

BY-PRODUCTS OF AN INTERVIEWER'S LIFE

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"My dear chap, how can I dine with you when I don't know you?"

"LET me do the interviews—I don't care who does the obituaries," remarked Lord Northcliffe in a Press Club speech, referring to the American custom of interviewing for publication all sorts and conditions of travelers.

His lordship, it appears, had made a practice of interviewing his interviewers. By this process, he said, he kept abreast of local issues everywhere he went and obtained a comprehensive grasp of affairs normally out of his range. The newspaper interviewer meets many famous men and women. Within a decade most celebrities come at least once within his range. As time passes he remembers most vividly odd incidents connected with these interviews. He may forget what was said concerning a topic of the moment, but will recall idiosyncracies of behavior, speech or attire that characterize his particular string of notables.

Consider the Hon. Winston Churchill, for instance, fresh and pink from South African adventures, refusing to dine with a group of Western millionaires who wished to lionize him at their club. Mr. Churchill said to the astonished sponsor of the affair: "My dear chap, how can I dine with you when I don't know you?"

To-day, the distinguished Englishman would doubt waive formalities. Times and customs have changed, and men with them.

Li Hung Chang, replying to a question as to the probable effect on civilization of Orville Wright's then embryonic efforts to fly, said that the history of China held reference to human flight during the T'sang dynasty in 960, but scientists of that day had wisely decided against developing it. Could the interviewer by any chance enlighten him as to the number of petals evolved by the Dianthus Chinesis in American greenhouses? The earl was vastly interested in horticulture.

Rudyard Kipling, traveling in the private car of a railroad magnate from Seattle across the American continent, refused to grant an interview because it hurt him to "draw a long breath." Mr. Kipling said he had been holding his breath for four days while his American host rushed him over canyons and skirted precipices on cumbrous trestles at the rate of sixty miles an hour. Kipling was reminded, he said, of Phineas Fogg's adventure with the engineer who, instead of letting his passengers walk over a dangerous bridge, backed up half a mile and took it flying.

When Kitchener of Khartoum returned from India to England by way of Japan and the United States in 1910, efforts to interview him began as soon as he set foot on these shores. His lordship abhorred publicity and detested reporters. Their enterprise resulted in nothing more exciting than K of K's reiterated assertion that he thought the United States an

amazing country — was fascinated by its people, charmed with its scenery and bewildered by its vastness.

When Kitchener's train reached the old Wells Street station at Chicago, fifty South African war veterans waited to welcome their former commander. Wearing a gray tweed suit of becoming shapelessness and a floppy golf cap, Kitchener descended the Pullman steps and was surrounded.

My effort to interview the Sphinx was a foregone failure. The main thing, then, was to get a good picture. For this Nate Meissler, newspaper photographer, accompanied me.

"Sorry, can't talk," snapped Kitchener—"Against orders, y'know—soldier—on duty—that sort of thing—Photograph? Lord, no! Can't, really—Sorry, y'know—awfully."

I expected that, but Nate was horrified. "Something must be done," he whispered. "Couldn't I think of anything?" Kitchener was already starting for the gate with his escort. Nate waddled after him.

"Lord!" shrieked the fat little camera man, Lord! Oh, my lord! Oh, dear lord! Just a minute, lord!" He chanted it like a prayer. Kitchener stared coldly at his pursuer. Suddenly the hard Kitchener lips quivered, and—epochal event!—Kitchener laughed. He literally shook.

"Curious chap, what?" remarked his lordship to the escort as he strode away, still chuckling.

"That's no way to address a lord," I said. "You should have called him your lordship." "Lord Ship or What the Hell," grinned Nate. "I didn't get his name but I got four plates."

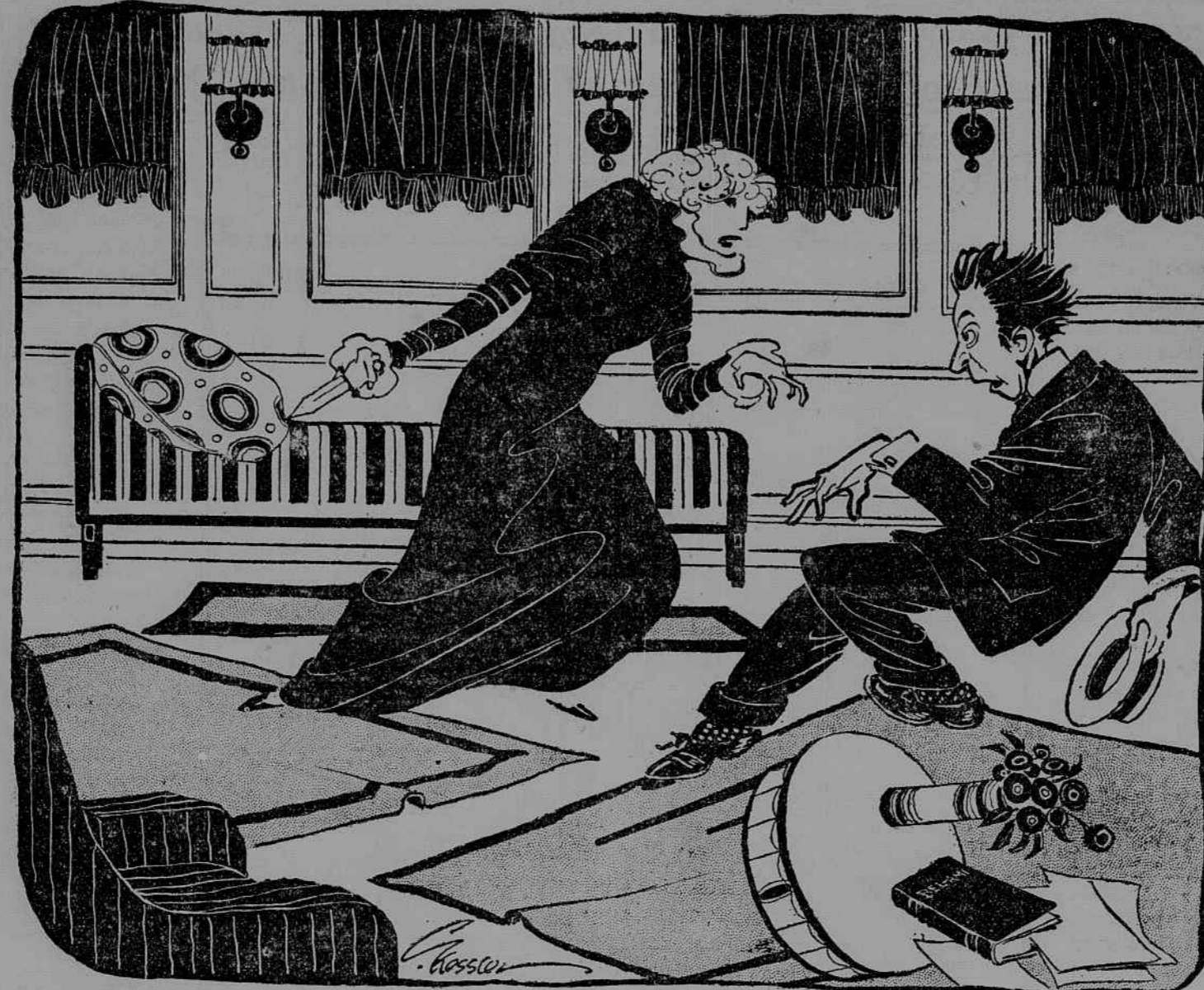
That is how a Chicago newspaper happens to possess the only laughing pictures of Earl Kitchener in the world.

"CUFFY" Dunn, city editor, shooting his cuffs with the characteristic nervous gesture that had won him the sobriquet, announced one afternoon that a reporter sent to Sarah Bernhardt's private car to interview her on the stabbing scene in her then new dramatic sensation "La Tosca" had been pursued by the divine one with a dirk.

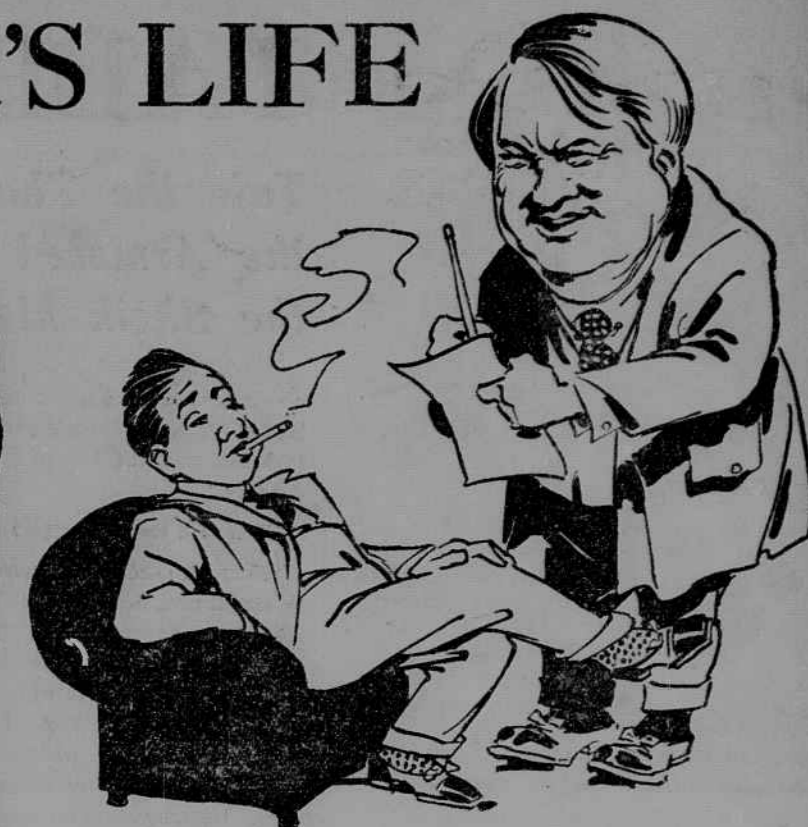
"For Heaven's sake," said "Cuffy," "let Kipling slide. Find Abbey and straighten this out."

Henry E. Abbey, king of impresarios, manager of Bernhardt's first American tour in "La Tosca," was at the Merchant Hotel in Third Street, a few blocks from the St. Paul Union station, where madame's car was parked. Abbey was perturbed. If his star had tried to knife our reporter she must be angry, he said, and might refuse to go on that night. With the house sold out and the town billed as for a circus this possibility appalled him. No time was lost between hotel and car. We ascended the brass-bound steps together.

The reception compartment of the car was hung in pale green. There were warm-tinted rugs on the floor and green shades with red fringe on the windows. The portière drapes that divided this section from the dining room were green silk on one side and red in reverse. When they parted there was a flash of scarlet, affording vivid contrast. A small white enameled table in the center of the compartment held a copy of De Maupassant's "Bel-Ami" and



Madame Bernhardt, for the edification of her interviewer, presents the stab scene from "La Tosca"



"Let me do the interviews; I don't care who does the obituaries," remarked Northcliffe

He is Scarpia. I make to heed my speech. I roosh at heem. He ees tout agile. He go like zees—so afraid for me."

Clutching the skirts of her black peignoir with one long white hand, Madame made a dive at the settee where she sat crouched as though in terror, to illustrate. Up in an instant, she continued:

"I walk zees way and I walk zat way—I ron ron' ze table; I am ver' angree. Soon I moos stab heem, so I become more—vat you say—enragee. Now I ron at

heem vees ze knife. I veech to stab heem, but he ees no longer present. He seize hees chaupau. He ron to zee door. He leap from zee steps and exclaim 'Zo long, Meeses Bernhardt. C'est fini—I est disparu.'"

"You've got a story," laughed Abbey—"every star her own press agent. I'm darned glad it's no worse," he grinned.

"Give us ten lines on it," said "Cuffy" Dunn, city editor. "These temperamental trouperes make me sick."

ALFRED Noyes is a most obliging poet. He makes notes on all sorts of paper scraps and has his pockets full of them nearly always. When a newspaper man calls to interview him he fishes round for these scraps and elaborates.

Mr. and Mrs. Noyes made their initial visit to Chicago a few years ago. Mrs. Noyes was intent on exploring the shops and Mr. Noyes on doing the stock yards. They had established themselves high up in the Auditorium Hotel overlooking Grand Park and Lake Michigan.

Interviewing Mr. Noyes was like interviewing Wu Ting-fang. He asked more questions than he answered. Never, I believe, was a poet so strong for statistics. Fortunately, stock yard statistics are all printed in handy little books—that is, all statistics considered by the stock yard companies to be good for public consumption. But Mr. Noyes was blandly willing to meet an interviewer half way—always willing to help.

Had Mr. Noyes formed any definite impressions of Chicago? Oh yes, a few. Were these impressions sufficiently definite to form the nucleus of a poem about Chicago? The poet hardly knew—he thought it not possible. Wouldn't Mr. Noyes just dash off a few lines of poetry about Chicago while the interviewer waited? Oh, certainly—with a fountain pen. Printed on this page in facsimile is the poem Mr. Noyes dashed off on a sheet of Auditorium Hotel note paper. It has never before been published.

"I may be able to elaborate the idea later on," said Mr. Noyes, as he handed me the manuscript, after waving it to dry the ink—"but I think this roughly expresses it."

Mrs. Noyes, pretty and petite, entered, attracted for the street.

"Ready Alfred?" she inquired.

"Too-ra-oo," grinned the poet, rising to join her. "Shopping—must do," and away they went.

SOME time before the assassination of President McKinley called Theodore Roosevelt to the Presidential chair, the Vice-President visited Minneapolis to address a gathering of civic societies. Elaborate plans were made for his reception by Thomas A. Shevlin, then chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, whose residence in Mount Curve Avenue

was to be the Vice-President's headquarters during his stay.

Chairman Shevlin, determined that nothing should go wrong with the arrangements, had every contingency provided for. When the private car in which Mr. Roosevelt traveled had come to a stop it was boarded by a silk-hatted delegation headed by Knute Nelson, at that time Governor of Minnesota, and leading Republicans of the district.

The Roosevelt of that day presented a slighter figure than that which he later developed. The Vice-President wore a somewhat rumpled black frock suit and a black billycock hat. There was the usual handshaking, members of the committee maneuvering for an individual word with the distinguished guest. The Roosevelt smile was on display and all seemed to be having a good time except Mr. Shevlin, who eyed the door anxiously. His plan called for a brief reception followed by a drive to the Minneapolis club behind the famous Shevlin bays. Young Tom Shevlin, later famed as the greatest of Yale ends, had been instructed to locate the Vice-Presidential baggage and see that it was dispatched to the Shevlin mansion so that the Shevlin valet could properly lay out the Vice-Presidential dress togs in time for a ceremonial Shevlin dinner arranged to take place later. Something appeared to have delayed Shevlin jr.

There was a stir at the car entrance. Young Tom, somewhat flustered, appeared in the doorway. Gesticulating to attract the elder Shevlin's attention, he hissed in a stage whisper audible above the small talk:

"Dad, I can't find Mr. Roosevelt's trunks." Roosevelt overheard the word trunks.

"Oh!" he boomed. "My trunks—here they are." Over the heads of the surprised dignitaries Mr. Roosevelt pitched a diminutive suitcase—about the size of suitcase that a high school boy uses to pack his books in. Young Tom caught it and ran.

"I always travel light," grinned the Vice-President.

THINKING of camera-shy celebrities reminds me that the late Charles Frohman's prejudice against being photographed was overcome during a visit he made to Chicago in 1911. Being assigned to interview Mr. Frohman, who was at the Congress Hotel, in Michigan Boulevard, I was taking along my fidus Achates, Nate Meissler. The managing editor, who had long known Frohman, remarked that it might be well to take a photographer, but added:

"Frohman won't pose—he has never had his portrait printed."

"Why?" I asked.

"That," grinned the M. E., is a good story if you can get it."

Mr. Frohman was affable. A stout, amiable, smiling little man, he understood just what to say and how to say it most acceptably. The material was precisely what we required. I forgot the subject of the interview, but what followed is fixed in my memory.

"And now, Mr. Frohman," I said as he stopped talking, "our photographer is below. I want a posed picture."

"Don't ask me to pose," he begged. "I never do it."

"Why?"

The producer turned with a smile to Charles H. Dillingham, his associate.

"Charlie," he chuckled, I've a mind to tell him. My boy," pursued the New Yorker, pacing the floor, hands rammed in the pockets of his purple dressing gown, "I want to hold my

(Continued on page twelve)

Chicago
Written in answer to the question whether it is possible to find a subject for poetry in Chicago.
Over Chicago, that city of smoke & slaughter,
Stoop the beneficent skies,
Ready to touch, with their light, the dark brows of their daughter,
Crown her & bid her arise,
Whiter than snow from the blood of the filth of the shambles
Mighty, with song in her eyes;
All her vast energies throbbing like music
Strong to create & to heal together,
Rained like tumultuous steeds in one dominant tether,
Steel, with a soul in the steel,
Guiding the chariot of Man to the goal of the ages—
God, & the Common-weal!
Alfred Noyes

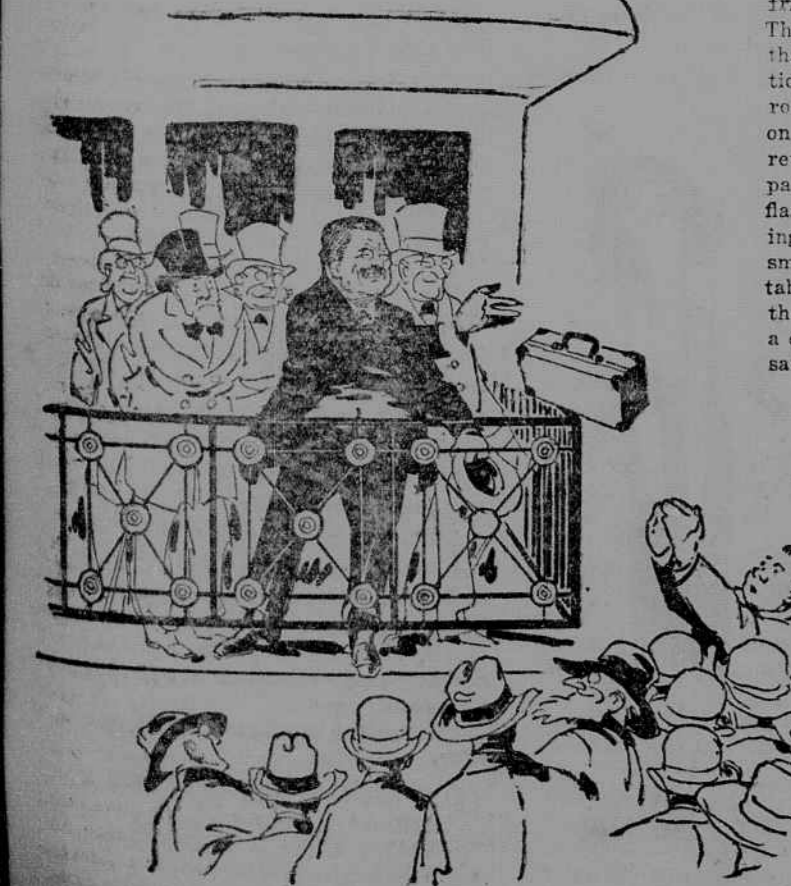
The lines on Chicago which Alfred Noyes obligingly dashed off

a curve-bladed paper knife shaped like a Malay kris. In one corner was a small cushioned settee.

Abbey shouted something in French and Mme. Bernhardt advanced through the portières, chattering volubly, between gusts of

laughter as she gave her version of the interview, re-inacting it for us.

"Zees man," she laughed—"e ees so drole. He veech to write of ze stab scena. I present for heem ze stab scena. Ovare zere he eet. So! I seize ze papiere knife. I am La Tosca.



Over the heads of the dignitaries, Mr. Roosevelt pitched a suitcase



"Mr. Hill, quick! What are the elements essential to success?"