting thing has always

been the tablet in the hall, which tells the story of the house and of all who have lived there. This book would be incomplete if I did not reproduce it in full. It will be found on the two following pages.

To crown all, there is the now famous annexe from Westminster Abbey which has been re-erected in the grounds. It was in this that King Edward was robed for his coronation. In every detail the re-erection is complete.

Sir Edward has considerably improved the estate since he bought it. His chicken farm is one of the best in Great Britain ; there is a miniature railway—less elaborate, but probably more useful, than the one at “The Nook”—running from the farmhouses where the prize cattle are sheltered to a field some distance away ; whilst near the church there is the best kitchen-garden I have ever seen.

But there is little pomp and circumstance at Littleton Park. Despite its size, it is “homy” in the best sense of the word, and it is the owner who is responsible for that. It is impossible to be his guest without feeling thoroughly at home. When he is not at the House of Commons, or taking a part in some financial deal, he farms on a fairly elaborate scale. Chickens, I think, are, and have been for some time, his particular hobby ; but he spends a good deal of his time among his cattle. His herds of Shorthorns and

MANOR OF SUCCESSIVE

Luttleton 13th cent. Litlington 14th cent.

REIGN.	TEMP.	OVER-LORDSHIP.
1042-1066 Edward the Confessor	700-800	Westminster Monks.
1066-1087 William I		
1100-1135 Henry I	1086	Achl House Carl, a servant of the King. Doomsday Book, said to be in Laleham. Robert Blunt, tenant in chief. Gilbert Blunt.
1154-1189 Henry II	1166	William Blunt, Baron of Irworth (one Knight fee), son of Gilbert Blunt.
1216-1272 Henry III	1265	William Blunt. Killed in the battle of Evesham.
1327-1377 Edward III	1346	Agustine Waley and Maud his Wife. John Gogh.
	1356	Edward de Bohun and Philippa his Wife, and John de Wytheewell, and Matilda his Wife, Manor of Luttelington.
1422-1461 Henry VI	1443	William Somerton, Esq., John Ryppley, Esq., and William Bokeland and John Talent and Matilda his Wife the Manor of Litlington.
	1445	William Bokeland and Alice his Wife and John Karkeke, Clerk, and Guy Perkelee and Elizabeth his Wife the Manor of Litlington.
	1458	John Norys and Thomas Heyward and William Bokeland, Esq., and Alice his Wife the Manor of Litlington.
1509-1547 Henry VIII	1528	Abbey and Convent of Westminster.
	1529	Sir George Puttenham, Kt., Sir Peter Vavasor, Kt., Richard Lyster, Attorney of the Lord the King, Andrew Lylyard, Esq., and Anthony Windsore, Esq., and Robert Markham, Gent, and Ellen his Wife, Daughter and Heir of John Sapurton, the Manor or Lordship of Lyttelton with appurts Warranty against John Abbot, of Westminster.
1558-1603 Elizabeth	1545	Edward Lord Windsor, Lessee under the Crown.
	1562	Richard Spicer and Agnes his Wife, and George Ludlow, Esq., the Manor of Lyttleton.
	1563	Francis Vaughan.
	1567	Richard Spicer.
	1573	John Bertram.
	1600	Henry Newdigate.
	1603	Edward Earl of Hertford, son of Anne Duchess of Somerset, widow of the Protector.
1603-1625 James I	1621	William, Grandson and Heir of Edward, Earl of Hertford.
1625-1649 Charles I	1627	Daniel and Thomas Moore.
	1648	Nathaniel Goodlad.
1727-1760 George II	1749	Gilbert Lambell.
1760-1820 George III	1799	Thomas Wood (married Ann Jones), died 1709.
	1799	Thomas Wood (married Mary, daughter and heir of Sir Edward William), died 1835.
1830-1837 William IV	1835	Thomas Wood (married Lady Caroline, sister of Marquis of Londonderry), died 1860.
1837-1901 Victoria	1860	Thomas Wood (married Francis Smyth), died 1872.
1901-1910 Edward VII	1872	Thomas Wood (married Honble. Rhona Cecilia Emily Tollemache).
	1907	Sir Richard Burbidge, Baronet, C.B.E.
1910- George V	1917	Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, R.N.R., M.P.
	1918	

LITTLETON

TENANTS

Lutlynton. Littleyngton. Littleton.

TEMP.	TENANTS OF THE MANOR.
700-800	Westminster Monks.
1065	Achi House Carl, a servant of the King.
1086	Estrild, a Nun.
	Gilbert Blunt.
1166	Robert de Littleton, held of the Blunts.
1209	Robert de Winton held Manor as tenant of Robert de Leveland. Rent 1 lb. of Pepper.
1335	Edward de Winton held by service $\frac{1}{4}$ ths of a Knight's fee. Edward de Winton.
1350	Sir Guy de Brian, Standard Bearer to the King. William de Perkelee, yearly rent 1 lb. of Pepper.
1424	Guy de Perkelee.
1439	Simon de Perkelee, Guy de Perkelee, sons of Guy de Perkelee.
1444	William de Bokeland.
1445	Guy de Perkelee and Wife $\frac{1}{4}$ rd. Agnes Wife of William and Nephew of Guy $\frac{1}{4}$ rd.
1458	William de Bokeland under tenure lapsed. Wood of Littleton, formerly of Fulborne, County Cambridge.
1367	Settled at Fulborne.
1479	Alexander Wood (died).
1520	John Wood (married Elizabeth Hylton), died.
1528	Nicholas Wood (married Elizabeth, heir of Edward Clopton), died.
1509	Edward Wood (married Elizabeth Chicheley, of the family of Archbishop Chicheley), died.
1633	Sir John Wood (married Susan Prettyman), died.
1646	Nicholas Wood (married Anne Ferroure), died.
1660	Edward Wood (Alderman of London, settled at Littleton) (married Susannah Harvey).
1666	Edward Wood (died).
1723	Thomas Wood (married Dorothy Spicer), Ranger of Hampton Court 1664-1723 (died).
1743	Edward Wood (married Elizabeth Bridger), died.
1749	Gilbert Lambell.
1799	Thomas Wood (married Ann Jones), died 1799.
1799	Thomas Wood (married Mary, daughter and heir of Sir Edward William), died 1835.
1835	Thomas Wood (married Lady Caroline, sister of Marquis of Londonderry), died 1860.
1872	Thomas Wood (married Francis Smyth), died 1872.
1872	Thomas Wood (married Honble. Rhona Cecilia Emily Tollemache).
1907	Sir Richard Burbidge, Baronet.
1917	Sir Woodman Burbidge, Baronet, C.B.E.
1918	Commander Sir Edward Nicholl, R.N.R., M.P.

Guernseys are, I am assured by those who know, at least comparable with any others in the country.

It is a little quaint to watch this farmer, who was once a ship's engineer, at work in his grounds, but, needless to remark, there is method in everything he does. When he builds a new chicken house he does so with odds and ends that would, in the ordinary way, go to waste, but the chicken houses, when built, are of a certainty the only buildings of their kind in the world. There is one near the dairy—it comes back to my mind because when it was in course of construction I acted as unskilled labourer to Sir Edward—that caused a visitor to remark in my hearing, "It isn't at all a bad thing to be a chicken in this neighbourhood." I thoroughly agreed.

What is more, I really believe that Sir Edward now knows as much about Shorthorns as he does about engines. He has one wonderful beast that was bred by the King at Windsor; but to me, a novice, every cow or bull I looked at seemed wonderful. I never knew so many things could be said about a Shorthorn until I heard Sir Edward speak on the subject. He farms as he once ran ships, the only difference being that, as he now has no shareholders to consider, he does not bother his head—to any extent—about profits.

But that he will make his farming pay is one

of the certainties. It couldn't be otherwise. It seems to be ordained that whatever he turns his hand to shall show a profit. It may be knack or it may be luck, but I prefer to think that the real secret is that Sir Edward weds to adaptability an untiring desire to make a success of any job he undertakes.

CHAPTER XV

View the whole scene, with critic judgment scan,
And then deny him merit if you can.
Where he falls short, 'tis nature's fault alone ;
Where he succeeds, the merit's all his own.

CHURCHILL.

REFERENCE was made in an earlier chapter to what at one time was called the "Nicholl Luck." There was—and probably still is—a belief in Cardiff that Sir Edward Nicholl always had the fates on his side. There may be something in the theory ; but isn't luck the word that is always tacked on to the man who has been successful ? There are people who cannot see an opportunity when it is placed before their eyes, others who have not the courage of their convictions, still others who are content to plod along with the crowd.

Sir Edward was never one of these. If he saw a chance he took it ; he was ever ready to throw himself heart and soul into any business proposition that attracted his attention. It was said, when he started the "Hall" Line, that he was doomed to failure ; it was published broadcast that his belief in turret ships was proof of his

incapacity. In ten years he forced his critics to take up their dictionaries and search for superlatives. If luck means the same thing as hard work, then it may be stated, with absolute certainty, that he has been lucky; but when attempts are made to assess his success too little thought is given to those heavy days when he was moulding and constructing a business that, at the start, was as small as anything could well be.

He has had his difficulties; he knows what it is to be without money; he has experienced depression and anxiety; but the big thing to remember is that he was always willing to back his judgment and his ability against any proposal or happening with which he was faced. It was no small thing for an apprentice to throw up his job and seek for fortune in another part of the country; no small thing to decide to become a shipowner. Pluck, and not luck, is the word that should be applied to Sir Edward Nicholl by the assessors of his success.

But he has been fortunate in one respect. He was born with splendid health and equally splendid stamina. His illnesses may be counted on the fingers of one hand, and even the accidents which befell him are very few and far between. He lacerated his right arm at Carn Brea, fractured a finger at Swindon, broke some ribs at Liverpool, suffered a scalp wound at Sulina, smashed an arm

while motoring in Cornwall, and badly damaged a foot at Littleton Park in 1918.

But how many men of his age—and of his wanderings—have got off so lightly? I am reminded, though, that it was while he was hobbling about on an injured foot that he was requested, by a member of the Government, to journey to Derby to preside at a big luncheon held in connection with the Trades Union Congress. He had smashed his foot by imitating Mr. Gladstone—he had busied himself cutting down trees in his grounds.

He was by no means fit for the journey, but he consented to make it without hesitation. In the train he came into contact with an elderly American gentleman whom he had never before seen. They chatted and conversed on various topics, but it was not until the day of the luncheon that Sir Edward discovered the name of his fellow-traveller. He was Mr. Samuel Gompers, the President of the American Federation of Labour, and he sat on Sir Edward's left. The neighbour on his right was Mr. Hughes, the Premier of Australia. The latter subsequently spent a week at Littleton Park. The luncheon was one of the biggest of its kind ever given. There were 950 present, and later Sir Edward presided at an equally big meeting.

I am reminded, too, of yet another function. It was a dinner at Redruth, given by the Urban

District Council in honour of Sir Edward. It was on that occasion that he was presented with the little silver drum he now values so much. It is a point of interest that the Chairman was Sir Arthur Carkeek, who afterwards opposed Sir Edward when he fought the Penryn-Falmouth Division.

Redruth had never before known such a gathering, and I doubt whether one of the kind has been held since. Everybody who was anybody was present, and in reply to the toast, "Our Guest," Sir Edward made a speech that later occupied considerable space in the West Country papers. In part, he said :—

I would like all of you for one moment to place yourselves in my position. This is the most embarrassing moment of my life. I appreciate more than words can express this demonstration in my honour. I notice the very handsome present, which I need hardly say I shall always appreciate. As Mr. Launder has indicated, I did beat the drum in Redruth Band, and I have been beating the drum more or less ever since ; but Mr. Launder is determined, evidently, that I shall beat it no longer. The drum presented to me has no sticks. (Loud laughter.)

Mr. Launder : " I beg Sir Edward's pardon. Here are the drumsticks " (handing Sir Edward the silver sticks amid more amusement).

" The omission is repaired ! " exclaimed Sir

Edward. It is difficult for me to go back thirty-eight years without strange feelings. To come back to be respected and honoured by the citizens of one's birthplace is something worth living for and something indeed to be proud of. Wherever I have been I have never failed to notify the fact that I am Cornish. Cardiff is the home of my adoption for many years, and I hope you will not think it said in a spirit of bravado when I mention that the people there have done all in their power to make me feel that I was appreciated. I have lived there for a very long time. When I was President of the Cardiff Cornish Association we had the biggest dinner ever held in the town. Everything came from Cornwall—even the soloists and string band. We showed the Welsh people that everything in life worth living for came from Cornwall. (Cheers.) I well remember joining the Redruth Volunteers during the time Major Hocking was in command of the company. I was in the church choir at the time—a little chorister, and a very nice little boy, too! I have been beating the drum ever since. I say that with due modesty, because mother always said I was the most modest boy in the family. I have tried to live up to it. Modesty first, but do not let anyone stand in your way if you can help it.

Sir Edward, of course, has a favourite motto. He has been asked on numerous occasions to make it public. I think it is very typical of him ; and

that despite the fact that the motto is in reality a revised version of an old song. Here it is :—

Work, work, work, and be contented
As long as you've enough to buy a meal,
For your work, you may rely,
Will bring you fortune by and by
If you only keep your shoulder to the wheel.

I once asked him which was his lucky day. We all have them. He votes for June 17th, his birthday. He is a distinct believer in luck as it applies to that day. It was on June 17th of a certain year that he made his first big shipping deal. He sold two steamers to a Norwegian firm. It was also on the 17th that he purchased one of his most profitable steamers, the " Welbeck Hall " ; on the same day in another year he completed his deal with Messrs. Furness, Withy & Co. for Nicholl Steamships, Ltd. ; whilst it was somewhere near the same date when Hansen's took over the " Hall " Line. Many other noteworthy milestones in his career are identified with the 17th June.

It is his ability to recognise a good thing when he sees it that is one of his chief characteristics. Some of his financial speculations—and they have been very many—would make an interesting chapter that would throw light on some of the biggest deals of the past four years. There was a period when he held so many Dunlop Shares that the mere memory of the number takes one's

breath away. He was, for a time, a member of the committee of the greatest financial combination in the country.

He can make up his mind more quickly than any other man I have ever known. I recollect one evening at Littleton Park when he speculated a small fortune before the man who was telling him the Stock Exchange news of the day could get properly into his stride. I have an idea that he believes in what the Americans call "hunches." He relies on his intuition to a very large extent, but, for all that, it would be a terribly hard job to get him interested in anything that he did not really like.

He has never had many hobbies. I believe that when he was an engineer he went in for stamp collecting on a fairly large scale, but that didn't last long, although he is still something of an enthusiast, for the collection was still incomplete when he was made an offer that tempted him so much that he fell. Nor has sport particularly attracted him. He played football in his boyhood days, and he has always had a liking for boxing; but he only tried golf once. He made three swipes at the ball, nearly missed it on each occasion, and immediately decided it had very little fascination for him. But he loves a good horse; hunting is perhaps the thing he likes best, next to tinkering with an engine. I have deliberately omitted mentioning the building of

chicken houses because that has been referred to before.

But chief of all is his affection for children. He is never so happy as when he is surrounded by them, and he is most distinctly seen at his best when the grounds of Littleton Park are dotted with youngsters who are given leave to do as they like. An American poet once said that "there never was nuthin', that could or can, git all the good from the heart of a man, like the hands of a little child." Sir Edward, I know, subscribes to that. He believes there is nothing in life so beautiful as the happy laugh of a child. Certain toyshops must look upon him as their very best customer; for myself, I do not know of anyone who has devoted so much time to the manufacture of happiness for little ones.

He has few aversions, but there is one person he cannot stand. That is the man—or woman—who attempts to be other than natural. He loathes affectation. "Give me a man who is himself," he once remarked at a dinner party, "and, whatever his other defects, I'll put up with him." He cordially dislikes the people who rarely open their mouths save to pay compliments; he has no use at all for the kind of man who, whilst exuding friendliness, keeps his eye on the main chance.

The giving of dinner parties has become such a habit with him that it might almost be regarded

as a form of recreation. Somebody's birthday? Right! The party is arranged at once. Not so long ago Sir Edward heard it whispered that the Prince of Wales was anxious to meet certain members of the Labour Party. This paragraph from the "Western Mail" tells the story fully:—

Sir Edward Nicholl, M.P., had practically all the members of the Labour Party as his guests at the House of Commons to-night in anticipation of having the honour of meeting the Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness had quite provisionally accepted the invitation yesterday, when in the City he met Sir Edward Nicholl. The King had the other day expressed, in reply to an inquiry, his desire that the Prince should have the opportunity of meeting the Labour Members of Parliament more intimately than it had hitherto been possible, and Sir Edward Nicholl readily agreed to become host. It appears, however, that when the Prince half-promised to attend to-night he had forgotten all about his prior engagement to go with his father and mother to the gala performance at Covent Garden. During the day an effort was made to fit the two functions, but this failed, and finally the play proceeded without Hamlet. The Prince is anxious to know more about the Labour Members, and another function will probably be arranged.

In addition to playing the part of host, Sir Edward has also tried his hand at entertaining.



SIR EDWARD NICHOLL ON THE FOOTPLATE OF THE ENGINE HE DROVE DURING THE RAILWAY STRIKE OF 1919



I can only vouch for one occasion. Dr. Macnamara and Sir Charles Sykes had just flashed on an astonished world as singers of comic songs. It was at a dinner to disabled ex-service men given by Sir Edward that Dr. Macnamara first displayed his vocal gifts. For a week after that Littleton Park was noisy with song. Sir Edward Nicholl was practising. His opportunity came at another dinner a few weeks later. When called upon for a speech, he explained that he was really not in the mood for oratory, but that he would be very pleased to give a song. Loud applause, of course.

I grieve to say, however, that the item was not the terrific success it was expected to be. The singer was there all right, and so were the songs, and the pianist—but Sir Edward had forgotten his glasses, and as he had not committed the ballad to memory, his “yum-tiddley-um-tum” efforts did not convey the same idea of pathos as the touching words of the song would have done. He now has his glasses chained to his fountain pen!

During the Railway Strike of 1919 he was one of the few volunteers who successfully drove a Great Western Railway train. His chauffeur was his fireman. Lots of people tried their hardest to drive engines, but the number who managed to do so were very small. Sir Edward admits that he himself was a trifle nervous at first. It was

not the starting that bothered him, but the pulling up at a station with a heavy load of thirteen or fourteen large coaches, weighing altogether over 300 tons, behind him. The days spent at Carn Brea and Swindon, however, came to his aid, and he not only ran trains to London, but he took them back to the country. One of his best stories deals with a lady who approached him at Paddington and tendered him half a crown each morning. His tips averaged over £2 each day—until he was “given away” by the “Daily Mail.”)

But, in case it should be thought that he is antagonistic to the Labour movement, let it be said that some of his best friends are Labour leaders. He mixes with them at the House of Commons far more than he does with the men of his own Party, and many of them have been his guests at Littleton Park.

But he does not like strikes. He realises, as do most men, that there are times when they cannot be avoided, but he has always done his best to prevent them when the opportunity came his way. Just before the Coal Strike of 1920 he brought together Mr. William Brace, M.P., and Mr. W. C. Bridgeman, M.P. He made a special journey to London to interview Sir Robert Horne, and the meeting at his house that night was the result. It did not stop the strike, but it gave two men on opposite sides a chance of stating their cases ;

and, in any event, Sir Edward was doing something worth while when other people were merely engaged in wringing their hands.

At home he is the host *par excellence*. His visitors' book tells its own tale of his frequent entertaining. Great names, with names more humble, may be found on every page. And, with it all, he is his own good self. Did he attempt to be other than he is, he would not be Edward Nicholl. His best friends are those with whom he laughed and lived in the days of long ago; when a man keeps his friends it is certain that there is very little wrong with him.

From the beginning he was determined to make good. Success has come to him because he did more than command it—he proved that he deserved it. He stands revealed as one who has put great truth into Young's fine lines:—

Too low they build
Who build beneath the stars.

THE END

PICTORIAL APPENDIX

VIEWS OF LITTLETON PARK,
SHEPPERTON, MIDDLESEX





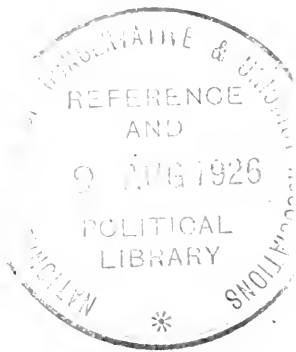
LITTLETON PARK, SHEPPERTON, MIDDLESEX
(1)





THE HALL, LITTLETON PARK

(2)



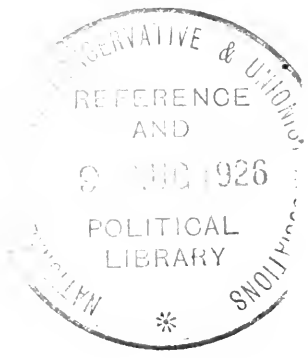


A VIEW OF THE GROUNDS, LITTLETON PARK
The Church in the distance
(3)



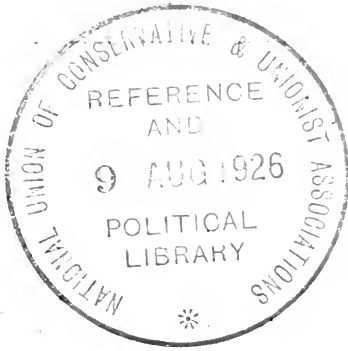


THE DINING-ROOM, LITTLETON PARK
(9)





THE LIBRARY, LITTLETON PARK
(Sir Edward Nicholl's "Den")
(5)

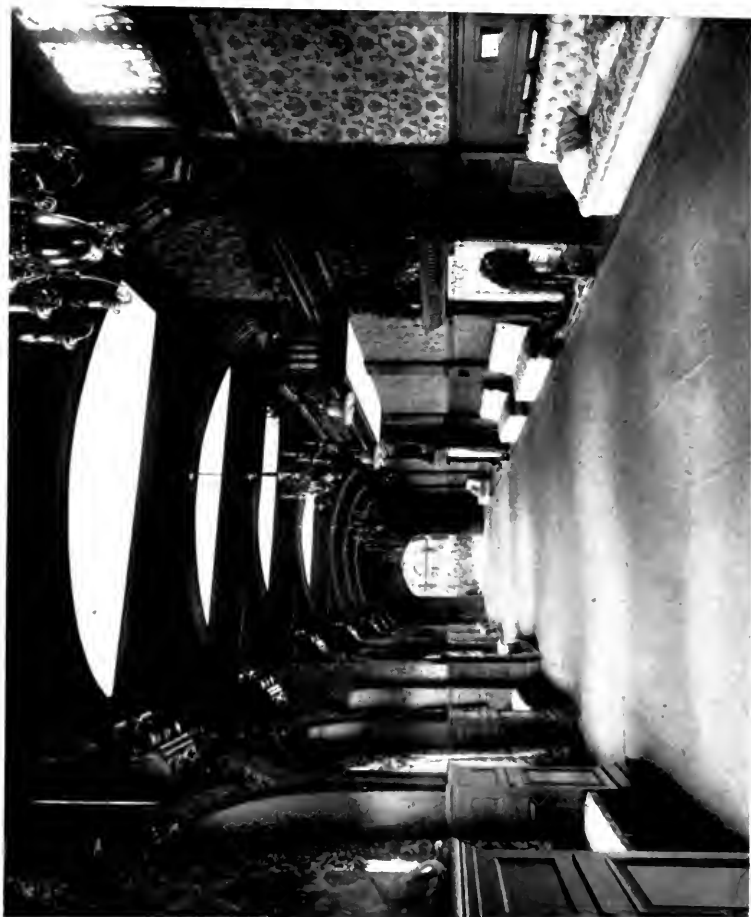


CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST ASSOCIATIONS
REFERENCE AND

9 AUG 1926

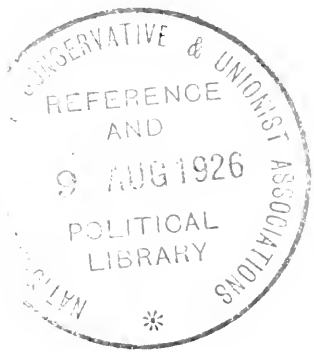
POLITICAL LIBRARY





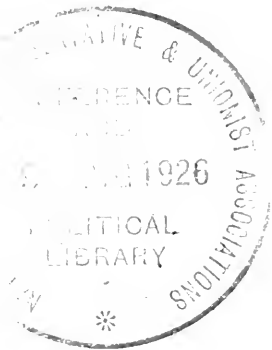
THE BALLROOM, LITTLETON PARK

(6)





THE BILLIARD ROOM AND CONSERVATORY, LITTLETON PARK



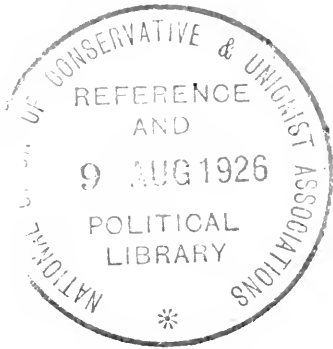


THE CATTLE HOUSES, LITTLETON PARK
(S)





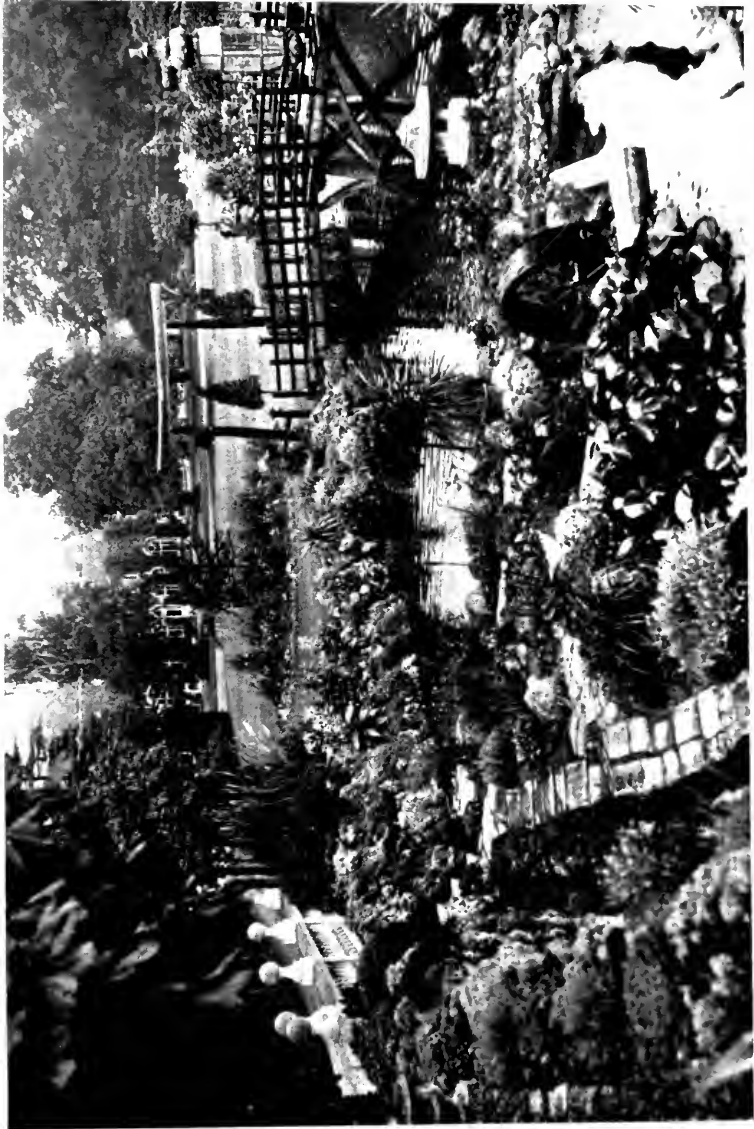
SHORTHORNS AT LITTLETON PARK





SOME OF THE CHICKEN HOUSES, LITTLETON PARK





THE RIVER AND WATERWHEEL, LITTLETON PARK





41

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

--	--	--

Form L-9
25m-10, 44(2494)

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
A 1
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY



A 000 953 424 9

DA
566.9
N5W6

