PHILIP GIBBS:

WAR CORRESPONDENT OF A NEW DISPENSATION

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ABSTRACT

The process of democratization which appeared in the nineteenth century was partly responsible for the emergence of a mass readership. It consisted of the new urban population which had its own tastes and interests, intellectual capacity and purchasing power. The popular press was firmly established by 1900 and it radically altered the scope and style of daily journalism in its attempt to speak in the language of the majority. Philip Gibbs was one of the prominent journalists between 1900 and 1914. His aspiration to become a war correspondent stemmed from the image of the war correspondent as a figure of romance and adventure, the consequence of the militarist spirit of the age and the licence which granted him freedom of movement. Inevitably, the war correspondent came in conflict with the military which had not kept pace with democratization and sensed a challenge to itself and to national security. Censorship and restrictions on the war correspondent tightened, until major army reforms between 1901 and 1912 brought more cordial relations between the press and the military. When the Great War broke out in 1914 the co-operative atmosphere broke down as censorship was reinstated, more severely than before. It challenged the freedom of the press and the right of the people to know. Gibbs was determined that the people should have access to news from the front. He fought hard for that objective and was instrumental in the compromise reached between the military and the press when an officially recognized system was devised for press representation on the Western Front. The wisdom of such a move was shown by the success of Philip Gibbs' war correspondence, which had appeal to a mass readership in its own language and with subjects of interest to it.

INTRODUCTION

The vital interdependence between the media and society has, throughout the turbulent history of the press, been the subject of much speculation and study. The press has frequently been regarded as an organ which discharges a social responsibility.[1] The development of this realization was progressive, and is ongoing. By the end of the nineteenth century, when the radical journalism of an earlier period had given way to the popular press, this social responsibility was distinct from the libertarianism which defined the age. It was as much a self-appointed function by the press, as it was the product of a social demand. James Curran, amongst others, has discussed the utility of the press in relation to society. "The modern press," he stressed, "has contributed to the normative integration of British society."[2] The issues of the freedom of the press and the right of the people to know, converged in an interesting way during the Great War of 1914 to 1918.

The British press was given an official voice and a legitimate platform for the first time during the Great War. Prior to this, the military was inclined to regard the press as a hindrance to its activities and potentially dangerous. Its efforts to restrict, even ban, war reporting, as it did during the first months of the Great War, was in marked contrast to the efforts of the press to become accepted by the military. When the military censorship was significantly relaxed in June, 1915, the impact on the British public was positive. It had been deprived of a commodity that by the end of the nineteenth century it expected as a right. The war effort may have suffered from this witholding of information because the public was divorced from the nature of the struggle the nation was involved in. The military required total national support of the war and it was

partly in response to this need that it conceded changes regarding the press and the censorship which it hoped, would galvanize and strengthen public support. At the same time the press was in a position where it acknowledged a dependence on the military for locating and structuring its war news, given the massive proportions of modern full-scale war. In short, both the military and the press were forced to adapt in response to changed circumstances to realize their respective goals.

Philip Gibbs entered the profession of war correspondent during this stage of its development. He acted as one of five war correspondents officially accredited to the British Armies on the Western Front during the most crucial stage of that development. In the course of his duties as war correspondent, Gibbs produced some of the most stirring, vivid despatches written by war correspondents. They are at once poignant and humorous, profound and down-to-earth. They are above all an intense and genuine expression of his own emotions, his own commitment to the war effort.

This thesis is written in an attempt to evaluate Gibbs's war correspondence in relation to the conceived functions of the press, in relation to the criteria set for modern war correspondence, and in relation to his goal as a writer. No such study has been done of Gibbs. The following chapters will examine the issues of the growth of the modern press and the development of war correspondence and how Philip Gibbs as a journalist functioned in this environment. The chapters will examine in what ways Gibbs contributed to the development of a working relationship between the press and the military. They will examine the manner in which Gibbs excelled as a war correspondent and offer suggestions as to how and why Gibbs's own professional growth as a war correspondent enhanced the profession itself.

Footnotes

1. See for instance J. Edward Gerald, The Social Responsibility of the Press, especially Chapter I, pp. 3-26, Anthony Smith, ed., Newspapers and Democracy, entire, Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication, esp. pp. 61-98, Donald H. Johnston, Journalism and the Media, esp. pp. 7-30.

2. James Curran, "The Press as an Agency of Social Control: An Historical Perspective," in George Boyce, et al, Newspaper History, p. 74.

CHAPTER I

PHILIP GIBBS

Philip Gibbs's writing career spanned over sixty years. He was probably best known as a novelist, but most critics agree that he produced his finest writing as a war correspondent. The following chapter will look briefly at Gibbs's character and his background, in order to throw light on his intellectual capacities, his gift for writing, and his attitude toward war, all of which figure in his success as a war correspondent.

Beginnings

Born in 1877 Gibbs was the fifth of seven children of Victorian middle-class parentage. His parents were Irish Catholic, with distant connections to royalty. Their's was a modest home; while there was no poverty, there was "a definite lack of luxury." Gibbs was astonished at how the family managed on an income of £400 which his father, Henry Gibbs, brought in annually as a civil servant in the Education Department. They performed "miracles of economy" he said, through which they were able to provide for domestic servants, modest holidays to the South of France, and a "well-furnished home in the comfortable mid-Victorian style" replete with cabinets and what-nots, contemporary water-colours and a grand piano.[1] The income was sufficient to enable Henry Gibbs to move his family from Kensington to the newly fashionable suburb of Clapham Park in 1880.

The Gibbs's move to Clapham Park was meaningful, because it

represented an important status symbol of the period. Appearances were vitally important to the Victorian, and residential improvement was a definite asset. While defining the middle class, especially of the late-Victorian age, has given chronic problems to the academic, it is generally agreed that besides occupation, education and religion, the main constant qualification for membership was wealth translated into property ownership.[2] Historians have examined the materialistic orientation of the period but they have also stressed other characteristics, such as the moral conscience and the religious foundations which went side by side with the materialism. The Evangelical influence and the doctrine of Utilitarianism were both evident in the Victorian's work ethic and business morality. Such values and virtues appeared also at a personal level; respectability was the prominent "morality" of the age, as was the idea of stability, especially within the home.[3]

The Gibbs's home was typical of the Victorian household. It had an established routine and the roles of its members were well-defined. The home was dominated by Henry Gibbs, but his wife added to the domestic environment her own subdued influence. While women were considered socially and politically second-class citizens, they were at the same time "sanctified" in the home because it was they who saw to the quality of that home life and kept it within conforming standards.[4] Gibbs described his mother as a "saint and a martyr," always tending to the pressing needs of her large family. It was she who encouraged the fashionable custom of holding weekly gatherings of friends and acquaintances. Through these "At Homes" Gibbs met many of the leading names of the day, especially in the fields of literature and the arts. Mrs. Gibbs also encouraged

music and light literature; she enjoyed reading popular novels aloud to the family, and she was a fine pianist. This musical background made a lasting impression on Gibbs. "Except music," Frederic Whyte wrote of him in 1921, "he has no other absorbing enthusiasms."[5]

Gibbs maintained that his father's talents were wasted as a civil servant, for Gibbs believed his father's true avocation lay in the world of literature. His father had a modest claim to authorship with one novel and numerous articles and essays, and this gave him membership in the prestigious literary club, the Whitefriars, as well as others like the Irish Literary Society. Through these associations he was acquainted with many of the best known writers of the age, some he claimed close friendship with. Gibbs shared many of his friendships with people like G.A. Henty, George Manville Fenn (both authors), G.D. Williams (head of Reuters), John Forbes-Robertson (the great actor), or came in contact with others like W.B. Yeats and Algernon Percival Graves. The list was long and Gibbs said that as far back as he could remember his "memory is a long portraits gallery of authors, novelists and journalists."[6]

Henry Gibbs's influence in his home, where literature was concerned, cannot be over-estimated. His taste in literature was varied and his knowledge broad. While he had a preference in fiction for contemporary authors like Dickens and George Eliot, he was also fond of the earliest novelists, Fielding and Smollett. He was an avid reader of essays and had covered, according to Gibbs, those from Bacon to Emerson, absorbed the works of Montaigne, freely quoted Johnson and "knew his Pepys". His knowledge of the contemporary political literature reflects his eagerness to accept the humanitarian notion of social reform which, from mid-century on,

had considerable public support. Henry Gibbs was influenced by the "writer-reformers" of the period such as Dickens, Ruskin, Cobbett, but particularly Thomas Carlyle, with whom he had a slight acquaintance. It was natural that Henry Gibbs was a supporter of the "Gladstonian liberalism" which highlighted Gladstone's prime ministership, particularly the first, between 1868 and 1874. The Liberal party projected the same belief that Gladstone held privately, and this was that while there should be liberty, there need not necessarily be equality. In this framework, the Great Man of Carlyle's model was very much a reality.[7]

But the influence Henry Gibbs exerted over his family went further than a personal interest in literature. It was, in fact, vital to the education of his children, which he undertook himself. This was not unusual, for in the Victorian middle class there was a strong "drive toward self-education", partly a reflection of the urge towards "character-building." Henry Gibbs refused to send his boys to public schools because he believed them to be "sinks of iniquity and most horrible dens of bullying and brutality". Many claims such as his have since been documented, though Gibbs suggests, too, that his father was cutting costs.[8] Yet, Henry Gibbs's objections to public school education were not misplaced. There were grave objections to the quality of the educational system which was said to favour a classical content, and to lack subjects in the sciences and the humanities, both considered requisites for the age. Henry Nevinson was a product of this educational system, which he has described as grossly inadequate and completely lacking in "beauty or pleasure". H.G. Wells was a severe critic of the system. Self-educated like Gibbs, his contemporary, he considered his own intellect to have been

enhanced by the comprehensive education he received. He pointed to Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) as an example produced by a system that provided a formal education with no substance.[9]

Gibbs's education consisted of informal instruction by his father who inspired his children to educate themselves. This he did through his own enthusiasm for learning and experience in any aspect of life and culture. Frequent, instructive excursions into the city left a lasting impression on Gibbs who never lost his fascination for London's kaleidoscopic effect. The subject formed the basis for many of Gibbs's later writings as a journalist, particularly in his series for the Tribune, "London Pictures".[10] Similarly, country outings formed an important part of Gibbs's education, mainly in the way in which it also left a lasting impression. His adolescent fascination with "earth's beauty and loneliness, his intense awareness of life and the beating pulse of humanity" were, Gibbs said, "akin to a kind of pantheism." He translated this emotion into the written word; at sixteen, he had published in the Daily Chronicle a vignette which pictured "the seagulls screaming over London Bridge on a winter afternoon."[11] Much of his descriptive writing as a journalist is concerned with nature[12] but nowhere did this become more evident than in his war correspondence between 1914 and 1918. His dispatch of July 1, 1916, describing the field before the battle, is especially indicative of this talent.

> "The fields on the edge of the battle of guns were very peaceful. A faint breeze stirred the tall wheat, above which there floated a milky light transfusing the darkness. The poppy-fields still glowed redly, and there was a glint of gold from long stretches of mustard flower. Beyond, the woods stood black against the sky above little hollows where British soldiers were encamped."[13]

And farther in the despatch, as the hour of the attack approached.

> "The dawn came with a great beauty. There was a pale blue sky with white wisps of cloud. But it was cold and over all the fields there was a floating mist which rose up from the moist earth and lay heavily upon the ridges, so that the horizon was obscured. ...Along the roads towards the battlefields there was no movement of troops. For a few miles there were quiet fields, where cattle grazed and where the wheat grew green and tall in the white mist. The larks were singing high in the first glinting sunshine of the day above the haze... The battle-line came into view, the long sweep of country stretching southwards to the Somme."[14]

Gibbs's father was also eager that his children develop a love of foreign travel, and he encouraged an interest as well in foreign languages. His five sons did travel widely; Gibbs himself in the course of his journalistic career travelled to all parts of Europe, to Russia, Turkey and the United States. It was his proficency in the German language that brought him his first promotion with Cassell and Company.

The quality and substance of that "disorderly home-made education" can be readily assessed. Five of Henry Gibbs's seven children became writers, three of them reaching the heights of success.[15] In Gibbs's case the energy of his father's education revealed itself early when Gibbs, aged 23, published his second book, Knowledge is Power. This was a collection of essays written originally for syndication throughout the provincial press, while he served as Managing Editor of the Fiction Bureau at Tilloton's Literary Syndicate. The sub-title "A Guide to Personal Culture" reflects the purpose of the book which was to serve as a guide for those having the ambition to acquire a comprehensive education in all direction with the intention of becoming "cultured".[16] Books along these lines were particularly popular in the 1880's when a new reading public emerged after the Education Act of 1870. Literature on self-education or

self-improvement continued to be popular well after the turn of the century; Gibbs's book went into many editions for years afterwards, and he was proud that it reached all corners of the globe. "It was my own education condensed into short essays, and written with the simplicity, sincerity and enthusiasm of youth," he said of the volume.[17] Later he revealed that the maturity and wisdom which many said were contained in the essays puzzled many of his readers because they expected a much older author. In this he paid tribute to his father's teaching. "All the reading I had done as a boy, all my youthful enthusiasm for Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot and Hardy, and the great masters; all my study of history - not very deep but fairly wide - was a great source of supply now when I sat down to write about great books, and the wisdom of the ages, and the love of poetry and art and drama and all beauty."[18]

While Gibbs strongly believed his education prepared him well intellectually, he was also conscious of shortcomings in the type of education he received. In 1945 he spoke of himself at age sixteen as the smallest and most delicate member of his father's brood. A dreamy eyed, romantic youth, by his own description he was

> "a shy, sensitive, lad, without any armour to protect myself against the brutalities, or even the unkindness, of the rough world about me. I blushed at any coarseness of speech. I had no toughness of fibre, none of the ease and assurance which are acquired by a public school education. I was deplorably self-conscious and diffident in company. Worse than that for myself, I was far too sensitive to the tragedy of life and to other people's pain and suffering, so that I agonised over the martyrdom of many, and even over the imaginary tortures of fictitious characters in novels and plays. It took a long time to harden me... I am not quite hardened yet."[19]

"A Nice, Unassuming Man"

Philip Gibbs's success as a war correspondent can be seen to be curious because he was so unlike the traditional war correspondent in character, appearance and, especially, in the subjects he pursued as a Fleet Street journalist. He had none of the rugged, aggressive qualities of many of his predecessors. His small frame was quite the opposite of Archibald Forbes, "a man of great physique and grand courage," or Bennett Burleigh, a man of "unusual physical strength and power of endurance,"[20] or Frederic Villiers who was seeing his seventeenth war in 1914. Gibbs was variously described as "small", "delicate", "fragile". W. Douglas Newton emphasized his frailty and wrote that "outwardly he appears the last man capable of 'roughing it!"[21] In Lord George Riddell's description Gibbs was "a nice, unassuming man with a face like a Cardinal's."[22] His brother Cosmo Hamilton revealed that prior to the war Gibbs suffered from nervous breakdowns, and Gibbs himself admitted that he was squeamish and felt faint at even the sight of blood.[23] Cosmo also recalled the time when, as boys, they "played the war-game together with hundreds of tin soldiers [and] he used to shudder at my fiendish joy in blowing them to bits with cannon charged with gunpowder and small-shot."[24] When Gibbs served as an artist correspondent during the Balkan War of 1912 his friends warned him he would not survive the rigours of campaigning. Gibbs himself thought the odds were against his survival.

In an effort to explain his brother's later success Cosmo wrote that there was "something a little misleading on his ascetic face and small frame. He was capable then, at any rate, of greater physical and mental strain than men of far stronger physique."[25] A more

detailed accounting of the inner Gibbs comes from his friend and colleague, Cecil Roberts.

> "When he entered the room I was surprised to see how small he was and how frail he looked. The frailty was deceptive. He was pliant-steel. He looked young, about thirty-five until you examined his face. His hair was tinged with grey, with a tendency to curl. The face was finely sculptured with chiselled nose and cheekbones, the thin mouth small and tightly closed. It was a handsome head, that of a medieval knight. But these features alone did not constitute Philip Gibbs. It was the expression built up with the lines of his face that proclaimed his personality. His skin was colourless, almost parchment-like in its taut transparency, its pallor heightened by contrast with grey-green eyes which at times seemed to slumber but on occasions, when words of indignation or sympathy stirred him, suddenly became luminous with the fire of emotion behind them. One felt at once that this man had suffered every line he had written. I came to know him more intimately later but nothing reduced the sharpness of that first impression. His human charity, his almost feminine tenderness, his restless revolt against the insensate brutality of warfare, the ungrudging tribute to the foe's heroism, the almost holy love of his countrymen in their revelation of stoic courage, all these qualities stamped his character. Of no writer could it have been said with more truth 'le style c'est l'homme'. I did not know then, as he advanced towards me, shook my hand and spoke to me in a voice whose deep tones were always so surprising in so frail a figure, that I was destined to become a life-long friend... There are very few men to whom I would apply the term Christian... Nor was I alone in my conception of his character."[26]

As a writing man Gibbs seemed unsuited to tackle the subject of war. When the Great War broke out in 1914 he was an accomplished, respected journalist. "One of the greatest reporters the press has ever had," Grant Overton said of Gibbs in 1924; one of the "best masters of descriptive writing now alive."[27] Gibbs himself admitted with a casual modesty that he was capable of "writing 'brightly' on almost any subject."[28] But the subjects he dealt with as a journalist covered the lighter side of the news, seemingly removed from the serious and technical subject of war. When he began to cover the war for the Daily Chronicle in 1914, Gibbs was hardly

the seasoned war correspondent tradition would have expected on such a momentous occasion.

The War Game

Possibly, one reason for Gibbs's success is that he possessed firm ideas on the subject of war. He had a definite philosophy on war which he understood in the general sense as an unleashing of the barbaric spirit in man, the brutal instincts which civilization had brought under control. While Gibbs appreciated the different scale of warfare in an historical perspective where war between "professional armies" in the previous century was vastly different in 1914 from the "struggle to the death between one people and another," he maintained that all war is hateful.[29] In 1917 after three years of intimate experience with war, he continued to regard war as one of the basest manifestations of man's spirit, but one that was somehow beyond human control. The war as he saw it then was "like some cosmic struggle in which man is but an atom of the world's convulsion."[30] This view was basic to Gibbs's understanding of war, and it found a continuity through his writing career. Two years before his death in 1962 he could still write that war is "a senseless and outdated way of argument" and that differences could be resolved if mankind exhibited more civilised behaviour.

War, he insisted, was essentially "tribal warfare" and only a primitive attempt to resolve differences.[31] He asked the essential question of the Great War: "Were the virtues which were to come from war... worth the price...?"[32]

Gibbs's philosophy of war was at the heart of his war despatches; it equipped him with a singular compassion for the

subject he dealt with and for the audience he addressed. The Great War of 1914-1918 consolidated his philosophy because it had such a tremendous impact on him. The war undermined the sense of security, stability and confidence in a social order which he inherited from his Victorian background, sentiments Gibbs shared with his society. Many of his generation experienced disappointment and disillusion, coming from a background which believed in its happy and prosperous destiny, to see it shattered by the Great War. "In one important way, morally and mentally," Gibbs explained, "we who came to manhood in the Victoria era, differed from a later generation. It was an age of optimism," he emphasized repeatedly in his works, and stressed that his generation "believed in the inevitable progress of humanity towards a finer civilization" which was crushed by the devastating effects of the war.[33] The prolonged exposure to death for soldier and civilian alike, in itself has the inevitable effect, E.S. Bogardus claims, of morally and ideologically reorganizing society.[34]

There were a variety of reactions to the war when it ended.[35] Gibbs did not wait for the post-war years to express his reaction. Even in the first months of the war he was convinced that such a holocaust must never recurr. He was determined that it was the right of the public to know the facts concerning the war and its conduct, and he fought openly to ease the restrictions on war correspondents. One of his arguments was that if the public was better informed on the war's horrors, the less chance there would be of such a war repeating itself. This attitude was particularly clear in his writings (monographs especially) after the war. In 1915 he made the following appeal:

> "If there is any purpose in what I have written beyond mere record it is to reveal the soul of war so nakedly that it cannot be glossed over by the glamour of false sentiment and false heroics. More passionate than any other emotion that has stirred me through life, is my conviction that any man who has seen these things must, if he has any gift of expression, dedicate his brain and heart to the sacred duty of preventing another war like this. A man with a pen in his hand, however feeble it may be, must use it to tell the truth about the monstrous horror, to etch its images of cruelty into the brains of his readers, and to tear down the veils by which the leaders of the peoples try to conceal its obscenities."[36]

Gibbs had some disdain for the General Staff. In particular he faulted the Staff College for the inefficiency and the callousness of the High Command in prolonging the war and adding to its unnecessary slaughter. It was unable, he said, "to get away from rigid methods and to become elastic in face of new conditions."[37] Winston Churchill, for one, took note of Gibbs's criticisms and writings on the war. His evaluation of Gibbs's book Realities of War was that it was "very impressive and terrible - also extremely well-written."[38]

Gibbs did not confine his philosophy on war to the area of war correspondence. Instead, he brought it to bear in his entire writing career. He focused specifically on the subject of the Great War, and later, on the Second World War, and as a writer he devoted himself almost exclusively to the two World Wars. It would be easy to construe from this that in effect Gibbs contrived a writing career out of the war subject. Certainly, he made use of his war experience. But evidence suggests a far deeper implication in his preoccupation with war, than mere opportunism. The Great War in fact, had a profound effect on Gibbs. It came to dominate practically every aspect of his life; it altered his purpose, controlled his perception of the world and of humanity, and

directed the impulse in his writing. "I could not forget the tragedy of the war," he admitted, and immediately after the war ended he made a personal commitment to devote the remainder of his career to peace work. He vowed "to work for it above all other motives and interests"[39] and it is in this sense that he persisted with the war theme in his writing.

It was in this spirit that Gibbs sought an interview with the Pope, Benedict XI, in 1919. He insisted that "some spiritual message was neded to give a lead to democracy"[40] and that the Pope must give it. This was an unprecedented move because no journalist had been accorded an interview with permission to publish. The Vatican had closed its doors to the press many years before. Gibbs was pleased with the effect the interview, syndicated to all major newspapers in the world, created. Essentially, he was dissatisfied with the Pope's words which he felt were lacking in some fundamental message. "Most people," Gibbs reflected, "would see nothing but platitudes in what he told me."[41] Most of all, the coming of the Second World War reinforced his misgivings. He wrote sadly that the Pope's message "had no effect whatever on the course of history.[42]

Gibbs was equally saddened at the eventual failure of the League of Nations. He was an ardent supporter from the very beginning, believing the League would grow in support and strength from member countries which would serve as the arbiters of the world's disagreements in international relations. Even when the League had dissolved he justified its foundation by the argument that "the failure of an ideal does not mean that it was wrong."[43] But he felt that the League had had a contribution to make, especially in the way in

which, through the experience of the League, "men learned to think internationally."[44]

It was through the medium of his fictional works, however, that Gibbs hoped to have the greatest impact. He cherished the idea that through his novels he might convey his message on the horror of war and the urgent need to avert another. He directed his appeal particularly to the post-war youth (who figure prominently in the majority of his post-war novels), positioning himself as their champion. He was convinced that civilization's destiny and security lay in the hands of this generation. In Middle of the Road for instance, the main character is determined

> "to pass on the experience of those who knew the meaning of war to a generation which wouldn't know, unless someone told them."

and in Young Anarchy the hero of the story reasons

> "that this post-war youth was born, literally and truly, into the beginning of a new epoch, with a new mentality."[45]

This message was the dominant theme in Gibbs's novels, "the hope of our living youth" as he called them in 1920 when he described the ceremony for the burial of the Unknown Warrior.[46] Generally, the war subject was central to his works of non-fiction as well. Few of Gibbs's colleagues at the front wrote of their war experience. W. Beach Thomas was an exception and he wrote two books which dealt with the Great War. The war for Thomas, though, was not the absorbing, embracing experience it was for Gibbs. Thomas, for instance, was able to separate that time from any other, unlike Gibbs who could not.[47]

Gibbs's despatches were enormously popular. They were the only ones from the Western Front syndicated to the British provincial

press as well as to foreign countries, most notably the United States.[48] Gibbs's name in America, it was said, was a "household word". Half-way through the war, Lord Northcliffe, proprietor of The Times, beseeched Gibbs to switch his services from the Daily Chronicle to The Times, so impressed was he with Gibbs's popular appeal. Colleagues acknowledged this popularity and did so publicly.[49]

In 1917 Great Britain offered Gibbs a KBE (Knight Commander of the British Empire) in recognition of what it considered to be a valuable war service. He received the Knighthood in 1920 along with his four colleagues from the Western Front. The Newspaper Proprietors Association had objected to Gibbs receiving singular honours. It prevailed upon the War Office to alter its original recommendation to include all five correspondents. At that time the Daily Chronicle wrote of Gibbs that the Knighthood was "a well-earned recognition of war services rendered not alone to the 'Daily Chronicle' and other newspapers, but to the nation."[50]

Footnotes

1. Gibbs, Crowded Company, pp. 10-11 and Gibbs, The Pageant of the Years, p. 3 and p. 6.

2. See Donald Read, England 1868-1914, pp. 58-62, Janet Roebuck, The Making of Modern English Society from 1850, p. 23, p. 29, p. 40, Richard Altick, Victorian People and Ideas, pp. 27-28, p. 52, Francois Bedarida, A Social History of England 1851-1975, Chapters 1 and 2, Elie Halevy, Victorian Years 1841-1895 (Vol. 4 of his A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century).

3. See David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century 1815-1914, p. 97 and p. 207 especially, Altick, pp. 114-64, p. 82, p. 175 and p. 226.

4. Altick, pp. 52-53, B.B.C., ed., Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 347, R.C.K. Ensor, England 1870-1914, pp. 159-161.

5. Frederick Whyte, "Sir Philip Gibbs," Living Age, Vol. 308 (March 19, 1921), p. 727. Also Pageant, pp. 8-9.

6. Gibbs, Adventures in Journalism, p. 151. See also Pageant, p. 16 and Cosmo Hamilton, Unwritten History, p. 4.

7. Pageant, p. 8 and pp. 10-11. See Herman Ausubel In Hard Times, p. 91 and especially Emery Neff, Carlyle and Mill, p. 392, and also Read, pp. 118-119 and Bedarida, p. 140.

8. Pageant, p. 7, Altick, p. 253 and p. 255, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 309, and Unwritten History, pp. 185-186.

9. Altick, pp. 248-253, Henry Nevinson, Changes and Chances, p. 26, H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, p. 272, Reginald Pound and and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe, pp. 225-226, and Raymond L. Schults, Crusader in Babylon, p. 2.

10. See Gibbs, The Journalist's London, pp. 54-69. See also The Daily Chronicle, April 11, 1904, p. 8 and April 22, 1904, p. 8, though Gibbs wrote inumerable articles on aspects of London. Refer also to Gibbs's England Speaks, p. 197 and p. 64. See also The Graphic, "Called Back: The Return of the horse-cab," November 11, 1911, p. 692, "Rag-Time in the Streets: A Defence of the Piano Organ," September 6, 1913, p. 442, "The London Revue," May 30, 1914, p. 964, amongst others. See also George Augustus Sala, Twice Round the Clock, in which he invites the reader to "explore this London mystery to its remotest recesses - its innermost arena," pp. 9-10. Twice was originally a series of articles for The Welcome Guest and Gibbs fancied his articles were similar to this famed series.

11. Pageant, p. 16 and p. 17.

12. For example, The Daily Chronicle, "Easter in Paris," April 4, 1904, p. 8, or "The House-Boat Season," July 6, 1904, p. 9. Or, in The Graphic, "The Flowers that Bloom in Spring," April 15, 1911, "The Garden City of the South Coast," July 26, 1913, p. 154, "We Leave for the Country," August 1, 1914, p. 214.

13. The Daily Chronicle, July 3, 1916, p. 1. There will be a two day, sometimes only a one day, interval between the composition and the publication of the despatches.

14. The Daily Chronicle, July 3, 1916, p. 1.

15. Apart from Gibbs, Cosmo Hamilton was the most successful, as a playwright and novelist in the United States and England. Arthur Hamilton Gibbs became a novelist, residing in the U.S. Frank Gibbs wrote three novels on West African life, and Helen Gibbs also became a novelist, though her writings have remained obscure.

16. Gibbs, Knowledge is Power, (7th Edition), pp. 1-2.

17. Adventures, p. 86, Knowledge, p. iii. See Altick, p. 170, Roebuck, p. 44 and Escott, p. 273.

18. Pageant, p. 33.

19. Pageant, p. 144.

20. Rupert Furneaux, News of War, p. 116 and Nevinson, p. 221. See also the New York Times, March 15, 1962, p. 14.

21. W. Douglas Newton, "Philip Gibbs," The Bookman, V.51, December, 1916, p. 69.

22. Lord George Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918, p. 300.

23. Hamilton, pp. 213-214 and Pageant, p. 158.

24. Hamilton, p. 214.

25. Hamilton, pp. 213-214.

26. Cecil Roberts, The Years of Promise, pp. 236-238.

27. Grant Overton, "The Knightliness of Philip Gibbs," The Bookman, V. 59, August, 1924, p. 686.

28. Adventures in Journalism, p. 114.

29. Across the Frontiers, p. 13, The Soul of the War, p. 369, and "Behind the Scenes in Stara Zagara," The Graphic, November 9, 1912, p. 686.

30. Gibbs, The Struggle in Flanders, p. 12.

31. Gibbs, Oil Lamps and Candlelight, p. 254, and Gibbs, European Journey, p. 342.

32. Soul of the War, p. 200.

33. Gibbs, Lifes Adventure, p. 204.

34. E.S. Bogardus, The Development of Social Thought, p. 565, and Gibbs, The Hope of Europe, p. 286.

35. See for instance Marvin Rintala, "A Generation in Politics: A Definition," The Review of Politics, Vol. 25, No. 4, October, 1963, pp. 509-522.

36. Gibbs, The Soul of the War, p. 25.

37. Gibbs, Realities of War, p. 58.

38. Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, V. 4, p. 914. See also Brian Bond, The Victorian Army and the Staff College, pp. 321-326.

39. Pageant, p. 265 and p. 242.

40. The Hope of Europe, p. 241. See also Adventures, p. 283, Pageant, pp. 256-260, and Roy MacGregor, The Throne of Peter, p. 52 for a discussion on the Papal attitude to the war.

41. Hope, p. 247.

42. Pageant, p. 260.

43. Pageant, p. 359. See also Hope, p. 170.

44. Gibbs, Since Then, p. 349.

45. Gibbs, Middle of the Road, p. 117 and Young Anarchy, p. 134. See also Hope of Europe, pp. 312-343.

46. The Daily Chronicle, November 1920, p. 1.

47. See W. Beach Thomas, The Way of a Countryman, p. 47.

48. See Robert W. Desmond, Windows on the World, p. 286.

49. Roberts, p. 236, Review of Reviews (London), V. 59, January, 1919, p. 647, Mark Schorer, Sinclair Lewis, p. 375, Whyte, p. 726, The Mentor, January, 1927, pp. 54-55 and The New York Times, April 27, 1919, p. 241.

50. The Daily Chronicle, March 30, 1920, p. 5. See Adventures, p. 275 and for his assessment of the Order of his investiture, see Pageant, p. 244, and Knowledge is Power, pp. 324-325. The citation appears in The Times, March 31, 1920, p. 19.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF THE MODERN PRESS

Great honour though it was, Gibbs's investiture signalled the end of his journalist career. He returned from the war convinced that he wanted to retire from active journalism; sensationalism dominated the post-war press generally, while his own newspaper had been bought in 1918 by Lloyd George for clearly political reasons. Gibbs abhorred such manipulation of the press and in 1919 he resigned from the Daily Chronicle, a move he claimed severely annoyed Lloyd George.[1]

Although Gibbs was troubled by the sensationalism of the press, he was able to appreciate it from a historical perspective. Sensationalism in the press was one issue basic to the controversy over whether or not the press should open its doors to the masses once the tide of democratization began to sweep over England in earnest in the nineteenth century. Society found itself radically changed by the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the rapidly growing middle class began to assert itself from mid-century on with increasing force. Effectively, the masses had pushed their way from "the inarticulate and into the articulate part of the community."[2] Throughout English newspaper history Crown prerogative had carefully censored and restricted the press.[3] The press itself was reluctant to open its doors to the masses by lowering its price , because it feared a reduction in the quality of the newspapers. The taste of the common man was considered cheap, vulgar, and inclined toward sensationalism.

But the press did open its doors to the masses. Forceful arguments had been presented in favour of such a move. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, for instance, argued that since the Reform Bill of 1832 had increased the people's political power, it was incumbent upon the Government to provide them with "political knowledge to guide them in exercising it discreetly."[4] He believed that newspapers should be the primary instrument for providing this instruction. Naturally, the taste of the common man was acknowledged by the press once it made itself available. The press found that such a move was, in fact, a commercially profitable venture, and this helped to make a "cheap press" possible. This became the popular press of the late nineteenth century which saw itself discharging a social responsibility as provider of news, educator and entertainer.

From Gibbs's point of view, the modern press was symbolic of the man credited with its initiation. Alfred Harmsworth, he said, typified the interests and needs of the common man. In him was embodied "the triviality, the restlessness, the craving for sensation, the desire to escape from boredom, the impatience with the length and dullness and difficulty of life and learning, the habit of taking short cuts to knowledge and judgements...."[5] The contemporary literature, especially the newspapers, reflected this.

The following chapter will look at the three important stages in the development of the popular press. First, there was the introduction of the cheap press. Without it, the second stage could not have materialized. This was the coming of the "new journalism", a style that brought journalism into the popular experience. Thirdly, the popular newspapers took hold, and flourished.

Laying the Foundations: The Cheap Press

The "vigorous development" of the press according to most authorities, appeared only in the second half of the nineteenth century. There were three influences which made this possible; the abolition of duties on newspapers, the Education Act of 1870, and the presence of the new and enlarged urban population.

The removal of the taxes on knowledge in mid-century made the idea of a cheap press a reality because this allowed newspapers to grow into commercially profitable businesses. Other contributing factors included the increase in advertising, technological advances, and the amalgamation by the Post Office in 1870 of the telegraph system. It was necessary that the press achieve economic self-sufficiency because it was this that made a free press possible, an element vital to the functioning of the cheap press.[6]

It was not until the 1880's that a cheap press was fully utilized by the newspapers. Then, once the dailies were able to lower their prices, they provided an alternative to the penny weeklies, the substance of the "poor man's" reading. The hesitancy on the part of the press relates to its fear of having to reduce quality, and also to the debate surrounding the extension of education. There was on the one hand a strong argument in favour of extending education. It reflected the humanitarian attitude of the period but was also grounded on more pragmatic reasons. "On the speedy provision of elementary education," W.O. Arnold-Forster said, "depend our industrial prosperity, the safe working of our constitutional system and our national power." The inspiration behind the Education Act, Arnold-Forster was responding to the social and economic circumstances of England which many believed to be

declining internationally.[7]

On the other hand, another school of thought insisted that to extend education to the masses would merely contribute to its moral decay. Already the literate element in the middle and working classes were displaying a decided preference for "penny-dreadfuls" and other cheap literature. To enlarge the literacy of this social order, ran the argument, would contribute to the increase in cheap literature, and this emphasized the gist of the debate. It was not education per se that was at issue, but the quality of the education, and this aspect of the debate continued well into the next century. H.G. Wells, amongst others, insisted that the remedy to this lay in the improvement of the secondary education. Gibbs agreed with Wells, whom he knew well and for whom he had enormous respect. His own view on education was somewhere between the two schools of thought. He was a cautious liberal, comfortable with the nineteenth century ethic that associated education with power, power and education with liberalism, and hence, in a broad sense, with improvement.[8]

Education and the reading of newspapers were not necessarily the "mutually reinforcing activities" as Edward Baines had hoped. The Education Act of 1870 was passed by Parliament and most authorities agree that it was responsible for the mass readership that subsequently emerged. It consisted chiefly of the new urban population which had specific tastes and interests, its own intellectual capacity, and its own level of purchasing power. By the 1880's it was obvious to the daily newspapers that here was a new market to corner. Gradually they lowered their prices and abandoned the practice of appealing to a small, educated, affluent, and primarily male, audience. The new approach they adopted was in touch with the

needs of the new readership, in spite of some bitter criticism over the lowering of standards. However, most agreed that as a result, the newspapers were a vital factor in contributing to the growing sophistication and intelligence of the new social element. The working classes particularly began to have a voice in shaping their political and social destiny as newspapers became the generators of public opinion. "The proper circulation of news is a social service of high value," Wickham Steed wrote. "Journalism is the chief modern form of this social service."[9]

The New Journalism

The period between the 1850's and the 1890's can be seen to be a transitional stage for the British press. These years represent the democratization of the press as it moved away from the privileged few and made itself accessible to the great masses. George Augustus Sala described the small readership as "the governing classes - aristocratic, official, parliamentary, financial and commercial."[10] To be a regular newspaper reader during this period was an index of social standing. Newspapers were anxious to maintain a quality and a standard that was above the reach of the public. The Times, for instance, was specifically designed for the upper classes who were wealthy enough to afford it (at 7d per copy) and sufficiently well-read and intelligent to absorb it. Newspapers generally did not innovate in either the style of journalism or the form used. Editorial staffs were small and reporters few, their talent confined to short-hand writing and their identities hidden behind the "Editorial We". Newspapers consisted of pages of solid print, few headlines, no pictures, columns almost indistinguishable, and most

of the reading consisting of political news, domestic and foreign.[11]

Newspapers were intimidating to anyone other than the habitual reader and were read primarily, some maintain, for political instruction. With the arrival of the cheap press and the evident desire of the mass readership to have access to newspapers, there came a movement to change and conform. Newspapers adopted methods used by the weeklies and journals which included entertainment and social and political criticism. Many writers used the journals as platforms for the redress of social ills, and this practice too, began to make its way into the dailies. The dailies sought to emulate the quality of journal contributors such as Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt and Coleridge, and consequently they were including more literature, more entertainment. Journalists such as Johnson, Addison and Steele, approved such a move. Johnson, for one, wrote that straightforward news as opposed to thoughtful and academic essays encouraged "reading without the fatigue of close attention."[12]

During this transitional period the function of the press took on a different aspect. The idea that it was the duty of the press to discharge a social responsibility was not new. John Delane for instance, as editor of The Times, advanced his opinion in the 1850's that "the duty of the Press is to speak."[13] But Delane's view was an exception, while after the arrival of the cheap press it became the norm. And besides acting as educator and generator of public opinion, the press now undertook the responsibility to reflect public opinion and interest. It came to consider itself, too, as responsible for entertaining the public. Sala, for instance, was known to have "humanized" the columns of his newspaper. He, and other journalists like him, often specialized in "low-life subjects."

Henri Labouchere, for another, believed that a newspaper must "create sensations."[14] These new approaches to journalism came together in a new style called the "new journalism", a radical departure from the traditional methods of journalism.

The new journalism is said to have begun with Frederick Greenwood and his Pall Mall Gazette, of which he was editor. In the 1870's Greenwood, determined that the PMG must break away from the formal and stilted newspaper language, introduced a more familiar, idiomatic style of journalism. He also included light news and some entertainment.[15] It wasn't until 1883 that the press underwent significant change, when the PMG appointed W.T. Stead as its editor. Incorporating Delane's and Greenwood's ideas on the press, and including his own concept of the press as the main lever by which the masses of the people could be raised, Stead made use of these ideas on a daily basis in the PMG. The paper began to assume a highly moral tone as Stead actively involved the PMG in his crusades on social or political reform. His most controversial was his series titled "The Maiden's Tribute to Modern Babylon", which forced him to resign his editorship when he was put in jail. It was an important departure from traditional journalism. Stead introduced much that was new to the press. He believed that for a newspaper to have appeal, it had to be readable. He set about simplifying the language even more than Greenwood. He introduced press interviews, the use of illustrations and bold headlines, and he made frequent use of signed articles by contributors. While Stead was known for his disregard of the financial aspect of newspaper work, the new journalism quickly came to be associated with profit-making schemes. However sincere

were Stead's crusades, they were sensational and they did attract a large circulation.[16]

George W. Newnes, a contemporary of Stead's, had a different attitude toward journalism. In 1881 he launched his penny-weekly Tit-Bits, for the sake of profit. Recognizing the existing need to cater to an increased reading public which preferred light entertainment, Newnes designed his magazine specifically to appeal to the common people. While his was a weekly, not a daily, Tit-Bits should be mentioned here because the popular dailies adopted many of its methods and principles.[17] These included the language, the light subject matter, and naturally the appeal in profit-making schemes.

But the biggest stride made during this period towards a new journalism was through the efforts of T.P. O'Connor. He adopted many of the methods of the PMG and Tit-Bits in his "path-breaking venture", the first half-penny daily, The Star. He was committed to the idea that the masses should have a daily of their own preferance and in 1887 he launched his paper. "Everything that is talked about," he insisted, "should be written about."[18] To this end, he determined that his "London worker's paper" would have "no place for the verbose and prolix articles to which most of our contemporaries still adhere, nor will it print news in the hackneyed style of obsolete journalism."[19]

The Star represents an important step in the development of the modern press because it bridges the new journalism and popular journalism. The Star made a successful appeal to the working classes but a mass circulation still evaded it. This appeared in the last decade of the nineteenth century when profit became a major aspect of

the newspaper industry. The popular journalism has often been critized for its sensationalism and commercialism, yet it did bring newspapers within the reach of the masses. With the Daily Mail the first successful half-penny daily, launched in 1896, Alfred Harmsworth set in motion the model on which all modern newspapers fashioned themselves. His answer to the substantial profits (within three years the Mail was selling over half a million copies) rested with his advertising policy, which laid the foundation for all future press advertising. While Harmsworth popularized journalism and made the newspaper available to a mass readership, he was also responsible for putting in motion certain monopolistic tendencies where press ownership was concerned and where variety of style and subject matter were involved. Nonetheless, his attempt to democratize the press was successful, and this was to a large extent due not only to his business instinct, but also to his ability to detect public taste and opinion and to cater to it in a meaningful way.[20]

The Popular Press

Harmsworth's success was synonymous with that of the popular press. While the coming of the popular press can be traced to the liberal ideology, the new, popular journalism was not associated with that ideology. Neither was Harmsworth committed to any ideology, as was W.T. Stead. This was partly responsible for his success, because it gave him enormous range of movement as a journalist.

Then, too, he was able to "collar" the new readership, Fyfe has suggested, because he was "part of it himself."[21] Gibbs shared this view, saying that Harmsworth did not possess a unique sense of public opinion; rather, "it was what he wanted," and not what the

public wanted, that was his guiding rule.[22] His own mind was so closely attuned to the tempo, to the mood of the time, Gibbs wrote again some years later. "He looked out upon life with a boyish zest for new discoveries, new fields of interest, new fashions, new ideas."[23] It was a reflection of the restless mood, the craving for excitement, for sensation, for a way of escape, that characterized much of the later Victorian period.[24] "He knew that a public had grown up," Gibbs wrote of Harmsworth's response to the period, "which took an intelligent interest in things not previously considered part of newspaper chronicles. Food; fashions; the drama of low places as well as high; sport of all kinds; the human story wherever it might be found; the adventure of science as it affected everyday life."[25]

Critics deplored the introduction of what they considered a "magazine character" into newspapers. But Harmsworth reasoned that the public wanted less of politics in its newspapers and more of entertainment. The popular press was reflecting a public indifference to politics while the new journalism was deflecting public interest away from the "political sphere".[26] Harmsworth was himself a little defensive about the issue of entertainment in the papers, insisting that he gave a fair quantity of news which he considered the backbone to a newspaper. "It is <u>hard news</u> that catches readers," he told Tom Clarke. "Features hold them."[27]

Having disregarded the strictures of convention and judging the popular taste, Harmsworth split "news" into two distinct areas. "Hard news" was presented to readers differently; he captioned it with bold headlines and simplified the language to the level of a literate but uneducated readership. Next, he brought light news, or

"news features" to the attention of the reader. Harmsworth made wide use of these "talking points" which covered an unlimited area of interest. This was the "human interest story", the "human angle" on a topic that in itself would be dull.[28] "News to him," Gibbs said of Harmsworth, "meant anything which had a touch of human interest for the great mass of folk, any happening or idea which affected the life, clothes, customs, food, health, and amusements of middle-class England.[29]

Some considered the human interest story to be synonymous with stunt journalism, contrived performances for the purpose of attracting attention and entertaining. They were considered sensational, cheap and offensive to good taste in journalism. Many, however, argued in favour of stunt journalism. Wickham Steed, for one, maintained it was important because it helped newspapers vie for individuality and keep the industry competitive.[30] Gibbs, who as a young journalist had some experience with stunt journalism, considered it a valuable feature because it did attract readers. In some ways the human interest story was akin to stunt journalism, because it dramatised news. "In fact," Gibbs wrote,

> "everything had to be a 'story' rather than a report. He [Harmsworth] sent them [his writers] to search for oddities of character, strange ways of life, out-of-the-way adventure. In the description of the historic scene, or an affair of public ceremony, he gave his praise to the descriptive writer who had observed some little touch of oddity behind the scenes, or who had avoided the obvious by seeing the human stuff on the sidewalk while some pompous pageant passed."[31]

The inspiration behind the Daily Mail was to provide a daily paper for the common man. With that principle in mind, Harmsworth preserved little of the "blood and culture" which had distinguished the dailies before. Instead, he offered compact, concise, often

abbreviated material. He reduced the size of the paper to a more manageable one, printed bold and eye-catching headlines, separated the columns visibly, emphasized short paragraphs, and devoted each page to a subject (e.g., Page 5 the News, Page 4 the Magazine page, Page 6 Sports, Page 7 for Women, two pages for advertising).[32] Another innovative feature of the Daily Mail was its use of fiction. Harmsworth specified that the paper would only publish serialized versions if expressly written for the Mail. The use of fiction naturally heightened the entertainment value of the paper; this together with the general usage of everyday English helped Harmsworth to corner the feminine market which up to then had been ignored. Harmsworth's energies did not stop with his aim to popularize newspapers. His impact on journalism itself was profound and far-reaching. He was dedicated to the idea that the stigma attached to journalists should be removed. A journalist, particularly a reporter, had no social distinction and was regarded with suspicion, even as a spy. Harmsworth radically altered this image and improved the journalist's public reputation. He effected important structural changes in the newspaper office, and he established the power of newspaper proprietorship.[33] Under his influence the newspaper business went out of the hands of family ownership and became a syndicate, a corporation, and lastly an amalgamated interest.[34] Harmsworth had created a new phenomenon in the press world; the newspaper magnate. In 1905 he accepted a title and became Lord Northcliffe.

Undoubtedly Northcliffe wielded tremendous power. When he purchased the Times in 1908 he silenced many of his critics who questioned the power he exerted over a mass readership. It was power

without responsibility, argued the critics who identified him with the Yellow Press. The fact that he owned so many newspapers and periodicals was at the heart of this concern, because his journalism was seen to cultivate the lowest possible standards and tastes, and it was disseminated to a wide audience. Skeptics argued that his lack of proper education should have prevented his becoming the "unofficial educator of millions."[35] Lord Riddell was aware of this fault, but he also recognized the value of Northcliffe's influence. He raised the level of "civic awareness" and in this respect Riddell argued strongly that Northcliffe did not seek power without responsibility. Others shared this view. L. Andrews, for instance, suggested that Northcliffe was known to be a champion of the "'little man' against ministerial and bureaucratic tyranny."[36] What really distinguished Northcliffe was his fundamental belief that the people had rights.

The Imitators

It took four years before rival newspapers to the Daily Mail were established. Then, the pattern of the popular press was fixed. "Adaptation of the Northcliffe formula," Escott said, "led to the evolution of the stream-lined, lucid, well-informed popular paper of the present day, with its daily condensation of news from all over the world, digested, explained and attractively presented, its lavish use of pictures and its background articles, often models of concise and accurate writing."[37] Most newspapers in the twentieth century were forced to adopt at least some of the new methods for the sake of survival. Some were regarded only as imitators, such as the Daily Express.

C. Arthur Pearson launched his Daily Express in 1900. It bore close resemblance to the Daily Mail but had some unique attributes offered a few alternatives. Like the Mail it downplayed the importance of politics,[38] and in its editorial policy was, like the Mail, totally under the influence of its proprietor. Unlike Northcliffe, however, Pearson was not an innovator. In his rivalry with Northcliffe, Pearson always had a compulsion to get one better. In this endeavour he made generous use of the "stunt", and this gave a more "sensational", "excitable" reputation to the Express.

Others argue that the Express was not simply a "pale reflection" of the Mail. The scope of the Express was limited on account of limited capital. Expansion of the newspaper plant suffered and so it could not compete with the versatile typography of the Mail.[39] Yet it was this financial limitation that gave the Express its singular quality, until Beaverbrook bought it in 1913 and made it into a paying concern. The editorship of the Express under Pearson was held by R.D. Blumenfeld, whose management and generous contribution through articles, gave a healthy "liveliness and optimism" to its readers. This provided an alternative to the editorial commentary of the Mail which was often gloomy and pessimistic.[40] But the Express was unable to steal away a significant readership from the Mail, and its circulation remained at around 300,000 copies per day until 1915.

The origins of the Daily Chronicle, which didn't begin to give the Mail close competition until 1903, were quite different from the Express or the Mail. It had not been founded to provide a popular newspaper for a modern readership, but traced its beginnings to the early nineteenth century.[41] By the 1880's the Chronicle was a a decidedly liberal paper, and it continued to champion the liberal

cause for the remainder of its existence. Unfortunately, the alliance with the Liberals played against the Chronicle for a number of years before its editorship was taken over by Robert Donald in 1903. The Liberal Press was in any case demoralized once the Liberal Party split over the Irish question and the matter of Imperialist expansion, but the Chronicle suffered the most. The coming of the Anglo-Boer War accentuated the problem. The Chronicle tried to steer to the centre on the war but failed to please either faction within the party or the liberal readership which supported it.[42] The Chronicle's weakness at this time was due also to its reluctance to adopt the new methods of the popular press, in order to retain its image as a quality paper.[43]

With Donald's appointment, the Chronicle's image changed rapidly. His task was facilitated by the healing of the rifts in the party, and later, by its overwhelming victory in the general election in 1906. While Donald stressed that the Chronicle would not have politics as a key feature, he kept the Chronicle as an essentially Liberal paper. "In every fibre of his being", Gibbs wrote, "he was of the Liberal faith, and he gathered round him a staff of talented men who had the same convictions."[44]

On February 13, 1904 the Chronicle advertised that on the 29th it would change from a penny to a half-penny daily. Its new features would include a magazine page which would contain "illustrated timely articles of value and interest to the family and home."[45] When Gibbs joined the Chronicle in 1904 he became Editor of this section, Page Eight. The articles were typical of the popular journalism; they covered diverse subjects on fashion, religion, theatre, and included a serialized novel. In 1904, photographs began to appear in

the Chronicle.

The introduction of photographic reproduction was an important event in the development of the popular, or modern, press. The process was not used by every paper until many years later, but for some it meant a new lease on life in the increasingly competitive field that Northcliffe had initiated. This was the case with the Daily Mirror when Northcliffe seized the opportunity of applying recent improvements made in the half-tone block process for reproducing pictures.[46]

By 1914 the structure and pattern of the popular press was established. The war years between 1914 and 1918 forced the press to respond to the needs of the moment, particularly where the Defence of the Realm Act required cooperation regarding censorship. But on the whole from that time change consisted in the refining of the innovations adopted by the press. One of the most important functions of the modern press continued to be its desire to perform a public responsibility, an issue that assumed significant proportions during the war. The license which the press assumed in this regard was very much a consequence of the ubiquity of the democratization process of the preceding century.[47]

Footnotes

1. Pageant, p. 266, The Journalists London, p. 122, H. Morgan, Lloyd George, p. 116 and Lloyd George's War Memories, pp. 2228-2231.

2. George Murray, The Press and the Public, pp. 7-10, Alan J. Lee, pp. 9-11, Bedarida, p. 7, p. 17 and p. 48, Roebuck, p. 2 and p. 17, Thomson, p. 107 and p. 120, Robert Rhodes James, The British Revolution (V. I of From Gladstone to Asquith 1880-1914), p. 13, Altick, p. 27, Ensor, p. 304.

3. See F.J. Mansfield, Mansfield's Complete Journalist, Wickham Steed, The Press, Joseph Frank, The Beginnings of the English Newspaper, especially p. 6 and pp. 14-15, H.R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers, V.'s I and II, Murray, pp. 1-6, and The Journalist's London, p. 23 and p. 32, but especially Chapters I to VI for a lively account of the early press.

4. Alexander Andrews, The History of British Journalism, p. 197, and Lee, p. 24.

5. Adventures, pp. 90-91. See also J.A.R. Marriott, Modern England 1885-1932, p. 102, Barbara Tuckman, The Proud Tower, p. 248, Roebuck, pp. 43-45 and Thomson, p. 140.

6. See Mansfield, p. 4 and p. 17, Steed, pp. 117-124 and p. 141, Lee, p. 43 and p. 61, The Journalist's London, p. 43, Harold Herd, The March of Journalism, p. 128, Brian Harrison, "Press and Pressure Group in Modern Britain," in J. Shattock (ed.) et al, ed's., The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings, pp. 261-263 and for the period prior to 1836 see, for instance, Patricia Hollis, The Pauper Press, especially pp. 295-306.

7. Quoted in Ideas and Beliefs, p. 308. See also Harrison, pp. 263-274, Lee, p. 24, James, p. 159, Bedarida, pp. 103-104, Read, p. 231, Ensor, pp. 304-305, and especially Chapters IV and IX, Thomson, p. 185, L.C.B. Seaman, Victorian England, pp. 269-270, and D.C. Sommerville, Modern Britain, p. 7.

8. See for instance Gibbs, Crowded Company, pp. 133-137.

9. Quoted in Mansfield, p. 34. See also Alec Jones, "Workmen's Advocates: Ideology and Class in a mid-Victorian Labour Newspaper System," in Shattock, pp. 293-314, George Boyce, "The Fourth Estate: The Re-appraisal of a concept," in Boyce, et al (ed's.), Newspaper History, pp. 19-40, Lord Brougham, "Practical Observations Upon the Education of the People," in The Emergence of Victorian Consciousness, p. 203, Mason Jackson, The Pictorial Press, p. 360, Altick, pp. 64-74.

10. Quoted in Lee, p. 38.

11. See Herd, p. 55 and pp. 222-224, Schults, pp. 39-43, and pp. xiv-xv, L. Andrews, Lords and Labourers of the Press, p. 69, Escott, p. 257, A. Andrews, p. 320, Lee, p. 38, Roebuck, p. 42, Blumenfeld, p. 32.

12. Quoted in A. Andrews, p. 162. See also L. Andrews, p. 69 and Escott, p. 257 for Benjamin Jowitt's similar attitude.

13. Quoted in Lee, p. 119.

14. G.A. Sala, Twice Round the Clock, p. 17 (Introduction), and Mrs. T.P. O'Connor, I, Myself, p. 188, Hamilton Fyfe, Sixty Years of Fleet Street, p. 32 and p. 35, James Milne, A Window in Fleet Street, p. 104, Journalists London, pp. 87-88.

15. For a history of the PMG under Greenwood, see J.W. Robertson Scott, The Story of the Pall Mall Gazette. See also Escott, pp. 251-253 and Lee, pp. 129-130.

16. See Frederic Whyte, The Life of W.T. Stead, V. I, pp. 99-116, pp. 159-186 and pp. 237-308, Schults, pp. 32-33, pp. 45-49, and pp. 128-192, J.S. Mills, Sir Edward Cook, p. 50, The Journalist's London, p. 95, and for further reading consult John Morley, The Life and Death of a Newspaper, Stanley Morison, The English Newspapers and Hamilton Fyfe, How the Press Revolution Came.

17. See in particular Escott, pp. 255-256, Fyfe, p. 54, Roebuck, p. 42 and Herd, p. 14.

18. Quoted in Fyfe, p. 43. See also p. 50 and Herd, p. 233.

19. The quotation appears in many sources, but see The Journalist's London, p. 100. See also Alfred F. Havinghurst, Radical Journalist: H.W. Massingham, p. 18.

20. See Pound, pp. 214-215, Wareham Smith, Spilt Ink, p. 201, Tom Clarke, Northcliffe in History, pp. 146-151 and pp. 208-209, Paul Ferris, The House of Northcliffe, p. 174, A.J.P. Taylor, Beaverbrook, especially p. 171, Valentine Williams, World of Action, p. 157, Fyfe, p. 58 and pp. 159-166 and Herd, p. 60.

21. Fyfe, pp. 165-6. Also Pound, pp. 204-205.

22. Adventures, pp. 90-91.

23. Pageant, p. 39.

24. See Bedarida, pp. 100-104, Ensor, pp. 304-305, Thomson, p. 172.

25. Pageant, p. 39.

26. Stephen Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, p. 346.

27. Quoted in Fyfe, p. 56.

28. Hughes calls this "the printed folklore of the factory age," p. viii. See also pp. 126-149 and p. 258.

29. Adventures, p. 9.

30. In Mansfield, p. 34. For further discussion on the stunt, see Hughes, p. 20, Fyfe, p. 37, and Jones, p. 4.

31. Pageant, p. 40.

32. See, e.g., Pound, pp. 198-200 and Herd, p. 57.

33. For a comparative breakdown of reporters' salaries see Lee, p. 112. See also The Journalist's London, p. 3, Andrews, p. 49, Mansfield, p. 26, Cecil Harmsworth King, Strictly Personal, p. 59, Fyfe, pp. 82-83 and p. 153, L.W. Needham, 50 Years of Fleet Street, p. 45, Thomas, A Traveller in News, p. 23, Adventures, p. 89, L. Andrews, p. 59, and J.M.N. Jeffries, Front Everywhere, p. 34.

34. See Pound, p. 105 and pp. 226-228, Lee, p. 79, and Needham, p. 33.

35. Riddell, Tavern Talk, p.. 44. See also J.A. Spender, Life Journalism and Politics, V. II, p. 170, and Pound, p. 213.

36. L. Andrews, p. 62.

37. Escott, p. 107. See also Montgomery, 1900, p. 155, Wickham Steed, p. 39 and Somerville, p. 70.

38. See Herd, p. 70. Both Northcliffe and Pearson were involved in politics; but Northcliffe took an active part, especially during the Great War of 1914-1918, and this was reflected in his newspapers. (For instance, the munitions crisis and his appointment as head of British War Mission. See Pound, pp. 474-475 and pp. 528-529.) Pearson never allowed his partisan association with the Conservative Party to meddle in his paper.

See L. Andrews, p. 132, Lee, p. 176. See also R. Allen, Voice of Britain, pp. 11-22, for a review of the Pearson Years of the Express history.

39. Fyfe, p. 97, Herd, p. 65, Thomas, A Countryman's Creed, p. 82, L. Andrews, p. 132-3 and The Journalist's London, p. 142.

40. Fyfe, p. 95, Andrews, p. 135.

41. For the Daily Chronicle's origins from the Clerkenwell News and its growth through the Lloyd family, see A. Andrews, p. 31, Escott, p. 280, Lee, p. 164.

42. See Peter Stansky, Ambitions and Strategies, especially pp. 14-15, 106-108, 174, 230, 262. Stansky points to the origins of the party's chronic problems resting in the Newcastle Programme of 1891, p. xii. Roy Dondas, The History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970, pp. 1-27, Lee, pp. 161-163, A.K. Russell, Liberal Landslide, p. 15 and p. 24, Escott, p. 281, Havinghurst, pp. 70-110, Andrews p. 32, Milne, p. 300 and Hope, p. 57.

43. Mills, p. 220 and Andrews, p. 32. See also Pageant, p. 16 for Gibbs's recollection of the strong and "old" Chronicle, in 1893 and p. 54 for his description of the Chronicle in 1903-1904, when its fortunes were very low.

44. The Journalist's London, p. 120.

45. The Daily Chronicle, February 13, 1904, p. 10.

46. Pound, p. 278 and Fyfe, p. 116. See also Clement K. Shorter, C.K.S.: An Autobiography, pp. 72-73, and Mason Jackson, The Pictorial Press, pp. 284-354.

47. James Curran, et al, "The Political Economy of the Human Interest Story," in Anthony Smith, ed., Newspapers and Democracy, pp. 288-316, Robert W. Desmond, Windows on the World: The Information Process in a Changing Society 1900-1920, pp. 63-83, Murray, pp. 11-17, Koss, pp. 421-424, Lee, p. 210 and Chapter VI, Schults, p. xvi, Hughes, p. xiii, and Gerald, pp. 52-66.

CHAPTER III

THE ACCOMPLISHED JOURNALIST

Gibbs arrived on Fleet Street in 1901 at a time when the transformation of the press was at its height. There were two aspects of this that affected him as a journalist more than any other; the introduction of the human interest story and the new type of journalist who most suited the needs of the popular press, the descriptive reporter. Harmsworth had anticipated that the new type of journalism "involved the training of a new type of journalist."[1] Gibbs described himself as a descriptive writer and he built his success as a journalist on this particular style of newspaper writing. It made much use of the human interest story and its popularity was entirely in the hands of the individual journalist.[2] The following pages will look at Gibbs's professional growth in this light.

Ambitions

From as far back as his memory would permit Gibbs said he had one unwavering ambition in life - and that was to write. Vague though his ambition was, it was realized within the second year of his first employment. This was at Cassell's Publishing Company, England's most reputable publishing house of the time, then under the Directorship of H.O. Arnold-Forster, who became the Secretary of State for War in 1903. From the start Gibbs impressed his supervisors, and he was quickly promoted to the Education Department

as assistant to its Editor, Arnold-Foster. Not long after this, Gibbs became Education Editor. Frederic Whyte remembered the twenty-one year old Gibbs who "with his youth and his faculty for concentration" could easily have challenged Arnold-Forster as Editor of the Department.[3]

Arnold-Forster was aware of Gibbs's various talents. He encouraged Gibbs to write his first book, Founders of the Empire, commissioned by Cassels and published in 1899. While this history textbook brought no income for Gibbs, it remained popular enough to be reprinted almost annually for the next twenty years. It was an offshoot of Arnold-Forster's Citizen Reader, a text which he produced in 1886 with the idea of providing the "ideal" school book.[4] Gibbs's book was one of the "Empire" series, the objective of which was partly to put into better perspective the information which youngsters, and adults had on the Empire. This information was often misleading, because knowledge was based on inadequate education supplemented, Gibbs wrote in his preface, by "the great array of serials, weekly papers, daily papers, snippits, snaps and collections of extracts of all sorts and kinds" which often gave a distorted, untrue picture.[5] Here was an attempt to move away from a value-system that encouraged an unscrupulous Imperialism, an issue that was a particularly sensitive one within the Liberal Party of the 1890's.[6]

Gibbs himself was highly patriotic. This was very apparent in Founders.[7] Even in 1935 he admitted that he indulged in patriotic emotions[8] and in 1947, while he adopted a more academic approach, he was praising love of country and the will to die for it.[9] The latter approach came after two world wars and Gibbs

instructed his readers that "even patriotism has to be controlled by intelligence and morality."[10] But Gibbs's patriotism was directed at England rather than Empire. His patriotism differed from say, Kipling's. Gibbs's approach to war was unlike Kipling's because he saw war in relation to civilization and democracy rather than to the Empire. Then, too, in Gibbs's experience with war between 1912-1945, it was not Empire that was being challenged by an enemy, but England. He was not deeply stirred by the South African war and in fact adopted a pro-Boer attitude, until Black Week modified his views. "Brought up in the Gladstonian tradition of the Liberals," he reminded us, "and being, anyhow, a liberal-minded youth hostile to the loud-mouthed jingoism of the time, I was not swept up by enthusiasm."[11] He explained his pro-Boer sympathies to his readers in later years when he admitted that he always sympathized with the "underdogs" to the point where at times he was inclined "to pity the criminal almost as much as his victim."[12]

The substance of Founders was to offer biographies "brief and very simple," of "some of the greatest Englishmen."[13] In Gibbs's opinion such men, by virtue of their "wisdom, courage and industry were directly responsible for the "greatness of the British Empire."[14] He modified his view during the war years in 1914 to 1918. Then, he made a scathing indictment of the High Command who, he wrote, "had the brains of canaries and the manners of Potsdam."[15] He was equally critical of the political leadership of England during the pre-war years. Together with the leaders of France and Italy, he referred to them as a "small gang of notorious persons, politically of doubtful character and shady antecedents."[16]

Founders of the Empire was just the beginning for Gibbs the writer. His next appointment, as Managing Editor of the Fiction Bureau at Tillotson's Literary Syndicate in the North of England gave him, writes Whyte, "the first real chance of showing some aspects of his remarkable talents."[17] Tillotson's, syndicating to the Provincial papers, was the first to introduce the serialized novel to newspapers responding to the demands of the new style of journalism. This was in 1873 and thereafter the provincial syndicate included a generous portion of literary and entertainment content. By 1889 Tillotson's had a Fiction Bureau devoted to this, and it was here that Gibbs made a contribution. He was responsible for the purchase of novels and short stories for serialization and syndication to the provincial and colonial papers. During his editorship, Arnold Bennett's The Grand Babylon Hotel was among his purchases. Bennett regretted selling his manuscript this way, and for what he regarded as a paltry sum. In 1902, he cautioned a friend, who was applying for a job at Tillotsons, to beware of Gibbs whom he considered "excessively smart and keen."[18]

Frederic Whyte, in his praise of Gibbs, was referring especially to Gibbs's series "Knowledge is Power."[19] This series channelled Gibbs's vague ambition to write into the area of journalism. It brough his name to the attention of Alfred Harmsworth, always on the lookout for fresh talent. "At the height of his power," Valentine Williams has written, "he opened the door of opportunity to every young aspirant worthy of his salt."[20] In 1901 he offered the twenty-three year old Gibbs the editorship of Page Four of the Daily Mail, the literary or magazine page. Gibbs considered that his experience with the provincial papers had been firm training ground.

As a budding journalist, he sickened for London with its variety and stimulation and opportunity, and he accepted Harmsworth's offer.[21]

The Apprenticeship

On assuming his editorial duties Gibbs was at once confronted by one of Harmsworth's eccentric habits. Page Four already had an editor in Tilson Young, recently returned from South Africa as correspondent with the Manchester Guardian. It was not unusual for Harmsworth to make duplicate appointments, and Gibbs and Young managed with that arrangement. Gibbs deferred to Young's seniority as "first there" and later took over as sole editor when Young was sent elsewhere. Gibbs did a fair amount of writing for Page Four though most of his effort went into commissioning articles.[22] But he remained with the Mail for less than a year. It was dangerous, he said later, to be one of Harmsworth's "court favourites" because "it was almost certain to mean a speedy fall."[23]

Gibbs resigned from the Mail, anticipating dismissal, and followed the "beaten track" of the underground passage between Carmelite House and the offices of the Daily Express. The Express was known to hire the reporters fired by the Mail. With this rival paper, Gibbs came to know "all the folly and amusement of stunt journalism",[24] his chief task being to record and interpret contemporary events. Not all the stories he covered as a reporter were stunts, the majority being legitimately based on social and local subjects. But it was a stunt story that ended Gibbs's tenure with the Express. Pearson requested him to write a series of articles proving the Baconian theory on Shakespeare's plays. When Gibbs expressed his reluctance, Pearson reminded him that a

"journalist writes from a brief." "I do not see how one can write against one's inmost convictions without prostituting one's pen and betraying truth itself," Gibbs explained. "I have always refused to do so." He instantly rejected Pearson's request and resigned.[25] Gibbs was not long without employment. The Daily Chronicle took him on as its editor of Page 8, the magazine page.[26] He had under him three artists who illustrated the articles, many of which were written by Gibbs.[27] The first contribution by Gibbs that appeared with his name was in April 1904. "Easter in Paris" was typical of the articles on Page 8 which provided easy but pleasant and informative reading on diverse subjects. By 1905, Page 8 was dominated by fashion and entertainment. Gibbs wrote his series on the "Streets of London" for this page.[28] Most of his articles, like others' contributions, were published unsigned, but those that are identified as his are distinguished by his individual style. He was for instance, even in these early years interested in animating the inanimate. Similar to his description of the tanks in 1916, his article on the opening of the Great Western train service described a motor car as "a monstrous creature with great glaring eye-balls and gasping breath."[29] Another article, in the same month, gave a pastel portrait of the house-boat season on the upper Thames set in the beauty of the natural surroundings.

By November 1905, photographs appeared frequently in the Chronicle, altering the concept of Page 8 which rested on artists' black and white illustrations. It was Gibbs's duty to fire his black-and-white artists who were being made redundant by the photographs. Gibbs himself remained with the Chronicle until 1906 and then let go. Gibbs was again not long without employment. In

January 1906, a new liberal penny-daily was launched. Funded by its proprietor, Franklin Thomasson, son of one of Bolton's cotton magnates who boasted "unimpeachable liberal-radical connections",[30] the Tribune advertised itself as a sober yet entertaining paper. It opened with a good deal of sensation and fanfare.[31] But the Tribune was unable to compete with either The Times or the Daily Mail, both of which it tried to emulate especially in its effort to make some fundamental policy and editorial changes when it was clear that it was failing to attract readers away from the larger papers.[32] The Tribune folded within two years. Thomasson's mismanagement and lack of experience in journalism were commonly held responsible.[33]

Gibbs was the Tribune's Literary Editor. He was proud of securing some of the finest talent of the day, including the novelist Marie Corelli and the poet Stephen Philips. G.K. Chesterton topped the list. Gibbs described how he was able to prevail upon his friend and one-time neighbour to share his loyalties with the Daily News and make regular contributions as well to the Chronicle. Gibbs himself wrote many articles, his best-known being the series "London Pictures".[34] He absorbed himself fully in the Tribune experience and this was an invaluable experience for him. At this time his conception of a newspaper was that of a "living organism, threaded through with the nerves of men and women, inspired by their spirit, animated by their ideals and thought, the living vehicle of their own adventure of life."[35] He was much affected by the Tribune's death, and sought personally to salvage the paper.[36]

The Tribune experience proved to be a unique one for Gibbs for three reasons. First, he turned a potential disaster to advantage

when he published the Tribune story as a novel, The Street of Adventure. Published in 1909, Street was Gibbs's third novel. His first two novels, The Individualist (1908) and The Spirit of Revolt (1908) were not much noticed. Both dealt with personality and the then-fashionable use of "psychological interpretations." His reconstruction in Street of the Tribune tragedy was an attempt to sound a "grim warning against the trials and tribulations of life in Fleet Street", a point which Gibbs often emphasized in his opinions on journalism as a career. But in fact Street had the reverse impact because as Gibbs saw it, it "lured many young men into London journalism."[37] The novel was said to have disproved the view of publishers who insisted that the subject was not popular. Hamilton Fyfe maintained in the late 1940's that "it is the best tale of its kind that has been published."[38] Another journalist, Gibbs's close friend Alphonse Courlander, expressed gratitude to Gibbs for opening up the subject with publishers. He remembered Gibbs as the "godfather" of his own powerful novel on the subject of journalism, Mightier than the Sword.[39] The Street of Adventure, which Frederic Whyte calls Gibbs's best novel,[40] enjoyed enormous popularity over the years, particularly after the War. In its review in 1919 the New York Times praised the novel highly, though it commented on the curious character of English journalism which, through Gibbs's eyes, was devoid of the aggressive and fast-paced style that dominated American journalism.[41] The novel went into many reprints after 1919, after it had its "second birth" as Gibbs enjoyed describing it.

The novel's initial success[42] was quickly erased by a libel suit which forced its withdrawal from the market. In his attempt

accurately to depict the Tribune story, Gibbs only thinly disguised the characters. He made no pretense about his portrayals[43] and insisted that his portraits were complementary. He said they were "slightly caricatured, now and then, in the friendliest way", and he also troubled himself to submit proofs to those individuals for their approval.[44] But this was not sufficient, and at least one of Gibbs's characters in real life brought suit, while several others threatened.[45] This removed the book from the sales that Gibbs and his publisher had anticipated.

But the Tribune experience was valuable for Gibbs for a second reason, other than providing him with material for a story. It convinced him of his vocation in journalism. He had been bitten by the bug of journalism which is "almost incurable", as he put it. "Fleet Street puts a spell upon a man", he once romanticized. "Away from it he feels exiled, and outside the arena of life".[46] It was more than penury, he frequently stated, which repeatedly drove him back to Fleet Street.

In the third place, the Tribune experience firmly established his journalistic reputation. His position as literary editor carried much prestige. In 1908, for instance, he was considered a candidate for the Editorship of the Tatler. Its founder Clement K. Shorter, had great hopes that a fine editor would revive the journal's sagging fortunes. However, together with Sir Harry Brittain who also interviewed Gibbs, he decided that in fact Gibbs was "of too literary a temperament to undertake a frivolous newspaper ...and this was really a great compliment."[47] By this time, too, Gibbs had a strong reputation as a writer. His style was fluent, graphic, and it already contained that "gift of understanding" Frederic Whyte wrote,

"which was to be so great a factor in his achievements as a war correspondent."[48]

By 1908, Gibbs's "apprenticeship" was complete. He had sought Fleet Street as a "training ground" for skills he wanted to acquire for a career as a writer.[49] This was not an unusual approach. Professor Saintsbury remarked that the advances made in the press in the late nineteenth century "made literary life possible" for a host of potential writers. The distinction between literature and journalism, he pointed out, was in any case a fine point.[50] Gibbs never defined what form his writing career should take. What he has said is that he considered journalism as "merely a novitiate for real literature, a training school for life and character from which I might gain knowledge and inspiration for great novels."[51] He was not alone in this approach. Writers such as Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, J.B. Priestley, had taken the same route. Valentine Williams maintained that journalism provided "a good training for authorship."[52] In all these cases, however, journalism was abandoned once it had served its purpose, and these writers went on to illustrious careers as authors.[53] Gibbs never experienced a conflict between journalism and fiction writing and found compatibility between the two. In fact as an author he remained dependent upon journalism to a curious degree. His journalism was a constant source of inspiration to him, often the backbone of his novels. This became evident during the post-war period, but during this early phase of his professional growth he was still searching for the great story for a novel. G.K. Chesterton has remarked on this period in Gibbs's career. While he achieved great distinction as a novelist Chesterton remained an

occasional contributor to the press. This caused G.K.C. to muse that he was an "accident in Fleet Street and he wrote that Fleet Street

> "might have been called the Street of Accident, as a man whom I am proud to have first met there afterwards called it the Street of Adventure. Philip Gibbs himself accentuated that intellectual incongruity which was the comedy of the place; he carried a curious air of being the right man in the wrong place. His fine falcon face, with its almost unearthly refinement, seemed set in a sort of fastidious despair about ever making it in the right place. This was long before he gained his great distinctions as a war correspondent...I begin with that impression of Gibbs precisely because his figure did seem so detached and cleancut against the background."[54]

Special Correspondent

By 1909, Gibbs's reputation as a journalist was established. He joined the Daily Chronicle again, this time as a special correspondent. His assignments assumed increased importance and he moved away from purely descriptive reporting.[55] In September, his name became known internationally as he claimed front-page headlines with the Dr. Cook story. The intrigue behind the story was resolved, John Hohenberg has remarked, "through the miracle of the wireless and the work of a first-rate reporter, Philip Gibbs."[56] Gibbs was known to possess an unusual "news instinct" anyway. Cecil Roberts recalled that he had "an uncanny gift for scenting a story ...[He] had a habit of always being in the right place at the right moment."[57] The Dr. Cook story proved to be the "scoop" of of the decade.

On September 2, 1909 a cable was received in Denmark, sent by an American medical doctor, a Dr. Frederick A. Cook, stating that he had successfully reached the North Pole on April 2. It aroused much speculation, because his expedition to the Pole had been unannounced and because he did not offer any proof in the way of scientific data

and geographic description. From the beginning Cook's credibility was questioned by the press.[58] Press representatives assembled in Copenhagen to await the arrival of Cook's ship, the Hans Egede; partly by luck and partly through his own initiative, Gibbs was able to board the ship before it docked. This gave him a considerable advantage over all his English newspaper colleagues in his first interview with Dr. Cook. "I knew nothing about Polar exploration in any technical ways," he wrote later, "but somehow on that voyage down the Kattegat I came to doubt the integrity of this man Cook."[59] He took exception to Cook's defensive and evasive answers to innocent and simple questions, and his inability to produce diaries from the expedition or documented astronimical observations. "The impression conveyed by my cross-examination of Dr. Cook this morning," Gibbs wrote for the paper on the 5th, "is confirmed by a meeting of fellow-journalists this evening."[60] The controversy over Dr. Cook's credibility began to wane as Copenhagen feted him. Many journalists, as well as the public, were persuaded by his powerful personality. The Danish Geographic Society was convinced, and this was important support. On September 7, the renowned explored Robert E. Peary announced his own return from the North Pole. It failed to convince that body of opinion which insisted Dr. Cook was not a fraud. Some of Gibbs's colleagues shared his view that Cook might be an imposter, but Gibbs was along in his blatant condemnation of the doctor's integrity. This kept alive the initial speculation and doubt on the matter. "I will even say", he wrote on September 7, "with a full sense of my responsibility in using the words, that Dr. Cook's honour and veracity are most seriously challenged."[61] The Daily Chronicle

and its News Editor Ernest Perris, supported Gibbs's assertions and published all he filed. His colleagues of the Press in Copenhagen admired his courage, but cautioned him against the risks he was taking. (There was always the possibility of a libel suit.) W.T. Stead, doyen of the English correspondents in Copenhagen, held Dr. Cook in high esteem. He was skeptical of Gibbs's stand on the issue, and told him "you are not only ruining yourself but you are ruining the Daily Chronicle for which I have a great respect."[62] The Danish press itself took a firm stand. Denmark had been generous in its reception of Dr. Cook. It responded to Gibbs's articles by calling him a liar.

Gibbs doubted his position now and again, but he went to a considerable effort to back up his assertions by solid evidence. He sought the advice of scientific experts and accepted their guidance in the manner in which he questioned Dr. Cook.[63] On September 8, following Dr. Cook's important lecture to the Danish Geographical Society, Gibbs wrote that it "proved conclusively that his claim to have reached the north pole belongs to the realm of fairy tales."[64] When the University of Copenhagen conferred a Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) on Dr. Cook, Gibbs at once sought an interview with the Rector of the University. It had been reported that the Rector had been permitted to examine the documents which Dr. Cook claimed variously were either not to be seen yet, or had been shipped to the States. Gibbs was successful in extracting the painful truth from the Rector, that in fact no documents had been seen. Perhaps his most forceful attempt to uncover Dr. Cook's fraudulent claim was his publication of a letter given him by a Mrs. Rasmussen, wife of the arctic explorer who had helped Cook on his journey. In this letter, Rasmussen stated

that Cook was a charlatan and a rogue and who had never been near the North Pole.

Gibbs had gone out on a limb in his assertions on Dr. Cook. He was upheld in his persistent effort and his convictions when reports came in that Peary had reached the North Pole, and that his expedition was fully documented. Public opinion switched to support Peary and the Cook episode faded. The University of Copenhagen and the Danish Geographic Society later made public admissions of their error and withdrew the honours given Dr. Cook. The Royal Society in England did likewise. W.T. Stead's personal opinion on the matter, which others, including Gibbs, shared, was that Dr. Cook sincerely believed he had reached the North Pole. It was a "psychological conundrum" Frederic Whyte says, and he notes that according to Stead it was Cook's naivete that was the cause of his inability to carry through his story. Gibbs later wrote to Stead, thanking him for his comments throughout the controversy, and concluded that he himself had ultimately felt compassion for Cook.[65]

In 1913, Gibbs was sent abroad to cover various important events. In Germany he was to assess the public attitude towards German relations with England. Based on intensive interviews, Gibbs found that the general public was opposed even to the prospect of war, while the official and business classes voiced definite militarist sentiments.[66] After the war, he underscored this by pointing out that German public opinion is "slavishly subservient to authority and leadership."[67] Later in the year, he travelled to Portugal on a humanitarian mission concerning the treatment of the political prisoners of the new Republican government. In a series of articles to the Daily Chronicle Gibbs detailed the sordid conditions

of the prisons, and his purpose was to make an appeal for "help and intervention" on behalf of those unjustly imprisoned.[68]

Gibbs's assignments as a special correspondent took him to other countries in Europe and the subjects he dealt with were more serious than those he had dealt with in the Chronicle between 1904 and 1906. In 1912 he was described as "a writer of rare charm, who can treat News Subjects with insight and sentiment."[69] He remained best known for his skill as a descriptive writer and it was in this capacity that he was a regular contributor to the Graphic from 1911 onwards. He tackled a wide variety of subjects. In January 1911 he gave his account of a personal experience when he attended, without invitation and at some risk, a meeting of foreign anarchists in White Chapel. "I am sure that this intellectual anarchy," he summarized in "An Evening in an Anarchists's Club," "this philosophy of revolution, is more dangerous to the state of Europe than pistols and nitroglycerine."[70] A gentler picture of London was his topic two weeks later. In "The Sweet, Sad Music of Humanity" Gibbs made a plea for the repeal of the by-law that would end the bell of the Muffin Man.[71] Later that year the Coronation of King George V figured prominently in his contributions to the Graphic, and he interested his readers with other subjects such as fancy-dress balls, agricultural exhibits, aviation, the 1911 census, the London strike of that year, "Cup Day", peoples and places in London, ethnic interests, and went on with much the same subjects the following year. He covered the Royal Garden Party at Windsor Castle in July, travelled to Cowes for the annual "season", to Ireland to hear Churchill speak in Belfast; he wrote a story on the sinking of the Titanic, on "Shakespeare's England" in Earl's Court, on the fashion of the

weekend cottages, and an article on old age. In August he wrote a piece in memory of General Booth and the future of the Salvation Army which Booth had inaugurated.

It is, then, interesting to see Gibbs, who was dealing with such subjects, express an interest in becoming a war correspondent in 1912. He threw some light on the matter in 1923 when he wrote that war correspondence seemed to him "the crown of journalistic ambition, and the heart of its adventure and romance."[72] It could be suggested that he saw in war, which he wrote gives a "tremendous lift out of the ruck of human dullness,"[73] new and important material for a novel. He desired above all, as a writer, to one day find "a story worth the telling."[74] Possibly, he selected the war subject because it represented, as Herbert Matthews, war correspondent with the New York Times said, a fundamental function of mankind.[75]

Footnotes

1. Quoted in Pound, p. 214.
2. Escot, p. 337 and R.D. Blumenfeld, The Press in My Time, p. 127.
3. Frederic Whyte. A Bachelor's London, p. 90. See also Adventures for Gibbs's view on Arnold-Foster, p. 84.
4. See Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster, A Memoir, by his wife, pp. 60-64.
5. Founders of the Empire (1907 edition), p. iii.
6. See e.g. Stansky, pp. 14-15.
7. See in particular p. 7 and p. 256 where he speaks of the greatness of Empire and the Englishmen who built it up.
8. England Speaks, p. 237.
9. Pageant, p. 524.
10. Ibid., p. 525.
11. Pageant, p. 26.
12. Pageant, p. 354-5 and Gibbs, How Now England?, p. 162.
13. Founders of the Empire, p. iv.
14. Ibid.
15. Realities, p. 58. Gibbs did not publish his opinions until 1920, on account of the censorship. But when he did put himself on record his words had an impact. He is still being quoted in academic works., e.g. Brian Bond, The Victorian Army and Staff College 1854-1914.
16. Gibbs, The Hope of Europe, p. 1. See the entire chapter, pp. 1-41.
17. Whyte, p. 90.
18. James Hepburn, ed., Letters of Arnold Bennett, V. I., p. 167.
19. See above pp. 9.

20. Williams, World of Action, p. 157.

21. See Adventures, p. 109.

22. Gibbs's salary was L6 per week L3 per article he wrote.

23. Adventures, p. 92, and Pageant, p. 45.

24. Pageant, p. 47.

25. Ibid., p. 48.

26. See for the story Pageant, pp. 55-6.

27. Gibbs has written on these artists, all of whom went on to more illustrious careers. For Alfred Priest see Crowded Company, pp. 64-5, Stephen Reid in The Riddle of a Changing World, p. 142 and Edgar Lander in Pageant, p. 351, European Journey, p. 5, Journalist's London, p. 134, Crowded Company, p. 17.

28. See above p. 8.

29. The Daily Chronicle, July 2, 1904.

30. Adventures, p. 103. Gibbs had known the Thomasson family in Bolton, while with Tillotsons. See also A.J. Lee, The Origins of the Popular Press in England, p. 141 and Journalists, p. 126.

31. Pageant, pp. 59-68 and Journalists, pp. 126-132.

32. Lee, p. 167.

33. Fyfe, p. 131.

34. See above, p. 8

35. Adventures, p. 167.

36. Adventures, p. 107, and Pageant, pp. 67-8.

37. Journalists London, p. 110.

38. Fyfe, p. 140.

39. Crowded Company, p. 109.

40. Frederic Whyte, "Sir Philip Gibbs," in The Living Age, Vol. 308, March 19, 1921, p. 726.

41. The New York Times, August 17, 1919, p. 415.

42. See Newton, The Bookman, Vol. 51, December, 1916, p. 70.

43. Journalists London, p. 131.

44. Pageant, pp. 67-9.

45. According to Fyfe, p. 69, Randall Charlton was encouraged to make trouble by bringing suit. Clement K. Shorter, for another, was simply unhappy about references in the book which he thought were unmistakably pointed to him. See C.K.S. An Autobiography, pp. 105-6.

46. Pageant, p. 71.

47. Shorter, p. 106.

48. Frederic Whyte, A Bachelor's London, p. 89.

49. Adventures, p. 109.

50. In Kennedy Jones, Fleet Street and Downing Street, p. 111.

51. Adventures, p. 109.

52. Williams, p. 374. See also pp. 375-6.

53. See Lord Birkenhead, Rudyard Kipling, p. 84, H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, p. 457, J.B. Priestley, Midnight on the Desert, p. 8, Fyfe, p. 23. See also on the subject, Pageant, p. 59, J. Saxon Mills, Sir Edward Cook, p. 57 for references to John Morley and Viscount Milner, and J.W. Robertson Scott, The Life and Death of a Newspaper, p. 352 and 15.

54. G.K. Chesterton, Autobiography, pp. 184-5. See Pageant, pp. 46-7, 60-2, 64-5, for Gibbs's association with G.K.C.

55. See Pageant, pp. 72-82 and especially pp. 109-134.

56. John Hohenberg, Foreign Correspondents, pp. 198-9.

57. Cecil Roberts, Half-Way, pp. 129-30.

58. See The New York Times, September 2, 1909, p. 1. Also Hohenberg, p. 194. Also The Daily Chronicle, September 4, 1909, p. 1.

59. Pageant, p. 84.

60. The New York Times, September 5, 1909, p. 1. Gibbs's articles were syndicated by the Daily Chronicle to papers throughout the world.

61. New York Times, September 7, 1909, p. 1. He had written in The Daily Chronicle, September 6, 1909, p. 1, that "I, at least, as one of the reporters of the world's history, must, in duty to the public, be skeptical until the facts are proven, without, however, denying the truth of Dr. Cook's story."

62. Pageant, p. 87. See also Frederic Whyte, The Life of W.T. Stead, Vol. II, pp. 300-1.

63. See Whyte, p. 301.

64. New York Times, September 8, p. 1. Also The Daily Chronicle, September 8, 1909, p. 1.

65. In Frederic Whyte, pp. 301-2. Peary came out with a strong indictment of Dr. Cook in late September. The Daily Chronicle, September 29, 1909, p. 1. In mid-October, The Daily Chronicle printed an article, one of several on the same theme, with the headlines, "The Daily Chronicle's Position Vindicated." The Daily Chronicle, October 13, 1909, p. 1.

66. Pageant, pp. 132-134.

67. Ibid., p. 134.

68. "The Tyranny in Portugal", in The Contemporary Review, Vol. CV, (January 1914), p. 38. Also The Daily Chronicle, December 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1913.

69. The Graphic, January 20, 1912 (no page numbers in Graphic).

70. The Graphic, January 7, 1911, p. 14.

71. The Graphic, January 28, 1911, p. 126.

72. Adventures, p. 191.

73. "The Spirit of War," in The Graphic, October 12, 1912, p. 526.

74. Crowded Company, p. 103.

75. Quoted in Philip Knightley, The First Casualty, p. 402.

CHAPTER IV

A SPECIAL BRANCH OF JOURNALISM

Gibbs's aspiration to become a war correspondent was not misplaced. There were several reasons why he would have considered war correspondence to be the crown of journalistic ambition.

Most significantly, war was a popular subject. Kennedy Jones of the Daily Mail ranked war first among popular subjects. "War not only creates a supply of news" he said, "but a demand for it."[1] During the American Civil War, the war so stimulated public interest that journalistic methods and principles altered and advanced dramatically to keep up with the demand for news.[2]

War reporting until the twentieth century was dominated by England and the United States. In the U.S. war correspondence began in the latter half of the eighteenth century during the Revolutionary War and secured itself during the Civil War (1861-1865). The British were able to draw on the American model but from the beginning distinguished their own method and style, particularly during the Imperialistic Wars in the latter half of the nineteenth century. During this period, war correspondence became an integral part of the British press. This development was nurtured by two trends; first, by the militarist spirit of the age and second, by the democratization which influenced both society and the press. The following section will discuss these two events.

Gibbs's aspiration was no doubt inspired by the excitement, the notoriety, the adventure, that was attached to the war correspondent.

Possibly, he was intrigued also by the challenge of overcoming restrictions imposed on the war correspondent by government and by the military. The remainder of the chapter will look at these two aspects of war reporting and end with a discussion on the machinery of censorship with which war correspondents were confronted in 1914.

A Popular Subject

The latter half of the nineteenth century in Europe was characterized by a growing militant atmosphere. England, for one, found herself in an increasingly insecure position internationally. She was feeling the effects of the territorial and economic consolidation of Germany, Italy and the United States which challenged her power in the international arena. At the same time she was suffering from the economic and social stagnation of the 1870's and 1880's and this added to her anxiety. Her naval supremacy came under serious challenge, first by France and Russia, then by Germany in the 1890's. Her inclination was to maintain the status quo by abstaining from a direct involvement with the other European powers. But the competing aliances which began to dominate the international scene soon upset the delicate balance of power and by the turn of the century it was clear that England had to become involved in order to protect her economic interests. The possibility of a major conflict among the Great Powers moved closer as the new century wore on.[3]

In the strengthening of their defences, the Great Powers engaged in a highly competitive arms race, and this defined the international atmosphere. It was stimulated by scientific advancements, such as poisonous gasses, repeating rifles, machine guns, photographic reconnaisance, improved methods of transportation, the refined system

of telegraphy, and later, the wireless, air flight, and sinister methods in warfare such as lethal chemicals, shrapnel and high velocity explosives. The Hague Peace Conferences achieved little in an attempt to preserve peace by limiting the arms race among the Great Powers.[4]

During this period, especially from the 1870's to 1900, England tried to compensate for her weakening international position by turning her attention to the reinforcement and strengthening of her Empire. This, in part, historians suggest, was the reason behind her engagement in frequent colonial wars, punitive expeditions and campaigns. She received no serious challenges from native armies that were poorly trained and primitively equipped and victory came easily in these "little wars".[5] Frequent, easy victory encouraged in the popular mind the notion that the British Army was invincible, that war was a distant adventure, and the soldier a romantic figure. At the same time, England's domestic situation was dominated by an increasingly force-oriented society that engaged in violent labour strikes, militant suffragette and socialist demonstrations, and threatened civil war in Ireland.

Many historians seek to explain this orientation in that the homogeneity which had unified English thought and behaviour in the first half of the century, was disintegrating as a result of the effects of the Industrialization of the country. The new ideas, philosophies and structures that would replace the old, had not yet fully taken root. Society was forced to seek comfort and refuge in various forms of escapism, particularly those that generated excitement. War was a chief outlet.[6]

The "sheer desire for spectacle," Rayne Kruger wrote, was

largely responsible for the martial spirit of the time.[7] War gave, even to the non-combatant, a surrogate experience of adventure through the medium of the press. War stories made a particularly intense appeal to the younger generation, the products of the 1870 Education Act. The popular press was able to capitalize on this interest in war and contributed to the public misconception that war was a diversion to a humdrum life, even entertaining.[8]

The war correspondent described the thrill and the excitement of combat in distant lands and with foreign peoples. Often he would embellish the truth for the sake of creating a more colourful background and possibly attracting more attention toward himself. The readership was especially able to identify with his adventure when the war correspondent often made himself the hero of his own story. Then too, war and stories of war were more acceptable when supported by the righteousness of Imperial expansion, advanced most notably by Cecil Rhodes and Rudyard Kipling. War reporting became quickly popular and the war correspondent came to occupy a prominent position on a newspaper staff.[9] The war correspondent, some authorities argue, was merely providing the public with the reading material it wanted. L. Starr, for instance, wrote that the American Civil War demonstrated that war reporters had a basic function to perform in American society in the discharging of a public responsibility.[10] The same is said to be true of William Howard Russell during the Crimean War in 1854.

Russell is commonly acknowledged to be the first war correspondent, largely because he was the first full-time field correspondent assigned to cover the daily news of a war. Before Russell, the military and the War Office would brief the press on war news.

From time to time journalists would provide the odd article on a war or on a battle, but this kind of news was unreliable. This was the case with Crabbe Robinson of The Times, Peter Finarty of the Morning Chronicle and Charles Gruneison of the Morning Post, all pre-Russell correspondents.[11]

As correspondent with The Times, Russell was instrumental in demon- strating the importance of the press during war-time because the impact of his correspondence reflected the changing needs of a changing society. That society was ready and anxious to influence government policy during the war in 1854. "Russophobia" reached its height in England in 1853 when Turkey was threatened by Russian aggression. Turkey, "sick man of Europe," still served as a buffer to Russian expansion into the Balkans. This was vital to the balance of powers and hence to England's continued noninvolvement in European affairs.[12] Public sentiment in any case, riding the crest of Victorian humanitarianism, sympathized with Turkey. But there existed an enormous discrepancy between the public's appetite for news from the Crimea and the ability of the military to satisfy it through traditional methods. John Delaney, editor of The Times, recognized early the public's enthusiasm and interest in the impending war. Although he has been critized for stirring up a "war spirit" against Russia for personal gain and for that of The Times, he is also recognized for his conviction that the interests of both the press and the public would be served best by a different and more consistent method of war reporting.[13] He commissioned Russell to act as The Times daily correspondent from the scene of battle.

Delaney's selective release of Russell's reports from the Crimea shocked public opinion by revealing the state of affairs that existed

in the army. "The officers are in rags," Russell wrote "Guardsmen who were 'the best style of men' in the Parks now turn out in coats and trousers and boots all seams and patches, torn in all directions, and mended with more vigour than neatness, and our smartest cavalry and line men are models of ingenious sewing and stitching."[14] The men suffered from "cold, wet, and exposure," their tents "like sieves" and the trenches deep and soggy with three feet of mud and snow; their clothing was always saturated and shoes often removed in 20°F weather because the feet would swell from the exposure to dampness.[15] Warm clothing, adequate shelter, sufficient provisions were sadly lacking, and an army that was already reduced by the ravages of disease suffered still more from inadequate medical care and strategical and tactical blunders on the field of battle.[16] "The commonest accessories of a hospital are wanting," remarked Russell. "The sick appear to be tended by the sick, and the dying by the dying."[17]

"These are hard truths," wrote Russell, in response to the criticism his despatches received from the military, "but the people of England must hear them."[18] What irked the army above all, was not so much Russell's disclosures <u>per se</u>, but that they pointed to military incompetence. Even the officers expressed surprise at Russell's disclosures about the pitiful conditions of the soldiers because they did not see the Crimean campaign as any different from other campaigns. "The difference," Byron Farwell points out, "was that they were being reported in the press to an increasingly literate public who found the customary treatment of soldiers unacceptable."[19] Prior to mid-century the "early Victorian re-building" that dominated society at the time, missed the army

somehow. The subsequent absence of reforms within the army left it, according to a better informed society, outdated, exposing the military system to "the nation's horror."[20]

Russell was not seeking notoriety but it was inevitable that his reports would create a sensation. A civilian could not view the condition of the army with the same detachment and from the same perspective as the military. At one point he wrote that he reserved the "exercise of the right of private judgement in making public and in suppressing the details of what occurred on this memorable day [Balaklava]."[21] Delaney acted in similar fashion, reserving Russell's most revealing reports for private circulation to the Cabinet.[22] Still, the reports Delaney published had a tremendous impact. The War Office was pressured by public opinion into providing immediate improvement of the medical facilities and the provisions.[23] Ultimately, it toppled the Aberdeen Government. The experience of the Crimean War began a steady series of reforms in the army though the fundamental changes did not come until later, with Cardwell's reforms in 1871 and Haldane's in 1905 to 1912.[24]

The effect of Russell's work as war correspondent had been considerable. The success of Delaney's attempt was as much a result of the democratization of the press, as it was of society. From this point on, the war correspondent was an indispensable addition to a newspaper. The following section will look at the development of war correspondence as a profession, in the light of those influences which worked in its favour, and those which worked against it.

The Press, the Public and the Military

When Gibbs met Frederic Villiers during the Balkan War of 1912-1913 he said of Villiers that he still "played the part of the war correspondent familiar in romantic melodrama."[25] Gibbs's statement was choice. The period between 1865 and 1914 was the most active in the history of war correspondence and an intense rivalry took place among the correspondents and the newspapers for which they wrote. The success of the war correspondents was very much due to their individuality, their enthusiasm, energy, and bravery.

Russell remained at the forefront of his profession until Archibald Forbes challenged his supremacy in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian War with his skillful use of the telegraph and his ingenious methods of conveying messages.[26] Villiers, artist-correspondent of the Weekly Graphic, described Forbes as "the ideal war correspondent, for he could do more work, both mentally and physically, on a small amount of food than any man I have ever met."[27] Villiers went on to extol Forbes' other virtues, particularly his ability to write one and final copy amid the tumult of battle. Russell himself was a master of such situations, and he referred to the life of a correspondent as not all 'couleur de rose'."[28] But Villers was impressed by the fact that Forbes's copy was ready for immediate transmission by the telegraph. "It was a sheer impossibility," Villiers exclaimed, "for my colleagues to compete successfully with Forbes."[29] Villiers himself was a correspondent of no small reputation. By the age of 26 he had seen ten small battles and as many skirmishes. Before his long career ended in 1914 he had covered a total of 17 wars.

Some correspondents, like Henry W. Nevinson, remained gentlemen

as they set out to outdo rivals; others did not. Bennett Burleigh, for instance, earned a poor reputation among colleagues.[30] There were instances when their enthusiasm for war reporting was responsible for instigating native skirmishes, even wars.[31]

Financing the substantial expenses of the war correspondents presented no difficulty for the rival newspapers. Even during the last years of the American Civil War when newspapers were forced to economize drastically, war correspondents were still generously maintained. British newspapers spared no expense, especially during the Imperialistic wars, to accomodate their war correspondents and their often eccentric habits. Besides paying the individual correspondent, newspapers saw to expenses like telegraph fees, purchase of kit, travel and ether costs.[32] Most correspondents travelled with valets, grooms, and interpreters. Charles Hands boasted a L400 automobile during the Balkan War in 1912.[33] G.W. Stevens recorded how he set out for the Soudan with two horses, two camels, two servants, two camelmen, and six packages of "five hundredweight."[34] Besides provisions, clothing, tents and camping equipment, which many London shops and businesses especially catered for,[35] the correspondent carried with him gold pieces, pistols and letters of credit.

With the support of his newspaper behind him the war correspondent was better able, perhaps, to respond with courage and bravery. He was usually resourceful and determined to get his "story," often written under dangerous and exacting conditions. Frequently he found himself a combatant. Many correspondents died from wounds or disease, and the number of casualties grew in proportion to the increasing number of correspondents. During the Anglo-Boer War, for

instance, forty of the fifty-eight correspondents with the main British forces were killed, wounded or imprisoned.[36]

War correspondents were held in such high regard that Russell and Forbes became national heroes.[37] Forbes said he was thrilled by a "sense of personal force" in possessing "the exclusive power to thrill the nations" in the "hollow of his hand."[38] This kind of rapport between a correspondent and his public was the key to his popularity, and to the success of men like Nevinson, Melton Prior, Steevens and Burleigh who, in Thomas Pakenham's words, "made the small wars of the late Victorian era familiar to their generation" and "made the vicarious war a familiar and acceptable part of the Victorian experience."[39]

The work of the war correspondent was greatly assisted by the technical advancements of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The most important of these was the telegraph and the way in which the news media encouraged its growth. The value of the telegraph was first experienced during the American Civil War when it became an indispensable device for the press. Rupert Furneaux considered the Civil War as the true beginning of war correspondence because the use of the telegraph during the war introduced the vital "element of speed into the transmission of news."[40] Interest in the war stimulated the circulation of both the Northern and Southern press. The newspapers were able to satisfy the demand, at least during the first half of the war, by increased use of the telegraph. Statistics show that the Northern press increased its news based on telegraph messages from 2-3 columns to 2-3 pages.[41]

The British press began to use the telegraph in earnest after 1868 when the Post Office nationalized the independent systems.[42]

Forbes was the first British war correspondent to recognize the importance of the telegraph. He reasoned that it is not only the duty of the war correspondent to detail the news of war, but also to "expedite his intelligence."[43] The telegraph made the transmission of news instantaneous, enabling the press to create "an aura of vicarious excitement and immediacy,"[44] and this was enhanced by, first, the work of the black-and-white artists and, later, by photographic reproduction. Unhappily, the telegraph was also responsible for expediting the publication of casualty lists which were not alarming until the first defeats of the Anglo-Boer War.[45]

The immediacy that the telegraph introduced into the transmission of news was accompanied by a new style of journalism that was coming into its own in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the United States the Civil War is said to have revolutionized journalistic practices. Besides hastening the improvement of technical processes, the Civil War encouraged the development of a variety of themes used by war correspondents. Battle reporting took on a different aspect with stories of camp life, the mental and physical condition of soldiers, personal features of the battle ground, and the conduct of the army and civilian administrations.[46] In Britain the coming of the new journalism gave new dimensions to war correspondence. Northcliffe for instance, undertook the use of sketch writers during the Khartoum campaign. He instructed George Warrington Steevens to concentrate on the "human side" in order to offer the reader a more intimate portrait of the British army.[47] Northcliffe's experiment was a success; Steevens' despatch on the Battle of Omdurman raised him to the ranks of the great war

correspondents.[48] The experiment brought new qualities to war journalism, notably an enhanced realism, not unlike that which characterized the contemporary literature. War correspondence became more graphic, more sensational.[49] It demanded greater license with which the military was increasingly uncomfortable. This was true particularly during the Anglo-Boer War which served as a transition period for the war correspondent and a bridge between the colonial wars of the nineteenth century and full-scale modern war in the twentieth.[50]

The elements which assisted the war correspondent often worked against him. The correspondent's use of the telegraph, for instance, undermined the power of official despatches from the military, and often hindered transmission of official messages.[51] It aggravated the friction which existed anyway between the war correspondent and the military. The military often regarded the war correspondent as a spy and believed he was unable to preserve military confidentiality in the writing of his despatches. William Howard Russell, for one, while he justified his action, admitted to revealing the size of detachments and the strength of armaments in his despatches. In the Soudan campaign both Burleigh and Steevens were responsible for revealing the poor quality of the Lee-Metford rifle.[52]

The relationship between the war correspondent and the military has frequently been seen as a contest.[53] There was conflict between what the war correspondent saw as his professional duty and often his public responsibility and what the military saw as confidential. But what many authorities suspect was at the heart of the military's attitude was not so much the breach of confidentiality as the insights into the military, which sometimes revealed incompetence.

This was the case with W. Howard Russell and his exposures to the British public which forced the military to take a defensive stand. From the time of the Crimean War, the war correspondent was more and more confronted by restrictive devices.

The first official censorship regulations were issued by Sir William Codrington, Commander-in-Chief during the last months of the Crimean War. While these orders came too late to be effective, the practise of regulating press activity during war was established.[54] However, regulations were irregular and not clearly defined, and originated from the field, not from the Government. Censorship remained inconsistent, though it strengthened as the friction between the military and the war correspondent grew.

Some authorities suggest that the military's vanity was behind some of the censorship regulations. Officers often fancied themselves as amateur correspondents and felt challenged by the press representatives whom they believed were robbing them of "the glory of reporting their victories."[55] Sir Garnet Wolseley, for one, had a deep dislike for men of the press and drew up the Soldiers' Pocket Book as a response.[56] His dislike was surpassed only by that of Lord Kitchener, whose attitude toward war correspondents was at times inconsistent. He openly praised G.W. Steevens, yet expressed an unrelenting hatred for Winston Churchill. It should be borne in mind that Steevens was responsible for making Kitchener into a legend during the Khartoum campaign.[57]

Undoubtedly the military found it necessary to regulate the press. This was true of the American experience in April 1861 when disclosures concerning the Battle of Bull Run gravely embarassed the military.[58] Newspapers, especially towards the latter part of

the century, despatched "teams" of war correspondents, to all corners of the globe. The French found it necessary to forbid war correspondents to accompany their armies in the field. The Japanese in 1904 forbade them to see the war (Russo-Japanese) or to write about it. Restrictions by the time of the Balkan War in 1912 were so complete that Gibbs was forced to consider his first experience as a war correspondent there as farcical.[59]

Some authorities, such as F.L. Bullard, insist that the military was justified in imposing restrictions on the war correspondent. Regulations, he said, "were formed to meet the dangers of a freedom which might easily degenerate into an impossible license."[60] Personal attempts by individual commanders to control the press worked well enough until the Battle of Omdurman brought the issue to a head.[61] Later in 1898 hostilities broke out between Great Britain and the Boer Republics and censorship during the ensuing war remained a major issue. During the Anglo-Boer War censorship for the first time originated officially from the Government through the War Office. It took measures to curtail the press which it felt had become cheaply sensational and highly irresponsible. Basically, the regulations remained unchanged, because their enforcement still depended upon the discretion of individual regimental commanders. This was true of the order specifying that war correspondents could accompany the army only during a big movement. It was also true of the censoring of "copy" which, while based on postal and cable censorship, was loosely enforced from the field with vague guidelines and voluntary submission of copy.[62] It was often easy for the correspondent to send out his copy for publication by his newspaper at home, aggravating further the mistrust which existed between

the press and the military.

The censorship during the Anglo-Boer War was complicated because South African newspapers did not come under the same censorship regulations or at the same time.[63] The English-language press was at an advantage in any case since the Boer Republics had no independent cable arrangements. Once Great Britain suspended the western cable and then the eastern cable through Laurenço Marques, the Boer Republics had no cable communication. But neither did the war correspondents, who were forced to use the cables that were open for military communication. They were at the mercy of a system that hampered their correspondence by "wire-blocking", by limiting the number of words they could file and by expecting them to travel long distances to reach a censor or a telegraph station.[64]

War correspondents were most unhappy with the system that curtailed their freedoms. They complained that censorship reduced the war correspondent's incentive. Some, like W. Howard Russell, predicted the war correspondents' death. When Richard Harding Davis wrote during World War I, he maintained that the war correspondents were "fighting for their professional existence" whereas before they had fought as rivals.[65]

Other correspondents remained confident about the value of censorship. Forbes observed that in effect the censorship relieved the correspondent of responsibility for his despatches.[66] Bennett Burleigh, despite the severe criticism he levelled at censorship, anticipated the day when the correspondent would be recognized for "his just right to communicate with the public at home."[67] F.L. Bullard saw in the censorship a transitional stage in the work of the war correspondent. His "province will be

more defined," Bullard wrote in 1913. "Times change, and he must change with them."[68]

What troubled the war correspondents more than anything else was not the censorship alone, but that at the same time official information on war was not made available. Inaccuracies in war despatches were due not so much to false reporting as to the difficulty in gathering news from military sources.[69] During the Russo-Turkish War from 1877-1878, the Russians recognized the advantages of a friendly press. Lieutenant (later General) Francis Greene, an American who, for a time, was officially attached to the Russian army, maintained that regulations should include giving accurate facts to the war correspondents so as to ensure a truthful account.[70] Lord Roberts agreed with this approach and during the Second Afghan War from 1878-1879 he personally gave ample information to the press.[71] Russell would have liked Roberts's attitude because he himself insisted that truth would become distorted without ample and honest accounts.[72]

Nevinson in his co-authored article "Lessons of War", looked critically at censorship and put considerable effort into his constructive critique. In his opinion the regulations could provide a useful means to change the tendency of the people at home "to think of nothing but the actual fighting." He suggested the creation of a "recognized corps of accredited correspondents."[73]

The situation that had developed between the military and the press was by 1901 in need of clarification. Efforts in this direction were at first clumsy and often unsatisfactory. The system that emerged did not please both sides at any one time, but it was a system with a definite structure and with enduring qualities.

Between 1914 and 1918 the control of information by negative steps (censorship) and positive techniques (propaganda) was established where the press was concerned.

Censorship Not Suppression

Even before 1914 steps were being taken to clarify the situation between the press and the military. In 1903 the Balfour government created the Committee of Imperial Defence. The CID was to serve as a central controlling body for all matters relating to imperial defence. It replaced the Defence Committee of the Cabinet and the Colonial Defence Committee.[74] It was a major army reform, and among other things it dealt with topics not covered previously by regulations governing war-time practices: censorship, espionage, food supply.[75] Haldane's reforms between 1906 and 1912 were also centralizing and gave a uniformity to England's defence structure.[76] The reforms were important for the press because for the first time censorship regulations originated from the government.[77] Not that the war correspondent enjoyed censorship; but now he knew better what he was up against, and could more readily cooperate with the authorities where national security was concerned.

Relations between the military and the press became more cordial after 1901 when the Anglo-Boer War ended. For years prior to 1914 the press was welcomed to army manoeuvres.[78] Then in 1912 the Joint Standing Committee (composed of the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee) was established for the specific purpose of regulating the publication of information relating to naval and military affairs. The press, represented by the Newspaper Proprietors Association, agreed to a voluntary control on their

publications, that the publication of secret military and naval information was prohibited, and that the press would presumably accompany the forces in time of war.[79] This was a voluntary agreement and not channelled through the legislative process. On July 27, 1914 the Committee secured an agreement from the press that in the event of war (which appeared inevitable) despatches would come under severe censorship. Long before the war, Northcliffe himself had advocated a censorship, "but not suppression", which is how many interpreted the severe stand taken unexpectedly by the Government and the War Office when War broke out. This, writes Lovelace, was "at the root of much of the war-time antagonism" between the press and the military during the first half of the war.[80]

The press had come to understand that in time of war it would receive official recognition. An atmosphere of goodwill and co-operation had built up between the press and the military. When war broke out in July 1914, the newspapers proceeded to select their correspondents, to train and instruct them and the War Office issued regulations which governed their instruction.[81] It postponed a decision by "promising" to issue passes at a future date. After six weeks, it was evident that a decision would not be forthcoming and the newspapers withdrew the selected correspondents from training. In fact, the Government banned all war correspondents from the field when war was declared in August and imposed a total censorship on the telegraph cable. This was a complete reversal of what the press had been led to believe, and did much damage to the co-operative relationship which had been built up between the press and the military. "The truth was," Gibbs wrote in 1923, "that the military mind was obsessed with the necessity of fighting the war in the dark"

and "to safeguard the reputation and cover up the mistakes of the High Command."[82]

Lord Kitchener's dislike of war correspondents has commonly been held responsible for the severe censorship measures. Immediately upon assuming office as Secretary of State for War, Kitchener dismissed any arrangements that had been made concerning correspondents going to the front. He later confided to Lord Riddell that he felt contact with the press was detrimental to the moral of the soldiers since this might encourage "demands for promotion."[83] Politics internal to the military were not, however, Kitchener's main concern. Rather, it was party politics that troubled him. If the press had access to the front, where it was regulated by field censorship only, a dangerous weapon would have been placed in the hands of the anti-Kitchener party at General Headquarters.[84]

As the first military man to accept a Cabinet post, Kitchener had neither aptitude nor understanding for the politics his position carried with it. Moreover, he confronted considerable opposition to his appointment at the start, which by 1915 built up under the instigation of Lloyd George, Sir John French and Lord Northcliffe. Absent from Britain for so long Kitchener, wrote Lord Riddell, was "more or less a foreigner."[85] He was not acquainted with Haldane's recent reforms, was out of touch with the streams of thought affecting democratic and military processes in Europe, and was highly prejudiced against the political activity he had to engage in. His decision over war correspondents did not take into account the more recent advances made by the press in military matters. There were many who thought his appointment a fatal mistake.

Kitchener's appointment though, was inevitable.[86] He

commanded immense popular appeal and was considered to be the one figure who could galvanize the nation behind the war effort. To a degree, this justified to most politicians the non-political nature of his appointment, and his detachment from current domestic affairs played to his advantage. He was dissociated from the industrial strife, the troublesome suffragette movement and the Irish problem, all of which plagued the country in the years prior to the war. In the eyes of the public he was a legendary figure, invincible, clean, and worshipped. "The people," wrote Lord Beaverbrook, "did not reason about Kitchener, they just trusted."[87] In this capacity he was indispensable to the government in its overall war effort. It encouraged this image of Kitchener, and as Secretary of State for War gave him virtually unlimited power. Unfortunately, many of these powers were undefined and not supported by administrative machinery.

By antagonizing the press, Kitchener left himself vulnerable to fierce criticism as was demonstrated by the press campaign launched against him by Northcliffe, over the munitions shortage, in May 1915.[88] Kitchener continued to hold office, but his powers were reduced. Amongst other things, Northcliffe was able to compel him to modify his attitude to war correspondents at the front. Kitchener purposely avoided the press, partly from his unfortunate experience with Colonel Repington's article on him in the Times.[89] This merely served to aggravate his already bitter experience with the press during the Sudan campaign. Still, Kitchener insisted he did not "dislike correspondents". Selectively that was true, but he held the profession itself in great disdain. He was unable to see the utility of establishing, in war-time, "a practical working relationship with the press,"[90] especially where recruiting and the educating

of public opinion was concerned. He held fast to his ruling that no correspondents would receive official permission to go to the front.

Of course, that was the official position on war correspondents. It did not preclude unauthorized correspondents from pushing their way to the war zone, which they did in great numbers. Besides telegraph and postal censorship, war correspondence fell under the general restrictions of the Defence of the Realm Act which prohibited the publication of information useful to the enemy or the spreading of false information. Until August 12, 1914, the Act had no specific reference to the press and press censorship, and therefore much of the censorship was voluntary.[91] The system functioned, according to Sir Edward Cook because of "the loyalty and sound discretion of the Press."[92]

In addition to such voluntary restraints, the press worked under a compulsory censorship. Immediately on the outbreak of war August 4, communication by telegraphic cable was suspended, and control of the cables for the duration of the war kept by the Government. The same was true of the postal communications.[92] The cable censorship was based on regulations established in years following the Anglo-Boer War and was summoned into action on August 4. Its instructions were definitely outlined, its functions clear, and each department under the direction of the Chief Cable Censor (Sir Douglas Brownrigg) at the War Office.

When the Press Bureau came into existence on August 7, 1914, it combined the functions of the Defence of the Realm Act regulations, the Joint Committee, and the Cable censorship. It was given another function, that of issuing official information to the press. This latter function supplemented the work of Charles Masterman and the

propaganda bureau at Wellington House which was organized just weeks after the outbreak of war. Masterman's objective was to disseminate information favourable to the allied cause and unfavourable to the enemy, and this he accomplished through a variety of means. Other government departments were also responsible for propaganda during the war, and in 1917 they were consolidated under the Department of Information which the following year became the Ministry of Information under Lord Beaverbrook at Crewe House. The propaganda organizations were responsible for giving some information to the press, but the main body for the dissemination of war news to the press remained the Press Bureau.[93]

The Press Bureau had no model on which to base its work and from the beginning had no precise description of its functions. It was left to "work out its scope and methods" for itself.[94] This caused confusion and uncertainty on the part of the press. In addition, the choice of F.E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead) as Director complicated matters. His appointment, largely Kitchener's and Churchill's choice, was a war-time concession to partisan politics, yet Smith had no particular experience or aptitude for the tasks with which he was entrusted.[95] Smith was in any case often abrasive and sometimes used bad judgement. This was painfully evident in the events surrounding his release of the news on the allied retreat from Mons, which ultimately led to his resignation at the end of September. The publication of the Mons story demonstrated that while in theory the Press Bureau was established, in practical application of its duties and limits it was still inexperienced.

The Mons story was particularly devastating to the British public, because it was the first public intimation that all was not

well with the war effort. The official position indicated that the British were winning and that the war would be over in a matter of months. Such a hopeful attitude was supported generally by the press, so effective was the censorship and propaganda. Its only access to news on the war was through the official communiques, and that which came dribbling in from the unauthorized correspondents near the front, was stopped by the cable and postal censorships, or by the voluntary censorship which required all written material to pass the censor. The impact of the Mons story on the public was all the more shocking because, apart from the sanguine news reports on the war prior to this, the despatch adopted an hysterical undertone. "This is a pitiful story I have to write," read the despatch by Hamilton Fyfe, one of the authors of the story. "Would to God it did not fall to me to write it."[96] This undertone of hysteria was enhanced by an unfortunate series of events involving the censor himself. The Times editor had censored what he considered a potentially dangerous article before sending it on to F.E. Smith. The article was returned to the Times with not only a few corrections, but a reinstatement of some of the editor's deletions. In addition, Smith added some remarks of his own, urging the need for more men. On August 30, nine days after the Battle of Mons, the Times broke the article with the headlines, "Broken British Regiments Battling Against Odds," and "German 'Tidal Wave' Our Soldiers Overwhelmed by Numbers."[97] Other newspapers published more cautious and more accurate accounts of the Mons story. Gibbs was critical of Fyfe's despatch which he felt gave an unnecessarily gloomy picture. His own, and that of others gave a moderate and restrained impression of the retreat, and he pointed out how these served to reassure the

nation. "Retreats which seem fatal when seen close at hand," Gibbs wrote, "and when described by those who belong to the broken fragments of extended sections, are not altogether disastrous in their effect when viewed in their right perspective.[98] However, Gibbs, like others, was quick to recognize that in spite of Fyfe's coloured despatch, it had merit because it basically was aimed at telling the truth. It brought to the attention of the authorities that a better system of press war coverage was imperative, and although the press and the government did not begin a serious working relationship until the following spring, some immediate steps were taken.

Discontent over the lack of information about the war grew on both the part of the press and the public. Kitchener did not soften his stand on war correspondents going to the front, but he was prevailed upon to appoint a military officer to represent the press collectively on the Western Front, and who was to be attached to the General Staff at General Headquarters. This appointment was filled by Major-General Sir Ernest D. Swinton, and his unofficial title "Eyewitness" was conferred on him by the newspapers.[99] His semi-weekly articles numbered a total of 103 between September 11, 1914 and July 18, 1915, the term of his appointment. His main purpose, he said, was to make sure that he would not give information to the enemy. "This appeared to me even more important than the purveyance of news to our own people," Swinton wrote.[100]

The work of Eyewitness (or "Eyewash" as some called his reports) did little to satisfy a public and a press hungry for news of the war. Many even felt they did more harm than good, because they gave only the official view, and that, incomplete. The Press Bureau

inevitably became the focal point of all complaints laid against the censorship. It was some time before the functions and structure of the Bureau were defined and this was taken into account by Sir Stanley Buckmaster, Smith's successor. It had to develop the censorship step by step and by 1915 200 of the total 700 instructions to the Press had been issued.[101]

But the Press Bureau did not become a successful and workable body until Smith's resignation.[102] Buckmaster's first object was to centralize as much of the censorship as possible. By mid-October all cable censors were under his authority and the Bureau consisted then of four departments. These were the Issuing Department, responsible for releasing official information, a Cable Department, responsible for the compulsory censorship of the press cables, a Military, or Press, Department, responsible for all material voluntarily submitted by the press, and a Naval Department, which dealt with all censorship relating to the Admiralty.[103] Between mid-October and mid-November Buckmaster drew up a formal set of regulations governing the work of the 50 or so censors at the Bureau.[104] This was an important step because until then neither the House of Commons nor the press knew the nature of the Bureau's work.

The censorship during the war was divided into four branches: the private and commercial cable censorship, the postal censorship, the field censorship, and the Official Press Bureau. Only the last branch dealt specifically with press censorship, and it was supported by various organizations which represented the press. The Joint Standing Committee continued to hold weekly meetings. The Newspaper Press Conference also met weekly and was composed of the Newspaper Proprietor's Association and the Provincial, Scottish and Irish

Press. The intermediary between these organizations and the Press Bureau, War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office, and other pertinent Government Departments, was Lord Riddell. The press was co-operative enough regarding the censorship, but continued to complain about the lack of "hard news" written by correspondents on the spot. Agitation on this matter, particularly by Northcliffe increased. He was a self-appointed spokesman for the Press and the voice of the people alike.[105] Many blamed Kitchener for continuing the ban on war correspondents and suggested that he had become generally a hindrance to the war effort.[106] His ban on war correspondents was harming recruitment. Gibbs himself argued that it was public opinion which pressured the War Office as did the eventual recognition that recruiting needed the stimulus of favourable press reports on the war.[107] Foreign countries on the other hand, such as the United States, maintained that the ban was harming Britain's cause in the U.S.[108] Northcliffe himself maintained that "the question of war correspondents was something of far greater significance than the satisfaction of journalistic curiousity."[109]

Riddell argued constantly and persuasively on the subject of war correspondents. He urged Kitchener to adopt the idea of sending a few correspondents to the front. By mid-April he had achieved results. On the 15th he got assurance from the Secretary of State for War that if the British press representatives were successful in prevailing upon General Joffre to alter the French ban on correspondents, then he, Kitchener, would follow suit. In November 1914 the French allowed, at their invitation, groups of supervised correspondents from neutral countries to visit the French sector. In December, the Press Bureau announced the correspondents would be

permitted by the Government to visit the front. Both instances were with Joffre's full knowledge and consent.[110] Now, in April, two related incidents broke down Kitchener's last resistance. First, Northcliffe, Valentine Williams, and Sir John French, collectively approached Joffre, and received his assurance that he had no objection to war correspondents.[111] Then secondly, on April 19, the publication of the Neuve Chapelle Story, in the making since the battle was fought on March 10-13, 1915, gave war correspondence a very different reputation to that which it had previously had with the authorities.

Valentine Williams (of the Daily Mail), at the invitation of Sir John French, was on several occasions given access to the official papers on the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. He was also given the freedom to interview and to make observations directly at the Front. The article he subsequently wrote was censored by French himself at GHQ, then despatched for publication with the provision it reach all papers simultaneously. The article caused some confusion, but was not stopped by any of the censoring agencies. "It was a piece of descriptive war correspondence in the old manner, mentioning units and individuals by name," Williams explained. "My intuition was to show that it was possible for a correspondent to do full justice to the feats of the army in the field without divulging military information and at the same time to establish the principle that the logical place of censorship for news from the front was at the front and not at home."[112] The effect of the Neuve Chapelle Story was, as its engineers expected, positive. Immediate public approval indicated its utility. Kitchener's last reserves had been broken down and within a few days he approved the despatch of selected groups of

war correspondents to the Western Front.[113] Three parties of five each were permitted to make brief tours of the Front, and under very close supervision. Gibbs was chosen to accompany one of the parties on these "experimental" visits.[114]

In May 1915 six correspondents were actually chosen, officially accredited, and given quarters with GHQ in France. Their choice was determined by the Newspaper Proprietor's Association which shared their expenses with the Army. The NPA, by arrangement with the War Office, distributed the despatches. Each correspondent acted for two London morning dailies. No documentation exists on what determined the choice of these six journalists. It is on record, however, that Northcliffe advised writers of "distinction"[115] and, according to Williams, that he advised they were not to write factual reports on the progress of the war, but "descriptive articles."[116] Riddell points out that the "position" of these correspondents was "never properly defined." There were in fact no regulations governing this function during the duration of the war, but the practise had been established. Kitchener "never recalled them," Riddell wrote, "and although he never officially recognised their position, it was assumed for practical purposes that they were fixtures."[117]

The five correspondents initially chosen were Philip Gibbs (Daily Chronicle and Daily Telegraph), Valentine Williams (Daily Mail and Standard), Douglas Williams (Reuters News Agency), Percival Philips (Daily Express and Morning Post) and John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir (Times and Daily News). V. Williams was shortly replaced by W. Beach Thomas; Buchan, by Perry Robinson; and Herbert Russell replaced Douglas Williams.[118] The correspondents were officially

received in a formal ceremony by Sir John French at his private headquarters in St. Omer, the G.H.Q. of the British Army in France. They were welcomed, albeit bashfully, by French, who then made some comments on their honour and loyalty. "He made an allusion to the power of the Press," Gibbs related "and promised us facilities for seeing and writing within the bounds of the censorship."[119] The war between the Government and the Press was over; for the correspondents, war had officially begun.

Footnotes

1. Kennedy Jones, Fleet Street and Downing Street, p. 198.
2. J. Cutler Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War, p. 41.
3. Bedarida, pp. 99-160, Ensor, Chapters IV and V, Read, pp. 199-206, pp. 369-371 and pp. 482-498, and Barbara Tuchman, The Proud Tower, inclusive.
4. See, for one, Malvern van Wyk Smith, Drummer Hodge, p. 23 and Rayne Kruger, Goodby Dolly Grey, pp. 57-65. Also Tuchman, p. 176 and p. 230, Guy Chapman, The Dreyfus Case, especially p. 321 and Correlli Barnett, Britain and Her Army 1509-1970, p. 331.
5. See Byron Farwell, Queen Victoria's Little Wars, especially Appendix II and pp. 364-371 for an exhaustive list of the battles and campaigns of the period. See also pp. 153-164 and p. 339. See also Read, p. 196, Kruger, pp. 57-65, and for further reading, Archibald Forbes, Battles of the Nineteenth Century, Vol's. I and II.
6. Bedarida, pp. 103-104 and pp. 99-160, Ensor, pp. 304-305, Altick, pp. 17-38 and pp. 291-298, Tuchman, pp. 3-59, Thomson, pp. 185-199, R.J. Evans, The Victorian Age 1815-1914, pp. 158-164, E. Halevy, History of the English People 1815-1914, inclusive.
7. Kruger, p. 16. See also Smith, p. 24 and p. 276.
8. See Barnett, p. 324.
9. Mansfield, p. 124, Koss, p. 192 and Frederick Palmer, With My Own Eyes, p. 36.
10. Louis M. Starr, Bohemian Brigade, p. 351. See also Rudyard Kipling, The Light That Failed, p. 18.

11. J.J. Matthews, Reporting the Wars, pp. 3-58, Mansfield, pp. 126-128, W.M. Armstrong, E.L. Godkin: A Biography, pp.. 17-34, A. Andrews, p. 329, Furneaux, p. 24, Lucy Maynard Salmon, The Newspaper and the Historian, pp. 194-232 and R.J. WilkinsonLatham, From Our Special Correspondent, pp. 19-22 and pp. 43-45.

12. The Crimean War did disrupt the balance of power and had a far greater impact on future European diplomacy than on that of the Near East. See for the causes of the Crimean War, L.S. Stavrianos, The Balkans Since 1453, pp. 319-331, Charles Swallow, The Sick Man of Europe, p. 57, John Shelton Curtiss, Russia's Crimean War, pp. 3-296, and Ann Pottinger Saab, The Origins of the Crimean Alliance, pp. 131-162.

13. Koss, pp. 70-120, A. Andrews, p. 329 and Gavin Burns Henderson, Crimean War Diplomacy, pp. 190-206.

14. W.H. Russell, The War, V. I, pp. 263-264.

15. Russell, p. 281, p. 280, p. 301 and p. 304.

16. See, e.g., the catastrophe of Balaklava. Russell, pp. 230-232. Also the action at Inkerman, Russell, pp. 246-247.

17. Russell, p. 289, p. 251 and p. 279. Russell V. II, pp. 2-4.

18. Russell, V. I, p. 280.

19. Byron Farwell, For Queen and Country, p. 88.

20. Barnett, p. 285. See also Armstrong, p. 34.

21. Russell, pp. 222-223.

22. Christopher Hibbert, The Destruction of Lord Raglan, p. 222.

23. The Times itself sent clothing and provisions long before the War Office took action. See Russell, V. I, p. 301. See also the work of Florence Nightingale, and her team of nurses, which

was directly inspired by the press reports. Philip Warner, The Crimean War, p. 160, General Sir Evelyn wood, The Crimea in 1854 and 1894, p. 214 and Elizabeth Grey, The Noise of Drums and Trumpets, p. 104.

24. Read, pp. 196-198, Farwell, Chapter XII and Barnett, Chapters XIII and XV.

25. Adventures, p. 193.

26. Philip Knightley, The First Casualty, pp. 45-48 and Furneaux, p. 49.

27. Frederic Villiers, Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure, V. II, p. 185. See also Archibald Forbes, Memories and Studies of War and Peace, pp. 2-3 and pp. 268-269 for his description of the "ideal" war correspondent.

28. Russell, p. 43.

29. Villiers, p. 185.

30. H.W. Nevinson, Changes and Chances, pp. 226-227.

31. For example, H.M. Stanley's activities in Africa and William R. Hearst during the Spanish-American War.

32. See Lee, p. 111 for a breakdown of a war correspondent's pay.

33. Charles Hands, Extra-Special Correspondent, p. 54.

34. G.W. Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartoum, pp. 14-15.

35. Wilkinson-Latham, pp. 248-251 and Richard Harding Davis, The Notes of a War Correspondent, pp. 239-263.

36. Smith, p. 73. See Wilkinson-Latham, p. 190, J.C. Andrews, The North Reports the Civil War, pp. 72-73. See also Steevens, inclusive, and Winston S. Churchill, My Early Life: A Roving Commission, especially pp. 220-342.

37. Escott, p. 249.

38. Furneaux, p. 124.

39. Thomas Pakenham, The Boer War, p. 136. See also Matthews, p. 4.

40. Furneaux, p. 24. See also Matthews, pp. 48-51.

41. J.C. Andrews (North), p. 6.

42. See Storey, pp. 32-48 for a detailed account of the growth of the telegraph system as it concerned the press.

43. Forbes, p. 225. See also pp. 223-225 and pp. 227-233.

44. Smith, p. 74 and p. 162.

45. Smith, p. 45, Kruger, p. 202, Matthews, p. 4, Gretton, p. 511.

46. J.C. Andrews (South), p. 518.

47. Blumenfeld, p. 128.

48. Furneaux, p. 173 and p. 174 and Wilkinson-Latham, p. 240.

49. Matthews, pp. 141-154.

50. Farwell, p. 339, Farwell, The Great Boer War, p. xii, and John Ferguson, American Diplomacy in the Boer War, p. 176.

51. Matthews, p. 89 and M.L. Stein, Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents, pp. 17-19.

52. Russell, V. I, pp. 274-276 and Steevens, p. 29.

53. Matthews, pp. 204-206.

54. Knightley, p. 16 and Colin Lovelace, "British Press Censorship During the First World War," in G. Boyce, et al (ed's.), Newspaper History, p. 309.

55. Knightley, p. 53. See also Furneaux, p. 173, Farwell (Little Wars), p. 192, Storey, p. 28.

56. Farwell, p. 195.

57. George H. Cassar, Kitchener: Architect of Victory, pp. 176-194, Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, pp. 172-181, Furneaux, p. 201 and p. 173, Wilkinson-Latham, p. 240, Winston Churchill, pp. 176-185 and Villiers, pp. 267-268.

58. See Andrews (North), p. 94 and p. 641.

59. Melton Prior, Campaigns of a War Correspondent, p. 320-335, H.W. Nevinson, Fire of Life, pp. 238-240 and pp. 283-284, Frederick Palmer, With My Own Eyes, p. 258 and Gibbs, Adventures of War With Cross and Crescent, pp. 116-128.

60. F. Lauriston Bullard, Famous War Correspondents, p. 22.

61. Wilkinson-Latham, p. 238 and Steevens, p. 140.

62. Bennett Burleigh, The Natal Campaign, p. 273, Furneaux, p. 197 and p. 207, and Nevinson, Changes and Chances, p. 234.

63. The Times History of the War in South Africa, p. 557-560 and Wilkinson-Latham, p. 22 and p. 247.

64. Stephen Koss, The Pro-Boers, p. 235, Burleigh, pp. 325-326, Davis, p. 168, Wilkinson-Latham, pp. 202-203.

65. Furneaux, p. 219 and Richard Harding Davis, With the Allies, pp. 213-235.

66. Wilkinson-Latham, p. 32.

67. Burleigh, p. 262.

68. Bullard, p. 3.

69. See Andrews (North), pp. 643-644.

70. Bullard, p. 28.

71. Farwell (Little Wars), p. 205.

72. Russell, p. 287.

73. Nevinson, Changes and Chances, pp. 277-280.

74. Ensor, pp. 361-362, Barnett, pp. 356-357, Paul Guinn, British Strategy and Politics 1914-1918, pp. 6-7. In 1914 the CID was displaced by the War Council.

75. Barnett, pp. 353-370 and Read, p. 487.

76. Liddell Hart, The Defence of Britain, pp. 247-254.

77. See List of Papers of the Committee of Imperial Defence to 1914: December 28, 1911, "Censorship of Wireless Telegraphs in War," p. 4. 4/4/33/140 B. F.O. 59; July 1, 1912, "Censorship of Wireless Telegraph Messages in War," 3 pp. 4/4/33/155 B. - 23; January 31, 1913, "Report and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee ...Enquiry Regarding Press and Postal Censorship in time of War; "Press Censorship," 31 pp, 4/5/2/167 B - 6; December 4, 1914, "Press Censorship," 5 pp, 5/3/2/107 C. O.D.C. 39.

78. Cameron Hazelhurst, Politicians at War, p. 148 and Valentine Williams, World of Action, p. 271.

79. British Sessional Papers, 1914-1916 VOL. XXXIX, "Memorandum on the Censorship." 1915. ed. 7679. p. 4. II The Press Censorship.

80. Pound and Harmsworth, p. 469 and Lovelace, pp. 309-310.

81. List of Papers of the Committee of Imperial Defence to 1914, December 4, 1913, "Press Censorship". See also Lord Riddell's, War Diary, pp. 16-17, Williams p. 271, and W. Beach Thomas, A Traveller in News, p. 56.

82. Adventures, p. 247.

83. Riddell, p. 76.

84. Williams, p. 274.

85. On this issue see Kitchener's two most recent biographers, Philip Magnus, Kitchener, pp. 276-298 and George H. Cassar, Kitchener: Architect of Victory, pp. 176-194 and pp. 348-352. See also Riddell, p. 75 and History of the Times, p. 177.

86. For details on his appointment see Cassar, pp. 170-176, Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, pp. 169-172.

87. Beaverbrook, p. 172, Cassar, pp. 178-181 and Steevens, pp. 45-46.

88. Cassar, pp. 331-360, Magnus, pp. 334-337, Beaverbrook, pp. 55-64, and pp. 88-93.

89. Lieut. Col. C.A., Court Repington, The First World War 1914-1918, pp. 21-22. Repington was the author of the article that started the munitions crisis, see pp. 35-39, and Williams, pp. 284-291.

90. Cassasr, p. 349.

91. "Memorandum on the Censorship," 1915 and Statutory Rules and Orders, "Defence of the Realm," H.M.S.O. 1915, London, Chapter 29, August 8, 1914 and Chapter 63, August 28, 1914. Then see articles 18, 27 and 51 in Statutory Rules and Orders, Defence of the Realm," 1914, No. 1249, H.M.S.O., 1915, London, p. 514, p. 516 and p. 521, and Sir Edward Cook, The Press in War Time, pp. 24-26, p. 28, and pp. 87-110.

92. Sir Douglas Brownrigg, Indiscretions of the Naval Censor," pp. 3-5, Cook, pp. 23-24, Lovelace, p. 310, and H.C. Peterson, Propaganda For War, pp. 12-15.

93. See Cook, pp. 57-59, Charles Roetter, The Art of Psychological Warfare 1914-1945, pp. 32-39 and Harold D. Lasswell, Propaganda Techniques in World War I, pp. 19-21. Especially see M.L.

Sanders and P.M. McKay, British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-18, pp. 18-32.

94. British Sessional Paper, "Memorandum on the Official Press Bureau," p. 2. 1915. Ed. 7680. Cook, p. 70 and p. 42, Riddell, p. 16, Hazelhurst, p. 149, Lovelace, p. 311.

95. Ephesian (pseud. for, perhaps Carl E.B. Roberts), Lord Birkenhead, pp. 109-110, Hazelhurst, pp. 149-158 and Lovelace, p. 311.

96. History of the Times, p. 184. The other correspondent was Arthur Moore of the Times (Fyfe was with the Daily Mail).

97. Ibid., pp. 183-184. For the incident on the article see Fyfe, pp. 175-176, Gibbs, Adventures, p. 243, History of the Times, pp. 179-186, Williams, pp. 272-273, Lovelace, p. 311, Pound and Harmsworth, pp. 469-470. See also B. Tuckman, August 1914, pp. 376-379 for details on the episode and its impact on the British.

98. The Daily Chronicle, August 31, 1914, pp. 1-3, and Adventures, p. 243.

99. See Sir Ernest D. Swinton, Eyewitness, pp. 19-20, and pp. 30-31, Williams, pp. 275-276, Riddell, p. 17, Hazelhurst, p. 148.

100. Swinton, p. 32.

101. See "Memorandum on the Official Press Bureau," p. 3 and Cook, p. 58.

102. Smith's biographer, Beaverbrook, Cassar and Magnus agree that Smith faced impossible odds. Others like Hazelhurst and Lovelace, felt that Smith's lack of contribution to the Bureau was the problem.

103. See Cook, pp. 45-59 and Lovelace, p. 312.

104. See "Memorandum on the Official Press Bureau," pp. 2-4, Cook, pp. 87-137, Lovelace, p. 312. Buckmaster resigned in May 1915 and was succeeded by Sir E.T. Cook and Sir Frank Swettenham, joint Directors. See J. Saxon Mills, Sir Edward Cook, on the Press Bureau, pp. 245-253.

105. See Paul Ferris, The House of Northcliffe, pp. 195-212, Pound and Harmsworth, pp. 462-465 and pp. 480-481, Magnus, pp. 333-337, Beaverbrook, pp. 88-93 and Riddell, pp. 21-22.

106. See Fyfe, p. 179, Magnus, pp. 301-8 and passim, Beaverbrook, pp. 174-179 and 186-189 and Cassar, passim.

107. Realities of War, pp. 13-14. Also W. Beach Thomas, The Way of a Countryman, p. 112. See also Lovelace, pp. 315-316.

108. Knightley, pp. 94-95.

109. In Hazelhurst, p. 149.

110. Daily Chronicle, November 16, 1914, p. 6 and December 2, 1914, p. 9. See also Williams, p. 274.

111. This complicated affair, which was played out in several sequences, was involved in the anti-Kitchener movement, the formation of the Coalition Government in May 1915, and is detailed by Williams, himself a war correspondent, pp. 269-298. Also Riddell, p. 21 and p. 75.

112. Williams, pp. 274-275. He details this complex episode on pp. 274-298. See also Riddell, pp. 75-76.

113. Riddell, pp. 22-23. Williams, p. 274.

114. Realities of War, pp. 14-15.

115. Northcliffe, in a letter April 20, 1915, to Riddell. Riddell, pp. 21-22.

116. Williams, p. 296.

117. Riddell, p. 23. Kitchener only gave his approval for limited, but frequent visits, and then of course, a year later he was deceased.

118. Gibbs dates this formal recognition and the subsequent move to G.H.Q. as occurring in June. Realities of War, p. 15.

119. Ibid., p. 31.

CHAPTER V

THE MAKING OF A WAR CORRESPONDENT

When war broke out in August 1914 and Gibbs was despatched to Europe, his knowledge of war and his experience as a war correspondent might have been considered inadequate for such a major undertaking. The professional war correspondent would have seemed to be a better choice than the hordes of inexperienced, though competent, journalists who were sent to Europe by the British press to write on the war. Some authorities, such as F.L. Bullard, suggest that the most important criterion is not experience in war, but experience as a reporter.[1] This is where Gibbs excelled. By 1912 his success as a journalist and his reputation were widely acknowledged.

In 1909 for the first time in his life Gibbs "came in contact with military Chiefs."[2] The War Office wanted a descriptive writer to compose a series of articles on the army and Gibbs, then with the Daily Chronicle was commissioned. The army reforms of R.B. Haldane, then Secretary for War, were in the process of being implemented. These reforms included the creation of a general staff and the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief, the reorganization of the military forces at home into the Expeditionary Force and the formation of the Officer's Training Corps to replace voluntary enlistment and to make up for the lack of compulsory military service.[3] Gibbs's specific task was to record "the traditions of the old Volunteer regiments and so to stimulate recruiting for the new Territorial Army."[4]

This undertaking supplemented Gibbs's knowledge of the Army which in his youth was confined almost entirely to the Artists' Rifle Corps. This was the unit to which his father and his two older brothers belonged and about which his memory was clear and full. It also put Gibbs in a position where he could thoroughly acquaint himself with the basic structure of the war, both the old and the new.

As a writer Gibbs knew that war stories gave "a tremendous lift out of the ruck of human dullness." War, he wrote in 1912, "is an excitement stronger than anything else that life provides... It satisfies the eternal craving of humanity for romance and adventure."[5] Gibbs's attitude was influenced by the Victorian's image of war and the war correspondent in the preceding century. But his attitude went deeper than the knowledge that "war stories" could have a public impact. He understood war in a broad sense as an unleashing of the barbaric spirit in man, the brutal instincts which civilization had supposedly brought under control.

The following chapter will deal with Gibbs's work as an artist-correspondent during the Balkan War of 1912 and as an unauthorized correspondent in Europe during the first six months of the Great War of 1914-1918.

War is the Untaming of the Tamed

"War," Gibbs wrote in 1912, "is the untaming of the tamed." At the same time, he reassured the reader, as well as himself, that these instincts are accompanied by higher ideals which give war a noble aspect alongside the barbaric ones. To wage war for the sake of liberty, he said, is surely the highest of these ideals.[6]

Gibbs reserved these sentiments in 1912 specifically for Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece which, in October 1912, were preparing a combined challenge against Turkey and what remained of Turkish oppression. The internal disintegration of the Ottoman Empire bore heavily on the decision of the Balkan states to unite though there existed other decisive factors. There was the upsurge of nationalist feelings anchored, in part, in the Macedonian problem and the Albanian uprising in 1912. Italy's takeover of Tripoli the year before was another important factor. The Balkan states had also built up considerable military strength. And there was the potential threat to independence brought on by the Bosnian Crisis.[7]

European diplomacy further influenced, and was in turn influenced by, the activity among the Balkan states. The conditions in the Near East had changed radically by October of 1912.[8] The Bosnian Crisis had destroyed relations between Austria and Russia and from then on these two European powers engaged in a contest for power in the peninsula. Russia supported the formation of the Balkan League which would serve as a barrier for her; Austria had the support of Germany and Italy. England and France shared with Russia a common fear, of Germany expanding her influence in the Near East. While their interests in the Balkans had decreased, they were both anxious to sustain enough influence there to give support to Russia. The severing of the entente between Russia and Austria sparked the division of the Powers into two hostile camps and "any intervention in Balkan affairs," writes Stavrianos, "was bound to have continent-wide repercussions."[9] The Triple Alliance among Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy constituted one camp, while the Triple Entente constituted the other, which was composed of Britain,

Russia and France. This decision of the European powers had its most significant repercussion in the outbreak of World War I. The Balkan issue precipitated the events in July and August 1914 because, in the words of R.C.K. Ensor, "behind the strife of local forces stood the vital interests of great powers."[10]

Gibbs did not pretend to have an absorbing interest in the politics of the Balkans. His knowledge was coloured heavily by his personal sentiments on liberty for the Balkan states. Still, he was keen to go to the Balkans in case war was declared. Most newspapers were quick to despatch their war correspondents; others, like the Graphic and the Westminster Gazette, took their time. The Daily Chronicle already had its representatives in both Bulgaria and Turkey, and this was naturally a disappointment to Gibbs. However, he was fortunate in his friendship with John M. Bulloch, Editor of the Graphic to which Gibbs was a frequent contributor. Bulloch offered him the position of artist-correspondent, whereupon Gibbs immediately obtained a temporary release from his contract with the Chronicle. It was an opportunity that thrilled him because, he said, it was "a chance of becoming a war correspondent."[11] He expressed some doubt over his artistic skills which he termed "elementary", but Bulloch assured him that the Graphic's black-and-white artist, Frank Dadd, would work them over well.

Gibbs joined his colleagues in Belgrade. The British correspondents formed a sizeable group. He was already familiar with many of them; Henry Nevinson, Charles Hands, S.J. Pryor, McHugh, Burleigh, Villiers. He met for the first time Nevinson's partner, Percival Philips, whom he would join on the Western Front in 1915. Gibbs arrived in Belgrade, equipped in the traditional mode with

note-books, sketch-pads, pencils, and "sufficient money to ensure food and lodging on a long campaign. I was, in fact, encircled with gold, for I wore it in a digger's belt round my waist and under my waistcoat." John Bulloch had offered Gibbs a Browning to complete his outfit, but he declined, having "the uneasy feeling ...that I might be the first victim of its deadly powers."[12] Henry Nevinson was considerably amused by this kind of innocence and naiveté on Gibbs's part who, he wrote, was

> "new to me, as to himself, on a scene of war, a pale and beautiful apparition ...mutely appealing to all because he had lost his kit, and was himself lost. He had come as an artist for the Graphic, but since I had known him as an outside reporter on the Chronicle, I endeavoured to instruct him on the merest essentials of military knowledge, such as the difference between a gun and a horse, between a company and an army corps, between a staff officer and a fool."

Nevinson's remarks were especially patronizing in view of the fact that Gibbs had done commissioned work on Haldane's reforms. But his intention perhaps was to be merely amusing, for he was also generous in his praise of Gibbs who, he said, "became one of the most conspicuous of all war correspondents...."[13]

In one day of his stay in Belgrade, Gibbs found himself arrested as a foreign spy, in spite of his possessing passports, documents, and "credentials which would satisfy any suspicious foreigner of my harmless and useful character."[14] Within a day, the matter had been cleared up and Gibbs released, but the incident indicates the suspicion with which war correspondents were viewed when Gibbs joined their ranks. For Gibbs it was a frustrating and disappointing beginning as a war correspondent, especially after he arrived in Sofia where the war correspondents had been assured by the military authorities they would be provided all facilities at the front.

In fact, there was no such intention, and the war correspondents were forced to bide their time in their hotels from early October preparing for the anticipated move. Their frustration was compounded by the delay in the declaration of war, which, when it finally came on October 14, was not publicly announced until October 18.[15] On the 19th, Gibbs wrote that the war correspondents "were getting anxious, impatient, despondent. The war had begun, history was being made, and we, who are the chroniclers of history, were still being kept back from the scenes of action."[16] In his despatch of the same day he complained to his readers that it was "futile staying in Sofia," because news of the war reached the war correspondents only secondhand.[17]

In spite of the restrictions Gibbs was able to send regular reports to the Graphic. Later, his description of the war appeared in print in Adventures of War With Cross and Crescent. Here he gave his account of the events as he saw them in Stara Zagora, Mustapha Pasha and Adrianople.[18] What emerges most significantly from his writings is his concentration on the "human side" of the war.

> "For some weeks now I have been passing through towns inhabited mainly by women, as most of the men have gone to the war. That is rather curious. It is strange to find oneself in a marketplace filled by women doing the work of men - bringing in bullock carts laden with country produce, burdened with great packs, drawing water from the wells, and sitting on the ground in groups sorting out their merchandise. Even in Sofia the crowds in the streets are mostly women, and further east it is the women who are tilling the fields which have been abandoned by their husbandmen. These women of the Balkans are, I think, more enthusiastic for the war than the men themselves. The men march away with a kind of quiet resignation; but some of the younger women are noisy in their demonstrations, and tie garlands about the rifles of their husbands and brothers, and cheer them on their way to the troop trains."[19]

Closer to the scene of battle, but still only on its outskirts, Gibbs furnished his readers with descriptions such as this:

> "For two days now I seem to have been living in a continual nightmare full of black and white beasts, with curly horns, of trampling hoofs, of armed men surging like a living tide through narrow streets incessantly by day and night, of gun-carriages, and bullock-wagons in a great tangle of spokes and wheels and shafts, of bayonets glistening like silver, of bearded faces and black eyes staring at me as a great army passes onwards through the town of Mustafa Pasha.
>
> "It is more than an army; it is a nation. Across the bridge which the Turks tried to blow up before they retreated upon Adrianople Bulgaria has passed on its way to war. All its manhood, its young boys and its elderly men, its peasants and professors and business men and poets have come pouring across the narrow way which spans the shining Maritza. The tide has never stopped for one moment."[20]

Similarly, Gibbs's power of description gives a "human" quality to the verbal portrait he draws of a distant battle scene. Its reflective aspect adds to this quality.

> "I could hear the low rumble of the guns, and now and again the quick rattle of machine-guns in the distance. The spectacle around me was grim and terrible, and when the sun began to sink into a great blaze of blood-red light overspreading the western sky above the sombre line of hills, it assumed an awful grandeur and beauty. Four, five, and then six villages a little way across the river began to burn with a fierce and swift destruction... They burned like flaming torches, great tongues of fire licking from roof to roof until the villages were great roaring furnaces of red light, intense and vivid as molten metal, with black patches breaking through the glare where houses had once stood, and with trees in the foreground silhouetted as black as ink. These great bonfires were of an indescribable beauty, and I gazed at them fascinated by a kind of joyful terror difficult to define."[21]

Gibbs was touched by the wounded and their suffering. He was overcome by their numbers, which, he reckoned, added up to

> "many great battalions; ...The bright sun of autumn in the Near East has shone down upon those winding caravans of Red Cross waggons jolting down the hill-tracks and over roads axle-deep in mud; the rain, which has swept the sunshine out of the sky at times, has poured down upon men lying in misery and in sodden straw... The men who fought at Kirk Kilisse and Lille Burgas had sixty leagues and more to cover

> in hay-carts and bullock-waggons before they reached the railways. Many of them never reached the railways. The last flicker of life was shaken out of them before they came to the trains... The faces of some of those wounded men were terrible as they passed me. They were the faces of dead men... I stared at these convoys of wounded and became weary of all their woe. Poor Devils!"[22]

Gibbs had strong and definite opinions on the Bulgarian censorship. The expulsion of the thirty-two remaining correspondents in Mustafa Pasha was the climax to what he regarded as a campaign against the war correspondents. While he agreed that in principle censorship was necessary, he challenged the inconsistent standards that were applied. He was upset, for instance, at the favouritism shown a number of newspapers, and critical about the incompetent men who were appointed censors. This latter point had been Nevinson's objection during the Anglo-Boer War. He felt the same way during the Balkan War, "especially as my sympathies," he wrote, "were entirely on the Bulgarian side, and the Bulgar authorities had to admit afterwards that they made a mistake in not securing a 'good Press'"[23] Gibbs admitted that his own troubles stemmed from "an insubordinate character and a deliberate violation of the rules laid down for us."[24] He was certainly determined. After the expulsion of the correspondents, he alone returned to see the war to its end. These final two weeks near the front, before an armistice was reached on December 3, he spent in "breaking bounds" in the way traditional to the war correspondent, in order that he might get a little nearer the seige of Adrianople. W. Douglas Newton speaks of this determination:

> "When going to the Balkans in the war of 1912, his friends tried to dissuade him. 'You'll be dead in a month,' they insisted. He told me, with his warm smile, that he thought that all the odds were on his dying. But he failed to die. 'I put on several pounds in weight, that was all; he admitted."

Then Newton attempted to explain why he thought Gibbs

> "...takes risks in spite of prophets, when you look closely into his face. There is that in his eyes and mouth which speaks of his determination. His eyes are singularly steady and watchful...You have the impression that they miss nothing...About Philip Gibbs's mouth there is also something alert, but an alertness of a repressed and determined nature. The lips are curiously puckered as though ever closing tight down on his emotions, as though they were refusing to be misled by the amiability of circumstances, were determined to get at the root facts in spite of the plausibility of appearances. In that compressed strength, too, is written something of the resolute courage of the man. His courage and boldness are remarkable. He takes risks with a calmness that is quite unexpected."[25]

In his final article for The Graphic as war correspondent,[26] he wrote that the price of the war, begun with high ideals and enthusiasm, was being paid in blood. One could infer from this somewhat pedestrian statement a deeper meaning, for in reality, it reflected Gibbs's awakening to the horrors, realities and the sorrows of war. "Paradoxical as it may seem," he afterwards explained, "a battle is not the most interesting thing in warfare. War, as I know now for the first time, consists of more than battles... A battle is soon fought, soon won, soon lost... But the drama of war is more than that. It is in what goes before the battle and what follows it."[27] In his published work on the Balkan War, Gibbs detailed the small events around the scenes of battle, the human aspects of individual events of both soldier and civilian, and the common hardship which met them both. A review of Adventure of War notes that it is "a story told without any attempt at purple passages, but perhaps nonetheless effective for that." The review goes on to point out that the importance of the book lies in the "extraordinary picture they [the authors, Gibbs and Grant] draw of the desolation

of modern war."[28] Gibbs himself said that "the real enduring drama of [war] is to be found not in military facts and figures, but in the human side of it."[29] He had been a good student of the Northcliffe school.

Unauthorized Correspondent

The experience of the Balkan War prepared Gibbs for what lay ahead of him as a war correspondent. The Balkan War perhaps had precipitated what many authorities consider an inevitable conflict among the European powers. With the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand, war became increasingly less a possibility and more of a probability. The London newspapers, following the Daily Mail's lead, dispatched a host of correspondents to the European centers, in readiness for action. Northcliffe even appointed understudies.[30] The Daily Chronicle announced on August 3, that it would "maintain its reputation for early and authoritative war news."[31] Its correspondents had been dispatched earlier to all parts of the continent who, the Chronicle stated, would supply the readers with "an exclusive service of cables."[32]

Gibbs had been quickly commissioned by the Graphic to act as its artist-correspondent once again. He was keen to go, and obtained a contractual release from the Chronicle. "It was the chance of seeing the greatest drama in life with real properties he explained. "It was not to be missed by any self-respecting journalist."[33] He was dispatched to Paris on July 29, a day after Austria declared war on Serbia. Five days later, when Britain honoured her committment to France and declared war on

Germany, August 3, Gibbs was asked to transfer his services back to the Daily Chronicle to act as its war correspondent on a roving commission and this he did with the full consent of the Graphic. He set himself up in the Chronicle offices in Paris where, like the rest of his colleagues, he waited for official word on the status of war correspondents.

Gibbs relates how he was in the middle of relaying one of his earliest messages by cable when cable communication was abruptly ended and he was left with a half-finished sentence.[34] This was one of the first overt acts of the censorship which took the press by surprise. The Chronicle, amongst other newsapers, had expectations for ample and exceptional war coverage, yet on August 3 it issued a notice that "in compliance with a request from the naval and military authorities, 'the D C' [sic] refrains from the publication today of any news dealing with any movements taken as a precautionary measure by the British government."[35] The following day it issued a statement to the effect that "all messages of an official kind must be accepted with caution."[36] This latter point was one of the reasons the newspaper encouraged the work of unauthorized correspondents, even though there was a ban on their activities. In France, for instance, official news was as scarce as in Britain. In their correspondence, the newspapermen were expected to rely solely on the official communiques on the war's progress, which were issued four times daily by the French War Office. Most correspondents decided that it was useless to remain in Paris, waiting for permission to join the armies. "As a journalist out to see things I was depressed," Gibbs wrote.[37] He decided to go in search of the war himself and in

the latter half of August he teamed up with two other correspondents and joined the band of unauthorized correspondents roaming near the battlefields.

Unauthorized correspondents worked the Western Front, according to Ashmead-Bartlett, until Christmas, 1914. "It was often thankless if exciting work," he recalled.

> "The stories of this long drawn-out struggle to beat the military authorities of England, France and Belgium, and to reach battlefields without being discovered, would make some of the most interesting reading of the war. The position cannot be said to have been dignified either for the authorities or for those who endeavored to outwit them."[38]

Perhaps one of the mot consistently undignified aspects was the method of delivery of the messages the correspondents wrote. The cable was cut and the post was censored. Gibbs, for example, at the beginning would return unnoticed to England to deliver his messages personally. When this became too risky he would ask strangers crossing the English Channel to make deliveries for him. At one stage he came upon the bold idea of asking one of the King's Messengers of the War Office who, he reasoned (correctly) would not be familiar with censorship regulations, to deliver a dispatch for him to the Chronicle. After the third such delivery, Gibbs was quietly, but firmly, told by the Chronicle he was to find an alternative.[39] Later, the newspapers adopted a courier system, which functioned privately, and very quietly. In any event, the despatches that reached their destination were censored by the newspapers themselves, or by the Press Bureau, on the basis of the honour system of submitting copy voluntarily before publication.

Unlike the French and English, the Belgians were uncommonly lax regarding censorship. This was a virtual invitation to the correspondents who, according to Barbara Tuchman, "flocked to Belgium."[40] Even in mid-August the Belgians were generously supplying information to British correspondents, an act that naturally upset the French authorities who were very strict with their press releases. Sir Edward Grey was forced to protest through the British Embassy against this licence, and Belgium was subsequently made to at least consider the expulsion of the press.[41] She was, however, lax with her regulations to the end of 1914.

The freedom granted to correspondents in the Belgian sector did contribute to Gibbs' decision to leave Paris. But he had another, more important, reason, and one which intensified as the war dragged on. The hopeful attitude taken by the authorities regarding the outcome and the brevity of the war, combined with the lack of information readily available to the public on the real state of affairs of the war, gave the people generally a misguided confidence which grew widespread. This angered Gibbs considerably because he was exposed to both the public's attitude as well as the soldiers', and in his opinion the discrepancy was too great. He wrote critically of the peoples "placid unconsciousness of the things that had seared my eyes and soul,"[42] and determined that the censorship restrictions had to be lifted in order to enlighten the public. "There was no battlefield in the old idea of the word. How often must one say this," he cried, "to people at home who think that a modern army is encamped in the fields with bivouac fires and bell tents?"[43] He faulted the War Office, Kitchener in particular, for encouraging this ignorance on the part of the public. He insisted that the press had an

obligation and that the people had a right to know more intimate details on such a vital issue. He was raising the recurrent theme that lies at the heart of press-military relations, namely the public's right to know which W. Howard Russell had also attempted to reconcile with the need for press restraint.[44]

Gibbs shared these sentiments with many colleagues, in particular H. M. Tomlinson and W. T. Massey, with whom he teamed up in late August. Both these colleagues were established journalists in their own right. Tomlinson, in fact, had found fame early with his travel book, The Sea and the Jungle, and Massey was reasonably proficient with military maps and figures.[45] Together these three set about the French countryside trying to locate the front and discover the character of the war. This main trouble in the beginning, Gibbs wrote, was to sort out where to go "and how far ...to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy."[46] They tried to reconstruct the strength and the rapidity of the German advance and the often haphazard French retreat and the stampede of refugees preceeding it. The trio learned from refugees of the fall of Lille and Cambrai, and later they heard of, and saw the retreat from, Amiens, Beauvais and Criel. This was the retreat from Mons. Official news that the British were in fact, retreating, did not appear in the newspapers until August 31. On the day of the Mons defeat, the official news gave only big headlines on the event, then went on to speak of the need for supporting the war. The Daily Chronicle, for instance, after headlining the Belgian disaster on August 21, in Louvain, concentrated on the official statement. This began with the headlines "Brilliant French Success in Alsace", and then went on to describe, in one sentence, the German occupation of Brussels. On

August 25 the Press Bureau issued a statement which said the British casualties "cannot be estimated exactly, but are not heavy...The enemy suffered very heavily." Ralph Perris, in his dispatch of August 27, indicates that the British were holding and that the action in Mons can soon be pieced together. Not until August 31 did the official statement from the War Office release information on the British retreat and the heavy casualties incurred between August 23 to 28.[47] Gibbs, like his colleagues, was devastated at the news that the allied forces were retreating. The story that emerged was assembled from information related by refugees, officers and soldiers, as well as deductions that Gibbs and his colleagues drew. The subsequent dispatch "cheered" England, Gibbs wrote, following the hysterical, pessimistic tone conveyed by the Fyfe and Moore despatch to the Times. "Our losses are very great," ran Moore's despatch. "I have seen the broken bits of many regiments...We have to face the fact that the British Expeditionary Force, which bore the great weight of the blow, has suffered terrible losses..." It was accompanied by headlines such as "Battling Against Odds", "German 'Tidal Wave'", "Our Soldiers Overwhelmed by Numbers."[48] "The list of casualties must be very great," Gibbs wrote, "but if I can believe the evidence given to me...[by hospitals] they are not heavy enough to suggest anything like a great and irretrievable disaster."[49] Gibbs' point of view is borne out by later studies on the Mons retreat. John Terraine writes that the British casualties during that battle and the subsequent retreat were 15,000 (from a total of 100,000) within fourteen days, whereas the French suffered a loss of 210,000 men.[50] Barbara Tuchman also

refers to the manner in which this retreat has been magnified in size and significance.[51]

In September, Gibbs and his colleagues were exposed to another retreat. Following Joffre's brilliant strategy which saved Paris, the Germans were forced to retreat behind the Aisne. It was an orderly rout but one that left in its wake a path of desolation. Villages and fields were razed. Even the dead were burned, in piles, "like Autumn leaves," Gibbs wrote "because there was no time for burial."[52] The German retreat was in marked contrast to that of the Allies in August, but for the correspondents equally difficult to piece together. Information was sketchy, incoherent, scarce, and official news out of reach.

By October, Gibbs and his colleagues reached Dunkirk. At this time it was illegal for civilians to enter Dunkirk, to where the volunteer Belgian army had retreated. The city feared siege or bombardment: Gibbs, having entered on false pretenses, felt all too conspicuous and vulnerable. English officers stared at him, a man not in uniform and therefore "I had a most unpatriotic hatred of those British officers," he said, "whose stern eyes gimletted my soul."[53] Before the end of the year, Gibbs was arrested twice. Each time he found means to get back to the war zone.[54] "The special correspondent has a right to be in the field of war," he wrote with a touch of bitterness, "and deserves the gratitude of the public whom he serves with some self-sacrifice."[55] Certainly, Gibbs did not spare himself in the line of duty.

One way in which the correspondents found it possible to remain near the war zone was to work in disguise. A popular cover at the

time was for newspapermen to attach themselves to Medical Units.[56] Gibbs chose this alternative and in mid-October he attempted to lose his identity as a newsman when he became a stretcher-bearer for the Red Cross Ambulance Unit. Percy Brown has given an account of how seriously Gibbs took this undercover role. When Brown met Gibbs for the first time, Gibbs asked him not to reveal his identity. "He added that his name was Philip Gibbs, which meant nothing to me. He seemed hurt when I asked him if he was a regular writer. He said he was."[57] The incident was forgotten, until they met again later in the year. "A look of pain flitted across his face," Brown recalled with a touch of humour, "when I asked him his name. I was dropping bricks again." Then Brown quotes Gibbs as saying,

> "'I was sent home once so I can't linger here as I may lose my secret cover at the front. Tell no one you have seen me for the authorities are after me again. I must be in Paris on the twelfth if you care to ring up the office,' he said, darting on to the boat. I did not see him again until I reached Paris where his publisher had come to collect the manuscript of his first war book. He used two 'phone voices', one for friends and one for strangers I was just giving him up, believing it could not be the friendly chap I had met at Furnes. But he broke through in his natural voice and almost ordered me to tea with him at Ciro's...Philip Gibbs invited me to dinner, asking if I minded his publisher, William Heinemann, coming too! I was a little thrilled by finding myself, an outsider, among the elite of the craft. At least I gathered that Gibbs was someone very important..."[58]

Brown's account of Gibbs' cloak and dagger activities has an air of melodrama. Yet without this kind of effort, it is doubtful Gibbs could have evaded the authorities for so long. His publisher, William Heinemann appeared to have approved his actions. Heinemann came to Paris specifically to collect Gibbs' manuscript, fearing the consequences of any other alternative. The manuscript, published almost at once under the title

The Soul of the War, contained much that was potentially dangerous in terms of the censorship regulations. At least, it could have created a furor. Most of its subject matter, by the time it was published in the spring of 1915, was dated and not harmful to the national security. Still, the freedom with which Gibbs wrote might have prevented its publication. Gibbs reasoned that simply, the book somehow "slipped by the censor."[59] His motive behind the book was genuinely expressed:

> "If there is any purpose in what I have written beyond mere record it is to reveal the soul of war so nakedly that it cannot be glossed over by the glamour of false sentiment and false heroics. More passionate than any other emotion that has stirred me through life, is my conviction that any man who has seen these things must, if he has any gift of expression, dedicate his brain and heart to the sacred duty of preventing another war like this."[60]

The Soul of the War is an important contribution by Gibbs for a variety of reasons. Many correspondents wrote about their war experiences, but not until long after the war. The immediacy of Gibbs' account of the first four months of the war is unique. Furthermore, it is in these writings that we see Gibbs arriving at his own understanding of modern war, in which he comes to terms with his own conception of a correspondent's duty. In addition, Soul portrays the four stages of Gibbs' activity in France and Belgium as an unauthorized correspondent. The first stage covers the early days of the war, in particular the general French mobilization which lasted twenty-one days in August; the second stage deals with the month and a half when Gibbs was in the company of Massey and Tomlinson during and after the general retreat; the third concerns Gibbs's time spent with the Ambulance Unit in Belgium, and; the fourth stage concentrates on the period which began

the winter stalemate though by that time Gibbs had been posted to Holland.[61] Each stage is richly described by what W. B. Thomas called "'human stories' [that] unfolded daily."[62] This is particularly evident during the month that Gibbs spent with the Ambulance Unit. At this time he recorded the courage, suffering and heroism of the Belgian soldiers in their last stand. He wrote of the "gallant resistance which belongs without question to the heroic things of history." In several lengthy articles to the Daily Chronicle Gibbs emphasized his admiration.

> "During those late days in October, still fighting almost alone, for there were no British soldiers to help them and only a few French batteries, with two regiments of French marines, they regained some of their sail and beat back the enemy from positions to which it had advanced. In spite of the most formidable attacks made by the German troops along the coastline...those Belgian soldiers, tired out by months of fighting, with decimated regiments and with but the poor remnant of a disorganized army, not only stood firm, but inflicted heavy losses upon the enemy, and captured four hundred prisoners...Each [German] assault failed against the Belgian infantry, who stayed in their trenches in spite of the blood that eddied about their feet and the corpses that lay around them. Living and dead made a rampart which the Germans could not break."[63]

In his article "Great Battle of the Dunes" Gibbs wrote of his personal involvement in the evacuation from Furnes,[64] and a few days later the Chronicle published his "Shell Fire: Its Psychological Effect." "It was not fear which was the matter with them," he said of the Belgian soldiers. "Intellectually they were brave men and coerced themselves into joining many perilous adventures. It was the intolerable strain upon the nervous system that made wrecks of them. Some men are attacked with a kind of madness in the presence of shells."[65] Gibbs' observations on the effects of shell-fire were just beginning, and he would have more to say on the subject at this stage of the war, and later,

regarding the Somme Battles, though this was not published until 1920 when Realities of War appeared.

This period represents an important part of Gibbs' view on war, because here he began to consolidate those views on war and modern warfare. "It is like looking into hell and watching the fury of supernatural forces at play with human bodies," he wrote, and explained that,

> "it is difficult to know anything on a modern battlefield where men holding one village are ignorant of what is happening in the next, and where all the sections of an army seem involved in a bewildering chaos, out of touch with each other, waiting for orders which do not seem to come, moving forward for no apparent reason, retiring for other reasons, hard to find..."[66]

Perhaps it was the magnitude of the war that impressed Gibbs the most. Later, his colleague Frederick Palmer was to speak of Gibbs "writing his heart out in the human wonder of all he saw."[67] Certainly, Gibbs' comprehension was broad and often philosophic, yet he was able to relate well to the public.

> "As I watched the flames, I knew that each one of those burning towns was the ruin of something more than bricks and mortar. It was the ruin of a people's ideals, fulfilled throughout centuries of quiet progress in arts and crafts. It was the shattering of all those things for which they praised God in their churches--the good gifts of home-life, the security of the family, the impregnable strong-hold, as it seemed, of prosperity built by labor and thrift now utterly destroyed."[68]

Gibbs brought the war close to the public by the "human interest" stories to which W. Beach Thomas referred. We read about his intimate experiences as a stretcher-bearer, exposed to the full horrors of the war; the gruesome tasks of burying bodies and bits of bodies, removing the half-living from the battlefield, accustoming himself to the tortured, mangled bodies, the faces from which the "vital spark" had already been put out. We read about

the steadfast courage of the injured soldier who returned to the scene of battle to do his bit; and of the dedication of the young Lieutenant de Broqueville, leader of the Ambulance Unit who risked his life to rescue the wounded. We read about the manner in which Gibbs and other civilians, not to mention the soldiers, become immune to shell-fire, to death, to the brutalities of war; and the way in which life was still to be enjoyed by the soldier-survivors and Gibbs' own group with whom he enjoyed "picnic parties on the Belgian roadsides", and the friendship and warmth that was created at the convent where the Ambulance Unit was housed, despite the stench, the chaos, and the cramped, unhealthy environment.[69]

But the articles that appeared in the Daily Chronicle represented only a portion of what Gibbs wanted to say. This is what made his book, Soul an important contribution. The New York Times, in its review of the book, remarked that Gibbs's

> "powers of depicting what he saw are extraordinary... His picture is the more effective because he simply carried his readers in and out amid the war's vast confusion, not trying to trace movements of armies, but presenting the things of human pity, and courage that he saw for himself. He has a keen sense of psychological meanings, and notes the effect of events upon himself in a way that transfers the emotion to his readers."[70]

In 1916 in his article on Gibbs, W. Douglas Newton drew attention to the fact that Soul read like a "novel." It was a "naturalistic study of Armageddon," he wrote, where Gibbs portrayed both the beastliness and the beauty in war. "Its human quality is enormously moving," Newton went on and concluded that Gibbs has "helped to deepen and to strengthen our knowledge of the facts of humanity at war, "and suggested that Gibbs was a war correspondent

of a new dispensation."[71]

These two opinions on Gibbs's writing on the war in its early stages are a comment on Gibbs's own keen interest in the individual. This figures prominently in his writings throughout the war. While the courage of the Belgian troops impressed and touched Gibbs in the early stages of the war, it was the plight of the refugees that overwhelmed his emotions most as he had been touched by the sight of the women in the Bulgarian marketplace, who symbolized the upheaval of war. That theme prevailed in his war correspondence even after he left Belgium in December 1914. The Daily Chronicle at that point sent him to Holland from where he continued to write of the Belgian refugees, who had so touched him in their desperate flight in August. They were "the real victims of this war," he wrote[72] and made an urgent appeal to England on behalf of the many Belgian families "for rescue from their wretchedness."[73]

Until the correspondents were officially accredited, Gibbs's knowledge of soldiers derived primarily from the French. He perceived an army in any case to be composed of "a number of individualities"[74] and he was particularly aware of the different and colourful types of men who made up the French army. Still, two characteristics emerged above others, in Gibbs' opinion to distinguish the French soldier. One was his fervent and open patriotism, and the other his love, his need, for a maternal figure. Gibbs stressed that the latter was not an indication of weakness or femininity, but simply a statement indicating inherited national traits. Throughout the war he retained the highest regard for the French soldier.[75] The British Army, on the other hand, was of a different breed, Gibbs concluded. While he did not

have the opportunity closely to observe the British soldier until after June 1915, he formed some early impressions which never changed. Patriotism in the Englishman, he observed, was not as emotional a sentiment as it was with the French. It "was taken for granted."[76] Gibbs' view on the officers and soldiers of the BEF was not new or particularly incisive. But he expressed himself with a refreshing clarity and sincerity which held a strong appeal.

> "For the first time I saw the qualities of my own race, with something like a foreigner's eyes, and realized the strength of our racial character...They were confident without any demonstrative sign that they were superior beings destined by God, or the force of fate, to hold the fullest meaning of civilization...Their courage was not a passion, demanding rage or religious fervour, or patriotic enthusiasm, for its inspiration. It was the very law of their life, the essential spirit in them. They were unconscious of it as a man is unconscious of breathing..."[77]

John Laffin, in his study Tommy Atkins, concluded that "soldiers are merely instruments of policy."[78] Gibbs, however, seemed to be convinced that the soldier was not merely an insignificant part of a great machine. Rather, that he was a special individual in his own right whose singular contribution to the war effort is what made the machine work." "One's imagination must try to disintegrate that great collective thing called an army," Gibbs explained, "and see it as much as possible as a number of separate individualities, with their differences of temperament and ideals and habits of mind. There has been too much of the impersonal way of writing of our British Expeditionary Force as though it were a great human machine impelled with one idea, moving with one purpose."[79] There exists, of course, that body of opinion which is critical of the emotional impact appearing in war literature. John Terraine is possibly the most recent to advance

this view. He discusses the danger of war becoming myth or legend because fact and truth are often sacrified for an emotive impact.[80] Gibbs is generally known to have stayed clear from the misrepresenation of fact in his writings. Furthermore, the only limitation on his voice was his genuine desire to stay within the bounds of the censorship which he felt was to the good of the nation at that time. The control of information during this initial stage of the war was composed mostly of restrictive methods, namely, censorship. Even after the propaganda machine came into its own after 1915, Gibbs was known as a journalist who did not falsify information. If he was emotive in his writings, he was not morbidly so like, for instance, Siegfried Sassoon. Nor was he under the influence of an idealism as were the New Elizabethans of whom E. B. Osborne wrote so poignantly.[81]

What Gibbs accomplished in his unauthorized 1914 dispatches and in Soul of the War, was to set the groundwork for his remaining dispatches. He established the style he was to use, the key points of interest he was concerned with, and the purpose which inspired him. The following chapter will look at Gibbs' war dispatches after an examination of the final stages of the official acceptance of war correspondents to the field.

Footnotes

1. Bullard, pp. 4-5, Jones, p. 180, and Louis L. Snyder and Richard B. Morris, (ed's), A Treasury of Great Reporting, p.xxix.
2. Crowded Company, p. 40.
3. Barnett, pp. 362-367, Ensor, pp. 395-396 and Read, pp. 487-488.
4. Crowded Company, p. 39. The Daily Chronicle has a series of articles entitled "Territorial Notes", between May and October 1909. They were unsigned, which was not unusual, but this makes it difficult to identify them as Gibbs's. The style is sometimes like Gibbs's, when, for example, a simulated battle provided "a wonderfully realistic picture of the horrors of war." May 28, 1909, p. 8.
5. "The Spirit of War", in The Graphic, October 12, 1912, p. 526.
6. "The Spirit of War."
7. For details on the complex situation in the Balkans between 1900 and 1913 and its immediate background, including the inevitable involvement of the European powers, see M. S. Anderson, The Eastern Question (1774-1923), pp. 261-297, L. S. Stavrianos, The Balkans Since 1453, pp. 413-544, R. J. Crampton, The Hollow Detente, pp. 30-54, J. A. R. Marriott, The Eastern Question, pp. 309-452.
8. Crampton, chapters 1 to 4.
9. Stavrianos, p. 534 and Crampton, p. 28.
10. Ensor, pp. 464-468, Luigi Albertini, The Origins of the War of 1914, Volume 1, and also Sir Llewellyn Woodward, Great Britain and the War of 1914-18, pp. 3-12.

11. Adventures, p. 190.

12. Adventures of War, p. 12.

13. Nevinson, More Changes and Chances, pp. 380-1. See also Frederic Whyte, who had similar comments on Gibbs, in The Living Age, Vol. 308, March 19, 1921, p. 726.

14. Adventures of War, p. 12, and Pageant, p. 94.

15. The declaration of war was a complicated affair and frustrating as far as the war correspondents were concerned. Montenegro declared war on Turkey on October 8; Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece followed with an ultimatum to Turkey on October 14; Turkey declared war on Bulgaria and Serbia on October 18; and Greece completed the declrations by October 18. See Marriott, p. 451-2, Staurianos, p. 534, particularly in the manner in which the European powers were involved in their attempt to avert war through negotiation and diplomacy.

16. Adventures of War, p. 40.

17. "The Terrible Task of Getting There", in The Graphic, Nov. 2, 1912, p. 648. (Published over two weeks after dispatch!)

18. See for comparison Marriott, pp. 452-455 and Stavrianos, pp. 536-537. See Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, With the Turks in Thrace especially pp. 1-11, 59-76, 292-312, for his account of the war from the Turkish side and his encounters with the censorship there.

19. "Behind the Scenes at Stara Zagara", in The Graphic, Nov. 9, 1912, p. 686.

20. "The Nightmare of Mustapha Pasha", in The Graphic, Nov. 9, 1912, p. 682.

21. "To Adrianople", in The Graphic, Nov. 9, 1912, p. 684 (written on Oct. 31).
22. "The Way Back From the War", in The Graphic, Nov. 30, 1912, p. 824.
23. Nevinson, Fire of Life, pp. 238-240 and Gibbs, "An Evening Adventure in Mustafa Pasha", in The Graphic, Nov. 16, 1912, p. 734, Adventures, pp. 112-128.
24. Adventures of War, p. 116 and Nevinson, More Changes, More Chances, pp. 380-1.
25. W. Douglas Newton, "Philip Gibbs", in The Bookman, Vol. 51, Dec, 1916, p. 69.
26. "The Price of War and the Roll-Call of Death", in The Graphic, Dec. 7, 1912.
27. Adventures of War, p. 2.
28. The New York Times, Feb. 23, 1913, p. 99.
29. Adventures of War, p. 2.
30. See Pound and Harmsworth, Northcliffe, p. 461, and for more details The History of the Times, pp. 220-222 and 227-230.
31. The Daily Chronicle, August 13, 1914, p. 1.
32. Ibid.
33. The War Dispatches, p. 4.
34. The Soul of the War, p. 40.
35. The Daily Chronicle, August 3, 1914, p. 1.
36. The Daily Chronicle, August 4, 1914, p. 1.
37. The Soul of the War, p. 45.

38. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, Some of My Experiences in the Great War, p. 59. Richard Harding Davis was another unauthorized correspondent. See his volume, With the Allies. So also was Perry Robinson unauthorized, and for this and others see J.M.N. Jeffries, Front Everywhere, p. 173. Also W. Beach Thomas, p. 56-7.

39. Pageant, p. 160 and Life's Adventure, p. 112. Also Thomas, p. 80, and The History of the Times, p. 221.

40. Barbara Tuchman, The Guns of August,p. 249.

41. See Tuchman on the matter, pp. 248-50, Thomas, p. 80, and Jeffries, p. 119. See also the Daily Chronicle, August 18, 1914, p. 1.

42. Adventures, p. 240.

43. The Soul of the War, p. 225.

44. W. Howard Russell, The War, V. 1, pp. 274-5.

45. For studies and descriptions of Tomlinson and Massey, see Jeffries, p. 130, J.B. Priestly, Margin Released, p. 159, and H.W. Massingham, H.W.M., p. 122.

46. Pageant, p. 143.

47. The Daily Chronicle, August 21, 1914, p. 1, August 25, 1914, p. 1, August 27, 1914, p. 1 and August 21, 1914, p. 1.

48. The Times, August 30, 1914, p. 1.

49. The Daily Chronicle, August 31, 1914, p. 1.

50. John Terraine, The Smoke and the Fire, p. 20.

51. Tuchman, pp. 376-8.

52. The Daily Chronicle, Sept. 23, 1914, p. 1.

53. The Daily Chronicle, Nov. 13, 1914, p. 1.

54. Pageant, pp. 161-2.

55. The Daily Chronicle, "The Plight of the Special Correspondent," Oct. 18, 1914, p. 4.

56. Nevinson, Ashmead-Bartlett, Wythe Williams to name only three.

57. Percy Brown, Round the Corner, p. 200.

58. Brown, p. 210.

59. Crowded Company, p. 110.

60. The Soul of War, p. 359.

61. The breakdown into "stages" is my own. Gibbs' story is told chronologically.

62. Thomas, A Traveller in News, p. 59.

63. The Daily Chronicle, Nov. 2, 1914, p. 4.

64. Ibid.

65. The Daily Chronicle, Nov. 6, 1914, p. 8.

66. The Daily Chronicle, Nov. 2, 1914, p. 4.

67. Frederick Palmer, My Second Year of the War, p. 403.

68. The Daily Chronicle, Nov. 2, 1914, p. 4.

69. See the Daily Chronicle, Nov. 2, 1914, p. 4 and Nov. 6, 1914, p. 8.

70. The New York Times, Oct. 10, 1915, p. 386.

71. W. Douglas Newton, "Philip Gibbs", in Bookman, Dec. 1916, V. 51, p. 70.

72. "Wooden City of 6000 Exiles: Pathetic Fate of the Belgian Women, What Can England Do?" in the Daily Chronicle, December 28, 1914, p. 3.

73. "Land of Hope--And Safety: Belgians Faith in England, Rescue Ships to Relieve Holland's Burden", in the Daily Chronicle, December 30, 1914, p. 3,

74. Soul of the War, p. 336.

75. Ibid., pp. 281-7.

76. Ibid., p. 329.

77. Soul of the War, pp. 330-331.

78. John Laffin, Tommy Atkins, p. 12. See also pp. 1-12.

79. The Soul of the War, p. 345.

80. Terraine, inclusive, but see p. 21.

81. See E.B. Osborne, The New Elizabethans and Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried's Journey 1916-1920, The Memoirs of George Sherston especially pp. 312-376 in "Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man", (V. 1), pp. 9-322 in "memoirs of an Infantry Officer", (V. 2) and pp. 3-245 in "Sherston's Progress". Also The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon, and see also Robert Graves, Goodbye to All That, especially pp. 67-278.

CHAPTER VI

A WAR CORRESPONDENT OF A NEW DISPENSATION

In the early months of the war what baffled Gibbs particularly was the reluctance of the War Office and General Headquarters to recognize the positive impact that war correspondents could have on the war effort. This feeling intensified once the war correspondents were accredited to the British Armies in 1915. They were met with antagonism by the authorities and this persisted long after. Several years passed before the army accepted war correspondents into its ranks and fully recognized their utility.

Although Gibbs never mentioned it, indeed he avoided the subject in his writings, what he was really referring to was the propaganda organization. By 1918, British propaganda was well organized and highly effective and the press was an integral part of it. This fact has been established and carefully documented, the most recent study on the subject being that done by M.L. Sanders and P.M. Taylor, British Propaganda During the First World War 1914-1918. The use of propaganda has often been condemned,[1] yet at the same time most authorities acknowledge the fact that the new experiences of total war demanded new methods of fighting it. Propaganda quickly came to be regarded as a highly effective weapon. The war during 1914-1918 was no longer war between armies, but war between nations, with the full support of the people required to sustain it. To achieve such support it was necessary to channel and manipulate public opinion. This was achieved through the co-operation of the press and the use of devices such

as pamphlets, films, posters, mass rallies, and literature. Propaganda efforts were at first limited and haphazard, owing to the organizations which in the beginning were not fully developed to conduct it. The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC) began operation at the start of the war and the National War Aims Committee (NWAC) began to function in 1917. Both of these organizations altered and refined their programs so that by 1918 the system of propaganda directed at the domestic audience was highly effective.

The press did not come under the mantle of these organizations. The Press Bureau was at first responsible for the organization of propaganda within the domestic press, and its method was accomplished through negative means (censorship) to achieve positive results. The War Office was primarily responsible for its activities and once it recognized the value (indeed the necessity) of publicity and propaganda, it eased up on the censorship and made more news on the war available. There was never coercion applied to the press for propaganda purposes and the publication of official information released to the press remained discretionary. Propaganda through the domestic press was the product of, first, the wide range of opportunity given to daily journalism to "devise its own propaganda" and second, the absorption of the press into the official machinery. A genuine patriotism was often behind this "willing acquiescence" by the press to actively involve itself in the machinery of propaganda.[2]

The press has often been regarded critically for betraying the public trust by willingly relinquishing its freedom and becoming a tool in the hands of the government. Some insist that the

press should have confronted the government outright in an effort to bring the war to a halt. Whether or not this would have been wise will remain speculative. What is known is that the press, and in particular the individual correspondents, were faced with an entirely new set of circumstances in total war and the system they devised came in response to that. The individual conscience of the correspondents had much to do with the way in which the system functioned. Gibbs, for one, supported the use of propaganda from the beginning. He was anxious that the gap between the civilian knowledge of the war and the realities at the front, be closed.[3] He was also conscious of the need for protecting the national security, yet he fought hard for the lifting of censorship regulations and for greater access to official information. Throughout his career he was determined to stand by his convictions and to get to the truth of a subject. What can be said is that Gibbs wrote his despatches within the confines of the censorship and succeeded in achieving what he aspired to as a writing man. To what degree he was under the influence of propaganda must remain a moot question. His genuine sincerity and patriotism would be difficult to ignore, and it is the opinion of this writer the correspondents' despatches had merit other than as successful, often overt propaganda. In regard to Gibbs, it would seem he was genuinely naive about propaganda; it was more his patriotism and his commitment to his profession that compelled him to accept the machinery of propaganda.

The following chapter will discuss the emergence of a system compatible to both the press and the military under modern war-time conditions, Gibbs's role in its formation, and an evaluation of how

that system enhanced Gibbs's opportunities as a writer.

Authorized Onlookers

One of the most hostile to the war correspondents at first was Sir Douglas Haig, Commander of the First Army. Gibbs wrote that during the Battle of Loos in September, 1915 he "drew a line through his area beyond which we might not pass."[4] In December of the same year, when he was appointed Commander-in-Chief, he received the correspondents in a fashion similar to Sir John French. It proved to be an important meeting because Haig revealed his ignorance of the purpose of the correspondents' work. He disliked the Press in any case (though he remained well-disposed to Northcliffe for his apparent willingness to help in the war effort). He particularly disliked Press interviews to which he was frequently subjected after becoming Commander-in-Chief, because they appeared to be an advertisement of himself. In his Official Despatches Haig made no mention of the press in any context and in his private correspondence he alluded only to the "relatively discreet role played by the Press.... It was widely believed that the Press exercised a boundless influence upon the electorate. Recent experience suggests that this influence was greatly exaggerated...."[5]

During his meeting with the correspondents Haig suggested that they were merely after stories of heroism for Mary Anne at home, an attitude to which the correspondents took a grave exception. Gibbs was particularly determined to point out to him that "the spirit of the fighting men, and the driving power behind the armies, depended upon the support of the whole people and their continuing

loyalties." This would not be attained, he said, if they knew little beyond his official "communiques". "We urged him to let us mention more frequently the names of the troops engaged - especially English troops - for the sake of the soldiers themselves, who were discouraged by this lack of recognition, and for the sake of the people behind them."[6] Haig was not untouched, especially by Gibbs's appeal. As a result of that initial meeting with the correspondents he lifted many of the censorship regulations. "He gave us everything we wanted, and more access to information than any war correspondents have had," Gibbs wrote later "We were not only allowed to go to any part of the front at any time, ...but orders were given to Army, Corps, Brigade, and battalion headquarters to show us the latest reports of any battle in progress coming in from all sources."[7] Eventually, Haig was so won over that he had complete confidence in two of the correspondents, Gibbs and Thomas who, for a time, wrote his weekly report on the progress of the war.

The organization which met the correspondents at the front was incomplete and they had to find their own ways by which to complete their daily assignments. The basic routine was straightforward. All the correspondents were provided a chauffered [sic] motor-car, which took them to a pre-determined area at the front, before dawn. A censor always accompanied them. By 2:00 p.m. they would have arrived back at their headquarters and by 4:30 p.m. their despatches were typed and censored, in time for the cabling of the message to the War Office in London at 6:00 p.m. The method by which information was secured by the correspondents was of their own devising. They decided to forego "scoops" and cut out

competition by "pooling" their information. During offensives they divided the front into five sections and drew lots for the section each was to cover. Often the front line measured over a hundred miles. Each correspondent had the opportunity to form his personal impressions and to observe the area allotted to him. For the official progress on the military movement of the day he relied on Divisional Headquarters, of which there were usually three that he could cover in one day. Here the correspondents were shown "the reports of the battle as they came in by telephone, or aircraft, or pigeon-post, from half-hour to half-hour or ten minutes by ten minutes."[8] Before the correspondents returned to their billets, Corps Headquarters would supply them with more general information. Upon their return the correspondents, together with their censors, held a conference. Each correspondent then outlined the "historical narrative of the day" as it had been revealed to him, "reserving for himself his own adventures, impressions, and emotions."[9] The information obtained during this conference was shared with the Army Staff who in turn released to them the official communiques.

This system devised by the correspondents was the Press's response to working a modern battlefield under new and untried conditions. The old, traditional system that emphasized individual effort, would not have worked, if only because of the physical magnitude of the battlefield. Gibbs was sure that the nation profited by the "pooling" system, because news was comprehensive and not fragmented into bits and pieces from various sources. This attempt to synchronize the news, however, led to criticisms both from within the system and without. A popular opinion for a time

was that the correspondents were "spoon-fed" information and that their reports therefore lacked credibility. Nevinson was highly critical of the system himself and voiced the opinion of many old-time correspondents. "Knowledge was equally pooled. There was no rivalry, no 'scooping'," he commented.[10]

Gibbs was defensive about such criticisms. "We had at the end of the war," he summed up, "the best organization of news service that existed in any army in the world."[11] Neville Lytton took a similar stand. He argued from the position of a military representative and said that the despatches, if they were to have merit, had to be supplied with accurate information, and this should be disseminated equally.

Gibbs was equally defensive about criticisms regarding the easy life which the correspondents supposedly led. The material comforts and facilities were admittedly far superior to any that the press had before enjoyed on the battlefield, but this did not reduce the strain of the work involved. One of the most trying aspects of this, to Gibbs, was the necessity of working against time. The daily visits to the battlefield were a physical and emotional test of endurance including frequent exposure to danger. Then, "there was never time to think out a sentence or a phrase, to touch up a clumsy paragraph, to go back on a false start, to annhilate a vulgar adjective, to put a touch of style into one's narrative. One wrote instinctively, ...So it happened day by day, for five months at a stretch, when big battles were in progress. It was not an easy life. There were times when I was so mentally and physically exhausted that I could hardly rouse myself to a new day's effort. There were times when I felt faint and sick and

weak and my colleagues were like me."[12] In the broad view of war to which the correspondents were constantly exposed there was, wrote Gibbs, "something staggering in the actual vastness and the unceasing drift of this wreckage of war."[13]

That the system worked, was in great part due to the character and the quality of the correspondents; men of "the calibre of Philip Gibbs," Roberts suggests or, in Neville Lytton's words, the "first-rate men" sent to the front.[14] Percival Phillips was regarded as a "deep thinker on war."[15] He was intensely patriotic towards England (though he was American-born) and expressed an unwavering hatred for the German. While many considered him to be cold and impersonal, a trait which was reflected in his writings, none doubted his expertise as a journalist. He was fast, accurate, orderly, with an "unfailing instinct for strategy."[16] He had a wide range of information and included an abundance of factual detail in his despatches, something that H. Perry Robinson of the Times shared. Robinson, at sixty, was the eldest in the group. His colleagues thought him too pompous and at times abrasive in arguments. Some, like Thomas, were often irritated by the unnecessary detail that Robinson insisted on writing or discussing.[17] Unlike Phillips he was an educated man, sharing this background with Thomas who also was an Oxford graduate.

W. Beach Thomas, besides being a scholar, was an athlete and a naturalist, the latter interest one that he held in common with Robinson. Both Robinson and H.M. Tomlinson were keen on botany and biology, but Thomas was an agriculturalist. While with the Daily Mail before the War, he brought his expertise on French

intensive gardening to the attention of the urban readership. Gibbs noted how many of the group of correspondents were, in fact, naturalists.[18] Thomas possessed, like Tomlinson, a great deal of personal charm, a characteristic not shared by Phillip and Robinson. Thomas replaced Valentine Williams, the Daily Mail's chief special correspondent abroad, when the latter joined the Irish Guards towards the end of 1915. Simply, Williams was fed up with the restrictions on the correspondents.[19] So was his brother, Douglas, the first Reuters representative on the front. He received a commission with the army in the artillery, and was replaced by Herbert Russell. Little has been said of Russell, possibly because he left the lasting impression that he was reluctant to assist in the pooling of information.[20]

Frederick Palmer was the only professional war correspondent in the group, having covered almost every war since 1897. Until 1917 he was the sole foreign (American) representative with the British armies, when he became chief censor of the American army. He was liked and respected by his colleagues for his personal charm and his professional abilities. Palmer wrote brief studies of each of his colleagues who, like himself, "went and came always with a sense of incapacity and sometimes with a feeling that writing was a worthless business when others were fighting."[21] Gibbs agreed with this. He believed that the only honest thing to do was to join up.[22] Instead, he did what he considered the next best thing by bringing the war's more intimate details to the families isolated at home.

Gibbs, unlike Phillips, was unable to write of the war in a detached, analytical manner. He was passionately involved in the

subject of the war, and this comes through in his despatches. He admitted that his interests rested in the things he had seen around him, rather than in the strategy and tactics of the war in relation to the view others had of him. Roberts spoke of his "Christian humility", his "unconquerable optimism and faith in his fellow men." Gibbs's publisher, George H. Doran, wrote of his beneficence, his broad knowledge. Frederic Whyte for one, recalled his "grave simplicity, his unobtrusive humour, his depth of feeling, his wide sympathies, his keenly observant interest in everything, human nature most of all."[23] In the month of April, 1915, for instance, Gibbs interested his readers with a variety of sketches, a style that carried through to the end of the war and distinguished his despatches. We read his rendition of the story of the fighting in Argonne that was told him by a stretcher-bearer; of the impressions of a French woman who told him about the strength, order, and cheerfulness of the Germans; of a soldier's account of his experience under fire, which Gibbs found in his journal; of the Art Gallery-turned-hospital where "the living pictures and the moving statuary ...exhibit the fine arts of war as they are practised by civilized men using explosive shells...."[24]
Later that year, in September after the Battle of Loos, he gave his readers a contemplative study of the Cloth Hall in Ypres. In it, can be seen Gibbs's application of the human interest story.

> "The Cloth Hall was but a skeleton in stone, with immense gaunt ribs about the dead carcass of its former majesty. Beyond, the tower of St. Mark's was a stark ruin, which gleamed white through the darkening twilight. The immensity of this destruction overwhelmed one's soul with a sense of enormous tragedy, greater than human pain or death.
>
> So we should feel is we stood gazing upon the ruins of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, while

> the shadows of night crept into their dark caverns, and into their yawning charms of chaotic masonry, with a gleam of moon upon their riven towers and fingers of pale light touching the ribs of isolated arches."[25]

Cecil Roberts contended that it was the sensitivity and vividness of his despatches which made Gibbs so popular a war correspondent.[26] His first despatch as an authorized onlooker set the pattern for his subsequent despatches.

> "It is the first time that I have seen the British front and moved about freely among British soldiers and officers of the Expeditionary Force and seen the way in which our own men set about their task... in these preliminary words I want to give a more general picture of the life and conditions of our soldiers abroad. So many phrases which appear day by day in the newspaper convey no more than a vague, uncertain meaning... 'The Front' - how does it look, that place which is drawn in a jagged black line across the map on the wall... the wife of a soldier abroad cannot fill in the picture [from the official bulletins]... It is after one has left 'G.H.Q.' that one sees something of the human side of war and all its ceaseless traffic. Yet even then, as one travels nearer and nearer to the front, one is astounded at the silence, the peacefulness of the scenery about one, the absence of all traffic sights. Yesterday, on the way to a place which is very close to the German lines, children were playing on the roadside, and old women in black gowns trudged down the long, straight high roads, with their endless sentinels of trees."[27]

Percival Phillips was the only other correspondent to equal Gibbs's time on duty. The driving force to Phillips's determination to stay on, will remain a mystery, for he has left no record of his personal experiences and attitudes.[28] One possibility is to be found perhaps in his total hatred of the German and his fervent patriotism towards England.[29]

Most considered Gibbs's endurance of no small consequence. His brother, Cosmo Hamilton, for one, who was astonished in the first place to find Gibbs eager to become a war correspondent, was further surprised to see him able to bear it. "It is difficult to understand how he ever got through, so apparently delicate and fragile as he

is," Cosmo wrote. Then he went on to explain that there was "something a little misleading on his ascetic face and small frame... that was held together by determined mastery of mind over matter and a high sense of duty."[30]

A Legitimate Press

The work of the war correspondents had a positive and an immediate impact on the public. Their despatches, wrote Lord Riddell for one, "did much to stimulate the nation and enable it to realize the nature of the struggle in which it was engaged."[31] Dissatisfaction over news on the war continued, focusing not only on its scarcity, but its distortion. The most severe criticism was that the correspondents were being used as tools to conceal the truth. Contemporary critics especially, maintain that it was in their power to "confront the system" and activate the government on changing its war policy.[32] This argument over the propaganda remains unresolved though it has been the subject of numerous studies.[33] The politicians themselves were divided on the issue. Lloyd George was a severe critic of the war time press. During the allied offensive of 1917, he said of the press that they created a false atmosphere of impending victory over the Passchendaele Ridge. Even after it was certain the Ridge could not be taken despite an advance over a worthless two thirds of a mile the press, in particular the Times, wrote Lloyd George, waxed "ecstatic". He then turned his attention to Gibbs and chastised him because "his sense of duty to the public who were looking to him for a truthful account of what their sons and brothers and husbands were passing through in the battlefield did not prevent his suppressing every check or repulse,

and exaggerating with unbridled extravagence every trifling advance purchased at a terrible cost."[34]

Gibbs was surprised and hurt by the attack. He had enjoyed a trusted association with Lloyd George who, after he became Prime Minister, relied upon Gibbs to give him detailed accounts of the Battle of Loos because, as Gibbs quoted him saying, "Everything is held back from us by the military chiefs."[35] Lloyd George was particularly distressed by the impassioned account of the situation at the Front that Gibbs gave at a public dinner shortly after the Battle of Passchendaele. The guests included, besides Lloyd George, General Smuts and Robert Donald. It is true that Gibbs was not impressed with Lloyd George and considered him an unscrupulous politician who "identifies himself with the interests of the nation, and the interests of the nation with himself." Lloyd George was aware of this, and according to Gibbs was determined, as was his way, "to hit back."[36] Quite possibly this was the reason Lloyd George wrote of Gibbs as he did in his War Memoirs; he certainly struck at the heart of Gibbs's war correspondence, namely, his desire to faithfully record for the at-home reader, within the confines of the system.

Sir Douglas Haig was also critical of the press, but he adopted the opposite viewpoint. He felt that the conditions at the Front were not as bad as Gibbs, for one, had described, and that the correspondents had exaggerated the details.[37] The use of propaganda was unavoidable, perhaps adviseable if the alternatives are considered. It was the intensity of propaganda used that most invites argument. Gibbs objected to the control of public opinion, though he valued its utility during crises such as war time. To what extent this figured in his ambitions, his reputation, remains

debatable. He was certainly able to advance his own private aspirations, even if he was not aggressive and ambitious.

Before the system stabilized towards the end of the war, two major stages were overcome. The first occurred in 1916 with the Battles of the Somme. While the war correspondents had demonstrated their loyalty, trust and competence, they were never fully accepted until the New Army made its appearance on the Western Front. The New Army gradually replaced the Old, as the latter's numbers dwindled, but it wasn't until July 1916 that they came in significant numbers to the Front. The New Army had none of the prejudices against the Press held by the old Army components. As a result, a workable relationship could develop between the Army and the war correspondents, which facilitated the latter's work enormously. Then too, by the time of the Somme Battles, the freedom of movement given the correspondents increased significantly as did the relaxation of many censorship regulations.[39]

In 1917 the second stage came in the establishment of a firm, complementary relationship between the press and the military. In that year, three factors had a bearing; British morale was seriously sagging because of the duration and cost of the war and was impairing the planned offensive; America entered the war; and the use of propaganda reached a highly organized and sophisticated level. In that year, a centralized organization for propaganda was established in the Department of Information. It was responsible for both domestic and foreign propaganda and was to concentrate more on active propaganda means as opposed to the counter-propaganda approach. Much of the discord and friction between the War Office, the Foreign Office and the Cabinet was removed. But it was not until the

following year when Lord Beaverbrook was appointed head of the new organization, The Ministry of Information, that the strife ended. Specific departments were created and there was a clear and definite policy on propaganda.[40] The uniformity that this centralization brought was important in stimulating the morale of the country and undermining enemy morale. Atrocity propaganda was an important method at this time, and was largely responsible for the successful recruiting to ensure adequate numbers for the planned Allied offensive.[41] There appears to be no specific guideline by which the press functioned at this time. But there is a definite distinction to be made between the war correspondent's despatches and the articles and editorials appearing in the newspapers. The latter clearly reflected the policy and sentiment of the newspaper concerned, whereas the despatches revealed the correspondents' individual attitudes. In this respect, the correspondents were probably less influenced by the dictates of propaganda. The regulations governing the work of the war correspondents were very relaxed in the last year of the war, and in this lay their freedom to express themselves and support the propaganda. Gibbs stressed that the only limitations placed on them were those of their own "vision, skill, and conscience."[42]

America's entry into the war in 1917 brought further changes to the system of press representation at the Front. Since America had no censorship it was difficult to ask the American representatives to conform to the British. Fortunately, by then the system had already undergone significant changes. In April 1916, Neville Lytton had been appointed Master Censor of the Press. His first task had been to make the system of censorship "more elastic," and to synchronize

all the despatches and official communiques. He extended the original pooling system set up by the correspondents a step further; information gathered by the various press units were sent to his office where they were digested and returned to all the press units. The uniformity was adhered to when he gave America permission for the setting up of a separate unit for the American press.[49]

In 1918 the press was placed under the Ministry of Information. A new central organization for propaganda was to concentrate more on active propaganda means as opposed to the counter-propaganda approach. It was soon shuffled and then was placed in a branch with GHQ known as Staff Duties. This section of Staff Duties came to be called Censorship and Press (CP).[45] The official organization of press representation would continue to change, but the basic principles for censorship and press had been established. When World War I began, for instance, the system of Press respresentation as established began to function without the delays that had marked World War I. Fifty-five correspondents from all countries were from the start permanently accredited to the B.E.F.[46] The principles of censorship remained basically the same, though some countries, notably the United States, would continue to permit greater freedom and flexibility. The role of the war correspondent changed accordingly. Greater freedom ultimately limited his access to unofficial news, so reliant had he become on official organization and dissemination of information.[47] This was the important consequence of World War I. A system had been built through which war correspondents could locate the meaningful areas of full-scale, modern war, and record it in a comprehensive way to a mass readership. It was unavoidable that the problems initially encountered were a necessary step in that evolution.

To a great extent the system worked and grew, during World War I, because of the quality of the initial Press representatives. By mid-1917, the correspondents were free to come and go as they pleased; they were trusted and accepted by the Army and recognized as a vital part of the war effort. The struggle to evolve a legitimate press during war time had been won, and it was regarded as legitmate by the Army.[48] "Had it not been for the fact that ...the five war correspondents were writers of mature experience," Williams explained, "the situation as between Press and Army would have become impossible in the first week." They were, furthermore, individuals with a high sense of duty and responsibility. Indeed, many argued that the correspondents, or the Press generally, were far more competent to censor than were the military representatives,[49] because they were more sensitive to the public, and military, requirements.

The correspondents who were appointed to the British Armies on the Western Front were a group whom the authorities considered possessing the character, reputation, and professional ability necessary for the task. None of the British correspondents were professional war correspondents though several had covered wars before. They were all, however, distinguished journalists. Their selection took into account, above all, their ability to translate that professional ability into the function entrusted to them. That is, to personalize the war to the civilian readership, to make the war into a more intimate and integral part of the civilian effort. Such requirements necessarily introduced new dimensions to the profession of war correspondence.

The Despatches

In its obituary of Gibbs in 1962 The New York Times wrote that with his war correspondence Gibbs "stamped himself deeply upon the mind and imagination of the civilian public."[50] In 1918 The New York Times had given him "first honours" among all the war correspondents because of the "quality of his service" and the "merit of his work."[51] Some years earlier the American correspondent Emmet Crozier concluded that Gibbs turned out an "outstanding correspondent's career." Gibbs, Crozier remarked, strove to "embellish the military news with his own reflection."[52] Gibbs's simplicity, his unpretentious honesty, and his genuine commitment to the war effort were greatly responsible for the way in which he won over an audience. The war had had a tremendous impact on Gibbs. "It obliterated all other adventures, impressions and achievements," he wrote in 1923, and he set about devoting the remainder of his career to peace. It would be difficult to dissociate him from the main character in Unchanging Quest who says of himself that "I see myself on that first day of war, and know that I am not the same man."[53]

Gibbs worked hard at his war despatches. He was more than prolific; the average length of his daily messages from the front were three to four columns. Frequently they would occupy the entire front page and sometimes spill onto the following page. At times these lengthy despatches would run for several weeks at a stretch. No other correspondent matched him in this regard. This would indicate that Gibbs's despatches served a purpose other than as a "tool" to the government; to his audience, they were compelling reading material.

In the view of this writer, four characteristics distinguish Gibbs's despatches.

First, and possibly most important, his despatches were dominated by his interest in people and in personality. He seemed genuine in his commitment to keep alive the separate acts of "massed courage" which, he wrote, camouflage individual deeds "so that the world will never know what each man did."[54] In this way he felt that he might lessen the effects of a military policy that emphasized quantity instead of quality. But he personalizes the soldiers in other ways. First, individually, as when he shared in the gladness of a young man who

> "with blue eyes under his steel helmet stopped me and showed me a bloody bandage round his hand, and said with an excited laugh:
>
> 'They got me all right. I was serving my Levies when a bullet caught me smack. Now I'm off. And I've had eighteen months of it.'
>
> "He went away grinning at his luck because the bullet might have chosen another place."[55]

Or, second, collectively, as when he

> "sat down at table with the officers of a battalion of Suffolks in a Flemish farmhouse. The men were camped outside, and as I passed I liked the look of these lads, who had just come out of one of the stiffest fights of the war. They looked amazingly fresh after one nights rest, and they stood in groups telling their yarns in the good old dialect of their country...."[56]

Gibbs enjoyed detailing the experiences of groups of men, as for instance, when he wrote of the London troops resembling "a battalion of anthropoid apes ...[as] they compete with each other in the length of time they can wear the mask [gas] and the physical exertions they can do in it."[57] Or again, when he recounted the humorous escapade of the Canadian division which, having purchased 100 white

nightgowns and having donned them over their uniforms, made a surprise raid across the snow in no-mand's land.[58] His despatches are filled with such passages.

Whether individual or collective, it is always a personalized, or intimate, picture that Gibbs draws of his subjects. Invariably, he places his subjects in definite settings, so that the reader is given a composite piece.

> "Groups of mud-coloured men who had been sleeping under the hedges sprang up to shouts of sergeants, formed up in platoons, and marched toward the fires. One party, as they went, broke into song, 'Good-byee, Good-byee,' and jogged down the winding lane close to the wheels of the gun-limbers where one could see the driver's faces by the glow of cigarette ends. It was not a healthy spot. Shells had come over hedges white with thorn-blossom, and little orchards beyond, where cherry blossom is thick as the fall of snow on their branches, and there were dead horses about and other things. But these boys shouted out their song, and nearby other men sat under the banks of ditches smoking and chatting. Among the tumult of gun-fire a bugle rang out, played by a lad who stepped out into the lane. They were the good old notes of 'Come to the cook house', and a fine subtle odour of soup from the field-kitchens told the meaning of his music."[59]

Or again:

> "...a black and dreadful night, raining more heavily after heavy rains. The wind howled and raged across Flanders with long, sinister wailings as it gathered speed and raced over the fields... And it was cold, with a coldness cutting men with the sharp sword of the wind... To those of us who know the crater-land of the battlefields, who with light kit or no kit have gone stumbling through it, picking their way between the shell-holes in daylight, taking hours to travel a mile or two, it might have seemed impossible that great bodies of troops could go forward in assault over such country... These men I met had come back wounded. Only in the worst days of the Somme have I seen such figures. They were plastered from head to foot in wet mud. Their hands and faces were covered with clay, like the hands and faces of dead men. They had tied bits of sacking round their legs, and this was stuck on them with clots of mud. Their belts and tunics were covered with a thick, wet slime. They were soaked to the skin, and their hair was stiff with clay. They looked to me like men who had been buried alive and dug up again, and when I spoke to them I found that some of them <u>had</u> been buried alive and

> unburied while they still had life. They told me this simply, as if it were a normal thing."[60]

Gibbs's purpose was to return to the soldier a humanity, an identity as a human being. In this context he shared with the soldier what has been called the brotherhood of the trenches. The war experience that the soldiers shared, George Panichas has explained, "compelled the depersonalization of life as well as its sacrifice to a mechanized materialism abrogating all human value."[61] While the soldiers did articulate some of their experiences in the form of published letters, diaries, notes, poetry, and in some cases monographs, on the whole they remained reserved and reluctant to speak about these experiences. Certainly, they did not direct their writings to a mass readership, and the bulk of the war literature was not published until some time after the war.[62] This is where Gibbs's despatches filled a gap. He was able to "see all round the question," Cecil Roberts explained. "Behind the soldier he felt the man, his home, wife and children."[63] Gibbs said it himself in 1917. "In the mass of hundreds of thousands of men, obedient to the high command, which uses them as parts of the great war machine, is the individual with his own separate experience and initiative, with his sense of humour and his suffering, and his courage and his fear."[64]

Gibbs extended this view to the enemy despite the propaganda which encouraged the opposite. He refused to discredit the enemy or to take part in any hate campaign. In 1921 he explained that

> "Never once throughout the whole war did I call the Germans 'Huns'; never once, from first to last, did I in my thoughts or in my words credit those who put them outside the human family. I believed always, with what seems to me now a strange obstinacy, though I have not altered my belief, that the Germans as a people were neither better

> nor worse than others in Europe... I have called this conviction of mine a 'strange obstinacy' because, looking back on it, I marvel that I withstood the tremendous pressure of public opinion and of German guilt."[65]

This kind of impartiality gave Gibbs's despatches a rare quality when the practise at the time was to actively dehumanize the enemy. His colleague, Percival Philips, for instance, hated the Germans and said so openly in his despatches. And while other colleagues and other newspapers were engaged in hate campaigns and atrocity stories, Gibbs talked about such things as how he "pitied any human souls who had to suffer what these German soldiers must have suffered in the agony of fear before death."[66]

Gibbs wrote lengthy passages describing the German war effort. His material was gathered through conversations with German prisoners, from stories told him by Tommy, from remnants of German letters and notes, and the actual scenes of the German front and their abandoned dugouts. Gibbs succeeded in dealing with the German fairly, and he was generous in his admiration of the German's skill, courage and industry. In this, possibly rests Gibbs's support of the propaganda; writing favourably about the enemy can be seen to have spurred the allies to a greater effort in providing equivalent supplies and accomodation for their own. In his despatch of March 24, 1917 Gibbs wrote that

> "...one ugly thing stares one in the face: German barbed wire. It is heavier, stronger stuff than ours or the French, with great cross-pieces of iron, and he has used amazing quantities of it in deep wide belts in three lines of defence before his trench systems, and in all sorts of odd places, by bridges and roads and villages even far behind the trenches, to prevent any sudden rush of hostile infantry or to tear our cavalry to pieces should we break his lines and get through. His trenches were deeply dug, and along the whole line from which he has now retreated they are provided with great concreted and timbered dug-outs leading into an elaborate system of tunnelled

> galleries perfectly proof from shell-fire, and similar to those which I have described often enough in the Somme battlefields. As a builder of dug-outs the German soldier has no equal. But in addition to these trench systems he made behind his lines a series of strong posts cunningly concealed and commanding a wide field of fire with dominating observation over our side of the country.
>
> I found such a place quite by accident yesterday ...a concealed fortress of extraordinary strength and organization - an underground citadel for a garrison of at least 3000 men perfectly screened by the wood above. Into the sand-banks on every side of the vast pit were built hundreds of chambers leading deeper down into a maze of tunnels which ran right round the central arena. Before leaving the enemy had busied himself with an elaborate packing up, and had taken away most of his movable property, but the "fixtures" still remained, and a litter of mattresses stuffed with shavings, empty wine-bottles, candles which had burnt down on the last night in the old home, old socks and old boots and old clothes no longer good for active service, and just the usual relics which people leave behind when they change houses.
>
> The officers' quarters were all timbered and panelled and papered, with glass windows and fancy curtains. They were furnished with bedsteads looted from French houses, and with mirrors, cabinets, washhand-stands, marble-top tables, and easy chairs. The cross-beams of the roofs were painted with allegorical devices and with legends such as "Gott mitt uns," "Furchtlos und treu," "In Treue fest."
>
> Each room had an enamelled or iron stove, so that the place must have been snug and warm, and I noticed in several of them empty cages from which singing birds had flown when German officers opened the doors before their own flitting.
>
> The men's quarters were hardly less comfortable, and the whole place was organized as a self-contained garrison, with carpenters' shops and blacksmiths' sheds, and a quartermaster's stores still crowded with bombs and aerial torpedoes - thousands of them, which the enemy had left behind in his hurry - and kitchens with great stoves and boilers, and a Red Cross establishment for first aid, and concrete bath-houses with shower-baths and cigar-racks for officers, who smoke before and after bathing."[67]

But I think Gibbs's reluctance to discredit the enemy came more from his genuine Christian values and sentiments. To him, the German soldier was just as human as the British.[68]

The second characteristic which distinguishes Gibbs's despatches is his use of nature as a background to his daily accounts. He described the war in relation to the environment and this gave a

tremendous vividness to his writing. This often revealed a tragic contrast of nature's beauty with the horrors of war. Cecil Roberts noted this paradox in his review of Gibbs's final monograph on the war, The Realities of War. Gibbs's picture is "all the more terrible," Roberts wrote, because he contrasts "the beauty that walked amid life and death."[69] Gibbs was aware of this quality in his writing. It was perhaps the most poignant aspect of the war to him. In April, 1918 he wrote:

> "The scene today along the line of battle was most tragic, because all the cruelty of war was surrounded by a beauty so intense that the contrast was horrible."[70]

Towards the end of 1918 he wrote from Bapaume

> "German shells were smashing among the houses, and there was a smell of corruption and high explosives in its ruined streets; but I noticed how against a broken wall these roses were in bloom, and marigolds and sweet williams among the red brick-dust of the ruins, and I picked a bunch out of sheer maudlin sentiment."[71]

In 1917 he had written in his May 1 despatch from Arras:

> "The fields on the edge of the shell-crater country are yellow with cowslips, so that war seems more hateful than ever, when the earth is so good and all the colour and scent of it. But the work of war goes on whatever the weather."[72]

Even in his childhood nature played an important part in his life, and his approach in his despatches is an uplifting experience for the reader. It differed from, say, that of Thomas, Robinson or Tomlinson, all of whom were naturalists. Gibbs's approach, while incorporating a naturalist's interests and outlook, went deeper. Nature, to Gibbs was more than a physical reality, a sensory experience. It was a spiritual experience as well, and more than likely his descriptive powers can be attributed to this quality. This becomes important when seen in the context of the readership he

wrote for, the mass middle class. Gibbs was not striving towards an academic or intellectual rendition of the war. Yet he managed to convey such characteristics to his readers through the depth with which he explored his daily examination of the war.

"...nature, after all," he wrote of a thunder storm in 1916, "had the best of it, though all the atmospheric effects seemed like a magnificant plagiarism of our human chemistry... These thunderclaps ...were enormously like our miniature tempests of hate."[73]

Douglas Newton termed this approach a 'naturalistic vision' of the war, when he attempted to distinguish Gibbs's despatches from traditional ones.[74] His point was that Gibbs gave to the tedium and business-like mechanics of modern war both a human and a dramatic quality. Again, this was important when his despatches are measured against the readership they served; a public which was anxious to have that touch of "humanity" bring them closer to the war experience. Gibbs was able to convey this by the way he treated nature in his despatches, by providing a physical setting for the situation and the characters, a reality with which the reader could easily identify. For instance, he kept a continuity through the description of the physical setting. On July 1, 1916 he described the land near the Somme which was

> "very different country from Flanders, with its swamps and flats, and from the Loos battlefields, with their dreary plain pimpled by slack [sic] heaps. It is a sweet and pleasant country, with wooded hills and little valleys along the river beds of the Ancre and the Somme, and fertile meadow-lands and stretches of woodland."[75]

By the 21st he was writing about one of these "stretches of woodland" with a different emphasis. Delville Wood was a spot where

> "great numbers of trees have fallen, cut clean in half by heavy shells. Branches have been lopped off or torn off,

> and are piled up as though for a bonfire. The broken trunks stick up in a ghastly way stripped of their bark, and enormous roots to which the earth still clings, have been torn out of the ground as though by a hurricane and stretch their tentacles out above deep pits."[76]

A week later, Gibbs wondered that

> "so many trees are still standing, and that it still looks like a wood...still looks dense at a distance and hides all the horror underneath."[77]

A year later Passchendaele Ridge had become

> "a series of volcanoes belching up pillars of earth and fire"

and Bourlon Wood by the end of 1917 Gibbs described as a sinister place. "There was never a sign of life within it."[78]

The seasons played an important part in Gibbs' despatches. They provided a structure against which he set the tide of the war, and the way in which this affected the soldier. For instance, his despatch of January 8, 1918 records that in winter "nature has arranged an armistice." "On the ground, war has called a truce because of the snow, except for bursts of artillery fire on both sides."[79] Or again, two days later where he describes the old battlefields in Lens and Arras, "...the white pictures of our winter warfare, and they are worth describing, because they hold the drama of a million men's lives."[80]

In September of the previous year there was "in the wind...a smell of moisture and mist, and the first faint sniff of rotting leaves. It is the autumn touch...It puts the autumn touch for a second or two into the souls of men coming back from leave."[81] Autumn, naturally, signalled the rains, and the foul weather conditions that had such tragic consequences for the fighting men. In 1917, the rains came a little early, putting a different aspect on the summer battles fought in blazing sun and with men fatigued

by thirst."[82]

> "The ground was hideous, worse than in the winter on the Somme. That seems strange, with a hot sun shining overhead and dust rising in clouds along traffic roads behind the battle-line as I saw it. Today that is the irony of things. Where our men were fighting yesterday and today there are hundreds of thousands of shell-holes, some three feet deep and some ten feet deep, and each shell-hole is at least half-full of water, and many of them are joined so that they form lakes deep enough to drown men and horses if they fall in."[83]

And later, when the winter rains came, at first making the terrain only "sticky", and then turning the battlefield into impassible bog. In October 1916 Gibbs wrote "Curse the rain! It would make all the difference to our fighting men."[84]

> "I had no heavy kit like the fighting men, but fell on the greasy duck-boards as they fell, and rolled into the slime as they had rolled. The rain beat a tattoo on one's steel helmet. Every shell-hole was brimful of brown or greenish water..."[85]

The activity of the army was thoroughly dictated by the season and Gibbs was always ready to pick this up.

> "Our Army is like an upturned ant-heap in all this mud, and in the old battlegrounds they have dug themselves in and built little homes for themselves and settled down to a life of industry between one shell-crater and another, and one swamp and another.[86]

Spring was the most symbolic season for Gibbs. He saw at once a re-birth and a new death.

> "The ground at my feet was spangled with anemones, and the sunlight chased shadows across the fields of spring below the city...Our men, living amongst ruin this side of St. Quentin, have settled down to this life of open warfare as though they had known nothing else."[87]

And again, a year later, when he reiterated the same theme, in the very early spring in 1918.

> "...as though Nature herself were in suspense waiting... for the beginning of that conflict of men which is expected...perhaps before the first crocus thrusts up through the moist leaves, and before there is the first glint of green in the woods."[88]

The power of description in Gibbs' despatches is their third distinguishing characteristic. The despatches are rich in a graphic quality which had marked Gibbs's journalism before the war. This was his description of the blowing up of the enemy entrenchment at Messines Ridge, an area which had been mined from underground.

> "The cocks of Flanders crowed, and two heavy German shells roared over Kemmel Hill and burst somewhere in our lines. A third came, but before its explosion could be heard, all the noise there had been, all the separate sounds of guns and high explosives and shrapnel were swept up into the tornado of artillery which now began.
>
> "The signal for its beginning was the most terribly beautiful thing, the most diabolical splendour, I have seen in war.
>
> "Out of the dark ridges of Messines and Wytscharchte and that ill-famed Hill 60, for which many of our best have died, there gushed out and up enormous volumes of scarlet flame from the exploding mines and of earth and smoke, all lighted by the flame, spilling over into fountains of fierce colour, so that all the countryside was illuminated by red light. Where some of us stood watching aghast and spellbound by this burning horror, the ground trembled and surged violently to and fro."[89]

Or again, in October of that year:

> "Our guns were everywhere in the low, concealing mist...The wet mist was like one great damp fire, with ten miles or more of smoke rising in a white vapour, through which the tongues of flames lept up, stirred by some fierce wind. The noise was terrifying in its violence. Passing one of these big-bellied howitzers was to me an agony. It rose like a beast stretching out its neck, and then came from it a roar which clouted one's eardrums and shook one's body with a long tremor of concussion."[90]

Gibbs' descriptions of the battlefield were particularly effective.

> "The fields were pale in the first light of day, and there was a white mist over all the war zone until it was soaked up by the rising sun.
>
> "The battlefields were ghastly in this whitish glamour, with dew clinging to the strands of the barbed wire and to tall thistles growing rankly in the unreaped cornfields all cut up with trenches and shell-craters. Supply trains puffed through the desolation of those old battlefields [Somme], with long trails of white smoke, and truck loads of shells for new battles...It [towards the

> Ancre] was a valley of abomination, and the dawn lighted up its leprous trees, sticking out of deep swamps from which there rose wafts of stench where dead things lie rotting. Sand-bag emplacements, where men had a little shelter from storms of fire, were white against the charred earth and black stumps...all this tumult of tortured earth, all these pits dug by shells, all this wild destruction of places ruined in the first years of the war and mangled ever since--was strewn with relics of German life and German dead newly littered here. Our great steel helmets, punctured by bullets or torn like paper by shell-splinters, lay in thousands, with gas-masks and rifles and cartridge-belts an grew coats. Every mile of the way lie rows of stick-bombs, never used against our men, and dumps of unexploded shells hideous in their potentiality. A few dead horses lay on each side of the tracks as they had gone trudging up with our transport before being hit. Beside one house lay a dead white dog, the pet of a transport column."[91]

What added to Gibbs' descriptive writing was his mastery of the human interest story. His descriptions of the civilians, the refugees in particular, figured prominently in this style of writing Its use made it easier to skirt subjects which the censorship forbade or which the propaganda encouraged. This was true of many of Gibbs' descriptions of action in the field, The Daily Chronicle headlined its entire first page of the April 16, 1917 issue with "Graphic Despatch by Philip Gibbs." The full page is devoted to Gibbs' despatch on the British takeover of Lens and the German withdrawal. Here is a portion of the despatch:

> "Our troops have pushed forward today through Lievin, the long straggling suburb of Lens, clearing street after street of German machine-gunners and rearguard posts, and our patrols have already penetrated into Lens itself, the great mining town, which is famous in France as the capital and centre of her northern minefields.
>
> "The retaking of this city of mineshafts and pitheads, electrical power stations and great hive of mining activity, where a population of something like 40,000 people lived in rows of red-brick cottages, under a forest of high chimneys and mountaineous slagheaps, will cause a thrill through all France, and will be one of the greatest achievements of the war...
>
> "I looked into the city today, down its silent and deserted streets, and I saw a body of our men working

forward to get into the heart of it. They attacked the little wooded hill called the Bois de Riaumont, just to the south of the city, and with great courage and cunning encircled its lower slopes, and made their way into the street of houses behind the line of trees which is the southern way into Lens.

"From the western side, up through Lievin, the other troops were advancing continuously. The enemy was still there in machine-gun redoubts...

"...For hours today I watched that destruction whie our troops were working forward through Lievin to get the better of the nests of machine-gun redoubts at the entrance to Lens, from which intense fire still came.

"I had an astonishing view of all this work in Lens, and it was as beautiful as a dream picture and weird as a nightmare.

"The snow had melted, and the wind had turned south, and the sun was pouring down under a blue sky across which white fleeces sailed. Below, outspread, was a wide panorama of battle, from Loos to Vimy, the great panorama of French mining country...To the left of Lens the tower of the great waterworks was crowned with a white dome like a Grecian temple and to the right was Lens Church, behind a hill where I saw our men fighting. It was like looking at war in Bolton or Wigan...all the time I watched, enormous explosions rose in Lens and Lievin, sending up volumes of curly smoke. The enemy was destroying the city and its priceless mining works..."[92]

The same qualities are to be found in Gibbs' earlier despatches. For instance, during the Somme battles he wrote this way:

"As I went over the battlefield of Montauban the enemy's shells and our own were falling over Bernafay Wood, where each side held part of the ground. A little to my left Mametz was being pounded heavily by the German gunners, and they were flinging shrapnel and 'crumps' into the ragged fringe of trees, just in front of me, which marks the place where the village of Montauban once stood. They were also barraging a line of trench just below the trees, and keeping a steady flow of five-point-nines into our end of the wood to the right of Mentauban, for which our men are now fighting.

"Other shells came with an irregular choice of place over the battlefield, and there were moments when those clouds of black shrapnel overhead suggested an immediate dive into the nearest dug-out...

"It is beyond the power of words to give a picture of the German trenches over this battlefield of Montauban, where we now hold the line through the wood beyond. Before Saturday last it was a wide and far-reaching network of trenches...No mass of infantry, however great, would have dared to assault such a position with bombs and rifles.

"It was a great underground fortress...now it was the

most frightful convulsion of earth...

"The bombardment by our guns had tossed all those earthworks into vast rubbish-heaps. We had made this ground one vast series of shell craters, so deep and so broad that it was like a field of extinct volcanoes.

"The ground rose and fell in enormous waves of brown earth, so that standing above one crater I saw before me those solid billows with thirty feet slopes stretching away like a sea frozen after a great storm. We had hurled thousands of shells from our heaviest howitzers and long-range guns into this stretch of field."[93]

The fourth characteristic that distinguished Gibbs' despatches was his skillful use of dialogue. The medium was not new to journalism, but Gibbs's use of it was particularly effective. He employed dialogue in his other writings too[94] especially his novels. The method came naturally to a man who was described as a "born storyteller."[95] Through dialogue, Gibbs described feelings, impressions, sentiments, even military action. Its use often helped to distinguish his work from that of his colleagues.

When Great Britain introduced the tank to the battlefield in September 1916, it was the task of the war correspondents on the Western Front to describe this vehicle to the people at home. The assignment proved difficult because the strict censorship forbade an exact definition of the vehicle's nature, its dynamics, its proportions, or even its purpose.[96]

The correspondents handled the task in a variety of ways. In his despatch to The Times, H. Perry Robinson gave a straightforward account.

"I have seen the cars and am familiar with their construction and operation...'Tanks' is what these new machines are generally called, and the name has the evident official advantage of being quite undescriptive. The Army calls them already by nicknames, one of which will ultimately supersede the others. For the present, 'Tanks' is good enough. They are not really armoured motor cars, so much as fortresses on wheels of an extraordinary and ungainly shape."[97]

Robinson was known for his faithfulness to detail, but it was said his writing lacked imagination and that he tended to aggravate by being too dogmatic.[98] William Beach Thomas of The Daily Mail, on the other hand, described the tanks in a rather different manner.

> "It was regarded as the highest privilege when some of were allowed to investigate them, to enter their cribbled cabin and talk with the little men, wearing their padded leather helmets, who inhabited them...They [the tanks] enjoyed...a dramatic debut. To see a rank of these jaundiced Batrachians awaiting under the slope of the hill their nocturnal advance to the firing line, gave one the sort of shivers belonging to the unknown...They looked like blind creatures emerging from the primeval slime. To watch one crawling round a battered wood in the half-light was to think of 'the Jabberwock with eyes of flame' who
>
> 'Came whiffling through the tulgey wood
> And burbled as it came'
>
> ...With ludicrous serenity they wobbled across the gridiron fields and shook themselves as if the bullets were flies that bit just deep enough to deserve a flick. Those who had inspected these saurians in their alfresco stalls beforehand or followed their lethargic course over impossible roads in the moonlight gasped with humorous wonder at the prodigy. Munchausen never aproached the stories imagined for them by soldiers. But their pet name will always be 'Tanks' and they were chiefly regarded as a practical joke."[99]

A newspaper readership composed primarily of middle-class subscribers could more readily warm to a colourful, lively description. But Thomas' despatches were said to be just a trifle too lofty, too philosophic, for the public consumption.

The despatches of Philip Gibbs, however, were described as direct, graphic, imaginative. They were said to be simple, above all to be popularly appealing. His despatches, the New York Times speculated, "have been, perhaps, the only ones that have been literature as well as war correspondence."[100] In 1916 he introduced the tank to his newspaper audience this way:

> "Like children whose fancy has been inflamed by some new toy, they [the soldiers] were enormously cheered by a new weapon which was to be tried with them for the first time--

'The heavily armoured car' mentioned already in the official bulletin.

"That description is a dull one compared with the rich and rare qualities which belong to these extraordinary vehicles. The secret of them was kept for months jealously and nobly. It was only a few days ago that it was whispered to me.

'Like prehistoric monsters. You know, the old Ichthysaurus,' said the officer.

I told him he was pulling my leg.

'But it's a fact, man!'

He breathed hard, and laughed in a queer way at some enormous comicality.

'They eat up houses and put the refuse under their bellies. Walk right over 'em!'

I knew this man was a truthful and simple soul, and yet could not believe.

'They knock down trees like matchsticks,' he said, staring at me with shining eyes. 'They go clear through a wood!'

'And anything else?' I asked, enjoying what I thought was a new sense of humour.

'Everything else,' he said earnestly. 'They take ditches like kangaroos. They simply love shell-craters! Laugh at 'em!'

It appeared, also, that they were proof against rifle bullets, machine-gun bullets, bombs, shell-splinters. Just shrugged their shoulders and passed on. Nothing but a direct hit from a fair-sized shell could do them any harm.

'But what's the name of these mythical monsters?' I asked, not believing a word of it.

He said, 'Hush!'

"Other people said 'Hush!...Hush!' when the subject was alluded to in a remote way. And since then I have heard that one name for them is the 'Hush-hush'. But their real name is Tanks.

"For they are real, and I have seen them, and walked round them, and got inside their bodies, and looked at their mysterious organs, and watched their monstrous movements.

"I came across a herd of them in a field, and, like the countryman who first saw a giraffe, said 'Hell!...I don't believe it'. Then I sat down on the grass and laughed until the tears came into my eyes. (In war one has a funny sense of humour.) For they were monstrously comical, like toads of vast size emerging from the primeval slime in the twilight of the world's dawn.

"The skipper of one of them introduced me to them.

'I felt awfully bucked said the young officer (who is about five feet high), 'when my beauty ate up her first house. But I was sorry for the house, which was quite a good one.'

'And how about trees?' I asked.

'They simply love trees,' he answered.

When our soldiers first saw these creatures lolloping along

> the roads and over old battlefields, taking trenches in the way, they shouted and cheered wildly, and laughed for a day afterwards."[101]

Although Gibbs had a firm command of technique in his journalism, the true inspiration behind his despatches was the expression of his own sentiments. At times he was troubled by the thought that he was unequal to the task and wondered if his readership were tired and bored with his writings. On other occasions it worried him that his descriptive powers would fail to convey what he truly wanted to depict. "One cannot write these things in prose," he confided once to his readers. "At least not in the haste of a newspaper message, but the pictures of all this drama of battle stay in one's mind, so that one dreams of them and hears even in one's sleep the tramp of many battalions, and the rumbling of many gun-wheels..."[102] The war ultimately wearied him, plagued his nerves and his spirit. On November 11, 1918 he wrote that "I have written my last message as war correspondent. Thank God!"[103]

Footnotes

1. Philip Knightly, for one.
2. M.L. Sanders and P.M. Taylor, British Propaganda During the First World War 1914-1918, p. 51, p. 31 and p. 30, and Cate Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, pp. 30-33.
3. Adventures, p. 240.
4. Realities of War, p. 32. See also Thomas (A Traveller), p. 56, and Williams, pp. 311-312.
5. The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, p. 64, Dorothy Haig, The Man I knew, and J.H. Borasten, ed., Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches.
6. Realities of War, p. 33. Hesketh Pritchard, Sniping in France, p. 32.
7. Pageant, p. 168. See also Williams p. 311 and Neville Lytton, The Press & The General Staff, pp. ix-x.
8. Realities of War, p. 27.
9. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
10. H.W. Nevinson, Fire of Life, p. 349.
11. Pageant, p. 168.
12. Realities of War, p. 30. See also Lytton, p. xi, who corroborates this. Cecil Roberts, Half-Way, p. 193 and Fyfe, p. 212. See an example of a hastily written despatch , The Daily Chronicle, April 13, 1917, p. 1.
13. The Struggle in Flanders, pp. 12-13. See also W. Beach Thomas With the British on the Somme, p. 57.
14. Roberts, Years of Promise, p. 234 and Lytton, p. xv.
15. Knightly, p. 95.

16. Roberts, Half-Way, p. 129. See also Nevinson, More Changes, More Chances, p. 379, J.M.N. Jeffries, Front Everywhere, p. 208, Pageant, p. 163 and Lytton p. x.

17. In Realities of War, p. 28. See also Jeffries, p. 173, Roberts, Years of Promise, p. 239, and Pageant, p. 165.

18. Pageant of the Years, p. 165. See also Thomas, A Traveller in News, p. 44, and A Countryman's Creed for further reading.

19. Williams, p. 315 and 224 and Jeffries, p. 115.

20. Roberts, Years of Promise, p. 242.

21. Palmer, My Second Year of the War, p. 226. See also pp. 286-7, and Curtis Brown, Contacts, p. 218. (Curtis Brown's press agency also represented Gibbs throughout his career), Thomas, A Traveller in News, p. 148, Pageant, p. 162.

22. Adventures, p. 262. Gibbs was rejected for military service. Although the size restrictions were lowered, he was possibly still not qualified. He stood 5'6" in his boots, Adventures, p. 55. See also Unwritten History, p. 213.

23. Roberts, Sunshine and Shadow, pp. 87-88, George H. Doran, Chronicles of Barabbas, p. 197 and Frederick Whyte, A Bachelor's London, p. 90.

24. The Daily Chronicle, April 5, 1915, p. 5, April 7, 1915, p. 5, April 12, 1915, p. 6, April 17, 1915, p. 6.

25. Ibid., September 28, 1915, p. 5. The Battle of Loos commenced on the 25th.

26. Roberts, Years of Promise, pp. 236-8.

27. The Daily Chronicle, March 13, 1915, p. 7.

28. Philips wrote one book, Far Vistas, in 1933 which is a record of some of his travels. It has no personal touch at all.

29. See, e.g. Cecil Roberts, Half-Way, p. 129.

30. Cosmo Hamilton, Unwritten History, p. 214.

31. Lord Riddell, War Diary, p. 24.

32. Knightly, p. 97.

33. See for instance Sanders, et al, Haste, Lasswell, James D. Squires, British Propaganda at Home and in the United States from 1914-1917, Charles Roetter, Psychological Warfare, and Sidney Regerson, Propaganda in the Next War.

34. David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, p. 2231.

35. Pageant, p. 174.

36. Pageant, p. 208, Hope of Europe, p. 24 and pp. 19-24, Ordeal in England, p. 70 and Roberts, Half-Way, p. 280.

37. Pageant, p. 207.

38. Adventures, p. 272.

39. See Gibbs' comments on this, in Adventures, p. 272 and Realities of War, p. 26. See also Williams, p. 315, Thomas, A Traveller in News, p. 104, Lytton, p. xii, Hesketh-Pritchard pp. 84-5, and Fyfe, Sixty Years, . 212.

40. See Sanders, pp. 55-97.

41. See James M. Read, Atrocity Propaganda 1914-1919, especially pp. 3-21.

43. Gibbs, The Battles of the Somme, pp. 16-17. See also Frederick Palmer, My Second Year of the War, p. 207, Murray Rothbard in the "Introduction" to Rogerson, Gretton, p. 1001, Thomas, A Traveller, pp. 136-143, Pageant, pp. 195-197 and Adventures, p. 272.

44. Neville Lytton, The Press and the General Staff, p. 121.

45. Lytton, pp. 126-127 and pp. 140-142.

46. See, e.g. Ian Hay (pseud. for John Beith), The Battle of Flanders, p. 16.

47. Knightley, for existance, p. 337 re: the Korean War and Matthews, pp. 174-178.

48. See Lytton, Ibid.

49. Williams, p. 311, Fyfe, Sixty Years of Fleet Street, p. 212, Lytton, p. 114, Pound and Harmsworth, Northcliffe, Lovelace, pp. 317-9, Williams, p. 311.

50. The New York Times, March 15, 1962, p. 14.

51. Ibid., August 18, 1918, p. 354.

52. Emmett Crozier, American Reporters on the Western Front 1914-1918, p. 60 and p. 104.

53. Gibbs, Unchanging Quest, p. 197.

54. The Daily Chronicle, November 8, 1917, p. 1.

55. Ibid., July 5, 1916, p. 1.

56. Ibid., October 4, 1917, p. 1.

57. Ibid., March 21, 1917, p. 1.

58. Ibid., February 13, 1916, p. 1.

59. Ibid., April 18, 1918, p. 1.

60. Ibid., October 13, 1917, p. 1. Gibbs was writing here of the Lancashire and West Riding men of the 66th and 49th Divisions.

61. George Panichas, Promise of Greatness, p. xxix. See also Sir Herbert Read, in the Introduction in Panichas, Marvin Rintala, "A Generation in Politics: A Definition", in Review of Politics, V. 25, No. 4 (Oct. 1963), pp. 509-522, H.M. Tomlinson, All Our Yesterdays, p. 358 and Pageant, p. 227.

62. M.S. Greicus, Prose Writers of World War I, Chpt. 1, and John Ellis, Eye-Deep in Hell: French Warfare in World War I, p. 162.

63. Cecil Roberts, Half-Way, pp. 129-130.

64. The Daily Chronicle, May 1, 1917, p. 1.

65. Hope, p. 164. See also J.M. Read, Atrocity Propaganda 1914-1919, especially pp. 1-21 and pp. 187-209.

66. The Daily Chronicle, June 13, 1917, p. 1.

67. Ibid., March 26, 1917, p. 1.

68. See Cecil Roberts, The Years of Promise, pp. 236-238.

69. Cecil Roberts in The New York Times, March 14, 1920.

70. Quoted in Pageant, p. 223.

71. The Daily Chronicle, September 2, 1918, p. 1.

72. Ibid., May 2, 1917, p. 1.

73. The Daily Chronicle, August 31, 1916, p. 5.

74. Newton, p. 69.

75. The Daily Chronicle, July 3, 1916, p. 1.

76. Ibid., July 24, 1916, p. 1.

77. Ibid., July 29, 1916, p. 1.

78. Ibid., October 6, 1917, p. 1 and December 9, 1917, p. 1.

79. Ibid., January 9, 1918, p. 1.

80. Ibid., January 11, 1918, p. 1.

81. Ibid., September 17, 1917, p. 3.

82. For instance the Somme Battles in July and August 1916.

83. The War Despatches, p. 257.

84. The Daily Chronicle. October 5, 1917, p. 1.

85. Ibid., October 13, 1917, p. 1.

86. Ibid., November 8, 1917, p. 3.

87. Ibid., March 20, 1917, p. 1.

88. Ibid., February 9, 1918, p. 1.

89. Ibid., June 8, 1917, . 1.

90. Ibid., October 5, 1917, p. 3.

91. Ibid., September 2, 1918, p. 1.

92. Ibid., April 16, 1917, p. 1.

93. Ibid., July 6, 1916, p. 1.

94. For instance, see his travel book, European Journey, and England Speaks, Ordeal in England, and Wounded Souls.

95. Frank Swinnerton in The Times, March 15, 1962.

96. Now it Can Be Told, p. 384. This was the Tank Mark I; see Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, A History of Warfare, p. 492, for a good description.

97. The Times, September 18, 1916.

98. For instance see Cecil Roberts, Years of Promise, p. 239, as well as Gibbs' Pageant, p. 165.

99. W. Beach Thomas, With the British on the Somme, pp. 219-223.

100. New York Times, August 18, 1918, p. 354.

101. The Daily Chronicle, September 18, 1916.

102. Ibid., October 3, 1918, p. 1.

103. Ibid., November 11, 1918, p. 1.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The full force of democratization reached the press in the middle of the nineteenth century. Its impact was especially felt during the Crimean War when Russell's graphic war despatches compelled the government into action. Had democratization reached the press and the military simultaneously the development of the war correspondent's profession might have taken a different course. But it took several generations for the military mind to change and adapt to new circumstances. Not until major army reforms were effected between 1902 and 1914 did the military begin to concede to the demands of democracy in relation to the press. Undoubtedly the First World War acted as a catalyst in this respect. It forced the military into interaction with the public because the nation's support was needed to sustain the war. "Modern warfare," Gibbs wrote once, "has opened the arena to the multitude."[1] This was true not only of the army where the Regular Army of 1914 was rapidly replaced by voluntary enlistment and then by conscription. It was also true of society which refashioned itself to adapt to the needs of the war. By the time of the First World War British society had come to regard the distribution of news as a public service, a social responsibility that was a consequence of the democratic system. The press, too, underwent dramatic changes as a result of the egalitarian spirit of the time. Besides acting as the vehicle through which news was disseminated, the press assumed the role of, among others,

entertainer of the masses. It became difficult to distinguish between news and entertainment, and which of these, in fact, the public enjoyed the most.

"Journalism", M.L. Stein wrote, especially war reporting, "has sometimes been called instant history."[2] Cyril Falls, in his classification of written sources on the war, included newspapers and the work of journalists.[3] Many journalists have agreed with this.[4] Gibbs's own publisher George H. Doran, felt that Gibbs's war correspondence would "go down in history as one of the authentic source records of the Great War."[5] The writer believes this to be a fair assessment of Gibbs's contribution as a war correspondent, as a journalist in general. Lucy Maynard Salmon directed attention to the fact that newspapers are of value to the historian's research tools because they give not only factual evidence, but also interpretive, contemporary reflections of the spirit of the time.[6] This is especially meaningful when the impact of the propaganda and censorship is taken into account regarding the war correspondence of the period.

But the functions of the war correspondent embraced a wider field than the chronicling of history. With the growth of democracy and an enlarged reading public, there arrived a readership in the latter part of the nineteenth century whom the press was eager to acknowledge. This new readership had distinct tastes and interests in its newspaper reading. To see the press as a conveyor of news in the preferred language of the majority is to understand how war news became often a literary adventure.

As a descriptive writer Gibbs carried the art, in his war correspondence, to its highest level. For him, this was a

distinctive achievement. His ambition as a writing man had been to find, through the medium of journalism, the great story. He found it in the First World War and never left the subject. In this writer's opinion, Gibbs produced his finest journalism, indeed, his finest writing, as a war correspondent. There is no question but that he put his heart and soul into the effort. The war theme persisted in his writings for the remainder of his writing career.[7] While his critics felt that Gibbs exhausted the war theme, especially in his fiction, none denied him his "essential cleanness and honesty ...his chivalrous sportsmanship, his complete freedom from pettiness and prejudice."[8] Mary Agnes Hamilton remarked that the main weakness in Gibbs's novels was that they were "really imaginative reportage."[9] Others voiced similar comments. One critic said that his novels were "a piece of marvelous reporting,[10] another, that they were "history while you wait."[11] Some said that in his novels "form is disregarded"[12] or that they were novels "without heroes."[13] One is tempted to suggest that unwittingly Gibbs was a precursor of the New Journalism of Tom Wolfe (not the new journalism of the nineteenth century) or the non-fiction novel of the 1950's of which Truman Capote's In Cold Blood is the most popular example.[14] Gibbs himself was aware of this aspect of his writing. "My friends used to say that my narratives of fact read remarkably like fiction," he sadly reflected. "Now they say that my novels read remarkably like journalism."[15] In this, thought lay the strength of his journalism, particularly his war correspondence.

The analogy between journalism and literature has been the substance of an ongoing debate in many studies. In 1904, H.W. Boynton explained that "little distinction can be made between a

piece of journalism and a piece of literature on the ground of external subject-matter alone... In one instance the product will be interesting as news, in the other as it bears upon some universal principle or emotion of human life."[16] The works of many war correspondents have been noted for their literary quality. During the First World War W. Beach Thomas, for instance, was well-known for his literary approach to war correspondence. So also were Ellis Ashomead-Bartlett, Irvin S. Cobb, Floyd Gibbons, G.H. Perris, Percival Gibbon, to name only a few. Richard Harding Davis gained immortality as a war correspondent with his description of the German advance into Brussels[17] and so did Valentine Williams with his Neuve Chapelle story in 1915. Of W. Howard Russell it was said that his war correspondence provided "a link between literature and the Army."[18]

Gibbs's war correspondence gave a new dimension to war reproting because he introduced a unique literary quality to his despatches. He did not write the occasional despatch (though some are singular) which bore astonishing features. Rather, he gave a continuous narrative of the entire war, in itself an accomplishment. "His primary concern is not with strategy and tactics, but with life," the Times Literary Supplement wrote of Gibbs in 1917. "Thus he is able to see both the trees and the wood, and not merely to depict a series of exciting incidents, but also to give the impression of a sustained and progressive drama."[19] Furthermore, in many of Gibbs's despatches there is a self-contained "story", structured with plot, character, suspense, atmosphere. Gibbs, in his mastery of descriptive writing, especially in his use of the human interest story, achieved what was the object of the new journalism and later,

of popular journalism. In this artistic, or literary, quality, lies much of the merit of Gibbs's despatches. Through his skillful use of the human interest story, Gibbs was able to inform the readership of the battlefront.

Gibbs published his despatches written between 1914 and 1919 in book form. This in itself was a unique undertaking because no other correspondent left a comparable record of his despatches. The despatches are unedited and unaltered except for a few additional passages which did not appear in the newspaper editions.[20] They do not alter the despatches, or throw light on the subject of the despatch involved. Since the despatches were published in their pre-censored state, the added passages can be attributed to the censor who deleted them for press publication. Gibbs did not alter or re-write his war correspondence. "I might have polished their style," he explained of his 1916 despatches, "but I have thought it best to let them stand as they were written at great speed, sometimes in utter exhaustion of body and brain, but always with the emotion that comes from the hot impress of new and tremendous sensations. They may hold some qualities that may be lost if I wrote them with more coldness or criticism of words and phrases."[21]

Most critics agreed with this approach. The Times Literary Supplement, for one, suggested that Gibbs's "decision was wise. Considered judgements can hardly yet be published, even if they can be formed; but the vivid impression of the eye-witness put on paper while it was fresh has a permanent value which would gain little from the polish applied to the study."[22] The publication of H.M. Stanley's despatches from his African explorations underlines this point. For a number of reasons Stanley rewrote his despatches to the

New York Herald when he published them in book form. Editor Norman R. Bennett commented that the originals, "written during the best of his explorations" had in many cases been considerably altered. In the process "the truth of the materials presented" was sometimes changed.[23]

In the fulfillment of his own creative urge, Gibbs satisfied the expectations of his readership. He gave his readers entertainment as well as news. He made publicly accessible what a century earlier had been the exclusive property of a small elite. Gibbs' "distinguishing achievement", wrote one commentator, was "to democratize war correspondence."[24]

Footnotes

1. Now it Can Be Told, p. 66.
2. M.L. Stein, Under Fire, p. 11.
3. Cyril Falls, War Books: A Critical Guide, pp. vii-viii.
4. For instance Jones, pp. 28-9 and Nevinson, More Changes, More Chances, p. 378.
5. Doran, p. 196.
6. Lucy Maynard Salmon, The Newspaper and the Historian, p. xli.
7. Of the 45 novels Gibbs wrote between 1920 and 1964, 28 are based on the war theme (either the First or Second World Wars) and most of the remaining 17 make reference in some small way to war. Of the 24 non-fiction books that he wrote in the post-war period, only 4 avoid mention of war entirely. I have examined all the books in question and have come to this assessment.
8. The New York Times, July 17, 1938, p. 4. (T.R. Ybarra).
9. Mary Agnes Hamilton, Remembering My Good Friends, pp. 144-5.
10. Bookman, p. 685, on Middle of the Road.
11. Times Literary Supplement, November 11, 1939, p. 653, review of Broken Pledges.
12. New York Times, January 12, 1941, p. 23, review of Sons of the Others.
13. New York Times, March 19, 1939, p. 24, review of This Nettle Danger.
14. See, for instance, George Panichas, The Politics of Twentieth Century Novelists, the Introduction, Lioniel Trilling, A Gathering of Fugitives, p. 42 and p. 126, John Hollowell, Fact and Fiction, pp. 1-25, and especially M. Zavarzadeh, The Mythopoeic Reality, pp. 73-88.

15. England Speaks, p. 332.

16. H.W. Boynton, Journalism and Literature, p. 12.

17. Quoted in Morris & SNyder, A Treasury of Great Reporting, p. 313.

18. J.J. Mathews, p. 72.

19. The Times Literary Supplement, January 25, 1917, p. 38.

20. I have carefully examined and compared these monographs to the original despatches. There is no discrepancy except for the additions mentioned. The volumes are The Battles of the Somme (publ. 1917), The Struggle in Flanders, (publ. 1918, American title From Bapaume to Passchendaele), The Way to Victory, Vol.'s 1 and 2 (publ. 1919).

21. The Battle of the Somme, Introduction, p. 15.

22. The Times Literary Supplement, January 25, 1917, p. 38.

23. Norman R. Bennett, ed., Stanley's Despatches to the New York Herald 1871-1872, 1874-1877, pp. xiv-xv.

24. The New York Times, August 18, 1918, p. 354.

Appendix I

The events on the Western Front which are of consequence in this discussion are given below:

Upon Serbia's refusal to accept the ultimatum delivered by Austria-Hungary, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Germany declared war against Russia on August 1, and against France on August 3. England honoured her commitment to France and Belgium, and declared war on Germany on August 4. The same day, Germany declared war on Belgium.

On August 2 Germany invaded Luxembourg and on August 4 she invaded Belgium, violating that country's neutrality. By August 7, British troops were landing in France. The initial objective of the BEF was to assist in Belgium's defence, which climaxed with the Battle of Mons on August 23. The BEF was then forced back by the German First Army on August 24 and a general Allied retreat commenced. The rapid sweep of the German advance was concentrated during this time south of the Meuse River, where the French armies were pushed back (see Map 1). The BEF also suffered defeat, in Le Cateau on August 26. By September 5 the German advance had almost reached Paris. It was forced to a halt at the Marne River by General Joffre's counterattack. The Germans pulled back on September 9, and retreated north-east of the Aisne River.

Between mid-September and mid-November 1914 the action on the Western Front was concentrated in Belgium in the Flanders region, as each side attempted to outflank the other. The Germans tried to get access to the sea while the Belgian army, with the help of the BEF and the French army to a lesser degree, defended their position. At this time, the First Battle of Ypres was fought, October 12 to November 11, ending in a stalemate. The front line was then stabilized

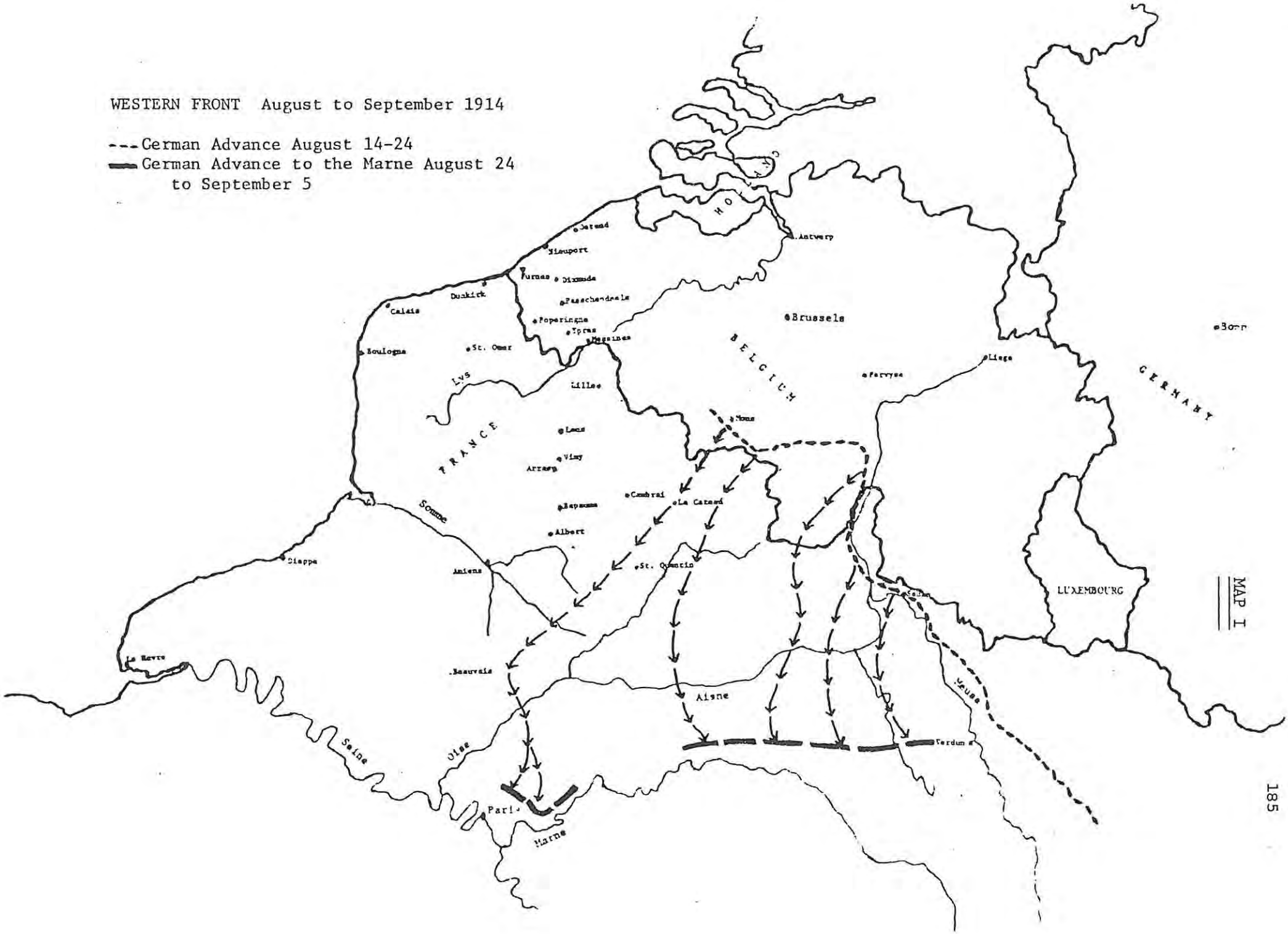
(see Map 2) and remained essentially unchanged until 1918.

The main engagements during 1915 occurred during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, March 10, the Second Battle of Ypres, April 22, and the Battle of Loos, September 25. Gains for both sides were very limited and ultimately inconsequential.

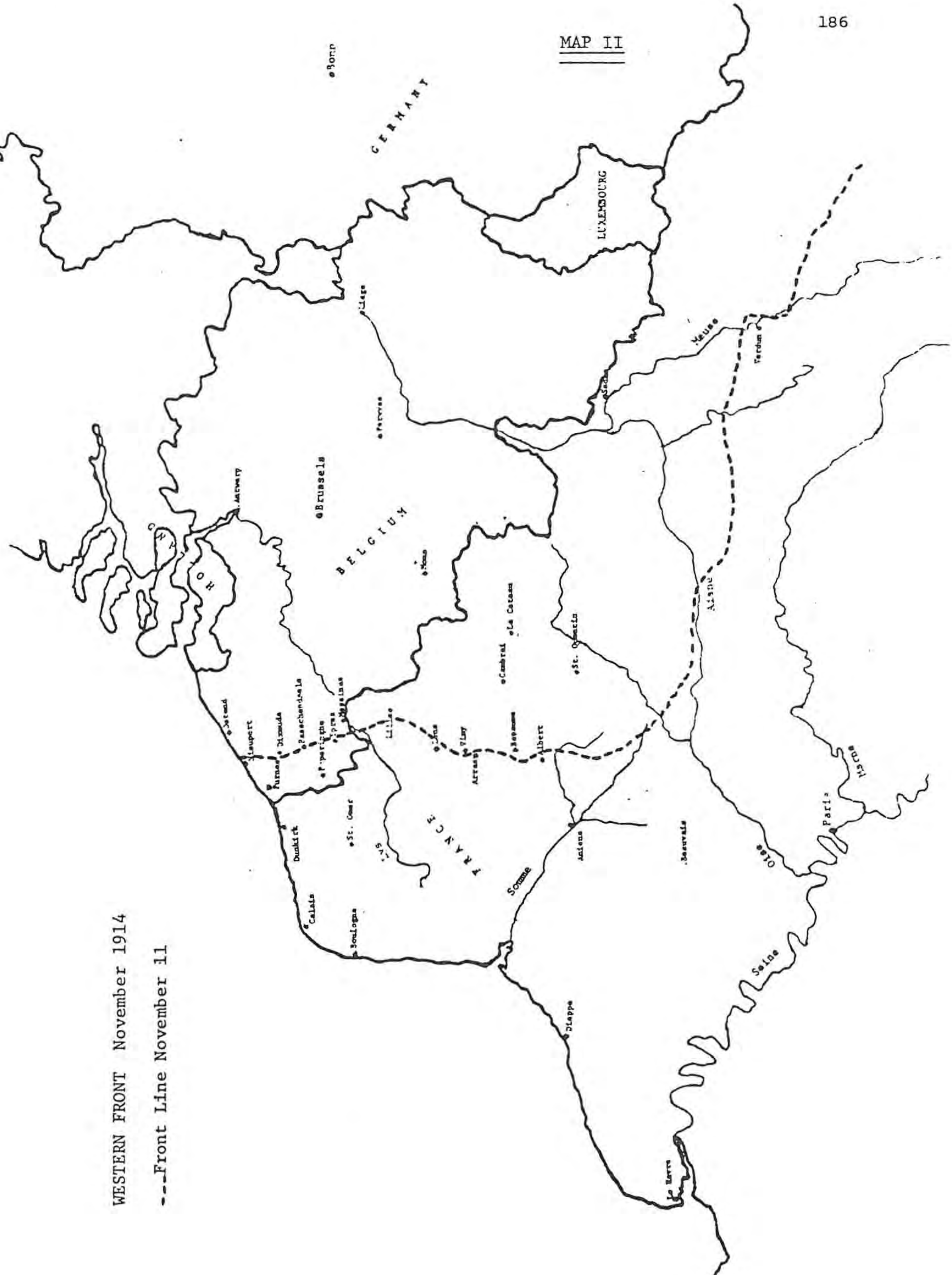
The Battle of the Somme was the most important event of 1916. The British and French landed their combined offensive on July 1. The Battle(s) ended November 18, with very limited gains for the Allies. They proved to be of no strategical or tactical value. The Battle of Verdun was the German offensive of 1916. It commenced February 21 and ended November 18.

In 1917 there were several allied offensives. The British were engaged in the Battle of Arras, April 9, and the French in the Battle of the Aisne, April 16. The Battle of Messines, June 7, was an important success for the British. The Third Battle of Ypres, July 31, met with some success for the Allies, as did the Battle of Cambrai, November 20. The United States entered the war this year on April 6, and landed the first troops in France on June 25.

The Germans launched several successful offensives in 1918; the Somme Offensive, March 21, the Fourth Battle of Ypres at Lys, April 9, and the Aisne Offensive, May 27. The Second BAttle of the Marne, July 15, again halted the German advance. This began a general Allied advance, driving the Germans back through Belgium and France the same way they had come.


WESTERN FRONT August to September 1914
German Advance August 14-24
German Advance to the Marne August 24 to September 5
HOLLAND
Antwerp
Brussels
BELGIUM
GERMANY
Bonn
Liege
Namur
Mons
Charleroi
Maubeuge
Cambrai
Le Catelet
St. Quentin
Albert
Arras
Lens
Lille
Ypres
Poperinghe
Furnes
Dixmude
Dunkirk
Calais
Boulogne
St. Omer
Abbeville
Amiens
Dieppe
Le Havre
Beauvais
Compiegne
Soissons
Rheims
Verdun
Sedan
LUXEMBOURG
Aisne
Meuse
Somme
Lys
Oise
Seine
Marne
Paris
MAP I

MAP II



WESTERN FRONT November 1914

---Front Line November 11

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