

THE MYSTERY OF ENGLAND'S WINSTON CHURCHILL

DRAMATIC as has been the political defeat just sustained in his own constituency by England's very conspicuous Winston Churchill—a quite different being from our own celebrity of the same name—the result will have no enduring effect upon his career. He has found what the English call “a safe seat,” and remains in the House of Commons. His triumph would have been unprecedented had the Manchester discontents sent him back to the House. The seat was not really a Liberal one, having been wrested from the enemy in the great tidal wave that lifted Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman into power a few years ago. It was profoundly humiliating at that time to Arthur Balfour to go down to defeat in one of the Manchester constituencies which he had brilliantly represented and which seemed to take special pleasure in refusing its suffrages to the man who held the supreme political dignity of the premiership. It is now the turn of Winston Churchill. He is thought to have proved a had loser. Mr. Balfour did not think the constitution was a failure because he lost his Manchester seat, but Winston Churchill has spent the past few weeks in having himself interviewed regarding the national calamity of his own rejection. Really, thinks London *Truth*, it is well to have “Winnie” defeated for once, because he is so conceited. He is a perfectly modest man, retorts the London *News*, printing an appropriate character sketch in confirmation of the idea. Character sketches of Winston Churchill have been frequent in English papers of late years. They are even more numerous since the promotion of their subject to cabinet rank by Prime Minister Asquith. The net result of them all is the mystery of Winston Churchill's personality. What is it like?

It is his extraordinary rise in the political scale that places Winston Churchill apart from political Britons generally, according to one “very candid friend” who writes at length in the London *Mail*. He was the merest youth in years when he became Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and now he has been put into the cabinet itself by his new chief, Herbert Henry Asquith, a Prime Minister with a passion for what in England they call “blood.” By birth, as his friend, Richard Harding Davis reminds us, England's Winston

Churchill is half American. His father, as all know, was the late Lord Randolph Churchill, and his mother was that Jennie Jerome of New York whose memoirs of the highest of high life are running through *The Century*.

Now, as colonial secretary, Mr. Churchill has made mistakes. In his new post he will make more. Thus Mr. H. W. Massingham—everybody writes a character sketch of Winston Churchill and Mr. Massingham is in the fashion—in a study printed in London *Public Opinion*. Winston Churchill, during the turbulent ministry of the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had to expound, to attack, to defend; to satisfy a restless, suspicious body of opinion in South Africa and to convince the party at home that the government's anti-Chinese labor policy was no sham. Great dexterity, firmness, powers of expression and keenness and readiness of mind were necessary to achieve these purposes. All these qualities were required by a young man little past thirty, in his second parliament, who had spent most of his life in military and journalistic adventure. His success, brilliant and unprecedented, opened the cabinet to him and his present business, as Mr. Massingham reads the riddle, is to obtain a mastery of politics.

What are the qualities which he brings to his task of making himself Prime Minister some day?

The first is an absorbing and unflinching interest in his work, for which Mr. Massingham vouches unreservedly. Politics is to Winston Churchill the business of life, the key to all things. His industry is great. He is at his desk at seven in the morning, reading and analyzing his papers. He likes society, but he is not absorbed or unduly impressed by it, and though he plays as fiercely as he works—“too fiercely, perhaps, for so highly strung a body,” Mr. Massingham suspects—no diversion interferes with his pursuit of the calling he has chosen. His training was rigorous. When he entered the House of Commons he encountered no great difficulty in rattling off a set speech, which he had got by rote in solitude previously. Every impressive phrase, each popular point, had been worked with all the eye for stage effect of which the great Keene could boast in his prime. Only the gift of debate did not come by right of birth. Facility in debate is the aptitude most dearly loved in the Commons. Winston Churchill



WINSTON CHURCHILL APPEALING TO THE VOTERS AT A NOON HOUR

In the citadel of free trade which he has represented for the past two years, the young man on the top of the motor car, who happens to be the most conspicuous political personality in England for the time being, was forced to pledge himself on the subject of Home Rule. The contest grew so keen that every speech he made was interrupted by questions, cat-calls or alternate cheers and groans

lacked it—at first. He set about its acquisition.

It was up hill work. Winston Churchill had no power to leap lightly into discussion, after the fashion of Arthur James Balfour, whose thrusts and parries are the model, as they constitute the despair, of crude young labor members. Winston Churchill set himself to practice the art by the cruel process of punishing the Commons with his maiden efforts. During this period of apprenticeship, Mr. Massingham says, Churchill often spoke badly. Ease, power, confidence, came slowly, then less slowly. At first he had to depend upon notes, jotted hurriedly on cuffs. The device grew superfluous as practice made, if not perfect, at any rate, readier.

Nevertheless, Winston Churchill has not, to our authority's mind, the complete physical equipment of the "great" public speaker. There is a deep and powerful note in his voice which suggests to Mr. Massingham at times that the late Lord Randolph Churchill has come to life again. But the ordinary note of Winston Churchill is described as a nasal twang with a slight weakness in its upper register. There is much lack of sustained power in manner and there is the same lack in matter. It may be that the phrases seem artifi-

cial, the excogitation of a delver among dictionaries rather than the spontaneous lucubration of the genius to whom words are things divine, attainable on the spur of the moment in felicity and aptness. It is not that the thought is obvious—although it is that often enough—as that it thins out nebulously. There are frenzies of eloquence in which the sentences seem to Mr. Massingham to be endowed with a really splendid rhythm. The phrasing becomes original. There is distinction of idea. The workings of a bold and thoughtful intelligence become manifest. At his best, Mr. Massingham believes, no living Englishman can write better or speak better than Winston Churchill writes and speaks. He takes rank now with the masters. Suddenly, and quite disconcertingly, he takes refuge on a lower plane and seems inferior, even tawdry, in conception and execution. It is the great drawback of being only thirty-four that one is liable to such descents. It is the inevitable deficiency of youth in its final stage. Mr. Churchill will be a man of forty soon and above his lapses from taste.

In knowledge he seems limited, unless some enthusiastic friend like Richard Harding Davis happens to be writing of him. Mr. Churchill is not a great reader. He has always been the

man of action, altho he has put together two stout volumes of biography on the subject of his own distinguished father. However, one of his first tasks when he became a minister of state was to gather together a large library which shows a real feeling for what is best in literature and much intimate acquaintance with the choicest classics of French. The mind of this man is of the quick sort—vivid, apprehensive. Like all clever men, he learns instinctively, even indirectly and to some extent unconsciously. His defect—he begins to overcome it heroically—is impatience. He has never learned to listen and this hampers him.

One key to the career of this future Prime Minister of England is his devotion to his father's memory and genius. Now, as all know well, the late Lord Randolph Churchill was nominally a Tory and really—in his heart of hearts—a radical. When his son came into politics he inherited what Mr. Massingham thinks was the father's traditional allegiance to Toryism, and his democracy. His surroundings, we are told, were conservative. His father's party opened its arms to this young, promising, active figure. Yet he had no sooner crossed the bar of the House than Winston Churchill found himself out of tune with Conservatism. He disbelieved, if not in the South African War, at least in the British policy that followed it. He thought imperialism dangerous and costly. He had his father's passion for thrift in the public service. With his quick instinct—or so Mr. Massingham calls it—Winston Churchill divined the coming battle over free trade, and predicted the struggle that was so soon to put Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman into power long before many old political hacks knew just what was the matter. The alienation was inevitable. The chiefs of the party to which he nominally adhered hated the independence of the raw recruit. His boyishness was insolent. His way of getting upon his legs and talking to the Commons was cocksure, and therefore laughable. Then there was the worst fault of all—a leaning to the radical view in everything. Winston Churchill had youth's contempt for conciliation. His fellow members of the party it has been his destiny to desert since at last refused to listen to him with any patience. Then he convinced the Liberal party that he had belonged to it heart and soul in secret from the first. The convert, or, as some of the Conservatives say, the traitor, was received gladly, but distrusted because he had shown himself so flighty.

The trouble with Winston Churchill just now is that he inclines to run out of his stock of physical energy, to miss his sleep, to polo when he should be resting from the immense strain of the life to which he is devoted. The face, tho its lines have broadened and deepened during the last few years, seems to Mr. Massingham still "over pale." The countenance as a whole has lost somewhat of its old boyishness, its former mischievousness. The shoulders are far too bowed for a man of thirty-four. "He has a long course to go. He will need something of Gladstone's methodical habit to carry him through it. He is of true racer's blood. He loves the battle more than the victory." No such conspicuous genius has arisen in English politics since his father's sun appeared, attained its wonderful zenith, and, to take leave of Mr. Massingham as an authority here, "rushed to its setting."

To publish the life of a man still under thirty-five might appear a work of supererogation; but Mr. A. MacCallum Scott, who makes Winston Churchill the subject of a volume,* has the right to maintain, and the *London News* says so flatly, that "the hero of this volume occupies an exceptional position in our epoch." Mr. Churchill has already crowded into fourteen years of adventurous existence the experience of a long lifetime. He stands to-day the most interesting figure in the Asquith ministry. A book such as this, collecting and criticizing the young man's speeches and writings, is just the sort of thing that has made him so self-conscious—to carping critics. Mr. Scott, however, writes in a heightened and telling fashion concerning his "hero," and the first few chapters are not inclined to conciliate that skeptic, the *London Standard*. Mr. Churchill, we are told, for instance, "has stood up to Mr. Balfour like David before Goliath." "He has rivaled Mr. Balfour in subtlety and outmanœuvred him in strategy until the one-time Prime Minister fled from his presence in fear." "He has won for himself a world-wide reputation in the fields of war and literature." "His models have been Burke, Macaulay and Disraeli, and he was worthy of such masters." "His literary power was as undoubted as his courage and his writings gave abundant evidence of mature thought, of penetrating criticism, and of profound political instinct." "He is of the race of giant beings." With much more to the same purpose, of which the *London Standard* says sarcastic things.

*WINSTON CHURCHILL. By A. MacC. Scott. Methuen & Co.



WINSTON CHURCHILL AND HIS MOTHER IN THE FIERCEST POLITICAL FIGHT OF HIS LIFE

The new member of the equally new Asquith ministry was obliged to appeal to his constituents at Manchester for a re-election to the House of Commons. His mother was at his side in every stage of the campaign which attracted the attention of the whole world.

Yet most Englishmen believe just this of Winston Churchill to-day.

Nevertheless, all the panegyric comes with something of a shock to those who recall that this giant and mighty being could not get his Manchester constituents to re-elect him last month. "A sort of taking of the fizz off the gin," comments the *London Mail* cruelly, for all who think Winston Churchill too self-conscious have enjoyed his defeat mightily. Even Mr. Scott in the volume already alluded to, finds in his hero "self-advertisement," "self puffery, frank and unashamed," "limitless ambition," "determination to arrive." Mr. Scott is even unkind enough to resurrect a novel written by Winston Churchill when he was much more of a boy than he is to-day. "Savrola" is the title of this production, dating from a period when Winston Churchill aspired to do all that Disraeli did. Not even Mr. Scott can find this "novel" about one who had a passion for uplifting the human race a thing to be interested in. Frankly, nobody can read it quite through. Mr. Churchill is said to be quite ashamed of it, and the *London Mail* thinks he ought to be. That newspaper, indeed, which regularly prints a character sketch of "the future Prime Minister," has just been crediting him with the charm of versatility. Mr. Sydney Brooks has written to the same effect, adding that Winston Churchill is the "quick change artist" of British politics. "He possesses a shrewd mind, and understands

the psychology of crowds. No one can pose better for the suffrages of the people." He can even make his countenance serve his moods. "He has all the deceitful glamor of the demagog. His plausible tongue can be prodigal in promises that involve mutual antagonisms." This authority would actually say that Winston Churchill's political convictions are subject to climatic influence. "But he knows how to conceal the ugly skeleton under the dapper drapery of ornate phraseology." As an instance of that antithesis presented by one character sketch of this man to another character sketch, we have our new authority contradicting Mr. Massingham in all that concerns Mr. Churchill's oratory. Winston Churchill is "a good and gifted speaker," but he is not an orator in the true meaning of the term, and what is more he never will be. He has not been dowered by fate with that faculty once described by Gladstone as the speaker's power of receiving from his audience in a vapor what he pours back upon them in a flood. Just here, we are assured by our unkind critic, Churchill fails. He does, to be sure, know that both on the platform and in the Commons one must not be dull if one is to be effective. His speeches are always pungent and attractive. "The living picture, the graphic terseness, the sharp antithesis, the sting of irony, the power of climax"—these are all present. But how fatal the lacks, how numerous, too, the essentials he is without!

"The soul and substance of real oratorical power—the ability of returning to your audience their own thoughts and feelings and beliefs in a form that fixes them deeper in their own minds—of this highest equipment of the orator Mr. Churchill is totally and singularly destitute." He has merely a comprehension of the witchery of words. Ever on the tip of his tongue, yet never said at quite the right time, is the "inevitable" word. "Sometimes, indeed, it comes, before it is wanted—even by his friends."

Yet this unkindest of critics concedes that in the use of epigrams Winston Churchill is an expert. "His wit stings like a whipcord." His vocabulary is not elegant, but it has size and variety. It is at times beyond control. Again, Mr. Churchill's deficiencies are as conspicuous as his genius is precocious, or so the impressionist we follow at this point inclines to believe. "His most vulnerable point is extreme sensitiveness to satire." On the other hand he is not chilled by coldness, he is not unnerved by criticism, he is not humbled by reproof. "His complacent smile survives the most severe chastening." His mental furniture is briefly inventoried by this critical student of his character. "An eclectic with a patchwork of opinions picked from every quarter." He thinks his own crudity is intellectual insight. His cocksureness is colossal, and on the other hand his ignorance is appalling. The whole trouble with Winston Churchill is made out to be that he thinks he knows enough to be in the cabinet. "His mind is essentially superficial." He seems to be original because he absorbs the ideas of others and works them off as his own. In flat contradiction of all that we have been told by Mr. Massingham, Winston Churchill is set down as lazy and shiftless, making a tremendous pretence of activity amid the din of his own inefficiency. "He has a mind that plays with things rather than ideas, with men rather than with principles." "He is continually coming across mares' nests and apprising the public of his discovery in sonorous and impressive phrases." Of the qualities which are deemed exasperating he has plenty, but "his irritant infallibility" is the worst of these. Errors he makes lightly and plentifully. To acknowledge one is beyond him. His apology for intemperate speech is like a wet mop run across a white wall, smooching what it has wiped out. A great statesman he can never be. He lacks the prime requisite, which is maturity and poise combined.

Not until Richard Harding Davis had begun to record his impressions of Winston Churchill did the rising Briton find his true panegyrist.* Mr. Davis sees in the new cabinet minister some such character as the old Spanish romancers made use of in their tales of the cape and sword. Winston Churchill in the uniform of lieutenant in the South African Light Horse, ever in the thick of things, stunned all war correspondents by his defiance of bullets. He shouted to his men to come on, which they failed to do. Churchill likewise fought the Spaniards, which was a breach of discipline in one wearing the uniform of a neutral. However, the family influence—that of the Duke of Marlborough—got him off. Here his American mother helped him, as she helped him heart and soul with the voters of that Manchester constituency which declined to send him back to the Commons. Between mother and son there exists a comradeship that delights all beholders. She affirms that he is a genius, and she has persuaded him that he must be at least that. She is proud of his journalism, dating from the days when he acted as war correspondent; she is prouder of his soldier record, which got him into difficulty with the great Lord Kitchener; she is proudest of his oratory, which she compares, it seems, to that of Burke embellished by Sheridan. When he speaks she hears Gladstone, or is said to do so. Her favorite novel is the one he wrote before he was twenty-three. As Winston Churchill is usually on distant terms with the Marlboroughs, to whom he is so nearly related, his mother's brilliance and fidelity to his interests are very necessary to him socially. But this fond mother, we are assured by the *London Throne*, does not see the real Winston Churchill. Neither, adds the *London Mail*, does the Liberal party, which will yet find him all that Iago was to the Moor. Nothing daunted, *London Truth* maintains that the mystery of the real Winston Churchill is artificially established by press agents who wish to keep their man of straw in the public eye. First we are told that Winston Churchill is no orator. Then we read that he is a Demosthenes. Next some writer contends that Winston Churchill is patriotic, and in a week more a rival print makes him out a traitor. It is all part of the most skilful game of puffery ever played, the sole object being to set going a Winston Churchill craze.

*REAL SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE. By R. H. Davis. Scribner.