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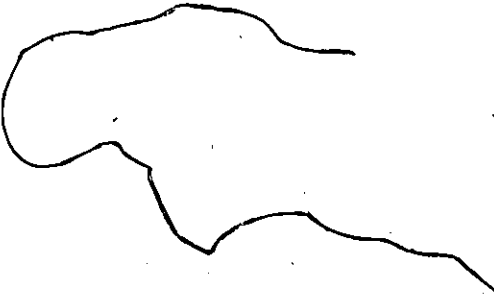
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The Life and Works of Robert Stead



by Prem Varma

Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Ph.D. degree in English Literature

University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Canada, 1980

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I would also like to thank the Library staff of the Ottawa University Library, the National Library, and the Douglas Library (Kingston), all of whom were very helpful. I am also grateful to my College (Sri Aurobindo College, New Delhi), for granting me leave to enable me to do my work here. Finally, I must thank my family without whose cooperation my studies would never have been completed.

## Introduction

The growing interest in Canadian literature has exposed the lack of basic studies in all aspects of the subject. In 1969 Pacey pointed out: "The most striking thing about criticism is that there is so little of it;" he went on to say that "a series of full-scale monographs on the best Canadian writers is badly needed."<sup>1</sup> There has, however, been a plethora of criticism since, and a number of monographs written in the last decade. But there is still a dearth of good, full-length biographical studies. My aim in working on Robert Stead is to provide such a basic study of his life and to discuss the works only in relation to his life. The absence of such a study is particularly felt in view of the contradictory and mostly derogatory opinions held about him. French and Logan dismissed his poetry as being "Vaudeville;"<sup>2</sup> and reviewers gave him the title of "Poet of the Prairies"--a title, especially after Sarah Binks, of somewhat dubious connotation. Allison lauds Stead

but with the ambiguous remark that he was "a civilized poet"<sup>3</sup> because he wrote patriotic verses. As for his fiction, most of his novels (with the exception of Grain) have been dismissed as "peurile."<sup>4</sup> Even a critic of fiction like McCourt finds Stead "at his best . . . capable of excellent work" but does not enlarge on the "excellent work" or promise in Stead.<sup>5</sup> Such opinions are possible because they are held without any reference to the time or the life of the writer. But in order to be valid these critical evaluations should be made in their proper perspective and related to the life and time of the writer.

The problem that must be faced in a study of Stead's work is, however, that earlier criticism is mostly in the form of reviews and occasional sketches and write-ups. Professional literary critics begin to look at his work only after the mid-1940s.

My main aim has been to write a life of Stead and I have looked at his writings only in the context of his life and times, to emphasize the significance of his writing in its historical/biographical perspective, and to see how far it is contributory towards the development of a Canadian literature. My object has not been to consider his work in great

detail, as such; for example, I have not looked at his themes as minutely as A.T. Elder,<sup>6</sup> or at his immigrants as closely as K.P. Stich,<sup>7</sup> or set a psychoanalytic perspective like Frank Davey.<sup>8</sup> My aim has been, rather, to integrate Stead's work in its larger perspective and relate it to his life, since my primary purpose was to produce a biography, with literary evaluation as a secondary concern. To attempt to do equal justice to both would be beyond the scope of one thesis. I chose to do the life now; the critical analysis and assessment of the writings can wait to be done at a later time; but the biography, late as it is, had to be done now. As it is, not many people who would remember Stead personally are around even now; after some years there would be fewer still. To construct his life from his papers and correspondence is almost impossible, as there is so little personal material available to the biographer and researcher. Stead was not an avid letter writer and did not have any literary correspondents. The few personal letters that may have existed at one time he destroyed when he sorted his papers and put them in order in 1950.

Biography may be defined as the written history of a person's life. Writing such a work about a man

whose life was as undramatic as Stead's is a difficult task--like walking the narrow path between 'history' and 'life' with the danger of straying off the path on one side at the expense of missing the view on the other. Moreover, the evaluation of his work (limited though it is) in connection with the emphasis on his life, complicates such a study because of the necessity in places to pause in the biography in order to discuss the writing. I have tried to give a chronological account of his life, as complete as the limited source material allows, including his literary and non-literary career, his family life, and his own personality and character, and to assess how he influenced his times or was influenced by them.

I have used the chronological approach flexibly with frequent movements forward and back so that I might discuss the poetry together at one place and the prose at another. A psychoanalytic approach has generally been avoided as tending to become too subjective for a study of this nature. The background and times have been referred to only in so far as they are relevant to an understanding of Stead's life and writing. Since no life is lived in a vacuum, contemporary times do provide the "external stimuli" which help us to understand the life, character, and

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work of a subject, but some woods may deny sight of the trees; and I have therefore introduced such background only when it is integral to the life. Events that left no mark or influence have been excluded.

The sources available on Stead are few. They consist of newspaper clippings and newspapers of the time; his diaries and papers (at the Public Archives, Ottawa); and the memories of the relatively few surviving friends or associates and members of his family. Unfortunately, in May 1950, Stead condensed his diaries, and earlier that year,<sup>9</sup> destroyed many of his personal papers. What remains of the written record is a list of dates and events chronologically arranged, but totally lacking in the inner life--the thoughts, feelings, impulses, and the more human and natural reactions of the man. One might expect to be able to obtain this sort of human portraiture from people still living who knew him or were close to him, but with Stead this is not much help. He was born in 1880 and few of his own generation remain. Besides, he was an extremely reserved man, so that younger people who knew him well, even amongst his own family, are practically non-existent. This, however, makes the present study more imperative in the

sense that it taps the memories of the few people who "knew" Stead at all. The result of lack of source material is that it was fairly easy to produce a "chronology" of Stead's life, but very difficult indeed to write a biography. Stead would not emerge alive.

The early years were particularly difficult to write about; the diary begins only in 1919, and hardly any friends or family members remain who remember those early years. Also, for that period, except for an occasional letter or certificate, there are no papers extant. The other available source, newspapers and newspaper clippings, would, of course, be useful only after Stead had made a name for himself. There is thus no verifiable information for the first twenty years of his life.

Though the diary begins in 1919, the task does not become any easier, as the information provided is so bald, factual, and often scanty, that it is unsatisfactory for a truly biographical study. The emotional detachment of the diary entries perhaps reflects Stead's unemotional nature--a characteristic mentioned by almost all the family members whom I interviewed. At times the diary simply gives a list names and, even where it gives more, its entries

make it impossible to fathom the extent of his friendship with any particular person. For example, he mentions Martha Ostenso once and says that he had gone for a drive with her, but nothing more is told, and no mention made in that entry or later, about any exchange of ideas or any conversation, etc. On another occasion he mentions the death of one Annie Davidson and adds that she was "his first girl friend," but this is the sole reference to her.<sup>10</sup>

The diaries however do reveal one thing: occasional references to weather and how it would affect the farmer indicate that though Stead had been a farmer for only one year, instinctively he remained a farmer for all time. For instance, after "the worst rain storm" ever seen<sup>11</sup> he reflects that "the farmers must be in desperation"<sup>12</sup> and adds that the continuous rain throughout the year had given them no time for seeding.

For some years the diary is especially inadequate. There are only two entries for 1927, and none at all for 1938. In later years the record is more complete but it is a very dispassionate record. The very factual manner in which the ups and downs of his wife's illness are written along with trivial things like who cooked the dinner and what was cooked,

points to the absence of any personal or emotional involvement on his part.

The fleshing out of his personality, scanty as it is, was made possible by interviews with family members, friends, and acquaintances. His son, R.A. Stead, though helpful on most points, was not able to provide much information about his father's private life. Jean, the eldest daughter-in-law, appeared somewhat reticent and seemed reluctant to disclose facts she may have known. Helen, the other daughter-in-law, and Janet, his grand-daughter, proved more open and helpful. Among friends, I interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Eggleston of Ottawa, some Stead families in Lanark and Middleville, Gordon Urquhart, friend, relative, and neighbor,<sup>13</sup> and received some information from Dr. Donald Thomson of Ottawa. My trips to Lanark were very fruitful as I met many people who talked about him; and though they were unable to give any specific information, they were able to convey to me the popularity he enjoyed, plus his extreme sense of reserve. At Lanark I also met Miss Agnes Yuill, local historian and in charge of the museum there, who pointed out the house where Stead was born, and told me that the picture being passed as such was of the wrong house.

But despite these interviews I have been able

to produce only a partial portrait. Casual information and evidence alike are unavailable for the early years. Not many of his friends, colleagues, and contemporaries survive. The only person who seems to have known him fairly well is Mr. Wilfrid Eggleston. R.A. Stead, his son, was the youngest of his sons, and being born only in 1918 could not tell me much about his father's early life in the west. Ads placed in a large cross-section of the country's newspapers and literary magazines, even in the Times Literary Supplement of England, inviting correspondence or material of any kind available, produced an almost negligible response. His publishers--McClelland & Stewart and Ryerson--informed me that they had no correspondence on record. The Ontario Archives at Toronto, and the Alberta Archives at Edmonton, confirmed that no material on Stead, or any of his papers, were available with them. The Lorne Pierce papers at Kingston, however, revealed much of the correspondence between Pierce and Stead in connection with Stead's unpublished novel. Material for a "life" is thus very limited.

The story of Stead criticism is much the same. Limited in both extent and approach, the criticism exists only in the form of short articles, introductions, and book-reviews. There is not a single book-

length study of him, and the only research study is E.C. Thompson's M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick. This combines a biographical sketch with a critical evaluation of the poems and prose, but the biography is at best a sketch, and the evaluation concentrated on Grain. In writing this biography my attempt has been to fill one of the many gaps Pacey spoke of by producing as definitive a biography of Stead as possible; to link his writing with his ~~background~~ and life in order to give a complete and comprehensive picture of Stead as a man of letters. (A critical evaluation however still remains to be done.)

The life does not make exciting reading; Stead lived a very conventional life, and there seems no possibility of disclosing the kind of spicy episodes that would make him another Boswell. There also seems to be no possibility of uncovering new and startling material on him as happened in the case of Grove and Lampman.

Some of the entries in the Bibliography still remain incomplete despite every effort to complete them. I have entered these only if positive evidence exists of publication--in the form of a cheque for payment, or of correspondence confirming the fact. In cases of doubt I have omitted the entries. Since

the work is a biography generally in chronological order I have ordered the Bibliography as well in chronological order within each genre.

Quotations in the text are from the following works and page numbers given in parentheses from the following editions.

- BJ        The Bail Jumper. T. Fisher Unwin, 1914.
- "BYTSR"    Manuscript of "But Yet The Soil Remains."
- CD        The Copper Disc. New York: Doubleday Doran, 1931.
- CP        The Cow Puncher. Toronto: Musson, 1918.
- "DW"        Manuscript of "Dry Water."
- EBOP     Empire Builders and Other Poems. Toronto: Briggs, 1909.
- GR        Grain. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969.
- HS        The Homesteaders. University of Toronto Press, 1973.
- KOP        Kitchener and Other Poems. Toronto: Musson, 1917.
- NS        Neighbours. Toronto: Musson, 1922.
- PBOP     Prairie Born and Other Poems. Toronto: Briggs, 1911.
- SF        The Smoking Flax. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1924.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Desmond Pacey, "Literary Criticism in Canada," Essays in Canadian Criticism (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. Logan and Donald G. French, Highways of Canadian Literature (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1924), p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> W. T. Allison, "Robert J. C. Stead, Poet of the Prairies." Introduction to Kitchener and Other Poems (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1917), p. vi.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Saunders, Introduction to Grain (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969), p. vi.

<sup>5</sup> Edward A. McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (Toronto: Ryerson, 1949), p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> A. T. Elder, "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J. C. Stead." Canadian Literature No. 17 (Summer 1963), pp. 44-56.

<sup>7</sup> K. P. Stich, "European Immigrants in the Fiction of Robert Stead." Studies in Canadian Literature (Winter 1976), pp. 76-84.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Davey, "Rereading Stead's Grain." Studies in Canadian Literature 4, 1 (Winter 1979), pp. 7-25.

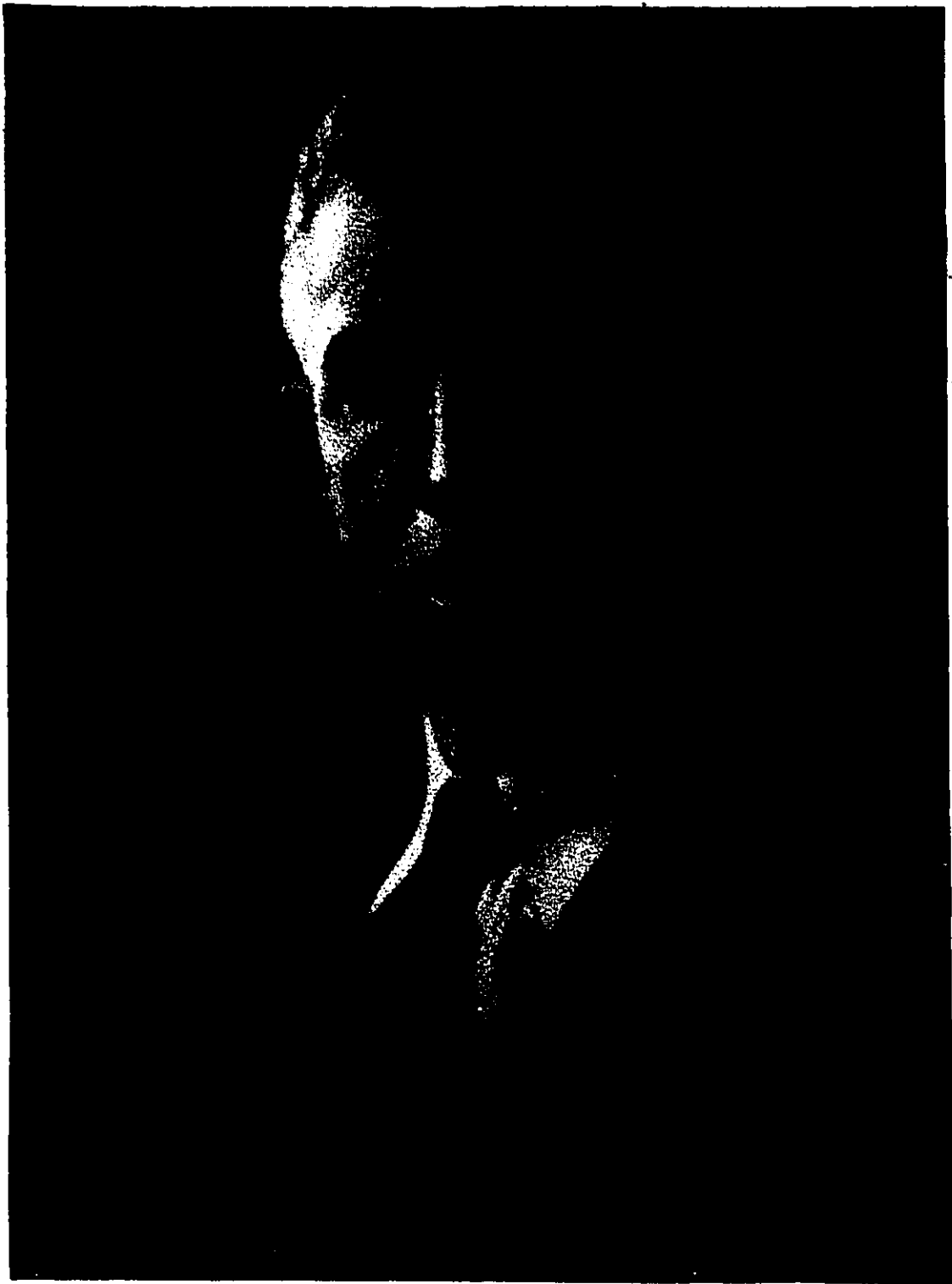
<sup>9</sup> In February 1950.

<sup>10</sup> Entry in diary, September 26, 1952, in Stead Papers, vol. II, folder 11. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

<sup>11</sup> Entry in diary, July 6, 1947, SP, vol. II, folder 11.

<sup>12</sup> Entry in diary, July 8, 1947, SP, vol. II, folder 11.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon Urquhart is Jean's brother and was their neighbor for many years in Ottawa. At present he is a resident of the Central Park Lodge for Retired People on 2374 Carling Avenue.



Robert Stead. This picture was taken in Ottawa in 1946.

Samples of Stead's handwriting

Styles for "Grain" <sup>11</sup>

Canadian spelling generally. Exceptions noted hereunder.

Abbreviations. Where the second word of the abbreviation is shown as two or more letters use a space between, as could not, but where it is only one letter use no space, as can't.

From Stead's notes for Grain

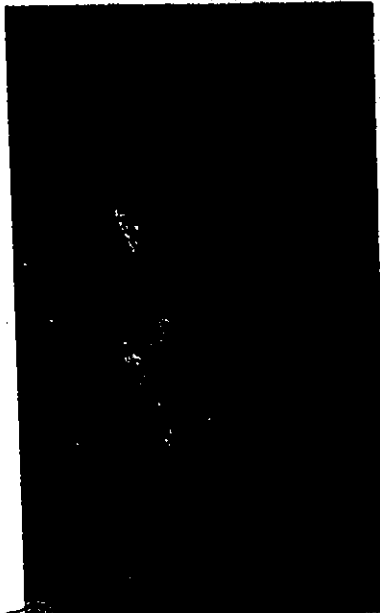
This is the original manuscript of "Grain" which I at first intended to call "Grander".

Robert F. Stead

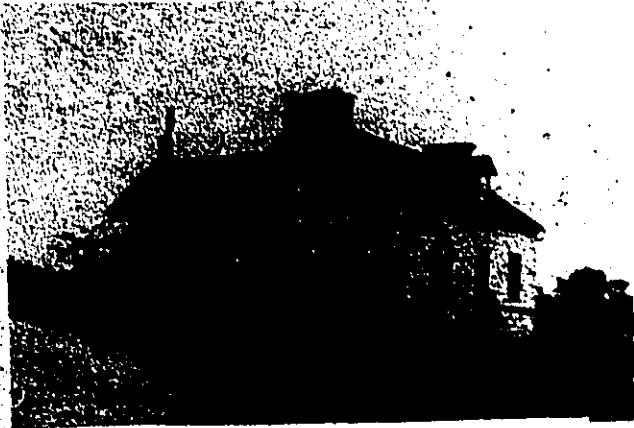
Ottawa, Jan. 28/36

From the first completed draft of Grain

# PARENTS AND BIRTHPLACE



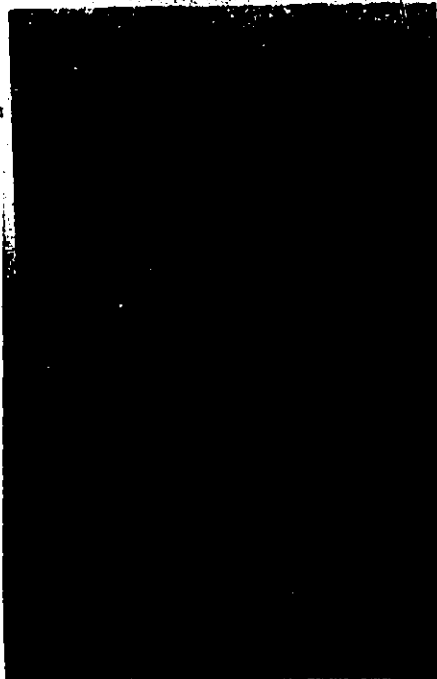
Robert J. C. Stead's father, Richard T. Stead (1840-1898), and mother, (Mary Campbell, 1842-1924) who lived at Middlevale, Lennox County, near Ottawa. Taken about 1880.



The house of Robert Stead's grandfather as it looked in 1380.



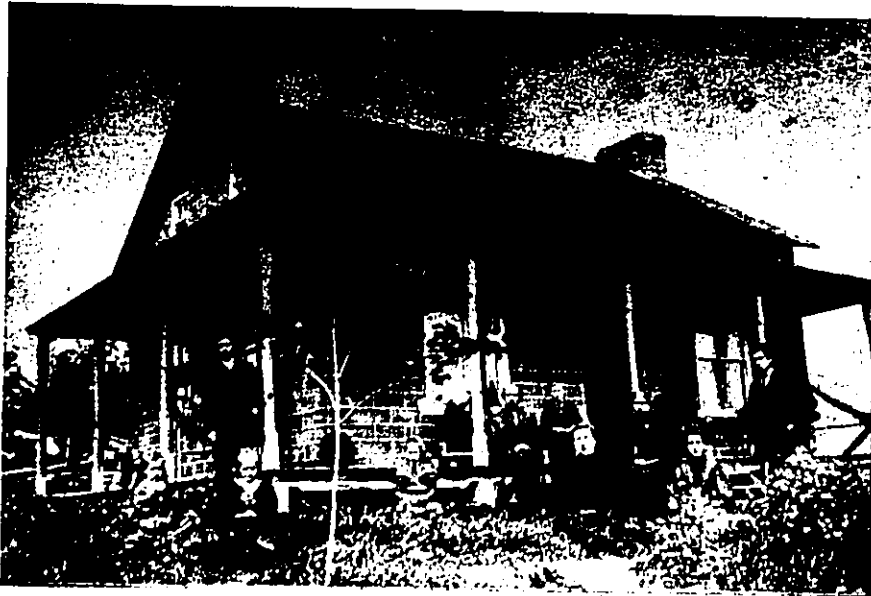
The Stead home on the homestead in the Chesterville district, south of Cartwright, to where the family moved from Middleville, Ontario, in 1882. This picture was taken just before it was taken down. There had been a Jean-to kitchen.



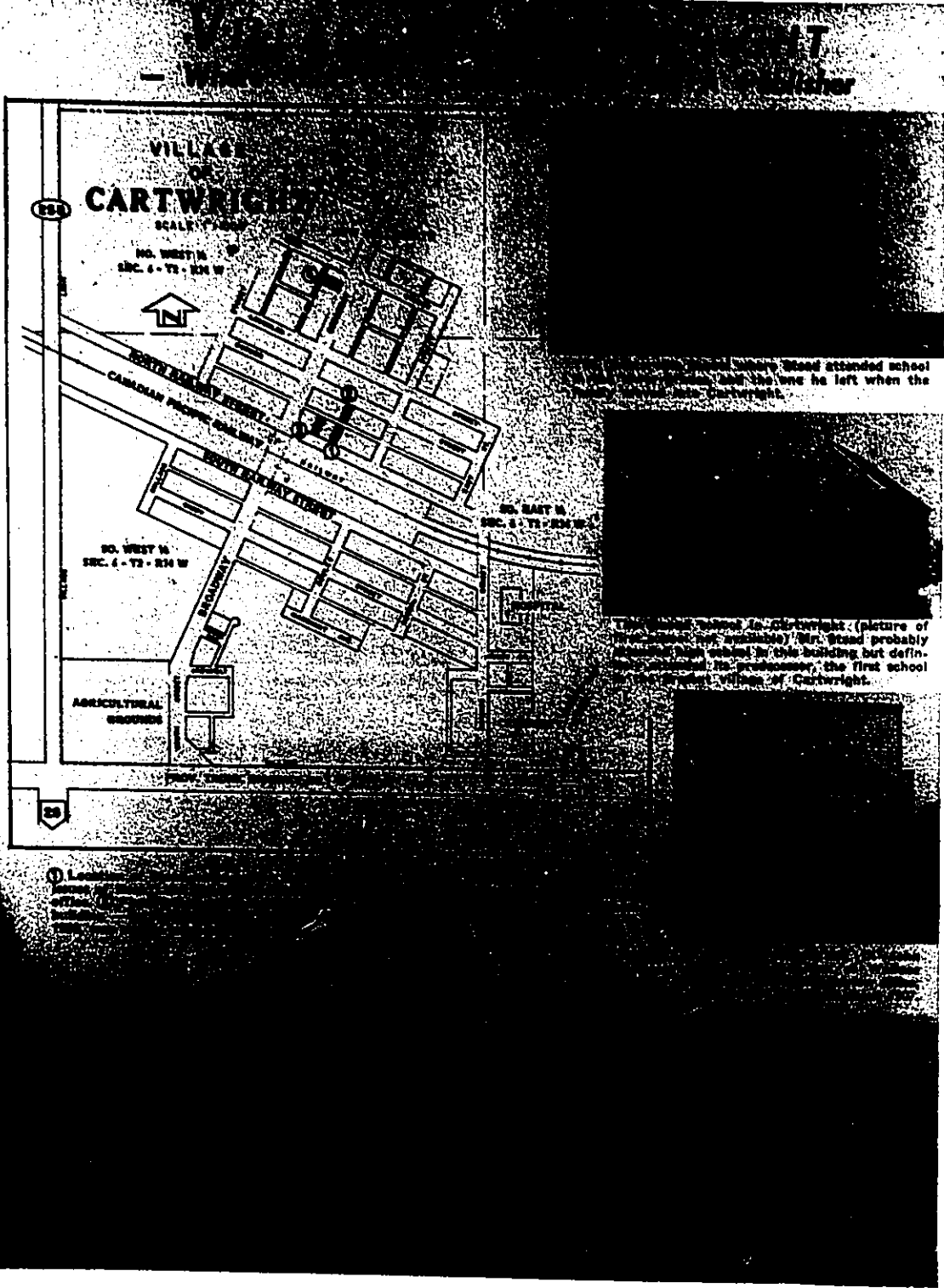
The Stead homestead in Lanark,  
Middleville.



In 1979.



In 1880.

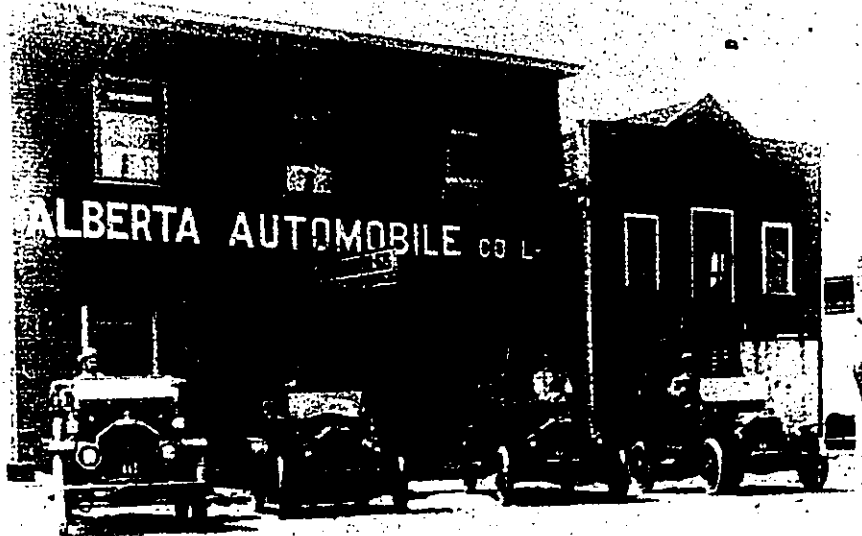


## SOD-ROOFED HOMESTEAD HOME



An interesting photo of pioneer days taken on the McKelvey's homestead (S 2-T 1-R 15) in the early 1880's. Robert J. C. Stead is the small boy on the oxcart. His sister Lillian (Mrs. Jas. McKelvey), is seated on horse, and his sister Marion (Mrs. C. W. Gimby) is holding a shotgun.

## THE ALBERTA AUTO AGENCY



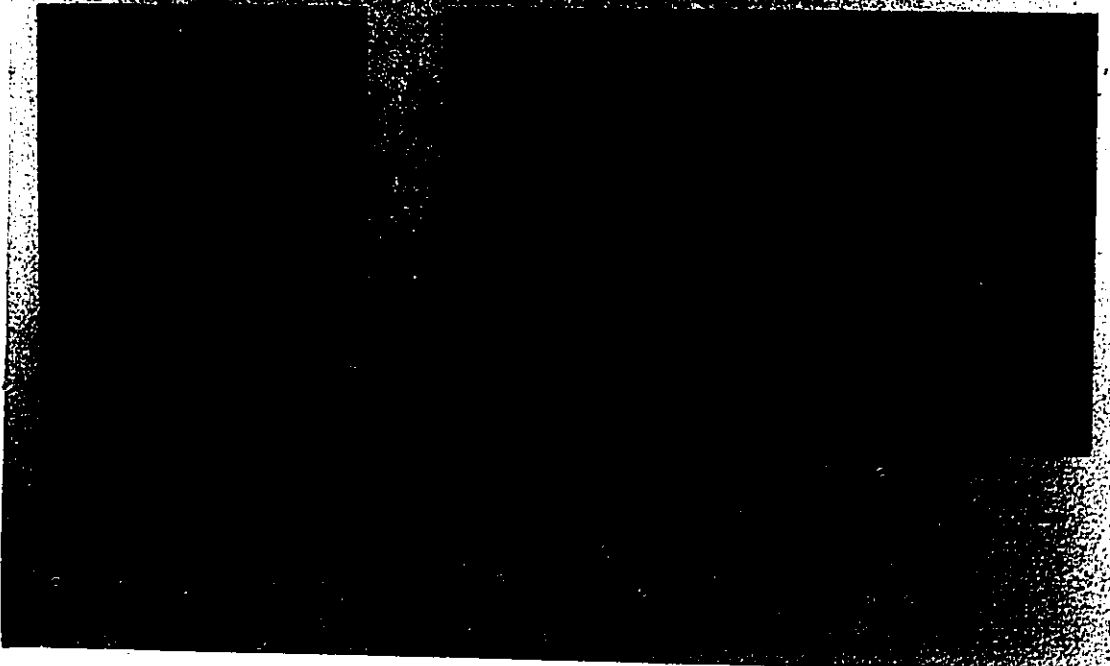
The "Alberta Automobile" agency at High River, Alberta, where, in 1909, Stead tried his hand at selling the newly developed McLaughlin-Buicks, shown in the foreground. From High River Stead moved, in 1912, to Calgary, where for a time he served on the staff of "The Calgary Albertan", further developing his capacity as a writer.

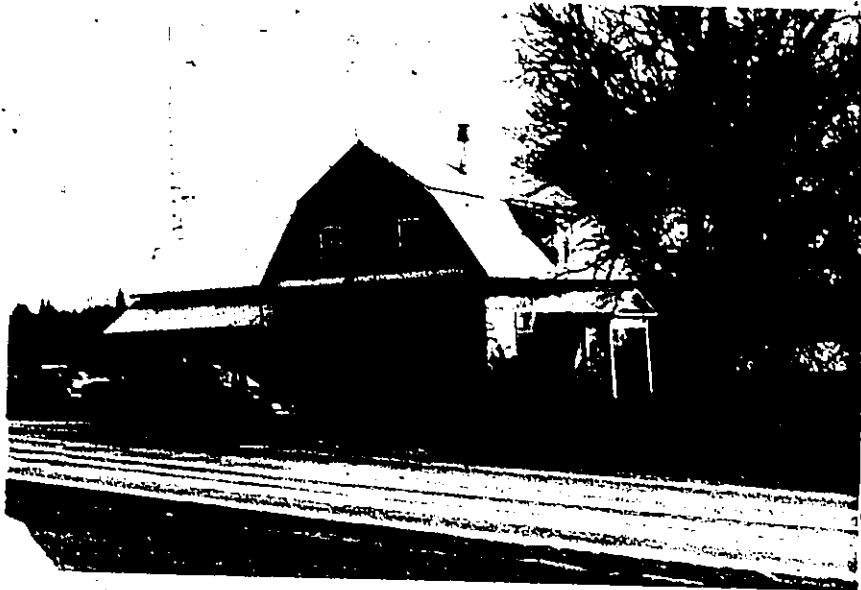
**THE [REDACTED] STEAD**



Photo

... during a visit to  
... home.

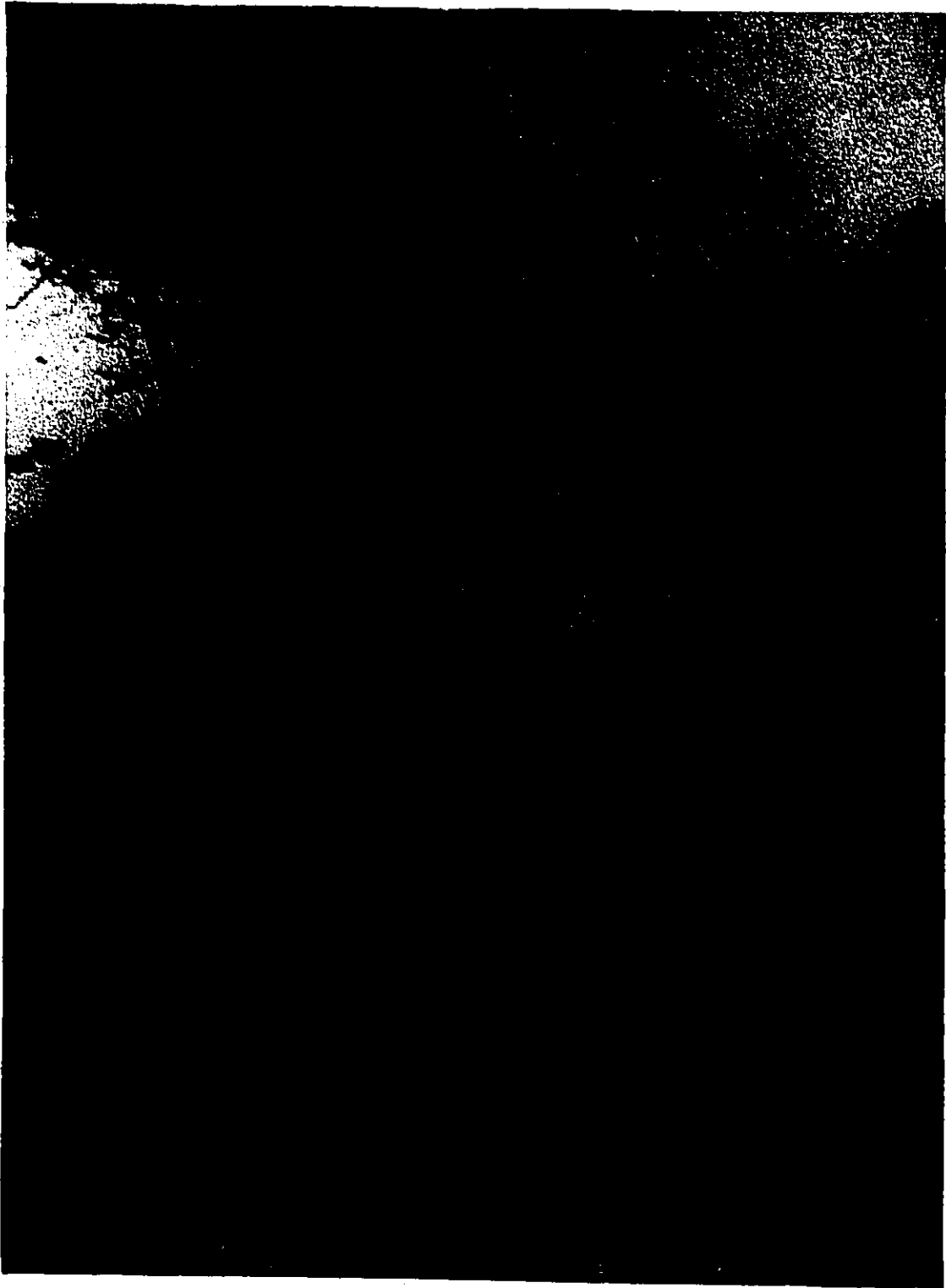




The house of  
Stead's grand-  
father as it  
looks today.



193 Second Avenue:  
Stead's home in Ottawa.  
The porch has been  
changed since. The  
window above the porch  
used to be Stead's study.



Robert Stead and wife Nettie.

Chapter I  
The Early Years

Following Napoleon's defeat and exile there was in Britain a period of unemployment, low prices on farms, and high costs in cities. Jobs were scarce and it was utterly impossible for the people "to obtain adequate subsistence from the application of their labour:"

The Solicitor General, on the 2nd of December, 1819, spoke of disaffection in Lancashire, and Cheshire . . . "and above all of the state of the Western parts of Scotland, especially in the neighbourhood of Glasgow and Paisley." Lord Archibald Hamilton, representing Lanarkshire in the House, declared that the disaffection prevailing among the people was chargeable to the distress so general and so wide-spread--"the utter inability of the people to obtain adequate subsistence from any application of their labour."<sup>1</sup>

This situation resulted in the formation of the Abercrombie Friendly Emigration Society, and in June 1820, some 1200 emigrants set sail aboard the Commerce and Prompt for Canada. They arrived in a new township in Upper Canada called Lanark which

had already been surveyed into village lots. Andrew Haydon in his Pioneer Sketches in the District of Bathurst tells us that "at the hill overlooking the site of the village then and now, a sign hung on a tree proclaiming 'This is Lanark.'"<sup>2</sup>

During the previous years many families had left Scotland for Canada. Wyman MacKechnie, writing about Upper Canada then, tells us that the reports of the early settlers back to Scotland were conflicting. Some told in glowing terms of large grants of land, of financial assistance in getting started, of 100 acres or more of rich soil, with unlimited timber for houses and barns, merely for the cutting--in short, of a life of independence and plenty that could never be achieved by remaining in Scotland. Others warned of intense privations and loneliness in the new land, of the severe cold and deep snow of winter, of the mosquitoes and black flies in summer, of the lack of roads and of the difficulty of obtaining supplies. They told of a shortage of doctors, and the lack of even the most rudimentary medical supplies,<sup>3</sup> as well as the absence of schools and churches. The first Presbyterian Church at Lanark was founded only in 1820.<sup>4</sup>

These conflicting reports, however, did not

deter emigrants. A band of 149 settlers sailed from Greenock on the ship Broke on July 13, 1820; and another group left on May 19, 1821, on board the David of London. Our interest is with the second ship, for among those on board was "a family by the name of Dick with eleven children . . ." <sup>5</sup> This was James Dick and his wife Janet. They had been married at Bathgate in Scotland on April 23, 1799. MacKechnie in his account of the early pioneers writes:

The ship docked at Quebec on the 25th of June with 364 passengers. This was the same number that left Greenock 37 days before; one baby had died en route and one baby was born on the high seas. The crossing of the 'David of London' had been less eventful and much speedier than most, as many previous voyages had taken 8 to 12 weeks. <sup>6</sup>

At Quebec there was great confusion as the families were transferred to the steam-boats that would take them to Montreal. After twenty-four hours they reached Montreal and had to unload their baggage all over again.

This time everything had to be carried to wagons which were hauled by horses over a rough land route around the Lachine Rapids, a distance of about nine miles. . . . It took a day to reach Lachine where they would meet boats to take them to Prescott, the gateway to their new home. <sup>7</sup>

The halt at Lachine proved tragic for the Dick family because Janet's husband was drowned in the St. Lawrence while swimming near the Lachine Rapids; the family continued their journey to Lanark with the rest of the party, but Janet Dick died a month later, presumably of a broken heart. Four of the boys became ministers and the fifth a successful businessman. It is surprising that in spite of their Scottish Presbyterian background they chose to become Baptist ministers; but denominational differences were not very rigid then (as we shall see later on). About the girls not much is known except that one of them, Margaret, married a Robert Stead, grand-father of R.J.C. Stead, the writer and subject of this study.<sup>8</sup>

Richard Thompson Stead, the writer's father, was born on March 3, 1840. At the age of twenty-four, on June 10, 1864, he married one May Campbell, who was three years his junior.<sup>9</sup> Not much is known about Richard Thompson's life except that from the marriage came six children, five girls and a boy, Robert Stead, who became famous as the prairie poet and novelist.<sup>10</sup>

Robert James Campbell Stead, as he was christened, was born on September 4, 1880, on a farm at Middleville in the township of Lanark in Ontario.<sup>11</sup> The house where he was born stood on Lot 16, Concession

7,<sup>12</sup> and still stands, though it looks dilapidated and unkempt. Older people of the community of Middleville (which is about six miles north of Lanark) remember Stead as a household name and are anxious to preserve the house, but feel that the authorities concerned do not take sufficient interest.<sup>13</sup> Or, it could be that no action has been taken in the matter due to lack of funds.

In the spring of 1882 the Stead family caught the infection of the "Manitoba fever" and decided to move to the west, which had opened with the apparent settlement of the Metis question and the entry of Manitoba into the Dominion in 1870.

The establishment of civil government in September 1870 . . . [saw] a renewal of claim-staking, and in 1871 an influx of settlers from Ontario began.<sup>14</sup>

Within a couple of years all Manitoba "was divided into the square survey of townships six miles square and sections, one mile square with ninety-nine foot road allowances between all sections."<sup>15</sup> The flow of settlers from Ontario mounted steadily and by the 1880s the west, for the Canadians, was a place of "enchantment and lurid reports of Riel and his Rebelions."<sup>16</sup>

For the first homesteaders the decision to migrate was never easy. Stead wrote about what may have been his family's decision in a way which was true for thousands of others:

. . . it meant plunging into an untried country of which [there were] fabulous tales of land that could be ploughed without stumping and staving, but where the hazards of nature were in proportion to her prodigality. It meant a long and expensive journey through the United States, and their capital small; it meant years of loneliness and perhaps hardship; abandonment of the old familiar scenes around which was wrapped the glamour of their childhood, separation from relatives and the associates of a lifetime. It takes courage to migrate.<sup>17</sup>

The decision taken, they travelled the American railway route through Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, thence up the Red River Valley into Manitoba, as the Canadian railway had not yet been completed around the north shore of Lake Superior. During these years the two points of dispersal over the new province of Manitoba were Winnipeg and the rapidly rising town of Emerson. Along with other immigrants the Stead family reached Emerson, after four days and nights of sitting and sleeping on the wooden slats of

a mixed immigrant train . . . that carried carloads of livestock and settlers' effects as well as passengers.<sup>18</sup>

7

As Stead points out in The Homesteaders

the purpose of immigrant trains was to move people. To supply comforts as well as locomotion was an extravagance undreamed of in transportation.  
(p. 11)

The description that follows might very well have been that of the immigrant train on which the writer's parents had journeyed:

The train was full. Every seat was taken; aisles were crowded with standing passengers who stumbled over bundles and valises with every pitch in the uncertain road-bed; women fought bravely with memories too recent to be healed, and children crowded in lusty abandon or shrieked as they fell between the slippery seats. The men were making acquaintances, the communities from which they came were sufficiently interwoven to link up relationships with little difficulty, and already they were exchanging anecdotes in high hilarity or discussing plans and prospects with that mutual sympathy which so quickly arises among those who seek their fortunes under strange conditions.

(pp. 11-12)

Situated strategically "on the Canadian side of the International Boundary" and "on the threshold of the prairie country" (HS, p. 20), Emerson, though founded only in 1874, was the "boundary town and gateway to the prairies" (HS, p. 19) and was already

enjoying to the full the prosperity which accompanied the inrush of settlers . . . Accommodation was at a premium; hotel space was out of the

question, and even the barest rooms  
commanded mining-camp prices.

(HS, p. 21)

Since not many immigrants could afford the luxury of staying overnight the arrival of a train caused considerable hustle and bustle. The scene has been captured by Stead in his autobiographical account of "The Old Prairie Homestead." At Emerson, Stead writes:

all is activity; the cars are being unloaded, the horses are limbering their stiff joints, the cattle huddling stupidly together. A sleigh train is being made up for 'points west,' and every moment counts, for should the spring freshets come before the settlers have reached there will be weeks of disastrous delay. There are no roads except a trail across the snow; no bridges whatever, and some will travel two hundred miles before reaching their location.<sup>19</sup>

By 1879 settlement "had pushed north to Cypress Creek and the Assiniboine watershed and westward to Badger Creek and Turtle Mountain."<sup>20</sup> The Steads, therefore, did not have much choice, and the homestead chosen by them was in the Turtle Mountain district, "which was a great elevation in the plain . . . and somewhat in the shape of a turtle."<sup>21</sup> In "Manitoba in the Early Eighties" Stead tells us that the land selected by Richard Thompson was "on the eastern

slope, at an elevation of about 150 feet, near the present town of Cartwright"<sup>22</sup>--about six miles to the east. Many settlers preferred the slopes of the "Mountains"<sup>23</sup> for homesteading as they were forested and provided easy access to timber. In one of his speeches, "Your Northern Neighbour," we are told that the site selected was 120 miles from Emerson and "just two miles north of the International Boundary which separated [them] from North Dakota."<sup>24</sup> The border could have been visible from the knoll where the house was situated except that it was an "invisible line" with nothing to mark it:

I could look across to the land of the free and home of the brave, but strange to say, the prairie south of the boundary looked exactly the same as that on the north. Nature, it seems, had totally disregarded the fact that on one side were to live the Phillistines [sic] and on the other the Chosen People . . . There was practically no settlement on either side, and all one saw was prairie.<sup>25</sup>

Though Nature had shown such majestic indifference to the 49th parallel, Stead recalled how man-made differences and prejudices are implanted even at that tender age. He goes on to write:

But there was a difference. I knew that south of that invisible line lived a people lawless and only

partly civilized, who would make short work of any poor little Canadian boy who might fall into their hands. I used to go as far as the boundary and look across. One day, in an excess of courage, I ventured perhaps a hundred yards into the forbidden land. Here I looked about, and, like Peter walking on the sea, my courage began to forsake me. There was absolutely no one within miles, but in a panic of fear I turned and ran for the protection of her Majesty's government.<sup>26</sup>

Stead was only two years old when the family migrated west, yet his impressions of the farm and its surroundings remained very vivid and deep as is shown by his recollections, in later years, of the creek that angled through the farm, and the prairie grass that rippled like green water when the wind passed over it. The graphic descriptions of the prairies and early homesteading embodied in his novels are largely the result of his keen perception as a child.

Stead has also left us what seems to be an accurate description of his father's farm and remembers that it was "the North-East Quarter of Section 14, Township 1, West of the First Principal Meridian . . . in open prairie country with the forest on both sides."<sup>27</sup> Stead tells us that the house itself was "of oak logs hauled from the forest which fringed the Pembina Valley"<sup>28</sup> and before that was constructed the family lived in a tent. He recalled the time when there

was neither house, nor barn, nor stack, nor fence, "nor strip of plowed land, nor any sign of human habitation to be seen in any direction."<sup>29</sup>

Stead used these memories of homesteading and the excitement of breaking the virgin sod to advantage when he turned to fiction. Though so young at the time, he was himself, in a sense, a pioneer. He had felt the thrill of pioneering in an imaginative way, and was proud of his pioneering heritage. He often recalled:

My father ploughed the virgin sod of the prairies of Manitoba. His father chopped the virgin timber of the old county of Lanark.<sup>30</sup>

Being the youngest of five children, and the only boy at that, Stead had a rather lonely childhood. He, like Gander, the hero of Grain, "had been reared on the plains with himself for a companion" (p. 127). His sisters were all much older than he was, the youngest being seven years his senior,<sup>31</sup> and a girl of seven was expected to do her share of work on the farm. Since the Steads were among the first settlers in that area, the question of friends and neighbors could not arise. Stead tells us that his father built "not only the first but the largest house in the community."<sup>32</sup> Their first and only neighbor for some time,

John Caldecotte, had his box-like shanty about one mile from their house, on the side of the creek; the only other sign of human existence visible from the house on the knoll to break the monotony of the bald-headed<sup>33</sup> prairie was a "wagon-trail which wound along the highlands, avoiding the sloughs to the north."<sup>34</sup> Neighbors, however, were not long in coming. "The Western Fever began to quicken the pulse of settlers in the rural communities of eastern Canada"<sup>35</sup> and many people came to Manitoba during its boom period of the 1880s when the CPR was being built. Before the first summer was gone, settlers' shacks were to be seen springing up on either side of the tracks, and the little community of Chesterville began to grow. Within a few years the number of families--rather the number of children--had so increased that a school became not only necessary but also practicable.<sup>36</sup>

. . . the first collective effort of the community was the building of a school-house. This little frame building, with its pine seats and its black-boarded walls became not only the educational centre of the community, but its social and religious centre as well. Here the farmers met to discuss the practices governing the use of public pasture and hay lands, precautions against prairie fire, or representation on the municipal council. Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans, held public worship Sunday about, all the

church going people attending all services without regard to denomination.<sup>37</sup>

In the community where Stead was brought up religion was important but not much importance was attached to the different sects, and the term 'Methodist' and 'Presbyterian' were used almost synonymously. S.D. Clarke's work on Church and Sect in Canada helps us understand why the differences between different denominations were so slender. He writes:

Many of the early settlers in Canada had inherited no strong attachment to a religious way of life . . . [because] the struggle to make a living was unfavourable to religious values . . . [with the result] that religion . . . was not a dominant influence in the life of a very large number of the early pioneer farmers.<sup>38</sup>

Clarke further corroborates Stead's statement of the "church going people attending all services without regard to denomination" by pointing out that

Preachers of the different sects joined together in the holding of religious meetings; the rank and file were even less inclined to distinguish between religious evangelists of one faith and another.<sup>39</sup>

This helps us accept the two terms being used interchangeably as we do find in Ralph Connor's autobiography, Postscript to Adventure.<sup>40</sup> R.A. Stead, son of the writer, also at one time spoke of a "Methodist

upbringing" for his father, though on most other occasions he preferred to describe their religion as 'Presbyterian.'<sup>41</sup> The synonymous nature of the terms can be better understood by bearing in mind that the early churches, like the early schools, were the result of the community effort and

the first churches of the new settlements were . . . usually of one of these denominations. Often they were available to more than one denomination, in practice they were open to all, and in the very early stages one building served as school and church of the whole settlement. Frontier conditions and scanty population made for union and uniformity, or denominational existence at a very simple level.<sup>42</sup>

In the ultimate analysis the lack of denominational differences is explained with reference to the land that leavened all differences and "because of its sheer perversity . . . wrought great changes in them."<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, it does not matter whether Stead's parents were Presbyterians or Methodists, but what matters is, that they were regular church goers and strict in their observance of the Sabbath, and instilled the same habit in their son. Not that his parents were alone in their devout religious outlook, for it was the same for the community as a whole. Sunday was observed by all the farmers with puritanical strictness as the day of rest. Stead brings their rigid observance

to life in his unpublished novel "Dry Water," where he tells us at great length how most of the work was done in advance. Tom tells Donald: "We don't play anything on Sunday. We ain't heathens (MS of "DW," p. 26). Not only play but even reading the newspaper is condemned by Donald's Uncle Jim. The strictness of their religion is brought out also in Neighbours where Stead tells us that religion for Frank's family was mostly "a matter of Thou Shalt Nots" with one exception. "There was one Thou Shalt. Thou shalt go to church every Sunday" (p. 5). What Frank, the narrator-hero of Neighbours, recalls may very well have been Stead's recollection:

Accordingly each Sunday morning I was crowded into a pair of boots and stockings and a suit with an uncomfortable white collar, and the four of us walked in great solemnity to the church of our faith.

(p. 5)

The regularity of church going might have had more than just religious sentiment at the bottom of it, because it was not only 'good,' but also a social outing, and opportunities for such outings being rare, they were not to be missed.

Brought up in a staunchly Protestant religious home it seems reasonable to assume that Stead was

conditioned by its attitudes, by the church going habit, at a young age. These attitudes remained with Stead throughout life, and when he began writing fiction the same discipline was reflected in the strict moral code he laid down for his characters of fiction. (We shall have occasion to discuss these again when looking at the novels.) The church going habit was also difficult to break as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

The site chosen for the school happened to be the north-east corner of the Steads' farm. It seemed the ideal place because the prairie trails from east to west and north to south converged here. Besides, it was "an acre of perfectly level land with road allowances to the north and east and Muskrat Creek forming the southern boundary,"<sup>44</sup> and thus formed an ideal playing ground. But the field was all that was supplied for sports, so that if games were to be organized the other expenses had to be met by the teacher or the students. Boys earned their pocket-money through gopher tails<sup>45</sup> usually doled that out to buy bats and balls.

It was not only sports that met the indifference of the trustees but the building too. Stead gives a fairly accurate description of the school:

It was a frame structure, of no great architectural beauty with windows on the north and south sides, a black-board of blackened plaster on the west wall, a door and outside platform on the east. It was not the little red schoolhouse or the little green or white schoolhouse; it was just the drab, weather-beaten schoolhouse, for trustees in those days did not believe in wasting money on paint. 47.

In the early years school was held only during the spring and summer months. It remained closed from the end of November till the first of April because graded roads and emergency aids, like the telephone, 48 had not yet arrived to lessen the dangers of a hazardous walk of two or three miles to and from school through winter snows. Education, or literacy, to be more accurate, was hardly worth that risk. The general complaint was that children forgot in winter what they learned in summer. Whether this applied to Robert Stead also we do not know; but he certainly had the advantage of having the teacher, one Mr. Taylor, under the same roof, and could always prod him to satisfy his academic leanings. He has, however, left us no record of having tried this. He much admired another teacher, a Mr. David Duncan, who combined the double duties of homesteading and teaching. The twofold task was very tiring no doubt, more so since Mr. Duncan, as Stead tells us, had to walk eight

miles to school and eight back as no other means of transport were available, and regulations required that he sleep on his own farm in order to 'prove up' and so be able to obtain ownership of his homestead. For all these efforts he was paid thirty-five dollars.<sup>49</sup> Although no dates are available to indicate the period of Mr. Duncan's and Mr. Taylor's stay, it seems safe to assume that, though not coinciding, both the teachers must have been boarders when Stead was a child. That explains the great impression made by Mr. Duncan on the young Stead, for though he later realized that Mr. Duncan was no great academician, he continued to believe him a great man.<sup>50</sup>

Mr. Duncan, however, saved himself an afternoon trip by having his noon meal at the fabled "elastic table" of Mrs. Stead, which was known far and wide for its hospitality. Stead recalls the welcome and warmth that was extended to expected and unexpected guests alike:

Our house was at a point where two trails intersected, where a stream came down from the higher levels to the West, where there was a ford across the stream, with water for both man and beast and an inviting place to break journey in the heat of the day or when night was settling down. Here the new-comers trekking westward, or northward from

Dakota Territory, would pause to eat and let their horses or oxen rest, and the former function invariably took place at my mother's table. It was a wonderful table, that; a sort of elastic table; of a kind which seems to have gone out of use, or at least is seldom found in city homes. Although normally set for eight, it could accommodate ten, twelve, or even more, with less domestic disorder than homes enjoying all modern conveniences experience when the butcher is late with his morning delivery. A few more eggs in the pan, a few more slices of pickled pork, and all was ready for the welcome though unexpected guest.<sup>51</sup>

The hospitality extended by Jean and Marjorie in Neighbours may have been based on the reminiscences of his mother's hospitality. Mrs. Strand in "Dry Water" also has a similar table which can be "lengthened." Further emphasizing the hospitality and popularity of his home, Stead tells us that when settlement trickled in:

Many of the settlers were bachelors; young fellows in their 'teens or twenties, and some not so young, attracted by the lure of free land and the romance of a new country. Other romance, too, was not repugnant to them, and a family of four girls, in a home with a reputation for good generous cooking, did not long escape being a centre of interest.<sup>52</sup>

The building of the school and the arrival of the first Presbyterian minister, Dr. C.W. Gordon (now better known as the novelist, Ralph Connor), took

place around the same time.<sup>53</sup> When Stead undertook to write Gordon's biography in 1924 (discussed in full in chapter IV) he sent out letters to common friends and acquaintances asking for information and reminiscences. He sent a similar letter to his sister, Lilian, who would have been about fifteen at the time of Gordon's stay with them. She wrote back an account of Gordon's arrival as follows:

He drove up from Pilot Mound from Mr. Farquharson's with old Jack in the buckboard about May 15th 1885 to Old Cartwright where Mrs. Robertsons kept a boarding house and she told him to stay there, but he had been told by W.J.<sup>54</sup> to come to our place and come he did. I had walked into C [artwright] that day with a basket of eggs so I got a ride home with him but Jack kicked so much going down way's hill that I thought my time had come.<sup>55</sup>

Gordon's preference was obviously not misplaced, for Lilian proceeds to tell how their mother "made him comfortable although he had to sleep with Mr. Taylor, the schoolteacher."<sup>56</sup> Lilian, intrigued by the eccentric nature of the missionary, could not help recounting the incident of "the first meal he had" at their house. She wrote that when Gordon wanted more tea he got up to get the teapot for himself, rather than allow Mrs. Stead to wait upon him.<sup>57</sup>

The missionary used the homestead as his

residence and headquarters while his work took him all over the countryside, from Chesterville to Cartwright and North Derby. The young Stead was a little over four at the time, and strange as it may seem, "a close acquaintanceship and understanding" developed between him and the missionary.<sup>58</sup> This was not only Stead's first friendship but also one that left a life-long influence on him. At one of the Rotary meetings, years later, Stead confessed that his interest in writing was "encouraged by intimate association with . . . Ralph Connor."<sup>59</sup> The reasons for this closeness are not difficult to discover for both the child and the missionary were lonely and naturally found company in each other despite the age difference. Robert Stead, being only four, was still too young to be of any positive help on the farm, and spent much of his spare time in the company of Dr. Gordon. This assumption was confirmed by Stead who, at the same meeting, disclosed: "While boarding with us we roomed together, and were the family white-collar workers. We never got up before 7 o'clock."<sup>60</sup>

In response to a letter sent by Stead, Gordon mentioned that he recalled carrying the "chubby four-year old boy with flaxen hair" on his shoulders.<sup>61</sup>

Stead's memories, however, were different. He remembered the flute playing of the missionary more than the rides on his shoulders. Dr. Gordon was, by all accounts, a fairly skilled musician. He not only delighted the future poet and novelist with his flute playing, but on another occasion enlivened the annual picnic by teaching the children a number of songs which endeared him to both old and young.<sup>62</sup> Stead also gives us an account of Gordon's musical flair by recounting the incident of a morning when he heard strains of music that seemed diviner and more wonderful than anything that he had heard before. He slipped out of bed and went to the door of Mr. Gordon's room and found him blowing upon his clasped hands. (It is likely that Stead shared a room with Gordon only in later years and not throughout his entire stay.) Stead watched until he felt he had acquired the technique and then went back to his own room to try. He tried desperately blowing on his hands in all kinds of ways, but without success. Only later did he learn that the 'magic' was a mouth-organ.<sup>63</sup>

As Stead grew older his responsibilities increased. At the age of ten he became a 'correspondent' for the Pilot Mound Sentinel.<sup>64</sup> Of course the news

consisted mostly of small local items such as somebody painting their barn-door, or someone building a lean-to for their kitchen. But despite the trivial nature of the news this job done at the age of ten, was surely the kind of experience that Stead needed to run his own paper, which he was to do only eight years later. So, while the young 'correspondent' followed the plow or drove the binder on the farm his mind was actively engaged in picking and editing the news of his small community at Chesterville. His eyes and ears were alert to see and hear the latest events and happenings, which, most probably, kept him from succumbing to the dullness of routine work.

Early indications of his talent were, however, not confined to writing and journalistic work but were also shown by the sense of humor he exhibited. In later years when Stead became a member of the Rotary Club he was once asked at one of their meetings:

". . . was it true that you once tricked your good Mother into eating prairie rabbit? Which to her was the same as eating the household cat?" Stead was tempted to tell the members the whole story.

Answering with the brevity of long-practiced journalism, Bob Stead Sr. explained: "Don't quote me, but these are the facts: We were living

on a farm in Manitoba, and Dad and Mother were shopping in town. Before leaving Mother had reminded that a rooster who had passed his prime was upside down in the wooded shed waiting for dinner. He being it.

"I may admit that, for a kid of nine, I was a fair forerunner of Roy Rogers with Dad's ramrod shotgun. Well, Sis sent me out for the rooster, and he and I had grown up together, and I didn't much like pulling the feathers off him. And I wished Mother wouldn't always say that she couldn't eat rabbit, it was like eating a cat. And some evil spirit gave me an idea . . . Anyway, I asked Sis why not, just for fun, and . . . Well, Mother never thought the old rooster would taste so good, and she'd have a second helping.<sup>65</sup>

Stead's practical joke did not go unpunished, and though he refused to admit it openly to his Rotary audience, he confessed he "couldn't sit down for several days."<sup>66</sup> His mother who was known for her strict ways could not tolerate this joke, which in her opinion amounted to 'deceit.'

In 1892 the Stead family moved to Cartwright, six miles eastward from their homestead, where the boy, Robert, was able to attend school more regularly, which he did for two years. It was here that Stead wrote his first poem, "The Price of Wheat," and also experienced the satisfaction of seeing it in print in the Winnipeg Tribune.<sup>67</sup> At fourteen he left school, never to go back except for a short business course

at Winnipeg in 1897. In short, all the formal education he ever received was from the drab little schoolhouse at Chesterville, and the two years of more steady schooling at Cartwright. It would, however, be truer to say that Stead's schooling with instructors finished at the age of fourteen, for he continued studying by himself in subsequent years, even to the extent of mastering the Latin grammar. Years later interviewers found it difficult to believe that Stead had never received a University education.<sup>68</sup> Their disbelief and surprise is explained by the fact that Stead, with his versatility and capability impressed most people as being a literary man, or having a literary background at least. He seemed to exude a literary presence. But Stead was a self-made man who had learnt to profit from his disparate experience. This led one interviewer to comment:

His university was the out-of-doors,  
his schoolmaster was the elements,  
his playmates were the plains.<sup>69</sup>

His schooldays over, Stead began working on a farm for \$15.00 a month. Although he stayed for only one year he was convinced that he should never go back to farming again.

The alacrity with which Stead changed jobs is remarkable. At fifteen a farmer, at sixteen he

was clerk in a general store-cum-post office in Cartwright at \$16.00 a month. The store was owned by one of their neighbors, a T.S. Menarey, whose house was "situated at the end of a long crescent-shaped pond [where] the banks tapered off and the river rippled over a stout bed of boulders."<sup>70</sup> This being the ideal place for a trail and a ford, the village of Cartwright sprung up here. According to Stead, Mr. T.S. Menarey "started a general store and a town was born."<sup>71</sup> But whether the town came first and the store later or the store first and the town later he does not tell us. It is however true that T.S. Menarey had a log store just west of Old Cartwright, and that it became a rather important centre and stopping place because he kept the post office as well as selling groceries and general provisions.

Working in the store further trained Stead for the literary career that lay ahead. Open till ten at night on weekdays and till twelve or later on Saturdays, the store served the function of the beer parlor or tavern of later times. The old cronies would come and sit around the fire on nail kegs and warm themselves while recounting tales of adventure and romance or hair-raising and indelicate yarns that were certainly not meant for his ears. This was indeed ideal

training for Stead the poet and novelist who was later able to fall back on his experience in order to portray the prairie characters in all their intensity and with the kind of characteristics that set one man apart from others. He learnt to recognize such characters, and also picked up the dialect they spoke. He used both to advantage in later years.

But Stead did not stay long at the store. He lost his job over "six ancient cows" that had been bought on account by the store. Stead told the story to Anne Maclean in an interview as follows:

Among our acquisitions that winter were six ancient cows. We took them in on account, badly shop worn. I groomed those six cows all winter . . . In the spring they were all alive, much to their surprise and I was ruined, both as stockman and storekeeper.<sup>72</sup>

The account is somewhat baffling as it is not clear as to why he lost his job. It might, however, be safe to assume that he had perhaps expended too much feed to keep them alive, and thereby earned the displeasure of his employer.

Stead's next job was in a lumber yard. This was a comparatively easier job and provided more leisure, as not many people were building in those days, and if there were even two customers in one day

it was considered quite an event. But it failed to satisfy Stead's penchant for hard work and he got another job as well in a grain elevator. Those were the days of the steam engine and Stead now became a sort of handy man for, somehow he learned how to run a steam engine; in his own words: ". . . [he] learned in some providential way, to put water in the glass and grease in the cup . . ." <sup>73</sup> This earned him a reputation as an 'engineer,' pretentious though it was; but those were the days when the ability to understand machinery was not widespread. This experience obviously helped him portray Cal Beach in The Smoking Flax who also earned a reputation as an engineer without being one. Stead himself realized in later years that the grain elevator experience was more valuable than that acquired at the store:

In those days we used to dock the farmer for dirt, in his wheat, according to what the traffic would stand. This called for discretion, a close study of human nature and a proper appreciation of the emotional and the dramatic--all qualities, as you will see, of great value in developing and directing the tender bud of literary genius. <sup>74</sup>

Enterprising as ever, Stead decided, in partnership with his father, to buy the lumber business. Trade was poor and the proprietor was only too happy to sell.

Stead's first experience with death and tragedy came at this time when on May 16, 1898, his father died. Stead seems to have felt more frustration than grief over the loss of his father. Although no expression of grief or sorrow has come to light, it is almost certain that a deep-rooted sense of dissatisfaction lingered with Stead for many years to come.<sup>75</sup> This might have resulted from the responsibility which devolved upon him of looking after his mother (he being the only son), or it might have been the result of knowing for certain that the doors of formal education were definitely closed forever; for though reasonably well off, he could not afford to stop working and go back to school. From now on, earning a living and caring for his mother would have to take priority over his own wishes. However, though Stead's own education had been erratic and slipshod, he was by nature a studious person who, even in later life observed strict hours of study and work. Helen, his daughter-in-law, told me in an interview how he had fixed hours for reading and writing; and even if "someone came he wouldn't come down until the time was up."<sup>76</sup> This is a definite pointer to the importance attached by Stead to study as well as his methodical nature. The same attitude is mirrored in

his creative writing, in which Stead shows a definite preference for heroes who spend their leisure hours trying to learn and improve their minds. No wonder Stead felt the loss of his father so acutely. There seems to have been a deeper bond between him and his father than is apparent on the surface. Never given to the expression of personal emotion Stead, even as late as 1948, writes in his diary:

Giving much reflection to the fact that it is exactly fifty years ago today that my father died. It is a long time to be without a father.<sup>77</sup>

With this kind of serious and studious bent Stead was naturally not one to waste the leisure hours provided by the lumber business. The time was profitably spent and during these years he produced his first 'book.' He has left us no record as to which book this was though he sent it to two publishers (always unnamed), who turned it down courteously saying "it was a good book [but] . . . suggested that [he] offer it to someone else."<sup>78</sup>

Frustrated in his literary effort, Stead conceived the idea of providing Cartwright with a local paper. The prospects seemed good and he was encouraged by local merchants and by Mr. Harry Spedding, owner of the Crystal City Courier, who even

solved the financial problem for Stead by offering to

make up for his lack of experience by printing the paper on the Courier press at Crystal City. For this he would charge [him] ten dollars a week--an absurdly low price compared to present costs--and [Stead] was to have complete control of the paper. [He] would gather the news, write the editorials, solicit advertisements, wrap and address the papers, and take in the money.<sup>79</sup>

Stead accepted the offer for the initial period, but within a couple of months decided to buy his own printing press. Afraid that friends would talk him out of it he nursed the idea in secrecy until he was ready to buy one. Though small, it cost him his whole capital of \$200.00, so that he was left without any money even for engaging a printer.

Having burnt his bridges, as the saying goes, Stead decided to be proprietor, printer, editor, all in one, of his paper, which was launched on January 4, 1899, as The Rock Lake Review. It was published weekly, appearing every Wednesday evening, and described itself as "the only paper published in the prosperous and thickly settled community of which Cartwright is the commercial centre."<sup>80</sup> Stead seems a remarkable example of a man who used adversity to advantage and saw its 'uses' rather than its limitations. Not being able to

hire a printer also proved "good training--the very best of training." Stead writes:

I learned to use words. I learned to spell. I learned to use capitals, and quotations and punctuation marks where they belonged. Any tendency to verbosity was discouraged by the fact that I had to set up the type myself, each letter by itself, one at a time, word after word and line upon line. Instead of writing to fill space, I wrote to get it said in the fewest possible words.<sup>81</sup>

It was no doubt a tedious job, the first issues of The Rock Lake Review being turned out on a hand press, one page at a time.

At this time the lumber business also began to pick up and it was really the money from the lumber that kept the paper going. But Stead gradually found it difficult to manage both the newspaper and the business. Surprisingly, though the latter was beginning to pay while the paper was still losing money, Stead sold the lumber business and kept the paper, which led one reporter to believe that "he was a literary man at heart."<sup>82</sup> But his business instinct was equally strong, and though the lumber business was sold, he now started a "Flour and Feed" store which did not require too much attention and left him comparatively freer to attend to the affairs of his press.

With the newspaper Stead was really in his

element, and under his deft care The Review survived and prospered despite financial and other hardships. Gradually things improved. As early as March 15, 1899, The Review began to appear in an enlarged and improved form. By the third year Stead had acquired a cylinder press "capable of printing 1000 pages per hour."<sup>83</sup>

When the third 'volume' of the paper was launched Stead assessed his situation:

the first two years in the life of any newspaper are the most arduous and most critical, and if this rule holds good in the present instance, the Review may congratulate itself in having passed the dangerous period in safety.<sup>84</sup>

In May 1903 Stead changed the name of his paper to the more impressive Southern Manitoba Review (under which name it still survives). This was however not the first time that its name had been changed. For a brief period it had been known as The Rock Lake Review and Cartwright Enterprise. But by 1903 the paper was beginning to be recognized as a newspaper of considerable merit. It published more copyrighted fiction than any other Manitoba paper,<sup>85</sup> and was praised by the Printer and Publisher in Canada, as showing "evidence of careful makeup and presswork . . . and [capable of making] itself felt as a factor in Southern Manitoba journalism."<sup>86</sup>

Encouraged by the success of the Southern Manitoba Review Stead grew more ambitious and began publication of a monthly magazine called Noble Deeds, devoted exclusively "to placing on record in a convenient and interesting form accounts of heroism which the average reader might overlook in the daily paper."<sup>87</sup>

Stead's rapid success as a businessman becomes apparent when we take a close look at the advertising in the issues of the Southern Manitoba Review. While the early issues simply advertise Noble Deeds, the August issues begin to advertise for agents to secure subscriptions. A born publicity man, Stead was a firm believer in the value of advertising long before its value was generally recognized. Publicity work fascinated him. Influenced by her son, Stead's mother was among the first to use the paper "as a superior advertising medium"<sup>88</sup> --the earliest issues of The Rock Lake Review advertising his mother's boarding house, while later ones publicised the lumber business of "R.T. Stead and Son." After the lumber business was sold his paper advertised the "Flour and Feed of R.J.C. Stead," and in 1909 he used it to advantage to advertise his first book of poems, The Empire Builders.

By November 1907, successful in his ventures, Stead moved to a newer and bigger office;<sup>89</sup> and in May 1908, purchased The Crystal City Courier.<sup>90</sup> By August 1908, he was Secretary-Treasurer of the Cartwright Farmers' Elevator Company<sup>91</sup> and a figure of importance in the rapidly expanding community. Around this time we find a few unsigned, unacknowledged poems appearing in both the Southern Manitoba Review and The Crystal City Courier. It would be a safe assumption that Stead allowed his first verses to appear in print anonymously. The mediocrity of their form and matter are not unlike the poems that were included in The Empire Builders and Other Poems. Besides, before the year was out Stead had made his debut and reputation as a poet with the publication of The Empire Builders. The book proved quite sensational and within a few months 4,000 copies had been sold. Stead was now at the climax of his success as a newspaperman; but ambition was overreaching output and he soon began to find it difficult to manage all his affairs. The Crystal City Courier was the first to go. Stead sold the newspaper in March 1909 to one T.E. Davis.<sup>92</sup> In August 1909 he relinquished his position as Secretary-Treasurer of the Cartwright Farmers' Elevator Company, and on January 4,

1910, the Southern Manitoba Review also passed out of his hands.<sup>93</sup> It was sold to the Wallaces who were related to him by his marriage to Nettie.<sup>94</sup>

In his eleven years as editor Stead did, however, achieve his goal. In an editorial he had confessed that his reasons for starting the paper were "that the town and country seemed asleep, public spirit was dead, and individual energy and enterprise were on the wane."<sup>95</sup> He could now justifiably feel proud of having shaken the people out of their lethargy and indifference. Through his editorials he tackled and brought home to his people the problems and controversial issues that beset them, their province, and their country. Coming from a family that was Loyalist in its attitudes, Stead identified "Canadian interests with British interests and was suspicious of American economic and political designs."<sup>96</sup> The earliest issues of The Rock Lake Review foreshadow his later imperialism in his wholehearted support of the British cause in the Boer War. As Mundwiler suggests:

It was perhaps by way of newspaper accounts of Kitchener's generalship in this war that Stead came to the emotional identification from which the elegy for Kitchener was produced in 1916.<sup>97</sup>

Stead's editorials frequently take up economic questions of local or regional importance such as the supply and cost of farm labor during harvest, the shipping and marketing of grain, and the problems of local merchants.<sup>98</sup> In later editorials he advocated the "back to the farm" slogan, pointed out the problems of western Canada in particular, and suggested advertising as a remedial step. Immigration and immigration policies were special concerns of Stead long before he joined the Department of Immigration and Colonization in 1919. He used his papers to point out the disadvantages under which the Canadian publisher labors as a result of "paper duty," and discussed his problems even before he became president of the Canadian Authors' Association. Though tourism was not an established industry, Stead realized the value of good roads for attracting visitors and devoted many of his editorials to the subject. When he tackled the "race problem" (as he called it) his racial feelings were expressed more vehemently than they are in any of his fictional work. Stead shared with his contemporaries the idea of white supremacy and believed in the inherent superiority of the white race. When discussing the problem of negroes in the U.S.A. his prejudice led him to remark that Canada's

"vigorous immigration policy" was resulting in the importation of many thousands of Galicians, Doukhobors, and others "of a questionable type."<sup>99</sup> The "questionable type" in Stead's opinion were "the yellow and brown" races<sup>100</sup> as he tells us very explicitly in his poem "The Mixer." A remarkable poem in the records of racism in Canada it denies the colored people a place in the Canadian mosaic. In his editorial he went on to say that the aim and object of every true Canadian must be "to hold up within our borders a united nation, and if these new settlers will make the task more difficult we would be much better without them."<sup>101</sup> His tone indicates that he was anti-Doukhobor; in writing he objected specifically to the fact that the Doukhobors were exempted from military service. Stead argued: "If the country is worth living in it is worth fighting for."<sup>102</sup> But his ethnic attitude is occasionally ambivalent, for on August 24, 1900, he had used the same columns to condemn those Canadians who were attacking the "Chinamen" in Canada. This is very surprising indeed in view of his vehement condemnation of the yellow and brown races in "The Mixer."

The subjects that repeatedly caught Stead's attention never really left him; they turn up again

and again, in his poems, in his novels, and in his non-fictional writing. The newspaper experience provided him the experience that helped him become a responsible writer of versatile interests as it helped him in later years as a publicity man.

He served his apprenticeship as a writer in a position which compelled responsibility to the community for which he was writing. . . . behind the mask of popular fiction he insisted on saying something important.<sup>103</sup>

Although Stead covered such a wide range of subjects there are notable absences. On a few subjects, which one would normally expect to find recurring time and again in the western prairie provinces in the 1900s, Stead is remarkably quiet. On the far-reaching effects of the Riel Rebellion, for instance, and the problems of the native Indians and the Metis, he is silent. He scrupulously avoided these topics in his editorials also, as he did in his work in later years--never in poetry, or novels, or other writing, does he touch upon these problems of western Canada, nor is there a single native Indian or half-breed portrayed in all his creative work. This may very well be construed to reflect his innate Anglo-Saxon bias which resulted in a total indifference to the very existence of the

native Indians and the Metis. References to the opposite sex, something one would normally expect in a writer and editor in his twenties, are also avoided. His silence in this case is partly explained by the over all sense of discomfort which both he and Nettie suffered in the presence of members of the opposite sex.<sup>104</sup>

Another thing that strikes the researcher of Stead's papers is that no documentary evidence in the form of diaries or letters is available for this period of his life. Perhaps that also accounts for these lacunae. He started maintaining a diary only after 1919, and even the few letters that survive from this period are very impersonal and in the nature of official papers. For that matter, no very personal correspondence for any period is available to the researcher.

A newspaperman himself, Stead had many friends in the same line. These contacts he did not lose even after he left Manitoba. One of them, however, deserves more than a passing reference: Norman Rankin, in the newspaper business, was both colleague and friend of Stead. His wife, Nancy, a schoolteacher of those days, was also known to the

Steads. The writer's daughter-in-law, Jean, now a resident of Ottawa, has told me that her father-in-law had known Nancy when they lived in Manitoba, but added that they were no more than family friends. Forty years later, however, the same Nancy and Stead were to have a 'romantic affair' (as romantic as a man of Stead's conservative nature could be expected to have), to be discussed in a later chapter, and, in 1953, she was to become his second wife.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Haydon, Pioneer Sketches in the District of Bathurst (Toronto: Ryerson, 1925), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> S. Wyman MacKechnie, What Men They Were (Quebec: Shawville, 1975), p. 17. Medical facilities in Lanark and Middleville are still practically non-existent; with no resident doctor there and the closest hospital at Almonte or Perth or Carleton Place.

<sup>4</sup> Information furnished by Miss Agnes Yuill of Lanark.

<sup>5</sup> MacKechnie, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Information from a diary of Robert Stead in the possession of his son, R.A. Stead, living in Ottawa, Ontario.

<sup>10</sup> Of the five girls one died in her infancy. Usually only four are mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> Birth Certificate of Robert Stead dated July 5, 1918, Toronto, in Stead Papers, vol. XIII, folder 52. The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, and are unnumbered. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

12 Each township was divided into 12 Concessions, and each Concession had 27 Lots. A Lot measured 200 acres.

13 I interviewed quite a number of people at Lanark and Middleville and gained this impression.

14 W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 148.

15 Ibid., p. 155.

16 E.C. Thompson, The Prairie Novel in Canada: A Study in Changing Form (Ph.D. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1974), p. 170.

17 Robert J.C. Stead, "The Old Prairie Homestead," Canadian Geographical Journal 7 (July 1939), p. 14. (Subsequent references to the Canadian Geographical Journal will be as CGJ.)

18 Ibid., p. 14.

19 Ibid., p. 14.

20 Morton, p. 179.

21 Robert J.C. Stead, "Autobiography," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 2.

22 Robert J.C. Stead, "Manitoba in the Early Eighties," The School (May 1936), p. 755. Though not explicitly autobiographical Stead draws largely on his own experience when writing about Manitoba in the eighties.

23 Two forested moraine-covered uplands, Moose Mountain (2370 ft.) and Turtle Mountain (2525 ft.), are really oases in the plains and only by courtesy described as "Mountains."

24 Robert J.C. Stead, "Your Northern Neighbour," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 1.

25 Ibid., p. 1.

26 Ibid., p. 1.

27 "Manitoba in the Early Eighties," p. 756.  
The entire prairie was being surveyed into a grid system of sections one mile square, 36 sections to each township numbered from 1 to 36.

28 "Autobiography," p. 3.

29 "Manitoba in the Early Eighties," p. 756.

30 Robert J.C. Stead, "Past, Present and Future," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 3.

31 Stead's sisters were: Marion, born April 11, 1865; Margaret, born January 17, 1867; Lillian, born October 23, 1870; and Jeanetta, born May 21, 1873. The sixth child was born on December 21, 1878, and might have been a companion for Stead, but she died on March 14, 1879.

32 "Autobiography," p. 4.

33 Though described as 'bald-headed' the prairie has valleys of willows and poplars which supply the timber. These trees are not "tall enough to reach out of the little valley and show a green tip to the bald surface of the prairies" (NS, p. 54).

34 "Autobiography," p. 4.

35 Robert J.C. Stead, "Early Homesteading in Manitoba," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 2.

36 The school was presumably started in 1884, because it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1934.

37 Robert J.C. Stead, "Early Days Out West," The London Times (England), July 12, 1925.

38 S.D. Clarke, Church and Sect in Canada (University of Toronto Press, 1948), pp. 167-168.

39 Ibid., p. 173.

40 C.W. Gordon, Postscript to Adventure (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938). On page 201 Gordon uses the word 'Methodist' while elsewhere throughout the book he uses 'Presbyterian.'

41 Unrecorded interview with R.A. Stead, son of the writer, on March 14, 1979.

42 James G. MacGregor, A History of Alberta (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), pp. 190-191.

43 Ibid., p. 208.

44 Robert J.C. Stead, "Early Days at Chesterville," Southern Manitoba Review, September 13, 1956.

45 To rid the prairie of gophers the government, through the teachers, paid a bounty of one cent per tail.

46 This seems to be an accurate description as it is similar to schools described in other pioneer settings; as for example, the one in Nell Hanna's Thistle Creek (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1979).

47 "Early Days at Chesterville." p.

48 Although the telephone had been introduced in Manitoba in 1878, only two years after Alexander Graham Bell had successfully demonstrated his invention, it was still not available as a facility.

49 Stead does not clarify, but I presume it would be \$35.00 a month, for in "DW" too the teacher, a Mr. Mackenzie is paid \$35.00 a month.

50 "Early Days at Chesterville."

51 "Manitoba in the Early Eighties--II," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 2. (This is a different article from the one that appeared in The School. This one was never published.)

52 Ibid., p. 3.

53 Sometime around 1884-85. The arrival of Dr. Gordon has documentary evidence, but the date for the school is assumed. The assumption is however supported by a letter from a Miss Robertson to Stead dated ? 1934, inviting him to participate in the school's 50th anniversary celebrations. The letter is in SP, vol. I, folder 7.

54 Identity of W.J. is not known.

55 Letter from Lilian to Stead dated April 18, 1924, in SP, vol. II, folder 8.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 "Your Northern Neighbour," p. 2.

59 The Bulletin, Rotary Club of Ottawa, February 11, 1957.

60 Ibid. This is however different from Lilian's version. It is possible that in later years Stead and he may have shared a room.

61 Description given by C.W. Gordon. Quoted by Stead in "Biography," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 38, p. 6. Gordon, however, makes no mention of Stead in his autobiography, Postscript to Adventure.

62 Account given by Lilian in her letter dated April 18, [1924].

63 Account given in "Biography," p. 7.

64 Anne Maclean, "Robert Stead--Homer of the Prairies," London Free Press (London, Ontario), December 16, 1922.

65 The Bulletin, Rotary Club of Ottawa, February 11, 1957.

66 Ibid.

67 Published some time in 1893 or 1894. It has not been possible to ascertain the exact date of publication as the files of the Tribune for that period are incomplete, and I have failed to locate it in the papers available. But it seems to have been definitely published for W.T. Allison, who reprinted it twenty years later, claimed that he had found it lying in the files of the Tribune.

68 "Robert J.C. Stead: Canadian Poet," The Belleville Intelligencer, February 5, 1912.

69 "Notes," The Globe (St. John, New Brunswick), November 2, 1918.

70 "Autobiography," p. 4.

71 Ibid., p. 5.

72 Maclean, "Robert Stead--Homer of the Prairies."

73 Ibid. Possibly by 'glass' Stead meant the indicator that told how much water was in the boiler which, if allowed to burn dry, could ruin the engine.

74 Ibid.

75 "Of R.J.C. Stead, The Prairie Poet" by One Who Knows Him, The Edmonton Journal, January 27, 1915.

76 Unrecorded interview with Helen Stead, wife of Stanley Stead, on May 11, 1979.

- 77 Entry in diary, May 16, 1948, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.
- 78 Maclean, "Robert Stead--Homer of the Prairies."
- 79 Robert J.C. Stead, "Founding of the Cartwright Review," Southern Manitoba Review, January 6, 1949.
- 80 The Rock Lake Review, all early issues.
- 81 Maclean, "Robert Stead--Homer of the Prairies."
- 82 Anne Maclean, "Early Start Made by Bob Stead was of Very Humble Character," The Ottawa Journal, December 16, 1922.
- 83 "Volume 3," Editorial, The Rock Lake Review, January 4, 1901.
- 84 Editorial, Southern Manitoba Review, May 7, 1903.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Quoted in editorial, Southern Manitoba Review, May 7, 1903.
- 87 Announcement, Southern Manitoba Review, May 9, 1907.
- 88 T[homas] S[aunder], "The Causerie," The Winnipeg Free Press, July 8, 1961.
- 89 Announcement, Southern Manitoba Review, November 21, 1907.
- 90 Announcement, The Crystal City Courier, May 7, 1908.
- 91 Notice, Southern Manitoba Review, August 22, 1908.

92 "Change of Business," The Crystal City Courier,  
March 18, 1909.

93 Announcement, Southern Manitoba Review,  
January 1, 1910.

94 Stead married Nettie May Wallace on December  
31, 1901. The marriage was performed within the Knox  
Church, according to the rites of the Presbyterian  
Church. Marriage certificate is in SP, vol. XIII,  
folder 52.

95 Editorial, The Rock Lake Review, January 4,  
1901.

96 Leslie Mundwiler, "Robert Stead--Home in the  
First Place," Essays on Canadian Writing No. 11  
(Summer 1978), p. 189.

97 Ibid., p. 189.

98 Ibid., p. 186.

99 "The Race Problem," Editorial, The Rock Lake  
Review, January 18, 1899.

100 Robert J.C. Stead, "The Mixer," Kitchener  
and Other Poems (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1917),  
pp. 44-45.

101 "The Race Problem."

102 Ibid.

103 Mundwiler, pp. 191-192.

104 Unrecorded interview with Jean Stead, wife  
of Lorne Stead, on May 10, 1979. She said that "mix-  
ing with the opposite sex was a problem with both  
of them."

## Chapter II

### The Period of the Poems

Stead discovered the truth of the Scripture about serving two masters for himself. Christ had said: "No man can be the slave of two masters, for either he will hate the first and love the second or he will be devoted to the first and think nothing of the second. You cannot serve God and Money."<sup>1</sup> In the conflict between the newspaper and the lumber business, Stead had given up the latter, but the conflict between the two papers was not so easy to solve. He ended up by selling both and leaving Manitoba with his wife and son in 1910.<sup>2</sup>

He now joined his brother-in-law in an automobile business, located at High River, only 50 miles south of Calgary. The journey from Cartwright to High River was accomplished by car. Though still a 'cow-town' when Stead moved there, it was an up-coming foothills community and supply centre for the surrounding ranches and farms, and was fast becoming a town of mercantile institutions, where

practically every line of human endeavor was represented. With the advent of the automobile into the business community there naturally arose the demand for an automobile agency. Eggleston tells us that both Stead and his brother-in-law sampled "the prospects at Medicine Hat and Lethbridge, scouted north as far as Lacombe,"<sup>3</sup> and on discovering that there were no dealers between Lethbridge and Calgary, decided to establish themselves at High River, selling McLaughlin Buicks. The attraction for Stead was two-fold: he would be selling cars, and would be going to Alberta--both satisfying to his adventurous spirit.

The attraction was irresistible. Alberta, though incorporated as a province only five years before, in 1905, had, by 1910, transformed itself from the buffalo country it once was, into a ranching, farming, and prospering province that awaited only the discovery of the oil beneath its surface to make it wealthy. Its population of 375,000 consisted of ranchers, businessmen; policemen, coalminers, lumbermen, and homesteaders. The automobile industry was novel and yet held promise of a great future since automobiles were steadily and surely replacing the horse and buggy. No

wonder the industry attracted Stead's adventurous and boisterous mind.<sup>4</sup> Selling cars in those days required as much salesmanship and tact as anything else. People had to be persuaded into buying cars. Not everyone was as enterprising as Mr. Joseph Morris.<sup>5</sup> Stead tells us that his experience here too was contributory towards his literary training:

I met every type of settler from millionaire ranchers and real estate boomsters to itinerant trappers earning a precarious living skinning dead horses on the prairie. In three years, I developed an intimacy with the foothill country which, under other circumstances, might not have fructified in thirty. Also I saw the second great wave of settlement wash into the west just as, twenty-five years before, I had seen the first great wave creeping slowly out of the Red River Valley and through the rolling prairie lands of Manitoba.<sup>6</sup>

The Steads lived at High River from February 1910 to November 1912, during which time he worked as office-manager in his brother-in-law's business. His move into the automobile business is another proof of his versatility. In an interview with Anne Maclean Stead explained his action as "a relapse into commercialism."<sup>7</sup> Stead might term it a "relapse" but the attraction of the newly opening automotive industry and the fascination that he felt for the west made the relapse possible. Western Canada,

around that time, had just emerged from one of its periodic slumps. The depression that plagued Canada during the late 19th century and the early years of the 20th, was, by 1910, giving way to a land boom which gradually reached the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and brought with it its attendant real estate agents, railroad men, farmers, ranchers, coal and oil prospectors, land speculators, and "bunco" artists. Stead paints an accurate picture of the up-coming town in his The Homesteaders. What he writes may very well have been a picture of High River with

its typical stores, selling everything from silks to coal oil; its blacksmiths' shops ringing with the hammer of the busy smith on ploughshare or horseshoe; its implement agencies, with rows of gaudily-painted wagons, mowers, and binders obstructing the thoroughfare, and the hempen smell of new binder twine floating from the hot recess of their iron-covered storehouses; a couple of banks, occupying the best corners, and barber shops and pool-rooms in apparent excess of the needs of the population . . . there were . . . in addition half-a-dozen real estate offices, with a score or more curbstome dealers, locators, commission-splitters, and go-betweens, and the number and size of livery stables gave some clue to the amount of prospecting going on . . . The streets were lined with traffic . . . long rows of box-cars were unloading on the side-tracks; farmers' effects and household goods of every description were piled in great heaps about the

railway yards; while horses, cattle, pigs, and poultry contributed to the dust and din of the settlers' operations. Great wagons of lumber were being loaded at the lumber yards, and an unbroken procession of wagons and farm machinery of every description was wending its way slowly into the distance where lay hope of home or fortune for the new settler.  
(pp. 199-200)

But Stead's relapse was neither complete nor permanent. His reputation as a poet had preceded him and he soon became a columnist for The High River Times. Although the automobile agency flourished, it could not hold Stead's whole-hearted attention; and from December 1911 he became a regular contributor under the nom-de-plume "Observer," and his "Observations" became a weekly feature. In addition, he would often oblige Mr. W.H. Davidson, editor of the Calgary daily The Morning Albertan, and cover some news event for him. This activity was welcome to both; Stead found it satisfying to his desire to write, and Mr. Davidson occasionally received an article for which he did not have to pay, and could send to the press without corrections.<sup>8</sup> The advantage to Mr. Davidson was very great at a time when The Morning Albertan's finances were so tight that the reporters were expected to buy their own lead pencils and paste. Stead proved so competent that

Davidson offered him a position on the staff of the Albertan for \$27.50 a week. Stead, however, not wishing to serve two masters again, declined the job though he continued to cover news events, even such important ones as the Duke of Connaught's visit to McLeod, and the International Dry Farming Congress at Lethbridge, both in 1912. But when his brother-in-law sold the automobile agency Stead readily joined the staff of the Calgary Albertan.

Although Stead had spent less than three years at High River, he always had a special feeling for the place. He cherished these years very dearly all his life. In a letter sent on the passing of Charles Clarke, founder of The High River Times, Stead remarked:

When I recall that of all my life which is now nearing 70 years, I spent less than three years in High River, it seems to me that the town looms disproportionately large in my memories.

Stead himself attributed this disproportionate influence to the number of friends and to the congenial atmosphere he had found there. But whatever the reason, it seems that the year 1910 became a very important landmark in Stead's life. Much light is thrown on this assumption by a manuscript which shows that at one time Stead seriously

contemplated writing his own autobiography, which he planned to publish after his retirement from government service. The plan, as outlined by him, was to divide the Autobiography into two parts and to publish it as two volumes. The first, to be called "First Thirty Years" was to cover the period from 1880 to 1910, and the second, for which no title had been decided upon, to cover the period from 1910 to the time of publication.

Perhaps Stead chose thirty years as the dividing line because in his address "Past, Present and Future" he remarks that

somewhere in the curve of life we reach an intersection where, like a slightly wearied traveller, we pause and look, not only forward, but back. I think that comes when we first realize that youth is slipping away--or has already slipped away. For me it came when I was about thirty years . . .

In November 1912 Stead left High River for Calgary, a booming settlement 840 miles west of Winnipeg, 620 miles east of Vancouver, and 138 miles north of the International Boundary. Located at the junction of the Bow and the Elbow Rivers, it promised to become in time one of the big cities of Canada. Originally selected by Colonel Macleod in 1875, as the site of a Mounted Police Post, it was first known as Fort Brisebois, after Inspector

Brisebois, of the North West Mounted Police, who had then been in command. Colonel Macleod renamed it Calgary, after the home of certain relatives on the Isle of Mull, Scotland. (Calgary is a Gaelic term meaning clear running water.) Its population in 1911 was 43,074.

Stead was attracted by both the romantic past as well as the promising future of Calgary. His newspaper jobs had already revealed his innate restlessness and indicated quite positively that he could never be content to stagnate as an agent in a small town. His "Observations" had shown him to be an informed commentator on world events, as well as one who was actively interested in the problems of the community. As the "Observer" he predicted the wheat blockade (July 11, 1912)<sup>11</sup> and suggested at various times that the solution lay in opening government-owned flour mills in the wheat-growing areas (January 25, and August 29, 1912); he tried to show how the farmer could remove the middleman if only the public would insist on having certain facilities and utilities (April 18, 1912); he expressed concern over rising prices and suggested return to the land as a plausible solution (May 9, 1912); he took up the problem of issuing paper currency by banks and felt that it should be issued

by the government instead (May 23, 1912); he looked into the production of cement and analyzed why Canada failed to compete with American production (June 27, 1912); he discussed the problem faced by the Canadian railway on account of the scattered nature of Canada's population (July 11, 1912); and advocated that stock-raising should be encouraged along with agriculture (December 5, 1912). In the wider field of world politics he took note of events in Persia (January 4, 1912), and India (January 18, 1912), as well as in Kansas City (January 9, 1913), and Mexico (February 27, 1913), and did not fail to notice the growing tension between Germany and Great Britain (August 8, 1912), or the hot exchanges between the United States and Great Britain over the opening of the Panama (August 1, 1912). In his editorials Stead questioned why the United States should appoint an inquiry committee into the sinking of the Titanic (May 2, 1912), or why U.S. ships should not pay taxes while using the Panama (August 15, 1912), and recognized how this evasion would, in the long run, affect the Canadian farmer. Stead had the ability to foresee and point out the advantages to Canada in general and to Alberta in particular, that the opening of the Panama would bring (April 11, 1912).

Stead also used this column for his reflections

and questionings about basic human problems, such as the increasing problem of crime (November 21, 1912); or, why a man convicted of murder should be let out on bail (September 19, 1912);<sup>12</sup> or, why war, when war solved no problems and resulted only in a waste of money (January 30, 1913). His concern with the war at this time can only show that Stead feared a greater collision than what most people anticipated.

Stead's imperialism also peeps through at times, especially in his attitude towards the Boer War (July 4 and 25, 1912). Sometimes he used the column to voice his pet theories of the immorality of using mental superiority to cheat others (December 12, 1912), the importance of making the country more attractive than the city (January 13, 1913), and the feeling that men are so engrossed in making money that they forget to live (July 4, 1912).

The wide range of subjects covered (this is by no means a comprehensive list) indicates the restlessness and exuberance which found further expression in the short stories and sketches he wrote about this time. This same exuberance and restlessness had brought Stead to Calgary. It was a city that fascinated persons of his temperament. Calgary's frantic rush from frontier town to boom city in the first decade of the 20th century was

probably the greatest phenomenon of its kind in western Canada. Statistics Canada singled out Calgary as "the fastest growing city in Canada."<sup>13</sup> Before 1911 Calgary's growth had been steady but not spectacular, then its economic pace accelerated, until by 1912 it was undergoing a real boom.<sup>14</sup> Started as a small shack town, it now stood as a proud sandstone city, and was not only the 'cowtown' of western Canada (on account of the ranches) but also an industrial centre. A city of the foothills, Calgary could use the coal, natural gas, and oil reserves of the Rockies and the foothills to feed its industries, and the easy access to these promised to make Calgary one of the great commercial centres of Canada.<sup>15</sup>

Stead's move to Calgary was thus characteristic of him. Of pioneering stock, Stead seemed always responsive to the adventurous instinct within him, and especially to the lure of bigger towns and cities. From Chesterville to Cartwright, from Cartwright to High River, from High River to Calgary-- the progress was always from the smaller to the bigger. (In keeping with this trend it is remarkable that from Calgary Stead moved only to Ottawa.) This trend, however, can also be explained in more

practical terms, for Stead's family was also growing. He had two sons now, one a boy of nine, and the other just a babe in arms.<sup>16</sup> The elder one, Lorne, had been attending school since Cartwright days and his schooling had to be kept in mind when making any move. This also helps us to understand why, in Calgary, the Steads chose to live at 1308 Fourteenth Avenue. Situated in one of the middle class residential areas the house was centrally located, and was close to both church and school.

That his Calgary experience was critically formative is apparent when one considers his repeated use of the boom-collapse syndrome in his novels.

Though Stead's move to Calgary had been prompted by the smell of printer's ink, he did not stay long on the staff of the Albertan. Within a few months, in March 1913, he was appointed to the staff of the publicity branch of the CPR Colonization Department, and gave up his job with the newspaper. The Morning Albertan was no doubt sorry to lose him since he had been an invaluable correspondent; but the new job further broadened his knowledge of the west; travelling on his various assignments he acquired ever new experiences.

His literary career had, meanwhile, been

progressing very well. While still at Manitoba, before his first book was published, his poems and short stories occasionally appeared in Canadian newspapers and magazines. He received no payment for the poems; but he was paid for stories published in the Canadian Magazine. His reputation as poet began with the publication of Empire Builders and Other Poems in 1908. On Stead's authority we know that only a thousand copies were printed, of which 50 were sent to the press for reviews.<sup>17</sup> Most of the reviewers accorded the book an important place in Canadian literature and saw in it the birth of a new kind of 'Canadian' poetry, where the verse reflected the "rugged wholesome life of the open country, the enthusiasm of the pioneer, the homesteader and the railway builder."<sup>18</sup> The Toronto Globe pronounced it to be the best book of Canadian verse of the year;<sup>19</sup> The Montreal Witness described it as a very stirring and worthy work, claiming it to be "a refreshing contrast to the brand of poetry served in the magazines."<sup>20</sup> The Montreal Star declared that the author was "head and shoulders above his fellows in the Dominion,"<sup>21</sup> while The Toronto World prophesied that the popularity of The Empire Builders was bound to

increase because "it breathes the same optimistic spirit which every Canadian should feel."<sup>22</sup>

The praise showered on The Empire Builders did not, however, promote a corresponding sale. After six months only 100 copies had been sold. Stead recognized that what was lacking was publicity and set out to promote it. He used his own papers (The Crystal City Courier and the Southern Manitoba Review) and his own press to advertise his book. The results were astonishing--within a few months 4,000 copies were sold. For Canada and for a book of verse that was a very big sale indeed. By 1909 the second edition was out and it was being recommended to readers by most newspapers. (Let me digress a moment to point out that much of the criticism of Stead's early work is available only in the form of newspaper articles and reviews, there being no serious criticism available on him until much later.) J. Castell Hopkins commented in December 1909 that "this is the kind of poetry we need in Canada."<sup>23</sup> By 1910 the third edition was on its way, and by 1912 it was already in its fourth edition. A slim book of verse containing only twenty-five poems--the story of its success is told by its publishing history.

Laudatory reviews and praise, however, were not the only reaction. Critical and condemnatory reviews made much of Kipling's influence and Stead's imitative quality. The poems, mere doggerel for the most part, had a rude vigor and an unflinching honesty that had for long been lacking in Canadian poetry. The publication of The Empire Builders was over all a successful venture for Stead, for both his finances and his reputation. He was now firmly established as a prairie poet and hero. A look at the newspapers of the time substantially proves the point. On August 12, 1909, both the Advance (Virden, Manitoba), and the Independent (Wawanessa, Manitoba), mentioned that Stead had passed through the town. Later, when Stead left Manitoba for High River in 1910, the news again loomed large in many papers.<sup>24</sup> Every movement of his was taken notice of and became a news item. Every time he passed through a town local papers took note of it and announced the fact.<sup>25</sup> By 1911, in Alberta, he was being asked to give poetry readings,<sup>26</sup> and his pictures began to appear with the caption "The Prairie Poet."<sup>27</sup> He was now constantly being referred to as the poet of the prairies or "the first real poet that the West has developed."<sup>28</sup> Considerable importance was attached

to the fact that The Empire Builders was coming out with a new edition almost every year. The Toronto Bookseller and Stationer of November 1910 stated that Stead had been "compelled to issue a third edition." The Canadian Courier considered it a great honor that Stead had agreed to contribute "The Fellow Who Won't Be Beat" for their Christmas number.<sup>29</sup>

Though the audience for Stead's poetry was largely Canadian, his book attracted some notice in England, and Lord Grey wrote letters commending the poetry.<sup>30</sup> The correspondence resulted in still another honor for Stead. A stanza from his poem "Mother and Son" was chosen to be emblazoned in a bronze monument erected to the memory of a Lieutenant Roy Maurice Gzowski at Aldershot.

While The Empire Builders was being reissued, Stead, in 1911, came out with another collection of poems, published under the title Prairie Born and Other Poems. This volume, like the earlier one, was brought out by William Briggs of Toronto. But Stead struck a somewhat different note in this collection. The poems of the earlier volume had been mostly patriotic and strongly imperialistic; Prairie Born had more Canadian themes. Those themes had already

been sounded in The Empire Builders but now they were treated in their more various aspects and at greater length. The prairie poems in the first collection had been confined in outlook and superficial in treatment. They were prairie poems only thematically as Stead had failed to break away from his Loyalist upbringing and the imperialistic note had remained as pronounced in them as had Kipling's influence. The outlook of The Empire Builders was colored by racialism (in "The Mixer"), by the condemnation of the rich (in "The Idle Rich"), and by the over all imperialism. Its poems also seemed more contrived than inspired, and even the prairie poems were used to express commonplace sentiments such as glorifying the country as opposed to the city, praising the mother country, and celebrating hard work and courage.

Prairie Born, on the other hand, breathed the free air of the prairies. Although Stead continued throughout his life to celebrate hard work and courage, he came to recognize the price that was often paid by the pioneers for these qualities, and learnt to fathom the nostalgia and longings that lay hidden beneath the courageous and stoical hearts. He continued to idolize heroic people but came to appreciate the quiet and subdued heroism of "the breed that is born to suffer."<sup>31</sup>

This collection was definitely a book of the prairies. It succeeded in catching the spirit of the west and presenting it in a glamorous light; but despite the glamor, the prairie portraits he drew exude a wistful sadness. His settlers are proud but lonely. They are nostalgic, but they do not complain, because theirs is a self-imposed exile.

Shortly after Prairie Born Stead published Songs of the Prairies which was brought out in both Canada and the United States. Intended primarily for the American market, it contained selections from the earlier two volumes; no new poems were added.<sup>32</sup>

When Lord Grey's commendatory letters arrived about this time Stead sent him a copy of his latest book of verse and asked him if it would be in order if he sent a copy to His Majesty also, to which Lord Grey replied that The Empire Builders ought to be sent first.<sup>33</sup> As far as the correspondence indicates the gift was sent. Thus Stead gradually began to acquire a foothold in England also.

With the publication of Prairie Born and Songs of the Prairies Stead merely stabilized his reputation as a poet. Financially, neither of the ventures was as successful as The Empire Builders had been. No startling sales were made, and even

the ardor of the reviewers seemed to have cooled down. Together the two volumes secured a total of eleven reviews to over forty for The Empire Builders alone. Stead felt and perhaps rightly that the sale of Songs of the Prairies could have been improved if "some special attention were given it."<sup>34</sup> What it lacked was publicity; and as Stead had seen in the case of his Empire Builders, publicity really helps. But not owning a press any more, he was unable to take the direct advertising action that he had taken for his first publication. I might mention here as a matter of some surprise that Stead's books at this time were selling better in Toronto and Montreal than they were in the western cities where one would have imagined them to appeal more because of local color.

Poetry however was not the only thing that Stead had been writing. His earliest dated short story shows 1904 as the date of publication.<sup>35</sup> His short stories, like the poems, are the product of his early years, and, like them, were written before the 1920s. They suffer from the same faults as the poems, and are, on the whole, rather juvenile. Some of them would make good boys' stories if only these otherwise good stories were not spoiled by such sentimental endings. The stories which do not deal with

a love interest are, over all, better than the girl-meet-boy kind of romance. For example, "Driver Dick's Last Run" which has an imaginative and unusual episode, makes good reading. It has the merit of being realistic in language, action, and characterization. The characters though sketchily drawn come alive with their characteristic language and behavior. The same is true of "A Made-To-Order Scoop" which, though unconvincing in its story, is both humorous and enjoyable. "A Hero of Ladysmith" begins well with its powerful realism and emphasis on the loneliness of the prairies and the quiet heroism of the pioneers. But Stead again spoils the end by giving it a sentimental turn: the hero dies clutching his beloved's photograph. "The Fellow Who Won't Be Beat" is, in the long run, a better story than "A Hero of Ladysmith" simply because its realistic portrayal of the clash between the homesteader and the rancher is not marred by sentimentalism. In "A Complicated Speculation" and "A Feminine Trust-Buster" Stead mingles sentiment and adventure but fails to produce a homogeneous mixture.

Many of the short stories deal with the attraction of the out-of-doors, and Stead, unable to overcome his childhood bias, feels that the city people have lost their soul. In "That Carson Girl,"

"Outside," and "The President of the Bar Y," the fascination of nature is explicitly portrayed. The Carson girl likes to go to the top of the hill "every evening before sunset,"<sup>36</sup> while Jack in "The President of the Bar Y" wondered "why people lived in cities when all this great, good out-of-doors lay beckoning them."<sup>37</sup> Mrs. Barton in "Fed Up," too, is possessed by an infinite longing to go and see the Rockies. In making the city evil and the country good Stead, like other writers of the time was simply

responding to the demands of a literary genre . . . producing a variety of sentimental romance which is permeated with a quasi-pastoral assumption that the country is regenerative while the city is sinister and moribund.<sup>38</sup>

Many of the stories take up the twin themes of pioneering and homesteading. Humor emerges when Stead makes fun of the 'greenhorns' who in his short stories are mostly Englishmen: "Wigstock & Company" and "Peverly's Deposit" have this as their main theme. Linked with this is the theme of speculation and cheating that accompanied this kind of gambling. "A Complicated Speculation" and "How Simpson Cashed His Bluff" revolve around this exploitation of the newcomers. Ruin through speculation is also a peripheral theme in "The Microphone is Blind."

In some of the short stories Stead shows a growing awareness of the problems of loneliness and isolation that beset people on the prairies. These are brought out very well in "The Hermit of the Hills," "Opal," and "The Yellow Target." In quite a few it is simply touched upon without becoming a major theme of the story. It is not always possible to separate the stories by their themes because one story may touch upon two or three; but what must be recognized is, that Stead is, in the short stories, less hesitant about painting the unpleasant aspects of the prairies than he is in the novels. He gives us the idyllic, but with that he also stresses the problems and difficulties of the pioneers. Idealism in the short stories is more equally balanced with the realism; a balance that Stead often failed to achieve in the novels.

The theme of the clash and conflict of generations occurs in some of the stories. In these he reflects upon the common predicament of the prairie farmer who is deserted by his children. This is poignantly brought out in "Opal" and in Christmas stories like "Holy Night" and "The Extra Plate." When dealing with this theme Stead brings out the inexorable clash and cycle of generations very

objectively. Ned tells his wife in "Opal:"

"You should n' take it like that, O Pal," he said. . . . "You must n' be sore at John, an' her. Its life, an' they're doin' jus' what we did before them, an' what their children 'll do after them. Human nature is a queer crittur, but its built that way."

Some of the stories anticipate the themes of the novels. "The Hero of Ladysmith" for example, revolves around the problem of the hired man who is unable to marry and lead a normal family life on account of his limited means. But here (as also in the novels) Stead merely shows us the problem without trying to follow it up to its natural and logical conclusion. "As You Were," which was written only around 1918-1919, takes up the problem of reorganization after the war which Stead was to take up at greater length in his novel, Dennison Grant. "The Sandway Confession" similarly anticipates Stead's novel The Copper Disc. Both read like miniature crime thrillers. In the story mystery and detectives are introduced, but on a lesser scale. A writer, supposed to have committed suicide, is shown to have been murdered by his secretary, and the suicide note, it is finally revealed, is part of a manuscript. Stead was apparently fond of giving a touch of mystery and suspense. Other stories that dabble in mystery are

"The Switch at Broken Ridge," and, to a lesser extent, "The Whispering Tunnel" and "Driver Dick's Last Run."

Stead has a few stories about the Mounted Police which might have been better fiction had they been less idolatrous in their attitude towards the Mounted Police. In his "The Romance of the Royal Mounted" he plays up the courage of the policeman and tells us how "his composure took the 'bad man' of [sic] his guard . . ." <sup>40</sup> At the conclusion Stead adds:

The incident was one of thousands in the experience of the North-West Mounted Police, . . . It helps to explain why western Canada, which had all the natural settings of a 'Wild and Woolly West,' escaped the period of lawlessness which has marked other frontiers the world over. <sup>41</sup>

In "A Show Down With Sitting Bull" Stead uses Indian legend and history to bring out the awe of the Mounted Police.

After joining the CPR, Stead used the railway and incidents connected with it as the themes of his stories. "The First Big Fill," characterized by Stead's usual humor, describes the filling up of a valley in order to lay the track across it. "The Switch at Broken Ridge" and "The Whispering Tunnel" also derive their themes from the railway. The first, a better

story than the second, describes how two boys solve a mystery. It brings out Stead's anti-German feelings because he makes two of his three villains Germans, but he balances his prejudices by making the third an Englishman. "The Whispering Tunnel" is a good boys' story, but is marred by its conventional ending where the boy's mother finally marries her one-time lover and son's benefactor.

Unfortunately Stead spoils many of his otherwise good stories by this sentimental attitude. This is most apparent in the Christmas stories-- "Peter Brand's Christmas," "Just for Christmas, You Know," and "When The Prairie Gets Them." These have the merit of showing the loneliness which people experience on the prairies, and occasionally of insight of character, especially in depicting how old and lonely people are moved by small gestures; but sentimentalism is a major fault with **most** of them.

A moralizing trait seems to be inherent in Stead and mars most of his creative work. Looking at his stories and editorials one cannot help wondering and noticing their common interests. "As You Were" is a striking example. Written in 1918-1919 it seems a concrete example of an editorial

entitled "Wake Up Canadians" that had appeared in The Winnipeg Tribune on April 13, 1918. It was written by Stead at the Tribune's request; in it he condemned the Canadians for their placidity and selfishness, and criticized them for measuring success in terms of acquisitions. His plea was that "greatness ought to be measured not by what it gets but by what it gives." He went on to say that if Canadian civilization had gone down it was because "it had been weighed and found not worthy to endure." Stead ended the editorial with the moral which was repeated in the short story too: that Canadians should develop the spirit of brotherhood --they should be brothers or comrades and not competitors.

Stead's sense of morality instilled into him in his childhood keeps intruding into his work. His emphasis on the Puritan bias against the stage and his Puritanical ethics are brought out in stories like "Holy Night" and "The Extra Plate." The same upbringing would not allow any of his heroines to stray for long from the strait and narrow path. Mrs. Barton in "Fed Up" promptly comes back to her husband, not sure whether her happiness on meeting Chester Main was purely moral. This same moral

restraint can be detected in the novels too.

Stylistically also the short stories anticipate the novels and the same characteristics are to be found in both. Dialogues are usually good as Stead is able to convey the actual dialect of prairie dwellers with their intonations and slurring speech. This gives to his writing a peculiarly native flavor which is lacking in some of the better known writers of prairie fiction, especially Grove. Perhaps the common fault of story writers in the 'twenties was their tendency to use a language that was deliberately and traditionally artificial. The revolution which impressionism had long since made in painting had not yet had its literary counterpart, though it was being realized that some new way of using words was clearly needed. We can see Stead wavering between a more natural style of speech on the one hand and a pompous and high sounding style on the other. He does a good job of the dialogues and proves himself a better writer than many of his contemporaries, but he is equally at home in the mock-heroic style in prose. For example:

As the mongooses to the cobra, as acid to alkali, as water to fire, so is the inroading homesteader to the rancher of

the old regime. The warfare of Jacob and Essau, begun on the pasture lands of Palestine, is driven to its last ditch in the foothills of Alberta.<sup>42</sup>

Natural descriptions in the short stories are detailed and accurate, though at times a little over-done. Nature is often used to reflect human emotions but Stead does not indulge in pathetic fallacy. His realistic treatment of nature makes him a step ahead of his contemporaries whose descriptions of nature were highly romanticized, and who not infrequently personified Nature. And though Stead personifies abstractions like Happiness, Service, and Thankfulness, Nature is never personified; it is used only as the backdrop for the acting out of the human drama.

By 1914 Stead had published three books of poems. He then turned his hand to novel-writing and became "the prairie poet and novelist."<sup>43</sup> His success as a novelist apparently cut short his poetical career; but the spell was broken in 1916 when he was inspired to write a poem on the death of Lord Kitchener. This poem, written at lightning speed, a few hours after he had learned of that great noble's death, made history and put Stead back on the poetic pedestal.

The inspiration came to him, as he has told since, in the form of a question he asked himself, "What finer death

could I desire?" The idea gripped him. He sat down and wrote 20 lines and took them to W.H. Davidson, editor of the Calgary Albertan, and Mr. Davidson was so impressed by them that he put them on the Canadian Press wire and they were flashed across Canada.<sup>44</sup>

It was indeed a fine piece of poetry--better than anything that Stead had written to date. Though written in a traditional metre and rhyme scheme it does not appear contrived or imitative in any way. I quote it in full:<sup>45</sup>

Weep, waves of England! Nobler clay  
Was ne'er to nobler grave consigned;  
The wild waves weep with us today  
Who mourn a nation's master mind.

We hoped an honoured age for him,  
And ashes laid with England's great;  
And rapturous music, and the dim  
Deep hush that veils our Tomb of State.

But this is better. Let him sleep  
Where sleep the men who made us free,  
For England's heart is in the deep,  
And England's glory is the sea.

One only vow above his bier,  
One only oath beside his bed;  
We swear our flag shall shield him here  
Until the sea gives up its dead!

Leap, waves of England! Boastful be,  
And fling defiance in the blast,  
For Earth is envious of the Sea-  
Which shelters England's dead at last.  
(KOP, p. 3)

First published in The Daily News-Advertiser on  
June 7, 1916, on June 8, the Advertiser wrote:

The tribute of elegaic verse with which the Advertiser was in yesterday's issue to honour the empire's great soldier dead, has attracted widespread attention.

This was true; the poem appeared in at least forty newspapers and magazines. As Allison tells us in his Introduction to Kitchener and Other Poems, the poem appeared in many Canadian dailies, and "is probably the only Canadian poem that was ever incorporated complete into a telegraphic news-service."<sup>46</sup> Later it was copied by the leading papers of England, and reprinted for distribution in the army hospitals of England. When the war came to an end, the editor of Literary News and Views drew up a list of the ten best war poems; "Kitchener" was included among them.

Stead's tribute "To France" was also written about the same time. A solemn lyric, it offered profuse apologies to France for not having known her true hardihood; for having thought her "fair without, and false within," for having mistaken "The painted face" and "the sensuous design" for the whole of France, and for not realizing that this was the face France turned "tourist-ward" (KOP, p. 18). This poem too, though written in a traditional form, had an inspirational quality about it which made it as popular as the 'Kitchener' one. First published in the British American (Chicago), it was reprinted in

over 200 publications.

Prompted by the popularity of these two poems, Stead put together a new collection which was brought out by the Musson Book Company of Toronto in October 1917, under the title Kitchener and Other Poems. Although this volume was bigger than all the earlier ones, it contained only twenty new poems. These new poems took up the themes of war and death--going off to war, the finality of death, the fall of soldiers, dying on foreign shores, the victory of bestiality, the enemy, the effects of war, and patriotism. A few of the war poems sounded an idyllic note however. For example, "June 1915," "In the Wheat," and "We Were Men of the Furrow." The poignancy of these poems justifies quoting at least one in full:

In the Wheat

His wheat is golden for the harvest blade;  
 Amid its ranks red prairie roses blow;  
 And by the fringe his little maid  
 Trips in and out; she is too young to know

He left his binder canvassed in the shed;  
 He left her mother, weeping, at the gate;  
 His harvest yields a richer red  
 And shouts for reapers; other fields can wait.

When in the Spring across the fragrant mould  
 His seeder-shuttle wrought a richer zone,  
 He did not dream how much a year can hold  
 Nor what a field should ripen with his own.

His care was all for simple, selfish things,--  
 His home, his wife, his horses, and his child;  
 No thought had he for conquerors and kings,  
 Or reeking power and innocence defiled.

Then in an hour his soul was born again;  
 He saw himself the nation's instrument;  
 She felt a pride that smothered half the pain  
 As through her tears she nodded her assent.

His wheat is red for harvest, but his blade  
 Is red with richer harvest at his feet;  
 And in his eyes, clear, calm, and unafraid  
 He sees a maiden playing in the wheat.

The poignancy of the last stanza is characteristic of Stead's poems and gives us an idea as to the sort of poetry he could write on occasion. It is, at the same time, an instance of emotions and sentiments highlighted to produce pathos. And sentiment seems to have been Stead's forte in both poetry and prose.

The dominant note in the war poems is patriotism. He expressed sound views though he cannot be commended for the beauty of his poetic thought. "The Charity Ward" shows biting sarcasm. Stead hopes to "whip his people into a realization of their duty as part of the Empire."<sup>47</sup> Written years before the question of Canada's share in the maintenance of the British fleet, or of a battle unit of her own, had become an issue in Dominion politics, one reviewer points out:

In this respect at least Stead has the poetic gift. He is a seer; he reads and interprets the future; his poetry bristles with the interrogation points which mark the road to Canada's national destiny.<sup>48</sup>

What prevents Stead's poetry from becoming great is his insistence upon thought and ideas to the exclusion of form. Yet, of fifty-six reviews accorded to the Kitchener book only one may be described as being unfavorable;<sup>49</sup> the reviewer criticized the title poem, finding it too "stilted" but commended the book for its prairie poems. Sales were naturally very good. On October 17, 1917, The Calgary News-Telegram announced that Kitchener and Other Poems had had such a big sale that a second edition was being brought out immediately. By the end of 1917 it had been "placed on the shelves of the schools in the province,"<sup>50</sup> and figured on the list of poetical works recommended by the department of education. By May 1918 the book had gone into its third edition. In point of sale too it set an enviable record of 5,000 copies in one year.<sup>51</sup> The following year an English edition was brought out under the title Why Don't They Cheer? in which the poem of this title was made the centre piece. (This collection was not published in America as it

"expressed sentiments not suitable for the U.S.")<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly enough Why Don't They Cheer? was published in England by Unwin on some arrangement with Messers Musson, and Stead was neither consulted nor informed of its publication. When Stead was corresponding for the publication of his novel The Cow Puncher he asked his literary agent, A.P. Watt, to look into the matter. (I have discussed this in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.)

With the publication of Kitchener Stead gave to his audience a score of new poems, which, though lacking in immediacy and intensity, managed to convey in verse the feeling that surged in the west. He succeeded in conveying the horror of war, but it was horror which was distinctly second-hand and not the horror of one who has been through the thick of it. His better war poems are actually a combination of the war and prairie poem, like "June 1915," "In the Wheat," and "We Were Men of the Furrow," because in them he tells us about the peculiar experience of the farmer turned soldier and the nostalgia of the soldier who ploughed wheat-fields before he shouldered a gun. A few stanzas should help in making my meaning clear:

We were men of the furrow, men of the hammer  
 and spade;  
 Men of the plain and forest, children of commerce  
 and trade;  
 Men of the day and distance; men of the mothering  
 earth;  
 Laying the lines of a nation nurturing fair from  
 the birth.

Little thought we of the war-cloud, little of  
 drilling and drill;  
 We were for peace with our neighbours--  
 peace (and a pocket to fill);

Then in the quivering heaven gathered the  
 threatening wrath;  
 We looked--and went on with our labours;  
 heard, and replied with a laugh;  
 Surely the world was for business; (list to  
 the hammer and spade);  
 Leave the war-lords to their lusting--on with  
 our traffic and trade!

Then, in a flash, it was on us; blazed, and  
 it dazzled our eyes;  
 Then for a moment we faltered, suddenly sick  
 with surprise;  
 We were stripping the cloth for the khaki and  
 dropping the spade for the gun.

(KOP, pp. 12, 15)

The same thought is again expressed in "June 1915":

How sweet the prairie blossoms bloom!  
 How soft the moonlight nestles on the lake!  
 There is no hint of worlds a-doom  
 In the low murmurings the night birds make;  
 A settler's window winks afar  
 As wife or daughter pass athwart the light;  
 And in the East is still a star,  
 And the warm earth breathes softly in the night.

The whispering, confidential wheat  
 Knows the hushed thrill of harvest in its womb;  
 And little eyes and little feet  
 Flit in and out, and twinkle in the gloom;  
 The breeze that stirs across the plain  
 Bears the soft tang of smudge-smoke in its breath  
 There is no sudden cry of pain,  
 Nor horror of cold eye-balls fixed in death.

And can it be so fair a moon  
 Can smile on scenes of war's debauch?  
 That Europe, too, has still her June,  
 And o'er her shambles bright stars watch?  
 That soft winds over Flanders' field  
 Fondle young locks like mother-fingers gone,  
 And the red dew of youth is sealed  
 On garden leaf and grass that once was lawn?  
 (KOP, p. 16)

The Kitchener volume on the whole is a better and maturer collection than Stead's earlier ones. In this he has certainly come a long way from his early juvenilia. Here the poems seem better well-knit both in thought and style, and, though the metres and rhythms are still traditional and commonplace, they are not merely imitative or derivative. Where the earlier poems read like schoolboy exercises or parodies, the 1917 volume has a definite inspirational quality about it. This quality is, however, not maintained throughout; the war poems are occasionally trite and commonplace in sentiment as well as rhyme scheme, as for example:

The babes of Belgium cry at night  
 Their curses on the monster that thou art.  
 (KOP, p. 15)

Or:

A dragon slew a splendid child  
 And gloried in the shameful act;  
 A noble hound, by nature mild,  
 Was stirred to horror by the fact;  
 Though far out-matched in strength and skill,  
 His honour boded no restraint;  
 He swore the dragon he would kill,  
 And with it kill its poison-taint.

In such a battle as the world  
 Had never seen, the two engaged;  
 The dragon all its furies hurled,  
 But could not win the war it waged;

Then homeward as the victor comes  
 The noble hound his footsteps turned,  
 But now to all the sound of drums  
 A strange consuming in him burned;  
 His eyes were red with battle's flame,  
 His teeth were red with battle's gore;  
 Men said the hound was not the same  
 As he had been before the war.

And then a deeper horror grew;  
 The hound was knarled [sic] and bent and dread;  
 The dragon's form alone he slew,  
 The dragon's soul was his instead!  
 (KOP, pp. 28-29)

Although Stead published a total of five books of poems, the number of poems was rather limited, as not much new poetry was added each time. The only books to publish new poems were The Empire Builders and Prairie Born and twenty new poems in Kitchener and Other Poems. Songs of the Prairies and Why Don't They Cheer? were purely repetitive. And two of the twenty new poems in the Kitchener book had received considerable publicity before they appeared in book form.

Most critics tended to dismiss Stead's poetry as "Vaudeville" and juvenile, but a proper appreciation is only possible if the poetry is judged in its context or in its historical perspective. Stead's poems were

published from 1907 to 1917; and though the metres and forms are derivative and hackneyed, the content of the prairie poems at least was sufficiently novel to establish Stead as the special poet of the prairies. When I say this I have poems like "Prairie Born," "Kid McCann," and "The Homesteader" in mind. His popularity as a poet is largely explained by the fact that he managed to do for the prairies what Service had done for the Yukon. The prairie poems, which are certainly better than the imperialistic verses, chronicle the record of homesteading and settling in the west. Though Stead lacks originality of style he is able to capture and put down in verse the environment of the settlers and their nostalgic longing for the pre-car, pre-steam, pre-gas, and pre-railway days. His poem called "The Early Days" brings this out very clearly:

Yes, times have changed since the early days  
 and things are different now;  
 We used to tramp from dawn to dusk in the trail  
 of a walking plough,  
 And sow our grain from a canvas sack with a  
 barrel-hoop for a mouth,  
 And we kind o' felt that Providence controlled  
 the frost and the drouth;  
 And in harvest work we always neighbour forth  
 and back,  
 And never thought of threshing till the grain  
 was in the stack;

And hauled our wood in the winter-time, and  
 smoked beside the fire,  
 And felt our lot was everything that reason  
 could desire.

Yes, times have changed since the early days;  
 farming is now an art;  
 They're tearing the prairie with steam and gas,  
 turning the rivers loose  
 To water the arid regions and bring them into  
 use;  
 Binding the earth with railway lines, netting  
 the world with wires,  
 Leaving the mail at our corner-posts, pampering  
 our desires;  
 They show us that times are better, prove it in  
 a thousand ways,  
 But we think of the old-time comradeship and  
 sigh for the early days.

(KOP, pp. 157, 159)

In many of his poems Stead picks up episodes and incidents of heroism and courage and celebrates these basic qualities of a pioneering people. "A Prairie Heroine," which was composed on seeing a white monument from the train window, "standing alone in the prairie, while the train rounded a curve,"<sup>53</sup> provides the most striking example of the quiet courage of the pioneers. It is too long to be quoted in full, but extracts from it will show the qualities I mention:

We built ourselves a little home, and in  
 our work and care  
 It seemed to me she always took what was  
 the lion's share;  
 God knows just what she suffered, but she  
 hid it with a smile,  
 And made out that she thought I was the only  
 thing worth while.

She stood it through the summer and the warm  
     brown days of fall,  
 And of all voices calling her she would not  
     hear the call;  
 But when the winter settled with its cold,  
     white pall of snow  
 She seemed to whiten with it, but she thought  
     I didn't know;  
 She tried to keep her spirits up and laugh  
     my fears away,  
 But I saw her growing thin and ever weaker  
     day by day.

At last I couldn't stand it any longer,  
     so I said,  
 'I think you'd better try and spend a day or  
     two in bed  
 While I go for a doctor. It's only sixty miles.'  
 . . . . .

I made a trip on horseback, and we floundered  
     on all night,  
 And reached our destination in the early  
     morning light.  
 But the doctor had gone out of town,--just  
     where, no one could say,  
 And a lump rose in my chest that fairly took  
     my breath away.  
 But I daren't stay there thinking, and my  
     search for him was vain,  
 So I bought some wine and brandy and I  
     started home again.  
 . . . . .

She must ha' watched all night for me, for  
     in the morning grey  
 She saw me stagger in the snow and fall beside  
     the way,  
 And God knows how she did it--she was only  
     skin and bones--  
 But she came out here and found me and dragged  
     me home alone,  
 And took the precious liquor that had cost us  
     all so dear,  
 And poured it down this worthless hulk that's  
     blattin' here.  
 . . . . .

I guess you know what happened: I lived,  
 she passed away;  
 I robed her in her wedding-dress and laid her  
 in the clay.

(KOP, pp. 117-119)

Sentimental no doubt, this kind of courage  
 and sacrifice becomes still more touching when it  
 is displayed by children as in "Daddy's Helper"  
 where a young child sets out to look for his father  
 who has not returned home at his usual hour. A couple  
 of stanzas will suffice to give the feel of the poem:

Daddy has gone for the cattle  
 Over the plains away  
 Daddy should be returning  
 Now at the close of day;  
 And the little lad from the window  
 Looked for the coming herds,  
 Then quietly stole through the open door,  
 Murmuring low the words--  
 "Daddy's a long time coming,  
 Baby will bring him home."

Quickly the darkness gathered,  
 Quickly the night came on;  
 Brave little boy-feet travelled  
 Where they should not have gone;  
 . . . . .

Darkly the river windeth  
 Deep in its narrow bed;  
 Cruel are the rocks beside it,  
 Sharp are the rocks o'erhead;  
 Slyly the night beast lurketh,  
 Broadly the great plain lies--  
 Only the star of heaven  
 Knows how a young life dies.

(KOP, pp. 80,81)

Another poignant poem about a child is "Little Three  
 Year Old" which we are told was composed "from thoughts

that were his own when his son of that age lay for weeks at the point of death."<sup>54</sup>

In the prairie poems, Stead runs the entire gamut of emotions which the homesteader and the pioneer feel. He brings out their longings for the homes and comforts left behind, their nostalgic yearning for loved ones perished in the harsh climate of a hostile land, as well as their sense of achievement and joy at overcoming the hardships and difficulties that beset them on their arrival. He manages to convey vividly the kind of life that people ~~lived~~ lived on the prairies. And since no poet before him had written about the prairies, he became popular and attained a phenomenal success. His poems had a homely and direct appeal for the homesteaders and pioneers for whom they were written. Whether they were narratives like "A Prairie Heroine" and "The Squad of One," or reflective ones like "The Homesteader to his Dog," or supernatural ones like "God's Signalman," they all had a direct and instant appeal to the common man because Stead wrote about the feelings and longings of the common man. His readers appreciated the sentiments he expressed and found a ready affinity with them. To cite only one example: "But the life that I lost was more to

me than all the lives he saved" (EBOP, p. 31). The thought may appear selfish and ignoble, but it is a truly paternal sentiment which any father might feel.

Of course all this does not make Stead a significant poet. But then I am not trying to make out a case for Stead's greatness as a poet. My only contention is that Stead's poetry which appears trite and useless to us today has to be seen and studied in the context of its time rather than being condemned out of hand by the attitudes of today. That the poetry has little, if any, intrinsic worth should not make us overlook its historical importance. As the first poet of the prairies, he has significance in so far as he paved the way for later and perhaps better poets; and his prairie poems ought to be preserved; not because they are great poetry, but because they are good verses.

The least deserving of Stead's poems, it seems to me, are the imperialistic ones. Written to show and emphasize his Loyalist tendencies, these have little or no saving grace. They read like childish exercises written to curry favor with England by praising her. Juvenile in both thought and form, the high sounding didactic tone of many

still further reduces their quality. This didactic tone, we might presume, is one of the legacies of Ralph Connor's influence on him. There is ample evidence in Stead's papers and in the various interviews given by him that he was influenced by Connor both as man and writer. I have already referred to the Rotary meeting in which he confessed being encouraged in his writing career by his "intimate association with Ralph Connor."<sup>55</sup> Perhaps Stead's reputation as a poet might not have suffered as it has, had he not written these imperialistic verses. A typical example is provided by "Manhood's Estate" which was written on the occasion of the transference of the British fortresses in Canada to Canadian garrisons. It reads:

Youth must lean on the mother's arm and obey  
the mother's will:  
But manhood faces the world alone,  
And bends its ways till they fit his own:  
Yet manhood honours his mother's name, and  
loves his mother still.

Some said--but they spoke in ignorance, and  
in words of little weight--  
"The child must be a child until he reach  
a man's estate;  
But when Ambition flaunts before, and Duty  
lags behind,  
Maternal regulations he will scatter to the  
wind."

But the mother smiled at the foolish speech,  
for she knew that her child was true;  
And she said, "The things that I wish of him  
are the things that my son will do;

I pronounce his absolute liberty, I remove  
 my slightest ban,  
 And I give him the keys of a continent, with  
 the bidding, 'Be a man!'"

Youth must lean on the mother's arm and obey  
 the mother's will:

But manhood faces the world alone,

(EBOP, pp. 13-14)

But imperialism and patriotism were in Stead's blood. When he used his poetry to voice these feelings he was not merely reflecting the feelings of the masses but his own innate and lifelong concerns. In 1918 in an address given at the Forum on January 6, on the New Federation, Stead traced the development of British political history from the absolute monarchy of William I through the stages that limited that monarchy. His inherent imperialism again came out; he felt that Canada had no right to decide in matters of war and peace. And out of four alternatives which were being proposed at the time, he felt that the 'New Federation' was the most feasible.

In summing up an assessment of Stead as a poet we may say that his significance lies in the fact that during that decade he was the only prairie poet of any particular merit. The west had as yet produced no poetry. Stead had the unique honor of putting the west on the literary and poetical map

of Canada. Today we can dismiss those verses as juvenile and valueless but they had in them instant appeal and brought both money and fame to the writer. Stead's reputation as a poet is remarkably illustrative of what Dr. Carleton Stanley once said in an interview: "If a man is swallowed up by popular taste at once he is certainly not very hard to chew or digest. If a man is really big, it takes something big among his readers to appreciate him."<sup>56</sup>

In Stead's case however we should recognize that Stead himself valued his popularity with the masses more than the critical acclaim of erudite scholars. In an interview published in The Winnipeg Tribune on November 11, 1912, Stead is reported to have said: "Personally I take it a greater compliment to find my work appreciated by the man in the street than any amount of favorable criticism from those who believe that all literature must be governed by precedent." He added that he had very little grievance against the critics of the Canadian press. But that was in 1912, when he was being acclaimed as the poet of the west, and before he had written the novels. It is interesting to reflect whether Stead would at this time have no grievance against his critics.

I cannot help noting the affinity between the popularity given to Kipling and to Stead, and quoting T.S. Eliot for what he had to say about Kipling's verse. The whole thing seems to be so aptly applicable to Stead's verse too:

The earlier work is juvenilia, but juvenilia which, having been published in its time, is essential reading for a full understanding of Kipling's progress. Most of it is what it was intended to be, light reading . . . it exhibits that same precocious knowingness about the superficial level of human weakness that is both effective and irritating . . . It is obviously the work of a clever young man who might go far in journalism, but neither in feeling nor in rhythm does most of it give any hint that the author would ever write a memorable poem. It is unnecessary to say that it is not poetry . . . it does not pretend to be poetry . . . But to be able to write good verse to occasion is a very rare gift indeed . . .<sup>57</sup>

This seems a very accurate assessment not only of Kipling's verse but of Stead's as well. It takes into account the potential; and it gives praise where praise is due. Some of Stead's poems are really powerful in their appeal and poignancy. It is told about "God's Signaller" that when the poem was read out to passengers in a train, there was not a dry eye in the car.<sup>58</sup> His apology "To France" was published in over 200 publications and had been

translated into French before it was included in Kitchener and Other Poems. Stead had the potential for writing poignantly moving verse if only he could restrain himself, but often his sentiments over-burdened his material.

Interestingly enough both Logan and French individually commended Stead as a poet though in their joint venture they apparently denounced him. A letter sent by Logan from "Somewhere in France" was positively laudatory. He wrote to congratulate Stead on his "splendid success) in poetry."<sup>59</sup> He went on to say that this was "not the old vaudeville stuff, but genuine fine-art poetry" and added that "the Daily Express, London, England, Mar. 25, . . . contains an extraordinary tribute to your genius." Logan continued praising Stead and concluded his letter with: "Service's last book is positively rotten, while yours, which I have never seen, but have heard about, is very fine."<sup>60</sup>

Logan was all praise for Stead's recent poetry (which he had never seen) and even wrote to The Calgary Herald commending his poem "To France" as an example of "poetry which has not only dignity in theme but also pure beauty of artistic craftsmanship."<sup>61</sup> A couple of verses quoted below will show that Logan was right:

We little knew thee, France; we thought--  
 And God forgive us that our thought was sin--  
 We thought thee fair without, and false within;  
 And did not seek to know thee as we ought.

How well thy sons have risen to thy need  
 No art can picture on the printed page;  
 But hoary Time shall beckon, age to age,  
 The deeds of France, for France is great indeed.

And thou hast suffered; who shall count the toil?  
 Thy cup of grief shall silently endure;  
 But thy great spirit riseth white and pure;  
 For France is still a nation and a soul!

(KOF, pp. 18-19)

The fact that French also at one time held a comparatively high opinion of Stead's work is revealed by a letter written by one Lilian Leveridge to Stead dated May 15, 1918, in which she writes:

Your name has been familiar to me for some years, and I have been greatly interested in any of your poems that have chanced to come my way. A few months ago Mr. French devoted one of our Canadian Literature Club evenings to a full and very appreciative survey of your poetry. It was one of those evenings that in my memory stand out as being particularly illuminating and enjoyable.<sup>62</sup>

And yet when Logan and French got together to bring out their book Highways of Canadian Literature in 1924, they again bracketed Stead with Service and dismissed both as belonging to the Vaudeville school of poetry. They explained that this was an expression used to describe the "throng of verse-makers whose vogue formed a decadent interim in Canadian poetry."<sup>63</sup>

They further enlarged that this label was given "on account of themes of their verse, its special and distinguishing technique, and its particular appeal to popular or vulgar taste."<sup>64</sup> It was obvious that they were at pains to justify their use of the term, because they explained:

As used here, the term Vaudeville harks back to its original French connotation . . . it means, first, entertainment which appeals to popular or vulgar or low taste in verse. It means, secondly, arresting or violent methods in technique of vividness in verse-colour and verse-rhythms rather than on the side of the picturesque and often picaresque matter --characters and situations--of the verse of this school . . . the term Vaudeville . . . is applied here as a descriptive epithet.<sup>65</sup>

One can almost sense an exaggerated effort on their part to justify an otherwise condemnatory label. It becomes imperative to quote them at length in order to show how they built up the case for including the poetry of both Service and Stead under this derogatory label:

The sublimation of the technique of emotional vividness to the exclusion of all regard for the intrinsic and aesthetic beauty and moral dignity of poetry--this is the essential formula of the verse of the Vaudeville School of Canadian poets. Their aims and motives were sincere and human. One motive was genuinely aesthetic: they wished to write verse that would escape the emotional

deadness of the traditional themes and manner of Canadian poetry. The other motive was pragmatic: they wished to write rhythmic and rimed social documents in verse which would have such novelty of theme and such dramatic or theatrical or 'sensational' content as immediately to create a demand for the 'new poetry' and make it readily marketable. Thus should 'the art of poetry' become at once both pleasurable and profitable.<sup>66</sup>

Having recognized Service's and Stead's motives and given credit where it was due, Logan and French acknowledged that the themes treated by them were new, and attributed their success to the newness of their themes:

the newness of their themes and their naive disregard of technical niceties were mistaken in the East for originality, vigor, freshness, and breeziness in art, and were welcomed and read by all classes of Canadians with avidity as 'real,' not 'hothouse' poetry.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, in a very ambivalent way, did they recognize the significance of a writer like Stead, even while apparently dismissing him.

As mentioned before, the themes of Stead's poetry, like his editorials, were not merely a reflection of the popular sentiment of the time; the emotions and subjects about which he wrote were to remain his lifelong concerns and interests, and appeared in all his writing, whether poetry or prose.

So, when he turned to the writing of his novels the same themes cropped up again. But, as it would be evident by now, Stead was forever widening his horizons and experience, and concomitant with that his themes also widened, so that his novels, coming later in point of time, cover a wider range of subjects, but do not discard those of the poetry.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, 6, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Their son Lorne was born on July 19, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> Wilfrid Eggleston, "The Causerie," The Winnipeg Free Press, September 21, 1946.

<sup>4</sup> No documentary evidence is available. This is pure conjecture but corroborated by Mr. Eggleston in an unrecorded interview on November 19, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Joseph Morris, one of Edmonton's pioneer businessmen placed an order for an automobile in 1903 when he saw a picture of it in one of the magazines. It arrived from Winnipeg by 'Express' train and was Alberta's first automobile.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Maclean, "Early Start Made by Bob Stead was of Very Humble Character," The Ottawa Journal, December 16, 1922. Anne Maclean tells us that Stead confessed having used the "contrast in settlement booms" in The Homesteaders.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from The Morning Albertan to Robert Stead dated January 10, 1913, in Stead Papers, vol. I, folder 7. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Stead to The High River Times dated February 10, 1949, in SP, vol. I, folder 7.

<sup>10</sup> Robert J.C. Stead, "Past, Present and Future," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Dates in parentheses indicate the date of The High River Times when the subject was discussed.

<sup>12</sup> There seems to be a definite link between these reflections and Stead's novel, The Bail Jumper. Either these reflections provided the subject of the novel or the novel inspired these reflections.

<sup>13</sup> Calgary, published by The Calgary Herald, text by Bob Shiels (1975), p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> 3485 building permits were issued in 1912; this figure was not reached again until 1950. (Municipal Manual, 1969, p. 147.)

<sup>15</sup> Factual information on Calgary is from Robert Stead's "Calgary--City of the Foothills," Canadian Geographical Journal 36 (April 1948), pp. 154-170. (Subsequent references to the Canadian Geographical Journal will be as CGJ.)

<sup>16</sup> Stead's second son, Stanley, was born on March 11, 1912.

<sup>17</sup> Anne Maclean, "Robert Stead--Homer of the Prairies," London Free Press (London, Ontario), December 16, 1922.

<sup>18</sup> Review of The Empire Builders and Other Poems in The Star (St. John, New Brunswick), December 24, 1909.

<sup>19</sup> "Poetry of the Plains," review of The Empire Builders and Other Poems in The Toronto Star, December 19, 1909.

<sup>20</sup> "More Canadian Verse," review of The Empire Builders and Other Poems in The Montreal Witness, November 21, 1908.

21 Review of The Empire Builders and Other Poems in The Montreal Star, April 14, 1909.

22 Review of The Empire Builders and Other Poems in The Toronto World, December 18, 1910.

23 Review of The Empire Builders and Other Poems in The Herald (Miami, Manitoba), December 16, 1909.

24 Mentioned by: The Winnipeg Telegram, January 15, 1910; The Journal (Constancia), February 25, 1910; and The Oshawa Reporter, September 16, 1910.

25 Mentioned by: News (Nanton, Alberta), January 19, 1911, and December 18, 1912; The Winnipeg Tribune, November 11, 1912, and December 3, 1913; and The High River Times, December 17, 1914.

26 Notice in The Morning Albertan, August 5, 1914.

27 The Winnipeg Tribune, December 3, 1913.

28 The Oshawa Reporter, September 16, 1910.

29 The Canadian Courier, November 26, 1910, p. 28.

30 Letters from Lord Grey to Robert Stead dated March 6, and April 4, 1911, in SP, vol. I, folder 2.

31 Found scribbled on a piece of paper in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. It could be part of a poem that was never completed.

32 E.C. Thompson in his M.A. Thesis says that Songs of the Prairies contained four new poems but that is not correct.

33 Letter from Lord Grey to Stead dated March 9, 1912; in SP, vol. I, folder 2.

34 Letter from Robert Stead to E. Moore dated December 14, 1922, in Lorne Pierce Papers (Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston), Box I. (These papers are also unnumbered.)

- 35 "Driver Dick's Last Run," Canadian Magazine 23, 4 (August 1904), pp. 359-362.
- 36 "That Carson Girl," MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 32, p. 1.
- 37 "The Prsident of the Bar Y," MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30, p. 3.
- 38 Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country (University of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 33.
- 39 "Opal," MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 33, p. 5.
- 40 "The Romance of the Royal Mounted," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 2.
- 41 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
- 42 "The Fellow Who Won't Be Beat," MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30, p. 1.
- 43 Stead's first novel The Bail Jumper was published in 1914, followed by The Homesteaders in 1916.
- 44 C.A. Hayden, "Bob Stead has Stepped up Higher," The Toronto Star Weekly, February 22, 1919.
- 45 In view of the comparative inaccessibility of Stead's poems I have provided extensive quotations from them.
- 46 W.T. Allison, "Robert J.C. Stead, Poet of the Prairies," Introduction to Kitchener and Other Poems (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1917), p. vi.
- 47 "The Man Who Wrote The Cow Puncher," Farm and Ranch Review, September 20, 1918.
- 48 Ibid.

- 49 There may be more than 56 but I have been able to find that many. The unfavorable one was published by The Vulcan Advocate, June 26, 1918.
- 50 Rocky Mountain Courier (Banff, Alberta), November 2, 1917.
- 51 The Calgary Daily Herald, October 26, 1918.
- 52 The Bulletin (Fort William), August 8, 1921.
- 53 "Of R.J.C. Stead, The Prairie Poet," by One Who Knows Him, The Edmonton Journal, January 27, 1915.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Mentioned in Chapter I, page 18.
- 56 The Winnipeg Tribune, September 26, 1946.
- 57 T.S. Eliot, "Rudyard Kipling," Introduction to A Choice of Kipling's Verse (London: Faber & Faber, 1941), pp. 7-8.
- 58 Incident recounted in the editorial in The Napinka Century, December 20, 1909.
- 59 Letter from J.D. Logan to Stead dated May 23, 1917, in SP, vol. I, folder 7.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 National Progress (Toronto), 1917. Impossible to locate for verification of page numbers and date.
- 62 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 7.
- 63 J.D. Logan and Donald G. French, Highways of Canadian Literature (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1924), p. 271.

64 Ibid., p. 271.

65 Ibid., p. 272.

66 Ibid., pp. 272-273.

67 Ibid., p. 277.



## Chapter III

### Success

The tide of affairs in Stead's literary life, for a number of reasons, began to turn before World War I. He had joined the staff of the Calgary Albertan in 1912, but his association with the newspaper was rather short-lived, ending quite abruptly in March 1913 when he was appointed to the staff of the publicity branch of the CPR Colonization Department. A new department of Natural Resources, a branch of the CPR, had been created at the beginning of 1912. Its director spotted Stead's publicity potential and invited him to join the department. It is ironical that Stead who had used his editorials to criticize the CPR<sup>1</sup> was now asked to publicize the same organization.

Working for the CPR offered one great advantage that had been denied to Stead till this time. He liked travelling and to have new experiences; now he could satisfy his roving instinct as part of his job. He continued to live in Calgary; but his new employment

required considerable travelling, which he enjoyed not only for its own sake but for the opportunities it offered him to visit new places and meet new people--experiences that he could always use to advantage in his creative writing. Stead had started writing as early as 1904, but turned to novel-writing only around 1912. By then he had acquired a considerable flair for writing prose as a result of the numerous opportunities that had opened up for him in the form of newspaper articles, sketches, and short stories. Having mastered the prose technique Stead used the comparative leisure provided by the working hours of the automobile agency to write his first novel, The Bail Jumper, published in 1914.

Set in the fictional community of Plainville, The Bail Jumper is "a western tale," but one, as Stead stated, that has "nothing 'Wild West' about it."<sup>2</sup> He elaborated: "The Wild West of literature owes its existence almost entirely to the imagination of certain long-bow novelists."<sup>3</sup> Stead rightly claimed that he had "simply tried to paint prairie life as true to conditions as [his] ability [would] permit." He ended with the assertion: "I think I may claim that thirty years intimate association with the life of the plains at least to some degree fits me for the task."<sup>4</sup> The

Bail Jumper is the story of a young man who, though innocent, is charged with a theft, and advised, by the villain-disguised as friend, to flee and become a fugitive from justice--or a 'bail jumper.' However, after a few melodramatic and sentimental vicissitudes, all ends happily.

It is indeed remarkable that Fisher Unwin of England should have agreed, rather volunteered, to publish The Bail Jumper. The publishing history of the novel reveals not only that the correspondence had been initiated by Unwin but also that Stead had by then already acquired a wide reputation in England. In October 1912 Unwin wrote to Stead asking him if he would give them "the opportunity of publishing" a work of his "in Great Britain, in the Colonies, and in the U.S.A."<sup>5</sup> In answer to this very ambitious and tempting offer Stead gave them the choice of The Empire Builders, or Prairie Born, or "the manuscript of a novel hitherto unpublished."<sup>6</sup> When Unwin showed interest in the manuscript Stead sent him The Bail Jumper. By May 1913 Unwin had made up his mind and agreed to publish it, provided a Canadian publisher would buy 1000 copies from him and look after the sale and promotion of the book in Canada, since he did not visualize a very large sale for it in England.<sup>7</sup>

Stead suggested William Briggs of Toronto, but left the two publishers to work out their terms of collaboration themselves. Although the original intention had been to publish the book in the United States also, the publishers were unable to make satisfactory arrangements for this; and eventually it was decided to bring it out in England and Canada only, although the available evidence indicates that all copies were printed in England, and some were then sent to Briggs for Canadian sale, bearing the Briggs imprint.<sup>8</sup>

The correspondence and settlement of terms took up the whole of 1913. On January 24, 1914, Stead sent them alternate titles for the novel, not being satisfied with the original one. He suggested "Ray Burton--Fugitive," or, "An Innocent Criminal," but left the final choice to his publishers. The book went to the press as The Bail Jumper. Its proofs were ready by March 1914, although it was not published until June 29 of the same year. When Stead was asked to give the publishers a list of people to whom the book should be sent, either for reviews or as potential buyers, he included the name of the Earl of Grey in the list and a copy of the novel was sent to him in July 1914.

By August, Stead was becoming concerned about the effect the war might have on the sales of his book.<sup>9</sup> He realized that 1914, the shadow of war already darkening the horizon, was a very critical year. He also felt that Briggs did not try enough to promote the sale of The Bail Jumper in Canada. In a letter to Fisher Unwin he wrote:

I sold four thousand copies of my first book of verse myself, almost exclusively by mail, and could have sold as many more if I had had time to devote to it, and yet Dr. Briggs complains that he lost on one thousand Bail Jumpers!

Do you know that, so far as I have been able to learn, Dr. Briggs secured a total of three reviews of The Bail Jumper in all Canada? I personally secured twenty-one reviews, and could have had many more but Dr. Briggs declined to supply me with copies for review purposes unless I bought them.<sup>10</sup>

He further added that at Christmastime he found booksellers in the largest towns of Alberta "who had never been canvassed, circularized, or approached in any way" for the book.<sup>11</sup> In the same letter Stead expressed his inability to "undertake any considerable publicity campaign" for his novel because it cost him too much money.<sup>12</sup>

In spite of Stead's dissatisfaction, The Bail Jumper was well received and accorded considerable notice by the English and Scottish press, and

by October its reputation had spread so widely that notices began to appear in Australian and New Zealand dailies. Canadian reviewers found their work simplified and ready-made and in many cases were content to serve just extracts from the English and Scottish reviews. Press reaction was thus both wide and favorable. Even reviewers who found the story melodramatic and the dialogue stilted praised the book for its pictures of western life. For instance, the Grain Grower's Guide of Winnipeg described it as "a splendid picture of western life as it really is,"<sup>13</sup> while The Cartwright Review praised it for being "a thrilling revelation of Western life."<sup>14</sup> Surprisingly, this was an aspect noticed and commented on by the foreign press also: three of the London (England) papers commended the novel for its pictures of western life.<sup>15</sup> Australian and New Zealand reviewers too felt that "the pictures of life in the Canadian West . . . redeem [ed] the book"<sup>16</sup> while some others described it as "a fine picture of outback life, with the human element strongly in evidence."<sup>17</sup>

As a first novel The Bail Jumper has much to recommend it. (As pointed out by most reviewers, it presented the west in realistic terms--if we, as

readers, accept the reviewers' concept of 'realism' to mean a close adherence to the actuality of landscape and nature, and a portrayal of life without idealization or degradation. A few commended the characterization and noted its three-dimensional quality. Although book reviews are a poor substitute for serious criticism, in Stead's case this is the only criticism available. Moreover, considerable insight and literary awareness was revealed in these reviews. None praised the plot construction, which is weak in its rather heavy use of coincidence and its tendency to waver between the melodramatic and the sentimental. But the significance of The Bail Jumper is one of literary history than that of artistic artefact, in the sense that in writing it Stead served his apprenticeship at a realistic rendering of the prairie country which helped him towards a maturer and more sophisticated presentation of both characters and background in his later novels. For the first time in prairie fiction we find a writer trying to impose realism on the romance and sentimentalism of previous prairie fiction. This imposition, however, does not seem to be done very consciously for it is difficult to trace any definite literary influence on Stead that may have been

responsible for the strains of realism in his work. Yet, he fits in with the literary temper of the times very well when writers like Ole Rolvaag, William Dean Howells, Hamlin Garland, and Theodore Dreiser, were writing and advocating (or had already done so) a greater emphasis on 'truth,' or, a more realistic rendering of background, characters, and events. The realistic treatment of nature and landscape that we find in The Bail Jumper had been introduced by Rovaag in his Giants of the Earth. But whether Stead had read his work or was even familiar with it we have no evidence. Stead, constantly working at two jobs, trying to master the Latin grammar, and writing, seems too busy to be reading fiction. In the light of these facts, it would be safe to assume that Stead's groping towards realism cannot be attributed to any literary influence of the time. However, Stead was not very successful in his venture for the various strands of realism, romance, and sentimentalism stand out separately and do not form a homogenized mixture. This does not, however, detract from the significance of the novel for it remains important as an experiment reflecting the conflicting strains of romance, sentiment, and realism in his own personality. Romantic by nature, Stead's Presbyterian upbringing and strict morality presumably

hampered his expression of romance, sentiment, and emotion in life as in fiction.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the inopportune time of publication and the lack of enterprise of Dr. Briggs, two Canadian editions of the novel sold briskly. Unwin then allowed it to run out of print, and the copyright reverted back to Stead, who now offered the manuscript to Briggs. But Briggs declined to publish it, feeling that the market for the book was exhausted. Whether the reviews that appeared abroad--in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, even Siam--prompted any sales is doubtful. However, Stead definitely had an English and Canadian audience to cater to. The Daily Globe (London, England), of July 10, 1914, included The Bail Jumper in its Library List of Fiction. Both the Western Standard of Calgary and The Canadian Countryman of Toronto were very keen on serializing it. Well aware that serializing would help his reputation in addition to being profitable, Stead quickly granted permission. The Canadian Countryman paid him \$50.00 for the serial rights, and subsequently, in 1921, the Western Newspaper Union of Chicago paid him \$272.00 for the same rights. But serializing has other advantages also, and Stead realized that serial appearance promotes the sale of a book "by bringing it to the

attention of a large number of people who do not read it in serial form,"<sup>19</sup> but would do so in book form.

It is interesting to note that even the Northern Newspaper Syndicate of England asked Stead for a story which they might serialize. Stead wrote to Fisher Unwin about it, wondering if The Bail Jumper would be acceptable. Though the outcome of this correspondence is not known, it is indicative of the gradual hold that Stead was beginning to have on his English audience.

His next novel, The Homesteaders, appeared as a serial in The Westminster of Toronto in 1916, before it was published in book form. Stead received \$100.00 plus the tribute that this was "the kind of Canadian fiction Canadian authors ought to write."<sup>20</sup> Stead wrote about it to Unwin on February 27, 1915, as follows:

My new story, which I think of calling "The Homesteaders," is now practically finished. It is a tale of approximately 90,000 words, with its scenes laid in Manitoba and Alberta. It pictures two land booms, with a lapse of twenty-five years between them, and introduces some of the characters already met in "The Bail Jumper," but is in no sense a sequel . . .

As, in the ordinary course of expectation a large proportion of my sale will be in Canada, I feel that the royalty on copies sold in Canada should not be less than that on copies

sold in Great Britain. . . .

As I could place many copies with newspapers and elsewhere to advantage, if the cost to me were not too great, I would like an arrangement by which I could buy copies at a better price than was quoted me on "The Bail Jumper."<sup>21</sup>

But Unwin could not offer better terms to Stead as he made clear in his letter of March 16, 1915. He refused to increase the royalty on the Canadian edition on the plea that they also "depended upon the Canadian sales, to pay practically [all their] expenses."<sup>22</sup> Since Stead did not have much of an option in the matter he allowed Unwin to go ahead with the publication on the same terms. But a new problem came up. Unwin could not arrive at any satisfactory terms with the Canadian publishers. Dr. Hadow, editor of the Westminster Publishing Company, had been quite eager and willing to handle the sale of The Homesteaders in Canada, but by January 3, 1916, he too expressed his disinclination because the price quoted by Unwin was prohibitive.<sup>23</sup> Anxious to have the book published, Stead thought of handling the Canadian edition himself, and wrote to that effect to Unwin. Since The Homesteaders like The Bail Jumper was to be printed and bound in England, Stead gave the following instructions to Unwin:

If I complete arrangements for a Canadian publisher to handle the edition I will advise you when returning proofs: if not I will want your name to appear as publisher, the same as in the English edition, without any alteration except perhaps the insertion of the words "Canadian edition."<sup>24</sup>

Stead's handling of the edition was so successful that on May 19, 1916, he wrote to Unwin (before The Homesteaders was even published): "I already have this edition over half sold . . ." <sup>25</sup>

According to the terms, Stead was to receive 1000 copies and 40 free copies for reviews. Later, however, a contract was closed with the Musson Book Company of Toronto, who agreed to handle the book in Canada.

Although the war continued and the time was hardly an ideal one for selling works of fiction (which Stead himself realized), The Homesteaders proved to be very popular; and its sale (possibly due to Stead's salesmanship) was far in excess of what had been anticipated. The first edition was sold out by the end of the year. The Canadian supply of 1000 copies sold out in five days, and western Canada failed to get any as all copies had been sold in the east. The Calgary Daily Herald of

November 15, 1916, protested, pointing out that the supply had fallen far short of the demand. As it was almost impossible, in war time, to secure more copies from England, Briggs had to send their representative all the way to England to secure the Canadian rights from the English firm: an ironical turn indeed since Briggs had been offered the book for publication and had declined. As The Calgary Standard commented: "Thus by a roundabout route does a prophet secure honour in his own country."<sup>26</sup> Assurances were printed in many Canadian papers that a reprint of The Homesteaders would be out by 1918. This took place, and the book proved such a hit with the public that by 1922 it was in its fifth edition. In November of the same year, Hodder & Stoughton decided to bring out a new edition, which was considered quite an event in literary book circles.

In addition to the large number of copies sold, The Homesteaders was serialized by the Farm and Ranch Review in 1917, by Farm and Dairy of Peterboro in 1919, by the Toronto Type Foundry Company in 1919-20, and by the Western Newspaper Union and Woman's Weekly in 1920. The largest sum of money for serializing was paid by the Western

Newspaper Union.<sup>27</sup> The circulation of The Homesteaders in serial form is difficult to gauge, but Mr. W.A. Patterson (Editor-in-Chief, Western Newspaper Union), wrote to Stead on November 6, 1920, saying that The Homesteaders was running "in approximately one thousand papers . . ."<sup>28</sup> There was also some talk of the novel "being dramatized for motion picture reproduction"<sup>29</sup> but no evidence is available about such a development.

The Homesteaders was not only a financial success, but a big and important step towards establishing Stead's reputation as "The Prairie Poet and Novelist." Reviewers were very enthusiastic; they hailed the book as "undoubtedly the leading native-born novel of the season,"<sup>30</sup> and expressed the view that Stead "as a clever delineator of Canadian prairie life . . . [had] no equal."<sup>31</sup> He was praised for "the graphic portrayal of early pioneer life" and "the beautiful word pictures" of southern Alberta.<sup>32</sup> It would be pertinent to point out here that The Homesteaders was reviewed not only by literary magazines and daily papers but also by more specialized journals such as The Railway News of Western Canada, and Canadian Farm Implements. E. Price, who reviewed it for the

Railway News, praised it as a book that recorded the experiences when the CPR was fighting for existence.<sup>33</sup> Canadian Farm Implements decided to side-step their usual policy and review a work of fiction. The editors felt that the novel had definite appeal for farm readers, and though Gilbert Parker, Nellie McClung, and Ralph Connor had been writing about the prairie "the living truth" was put down only by Stead.<sup>34</sup> The Calgary News-Telegram paid a similar tribute praising the novel and recommending it to "every farmer, every farmer's wife, son and daughter, and every dweller in the city or town . . ."<sup>35</sup> In short, it was recommended to everyone. Although the reviewers of the western Canadian press waxed the most eloquent, it is commendable that The Homesteaders attracted notice throughout the British Empire; and reviews appeared in England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Tasmania, and Siam.

The Homesteaders won for itself a distinctive place in Canadian literature and was recognized, even in its own day, as a permanent contribution to the literature of the country,<sup>36</sup> not simply because it was an accurate description of pioneers and pioneering, but also because it revealed "a literary art

and a skill of conception and construction not excelled" before.<sup>37</sup> In The Homesteaders Stead presented the West "in terms of a garden awaiting cultivation."<sup>38</sup> This garden motif is not only reminiscent of the "Garden of the World" myth, but may have, in all probability, grown out of it.<sup>39</sup> Though linked to American fiction by this myth, Stead showed that Canadian fiction could not follow American fiction blindly, and, in The Homesteaders pointed out the direction twentieth-century Canadian fiction was to take. In American literature it was the wild West beyond the frontier that had lent itself most readily as a popular theme for literature, but as pointed out by Harrison "the West to be found in English Canadian fiction is rarely a 'frontier'."<sup>40</sup> Canadian fiction sought different themes because it "developed with the growth of a settled agrarian population,"<sup>41</sup> and was consequently more concerned with the farmer and farming conditions. The frontier had less appeal as a theme for the early Canadian novelists, for, though

they came into incredibly rigorous pioneer conditions, they did not come to the edge of a trackless wilderness. They had the sense of a plain patrolled by the North West Mounted Police, surveyed for settlement, with a railroad stretching out to cross it.<sup>42</sup>

Stead in his handling of the garden myth modified it to suit the agricultural background of Canadian fiction by introducing into it pastoral imagery as well as the "moral assumption that nature is regenerative and man and his artificial creations . . . trivial or corrupt."<sup>43</sup> Stead had already touched on this theme of nature being regenerative in his short stories, where the opposition between the city as evil and the countryside as good had been brought out more sharply.

Stead himself felt that The Homesteaders was a better work than The Bail Jumper, because, in his opinion "the workmanship [in The Homesteaders was] more mature" than in The Bail Jumper.<sup>44</sup> His opinion was shared by the critics,<sup>45</sup> who recognized it as a piece of realistic writing before literary realism had become the order of the day in Canadian prairie fiction. It was, they agreed, a better novel because in it Stead had successfully discarded many of the romantic frills and melodramatic intensifications that had marred the earlier novel. Here was local color, "unstudied simplicity," and photographic accuracy."<sup>46</sup> A touch of enthralling romance thrown in at the end added to the book's appeal to the readers of the day. Stead had skillfully devised a popular type of "romantic western fiction

with strong realistic overtones."<sup>47</sup>

The "realistic overtones" in The Homesteaders are fairly pronounced because in it Stead treats realistically the problems of settlement and pioneering and shows how some of the pioneers, brutalized by hard work, become inhuman and indifferent. The tender John Harris of the earlier chapters has been hardened beyond recognition when we see him twenty-five years later. But Stead tempers his realism with romance and sentiment in the love affair of Jim Travers and Beulah, and despite its strong realistic scenes thus makes The Homesteaders an idyllic romance in many ways. To begin with, John and Mary Harris are a typical romantic couple of earlier prairie fiction, but change with experience in a realistic way. Their ideals crumble; when they are successful as farmers, the romantic and idealistic traits in John Harris's nature are completely submerged--rather overpowered--by a vaulting ambition that is focussed on an ever-widening goal.

In The Homesteaders Stead provided the direction in which prairie fiction was to flow as well as the prototypes of stock characters that were to crowd the pages of later prairie writers. John Harris is typical of the prairie patriarch, tyrannical and

narrow in outlook, dehumanized by hard work and success; Mary, broken in spirit, represents the bulk of prairie women who cease to think and become indifferent, hardened by hard work and harshness; Beulah, the rebellious daughter, foreshadows the defiance of the second generation who refuse to be subjugated and tied down to the monotony of a farm life.

By 1916 Stead had become an important figure on the prairie scene. A best-selling novelist and a poet of no mean repute, he was accorded extravagant praise and raised to the status of provincial hero. Reporters thronged around him desirous of hearing and recording his opinion on every subject, and often quoted his most trivial and personal remarks verbatim. A visit to the U.S. which was of no apparent significance was reported by The Calgary Herald. When writing of Roosevelt's popularity and eloquence the Herald quoted Stead: "There were 18,000 people present, and the applause which greeted Roosevelt was so great that he was kept standing for 35 minutes before being able to commence his address."<sup>48</sup> On another occasion The Morning Albertan reported Stead's return from the military encampment at Fort Lewis, Washington:

" . . . he saw 40,000 American troops in training for taking the field against the armies of the German Emperor."<sup>49</sup> Again, on February 5, 1918, The Calgary Herald quoted Stead's reaction to the first heatless day in Chicago.<sup>50</sup>

The second decade of the twentieth century seems to have been a very productive period for Stead. Beginning as a poet, he won recognition as a novelist with the publication of The Homesteaders. The middle years of the decade also saw a rise in his popularity as a speaker; and he was often asked to speak on a variety of subjects, and, if available press reaction is conclusive evidence, was mostly always successful, no matter what the occasion or subject. Whether an Ad Club Luncheon, or the 96th anniversary of the IOOF,<sup>51</sup> he had the knack of picking up the right subject and handling it in the right way.<sup>52</sup>

Early in 1916 Stead gave a talk on "Business Morality" which was reviewed favorably and widely by the press.<sup>53</sup> A brief look at the address will help us to understand his approach in general. A strongly moral, didactic tone came naturally to Stead and in this address he preached that "morality is right living." It is not itself a religion, but

is an outgrowth of religion. In it he took up the basic religious principle "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you" and tried to apply it to business. In commercial phraseology it becomes the gospel of the fair or square deal. Stead tried to point out that the common practice of using supply and demand to determine price is "immoral." This moral stance is a prelude to the socio-economic theories that became his lifelong concern and were to come out quite explicitly in his later fiction, especially in Dennison Grant.

According to Eggleston the secret of Stead's success as a speaker lay in his sense of humor and his good looks. Five feet eight inches in height, with a build that may be described as stocky but not fat, and sparkling eyes that were a mixture of green and blue, Stead immediately "charmed his audience by his handsomeness and charming manners."<sup>54</sup> Captivated instantly, the audience were spell-bound when he began to speak, because, being a man of versatile interests he had the gift of making the dullest subject interesting and humorous. In this connection Eggleston recalled how at one of the CAA meetings Stead was asked to read out the Treasurer's report, the Treasurer being absent. Stead

spent some twenty minutes reading it and supplemented it with such humorous comments that Eggleston felt that those twenty minutes were the best twenty minutes of the meeting.<sup>55</sup>

These years were years of success for Stead in every field. He built up his reputation as both writer and speaker, and his full-time career also flourished. In November 1916 he was appointed publicity agent of the CPR in the new Department of Natural Resources,<sup>56</sup> which had charge of the promotion of colonization and industrial development. When the Victory Loan Committee was formed he was appointed Chairman. There too he won recognition for his efforts. Stead publicized the Victory Loan in every way. Full page advertisements began to appear regularly in most of the prominent papers of the west; a Victory Loan Poetry Campaign was conducted and the prize-winning poem by George M. Maitland was published in The Morning Albertan on November 13, 1918. A parody of Henry Newbolt's poem "Play Up, Play Up, and Play the Game" appeared in the same paper on November 8, 1918. Unsigned, unacknowledged, it might very well have been another of Stead's efforts at publicity for the Canadian Victory Loan. The parody was entitled "Pay Up, Pay Up."

Stead's zeal in promoting the Victory Loan did not go unnoticed, for on December 15, 1917, J.S. Dennis, who was then Assistant to the President in the Department of Natural Resources, sent him a personal letter commending his work.<sup>57</sup>

About this time Stead also began to write non-fictional and semi-fictional material for the purpose of advertising products, institutions, presses, etc. He also wrote short stories designed for the same purpose. In 1916 he began his long association with John McAra of the Magnet press.

There is no evidence indicating how Stead and McAra came in contact, but in 1916 Stead started writing for the Magnet which McAra issued at irregular intervals to advertise his printing press. In these writings we find Stead for the first time trying to combine fiction and publicity. Very often he gives us a regular story with an ad obviously tagged on at the end; in other cases it seems that the story had been framed for the advertisement because it forms an integral part of it. In some, the fiction is abandoned altogether and Stead uses the Magnet for his own reflections and debates, usually conveyed through a dialogue between Jones and Old Man Allister, two characters who appeared

frequently in the Magnet in discussion of current problems. Stead continued writing for McAra with fair regularity until 1928.<sup>58</sup> Out of the twenty-five issues he wrote not one can be described as pure fiction. Four of the issues have Christmas stories, but stories so moralistic in tone and attitude that it is hardly possible to describe them as fiction: they read like little 'moralities.' "As You Were" is a short story about the war, and if it were not for its very didactic ending might have merited the name of 'story.' Most of the issues present Jones and Allister deep in their reflections; the story framework exists without the story.

Stead explains the nature of his commissioned writings for McAra in his "Breaking the Buyer's Strike:"

It isn't straight advertising dope, but little essays on all sorts of topics, brightly written and always contriving to say a good word for "McAra, the Printer," before the end of the story.<sup>59</sup>

He stated quite explicitly that "the purpose of 'The Magnet' was to attract business to the McAra printing shop."<sup>60</sup> The pieces written for the Magnet are the first instance we have of Stead subverting his creative talent to commercial ends. Eventually this process led to a falling off in the quality of his

short stories, as though his creative capacity were being overcome by his publicizing and commercial instinct. Soon his creative work came to be confined to novels alone.

As we have seen Stead was not very happy with Unwin as his publisher. Having established a wider reputation he felt he could again broach the subject of an improvement in terms. Accordingly, on November 24, 1917, Stead wrote that he had received an offer from another English firm offering him better terms for his next novel, which they had not even read.<sup>61</sup> Unwin acknowledged receipt of Stead's letter and was apparently prepared to reconsider the matter of improved terms, for he asked Stead to send them the terms and basis of a contract which would be acceptable to him.<sup>62</sup> Unwin also mentioned that in the meantime Kitchener was being considered for publication in England, and added that if he published the Kitchener volume, he should, in all fairness, be given the first choice for Stead's next manuscript. Stead was apparently satisfied and readily agreed in principle. When a copy of the contract was sent to him he made a few changes and sent it back to the English publishers, but no acknowledgment or answer was sent to Stead after that.

On February 7, 1918, Stead sent another letter to Unwin telling him his plans of getting The Cow Puncher published on October 1, 1918, and of his intention of getting it published in the U.S.A. around the same time. Having received no reply Stead sent the manuscript to A.P. Watt, a literary agent in England, to say that he had already settled the Canadian rights with the Musson Book Company of Toronto, that the rights for the U.S. were still pending, and would Watt place the manuscript with a publisher in England; he also wrote that he expected "a royalty of about 15% on the first 5000 copies and 20% thereafter with a deposit of . . . 50 to 100 pounds upon date of publication."<sup>63</sup> He added that Mr. Unwin had been his publisher in the past and that the manuscript must be offered to him first, but that his personal preference was "that the book should go to Hodder & Stoughton."<sup>64</sup> The needful was done; and when Unwin declined, the terms were immediately finalized with Hodder & Stoughton, the manuscript having been inadvertently submitted to them before being submitted to Unwin. By August 1918, the U.S. rights were settled with Harper & Bros.<sup>65</sup> Watt, however, failed

to secure the terms desired by Stead. The terms offered by Hodder & Stoughton and accepted by Stead were as follows:

We are prepared to pay royalty of 10% (ten per cent) on the first 1000 (one thousand) copies 15% (fifteen per cent) on the next 9000 (nine thousand) copies, and 20% (twenty per cent) thereafter.

Colonial sales at 4d. (fourpence) a copy. We are to have the option of publishing cheap editions 3 (three) years after the original publication, (royalty to be 7½ (seven and a half per cent) on the publishing price.)

We are prepared to pay £25. (twenty five pounds) on account of royalties on the day of publication. <sup>66</sup>

They were unable to give Stead a definite date of publication, as desired by him, and expressed their inability to bring it out in the autumn of 1918, thereby defeating his intention of a simultaneous publication. It may be mentioned here that The Cow Puncher, unlike his earlier novels, was printed and published in all three countries separately.

Since Watt was looking after Stead's interests in the matter of The Cow Puncher, Stead asked him to find out what had happened to the proposed publication of the Kitchener book in England. He mentioned having seen reviews and had an inkling that it had been published under the title Why Don't They Cheer? But Unwin refused to disclose the terms to Watt saying

that it had been brought out in agreement with Messrs Musson. Watt advised Stead to write to Musson and find out the terms. It is interesting to note that Why Don't They Cheer? was brought out by Musson and Unwin without even consulting Stead. Except for the fact that mention had been made by Unwin in a letter to Stead, the writer had been kept totally in the dark. When Stead probed into the matter this is what he discovered:

Musson's London office did submit the book to Mr. Unwin. He made an offer for it, and without submitting the matter to me, or even advising me what had been done, they accepted the offer, although I had not authorized them to do so.<sup>67</sup>

Stead brought this to Watt's notice possibly to let him know how he had been misused in the past, or warn him about the future--but absence of information leaves the matter uncertain.

The Cow Puncher was published more or less simultaneously in Great Britain, U.S.A. and Canada.<sup>68</sup> In matter of sales of Stead's books it beat all earlier records: "The first Canadian edition of ten thousand copies, placed on the market on the Oct. 24th" was exhausted by the middle of November, and a second edition was being printed.<sup>69</sup> Within

thirty days of first publication it was in its third edition.<sup>70</sup> Before the year was out Stead's Canadian publishers had reported "that The Cow Puncher was the best selling novel that season."<sup>71</sup> By early January 1919, it was already in its fourth edition and Stead had started receiving letters asking for rights to translate it into Norwegian and to arrange for its publication in Norway.<sup>72</sup> This most successful in sales of all Stead's works, touched the 17,000 mark by July 1919;<sup>73</sup> and though Stead was somewhat disappointed with the sale in England he consoled himself that this would help him lay the foundation for a future reputation.<sup>74</sup> He was not far wrong: for by 1921, R.P. Hodder-Williams had reprinted The Cow Puncher in a cheaper edition. On January 11, 1921, fifteen thousand copies of a two-shilling edition appeared, and in March 1923 another five thousand, and still the book had run out of print by September 1926, when the rights reverted back to the author. In all, The Cow Puncher sold over 70,000 copies.<sup>75</sup> The production of a cheaper edition in the case of this novel may have been due to Stead's personal contact with R.P. Hodder-Williams. There is evidence that Stead had met him in the summer of 1920 when he had made a

trip to England, though the influence and result of that meeting are mere conjecture.

Many papers rightly commented that in the case of The Cow Puncher the sales were in keeping with the reviews. Incidentally, it was reviewed in over 300 publications. The Winnipeg Tribune of March 1, 1921, also remarked that The Cow Puncher, even in Ottawa, sold better than any other novel that year. Reflecting in later years, Stead attributed its tremendous success to the publicity given to it:

When "The Cow Puncher" was published, my Canadian publishers agreed to supply one thousand copies for review purposes in Canada. You may consider the number absurd, but they actually supplied over eleven hundred. The large papers were covered in the usual way, but the smaller papers were supplied with prepared reviews. Clippings were received showing over 300 reviews published in Canada, and no doubt many were published which were missed by the clipping agency. Three hundred reviews of one book, published in Canadian papers, is, I think, pretty near a record. And they weren't all just paragraphs either. For example, the "Catholic Record," which, I suppose, is not on most review lists, published a review of THE COW PUNCHER [sic] of over 5,000 words--and very laudatory words at that. This paper has a circulation of 32,000, so it was well worth a review copy. No doubt the fine response of the Press was due, in part at any rate, to my wide personal acquaintance with editors. 76

The Cow Puncher sold well and was popular not only as a book, but as a serial too. The Farm and Ranch Review serialized it as early as November 1918, paying \$200.00 for the rights. The Toronto Type Foundry Company and the Farm Journal serialized it in 1919, the Orillia Times in 1920, and the Western Newspaper Union in 1921. The Western Newspaper Union paid \$500.00 for the serial rights this time as against \$250.00 paid for The Homesteaders. Even the Canada Weekly offered to buy the serial rights for \$500.00, but went into liquidation before being able to pay.<sup>77</sup>

The Cow Puncher was hailed all over the country as a great "romance" of the foothills, and commended for being both "interesting" and "free from sex problems"<sup>78</sup> (as though the two things were incompatible). Praised for its local color and dramatic interest it was criticized for its sentimentality. The general reaction was to regard it as another valuable contribution to the meagre literature of the country. A reviewer, A.C.C., called it "the novel of the year"<sup>79</sup> and highlighted its descriptions of the prairies. It would seem that the papers were vying with each other in their use of superlatives in order to lavish praise on the book. The Almeda Despatch called it "one of the finest stories of life in western Canada,"<sup>80</sup> while the

Canadian Freeman of Kingston, described it as "the greatest thing that came out of the prairie country."<sup>81</sup>

The British Columbian went a step further and wrote: "It . . . is not merely a novel; it is an event in the literary life of the country."<sup>82</sup>

With The Cow Puncher Stead raised the Alberta cowhand to the stature of a hero, investing him with heroic glamor and heroic qualities. The 'cow puncher' was given the halo of the hero of romantic fiction. Stead, who till now had allowed his heroes and heroines to live happily ever after, made an exception in this case and let his hero die wrapped up in glory on the field of war. Perhaps much of the novel's popular appeal derives from this "exploitation of patriotic sentiment."<sup>83</sup> And perhaps this ending was to be preferred to a happier one, in so far as it served to underline Stead's patriotic feelings and convey a message about the war which was not lost on his readers,<sup>84</sup> but the ending does not seem the logical and natural result of the preceding events. In this respect The Cow Puncher appears contrived, like The Bail Jumper--a fault which Stead had more or less overcome in The Homesteaders. One would almost get the feeling that Stead the patriot got the better of Stead the artist when the end was written.

While the realism of the book is convincing, its romanticism is not. In creating the background and landscape Stead was on known ground and could provide those little details that contribute to realism (although in this novel no place names are given), but in his expression of the romantic story Stead suffers from his usual in-built repression. It was perhaps his stern Presbyterian upbringing that had taught him to frown upon the candid expression of affairs of the heart; but whatever the reason, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Stead was never at ease when depicting the romantic traits and love affairs of his heroes. His male characters, like him, suffer from repression and are unable to express themselves freely in the company of women.

This novel, however, is autobiographical in other ways also. Dave Eldon seems to be the perfect alter ego for Stead not only in the external features of his life but in his attitude and thinking too. Dave's career, like Stead's is checkered; he uses his leisure hours to read and educate himself. The mental affinity is also indicated more subtly in that in this novel Stead gives us what may be described as his heroic ideal. He clearly exhibits the qualities he considers admirable in

a man: fairness, fearlessness, impartiality, courtesy, and an even temper (CP, p. 166). As his formula for success he presents a mix of heredity, environment, and ability, and defines success as a capacity to add to human happiness; he upholds the work ethic (in chapter 8); upholds commercial uprightness ( p. 126), and the golden mean (p. 153); he also expresses his views on Darwinism (p. 53) and applies Darwin's law of survival to war which leads him to conclude:

If our civilization is better than that of Germany we shall win, ultimately, and if our civilization is worse than that of Germany we shall be defeated, ultimately,--and we shall deserve to be defeated . . . the test of war will show that there are elements in German civilization which are better than ours, and elements in our civilization which are better than theirs, and that the good elements will survive and form the basis of a new civilization better than either.

(CP, p. 319)

Stead's affinity with his hero includes not only a correspondence of physical details of life and mental attitudes, but also a similarity of their two natures. Dave, like Stead (as we shall see when dealing with his later years), tends to exaggerate, and to magnify his pain and gloom:

When he was miserable his misery left no place in his soul for any ray of sunshine. It fed on itself, and grew to amazing proportions. It spread out from its original cause and enveloped his whole life. It tintured all his relationships, past, present and future. When a cloud of gloom settled upon him he felt that it would never lift, but became heavier and heavier until he was crushed under its weight.

(CP, p. 85)

This almost anticipates Stead's feeling "that suicide was the only honourable course" when he was suffering from a severe intestinal pain, or his references to "the Great Depression" when describing the gloom that descended upon him when he suffered physically (discussed in chapter 7).

Dave's religious attitude also is not very different from Stead's. When Dave decides to go to church, it is just a church and no mention is made of the denomination (CP, p. 86). This is quite in keeping with Stead's own religious attitude which, throughout his life, seems to have been more moral and ethical than ritualistic or denominational. In this novel Stead tends to emphasize this point, for Dave too, criticizes the church for being "too fussy over details" (CP, p. 108) and "too insistent upon the form of belief and not nearly insistent enough

upon conduct" (CP, p. 109). He elaborates further: "Each sect has its own trimmings but they all profess to use the same motor" (CP, p. 109). Dave's walking out of the church (p. 92) may also be taken as foreshadowing Stead's shift, in later years, from the Presbyterian to the Unitarian Church..

The Cow Puncher also has socio-economic significance for in it Stead tries to give shape and expression to the teachings of Henry George<sup>85</sup> and to formulate his own socio-economic theories which were to form almost a thesis in his next novel, Dennison Grant.

With the publication of The Cow Puncher Stead reached the high water mark of his commercial success as a novelist. It did not, however, detract from his reputation as a speaker. The newspapers of western Canada of the time show him to be much in demand as a public speaker. His talks were widely publicized and the reports that followed were invariably favorable.<sup>86</sup> To mention only one instance: on February 14, 1917, Stead addressed the Fortnightly Club in Calgary on "Adventures in Authorship." The talk proved so popular that within a month he was asked to give a repeat performance at the Strathmore Club and at the meeting of the Forum to be held in the

Methodist Church, both at Calgary.<sup>87</sup> Since his popularity ensured a large audience, the Methodist Church even imposed a 25-cent admission fee.<sup>88</sup> In this address Stead talked of his adventures with publishers, critics, and the public. He amused his audience by telling them how wilful the characters of fiction can be, and mentioned Beulah Harris of The Homesteaders as an example of a character who refused to live the role the author had planned for her. As The Standard of Alberta pointed out, Stead "at once got into close touch with his audience by his great humor."<sup>89</sup> The presence of a large audience prompted Stead to conclude the talk by readings from The Empire Builders and Songs of the Prairies and the 'Kitchener' poem--not a common practice but one that was readily accepted by the audience.

The range of Stead's talks was as wide as the scope of his editorials had been in earlier years. Even before he joined the Department of Immigration he gave a talk on immigration<sup>90</sup> in which he maintained that the world is not over-populated, but that the population is unevenly distributed, and that the purpose of immigration is to set the balance right. He took advantage of the subject to publicize the west and pointed out that Alberta alone could produce

food for 50 million people, but lacked the man power to tap its potential. A skilful publicity man, Stead used his talk to advertise the CPR as the best available means of transporting people from eastern Canada to the west.

An imperialist at heart he gave evidence of his leanings when he spoke on the "New Federation" in March 1918, and proposed that as the only alternative for Canada. He was all praise for Britain and pointed out that during the recent coal famine it was Britain, despite its engagement with the war, that had helped New York. Though the address was commended for being "interesting" and "of an entirely original character," it was criticized for being "intricate, dangerous, and ineffective."<sup>91</sup>

In 1921 while speaking on "Canadian American Relations" Stead pleaded for a better international understanding and a broader patriotism which looks not to the welfare of one nation but to the welfare of the world at large. In this he also advocated a back-to-the-land movement if the world was to be fed. He went on to say that Canada had the raw material but lacked man power, and hinted how things could improve if there were a better understanding between the two neighboring countries.

The recognition accorded to Stead as a speaker gradually fired his enthusiasm as an advocate of Canadian literature; he became a pioneer in the field of making Canadians aware of their own literature. A writer himself he was familiar with the problems peculiar to Canadian writers, and soon directed his energies towards the promotion and recognition of a national literature. He delivered his first address on the subject to the Dickens Fellowship Club at Wesley College in Calgary on April 11, 1918. Practised in the art of rhetoric, Stead began his address by asking "Have we a Canadian literature?" and answered by saying that if we had, then the question would be superfluous. He went on to define national literature as "the hopes, ideals, and sentiments of a people expressed in writing and incorporated into the hearts and minds of the nation."<sup>92</sup> Printing of books alone does not make a literature, he emphasized, and went on to show how and why Canadian literature had failed to come of age. The problem, he said, was that Canadian children learnt American literature, Canadian markets were flooded with American books and magazines, with the result that Canadian literature was stifled and smothered and could not grow. He ended with the plea that Canadians should buy and read books written

by Canadian writers and published in Canada as that was the only way to have a Canadian literature.

In February 1919, speaking on the same question,<sup>93</sup> Stead did not plunge immediately into his subject but started with one of his pet theories-- money and service rendered (a theory also found in his later novels, as for example in Dennison Grant and The Cow Puncher). From here he went on to literature in general, and said things like "Literature made the war possible, literature won the war, literature is the greatest power in the world."<sup>94</sup> Carried away by his own rhetorical zeal, Stead claimed that literature was above religion, or rather, religion depended on literature: "When you separate religion from literature I will separate light from heat."<sup>95</sup> From literature in general he turned to Canadian literature and tried to emphasize Canada's desperate need; for, he said, without vision the people would perish, and only literature could give them vision. He concluded that a nation is what it is on account of its literature.

Discussing the problems that the Canadian writer faces, problems of publishing and copyright, he explained:

Canada's position was unique in that it lay alongside of a nation of thirteen times its population, which spoke the same language, or nearly so . . . The publishing business is one which naturally tends to centralization, and as there is no language barrier the larger nation tends to become the publishing centre of both. This situation, bad enough in itself, is aggravated by copyright regulations. To obtain a copyright in the United States, the type for the book must be set there, and as it is pure waste of effort [t] to set it up twice, the tendency is for the Canadian publishers to have his books set up and printed in the United States. Indeed, the American publisher actually produces the book, and generally the Canadian publisher merely buys so many hundreds or so many thousands with which to supply the Canadian market. In this way the final say-so as to how the book shall be published, or whether it shall be published at all, rests with the American publisher. 96

The problem, as Stead pointed out, becomes more apparent in the case of magazines and periodicals, where overhead costs remain the same whether the circulation is 10,000 or 1,000,000. Wider circulation has the advantage of distributing the cost over an immense circulation, and thus enables the publisher to pay better prices to its writers and artists, and to sell its advertising space cheaper than its smaller competitors with a limited circulation are able to do. Having shown the problem of the Canadian author and publisher

Stead proceeded to show how the problem compelled Canadian writers to live abroad. In Canada "the average money returns from literature were, he said, less than the same industry and ability would earn in almost any other profession."<sup>97</sup>

By 1918 Stead's reputation as publicity agent was so well established that the Honorable J.C. Calder, who was then Minister of Immigration and Colonization of the Dominion of Canada, decided to pick him up for the Publicity Branch of his own Department. J.S. Dennis again sent a commendatory letter to Calder on November 29, 1918. He wrote:

Mr. Vanderhoof has explained to me that you may desire to obtain the services of Mr. Robert J.C. Stead to take charge of the publicity department under your new scheme.

Mr. Vanderhoof has discussed the matter with Mr. Stead and is, I understand, wiring you with reference thereto. He has explained your desire, that I should express myself as to Stead's qualifications for this position and in this connection I can only say that he has been in charge of the Publicity Branch of my Department for some years and has proved himself a thoroughly reliable and qualified man in every way. If he sees fit to take up work with you we will certainly miss his services here very much and will find it difficult to replace him, but I have no desire to stand in his way as I feel that he will have a much wider field as publicity agent for your department and realize

that at the present time there is probably no other man in Canada whose services you could obtain who is so well qualified for the position.<sup>98</sup>

In December Stead went to Ottawa and met Mr. Vanderhoof. As a matter of fact they were both sharing the same room (if newspaper gossip is to be believed).<sup>99</sup> On January 1, 1919, he began his duties as Director of Publicity for the Dominion Government on a salary of \$4,000.00 per annum. He was allowed to work from temporary headquarters at Calgary until he moved to the seat of government in Ottawa in March that year.

February for the Steads was a month of farewells--private and public. Mr. and Mrs. Stead were given a rousing send-off by the Calgary Canadian Club where many felicitous speeches were made. Dr. Scott, a minor literary figure on the western scene, referred to Stead as "a very valuable national asset." Greatly moved by these remarks Stead made a very feeling reply in which he referred to the pioneers of the old days, who risked everything, even to the lives of themselves and their families, coming to this western country. Even as they were pioneers so the people of today had a new feeling of enterprise, that of mental pioneering:

We do not know where the trail is going to lead, we do not know where it will end, but we should follow the trail and we must not be afraid of the future.<sup>100</sup>

Stead's staff at the CPR gave him a farewell party at the Palliser Hotel in Calgary and presented him a gold watch. The board of trade also hosted a luncheon in his honor.

Stead's move to Ottawa to join the Department of Immigration and Colonization was given considerable publicity by the western press. C.A. Hayden, a well-known newspaperman who had but recently joined the staff of The Albertan, wrote a very laudatory account for The Toronto Star.<sup>101</sup> His appointment was announced by at least sixteen newspapers.<sup>102</sup> Twelve of these mentioned his writing and status as a novelist. They all wrote:

Mr. Stead has intimate personal knowledge of the resources and needs of Western Canada, having lived on the prairies of Manitoba, in the early eighties, and been connected with the C.P.R. for six years, and aside from his publicity activities is widely known as a Western Canadian writer, his latest novel, "The Cow Puncher," having been among last season's best sellers.<sup>103</sup>

The Alberta Farmer and Calgary Weekly Herald of February 13, 1919, described his appointment as:

a stroke of good business in a double sense. That Mr. Stead will do his work well in this new and important sphere goes without saying, whereby this country will benefit. That in naming this rising young Canadian writer of books, prose and poesy, for a national task at the seat of government the powers at Ottawa have recognized talent and afforded it greater scope for development, is a hopeful sign. Mr. Stead should benefit as an author by the change and if he does it is certain the literature of Canada will be still further enriched.

These hopes and predictions were, however, only partly correct. Canadian literature did not gain by Stead's move in the sense anticipated; but it did gain in that it gave Stead a position in which he could make Canadian literature the subject of many addresses and so by making people aware helped to promote it by persuading them to buy and read Canadian books.

On February 26, 1919, the Steads finally left for Ottawa. They stopped en route at Medicine Hat and Winnipeg, where Stead's sister, Margaret, lived, and arrived in Ottawa only on March 3. At first they rented a suite at the Corona Apartments at \$160.00 a month, but on June 9, bought a house at 193 Second Avenue, and moved in on September 25. This house too, like the Calgary one, was conveniently located, close to Church

and school, since two children's education had to be kept in mind now.<sup>104</sup> The house on Second Avenue was to be their permanent home in Ottawa and was sold only after Stead's death in 1959. The house still stands, much in the same condition, with only the front re-done since the Steads lived there.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> A few of the editorials in which Stead criticized the CPR are: "CPR Taxation" on June 29, 1900; "The Department of Agriculture and the Railway Question" on December 14, 1900; "Crow's Nest Pass Deal" on January 25, 1901; and two untitled ones on September 21, 1900, and December 28, 1900. All these are from The Rock Lake Review.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Robert Stead to T. Fisher Unwin dated November 14, 1912, in Stead Papers, vol. I, folder 3. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Unwin to Stead dated ? October 1912, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Stead to Unwin dated November 14, 1912, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Unwin to Stead dated May 2, 1913, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Unwin to Stead dated April 16, 1914, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Stead to Unwin dated August 29, 1914, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

10 Letter from Stead to Unwin dated September 22, 1915, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

11 Ibid.

12 Letter from Stead to Unwin dated February 27, 1915, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

13 Grain Growers' Guide, February 24, 1915.

14 The Cartwright Review, October 29, 1914.

15 The three London papers are: Morning Post, July 10, 1914; Evening Standard and St. James Gazette, July 29, 1914; and Field, August 9, 1914.

16 The Morning Herald (Sydney), November 21, 1914.

17 Canterbury Times (New Zealand), November 18, 1914.

18 All the family members interviewed by me remembered Stead as a man who always kept his emotions and feelings in check. The same restraint and control can be noticed in his characters also. Dennison Grant loves Zen but allows her to marry Transley; Cal Beach loves Minnie but leaves the Stake household for the sake of Reed's happiness; Dave Eldon too does not declare his love to Irene; and Gander fails to make a bid for Jo.

19 Letter from Stead to Messrs. McClelland & Stewart dated May 8, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

20 "R.J.C. Stead's Latest Book," The High River Times, January 13, 1916.

21 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

22 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

23 Letter from Unwin to Stead dated January 3, 1916, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

- 24 Letter from Stead to Unwin dated February 20, 1916, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.
- 25 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 3.
- 26 The Calgary Sunday Standard, December 3, 1916.
- 27 The Western Newspaper Union paid \$250.00, the Farm and Ranch Review \$80.00, the Farm and Dairy \$50.00, the Westminster \$100.00, and the Toronto Type Foundry made no payment at all.
- 28 Letter in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 29 Letter from Stead to L.E. Patterson dated January 23, 1920, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 30 W.T. Allison, "The Homesteaders: A Novel of Prairie Life," The Winnipeg Telegram, December 9, 1916.
- 31 The Calgary Sunday Standard, December 3, 1916.
- 32 "Stead's Latest Novel A Success," The Lethbridge Daily Herald, December 28, 1916.
- 33 The Railway News of Western Canada (Winnipeg), December 30, 1916.
- 34 Canadian Farm Implements February 1917.
- 35 The Calgary News-Telegram, September 26, 1918.
- 36 "Western Author and His Books are Winners," The Mail (Bassano, Alberta), October 12, 1916.
- 37 "R.J.C. Stead to Add to Fame," The Cartwright Review, January 25, 1917.
- 38 Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country (University of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 72.

- 39 This has been suggested by Dick Harrison in Unnamed Country, p. 72.
- 40 Harrison, p. 73.
- 41 Ibid., p. 73.
- 42 Ibid., p. 73.
- 43 Ibid., p. 75..
- 44 Letter from Stead to Unwin dated August 20, 1915, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.
- 45 Most of the criticism is in the form of book reviews and newspaper articles.
- 46 "The Homesteaders Worthwhile," The Morning Albertan, December 16, 1916.
- 47 E.C. Thompson, The Critical Study of the Poetry and Prose of Robert Stead, Prairie Poet and Novelist (M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1965), p. 92.
- 48 The Calgary Daily Herald, November 2, 1916.
- 49 The Morning Albertan, December 29, 1917.
- 50 Stead said: "I was in Chicago on its first heatless day and, believe me, it was the coldest day of my life!"
- 51 Independent Order of Odd Fellows.
- 52 To give a sample of the press reaction: "Ad Club Hears Two Good Talks at Luncheon," The Calgary Herald, April 28, 1915, described Stead's talk as "the most sensible advertising talk" that the Club members had ever heard; similar praise was given by The Chronicle (Crossfield, Alberta), April 29, 1915.

53 The Morning Alhertan, February 18, 1916, described it as "an interesting and thoughtful address;" so too The Calgary Daily Herald, February 18, 1916; The Calgary News-Telegram, February 18, 1916, said it was a "very able and scholarly address;" The Western Standard, February 19, 1916, said it was "one of the best that has yet been delivered before the Club."

54 Unrecorded interview with Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Eggleston, Ottawa, on November 19, 1978.

55 Ibid.

56 "R.J.C. Stead is Given Higher Post in D.N.R.," The Calgary News-Telegram, November 15, 1917.

57 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 7.

58 Although the last Magnet is dated December 1940 there is none between June 1928 and December 1940.

59 Robert J.C. Stead, "Breaking the Buyer's Strike," MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30, p. 7.

60 Ibid., p. 7.

61 Identity of the firm was not revealed, but later evidence would justify the presumption that it might have been Hodder & Stoughton.

62 Letter from Unwin to Stead dated January 2, 1918, in SP, vol. I, folder 3.

63 Letter from Stead to A.P. Watt dated May 22, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.

64 Letter from Stead to A.P. Watt dated May 22, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.

- 65 Letter from Stead to A.P. Watt dated August 6, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 66 Letter from Watt to Stead dated September 27, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 67 Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated October 19, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 68 In Canada and the U.S.A. the book was published on October 1, 1918, but in England it appeared in May 1919.
- 69 Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated November 21, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 70 The Revelstoke Review, December 13, 1918, wrote: "The third edition of The Cow Puncher is already in the press--and that within thirty days of its appearance."
- 71 Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated December 26, 1918, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 72 Letter from Hans Aarnes, associate editor, Gula Tidend (Bergen, Norway), to A.P. Watt (undated), in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 73 Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated July 25, 1919, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 74 Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated March 4, 1920, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 75 Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated May 13, 1927, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.
- 76 Letter from Stead to John McClelland dated September 13, 1926, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 77 Eventually only \$50.00 was paid. Information from diary in SP, vol. XIII, folder 51.

78 "The Cow Puncher is a Healthy Romance,"  
The Montreal Daily Star, October 26, 1918.

79 "From a Canadian Bookshelf," The Vancouver World, November 16, 1918.

80 Of November 1, 1918.

81 Of November 2, 1918.

82 Of January 27, 1919.

83 E.C. Thompson, The Prairie Novel in Canada: A Study in Changing Form (Ph.D. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1974), p. 224.

84 Wartime messages were mentioned by: News (Baltimore), December 23, 1918; The Morning Albertan, February 1, 1919; and The Winnipeg Tribune, March 1, 1921.

85 Henry George (1839-1897) was an American economist and reformer whose influence on Stead's socio-economic theories is only too apparent. Stead refers to him by name in The Cow Puncher (p. 94). Henry George denounced "unearned increment" in Our Land and Land Policy (1871) and put forward the theory of the single tax as the means to abolish poverty in Progress and Poverty (1879).

86 Even if there were unfavorable ones they have not come to my notice. They were certainly not retained by Stead in his files.

87 At the Strathmore Club on March 8, and at the Methodist Church on March 13, 1917.

88 Mentioned by The Gazette (Olds, Alberta), March 2, 1917.

89 The Standard (Strathmore, Alberta), March 14, 1917.

- 90 On June 8, 1917.
- 91 The Morning Albertan, January 7, 1918, called it "interesting" while the same paper of January 10, 1918, came out with the criticism. The Calgary News-Telegram, January 7, 1918, found it "original."
- 92 The Winnipeg Tribune, April 12, 1918.
- 93 Address on "The Commercial Side of Literature," given at the First Baptist Church, Calgary, on February 20, 1919.
- 94 "Commercial Side of Literature Explained," The Calgary Daily Herald, February 21, 1919.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 The Morning Albertan, February 21, 1919.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 7.
- 99 The Toronto Daily Star, December 12, 1918.
- 100 "R.J.C. Stead is Honoured by the Canadian Club," The Morning Albertan, February 25, 1919.
- 101 "'Bob' Stead has Stepped up Higher," The Toronto Star Weekly, February 22, 1919.
- 102 Stead's appointment and move was announced by: "On New Work," The Alberta Farmer and Calgary Weekly Herald, February 13, 1919; "R.J.C. Stead's Position," The Market Examiner (Calgary), February 14, 1919; "Leaves C.P.R. for Government Post," The Standard (Strathmore, Alberta), February 19, 1919; "R.J.C. Stead's New Post," The British Columbian, February 19, 1919; (the same announcement appeared in the following papers: Canadian Finance (Winnipeg), February 19, 1919; The Daily Post, February 19, 1919;

The Saskatoon Phoenix, February 17, 1919; The Vulcan Advocate, February 19, 1919; The Express (Empress, Alberta), February 20, 1919; The Globe (Tugaske, Saskatchewan), February 20, 1919; The Times (Sintaluta, Saskatchewan), February 20, 1919; The Wetaskiwin Times, February 20, 1919; The Times (Irma, Alberta), February 21, 1919; The Herald (Cupar, Saskatchewan), February 22, 1919; The Mail (Bassano, Alberta), February 22, 1919; The Standard (Ilumas, Manitoba), February 22, 1919.

103 All those papers which announced "R.J.C. Stead's New Post" had the same notice.

104 Lorne and Stanley were attending school. Robert, born in 1918, was still too young to attend.

## Chapter IV

### The Early Twenties

Stead's move to Ottawa had more far-reaching consequences than he had anticipated. His new position meant the addition of new responsibilities as well as widening of interests. As Director of Publicity for the Department of Immigration of the Federal Government; Stead conducted a successful campaign to induce specially selected immigrants to settle in the country, which continued until immigration was suspended during the depression years in the 1930s. He also associated himself with the Back to the Land Movement sponsored by the Federal Government later on.

Stead's growing diversity of interests and responsibilities was paralleled by a corresponding decline as a writer. The actual cause of the decline is difficult to pinpoint. It seems most probable that many factors contributed to undermine his literary productivity. Perhaps his going to Ottawa and removal from the west, which had always been the scene of his inspiration and experience, led to his creative drought;

for when he tried to turn from his prairie background to write about the city as against the country, of the east as opposed to the west, one attempt proved abortive while the other was immensely belabored.<sup>1</sup> But to hold his move to Ottawa as being solely responsible for his creative decline would be presumptuous. It is equally possible that by this time he had exhausted all that he had to say; the spring of literary inspiration and creativity may just have begun to run dry. Besides, Stead's devotion to his art had never been whole-hearted and complete, for his artistic instinct was always in competition with the practical desire to be successful. The very fact that he allowed his other interests to assume greater importance and came to look upon his writing as something secondary may be indicative of his growing awareness that as a creative writer he did not have much more to say. Also, he may have become aware of the dissipation of his creative powers by the response that he was now receiving from publishers--a very different story from the time when Unwin were asking him for a book that they might publish.

Although Stead tried hard to ensure that his widening interests and responsibilities would not interfere with his writing, the twenties saw the

gradual dominance of Stead the public and commercial man over Stead the artist. At this point it becomes very obvious that he was a man possessed of two sharply opposed and sometimes incompatible personalities. On the one hand he was a writer, an artist; but on the other hand he was possessed of a strong commercial instinct. The desire to write was strong with him but was off-set by an equally strong desire to be successful, to be popular, to make money, to be a public figure. These two traits in Stead's personality can be detected from the very beginning of his career. Since his Cartwright and High River days he had given evidence of this dichotomy when he had combined his commercial ventures with some outlet for his artistic instinct. In Cartwright when he was editing The Crystal City Courier and the Southern Manitoba Review he did so along with the lumber business followed by the "Feed and Flour" store. In High River the commercial instinct had found an outlet in the automobile agency and the artistic in his work done for The Albertan. The dichotomy can, however, be traced even further back: when he worked as a farmer's hired help or a store-keeper's clerk, it may be presumed that he spent his spare time in writing verses. This dual nature appeared, for the

first time perhaps, when Stead was only a boy of ten helping on his father's farm. He off-set the dullness of a farmer's life by becoming a 'correspondent' for the Pilot Mound Sentinel. But till the twenties these two aspects of Stead's personality had co-existed side by side, and it was only now (possibly under the influence of the materialistic attitude prevalent in the west where the only measure of success was money and material acquisitions), that the commercial and public man in Stead came to the fore, and though the artist in him strove to survive, it gradually succumbed to the more powerful businessman in his personality.

Curiously enough, though this decade saw the decline of Stead as a writer it also witnessed his rise as a public speaker. He had, of course, given talks before, in the west; but Ottawa offered more opportunities and he steadily and surely acquired status as a speaker. Taking stock of his position, he wrote in his diary as early as January 23, 1926, that ever since he had come to Ottawa he had been speaking "once or more, often everyday."<sup>2</sup> But as his reputation as a speaker grew his popularity as a writer declined. Perhaps the two are related. In any event, his growing reputation as a public

figure, by opening up new avenues of achievement, may have prevented a frustration from developing over the fall in his literary stature. He was attaining a new measure of success and achievement in a new sphere--and to Stead this mattered more than anything else. Consciously or unconsciously he craved success and wanted it in every field. Both his restlessness and his great desire for achievement are explicitly brought out in a letter he wrote to Patterson of the Western Newspaper Union on December 13, 1923:

Although I am engaged in very interesting, very worthwhile work, I am arriving at the conclusion that there isn't much prospect of any great advancement in the Government Service. My temperament is not one which can be happy except in achievement, and, while I have no intention of doing anything precipitate, I am quietly looking around for other possibilities.

At forty-three Stead was still "looking around for other possibilities" because he realized that he was possessed of a disposition which could not be happy "except in achievement." Incidentally, this letter was sent in answer to one from Patterson in which the latter had mentioned having been to Canada to see the possibilities of opening a Canadian branch of the Western Newspaper Union.<sup>4</sup> Stead's letter continued:

Now if it occurs to you that my knowledge of Canada and my connection with Canadian affairs, particularly newspaper affairs, combined with such native ability as I may possess, qualify me for any position under your control which would be likely to prove attractive, I should be very glad to hear from you in that connection.<sup>5</sup>

The opening of the Canadian branch was however only a dream which was never realized.

Stead had been publishing a book every two years since 1914, and tried to keep up this schedule despite the growing pressures on his time and energy. Accordingly, Dennison Grant was ready for the press by 1920.

In view of the tremendous success of The Cow Puncher, the Musson Book Company wanted to have the "world rights" on Dennison Grant, and a contract to that effect was signed over a lunch appointment with Frank Appleton on February 25, 1920.<sup>6</sup> It became a Canadian best-seller but nothing to match the sale of its predecessor. It sold about 12,600 copies in the first two months, but the fervor soon died down.<sup>7</sup> Only 500 review copies were supplied but it sold well because of the momentum gained by The Cow Puncher and Stead's popularity, which ensured him considerable success with serials at least. The Farm

and Ranch Review took the lead again, serializing it as early as November 1920. Farm Journal was a close second, serializing it in December 1920. The following year it appeared in the Ottawa Veteran and in the Manitoba Free Press. In 1922 Stead sent a copy of Dennison Grant to Alfred Washington of the Western Newspaper Union, asking him if Mr. Patterson would like to use it as a serial. Washington was full of praise for the book:

I have not for several years derived as much pleasure from the reading of any other book as from this . . . Your descriptions of western scenery and western ranch life are remarkably good.

Mr. Patterson however did not approve of the novel outright and ran it as a serial only in its abridged and revised form under the title Zen of the Y.D. In its revised form the book gained in popularity and this version was serialized by the Ottawa Citizen, the Lanark Era, and the Ingersoll Tribune. Hodder & Stoughton also published this version in 1925.

Dennison Grant, though popular, revealed a new aspect of Stead as writer. In it, both the romanticist and the realist were pushed into the background and Stead the propagandist occupied the centre of the stage. It was almost like a manifesto of Stead's socio-economic theories, as in it he

suggested "ways and means of revolutionizing the Prairie World."<sup>9</sup> The theme had appeared in embryonic form in The Cow Puncher but in Dennison Grant it became much more than a theme--it became a thesis. And it was this that made this particular novel, as most of Stead's critics have pointed out, "the rhetorical centre of his work."<sup>10</sup> This aspect of Dennison Grant has been commented on by Thompson, McCourt, Elder, and Ricou.<sup>11</sup>

In Dennison Grant even more than in The Cow Puncher Stead gives us an accurate picture of the Alberta foothills and is able to recapture the background of the wheat pools, the elevators, and the cooperative movement. Its realism is more rugged and has a firmer foundation because it reflects the actual economic and political achievement of the prairies, if again, we take realism to mean a "close resemblance to what is real; fidelity of representation, rendering the precise details of the real thing or scene."<sup>12</sup> Even in its "Big Idea" Dennison Grant reflects the current issues and contemporary times. Written immediately after the First World War it appeared at a time when reconstruction was needed and desired. The main theme of the novel is actually the idea of the redistribution of wealth "in the

coming reorganization of society" (DG, p. 128). The "emergence of the communist state in Russia and of the new spirit of internationalism in the form of the League of Nations"<sup>13</sup> are not without their influence on the idea that Stead puts forward. We get a peep of the same idea in Ibsen's The Wild Duck, but there is no reason to believe that Stead was influenced by Ibsen, nor even that he was familiar with his work; he does not share Ibsen's concern for reform; his concern is purely sociological and not ethical as in the case of Ibsen.

The theory of wealth put forward by Stead in Dennison Grant is idealistic and moralistic as was his address on "Business Morality." Much emphasis in the address was laid on the belief that no man has any right to money that he has not earned. And that the amount earned should be in proportion to the service rendered to society. The same thoughts are expressed in Dennison Grant (p. 124). Stead's argument runs that the uneven distribution of wealth accounts for our sense of justice and that "brain power is today the dominant power" (DG, p. 131). But his plea is that just as it is wrong for a physically strong man to take advantage of one who is weak, similarly it is wrong for the man with the bigger brains to exploit those with lesser brains.

The same theory had appeared in a less elaborate form in Stead's editorials and short stories, but in Dennison Grant it received its final form and shape, and even its practical aspect was considered in the form of the "Big Idea" put forward by Dennison.

However, Dennison Grant is not merely a realistic propaganda novel; it has its share of romance, though sentiment, in the sense of being "addicted to indulgence in superficial emotion"<sup>14</sup> is quite negligible. Zen provides the love interest. She, like most of Stead's heroines, is vivacious, independent, and attractive. But she makes an error of judgment in choosing Transley rather than Dennison for her husband. Zen however is aware of her mistake even before she marries Transley for she finds herself thinking not of Transley but of Dennison. Stead's morality does not forgive even these lapses of thought and we are told that "these discoveries shocked and humiliated her" (p. 161). She feels shocked and humiliated because "it was disloyal to admit that this stranger on the Landson ranch was a greater man than her husband-to-be" (DG, p. 162). Zen, governed by an ethical code as strict as the author's, realizes that "she should have no place in her mind for any man but Transley" (p. 163).

She realizes that she cares for Dennison but allows herself to be swept and overpowered by Transley. Deliberation on her part comes when she has to put on the ring sent by Transley herself, and she decides to do so:

"I have to put this on," she said, pursing her lips firmly, "and-- and forget about Dennison Grant."  
(p. 167)

After marriage, when Zen and Dennison meet accidentally, Zen decides to rectify her error and yield to the man whom she should have married. But again Stead's conservatism and moral background do not allow the marriage to break. If the marriage had been allowed to break the idealization would have been less complete, for Dennison, the 'cow puncher' has been idealized to an even greater extent than Dave in The Cow Puncher, because no Conward has been able to corrupt him. Besides, Zen's marriage is not saved by external circumstances (as in his later unpublished novel "But Yet The Soil Remains") but by a decision taken by Zen and Dennison individually on the night of the storm. The idealization of the 'cow puncher' begun in The Cow Puncher is completed in Dennison Grant. In both these novels Stead succeeds in showing that the western towns are not western in

the ancient use of the word. They are peopled by native Canadians and English citizens who own religion and respect for law. The rough and festive cowboy of Texas and Oregon has no counterpart here . . . the genuine Alberta cowboy is a gentleman.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that Dennison Grant proved more popular as Zen of the Y.D., shorn of its theorizing and philosophy, and with a happier ending substituted for the original one, serves to show that the public did not want any serious 'thesis' novel from Stead. They were willing to accept only his romantic stories, and, thus, in a way, the public determined what he wrote; for Stead decided to give his readers what they wanted, and produced in his next work a pure romance, complete with happy ending and western setting.

His next novel, Neighbours, then, was a reversal of all the progress he had made from the romantic fiction of popular taste. Published simultaneously by the Musson Book Company in Canada and by Hodder & Stoughton in England, in 1922, for a long time it headed the Hodder & Stoughton List of Selected Books. Although Stead had written to W.P. Watt as early as May 14, 1921 (long before the novel was even completed), that he should arrange "for simultaneous publication in the United States,

and also for serial publication in the U.S. prior to book publication" Watt did not succeed in making these arrangements.<sup>16</sup>

Neighbours was heralded as "Stead's Greatest Book" and was widely publicized as "an outstanding book by an outstanding writer."<sup>17</sup> But actually, it is, of all Stead's novels, the least pretentious. Set in Saskatchewan around 1904, Stead takes up the theme of homesteading and treats it more idealistically than he had done in his earlier homesteading novel, The Homesteaders. While The Homesteaders indicated the problems and growing tensions of the early settlers, Neighbours gives us an idyllic pastoral picture where nothing disturbs the romance that envelops characters and scenes alike. By 'romance' I do not mean anything in the sense of being extravagant or fantastic or wild but simply in the sense of an emphasis on feeling and emotion. The term 'romance' as applied to the landscape implies the Wordsworthian concept of nature where feelings can co-exist in a state of greater simplicity and the passions are incorporated with the natural setting.<sup>18</sup> But even the romantic element remains somewhat subdued. Thompson makes an accurate assessment when he says:

The pace of the story-telling is leisurely, the characterization

casual and low-keyed; nothing startling or improbable happens; no great depths of passion are revealed.<sup>19</sup>

Stead does not focus on problems, and restricts his action to such an extent that nothing seems to happen. There is a greater concentration on homely details, such as making dresses, or cooking, or similar insignificant data. But there is an advantage accruing from this shift in emphasis; by restricting the plot and action Stead also avoids the awkward coincidences that mar his earlier novels.<sup>20</sup>

In Neighbours the emphasis shifts from plot to character, and for the first time in Stead we find character-development. There is hardly any action which contributes to the development of the story. So, the interest has to be sustained by a greater insight into the working of the mind. There had previously been instances of characters doing something wholly unexpected of them, such as, when Mary, in The Homesteaders, decides to go for a holiday, or when John, in the same novel, gives up his land-hunger towards the end. But these were not instances of character development. Mary's bravado is something that has lain dormant for a long time but had been there right from the beginning; nor

does John change: he receives a shock treatment, as it were, and is made to realize his folly. In Neighbours the characters of Jack and Marjorie are quite static, but both Frank and Jean do develop. Jean's conflicting emotions, her decision not to marry Frank as planned, her audacity in proposing to Spoof, and his refusal, mature her to a degree which Stead's heroines do not normally aspire to nor achieve. She puts her dilemma to Frank:

"It is so hard to know--to be sure  
--what is right!"

"How what is right?"

"In books--you will understand,  
Frank--it is always so clear. One is  
a hero; the other is a villain; it  
is so easy to know. But in life--I  
don't suppose there are many villains  
after all. That doesn't make it easier  
to decide."

(p. 210)

Unsure of her feelings Jean tells Frank that she loves Spoof. The reader may be inclined to agree with her brother that she is not in love with Spoof, merely infatuated; but that gives a new turn to her character:

That Jean should be so strong, so set,  
so immovable, and . . . so unreason-  
able, in spite of all her delicate  
wistfulness and strange uncommonness  
of spirit--that was a side of Jean's  
character which all the years of . . .  
childhood and youth had not revealed.

(p. 215)

Jean's refined sensibility coupled with her observations mature her to the realization that she and Frank have "known each other so well, and so long" that they would just settle down "to the routine--the deadly routine" which she feels is "bad enough anywhere, but on these prairies, with their isolation, their immensity--unbearable" (NS, p. 261). In this respect Jean is a more vocal spokesman than Stead's other heroines, of the problem of the farm women in their need "for an expanded horizon."<sup>21</sup> Jean expresses the problem while the other women only feel it. Jean is also different in that she is lacking, to a large extent, the moral inhibitions that confine his other heroines. In this novel we have the only instance in Stead of a girl taking the initiative and proposing to the man she loved or thought she loved.

After Jean has proposed to Spoofo and her proposal turned down, a change comes over Frank too. He starts "glean[ing] the neighbourhood for books" (NS, p. 292) and gradually realizes that it is not enough to be successful, that man does not live by bread alone; and a new vista of art and intellect opens before him which makes him different, perhaps more mature, more artistic, and more creative, than he was at the outset. He himself is the first to

notice the change:

With joy I noted, suddenly, that I had forced my boundaries far beyond the corner stakes of Fourteen, beyond even the prairies, the continent, the times in which we live. My mind, from sluggishly hibernating for the winter, became a dynamo of activity. As soon as the morning chores were done I was at my books, and I felt it almost a hardship when Jack would drop in for a game of checkers or a chat about nothing. Late into the night I followed my heroes and heroines, my theories and philosophies, until at last I drew off grudgingly to bed . . . It was hard to realize that these flying hours were the same as those that had dragged so leadenly only a few short days ago.

Tremendously I wanted someone to whom I might talk. I was so filled with thoughts that I threatened to burst. I began to be primed for unbounded arguments . . .

My pressure of ideas became so threatening that at last I burst out into the neighbourhood to relieve it. I found my safety valve in the most unexpected place--Andy Smith. The little Scotsman was amazingly read and belligerently eager for argument. It seemed that I was as much a Godsend to him as he to me.

(NS, pp. 292-294)

This is sufficient to show that the characters of both Jean and Frank develop and change. In the second half of the book they continually present a new and different face to the reader and become full of surprises.

Neighbours, as Stead's only novel written in the first person, enjoys a definite advantage, for it

can convey the intensity of the homesteading experience with greater conviction and vehemence. But despite the strong note of conviction, Neighbours is, on the whole, ordinary in story as well as in style. Yet the book did not fare badly. It was warmly welcomed in England, and was serialized in the U.S.A. as soon as the rights could be settled. In Canada alone it sold over 15,000 copies, and that too at a time when "business conditions were bad" and the publishers had not been "aggressive" in their publicity.<sup>22</sup> It was serialized in the South Dakota Farmer and Breeder, the Church Family Newspaper published from England, the Sentinel Tribune of Bowling Green, Ohio, the News of Amherst (Nova Scotia), the Speaker of New Liskeard (Ontario), and the Western Newspaper Union. In the last mentioned, however, the novel was serialized only after it had been abridged. On the insistence of the editors Stead agreed to shorten it but wished to do the cutting himself. On October 24, 1923, he wrote to Patterson:

I agree with Mrs. Patterson . . .  
that it is a shame to mutilate this  
masterpiece, but if the child must  
be strangled, I myself will be the  
executioner.<sup>23</sup>

Stead may not actually have felt so strongly over the abridgment as he makes out in his letter, for he did not normally seem to mind abridging or

altering his work to suit the palate of his readers. When Dennison Grant had failed, for instance, he had had no qualms about hacking it into an inferior work of art as Zen of the Y.D. This, however, is only another instance of the dichotomy in his personality. Right from the beginning we have evidence of this conflict within him. In his youth, his newspaper came in conflict with his lumber business. At that time the writer in him won, as he sold the business despite its more certain financial security. This kind of a pose is also not unusual with Stead. In an interview with Anne Maclean Stead had said: "I have written, not so much from desire as from necessity, a necessity existing within myself--and sheer joy of creation."<sup>24</sup> This also sounds like a pose, to be what he would have us believe about him, rather than the truth of the matter. Perhaps his concession to the demands of his audience was more than he cared to admit to himself, for what he says is only partially true. He did write from an inner necessity, but what he wrote was in conformity with what was popular.

The clash is also apparent in his loyalty to the dual demands of romance and realism in his novels. Aware of the value of realism, Stead tried

to introduce it subtly so that as a novelist he might not lose the following he had acquired. Discovering that his socio-economic theories were unpalatable, he dropped them in subsequent novels. This is ample proof to show that Stead valued his reputation, popularity, and commercial success more than he did artistic fulfilment. In this respect he proved representative of prairie people of the day, for he reflects the general attitude of the people of the time, for whom success was measured only in terms of dollars and material wealth. "In the urban west," Gray tells us, "there was only one yardstick of status, of success, of personal and community worth. That measure was money."<sup>25</sup>

Stead was concerned not only with his own reputation as a writer, but also with the situation of Canadian writers and Canadian literature generally. Whenever occasion offered he took the opportunity to stress the importance and need for a national literature. He did not offer abstractions to his audience but showed in concrete terms how the audience could help their literature and their writers. He wrote on ways and means of promoting a national literature. His "Canadian Literature--A Message" which appeared in Littlebury's Magazine (Calgary), in March 1919,

expressed almost the same ideas as those found in his address on "The Commercial Side of Literature," except that the article ended on a note of optimism. Stead felt that the signs were hopeful for Canadian literature because of the new spirit born from the war. This new spirit, he believed, gave the Canadians a greater feeling of nationalism and "the people of Canada seem[ed] disposed to read their own writers and not to be over critical of them." In "Mr. East--Meet Mr. West" which was written on October 11, 1922, and published in December in the Manitoba Free Press, Stead likened the position and function of the Canadian author to the American who landed on an island where two Englishmen, already stranded there, had not yet talked to one another because they had not been introduced. It was the American who introduced them.

On December 13, 1919, the Ottawa Journal reporting on a talk given at the Rotary Club, of which Stead had recently become a member, quoted him about the book situation in Canada to the effect that

books were found to be more explosive than T.N.T., more devastating than liquid fire, because they make or break the morale of the nation . . .

In the ensuing discussion on the morale of the Canadian

nation, the Journal went on, Stead reiterated that "with respect to literature, motion pictures and the stage, we are a conquered people" because the "American literary invasion of Canada" is not even realized by many Canadians, which makes the situation "no less tragic."<sup>26</sup> In his usual rhetorical way Stead continued:

Legislation in democratic countries depends on sentiment, and sentiment is the child of literature. What the people read determines what the people think. If, therefore, the father be foreign, how shall the child be Canadian?<sup>27</sup>

Stead expressed similar ideas on November 20, 1920, when addressing the University Club of Ottawa on the subject of "Canadian Literary Independence;" and again at the Canadian Club Luncheon given on August 8, 1921. Tickets priced at a dollar each were sold for the talk--which would indicate Stead's reputation as a public speaker. On this occasion too, he built up the case for the development of a purely Canadian literature in order to give Canada an individual identity. How can Canadians have a national identity when they do not read Canadian literature, he argued. The text of the address was furnished by the Scriptures: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Stead showed that the purpose of American literature

was to Americanize. He mentioned how his book, Dennison Grant, had been refused publication in America because in the third chapter he had described a fight in which an Englishman had thrashed an American. Stead confided that he had been later informed by a friend that "that was enough to bar the book from American publishing houses."<sup>28</sup> At the end of his talk Stead read out his poem "The Silent Ships" and mentioned why his Kitchener book, which had been published in Great Britain and Canada, had not been published in the U.S.A.<sup>29</sup>

His address on "Canadian Literature and National Identity" was delivered on more than one occasion with slight variations. But the main argument remained the same throughout: That an individual national identity can only be nurtured by a purely Canadian literature. The same subject was touched upon in other addresses delivered around this time. In "Idealism in Canadian Literature" delivered on November 1, 1921, Stead tried to fathom the reason why nationalism was lacking in Canadian literature. The reason put forward by him was the same: idealism resulted in nationalism, and Canadian writers failed to inject idealism into their work because of their dependence on American publishers. In order that their books may sell well, Canadian authors had to satisfy American sentiments, and that

prevented idealism, which in turn hampered the development of nationalism. In his address on "Matters Concerning Canadian Authors and Publishers and Their Problems" delivered at Kingston on November 13, 1921, Stead again reiterated the importance of a national literature in order to produce a distinctive national sentiment. In this address he looked far afield and showed that Canada's greatest problem was the problem of assimilation, or, the Canadianizing of the foreign element. This sentiment was not new to Stead. It had been expressed in no uncertain terms in his poem "The Mixer." This was, however, one of the few addresses (perhaps the only one) where Stead expressed his feelings on racism so openly.

The cause of Canadian literature was taken up by Stead not only in Ottawa but wherever he went. Fond of travelling he seldom missed an opportunity of a journey; he exhibited this roving instinct, this spirit of adventure, and the attraction of the unknown and unvisited, throughout his life.

In 1920 an opportunity came to visit England, and he left on August 22, accompanied by W.T. Cranfield and his son. While there, he visited Peterborough, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bristol, Birmingham, and Liverpool. In London, he was interviewed by a

number of press people, he looked up his old publishers (T. Fisher Unwin), had a conference with the Honorable J.A. Calder, and a lunch appointment with R. Percy Hodder-Williams of Hodder & Stoughton. This lunch appointment no doubt helped him lay a publishing contact which Stead soon used. On October 13, 1920, he sailed from Liverpool for home, arriving in Ottawa on October 21.

Stead enjoyed meeting people as much as he liked travelling. Occasional references and entries in his diary show that he would go a long distance specifically to meet someone. On January 6, 1920, he went to Toronto specially to meet Sir Ernest Hodder-Williams; in August 1921 he accompanied Senator Bennett in his steam yacht on a trip to Georgian Bay; in October 1922 he arranged a meeting with the English writer Hugh Walpole. Among Canadian writers he was on friendly terms with D.C. Scott, Arthur Stringer, Martha Ostenso, Hugh Graham, and Wilfrid Eggleston. He also maintained cordial relations with reporters and editors which helped keep his press contacts alive.

Though the rigidity and regularity with which Stead called on friends, relatives, and acquaintances, makes dull reading as part of the diary, it serves to show a socializing as well as a commercial instinct

at work. Whether on holiday trips or on official tours, he always maintained a tight schedule, calling on people he had met and known. The purpose of these visits was not always purely social; they were often performed with an eye to the invitations for talks they might bring. But as his reputation as public speaker grew he found himself getting more and more hard pressed for time for the numerous speeches he was asked to give. As an easy way out, Stead soon acquired the habit of delivering the same address in different cities, with the advantage that a large cross-section of the country's press was commenting on the same address, and a large number of people were exposed to the same ideas at the same time. For instance, his address on Canadian literature and national identity was delivered in Ottawa, Kingston, and Montreal, as well as in a number of cities in western Canada. Write-ups of the address appeared in a number of papers and though there were occasional variations in approach and handling, basically the reports were the same.<sup>30</sup> This in itself was a major contribution towards the emergence and recognition of Canadian literature. He had the advantage of his job which took him to the west, and that, combined with his own intimate knowledge of western Canada,

helped him to carry his message far and wide. One might liken him to a missionary, who, fired by missionary zeal, preached the gospel of Canadian literature wherever he went. By making his audiences aware of its need he helped towards its appearance--for, as he had himself said: the demand would create the supply. Stead's contribution to Canadian literature lies not only in his actual writings, then, but also, to a large extent, in publicizing it, in making his countrymen aware of it, and of the need for their patronage for its survival. Viewed in the context of the times, this too was a major achievement. When Stead began his campaign he was asking: "Have we a Canadian literature?" but by the time he had finished, the question did not arise. Canadian literature was gradually coming into its own.

Keeping this active publicity campaign in mind, and considering that Stead was, at that time, one of the most popular writers of the day, always being asked to preside at Authors' luncheons and CAA meetings,<sup>31</sup> it was befitting that he should have been asked to become the first President of the CAA, Ottawa branch, when it was started in 1921. As a continuing and active member, first President of the Ottawa branch, and subsequently national President,<sup>32</sup> Stead

helped to give the CAA itself necessary direction and focus; and the Association became "involved in cultural issues with political and social implications much beyond the early Twenties and the audience for popular literature."<sup>33</sup> Stead tackled the issues of sales and distribution of American periodicals and magazines in Canada, and of Canada's copyright laws, both of which undermined the growth and output of Canadian literature indirectly. Stead had repeatedly pointed out how Canada was flooded with American literature, especially in the form of magazines. He was not wrong. Mary Vipond furnishes us with the figures:

Over three hundred American publications (excluding newspapers) circulated in Canada in the mid-1920s; perhaps fifty million copies of American magazines were bought annually in Canada by 1926, and the number was steadily increasing. The best sellers were the Ladies' Home Journal (with a circulation of 152,011 in Canada as of June 30, 1926), Saturday Evening Post (128,574), Pictorial Review (128,320), and McCall's Magazine (103,209).<sup>34</sup>

As against these figures Mary Vipond continues:

The leading nation-wide magazines of general interest were Maclean's Magazine (with a circulation of 82,013 as of December 31, 1925), Canadian Home Journal (68,054), Saturday Night (30,858), and the Canadian Magazine (12,604).<sup>35</sup>

The figures speak for themselves. It is obvious that the CAA had tackled a genuine problem when they asked for a tariff to be put on all imported magazines.

The second issue, concerning copyright, was a bigger problem. Stead, in his capacity as national president of the CAA, fought for fairer laws for Canadian authors and publishers. He pointed out:

The licensing clauses in the Canadian Act are less sweeping than the manufacturing provision of the United States, as they do not make manufacture in Canada essential to copyright, and as they provide for licensed reproduction only under certain special conditions including payment of royalty to the author, and as they further permit the importation of plates for the purpose of printing in Canada, whereas under the United States law, if a Canadian author does not have his work set up and printed in the United States he has no protection whatever in that country.

On another occasion Stead commented:

Canada is one of the few countries of the world in which, owing to failure to bring the copyright law up to date, the manufacturers of certain mechanical devices for the reproduction of sounds or sights are able to employ the words, the music or the ideas, as the case may be, of the original creative artist, and to sell mechanical means for reproducing the "performance" [sic] of the same without paying one cent to the originator. That this is a gross injustice is not denied by anybody.

In view of this situation, Stead argued that it was only natural that Canadian writers should wonder "why they are thus discriminated against."<sup>38</sup> Whenever there was an opportune occasion Stead tried to impress upon his audience the need for better copyright laws. On November 17, 1923, in "a radiographed message" he remonstrated:

Literature in Canada may still be described as an infant industry. In the material world we, as a matter of national policy, have given protection to our infant industries against the competition of other nations. No such protection is given to Canadian literature, although in the final analysis, it is immensely more important to the future of Canada that we should make our own stories than that we should make our own automobiles and our own reaping machines.<sup>39</sup>

When Stead delivered his Presidential address at the third annual convention of the CAA, in May 1924, he reviewed the achievement of the Association in its three years of existence. The result, he said, if not altogether satisfying, was not disappointing. On the subject of copyright he remarked: "Our efforts have been not entirely disappointing."<sup>40</sup> In respect to Canadian literature he felt that the question had changed from "Have we a Canadian literature?" to

"What is the kind of literature which these Canadian authors are giving us?"<sup>41</sup> The CAA also succeeded in promoting an annual Canadian Authors' Book Week.

But Stead's interest in and zeal towards the promotion of Canadian literature existed outside of his relation with the Presidency of the CAA. It had not started with the Presidency and did not die with it. While a regular member of the Association, he seldom missed their talks and luncheons; and even in later years, as a very interested and knowledgeable person, he was asked to deliver the Association's Authors' Book Week address. In 1933 and 1934 this address was given wide publicity, being broadcast over the CRCO.<sup>42</sup> In 1932 Stead had been more enterprising and had written and presented a skit called "The Editor's Mail" on the occasion. It was written and produced in collaboration with May Holland Cox. His association with the CAA during the twenties and thirties, therefore, remained a close one.

Despite such ever-increasing responsibilities and interests Stead continued to write. Indeed, his field of writing also widened, extending to non-creative work. McAra, in 1916, had started him on commissioned work, and by the 1930s he was not too finicky about the sort of work he would undertake.

Accordingly, when Lorne Pierce of the Ryerson Press, asked him to write a book on Ralph Connor for the Makers of Canadian Literature series, Stead readily agreed. Pierce, when sending the general pattern to be followed in the books for the series, promised to pay \$500.00 for the book. He wrote:

I am very anxious that you should do this, not only because I know that you will do it well, having an affinity with Gordon in the field of fiction and also with the scenes of many of his novels, but I should like to have you associated with this standard encyclopaedia of Canadian literature.<sup>43</sup>

Stead accepted the assignment; he set to work on it by sending out letters to his sister, Lilian, to friends and acquaintances, and to Connor's publishers, for material on him. He also sent a letter to C.W. Gordon asking him for more personal information. Later, he wrote to George M. Locké who had been asked to do the Connor book before Stead accepted it.

On February 4, 1924, Pierce sent another letter to Stead telling him that they would like to have the manuscript in about six months. Stead promptly set to work on the material elicited in response to his letters. He had read most of Connor long before, and had even written a couple of unpublished reviews of his books.<sup>44</sup> As desired by Pierce, the manuscript was

ready and sent in two instalments on August 6, and September 22, 1924.<sup>45</sup> Payment of \$400.00 was made on receipt of the manuscript, the remainder was to be paid on publication.

When Lorne Pierce had conceived the idea of his Makers of Canadian Literature series it was a very ambitious project covering about fifty writers. But Logan, with his over-critical zeal, from the very outset, discouraged such a large project. He wrote to Lorne Pierce as early as October 8, 1922, dissuading him from having fifty "makers." Logan's contention was:

The new school of realistic fictionists (Bob Stead, et ali) are futilities, pure and absolute, viewed as artists. You may, however, include that horrible example of the evangelistic novelist "Ralph Connor," whose work, both in substance and in artistry, is a concoction so vile that it ranks with literature in the same way that bootleggers' booze ranks with real Scotch whiskey.<sup>46</sup>

Partly under the influence of such suggestions and partly due to publishing difficulties that cropped up the series had to be abandoned. But these difficulties had arisen in 1922, before Stead had been asked to write the Connor book. That there were genuine problems there is no doubt, as is evident from letters exchanged between Lorne Pierce and other authors

who were writing for the series. There are letters to this effect between Grace Blackburn who was writing on Arthur Stringer, and James Cappon who was writing on Charles G.D. Roberts.<sup>47</sup> But Cappon's letter of January 10, 1923, conveys the impression that the problems, whatever they had been, had been overcome by then. He writes:

I had communications which led me to doubt if you could carry out the scheme you described to me . . . Then came your letter of the 8th expressing a confident hope that you could go on with part of your scheme at least.<sup>48</sup>

It would be correct to assume that since Lorne Pierce wrote to Stead only in 1924 he had already taken stock of his position and decided which part of the scheme was to be carried out. Yet nothing more was heard of the Connor book. Stead waited patiently until August 5, 1926, and then sent a letter to Lorne Pierce wondering why he had not heard anything about the publication of "Ralph Connor." He added:

While I am not in a position to be entirely indifferent to the remainder of the remuneration for this job, I assure you the remuneration was not my chief incentive in undertaking it. I wanted to do the book for my old friend Gordon, for you, and--for myself.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, Stead wanted to keep up his old-time

schedule of publishing every two years. Accordingly, he had already entered into negotiations for the publication of The Smoking Flax when Pierce's offer concerning the Connor book was put forward. Since the Musson Book Company had published Dennison Grant, it was natural that the book was offered to them. After their experience and disappointment over it they were, however, reluctant about publishing this new novel. Stead, noting their hesitation, sent the manuscript to Brandt and Kirkpatrick who, too, declined it politely. They said that though they liked the story they feared that it was lacking in action, and, as such, would not prove very popular. They added that as a homesteading novel they would prefer it "to be laid in the United States."<sup>50</sup> Stead then decided to change his publishers and succeeded in settling the U.S. rights with Doran Doubleday of New York. That settled, he wrote to McClelland & Stewart in Canada and offered them the manuscript of The Smoking Flax.

The book will be set up in the United States; an edition for Canada manufactured there as well as an edition in Canada.<sup>51</sup>

Stead's terms and offer were accepted by McClelland & Stewart and they agreed to publish it in the autumn of 1924. However, this novel too, like The Homesteaders, was serialized even before it appeared in book form.

Maclean's Magazine serialized it from August to October 1924, and asked Stead to withhold publication of the book until October 15, so that the serial would have run completely before the book appeared in the bookshops.<sup>52</sup> Recognizing the "considerable publicity value" of serializing, Stead conceded to their request, and accordingly wrote to his publishers not to bring out the book until October 15.<sup>53</sup>

As anticipated, the serializing did have a publicity value; J. Vernon Mackenzie, editor of

Maclean's commented:

It is a great piece of writing with even more than your customary literary craftsmanship. In addition, it is such a thoroughly healthy, worthwhile yarn, with no attempt at the melodramatic; that it should have a very strong appeal to every thoughtful citizen of this Dominion.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from this favorable comment, Mr. Tyrell, who was then General Manager of Maclean's, promised to give some publicity to the book at the time of its publication.<sup>55</sup>

Despite these bright beginnings, The Smoking Flax turned out to be a miserable failure as far as sales were concerned. Its failure is surprising in view of the fact that by 1924 Stead had attained national stature as poet, novelist, and speaker;

besides, McClelland & Stewart was among the better known publishing houses in Toronto; and, what was most important, this novel had all the ingredients that made for popular appeal. It provided romance and realism in the right proportions; its love story was mature and natural in the sense that both Cal and Minnie, though very much in love, can think of other considerations and allow them to prevail over their emotional inclinations. But true to his nature, Stead made sure that the lovers were united in the end. In Cal's flight from the Stake household after the arrival of Jackson Stake, Stead was able to fill in the background of the west with minute realistic details that lent authenticity to both the background and the story. The same kind of realism is evident in the description of the Stake farm and the improvements that Cal sought to make there. The resentment and ridicule of Gander and Grit reveal a great insight into character on Stead's part. Their attitude has been depicted very well:

Gander and Grit, strolling up from the horse stable, took in the situation with amused interest. The elliptic wrinkles in Grit's face lengthened until they effected almost a complete circle, save for the interruption of his nose, and Gander's Adam's apple was spasmodically gulping his emotion.

"I often heard it said that some day they'd breed a Ford that 'ud give milk," said Grit, "but I never reckoned I'd live to see it."

Gander weighed his response. "Wonderful what you can do, with a Ford an' an eddication. If I was a D.D. I bet I could make the Dodge give cream cheese."

"Or lay an egg," Grit suggested.

"A fried egg!" Gander exclaimed, but this flight of imagination proved too much for the two cronies. They caught arms, clinched, and in a moment were swaying and straining in a catch-as-catch-can wrestling bout. After a minute or two of Herculean combat their emotion had found relief, and, panting and grunting, they resumed consideration of the possibilities arising out of a Ford and an education.

"He'll be hemstitchin' the handkerchiefs with it next," Gander predicted.

"Or feedin' the canary," Grit added, disregarding the slight objection that there was no canary.

Having so spoken, the two worthies, their bodies judiciously poised on well-spread legs and their thumbs tucked in their trouser bands, observed the processes with an exaggerated gravity, not unmixed with a secret hope that the pulley would drop off, or the belt break, or disaster in some form overtake the contrivance. But Cal had made sure of his job, and the separator ran on smoothly and regularly . . .

(pp. 98-99)

Even his other characters are depicted with understanding and insight. Mr. Stake senior, we are told "had little initiative and no aggressiveness, but, if provoked, he could develop an enormous inertia" (p. 97). Stead further adds:

He was one of those men whose will power is mostly won't power. What Jackson Stake mistook for determination in his own character was really stubbornness; the stubbornness which had grappled with this scrubland farm and converted it, little by little and year by year, into a valuable possession and a place of plenty; the stubbornness which had dared a pioneering life and bent environment to its will --that was the great strength of purpose, more negative perhaps than positive, which under a heavy exterior dominated Jackson Stake. He appeared genial and pliable, but when crossed he was hard as rock.

(p. 97)

It is however coincidence that the settler at whose shack Cal and Reed arrive wanted to go home, and Cal's arrival fits into Mr. Mason's plans like a jigsaw puzzle piece falling into place. But such coincidences are common to all fiction, and Stead was perhaps better than his contemporaries for his coincidences do not strike the reader as being far-fetched or improbable. Stead had tried and, in this novel particularly, succeeded in showing a cause-and-effect relation between the characters and their actions. Each movement of Cal's is related to his character and commitment to his sister Celesta. Even Minnie's impulsive decision to go in response to Cal's telegram is in keeping with her character.

She is depicted as a very independent and impulsive person. The story of Celesta, a trifle unusual in Stead's moral fictional world, smacks of realism, however, and lends greater credibility to the story of Cal and Reed. Celesta's seduction and betrayal tells the story, though inadequately, of the evil and dangers of the city. Inexperienced, simple, and needy, she falls an easy prey to the wiles and cunning of men. Her story could have been the story of hundreds of girls similarly seduced and betrayed and compelled to take up life in the brothels. It was one of the big problems of western Canada. Gray explains:

The coming in of a million or more immigrants between 1900 and 1915 ushered in the bawdiest, brawlingest, drunkenest, and back-breakingest era in prairie history. It was also the most puritanical, law-abiding, Sab-batarian, and pietistic. It was an era in which the forces of self-righteousness collided head-on with the entrenched forces of prostitution.<sup>56</sup>

But it was a problem that Stead managed to touch on the surface only. His conservatism prevented him from probing deeply into the unpleasant aspects of life, and though he succeeded in winning the reader's sympathy for his 'fallen woman,' his Presbyterianism would not allow her to survive, and his sense of poetic justice saw to it that her seducer too did

not go unpunished.

The Smoking Flax was, thus, a better novel, as far as characterization went, than his earlier novels. It received good reviews "throughout the country" but remained a disappointment to both publisher and author in point of sales.<sup>57</sup> In a letter written to McClelland & Stewart on March 21, 1925, Stead confessed having had misgivings about the sale of this novel when he had noticed "the comparative dearth of publicity at the time of publication."<sup>58</sup> But, he added, that he had lulled himself with the idea that perhaps their "sales effort would be more effective" since they were committed to pay royalty on at least ten thousand copies.<sup>59</sup> "But," Stead continued:

it has dropped to the lowest point in my experience since the publication of "The Homesteaders", in 1916. It is less than one-third of my usual sale. And this notwithstanding the fact that I have never written a book which has had better comments from those qualified to pass an opinion.<sup>60</sup>

McClelland & Stewart, however, assured Stead that this unexpected fall in the sale of his book was not a lone example, because they observed "a noticeable reduction in the sales of fiction" by all writers.<sup>61</sup> They attributed this falling off to the "hard times"

and the changed policy of booksellers who no longer believed in ordering a large stock and keeping it on hand.<sup>62</sup>

Stead was not very happy over the jacket of The Smoking Flax though he liked the makeup and the press work. On November 8, 1924, he wrote to McClelland & Stewart:

I am not sure that I am enthusiastic over the jacket, particularly as I cannot recall what incident in the story it is supposed to represent, but I hope it will prove to have a good selling appeal. Personally I think the jacket of the English edition which has just come to hand is very appropriate and more appealing.<sup>63</sup>

He was informed that the design used was the same as that "selected by Geo. H. Doran Company for the American Edition."<sup>64</sup> But Stead was equally disappointed with the American edition and expressed his dissatisfaction to Mr. John McClelland:

Frankly, I have been somewhat disappointed in the American production. The jacket does not represent any scene from the story which I can identify, nor does it suggest the general atmosphere of the book, which is much better depicted by the English jacket. And in the makeup the pages have been crowded, and a thin stock used, which gives the volume a slender appearance.<sup>65</sup>

Stead's reference to the "slender appearance" and the note of discontent that lay beneath it is again an indication of his awareness of the type of audience for which he was writing. He added: "that may be no disadvantage with the discriminating buyer-- but how many buyers are discriminating?"<sup>66</sup>

At this point it would not be irrelevant to point out that Stead almost always felt dissatisfied with the way his publishers handled the sales and promotion of his books. This, however, was not an attempt on his part to shift the blame for his failure on to his publishers for it has to be recognized that he knew what he was talking about. When he arranged things himself, whether it was getting the novels published, or securing reviews, or publicizing the books, he achieved better results than either Briggs, or Musson, or McClelland & Stewart, or for that matter, any of his publishers. The reason is not difficult to discover. As I have emphasized earlier, the commercial instinct in Stead was as strong as the artistic, at times perhaps even more so. Besides, he was through and through a publicity man, and knew the knack as well as the value of advertising.

The publication of The Smoking Flax thus

further undermined Stead's already waning reputation. Frustrated in his latest literary effort he was possessed by a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the way things had turned out. Many factors contributed to this feeling, but the death of his mother on June 18, 1924, may have been one of the most important. The diary entry simply reads: "Mother died at Edmonton." He goes on to record that the funeral was to take place on the 23rd, at Cartwright. Stead went to attend the funeral.

Bald and matter-of-fact as the diary entry reads, it gives no indication of an emotional attachment, but that is no reason to believe that Stead had no sentimental feelings for his mother. Two things are to be noted in this connection. First, that Stead, in May 1950, made a digest of his old diaries, and in doing so divested them of any emotional trappings that may have been there, leaving for posterity a matter-of-fact record of events and happenings; and second, that Stead, as a man, was not given to displaying his emotions and sentiments. This opinion was confirmed by the various people I interviewed. His daughter-in-law, Jean, said that he was "very unemotional;" she described him as one who "didn't show his feelings very much."<sup>67</sup> This aspect of his

personality was pointed out by his grand-daughter, Janet, and by his second daughter-in-law, Helen, also. As a matter of fact, it was mentioned, even if casually, by almost all the family members I interviewed. This explains not only the absence of sentiment in his diary, but also helps us to understand why his characters are unable to achieve any great emotional outbursts. Their feelings, like the writer's, seem to be dammed and under control. Raymond Burton of The Bail Jumper, Jim Travers of The Homesteaders, Dave Eldon of The Cow Puncher, Dennison Grant of the novel bearing this title, Cal Beach of The Smoking Flax, and Gander of Grain, are all incapable of showing their feelings. Most of his male characters find it difficult to declare their love, and sometimes, because of their inhibitions, lose their beloveds to their less deserving rivals. For instance, Dennison loses Zen to Transley, and Gander loses Jo to Dick. The other heroes also, like Raymond Burton, Dave Eldon, Cal Beach, along with the heroines, find it difficult to express their feelings.

Whether Stead was attached to his mother or not is open to dispute, but his admiration of her is not. In an interview, when asked from whom he had inherited his genius, he answered that it must be from his mother because she was the ablest woman he

had ever known.<sup>68</sup>

Stead's unemotional nature seems to have been the result of his over all conservatism. Coming from a devout Presbyterian religious background, his conservatism extended beyond thoughts and ideas. It made him develop a very quiet sense of humor, and he was remembered by the people I met, as one who "never laughed hilariously."<sup>69</sup> His son, R.A. Stead, commented on his father's extremely conservative attitude which was reflected even in his choice of clothes. He mentioned that his father did not like "flashy" clothes, preferred suits to combinations, and "usually wore a tie even on the hottest day in summer."<sup>70</sup> For him a hat was an essential part of dress and he usually wore one. His daughter-in-law, Jean, also emphasized his conservative dressing habits and mentioned that "he wouldn't go out of doors without being fully and correctly dressed." She added that though he "dressed modestly" he was never "sloppy."<sup>71</sup>

The insistence on being "correctly" and "completely" dressed reflects Stead's methodical and conservative attitude in life. It was an attitude that he shared with his wife, Nettie, who may have been responsible for making it more pronounced than it might otherwise have been.<sup>72</sup> They both shared old-

fashioned ideas on dress, religion, thrift and industry. This old-fashioned conservatism extended even to their ideas on bringing up children. Jean, who had had to live with them when she and Lorne moved to Ottawa from Montreal during the early years of the Depression, remembered this very minutely. The same impression was borne by Janet, who recalled the time when she lived with her grand-parents when her mother was at the sanatorium. She remembered that even when she was grown up she was never allowed to smoke in front of her grand-parents, and, what was still more vivid as a memory, recalled how her grand-mother would give her a cookie and a paper napkin and insist on her sitting in one place to eat it, so that the crumbs would not fall all over the place.<sup>73</sup> Nettie's meticulous house-keeping made no allowances. Her own boys were not allowed any freedom and "even as kids were not allowed to go trekking in and out of the house."<sup>74</sup> She also insisted on her husband smoking on the balcony instead of in the rooms, "so that he couldn't smell up the house," or litter ashes over her carpets and floor.<sup>75</sup>

As I have mentioned several times, the twenties were on the whole not favorable for Stead. One setback occurred in May 1925. It started with a ray of hope

but ended on a note of frustration. Stead received a letter from one Mr. Liggett of McFadden Publications expressing a desire to use his poem "The Squad of One" for one of their new journals. He wrote:

We are starting a new magazine of adventure and western stories and are very desirous of printing your poem "The Squad of One" in one of our first issues. We do not seem to be able to locate a copy of this poem here and would very much appreciate it if you would send us one. 76

Stead promptly sent Mr. Liggett a copy of his Empire Builders. Liggett's reply was very encouraging:

There are a number of poems which it is possible that we may use . . . I also would like to see a copy of your serial "The Cow Puncher." It is barely possible we might be able to use this in serial form. . . . I have no doubt that you can supply us with a great deal of interesting material if you have time. The annals of the Mounted Police alone should supply you with very interesting material. 77

Stead pointed out that The Cow Puncher had been serialized in the U.S.A. already, and wondered if that would make any difference, or cause them to change their plans. He also directed their attention to Zen of the Y.D. Liggett wrote back on June 18, 1925:

If you have some time I would like to have you submit some fiction stories on the mounted police. I believe there is a great deal of

material up there and the field has not been overdone. Good stories on the mounted police are few and far between and I believe you can do this just the way we want it done. 78

But Stead was unable to comply with Mr. Liggett's request. His official position, in charge of publicity for the Department of Immigration, took up much of his time. Besides, his responsibilities towards the CAA, and the ever increasing demand on him for talks and lectures, as well as his family commitments, left him little available time for other activities. He apologized to Liggett saying:

I have so much on hand that I am afraid I cannot at present undertake the fiction stories of the mounted police which you suggest. Perhaps I may have opportunity later on. 79

The matter fell in abeyance. After a year or so, when he had more time, Stead revived the correspondence and made inquiries as to what had happened to his poem and novel. He also reminded the publisher that he had received no payment for his work. He was then informed that it had never been considered fit for inclusion in the Fighting Romances Magazine and that no payment was due. Stead, however, argued that since the poem had been asked for the question of acceptance did not arise, and whether they had used

it or not payment should be made for it. But McFadden Publications refused to entertain any such requests; Liggett had left them, and they felt they were not responsible for any commitments made by him.

Frustration grew apace. The Smoking Flax had proved a commercial flop. Though it found favor as a serial and had the unique honor of being made available in Swedish and Norwegian translations,<sup>80</sup> it did not sell well. It was recognized as a "critical success" because of its realism, a realism colored by romanticism, but this did not improve its sales. Although it was generally recognized that Cal Beach, its hero, belonged to that "tradition of altruistic young men determined to change the west . . ."<sup>81</sup> The Smoking Flax as a novel did not prove very popular.

The significance of The Smoking Flax, however, cannot be overlooked. In this novel Stead took up the period after the war, and had for its characters the second generation--the children of the settlers who homesteaded in the west and 'opened' it. This provided Stead with an opportunity to underline the clash of generations which had been briefly touched upon in The Homesteaders and was to become one of the major themes of subsequent prairie writing.<sup>82</sup> The novel is also remarkable in that it pointed the way to a new

approach in fiction. Till then, Stead had been concentrating on presenting actual scenes and incidents; development of character had not taken place in his novels (with the sole exception of Neighbours, but even here the development did not occur in a very definite way). In The Smoking Flax Stead shifted the focus and gave us an in depth study of the farmer's personality, the ideas and longings that ferment on a farm had more importance than farming operations. E.C. Thompson calls The Smoking Flax a "farm novel"<sup>83</sup> and defines that to mean a realistic picture of western farming life successfully portrayed. But to commend the book for that alone would be to misunderstand it. In this novel characters develop and change, and therein lies its value. The character of Jackson Stake, for example, would remain a mystery if we fail to see his death as deliberate and planned.<sup>84</sup> His death has to be recognized as the natural outcome after his paternal feelings have been aroused. Jackson's coming to the window and looking through, "gazing intently, absorbedly at the little form on the bed" (p. 279), and his suggestion of sitting up with him after a few days, are indications of the awakening of the paternal instinct in Jackson Stake. All doubt is further removed when Cal sees "Jackson Stake . . .

fondling the hair of the boy Reed, his child" (p.287). This is confirmed by Jackson himself when he confesses to Minnie:

It wasn't that that brought him here. It was that wild adventurous spirit of his. He felt that [Cal] had turned the trick on him, and he wanted to show [him] that he could turn it back . . . But sitting beside Reed, and watching him, and staying up with him at night, and wondering . . . 'Minnie,' he said, 'It got me. I began to realize things I'd never realized before. That he was my boy--'

(pp. 291-292)

Perhaps this change of heart is easier to understand if we realize that Jackson Stake is as much sinned against as sinning. Branded as the black sheep of the family, he is so used to blame that an instinctive feeling of being at war with the world has become almost second nature to him. But he is not all bad. He tells Cal that what had appeared to be blackmail was really an effort to keep him quiet.

The Smoking Flax should be commended further for the "techniques of circumstantial realism,"<sup>85</sup> as elaborated by Dick Harrison in his excellent study of prairie fiction in Unnamed Country, are developed to their fullest extent in this novel, so that Grain, his only accepted realistic novel, seems imminent.

Most reviewers and critics point to a weakness in characterization; a closer look shows that

Stead fails with his major characters more often and more seriously than with his minor characters. For example, he fails with Cal and Minnie more than with Jackson or Gander or Grit. Stead actually shows a greater insight in the portrayal of his minor characters. This is true not only of the male characters but also of the women. As a matter of fact the 'other' girl in his novels emerges as a more rounded character than the heroine. His heroines, conforming as they do to the standards of romantic fiction, are beautiful, vivacious, daring, and independent; but no such norms being laid down for the minor women, Stead drew them from experience and was far more successful in his handling of them. To cite a few examples: in Neighbours Marjorie is a far more down to earth character than Jean; she is also more realistic in her approach to life. Jean, no doubt, foreshadows a succession of prairie heroines who were to feel the dissatisfaction and frustration of a confined and limited mind more intensely, but Marjorie is certainly more realistically portrayed; in The Cow Puncher, while Irene Hardy remains the elusive heroine of romance, Edith Duncan is more real as a person; in Dennison Grant too, Phyllis Bruce is real and down to earth while Zen is wrapped up in the aura of romance; and in The Smoking Flax

Annie Frawdic, though merely sketched, is more realistic than Minnie Stake.

Stead's heroines, however, are not merely stereotypes in the tradition of the romantic novel. They contain within them the potential of a Judith Gare of Ostenso's Wild Geese or an Ellen Amundsen of Grove's Settlers of the Marsh. His depiction of such heroines reflects also the changing attitude of the time towards women, and their increasing emancipation. Beulah is not bound to the farm and land as her mother is; she can break those ties and free herself, and she does. Minnie is another of Stead's heroines who fights for her freedom and wins it. She, like Beulah, refuses to be tied down to the everlasting chores of the farm. Zen belongs to the same type; she would have fought for her freedom had she felt confined and bound in as did Minnie and Beulah.

Stead's success in this fictional development was more than what most critics and reviewers conceded. Characterization was no longer a weak point with him; the characters were more alive and more varied. He had come a long way from the characterization of The Bail Jumper. If he failed now it was only in the depiction of 'bad' characters, for in all his novels we do not come across anyone more villainous than Hiram Riles and

Gardiner. In this respect his range remains limited. But when we remember that Stead was after all a pioneer in novel-writing in western Canada, and that his significance is historical rather than intrinsic, we should give him credit for his occasional moments of insight instead of condemning him for his lapses. He shows a potential which he did not exploit. A glaring example is the relationship between Beulah and her father John Harris in The Homesteaders. The tension between them is merely indicated and not allowed to acquire the dimensions a similar relationship did in Ostenso's Wild Geese, published some ten years later. It would not be surprising if Ostenso got the idea from Stead for her depiction of Judith, and simply carried the collision of two strong characters to its natural and logical conclusion.

Stead also gives us the first portraits of the typical overworked farmer's wife which was to become a stock character of later prairie fiction. Though he failed to put up their case as deftly as did Grove in Fruits of the Earth and Settlers of the Marsh, or Arthur Stringer did in his trilogy, he depicted faithfully the callous indifference of the men to the comforts and leisure of the women folk. Here again, it was Stead, along with Stringer who

paved the way for Grove and other realistic fiction writers of western Canada. (I mention Grove particularly since he is often regarded as the first writer of the realistic novel in Canada.) Two examples indicating the plight of the women and the attitude towards them ought to suffice to show Stead's awareness of the problem. The first is a description from The Homesteaders:

Mary plodded along with her housework, toiling doggedly from five in the morning until half past nine or ten at night. Beulah's departure had left all the labours of the home upon her hands; her husband had made no suggestion of securing help. . . . The new man made no offer to milk any of the cows . . .

(p. 155)

The second description I have chosen from The Smoking Flax. It is not really a description, but rather a complaint by Mrs. Stake. She says:

"Jackson can always get another man or two, whether he needs him or not, but I can't get a woman, not for the soul or sake o' me."

(p. 38)

What she says about her husband is true of most husbands in novels about prairie farms. In addition to the women who complain Stead also gives us the different but typical pioneer women of Canadian prairie fiction--overburdened, indifferent, and

dead in spirit. Mrs. Metford in The Cow Puncher is a good example. These women foreshadow the typical pioneer women of later prairie fiction writers.

In the men too, Stead depicts the typical pioneer hero that was to re-emerge with firmer strokes of characterization in subsequent writers. John Harris in The Homesteaders is the prototype for heroes like Abe in Grove's Fruits of the Earth. Rather, he is the prototype for all those prairie heroes who lose sight of everything else except the farm, the land, money, and work, and are incapable of voluntarily changing their orientation. Through these characters Stead expresses a theme that was to loom large in later prairie writers--the hold of the land over the immigrant. At that date, however, Stead could not visualize and explore the psychological and emotional complications of the theme as later novelists did.

Harrison points out Stead's contribution in the field of imagery; in The Homesteaders he "describes the basic position of man in the prairie-as-Garden":<sup>86</sup>

It was a life of hard, persistent, work--of loneliness, privation, and hardship. But it was also a life of courage, of health, of resourcefulness, of a wild, exhilarating freedom found only in God's open spaces.

.....  
And at night, when the moon rose in wonderful whiteness and purity,

wrapping field and ravine in a riot of silver, the strange, irresistible, unanswerable longing of the great plains stole down upon them, and they knew that here indeed was life in its infinite fulness--a participation in the Infinite, indefinable, but all embracing everlasting.

(pp. 58, 60-61)

Stead gives us the romance of pioneering in terms of the infinite, the eternal, and the ineffable; "traditionally the terms of romance."<sup>87</sup> But Stead gives us more than the romance of pioneering. He gives us the other side also.

It would seem that the ideal is being realized, but Stead shows that success is fatal to the ideal. For Harris, the 'unanswerable longing of the great plains' has become an insatiable desire for more land.<sup>88</sup>

Twenty-five years later, we see him "brutalized by work and crass ambition"<sup>89</sup> and devoid of all the finer traits of his character. Stead tells us:

Harris did not know that his gods had fallen, that his ideals had been swept away; . . . he felt that he was still bravely, persistently, pressing on toward the goal, all unaware that years ago he had left that goal like a lighthouse on a rocky shore, and was now sweeping along with the turbulent tide of Mammonism.

(HS, p. 88)

The pattern traced by Stead here is a pattern that recurs frequently in subsequent prairie fiction.

Stead also begins, in The Cow Puncher, to develop a new kind of cowboy, but it seems that half-way through the novel he lost his courage and allowed his hero to become a typical specimen of romantic fiction. He does, however, succeed in showing that

the cowboys were as unlike the cowboys of fiction and . . . imagination as a Manitoba steer is unlike his Alberta brother; they did not carry revolvers, nor swagger in high boots, nor rip the air with their profanity, and their table-manners were outstanding . . .

(HS, p. 293)

Finally, Stead gives us the first glimpse of heroes who are dreamers and not doers. In this category we have Dennison Grant and Cal Beach. They are both possessed of a vision in much the same way as such Grove heroes like Abe, Len and Lindstdt.<sup>90</sup>

Stead is to be commended further, for in these novels he helped to "lay the groundwork for the realistic novel in Canadian literature, by adhering strongly to material he knew and loved best"<sup>91</sup> instead of trying to portray the "synthetic west"<sup>92</sup> of the thrillers. Saunders voiced the general opinion when he said that as a writer Stead was the first "to make life on the prairies as we know it believable to us."<sup>93</sup>

The ousting of the rancher by the homesteader which is an occasional theme in Stead and never fully developed<sup>94</sup> has its basis in history, and is thus, another aspect of realism in his work:

While general settlement policies bore heavily on the ranching industry as a whole, it was at the local level that ranchers came face to face with the direct results of agricultural settlement.<sup>95</sup>

Much was made of Stead's realism even by critics in his own day. And as subsequent observations also show, his fiction faithfully chronicles the conditions and development of the west from the early years of the twentieth century to the mid-twenties. The task was not difficult; he did not have to go far afield to find the reality he wrote about. He drew on his own experience and used to advantage his own varied and checkered career as farm-hand, store clerk, automobile agent, and publicity man. The hero of Stead's first novel, The Bail Jumper, is, it would be reasonable to assume, a projection of himself; he starts off as a store clerk and then becomes a farm-hand. Again, like Stead, he is poetically inclined, the difference being that he likes to recite poetry while Stead composed poems. The autobiographical material

is used obviously and deftly; facts and fiction are woven together so subtly that no line of demarcation can be traced. This is true not only of The Bail Jumper but of all Stead's novels, for the autobiographical element is similarly apparent in them all. In The Homesteaders Stead took up the theme of pioneers and pioneering. Here his memories of homesteading in the Turtle Mountain district of Manitoba served him well. From his own experience, gained at a young but also impressionable age, Stead had a thorough, intimate, first-hand knowledge of pioneering conditions. John Harris, we are told, delights in ploughing the virgin sod of the prairies, just as Stead imagined his father to have done:

Harris's soul never dulled to the delight of driving the ploughshare through the virgin sod. There was something almost sacred in the bringing of his will to bear upon the soil which had come down to him through all the ages fresh from the hand of the Creator.

(HS, p. 67)

Stead had often fondly recalled that his father had "ploughed the virgin sod of the prairies of Manitoba."<sup>96</sup> The autobiographical element is not limited to the theme alone; the resemblance can be seen in the characterization too. Jim is reserved and upright like the author, and suffers from a similar emotional

restraint. His going further west provided Stead with the opportunity of showing his intimate knowledge of western Canada.

In The Cow Puncher Dave Eldon keeps changing jobs with the same alacrity as Stead. He shovels coal, works for a grocery store, and finally lands himself a newspaper job. It is perhaps not surprising that many of Stead's heroes do, at some time, get associated with newspaper work. Maybe Stead felt, and agreed, with Dave (of The Cow Puncher) that though "the worst paid of all professions . . . its the best training in the world, not for itself, but as a step to something else" (p. 120).

Having lived through the 'booms' of the western cities, Stead could describe their rise, peak, and collapse with striking accuracy. Only the beginnings are felt in The Homesteaders but the 'boom syndrome' provides the background for The Cow Puncher.

In Neighbours the autobiographical element is more intimate. Although external features are not emphasized, Frank is very definitely an alter ego for Stead. The autobiographical coloring is shown in the occasional references to strict Presbyterian parents: Frank wonders how his orthodox parents would have reacted to "Jean picking up so perverted

an instrument as a banjo on a Sunday afternoon, and blending her voice with Spoof's in 'The Road to Mandalay'" (p. 171). In this novel he tells us very explicitly about the negative nature of the religion that was practised at home:

" . . . our religion was entirely a matter of Thou Shalt Nots, but I should make one exception. There was one Thou Shalt. Thou Shalt go to church every Sunday."

(p. 5)

These memories are, too reminiscent of the farming community and the Presbyterian household in which Stead had been brought up to be taken as entirely objective. The resemblance between Frank and his creator is further evident in his love for poetry and for things artistic.

But the autobiographical element is not always so obvious. In both The Smoking Flax and Grain it is more subtle. In The Smoking Flax Cal is not so much a projection of Stead's self as the idealization of his unfulfilled desires. Never having received a University education himself, he makes much of Cal's academic qualifications which, however, do not make him unfit for life on the farm.

Gander, the hero of Grain, is perhaps Stead's most intimate alter ego after Frank (of Neighbours).

In Grain Stead perhaps strove to come to terms with his own passive role in the war. He takes pains to emphasize that it was not cowardice on Gander's part that prevented him from going to the war, but a failure to understand its gravity and importance. Stead too had been patriotic but only verbally. Perhaps it was family considerations that prevented him from going. Or, it could be simply a matter of age, for Stead was already thirty-four when the war broke out in 1914. And, according to Mrs. Eggleston, persons of Stead's age were in readiness to proceed when the call would come. The younger people being taken first, these would have been called only in 1918-1919, and for them the call never came. Mrs. Eggleston seemed quite sure that if the war had lasted another year, Stead would have been called upon to serve his country.<sup>97</sup> But whatever the reason, Stead identifies himself with Gander in his psychological and emotional makeup.

The autobiographical element also appears in lesser and more minute details, as in his description of the lots chosen by Frank and Jack (in Neighbours) with a gully in between; or his heroes belonging to Scottish families; or the frequent references to baseball. (That was the only game

Stead liked to play or watch.<sup>98</sup>) His pro-Scottish leanings are apparent when we notice that the best and most idealized characters in his novels are always Scottish: Raymond Burton, the Grants, and Myrtle Vane in The Bail Jumper, and Frank Hall in Neighbours, to mention only a few. Other minute autobiographical details are when London, in The Bail Jumper, recalls going to church in the schoolhouse, or when Donald, in "Dry Water," mentions the service being held in the schoolhouse. Both these details are derived from Stead's Chesterville experience where the first church meetings were held in the school. Other similarities include the resemblance of heroes to Stead in their religious leanings, their enterprising natures, their conservatism, their ideas and concepts, and in that they too "used their idle hours to advantage" (BJ, p. 64).

Although this study stresses Stead's realism, it is to be recognized that his was a very narrow and limited realism. It does not, for instance, take into account the problems of booze and prostitution in the prairie towns during the time of which he writes. Although many of his novels do use Calgary as the background for the development of the story he does not depict it as "the booze, brothel, and

gambling capital"<sup>99</sup> of western Canada. As I have already mentioned, according to Gray

the coming in of a million or more immigrants between 1900 and 1915 ushered in the bawdiest, brawlingest, drunkenest, and back-breakingest era in prairie history. It was also the most puritanical law-abiding, Sabbatarian and pietistic. It was an era in which forces of self-righteousness collided head-on with the entrenched forces of prostitution. . . .<sup>100</sup>

But the merit lies in that Stead did not try to overstep the limits of his limited realism, and may therefore be defended on grounds that he peoples his novels with heroes and characters who are good and do not have to face these problems nor have occasion to come up against them. Moreover, prohibition came in shortly after<sup>101</sup> and though that does not mean that the problem was solved, it was, in any case, less apparent on the surface. Stead, brought up in a strict Presbyterian home, married to an equally strict Presbyterian wife who would not tolerate any liquor in the house,<sup>102</sup> may have considered it wiser to avoid subjects which were, after all, not very essential to the romantic fiction that he was writing.

Another limitation in Stead's treatment of the prairies is his total unawareness of the isolation and loneliness people suffered. Surprisingly, this

often formed the subject of his short stories, but in his novels he apparently preferred not to probe too deeply into the unpleasant aspects of life on the prairies that would detract from the idyllic nature of his romances. In this respect he was simply adhering to the pastoral tradition in literature. American writers like Hamlin Garland, as well as later Canadian writers like Grove and Ross, showed how this isolation and loneliness often brutalized and dulled prairie people. It should however be noted that though Stead wrote idyllic, sentimental romances, he was one of the few writers to see "that the millennial harmony between man and nature implied in the early romances of pioneering was an illusion."<sup>103</sup>

Treatment of war was another area of limitation in Stead. War and patriotism are introduced in his novels but with an idealized and romantic attitude: soldiers are glorified and widows are proud. His picture lacks the real ugliness and sorrow of war. But his stance reflects the general attitude prevalent in Canada before and during the First World War, especially in western Canada. Stead is not alone in his one-sided outlook on war. The horror aspect of war is conspicuous by its absence in almost all the literature of Canada produced before the Second

World War.

One of Stead's letters gives us an idea of how wide the connotations of 'patriotic value' were for him and his contemporaries. On August 20, 1915, he wrote to Unwin:

Sometimes I feel as though it was almost a mean thing to try to put a book of fiction on the market at a time when we are all thinking of other and important matters, but I recall that Canadians will this year spend probably thousands of dollars on fiction written or printed in foreign countries, and I feel that anything I can do toward retaining that business for printers, publishers, and dealers within the Empire is not without patriotic value. I am now taking military training in order that I may give other patriotic service on occasion. 104

Another aspect of current interest which Stead overlooks is the ethnic problem. Racial discrimination was openly practised on the prairies and was a problem of which he was apparently aware. He expressed racial feelings in his poetry and often used his editorials to discuss the issue; but in his novels, though he writes of immigrants often, those newcomers he draws in greatest detail are invariably from eastern Canada (like his family). Here again, it is obvious that Stead could fall back on the family's experience and his own early memories. It

is also another instance when he seems deliberately to avoid unpleasant topics; and it does seem to be avoided deliberately, for his feelings can be felt just below the surface. He makes no mention of racial conflict, yet the west he writes about "is an Anglo-Saxon preserve where other ethnic groups live more in sufferance than in dignity."<sup>105</sup> Here again we may say that Stead is only being discreet in his avoidance of controversial issues. But despite Stead's overt avoidance of racism as a subject, he does depict the reality that on the prairies, at the beginning of the century, to be British and Anglo-Saxon and Protestant was the only thing.<sup>106</sup>

Another frequent fault in Stead is his moralistic attitude. The didactic note had been strong in both Ralph Connor (1860-1937) and Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)--and Stead was exposed to and influenced by both. According to R.A. Stead, Knowles was one of his father's favorite writers, whom he constantly read.<sup>107</sup> The influence of Connor ~~has been~~ has been pointed out so often that it is needless to repeat.

Having discussed Stead's limitations at length, I am inclined to conclude that his limitations are the limitations of popular fiction, and the

limitations of his time. His merit and significance lies in those brief glimpses when he was able to overcome those limitations, or, rather when he did not allow those limitations to mar his artistic work, for in Stead, these limitations or weaknesses are all related to omissions. There are some things he just did not touch upon. But what he depicted was handled skilfully and masterfully, so that the average reader was not aware of any faults. Stead knew his weak points and was aware that he could not rise above them, but that did not stand in his way, for in all his novels he endeavored to produce a popular literature rather than a lasting one. And popular literature, as E.C. Thompson tells us, "is that useful sub-stratum of literary experience which reveals, fairly accurately, the prevailing day-dream of society."<sup>108</sup> When Stead turned his hand to novel-writing the form most readily available to him was the sentimental idyllic romance of the homesteader and the farmer. That "the first fruit of settlement literature by English-Canadians tended to be romantic rather than realistic"<sup>109</sup> is obvious. The reason is not far to seek. In the west, as in other pioneer regions,<sup>110</sup> the "cultural values . . . were essentially Utilitarian and did not include the concept of 'fine

writing'."<sup>111</sup> The literature that was produced by this environment was a literature of

homestead romances which flattered the people and their achievements, and which supplemented the more prosaic pieces of grain-belt writing found in farmers' magazines and almanacs.<sup>112</sup>

This explains the instant and immense popularity gained by Stead. He wrote not only of what lay closest to the hearts of his audience, but also of their daydreams and longings. He presented the daydreams of the prairie dwellers with a romantic coloring, and became more than the "idyllic spokesman"<sup>113</sup> of the homesteaders. In him we find the first steps taken towards the realistic novel in Canadian literature. His novels as a whole, present the evolution of Canadian prairie life from the early days of homesteading to the time when the countryside became gradually mechanized and ushered in the era of big harvests and large settlements. Seen in perspective his fiction constitutes "an increasingly realistic chronicle of the development of western society

... "<sup>114</sup>

Thus Stead occupies a significant position as a transitional writer between the sentimental novel as practised by Connor and the realistic novels of Grove. Connor's novels, though dealing with the

west, depicted none of the hardships that had to be faced in settling. They were written with a specific purpose--to preach the gospel of love and God through fiction--and that purpose Connor achieved. But the fiction he wrote relied heavily on sentiments and emotions. This is why I call his novels 'sentimental' and 'romantic.' Stead's merit lies in that he was not content just to reproduce the efforts of the homesteaders no matter how interesting, or heroic, or glamorous. His novels were a step ahead of the sentimental fiction of the time, because each novel of his "is built around a 'problem' to be stated, explored, and resolved."<sup>115</sup> And his treatment of the problems shows both perception and imagination. The Mountie, the minister, and the teacher, who were the "central archetypes in the fiction of the prairies"<sup>116</sup> and through the pages of writers like Ralph Connor and Arthur Stringer, are notably absent from Stead's fiction. In his very choice of characters he had taken a step toward realism in the prairie novel. The Mountie, we are told, had "unique literary potential as a national culture hero"<sup>117</sup> and yet Stead did not use him in any of his novels. On the contrary, he painted the overworked farmer's wife, and depicted the gradual degeneration of the man

who becomes a slave to the land instead of its master; he depicts the romance of pioneering as well as the disillusionment of that romance. These were to become major themes in the realistic novels of later prairie writers, but all these themes are anticipated by Stead. According to Ricou, it was Stead who provided W.O. Mitchell with the metaphor of the prairie being "all soul; no body."<sup>118</sup>

Stead also uses the journey motif in his novels and gives us the quest theme in its less varied forms. Many of his heroes go on long journeys: Raymond Burton flees to the west; John Harris is lured by the mirage of easy money and wealth; Jim Travers' purpose is simply prospecting; Frank Hall and Jack Lane are typical settlers, attracted by the promise of cheap and better land; Cal Beach's journey is initiated due to reasons of health, but is later motivated by fear. In many cases the journey and the quest theme coincide, as in the case of John Harris and Cal Beach. It may be described as a quest leading to a greater understanding of the self (as in the case of John Harris) or to a better appreciation of others (as in Cal's understanding of Jackson Stake).

It is quite apparent that later prairie fiction has its roots in Stead's novels. He provides

many of the themes, some of the characters, and a few of the images that were to recur and assume greater proportions in subsequent prairie writing. The seeds of realism were planted by him though fruition took place later. With each successive novel more and more realism was brought in, but his public would not accept anything but romantic fiction from him. This will become still more apparent when we discuss his later and most realistic novel, Grain. Stead's persistent steps towards a greater realism and lesser romanticism were not appreciated and cost him both money and reputation, and resulted in a falling off of both.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The incomplete novel is set in the city. The only published novel with a city background is The Copper Disc, which took him five years to write.

<sup>2</sup> Diary, Stead Papers, vol. II, folder 11. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

<sup>3</sup> Letter in SP, vol. II, folder 10.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from L.E. Patterson to Robert Stead dated December 10, 1923, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Stead to Patterson dated December 13, 1923, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.

<sup>6</sup> Diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Stead to W.P. Watt dated May 14, 1921, in SP, vol. II, folder 9.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Alfred Washington to Robert Stead dated November 13, 1922, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.

<sup>9</sup> E.C. Thompson, The Prairie Novel in Canada: A Study in Changing Form (Ph.D. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1974), p. 226.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson's Theses (M.A. and Ph.D.); McCourt's The Canadian West in Fiction; Elder's "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J.C. Stead;" and Ricou's Vertical Man/Horizontal World.

12 The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 1756.

13 E.C. Thompson, The Critical Study of the Poetry and Prose of Robert Stead, Prairie Poet and Novelist (M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick; 1965), p. 120.

14 The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, p. 1942.

15 The Calgary Weekly Herald, November 12, 1884.

16 Stead completed writing Neighbours on October 8, 1921. He mentions the letter he sent to Watt in his diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

17 "Robert Stead's Latest Novel, Neighbours," The Cartwright Review, January 4, 1923.

18 Wordsworth believed that "in order to write well a poet must deeply feel the emotion he expresses . . ." David Perkins, Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 3.

19 Thompson, M.A. Thesis, p. 139.

20 Numerous examples can be cited: London meeting Burton in the West (BJ); Beulah travelling on the same train as Jim (HS); Jim working for Gardiner in the west (HS); Allan and his father being brought to the Arthurs' ranch (HS); Dennison having Zen for a neighbor (DG); Spoof and Mrs. Alton running into each other on the prairie (NS); Cal going to the Stake household for a job (SF). These are only a few of the many such examples strewn throughout Stead's work.

21 A.T. Elder, "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J.C. Stead," Canadian Literature No. 17 (Summer 1963), p. 51.

22 Letter from Robert Stead to John McClelland dated September 13, 1926, in SP, vol. II, folder 4.

- 23 Letter in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 24 Anne Maclean, "Robert Stead--Homer of the Prairies," London Free Press (London, Ontario), December 16, 1922.
- 25 James H. Gray, The Roar of the Twenties (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), p. 75.
- 26 "Robert Stead, Canadian Author Gives Ideas on Book Situation," The Ottawa Journal, December 13, 1919.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 "Propaganda in Books says Canadian Author is Most Potent Agency," The Bulletin (Fort William), August 9, 1921.
- 29 It was declined as not expressing sentiments suitable for the U.S.
- 30 Writeups on Stead's address on Canadian literature and National Identity appeared in the following papers: The Bulletin (Fort William), August 9, 1921; The Toronto Mail & Empire, August 15, 1921; The Regina Daily Post, August 18, 1921; The Regina Leader, August 19, 1921; The Calgary Herald and The Morning Albertan, August 30, 1921; The Edmonton Bulletin and The Edmonton Journal, August 31, 1921; The Saskatoon Phoenix, September 3, 1921; Daily Colonist, September 4, 1921; The Ottawa Citizen, November 9, 1921; The Standard and The British Whig (both of Kingston), November 18, 1921; The Montreal Star and The Gazette (Montreal), November 23, 1921.
- 31 Stead presided at the Author's luncheons for Nellie McClung and for Lady Byng on November 16, and November 24, 1921, respectively; for G.H. Thring of the British Authors' Association on October 29, 1930; he addressed the luncheon meeting of the CAA at Edmonton on August 31, 1921; he was guest of honor and speaker at the CAA luncheon at Winnipeg on November 18, 1923. These are only a few instances.

32 Stead was national president for the years 1923 and 1924.

33 Leslie Mundwiler, "Robert Stead--Home in the First Place," Essays on Canadian Writing No. 11 (Summer 1978), p. 193.

34 Mary Vipond, "Canadian Nationalism and the Plight of Canadian Magazines in the 1920s," The Canadian Historical Review 58, 1 (March 1977), p. 43.

35 Ibid., p. 44.

36 "The Copyright Situation," The Canadian Bookman 5, 8 (August 1923), p. 209.

37 "The Copyright Delay," The Canadian Bookman 5, 1 (January 1923), p. 7.

38 "The Copyright Act," The Canadian Bookman 5, 6 (June 1923), p. 150.

39 "Literature as a National Asset: A Radio-graphed Message," The Canadian Bookman 5, 12 (December 1923), p. 343.

40 "Third Annual Convention, CAA: Address by the President," The Canadian Bookman 6, 7 (July 1924), p. 164.

41 Ibid., p. 164.

42 On November 6, 1933, and November 3, 1934. Information is from diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

43 Letter from Lorne Pierce to Stead dated January 25, 1924, in SP, vol. II, folder 8.

44 Reviews of "To Him That Hath" and "The Gaspards of Pine Croft" are in SP, vol. X, folder 39. These were never published.

45 The manuscript was sent in two instalments: pp. 1-117 on August 6, and pp. 118-133 on September 22.

- 46 Letter from J.D. Logan to Lorne Pierce dated October 8, 1922, Lorne Pierce Papers (Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston), Box I. (The Lorne Pierce Papers are also not numbered.)
- 47 Correspondence in Lorne Pierce Papers, Box I.
- 48 Letter from James Cappon to Lorne Pierce dated January 10, 1923, in Lorne Pierce Papers, Box I.
- 49 Letter from Stead to Lorne Pierce dated August 5, 1926, in Lorne Pierce Papers, Box II.
- 50 Letter from Brandt & Kirkpatrick to Stead dated August 21, 1923, in SP, vol. I, folder 2.
- 51 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated March 13, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 52 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated May 2, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 53 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated May 8, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 54 Mentioned by Stead in a letter to McClelland & Stewart dated May 15, [192] 4, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 James H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), p. 2.
- 57 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated December 31, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 58 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 4.
- 59 Royalties on 10,000 copies were guaranteed; half the amount payable at the time of publication and half within 90 days.

60 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated March 21, 1925, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

61 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated December 31, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

62 Ibid.

63 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 4. This letter is the only evidence that there was an English edition.

64 Letter from McClelland & Stewart dated November 12, 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

65 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated November ? 1924, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

66 Ibid.

67 Unrecorded interview with Jean Stead, wife of Lorne Stead, on May 9, 1979.

68 R.E. Knowles, "Great Canadian Novel Not Yet Written--Stead," The Toronto Daily Star, April 6, 1936. Stead said: "I regard my mother as the most capable woman I ever knew."

69 Interview with Jean.

70 Unrecorded interview with R.A. Stead, son of the writer, on May 4, 1979.

71 Interview with Jean.

72 Nettie's influence on Stead was described as being "moral and ethical" by R.A. Stead in an unrecorded interview on March 14, 1979.

73 Interview with Jean.

74 Ibid.

75 Mentioned by both Jean and Helen in their interviews. Helen Stead, wife of Stanley Stead, was interviewed on May 11, 1979. The interview is unrecorded.

76 Letter from Walter Liggett to Stead dated May 16, 1925, in SP, vol. I, folder 6.

77 Letter from Liggett to Stead dated May 26, 1925, in SP, vol. I, folder 6.

78 Letter from Liggett to Stead dated June 18, 1925, in SP, vol. I, folder 6.

79 Letter from Stead to Liggett dated August 12, [192] 5, in SP, vol. I, folder 6.

80 It was serialized by The Ottawa Journal, The Aurora Banner, The Waterloo Chronicle, The Wolfville Arcadian, and the Woman's Weekly. In Swedish it was serialized in Svenska Canada and in Norwegian in Tidningen Norrona.

81 Thompson, Ph.D. Thesis, p. 406.

82 Grove, for instance, uses this theme in his Our Daily Bread and in Fruits of the Earth. It also occurs in Ostenso's Wild Geese.

83 Thompson, M.A. Thesis, p. 153.

84 Thompson has misunderstood the text because Jackson Stake does not die in an accident (at least not in my opinion).

85 Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country (University of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 102.

86 Ibid., p. 75.

87 Ibid., p. 75.

- 88 Ibid., p. 90.
- 89 Ibid., p. 90.
- 90 Abe of Fruits of the Earth, Len in The Yoke of Life, and Lindstedt in Settlers of the Marsh.
- 91 Thompson, M.A. Thesis, p. 176.
- 92 Edward A. McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 94.
- 93 T[homas] S[aunder], "The Causerie," The Winnipeg Free Press, July 8, 1961.
- 94 This theme forms only a sub-plot in Dennison Grant, but it is dealt with in some of the short stories, most notable among them "The Fellow Who Won't Be Beat."
- 95 John H. Archer, "The Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association" in Historical Essays on the Prairie Provinces, ed. Swainson (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), p. 193.
- 96 Robert J.C. Stead, "Past, Present and Future," MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40, p. 1.
- 97 Unrecorded interview with Mrs. Eggleston on November 19, 1978.
- 98 Interview with Jean.
- 99 Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, p. 125.
- 100 Ibid., p. 2.
- 101 Prohibition was introduced in Alberta in 1915.
- 102 Taped interview with R.A. Stead on March 7, 1979.

- 103 Harrison, p. 34.
- 104 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 3.
- 105 Thompson, Ph.D. Thesis, p. 240.
- 106 Ibid., p. 240.
- 107 In Stead's limited library Knowles' books formed the largest percentage by any single author. (See Appendix IV)
- 108 Thompson, Ph.D. Thesis, p. 217.
- 109 Ibid., p. 156.
- 110 Shown also in the literature of the U.S. in writers like Hamlin Garland and Willa Cather.
- 111 Thompson, Ph.D. Thesis, p. 177.
- 112 Ibid., p. 177.
- 113 Ibid., p. 177.
- 114 Ibid., p. 405.
- 115 Ibid., footnote on p. 223.
- 116 Harrison, p. 88.
- 117 Ibid., p. 85.
- 118 Laurence Ricou, Vertical Man/Horizontal World (University of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 10.

## Chapter V

### Grain and After

Thomas Saunders in his Introduction to Grain writes that "something was stirring on the prairies in the mid-twenties--something more than the wind rustling through the grainfields or whistling across the winter snows"<sup>1</sup> and talks of "a literary ferment" which was taking place at the time. But Saunders fails to point out that Stead was the man largely responsible for causing that ferment. We have already seen how Stead prepared the way for the achievement of both Grove and Ostenso (the two writers mentioned by Saunders) by his constant efforts at injecting a greater realism into the sentimental and romantic novel of the day; and that these efforts, though not always successful, were in the right direction of the future for the Canadian novel.

Till now Stead had been anxious to please his readers, to achieve financial success as well as a literary reputation. Of late, however, his efforts

had not been so well rewarded; as seen in the last chapter, there had been a gradual falling off of both reputation and money. But despite these setbacks, 1926 did see the publication of his novel Grain.

Grain stands out as the only novel in which Stead strove to prove that he was more than a literary hack, and wrote to satisfy the artistic instinct more than the commercial. As Saunders comments:

Grain . . . is significant not only for what it is in itself but for the act of courage it involved. It meant Stead's turning his back on the easy success he had already achieved and venturing on something more satisfying to him personally, in which no success--critical or popular--was guaranteed.<sup>2</sup>

It would perhaps be too sweeping to say that Grain shows evidence of having been conceived (and possibly written) much earlier than its date of publication. But its background--the war years and after--as well as the story of Cal and Reed, are possible indications that Grain might have preceded The Smoking Flax. It would not be unreasonable to presume that Stead had Grain in mind earlier, but wanted Gander to learn from the example of Minnie and Cal, and that this might have given him the idea to write The Smoking Flax first. The decision to write it first may have been prompted by the fact that The Smoking Flax had

all the ingredients of the popular romance and was likely to prove more successful. The two novels, however, are interwoven:

sharing characters and events; but with points of view different enough to change the emphasis and perspective in which we see those events. It is as though Stead had needed the earlier novel to discover that his real subject was not the romantic transient Calvin Beach, but the prosaic Manitoba farm boy, Gander Stake.

If we work on this assumption that Grain, even if in embryo, preceded The Smoking Flax, then, it is only natural to ask why Stead chose to publish it when he did. Why not earlier? I could find no external evidence that might throw light on the matter and can offer only the following conjecture. Very possibly Grain may never have been completed before this date. Or, Stead may have feared to publish it through fear of its reception--because he had largely eliminated romance in writing it. But after the publication of The Smoking Flax, despite his efforts at giving the public what they desired, his reputation had suffered. Moreover, since his move to Ottawa he had written nothing new. He may therefore have decided to complete or revise Grain and publish it then. Another factor which may have

contributed to its publication at this time was the appearance in 1925 of both Grove's Settlers of the Marsh and Ostenso's Wild Geese. The furore caused by these two may have inspired Stead to go ahead with Grain, for he must have realized that the realism in his book was milder and less likely to set up public shock waves than the realism of Settlers of the Marsh or Wild Geese. He must have been aware that the realism he offered in Grain was of "a different and gentler" kind.<sup>4</sup>

The characters in this novel as in the earlier ones are very ordinary and the story is leisurely told. This is where Stead's problem lies. With such an ordinary story and such ordinary characters it is very difficult to achieve a climax. Stead's characters do not assume the gigantic proportions of Grove's characters, for example;<sup>5</sup> consequently the tragedy that strikes them cannot be as disastrous and thunderous as that which befalls Grove's characters. But Stead's characters, though less exciting and impressive, are truer to life and more realistically conceived. It is the very ordinariness of Gander's life that makes him so credible. He belongs to the prairie as thoroughly as the coyote or the gopher, for like them, that is "his native environment" (GR, p. 56).

There is nothing inexplicable in Gander's character. Even his attitude towards the war has been seen as having been handled "with genuine psychological insight."<sup>6</sup> Gander is not afraid of dying. He gives sufficient evidence of his courage and bravery when he saves Walter Peters without a moment's hesitation:

Gander's decision was instantly taken. It was impossible to stop the engine in time; before he could so much as reach the throttle the boy would be chopped to pieces. But the great belt was rushing by within a yard of Gander's arm. To hurl himself upon it, with his whole force striving to run it off the flywheel, was the work of an instant. It whirled him from his feet, carried him for a moment like a leaf on some dark and rapid stream, then suddenly leapt from the wheel and fell like a serpent writhing in the stubble.

(p. 109)

It is not cowardice that keeps Gander from going to the war but his inability to understand what the war was about. Perhaps in Gander Stead rationalized his own involvement with the 1914 war, for he explains at length how the war seemed to Gander as something very remote and lacking in immediacy:

it is not to be granted that Gander was essentially less patriotic than other young men who had responded to the call. Any analysis of patriotism may lead to dangerous ground, and nothing more will be said than that Gander was happy in his home, that he saw no occasion to break away from it, that he was

attached to his father, his sister Minnie, his younger brother Hamilton, and in a lesser degree his mother; that he loved the farm horses and machinery, and that after all, the war was away in Belgium or some such place. Gander was not sure of his geography, but of this much he was sure, that the Atlantic Ocean lay between, and the British Navy ruled the Atlantic Ocean, so what was there to worry about? With Gander as with most others, it was a matter of perspective. He was not lacking in courage or in a spirit of readiness to defend his home; if an enemy battalion had appeared on the road allowance that skirted his father's farm Gander would have faced them single-handed with his breech-loading shotgun. He might even have marched into Plainville to resist their landing in his market town. But Belgium? Gander was unable to visualize a danger so remote.

(pp. 106-107)

The inexplicable nature of war coupled with his love for the land prevent Gander from going. And yet in a strange way he is aware of what the family and the community expect of him. That is why he feels guilty. Stead makes explicit the guilt so that there can be no doubt about it:

Down underneath was a gnawing sense --a sense that he was running away from something, that he was a fugitive, taking refuge on the farm.

(p. 126)

Or again:

During the years of war Gander had resisted the prairie longing to spend his Saturday evenings in Plainville. No doubt the psychoanalyst would find in that suppressed desire the explanation of his sullenness, his aloofness, his occasional unbalance, such as had ostracized him from the company of Joey Burge. But now that the war was over and the recruiting posters had been taken down or were flapping in tattered remnants from neglected walls and fences, Gander again felt at ease to move about among his kind.

(p. 158)

Gander is in the peculiar position of the man who knows what he ought to do, but prefers to do something else which, though equally patriotic, is not what is expected of him. It is this which makes his the tragedy of the quiet man because his suffering is all within.

The story too has nothing startling in it. Jo and Gander love each other but theirs is a subdued love affair; it is not colored by any passionate outbursts. Even when Jo marries Dick Claus, her marriage does not cause any great stir in the community. Gander's life also goes on, uneventful as ever. Gander is unheroically heroic for there is nothing spectacular in his heroism. He is heroic in his courage as well as in his attitude towards Jo and Dick. But here too as before it is the

quiet heroism that goes largely unnoticed. It is recognized briefly and momentarily but is soon forgotten. For example, the farm hands do propose that he should get a Victoria Cross for saving Walter Peters. Similarly, Dick tells Gander: "You pulled me out of No Man's Land as sure did any soldier in the trenches. Only you won't get any VC for it" (GR, p. 200). Stead prepares us for this quiet heroism from the very beginning by pointing out that Gander belongs to "the unheroic generation after the pioneers."<sup>7</sup> At the very outset we are told:

Perhaps the term hero, with its suggestion of high enterprise, sits inappropriately upon the chief character of a somewhat commonplace tale; there was in Gander Stake little of that quality which is associated with the clash of steel or the impact of noble purposes. Yet that he was without heroic fibre, I will not admit, and you who bear with me through these pages shall judge whether or not the word is wholly unwarranted.

(GR, p. 15)

With this elaboration Stead introduces what Harrison calls "an ironic distance between the reader and his hero."<sup>8</sup> Harrison further points out:

Stead's is a patient, almost dogged fidelity to the daily circumstances of prairie life which work inexorably to stunt the growth of his hero, just as Gander's ill-fitting trousers induce a permanent hitch.

in his walk. But Gander remains more comic than pathetic in his deformity; he limps because he wants to wear a belt, like a man, and he is personally narrowed to the limits of the farm because he chooses a man's work over a child's growing up.<sup>9</sup>

But as pointed out by Frank Davey, **realism** is not the central effect of Grain.<sup>10</sup> I agree with Davey that the core of the novel is Gander's relation with women, specially his feelings for Jo Burge, but I fail to see how Gander's feelings are "incestuous" or how incest is "a preoccupation of the book."<sup>11</sup> The passage that Davey quotes to show that Jo is linked in Gander's semi-conscious awareness with both his mother and his sister Minnie<sup>12</sup> can be interpreted differently. As a matter of fact, Gander, we are told, resents taking orders, and hence, feels uncomfortable when Jo "suddenly mothered him" (GR, p. 79). In Gander's mind all discipline and authority is associated with the mother, and since he hates authority he cannot possibly love a mother figure. For that matter, his mother is the last-mentioned among the persons whose attachment had prevented him from going to the war. We are told that Gander "was attached to his father, his sister Minnie, his younger brother Hamilton, and in a lesser degree his mother" (GR, p. 106).

His attitude towards Jo becomes ambivalent as he loves her more than anyone else, but she has become associated with a mother image which he resents. That might explain why he leaves her to the attentions of Dick Claus while he himself is taken up with his love for machines. When Jo and Gander meet on the few occasions during the duration of the war, it is brought out quite clearly that although Jo was Gander's first love and he cared for her a great deal, still, he could not comply with her ideas of patriotism and courage. It is this inability, to take orders, and not Gander's incestuous feelings, that finally brings the rift between Jo and Gander. I might point out here that Jerry is the only girl who respects Gander as an adult, or, has "adult expectations of Gander" as Davey puts it;<sup>13</sup> because she does not try to boss him, she comes to occupy his thoughts so often. But she cannot wean Gander away completely because her meeting with him is so short lived. Besides, Gander always feels a certain compulsion to remain faithful to Jo:

Without knowing or understanding it Gander was still, at heart, faithful to his first love, and this new experience had in it all the allurements of the illicit. He felt that, in a sense, Jo must be his always. It was an ownership which he never would be able to assert, and yet it

was a pleasant thing to tuck away in his heart. He knew--don't ask him how--he knew that although Jo had married Dick she had wanted him. He had mused that thought, found comfort in it, when no one but himself knew he harboured it at all. It was a delicious secret.

(GR, p. 144)

Logan and French in their Highways of Canadian Literature (1924) assessed Stead the novelist as being effective in reproducing the atmosphere of the prairie, in giving "the details of farm and ranch life, and characteristic bits of scenery."<sup>14</sup> They added that his stories "are stronger in incident and action than they are in characterization."<sup>15</sup> But in Grain, Stead amply proved that he could handle characterization as skilfully as he could the descriptions of farms and farming operations. In this novel Stead excels not only in his characterization of Gander but also depicts accurately and realistically the emotions and feelings of his characters. As pointed out by Thompson, "Gander's emotions and shy fumbling actions" are skilfully interwoven "with the prairie setting."<sup>16</sup> For instance, Gander's timidity and frustration are paralleled in the climatic setting:

He slipped up quietly, uncertain whether she was asleep, and sat down beside her. Her hair, released by the removal of her hat, hung loose around her head; a strand or two curled about her neck. Little beads of moisture had

gathered on her forehead, for the day was very hot. Gander studied her fair face more intently than he had ever done before.

For a long time Gander sat beside her, wondering if she really was asleep or if this was a subtle feminine play to test him. Leaning low over her face he stooped until almost he had touched her lips. Yet he did not touch them; something seemed to hold him back. He arose impatiently to his feet and walked aimlessly about among the willows; coming upon his saddle, where he had thrown it upon the grass, he fussed with its straps and girth without knowing he did so, buckling and unbuckling, lacing and unlacing. When he returned to the girl she was sitting up.

(GR, p. 77)

This is followed immediately by a description of the frustrated stock and the equally frustrating weather:

The clouds were thickening in the west, and the sun was tempered by a screen which now reached well overhead. The stock were straggling over the next ridge.

"They want water," she said. "We'll have to drive them to water or they'll make for the grain fields."

"Yes," he agreed, slowly, knowing that after watering it would be time for each to work homeward.

"We'll work 'em over to the southeast, Jo; there's a slough here, if it ain't all dried up. Then you can cut your herd out, an' they'll be close to home."

"Good!" She dug her heels into her pony and was off at a gallop down one side of the ridge. Gander took the other, and in a few minutes they had the herd moving stolidly to the southeast. When they smelt water they broke into a run, but the slough proved to be almost dry;

inside the circle of rank grass and rushes was a broad belt of soft mud, etched with the light footprints of snipe and plover and the heavier trafficking of a family of muskrats. The little sheet of water in the centre lay scummy and green with stagnancy . . .

Suddenly a drop of water struck his cheek. "Rain!" they cried, looking quickly in each other's face, and the joy in their voices was wholesome and clean. "It's coming!"

The sun was completely obscured, and clouds were scudding overhead, with patches of serene blue shining tranquilly through their turmoil. On the prairie not a leaf moved. Every living thing stood silent for the gestation of the storm.

Then down came the wind. Gander first saw it raising clouds of dust from the summer-fallow a mile away, then spirals of leaves from the clumps of willows on the ridges. Yet where he sat it was as still as death.

"Jo," he said, "are you my girl?"

She drew her hat from her head, perhaps in anticipation of the wind, and her fair hair flung loose about her neck.

"Bill," she answered simply, "I've always been your girl."

He stepped his horse toward her, but the next minute the blast hit them. Her hair was all about his face, and what he said she did not hear.

The cattle swung out before the storm and the two riders in a moment had work on their hands. They were off at a gallop, rounding up the milling herd and crowding them back against the wind. A few great drops splattered on Gander's shirt; his shouts were whipped from his mouth unheard . . .

. . . They came up over the ridge again and faced the sun, blazing in their eyes. The wind had died as quickly as it had come; the clouds were blown into a thunderbank, vivid with pink and mauve, floating like a mighty iceberg in the eastern sky; the

blaze of intense lightning flashes lit it with sharper colour from time to time, but the promised rain vanished in thin air.

The girl and boy drew up again together, and Gander's jaw was grim and set. There was something fearful and majestic about him as he gazed defiantly at the empty sky; defiantly, perhaps, at God.

The girl watched him for a moment as he sat launching his soul against the inevitable. She, too, was rooted in the soil, and knew something of the mocking tragedy of rain that threatens but does not come. It was as though the heavens flirted with the earth, arousing her hope and passion, only to draw away in cold and beautiful disdain.

"I know--I know," she murmured to herself. Then her sympathy suddenly mothered him. Riding close she threw her arms about him and kissed him on the cheek. The next moment she was galloping her cattle toward their own gate.

Gander rode slowly homeward, a medley of mixed emotions. The sun seemed to come out hotter than ever, but he was afraid his cheeks burned not entirely of the sun. He was too young to be long caught in despair over the fleeting rain; his protest had been a sort of reflex of his father, rather than a cry from his own heart. His thoughts again hung about the girl, and he was ashamed of his own timidity.

(GR, pp. 77-80)

I have quoted this scene at length because it symbolizes the entire Gander-Jo relationship, at once demonstrating Gander's timidity and Jo's expectancy, and emphasizing the emotional intensity between them by a corresponding build up of tension in their natural surroundings.

Harrison also points out that it is not uncommon to find in Stead "crucial scenes of emotional turmoil . . . commonly answered by storms."<sup>17</sup> This can be seen even in his earliest novel, The Bail Jumper. When Raymond Burton is taking flight Stead writes: "But to the fugitive the threatened storm meant nothing. The warfare of the elements could tear no deeper than the warfare of his soul" (BJ, p. 161). A similar storm also appears in Dennison Grant when Dennison takes the decision to lose the woman he loves for the sake of her child.

Davey gives us an incestuous and Freudian interpretation of Grain, especially in his treatment of Gander.<sup>18</sup> Though reading in between the lines supports Davey's interpretation, I feel, to regard that as the only meaning, is to misunderstand the novel grossly. I might point out that the only two occasions on which Gander asserts his manhood in the novel are both the outcome of a challenge thrown to him in which he is made to feel inferior. On the first occasion Jo's unkind taunt, "You're too good to take orders? Too big a man to be told what to do?" and her concluding remark, "Better men than you are doing the square dance as you call it, Gander" (GR, p. 131) triggers off Gander's rage and makes him overpower

Jo with what Davey describes as "rape feelings."  
 On the second occasion Gander flares up when Jerry  
 hints at his lack of education. He immediately retorts:

"You think because you're from the  
 city, an' have been to school more  
 'n I have, an' wear fine clo'es, an'  
 have pretty clean fingers, I ain't  
 good enough for you. Perhaps I ain't.  
 But I ain't asked you. An' when I  
 want you I won't ask you--I'll take  
 you, see?"

(GR, pp. 164-165)

On both these occasions, then, Gander is acting in  
 self-defence as it were. And when he finally leaves  
 for the city, it is not on account of Jerry. In tak-  
 ing the decision to leave, Gander has grown up, and  
 characteristically, he does not sign himself "Gander"  
 in the last note written to Jo, but "W.H.S."

McCourt criticized the ending finding it too  
 sentimental,<sup>19</sup> but it is not all that sentimental,  
 nor does the conclusion stem from the reasons put  
 forward by McCourt. According to him:

Under the influence of a beautiful  
 and sophisticated girl's interest  
 in him, Gander suddenly awakens to  
 a realization of his inadequacies,  
 and goes off to the city to work  
 in a garage and attend night school

But that is hardly true. Gander does not leave home  
 because he becomes aware of his inadequacies, nor  
 does he leave for Jerry Chansley. Gander's decision

has nothing to do with Jerry. He realizes that she "had been a strange but tender incident in his life. She must have cared for him a little, at least, or she would not have written that note" (GR, p. 201). But it is not the note that eventually makes him leave. It, at most, offers an alternative to the farm, thereby making his decision to leave practicable. His decision to leave is arrived at only after Minnie has talked to him and suggested his leaving as the only wise and honorable way out. It is she who makes him realize that sometimes "it is the brave man that runs away" (GR, p. 204); and when finally Gander leaves, he goes for "the honour of the Stake family" (GR, p. 206) and not for self-education, or to make himself worthy of Jerry. Gander's flight is not to Jerry but from Jo when he finds that Dick is on the way to recovery, because Jo had already confessed to him that her marriage had been a mistake.

Saunders also found fault with the ending on the basis that Gander should have been able to give up Jo and forget her in his devotion to the land. True, but we have also been repeatedly told that machinery was Gander's second love. Elder takes note of this:

While the Germans are forcing their way across the Yser, Gander takes over the operation of Bill Power's steam thresher, throttling the forces impelling him to war by working fourteen hours a day on his infrequent trips to Plainville, he is more interested in the new forms of power than in the world events, hanging about the grain elevators, fascinated by their gasoline engines.<sup>21</sup>

Stead also tells us:

Although Gander was a boy not touched by the romance of books here was something that stirred him deeply--the romance of machinery, of steam, which, at the pull of a lever, turned loose the power of giants.

(GR, p. 54)

When all these factors are borne in mind the ending becomes acceptable; his flight to the city begins to appear as the only sensible thing to be done; and

in taking leave of all he knows and loves best Gander is, for the first time in his life, asserting himself as a man by making a difficult, lonely, but responsible decision.<sup>22</sup>

The ending then is not weak. On the other hand, the novel has two major weaknesses. The greater and more apparent one is that Cal and Reed are not sufficiently incorporated into the story. They remain on the fringe, as it were, and fail to emerge as convincing characters; and their life-stories, shrouded in mystery, fail to convince. But Stead's problem here

was a genuine one. The characters had been amply explained in The Smoking Flax and telling their story again in Grain would have made it repetitive. The problem is for those readers who have not read The Smoking Flax, and therefore cannot appreciate the detail about Cal and Reed that is crowded into the last chapter of Grain. In such a situation it is so easy to err, either on the side of implicitness or on the side of explicitness. Stead's fault is that he merely suggests, but had he tried to reveal them more fully he might very well have overreached and still been at fault.

The second weakness is the character of Jerry. She is a city girl, "much too smart" (GR, p. 147) for Gander; in her presence he feels "like a mouse under the eye of an agile but tolerant cat" (GR, p. 147). It is difficult to imagine how a girl like her could have got interested in Gander who is "shy" and "awkward" and "whose gamut was the range of experience on his father's farm" (GR, p. 142). She too fails to become an integral part of the story and remains a sort of deux ex machina whose intervention is as casual as her significance in the story.

Except for Cal, Reed, and Jerry, however, all the other characters in the novel are highly

individualized and alive. The remarkable thing is that Stead portrays characters who are so typical of the prairie environment, and yet they are not blurred and indistinct as types. The characters exist as individuals and stand apart from one another. I agree with McCourt that Gander is "one of the few living people in Western Canadian fiction,"<sup>23</sup> and that the minor characters "are all sharply distinguished from one another."<sup>24</sup> Tommy Burge, Dick Claus, Walter Peters, are all individualized, and yet they are quite typical prairie characters. Their humor, their attitude to life and war, and their reactions, make them typical--yet, each is different from the other, which makes them stand out as individuals. Tommy Burge, presented primarily as Jo's brother has all the faults of big brothers. Dick Claus has a streak of pride and goes off to war when Jo has turned down his proposal. His sudden decision to enlist reveals an impulsive nature. Walter Peters lacks the coarseness of the average farmer and is killed on the battlefield before he can acquire it.

Even within the Stake household, Jackie, Gander, and Ham have very little in common. Each represents a type but is presented as an individual.

Jackie is a rover, flitting in and out of jobs. Fascinated by the city and the attraction of money he forsakes the farm. Gander, on the other hand, is so firmly rooted to the farm that he does not leave it even though his conscience troubles him during the war years. Hamilton, unlike Gander, is only waiting to come of age so that he may enlist.

Realism and characterization are not the only qualifications that ensure a permanent place for Grain in Canadian literature. Davey in his excellent rereading of Grain has shown how the novel satisfies present day criticism which focusses on "the active mythic forces of language."<sup>25</sup> In a detailed study he looks at the imagery and shows us how the narrative voice which is omnipresent at the beginning gradually disappears towards the end and how it is related in inverse proportion to the development of Gander.

By the sixth chapter the narrator is no longer a personality, Gander meanwhile has grown up in definition . . . Stead has shifted from mocking Gander to respecting him . . .<sup>26</sup>

Although Stead strongly felt and later critics also realized that Grain was his one novel of consequence, it was not given much of a reception in his

own day. Newspaper reaction was meagre though favorable. The New York Times of February 13, 1927, called it an "interesting . . . work" and felt that Stead's "real achievement is the characterization of Gander."

The review went on:

It is not a brilliantly vivid characterization, but in its way it is real and unspoiled by artistic compromise.

The Saturday Review of Literature also had a word of praise for it:

Grain is solid prosaic fiction, realistically depicting the Manitoba prairie farmers, which, if it soars to no lofty heights, sinks to no depths of squalor too often found in tales of the soil.<sup>27</sup>

In a letter sent by Stead to John McClelland some years later Stead assessed the press reaction to

Grain as follows:

It was described by a Canadian reviewer as another "Maria Chapdelaine" . . . the New York Sun commended me for having "the courage to avoid the conventional ending;" the Los Angeles Times said "The author . . . has completely mastered the spirit in its contact with things primitive," and the Denver News said "It assumes the proportions of an epic." Other prominent American papers were equally complimentary. Among Canadian papers published in the prairie country and therefore qualified to speak with some authority, the Winnipeg Free Press

said "It is the best thing the author has written;" the Winnipeg Tribune described it as a "gripping and absolutely faithful narrative;" the Calgary Herald, "The most powerful novel of the west that Mr. Stead has yet written;" the Regina Leader, "Grain" will give a conception of the prairies nearer to reality than all except two of [sic] three other novels which portray the West," and "Nowhere can be found more faithful descriptions of what life in the prairie country really is;" and the Edmonton Journal said "Mr. Stead is preeminently the novelist of the prairies."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the not unfavorable press reaction, Grain was as difficult to sell as The Smoking Flax had been. It was published in both Canada and the U.S.A., possibly because of a contract negotiated in the spring of 1924, in which Stead agreed to have The Smoking Flax and two other novels published in Canada by McClelland & Stewart and in the U.S.A. by Doubleday Doran. Grain in all probability was one of the other two books. The correspondence, however, does not give the impression that the publishers felt bound by the agreement.

On January 11, 1926, McClelland & Stewart wrote to Stead that they had been advised "by Messrs. Geo. H. Doran Company, New York, that they have in hand the manufacturing of your new book GANDER"<sup>29</sup> and expressed a desire to have a copy of the manuscript.

Though McClelland had not read the manuscript nor even seen it, he expressed dissatisfaction with the title. In the same letter he went on to say:

It seems to me that the title is not a good one and I am hoping that it will be possible to secure something more attractive. Titles, without doubt, have a lot to do with the sale of a book . . .

McClelland seemed to object only to the title, but Z.C. Brandt pointed out other shortcomings which he felt would prevent the book from making a good sale. On May 5, he wrote to Stead:

I am afraid of the book from the sales angle because you haven't a sufficient love-story, nor is Gander made sufficiently loveable to carry the story on the pathos of his life . . . I like the book . . . but it won't hit a very large public unless you can change the end and give a little more hope for Gander . . . you should clear up the mystery about Reed's parentage . . .<sup>30</sup>

This perhaps helps us understand why the last chapters are so cluttered and why the end appeared so unsatisfactory to most critics.

Stead wrote back to McClelland and explained why Doran had received a copy while they had not. He clarified that

a copy which he had sent to New York . . . for serial consideration had been turned over to Doran Company.<sup>31</sup>

McClelland's objection to the title was taken in good spirit and Stead continued with a delightful touch of humor:

Like you, I have misgivings about the title "Gander." You may remember that I discussed it with you in your office some time ago and at that time it seemed to appeal to you, but the more I contemplated the less I liked it. A wag friend of mine suggests that it is quite appropriate that "Gander" should come after "Wild Geese"! I have been thinking over the following titles:

A Son of the Soil  
A Soldier of the Soil  
Aftermath

Of these I think I prefer the first-- A Son of the Soil. It entirely fits the character and the atmosphere. I should be glad to have the benefit of your opinion . . .<sup>32</sup>

But McClelland did not fancy A Son of the Soil. Aftermath was the only title he liked, but it had already been used. So, on January 21, 1926, Stead sent two more suggestions: "No Man's Orders" and "Half a Hero." He wrote:

Either of these titles will fit the story, but your judgement of their selling value will be more accurate than mine. Perhaps you or Doran may bring forward a suggestion better than anything that I have considered.<sup>33</sup>

The very great anxiety on Stead's part that the book should sell well is again an indication of his basic commercial nature. The title Grain was

eventually chosen by Doran and agreed to by both Stead and McClelland. This was in keeping with the general trend of titles in American fiction where the fashion was for symbolical titles, like The Pit, The Octopus, The Jungle, etc. By changing the title from Gander to Grain the emphasis had been subtly shifted from the character to the central symbol of the book.

Doran also suggested some changes in the third quarter of the book. Stead wrote back saying that he would comply with the suggestions put forward, but I have found no evidence to show whether he did or not. In a later letter to McClelland Stead wrote that he had been asked to put more action into Grain, but added that he did not do so.<sup>34</sup> In any case it is difficult to ascertain the nature of the changes suggested and made, as the only version in Stead's papers is the corrected and final version. In all probability the changes made must have been very minor since Stead did not feel the necessity of retaining the original copy.

Although in writing Grain Stead had allowed his artistic side to dominate, the commercial and publicity man came to the fore when the book was about to appear. He wrote to McClelland & Stewart

asking them to make arrangements that Grain might be listed in the Eaton's and Russell Lang's catalogues. On September 13, 1926, he sent a long letter outlining how a publicity programme might be conducted for Grain. He concluded the letter:

I have said nothing about the selling methods, as that is not my speciality; but the twenty-five years which I have spent in active publicity work may commend my observations on that phase<sup>35</sup> of the subject to your consideration.

He also made some arrangements for "some special publicity in the United States" with Mr. Alan Rhinehart<sup>36</sup> and took an active interest in securing reviews and writeups.

Though McClelland & Stewart, with one or two reservations, accepted Stead's suggestions, they did not agree with him that publicity and book reviews definitely promote the sale of a book. They pointed out that the retail trade of books had undergone a change over the years:

The new scheme of things is that our retailers today are buying from hand to mouth. They do not anticipate their requirements as in earlier days . . . instead of ordering . . . enough stock to see them through the season, they place a minimum order and repeat.

It was a common thing . . . to book advance orders for novels in quantities of 500 and 1,000 copies

. . .

One cannot blame the bookseller, for there is such a large list of books each season and there are so many leading authors that the booksellers become bewildered as to how many they should buy of this or that.<sup>37</sup>

They went on to say that the problem had become more acute in the west because

the booksellers do not repeat as freely as they do in the east, partially on account of distance and partially to clear up their stocks.<sup>38</sup>

With Grain, unlike The Smoking Flax, Stead took great pains to see that the book should not fail for lack of publicity. When he gave occasional talks or addresses in small towns he would inform his publishers in advance so that the bookshops might be stocked with copies of his book, and a window display occasionally put up, just in case his visit to the town might boost the sale for a day or two. But Grain, though critically well received, was not popular either in book form or as a serial. Only Maclean's Magazine and Capper's Farmer serialized it.<sup>39</sup> Some readers of course liked the story; H. Napier Moore of Maclean's wrote to Stead on October 12, 1926:

I am told that the number of favorable letters received from readers making direct reference to Grain far exceed

those received over any serial yet published in Maclean's.<sup>40</sup>

But Grain failed with Stead's regular audience because it did not give them the stuff they wanted: it was neither sentimental nor romantic. It also failed to make an impression on the newer audience. Saunders rightly points out that while Grove and Ostenso were new voices, Stead was not. He was handicapped "by his literary past,"<sup>41</sup> as Saunders puts it. And while Settlers of the Marsh and Wild Geese were both recognized as important events in the literary history of the country, Grain failed to make itself felt. When eventually it was sold out the depression had already set in and McClelland & Stewart did not wish to reprint it.

Grain was, in a way, the last of Stead's published novels. The Copper Disc, the only novel published after Grain, belongs to a different tradition altogether. Grain marks the climax of Stead's achievement--in it he had succeeded in giving a new dimension to prairie writing. Here again, as in The Smoking Flax, we find characters treated with a depth of psychological insight and understanding.

Around the time Grain was written, or possibly a little earlier,<sup>42</sup> Stead started writing a novel

different from his previous ones. Removed from his prairie environment he tried to write about the city. The work exists only in manuscript form and is incomplete. Set in an unnamed city, it is not a total break from his earlier fiction; for Fraser Board, the hero, an insurance agent, is, like Stead's other heroes, an alter ego for himself. The similarities are too many to be purely coincidental. Board has had a childhood on the farm, is the youngest in a family of sisters, and his father too had been a woodcutter. Here again we meet a character who works for the newspaper and when opportunity permits there is the usual reference to newspaper work bringing one "into contact with many phases of existence" (MS, p. 35a).<sup>43</sup>

It is unfortunate that the story was never completed; it exists in a typescript of 55 pages, but is too fragmentary to warrant publication in its incomplete form. There is, however, promise in it of a greater development of themes which until then Stead had only touched on. In this story, rather than the clash of generations, Stead shows a definite leaning towards the younger set. He advocates that the younger generation should be understood and their values accepted. Amos Burdell becomes his mouthpiece:

I have always contended that the dynmastic [sic] forces which are represented in youth are neither properly understood nor properly appreciated by the older generation.

(MS, p. 39)

Burdell appears to be far ahead of his times in his thinking and attitude. It is possible that Stead himself, being the father of three sons by now,<sup>44</sup> was well aware of how the younger generation felt, and could see their view point more sympathetically. "We must remember," he tells us at another time,

that this is the twentieth century-- days of the great war--not the mid-Victorian era. Customs change, manners change, but the eternal verities remain the same.

(MS, p. 52)

Stead handles the character of Amos Burdell, with his accommodating attitude towards the younger generation, very skilfully. Amos is a preacher; his moralizing comes naturally to him. Besides, being unmarried, he is not likely to be involved in a clash in a personal way. Had the novel been published, or even completed, we might have seen in him the makings of a Bentley as in Ross's As For Me And My House. Like him, Amos is barely tolerated by his congregations and is almost compelled to 'retire;' but unlike Bentley, he is full of good humor and

believes in enjoying life, and letting those who will pamper him.

The other characters do not emerge fully and it is difficult to say how well they might or might not have developed. But the character of Theodora Euclaire deserves some attention. She, like most of Stead's heroines, is refined, sophisticated, attractive, and smart. But she is a city girl, and Stead makes her bolder than any of his earlier heroines. Though Myrtle Vane in The Bail Jumper and Irene Hardy in The Cow Puncher were city girls, they were not like Theodora. The boldness she exhibits makes her a unique character in Stead's gallery. A short summary of the novel (incomplete as it is) might help in an understanding of her. It begins when an old friend, Watt, tells Fraser Board that he plans to marry. While Board reflects on love and marriage, and thus in a receptive frame of mind, Nancy Patterson arrives to arrange some insurance on her aunt's furniture. Since she has no idea of its value Board volunteers to drop in later that evening to make an assessment. There, he is introduced to Nancy's friend Vera Sweet and her fiance Dagger who works for the Herald. Board falls in love with Nancy, and Dagger and Board strike a

friendship. When Watt comes to invite Board to a small party at the Juanita Gardens, he invites the other three also. At the Juanita Gardens we meet Theodora, Watt's fiancée. Theodora finds the atmosphere of the dance hall "stuffy" and suggests to her partner, Board, that they should go out. Seated outside in the garden, in the moonlight, Theodora tells Board:

I believe in dipping into life. That is my understanding with Kilo.<sup>45</sup> I have told him that marriage for me must not be a yoke of restrictions, but a road into even fuller liberty.

(MS, p. 54)

Having made her position clear she flirts with Board, who is too stunned even to respond. Finally, she puts her arms about him and kisses him:

her lips pressed against his, and his trembled an answer in sudden response. For a long moment she held him; then she drew back, and her low silvery laughter again encircled him about.

(MS, p. 55)

And then she tells him: "Beaver,<sup>46</sup> I see we are going to be good friends--good friends." She then says, "Now let us finish our dance!" (MS, p. 55). At this interesting point the story was abandoned. Stead gives us no reason for leaving it at this

particular point--perhaps he could not see a way out of the situation as it promised to develop, and not having handled a character like Theodora before, found it difficult to proceed. He had got his characters in a compromising situation, and may well have decided that it was best not to continue. Of course, it is equally possible that he may have dropped it because the story threatened to become too much of a sentimental romance. In the early part, on known ground, he did well--he does a good job of Board's strict upbringing and his sharply defined conceptions of right and wrong. Board belongs to a hard-working family, and Stead is in his element when he describes the struggle of the family during pioneering days:

His eldest son, Adam, took up the fight where his father had laid it down. Acre by acre and field by field he continued to struggle. The log cabin of an earlier day gave place to the brick house of a more pretentious period; the barns were rebuilt and enlarged, fields of corn ripened and yellowed on the curling ridges . . .

(MS, p. 15)

But Theodora seemed to be too much for Stead. In all his novels he had never painted a character like her.

In this incomplete manuscript Stead also touches upon the problems of the single man who

was indirectly responsible for the booze and prostitution problem of western Canada. He makes occasional references to the impossibility of marriage for the man who does not earn enough. The same problem had been tackled in The Smoking Flax and Grain, but Stead has the tendency to touch the subject on the fringe only, and never probes deeply into it. It seems at times that Stead's strict upbringing hampered him in his expression as an artist and prevented him from giving full play to his artistic side. A psychoanalyst might perhaps point out that Stead's conservative Presbyterian upbringing prevented him from exploring the unpleasant aspects of life on the prairies. In any event this is an ever-recurring attitude in Stead's work.

The same factor seems to have prevented his characters from achieving a fuller expression; they suffer from the same repression and reticence which Stead experienced in life. In Grain we are told how Gander "committed one of those rare indiscretions in the Stake household--he gave evidence of affection" (p. 28). The same sentiment is repeated when he writes about Mrs. Stake's anxiety:

Whatever sentiment or concern his mother had felt for him during his absence she now suppressed; it was a way with the

Stakes to show no weakness toward each other.

(p. 39)

What Stead writes about the Stake household may well have been equally true about his own, for the Steads, like the Stakes, did not believe in displaying their feelings,<sup>47</sup> and "to be admittedly fond of a member of one's family had always been regarded . . . as a weakness" (GR, p. 188). In Neighbours too, Marjorie's display of affection on Frank's return causes some surprise, and the narrator hero tells us that he "had never known Marjorie to be so demonstrative" (p. 191). In Dennison Grant again Stead writes:

Zen had never known her father to be emotional; she had known him to face matters of life and death without the quiver of an eyelid, but as he held her there in his arms that night she felt his big frame tremble.

(p. 157)

Between 1927 and 1930 Stead wrote a number of Christmas and New Year stories. These seemingly belong to the realm of fiction but are actually commissioned stories, written to order--tailor-made as it were--for the Western Newspaper Union. The story of this involvement dates back to 1922 when Stead had sent his Dennison Grant to Alfred Washington, asking him if Patterson would be interested in using it as a serial. Stead received no definite answer to

his inquiry but Patterson wrote to him on March 8, 1923, asking him if he would send a Christmas story "of about eleven hundred or twelve hundred words."<sup>48</sup> In October of the same year Stead sent Zen of the Y.D. to Patterson and also proposed shortening Neighbours if they would serialize it. Patterson promptly sent a cheque for \$500.00 for Zen of the Y.D. On March 25, 1925, Stead was informed that the abridged version of Neighbours would be appearing shortly. But close on the heels of this letter followed another saying that the abridged copy of Neighbours had been misplaced. Stead was asked to make another for which the Western Newspaper Union was willing to pay him. He made the revisions all over again and billed them for \$40.00, which they promptly and willingly paid.

Correspondence between Stead and Patterson had been only occasional until November 1926. It quickened pace when Stead sent his Christmas story "Just for Christmas, You Know" to Patterson on November 5, 1926. On November 26, L.E. Parsons of the Western Newspaper Union wrote to Stead asking for a Christmas and a New Year story, neither to be more than 750 words. He also made it clear that

these stories should be full of the Christmas and New Year's spirit, and appeal to adults rather than children only.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, writing for the Western Newspaper Union was as taxing as writing for his own publicity work. From this beginning Stead got into a more or less regular supplier-buyer relationship. By March the following year he had sent his "The Yellow Target" and "Hill and Dale," Christmas and New Year stories respectively. Interestingly enough, Stead simply shortened his "When The Prairie Gets Them" and sent it as "The Yellow Target," This is not the only instance when he did this.

Before these were even received Parsons had written to Stead again on March 14, 1927, asking him to do a special feature for them. Although the request was quickly complied with and the special feature, "The Vision of Christmas," sent as early as March 29 of the same year, it did not serve their purpose. They did, however, use it as a story in one of their issues.

On November 25, 1927, Parsons wrote to Stead asking for a two-column Christmas story and a one-column New Year's story. The instructions were repeated with greater elaboration: this time Parsons added that the stories "should be of the most cheerful kind."<sup>50</sup> In compliance with this request Stead sent, on March 29, 1928, "That Carson Girl" ( which

again was a shortened version of "The Financial Handicap") and "A New Year's Investment."

Finding such a ready supplier in Stead, Parsons became more and more demanding and his instructions more and more elaborate every time. On December 14, 1928, he wrote asking for four stories, and wanted him to avoid "all sad features."<sup>51</sup> This time he wanted two Christmas stories, one of 1464 words and one of 672 words, and two New Year stories, one of 672 words and one of 160 words. In March 1929 Stead sent "Matilda's Christmas" against the 1464 word Christmas story, and "One of the Least" as the 672 word one. The New Year stories were "The Face in the Frost" (672 words) and "The Thief of Hearts" (160 words).

This time the question of payments caused some misunderstanding. Stead received only \$30.00 and wondered if that was the amount he should have received. When he brought this to Patterson's notice, the latter sought to pacify him immediately and sent an additional cheque for \$50.00 on May 3, 1929. But the relationship had been spoiled. When Parsons sent an elaborate request for five Christmas stories in December 1929 Stead sent only three in the following March. He sent a 1300 word story in "Say it to Sylvia,"

and two 700 word ones in "Heads or Hearts" and "The Extra Plate," but expressed his inability to supply the two 350 word stories. This transaction ended a fairly long relationship between Stead and the Western Newspaper Union.

These Christmas and New Year stories being commissioned stories belong really to the realm of commercial fiction. They were written to specific requirements of length and character, "written to a formula" as it were, and in their effort at being cheerful came to be "governed by saccharine optimism that cloy . . ."52

By the end of the decade Stead began to give serious thought to the future. Although he was aware that an artistic decline had set in he still did not wish to face the fact that his literary career had ended. He felt the dearth of inspiration more acutely at this time for he had no book ready for publication in 1928. Till now he had been writing at least, which provided some measure of artistic satisfaction, even if sales and response were disappointing. This led him to question if the government job had not been partly responsible for hampering his literary output, and wondered whether he should continue to work for the government. He began to be

troubled by a great conflict: his job provided him a steady career and financial security but denied him the artistic fulfilment that he craved. He started feeling that his job provided him with "more money than the leisure to enjoy it."<sup>53</sup> He debated whether he should take a chance on his literary earnings "where he may have less money and more leisure,"<sup>54</sup> or whether he should still continue to accumulate capital. Possessing a very balanced view point Stead realized that his income from literature was too uncertain for him to take that risk. He wanted to be sure that he had saved enough so that he and his wife might draw on their capital for the rest of their days, if necessary. The uncertainty of whether he had saved enough or not prevented him from taking a decision and risking a change. So Stead continued in his efforts at being an artist along with his career. He had no choice in the matter since he had to earn a living, there being no Canada Council grants available then.

As mentioned earlier, he had agreed to get three books published by Doran Doubleday in New York and McClelland & Stewart in Toronto. In July 1930, he wrote to his Canadian publishers about The Copper Disc, "the third of the books covered by the contract . . . dated February 24th, 1924."<sup>55</sup> He confessed that

Doubleday Doran were reluctant to publish it. McClelland wrote back to Stead on July 25, 1930, saying:

I can understand why Doubleday Doran are not anxious to bring the book out this year. This is a particularly bad year. Trade is very depressed, and all publishers are curtailing their list to a marked extent, and the general opinion is that the coming season will be rather a difficult one and the sale of books will not measure up.<sup>56</sup>

They added that it was too late to secure another publisher and suggested that publication be postponed till the following year to which Stead readily agreed. A couple of months later, however, he was informed by Brandt & Brandt, who looked after his book interests in the U.S.A., that Doubleday Doran proposed to publish The Copper Disc in the following March or April.<sup>57</sup>

When McClelland & Stewart were informed about this new move they did not approve of a spring publication. Correspondence regarding the advisability of a spring publication continued, until a telegram from the Crime Club Inc., which was a subsidiary of the Doubleday Doran Company, alarmed them by saying that The Copper Disc was going to be published by them on February 2. Feeling their interests were being jeopardized they immediately wrote to Stead:

This subsidiary of the Doubleday Doran Company publish their books at \$1.00 retail.

It will be recalled that the arrangement at the time of the contract was made was that the new books were to be published at the retail price of not less than \$1.50.

Have you since agreed to permit the American contract to be revised

We think also, as far as Canada is concerned, that the sale if published in the spring will not anywhere approach the sales if published in the autumn.<sup>58</sup>

Stead promptly sent a reply in which he sought to pacify his Canadian publishers:

. . . If you think it wiser not to publish until next autumn, is there any reason why you should not hold the Canadian edition back until that time? Or is it preferable to publish in both countries simultaneously?

I was notified that Doubleday Doran under their new policy would issue this as a \$1.00 book. I agreed to this provided no change was made in the amount to advance royalties payable under the contract . . .

McClelland & Stewart were indignant and sent a strong letter pointing out that "a mystery story" had not been anticipated at the time the contract had been signed. They felt cheated because the Canadian market for this sort of fiction, they wrote

is measured by hundreds as against books with a Canadian scene where thousands might be sold.<sup>60</sup>

They advanced many reasons why the book should not be brought out as a \$1.00 book, and showed how it might affect the future sales of Stead's books. They were also upset over the fact that the book was to be published in spring instead of autumn. Stead felt their grievances were justified and was apologetic about the turn things had taken; but he tried to indicate how, at each step, he had taken every precaution necessary that Doubleday Doran and McClelland & Stewart might work in harmony. He tried to convince them that when he had agreed to the lower price and to the spring publication he was under the impression that the publishers were already in agreement. But McClelland & Stewart were adamant. They wrote back:

The only solution we can submit is that the book should be restored to Messrs. Doubleday Doran's regular list at the full retail price of \$2.00, and transferred from the Crime Club books, or that there be a modification of the contract to permit us to publish in Canada profitably . . . . 61

On receipt of this ultimatum Stead wired to Brandt & Brandt:

McClelland Stewart vigorously protest publication Copper Disc at one dollar say this makes Canadian publication under their original contract impossible urge book be restored to Doubleday's regular two dollar list. I

agreed to dollar price under assumption American and Canadian publishers working in consultation. Please advise Doubleday.

This was sent on December 17 and Brandt's answer came within a few days. He wrote that the arrangements for the publication of The Copper Disc were too far advanced for any changes to be made. So Stead wrote to McClelland & Stewart asking them for terms that would be acceptable to them for a Canadian publication, and agreed to "regard THE COPPER DISC as not coming within the scope of their existing contract."<sup>62</sup> Stead added that his next book might be considered the third book of the contract. But the publishers took this opportunity to nullify the contract altogether as they felt that even the future had been affected disadvantageously. They refused to be bound by any contract and made it clear that a new contract with new terms would have to be drawn up if they were to publish any of his works in the future. They explained:

It will be obvious that if we were to sell "The Copper Disc" at \$1.00, it would be practically impossible to come along later with a new book and ask \$2.00 for it.

Our firm opinion is that in any case the circulation of "The Copper Disc" at \$1.00 is bound to disturb the Canadian market for any future books by you at the regular fiction price.

This caused a little tension in the relationship between writer and publisher. In the matter of The Copper Disc McClelland & Stewart declined handling the book in Canada, and Doubleday took over the Canadian rights also. The book sold something less than 7,000 copies on which Stead received around \$800.00 in royalties--not a small amount in a major depression which was already undermining all business. The Copper Disc had been serialized by Maclean's in 1930 while the publishers were still making up their mind about it. On March 5, 1931, the Nor' West Farmer (Winnipeg) also announced their intention to serialize it. Whether it appeared anywhere else as a serial we have no evidence. Apparently Stead's 'boom' period had subsided.

As indicated by the publishers, The Copper Disc was a novel very different from anything that Stead had attempted before--or after. Perhaps that is why it is one of Stead's most labored works. Started on January 4, 1925, it was completed only in July 1930,<sup>64</sup> whereas most of his other novels were written in two year periods. The Copper Disc is Stead's only venture into a detective-cum-science fiction. As far as detectives and mystery are concerned, Stead had dabbled in them in his The Bail Jumper, and, to a lesser

extent, in The Homesteaders. In The Bail Jumper he had introduced us to a female detective in the person of Polly Lester who had uncovered the mystery of the stolen money and exposed the true criminal. Something similar had happened in The Homesteaders also but in that novel Stead let his readers into the plans of the villains. Unable to resist a little mystery at the end, however, Stead misled his readers into believing that Gardiner had committed suicide. In The Copper Disc the mystery and detectives assume the proportions of a regular detective story, and the story revolves around scientific inventions and theories much in the same manner as H.G. Wells' science fiction. This field of fiction was totally new to Stead, and yet he succeeded in producing a plausible story and in holding the readers' interest for the mystery is sustained right till the end. In the Crime Club fiction it might not stand comparison with Agatha Christie or Erle Stanley Gardner, but it is certainly a readable story in its own right.

It was fortunate for Stead that he had decided against the change of job that he had been contemplating. With the thirties and the coming on of the Depression, the security of a government job was too good to give up. Of course that meant that the only possible

opportunity of a change had been missed, but perhaps it was for the better. With a permanent job and an assured steady income the Steads were not seriously affected by the depression but they were not totally untouched. With no new avenues of employment being opened up and even older hands being laid off, the depression meant fewer prospects for his sons. Lorne, the eldest, already married, was the one to be most seriously affected. He had been working for the Canadian National Airways at Montreal, but was laid off when the depression worsened. Jobs were impossible to secure, and Lorne's only option was to move to Ottawa where his father helped him financially until he found employment with one Connor, proprietor of Connor washers. Lorne and his family<sup>65</sup> lived with his father until things improved and they were able to afford a house of their own.

In 1932, Stanley, Stead's second son, graduated from the Glebe Collegiate. A very wrong time to be looking for work, Stanley worked at various service stations in Ottawa. He was, however, not as badly off as his elder brother; as pointed out by R.A. Stead, he lived with the family and did not have to worry about his next meal. Though Lorne too lived with the family, things were different, as he

had a family to support.<sup>66</sup> To add to his troubles, his wife, Jean, contracted tuberculosis and had to be sent to the sanatorium around 1933-34. When she was in the hospital their children were looked after by Nettie and Stead. The addition of a few family members made no difference as far as Stead was concerned. The family, as a rule, was closer to Nettie, and she was more influential, with even her boys being closer to her.<sup>67</sup> This could have been due to the fact that she not only spent more time with them but also took a keener interest in their affairs. Stead had the disadvantage of being busy and out of the house most of the time. Even when he had less work he would go off by himself to watch a game of baseball or prefer to go for a walk. For that matter, even when he was home and comparatively free, he kept aloof and by himself. At home he was seen either on the verandah smoking his cigars, or he would be occupied in his study. By all accounts he could not and did not spend much time with the children. Though full of a quiet humor, Stead reserved "his brighter side . . . for his club and friends and outside"<sup>68</sup> and did not display it at home. At home, the family was exposed only to his unexpressive nature which prevented him from being close to anyone. Jean

marvelled that though she had lived with her parents-in-law during the depression years when Lorne was struggling for a job, she "couldn't get close to him."<sup>69</sup> This inability to open up was also the reason why "they were unable to establish any kinship with any of the Steads in Lanark."<sup>70</sup> The latter fact was further attested when I interviewed a number of Stead families in Lanark and Middleville. Stead was a household name, they said, and the families were proud of their association with him; but when I pressed for more information, none of the members were able to tell much. It would seem that though distantly related no effort had been made on the part of Nettie and her husband to establish any closer contact. Some were inclined to blame Nettie for this almost anti-social attitude, but that seems to be a prejudiced opinion. According to both Jean and Helen, Nettie had "a lot of lady friends" but they were not family friends, and would be better described as acquaintances.

Though the Steads were fond of entertaining their thrifty habits and rigid ideas on drink prevented them from becoming popular in their social circle. Their son, R.A. Stead, also mentioned that though his parents liked socializing they could not

always afford it, which limited their socializing to church activities. There is ample evidence in the diaries to show that both Nettie and her husband were very active members of various church groups. Stead's name appears repeatedly in connection with the activities of the Glebe Church in Ottawa, while Nettie also "did a lot of knitting for the war effort through church groups."<sup>71</sup> Coming from middle-class backgrounds, habits of thrift and industry were strongly rooted in them; besides, both Stead and his wife were types who kept themselves busy. Helen also recalled that Nettie "was never idle."<sup>72</sup>

The middle-class background produced not only the habits of thrift and industry but also an exaggerated importance given to money. This was, however, more apparent in Stead than in his wife. She liked to spend money and would have liked to buy finer things for the house which Stead would not allow her to.<sup>73</sup> His son, as well as the daughters-in-law I interviewed, were all convinced of the conscientiousness with which Stead set about creating an estate for the family. Jean remarked that that thought was always "uppermost in his mind"--the thought of creating an estate, but added that it did not make him miserly or stingy, only careful: "he was not tight with his money but did not spend it

foolishly."<sup>74</sup> Of course there were occasional differences of opinion regarding expenditure, because, as I mentioned above, Nettie liked to spend and often wished to buy curtains and other things for the house, but Stead did not want to invest.<sup>75</sup> Helen corroborated this view when she told me that the Steads were "kind and generous" and practised thrift only on themselves. But though willing and eager to help the sons through their difficult days, Stead admired business acumen in others and liked people to be interested and shrewd in money matters. Jean recalled how at one time her father-in-law had given a sum of money to all the daughters-in-law to see what they would do with it. This was some time in the late fifties. Jean invested hers in Bell Canada stock which pleased Stead very much.

This attitude also accounts for Stead's being closest to his youngest son, Bob. He, of all the sons, seemed to have inherited his father's serious and studious nature, and the same traits of reserve, thrift, and unemotional exterior.<sup>76</sup> He and his wife, Elizabeth, followed most closely the life style of his parents: serious, church-going, strait-laced, etc. Helen told me of an incident, dating back to Richard's childhood, when he and his mother were travelling by bus. Finding everyone so serious and quiet Richard started singing

hymns and carols to entertain the people. Helen's observation was that Richard (son of Robert and Elizabeth Stead) was more like his uncle Stan than like his father in this respect.<sup>77</sup> Both Lorne and Stan, for that matter, were different from Robert in the sense that they were "more full of life and fun."<sup>78</sup> Lorne was definitely the outgoing type; a social drinker and a keen bridge player. Stan too enjoyed his drink and loved company. They were both described as being free thinkers and not regular church-goers. The only time Lorne and his family went to church was at Easter.<sup>79</sup> This explains why the Steads did not find much in common with their two elder sons. Moreover, it was Bob who lived up to his father's expectations by being studious and going in for a University education. Lorne and Stan had never been interested in studies which was a source of great disappointment to Stead. For this reason, Stead felt an intellectual affinity only with his youngest son.

Despite the growing depression, Stead revived his correspondence with McClelland & Stewart in December 1932. He wrote to McClelland about a new novel which, he confessed, was "on more ambitious lines than anything he had previously attempted."<sup>80</sup>

He outlined his effort:

I am tracing the development of a prairie family through three principal stages with the backgrounds of 1890, 1900, and the present day. The change in outlook, environment, and personal philosophy which has taken place in the last forty years will be presented, by means of an accurate picture of life in our prairie West in the three periods mentioned. Without getting either the subject or my qualifications for handling it out of focus I think it will be a contribution to Canadian literature of much current interest and some permanent value.

I have "swithered", as the Scotch say, between two titles: "The Story of a Manitoba Farm", which is self-explanatory, and "Dry Water", derived from the prairie mirage which suggests water in the distance beckoning but forever eluding its thirsty pursuer. These titles may indicate, better than any short synopsis, the lines along which I am working.<sup>81</sup>

This letter was promptly answered and McClelland & Stewart agreed that the novel, as outlined by Stead, seemed good, but they were still not very hopeful about getting it published. In any case they would have to see the manuscript before deciding. Besides:

the depression [had] hit the book  
business as it [had] other lines  
and they were finding that the  
public<sup>82</sup> simply did not have the  
money.

The correspondence however took place before the novel had been completed, and Stead was hopeful

that things would improve in a year or so. The manuscript was sent only in May 1935. In July McClelland & Stewart wrote back to Stead telling him that they had been unable to get an American publisher to collaborate with them, and advised that he might send it to a literary agent. At the same time they suggested that Stead should put more action into the book.<sup>83</sup>

When the manuscript came back from New York, Stead wrote to McClelland that he was "disappointed, but not disheartened."<sup>84</sup> He accepted the charge that "Dry Water" was not an action story, but refused to accept that as a criticism of it. He defended it by writing:

It may be granted at once that DRY WATER is not an "action" story. It was not designed to be, but I do not admit that for that reason it is lacking in interest. It is a character story in which the effect of prairie environment on a number of persons, particularly Donald Strand, is, I think, faithfully portrayed against an authentic background. To introduce action which is not native to the background would do violence to the whole book.

Perhaps I may suggest that "My Antonia", in which Willa Cather did for the American prairies what I am trying to do for the Canadian, is certainly not an action book, but it is already almost an American classic.<sup>85</sup>

Stead went on to cite many other books which were lacking in action but had found favor with critics

and public alike. Among them he mentioned his own Grain, and pointed out:

Before publication I was urged to put more action into "Grain", (which I did not do), and the book has established for me a literary reputation with which I cannot afford to trifle.<sup>86</sup>

On the contrary, with the publication of "Dry Water" Stead wished to consolidate the "literary reputation" he had established with Grain. He put it very frankly to McClelland:

I think both my publishers and myself should take advantage of the cumulative publicity value of my previous work by putting out something along the same tenor but of still more literary artistry.

This, I think, we have in DRY WATER. I have spent four years on it; it has been written and re-written; there is not a sentence in it which was not put there for a purpose. I have the utmost confidence that when it appears it will be hailed as one of the outstanding books of the year.<sup>87</sup>

His position clarified, Stead sent the manuscript to Ann Elmo of the AFG Literary Agency<sup>88</sup> in New York. Longmans Green became interested in the novel and wanted to know "the number of sheets or copies that . . . would be required for the Canadian market."<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, Stead wrote to McClelland & Stewart to find out their requirement. Considering that times had changed, Stead was prepared to

waive the payment of one thousand dollars advance royalties and accept in its place royalties on the actual quantity of advance sales.<sup>90</sup>

But business was bad and the deal fell through:

The McClelland Stewart Co. could not agree on price with Mr. Aley.<sup>91</sup> They offered a very low figure . . . so that Longmans Green gave up the idea of publishing the book.<sup>92</sup>

Correspondence dragged; business was dull; then finally on November 1, 1937, Stead asked McClelland & Stewart to release him from the contract and return his manuscript if they did not intend to publish it. When returning his manuscript McClelland expressed his dissatisfaction with the title, and wrote to Stead that it ought to be changed since it was not a "good selling title."<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile the depression continued. At home things improved when Stanley secured a job with Connor washers in 1935. He was paid only \$25.00 a month, which was not much, but at least it was better than nothing, and had some semblance of permanence about it. Stead, practical man that he was, commented in his diary: "A scandalous wage but nothing better available."<sup>94</sup>

Though the depression undermined all business and shattered most people's hopes until they despaired,

Stead continued to rise in his career. In 1936 the Departments of Interior, Mines, Indian Affairs, Immigration and Colonization, were consolidated to form a new Department of Mines and Resources. Stead was appointed Superintendent of Publicity for the National Parks and Resources in the new department and was assigned the work of publicity and information especially for the national parks.

The purchase of a new Pontiac car in May 1937 is a clear indication that the depression had not affected the Steads directly. They were doing well though the sons were all more or less affected. By 1937, Bob, the youngest, had graduated from the Glebe Collegiate. Being the studious type and unable to secure a job, he went on to Queen's University. By the time he graduated it was fall 1939; the depression had not disappeared but war loomed large on the horizon. Stead felt his son's predicament acutely. On September 8, 1939, he wrote in his diary that he had told one of his friends, a Dave Sim, how his son "was in the distressing position of having graduated from the University but unable to find permanent employment."

Stead's distress in 1939 was the cumulative result of various frustrations. His office atmosphere had become frustrating and difficult. Despite small

concessions that were granted him--for instance, he was allowed to attend the CAA meetings as part of official duty--he started feeling that he was being kept too busy, that nobody cooperated with him, and that his suggestions were being overlooked or ignored. He grew dissatisfied as a result. For example, on July 12, 1939, he suggested that Kelly of the Halifax Herald go to Cape Breton to do the writeup on the national park there, since Stead himself was going to Halifax. When he returned on the 23rd he found that "the wire asking for authority for E.E. Kelly . . . to visit C.B. Ntl Park had been placed on his desk, and left there without action" until his return.<sup>95</sup>

His dissatisfaction was not confined to his office and colleagues only, for he records in his diary how when they had gone to meet "the plane with ministers on board. Mr. Howe knew him, but Mr. Crerar, his own minister had to be introduced."<sup>96</sup> Stead found many faults with Crerar as minister, chief among them being that he never mentioned anything about the national parks in his speeches.

This discontent and dissatisfaction soon became all pervasive. It was felt in the home as well as in the office. Perhaps Stead suffered in secret the disappointments of his sons. Perhaps he also suffered

the strain of a pending Second World War with three sons of military age. Though as a young man Stead had glorified war and patriotism, the memories of the 1914 war were still vivid enough to prevent such a chauvinistic attitude. As a matter of fact, his second son, Stanley, joined the army in 1941. It has not been possible to gauge the father's reaction as the event is not even mentioned by him in his diary. When I asked Bob about his father's reaction he felt that perhaps he had a smug assurance that Stanley would not stay on in the army as he was always having problems with his feet. Strangely enough, Stead was not perturbed, rather surprised, that Stan had been taken at all. As expected, he was discharged after a few months.<sup>97</sup>

In the same year Bob also joined the government service in the Department of National Defence. Stan, discharged from the army, operated a YMCA summer camp for some time. After that he began selling life insurance. Though he made a good salesman with his glib talk, Stan was not happy with his work.<sup>98</sup> He finally settled down to selling oil-furnace heaters.

With the breaking out of war the depression ended and Stead was relieved of the mental financial strain. His sons, as shown, soon secured jobs, and

Stead had only Nettie and himself to provide for. When war actually broke out in 1939 Stead was holidaying at Mississippi Lake, west of Ottawa, but cut short his holiday and returned to work as soon as news of Germany's attack on Poland was flashed on September 1, followed by the declaration of war by Britain and France on the 3rd. Patriotic as ever, on September 15 Stead called on one Walter Thompson to offer his services for war work.

The outbreak of war adversely affected publicity work. From February to April 1940 Stead had been busy arranging conferences, meetings, discussions, and interviews in connection with the opening of the Banff-Jasper Highway. On June 7, he attended the last such meeting and left for Jasper on June 16 to make preparations for the official ceremonies. But en route he received a wire saying that all ceremonies were to be cancelled in view of the gloomy war situation.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the depressing state of affairs Stead continued his old-time zeal in the promotion of Canadian literature. Though he was not president of the CAA any longer, he was still a regular member of the Association and seldom missed any of their talks and luncheons. At the outbreak of war Stead was asked to address the discussion group of the YMCA at Ottawa on

"Canadian Books and the War." In 1945 he addressed the CAA convention at Montreal on "Authors, Poets, and the Tourist Business." In 1946 Stead gave an address on literature at a meeting of the Ottawa Men's Canadian Club at the Chateau Laurier. Calling it "Canada's Neglected Industry," Stead deplored the fact that Canadian literature got no assistance from anyone though it had great possibilities.<sup>100</sup> In his address Stead showed great maturity and understanding when he tried to explain that the absence of literature and its appreciation was due to the fact that the people came of pioneer stock and were therefore more concerned with the necessities of life, which in turn made them more concerned with material success. This view was not unique to Stead however; Sir Robert A. Falconer had expressed similar views as early as 1919 when he said:

In a country like ours, where there is such insistent call for every sort of energy to deal with its vast and undeveloped resources, the whole atmosphere tends to produce the kind of mind which seeks its satisfaction in a career which is, to use the ordinary phrase, a practical one.<sup>101</sup>

In 1947 Stead gave a talk on "Can We Have a Canadian Literature?" This was delivered at quite a few places between March and May.<sup>102</sup> The following year he wrote

an article entitled "Can There Be a Canadian Literature?" for the Carleton College publication. In this he blamed the absence of good literature on the difficult publishing conditions that existed in the country. Stead had helped to better those conditions, and to procure better copyright laws, but the depression had marred the good work done by him along with that of others interested in Canadian literature; the publishing industry suffered along with the rest of the country during those trying years.

As we have seen, Stead's interest in the production and betterment of Canadian literature never waned. His actual contributions may have ceased, but not his interest. The same may be said of his other interests. Though he enjoyed changing jobs and trying his hand at new things, his commitments and interests did not change so easily. His interests widened no doubt, but it was rarely that he abandoned an earlier interest in lieu of a new one.

With Stead's widening of interests there is a similar widening of his social circle, and shouldering of greater responsibilities. He was himself aware that ever increasing obligations left him little or no time for writing. In a letter to McClelland as early as December 1932, he says:

The year has been a busy one with me and my time for literary work has been somewhat limited. In addition to carrying the cares of my office I am president of the Ottawa Rotary Club, and while the experience is valuable the duties are by no means nominal. I once thought that as I grew older I would have more time for literary work, but that was another illusion.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to being president of Rotary, Stead held similar positions with various groups. On January 13, 1927, he had been elected President of the Editorial Group, Professional Institute; he had been made Chairman of the Poultry Congress Publicity Committee the year before. Besides these, he was closely associated with various tourist committees, with the Wild Life Conference, and numerous editorial committees. He attended railway meetings and meetings of Library Boards apart from being an active member of his Glebe Church and the Ottawa Property Owners' Association. All these were over and above the meetings and conventions connected with his work.

A brief review of Stead's other activities and the demands they made on his time would give us a fairly good idea not only as to the range of his interests but also about the varied nature of his duties. In 1923 he had been in New York attending a motion picture conference held on June 7; in 1925

he accompanied an American editorial party to western Canada from August 22 to September 12; in 1926 he attended an International Plowing Match at Niagara Falls on October 12; and in 1927 he accompanied the special train for World's Poultry Congress from coast to coast. Although Stead became president of Rotary only in 1932, he was asked to preside even earlier.<sup>104</sup> In 1935 he was offered the Rotary District Governorship, but declined. In 1937 Stead attended the International Travel Exhibition in Chicago from May 7 to May 9; and in 1939 he was invited to the unveiling ceremony at the Exhibition grounds on July 17. He was offered the national presidency of the CAA for 1943 but refused.<sup>105</sup>

Stead's broadening interests were also reflected in the equally wide range of subjects covered in his talks. He could talk on any subject from pioneering to current problems, to "The Machine Age" and "Technocracy." Pioneering and homesteading was a favorite subject with Stead. A number of his talks deal with the prairie experience of the early settlers: "Early Days in the West," "Early Life on the Prairies," "Boyhood on the Prairies," "Women of the West in Early Days," "Early Days in Manitoba," "Early Days in Western Canada," and "Past, Present, and Future." In these Stead could fall back on his own experience and describe

with striking accuracy the conditions that prevailed in the west then. His talks were often enlivened by a recounting of childhood memories which were made more spicy with a dash of humor and a sense of adventure. These, however, were not the only addresses that had an autobiographical coloring. Even his talks which dealt with America or Canadian-American relations were strewn with personal anecdotes and reminiscences. In "Your Northern Neighbour" he recalled how little the boundary line meant to a young boy but the fear of Yankees was put into the heart of every Canadian child. After making a trip to Manitoba in later years Stead gave a talk on "Manitoba Then and Now" in which he compared the west of the early days to the more mechanized and industrialized west of later times. The subject of "Past, Present, and Future" had also been somewhat similar, with this difference that in it the future had only been visualized.

With the coming of the Second World War Stead delivered an address on "Canadian Books and the War," in which he tried to show how the war had affected the book trade in Canada. Another address delivered around this time was "Unite and Conquer," which was a spirited call for unity in order that the war may be won. And when peace was restored Stead spoke on

"Unity in War and Peace." When dealing with current problems Stead turned his attention to the question of "Land Settlement" and showed how it was related to immigration. When Canada was hit by the depression Stead tried to analyze the situation and its causes in his address "The Causes of the Depression" delivered on January 28, 1932. Again, when prices soared during the war he spoke on "The Price Ceiling" on March 9, 1942. In "The Machine Age" and "Technocracy" Stead compared the past with the present and pointed out how machines and improvements in technology had changed life considerably. When necessary Stead could even talk on more specialized subjects like "Canada's History and Constitutional Set Up."

As member and later president of Rotary he often enlarged on the "Objects of Rotary," and on one occasion indulged in disclosing to his audience "How To Tell a Rotarian." From his familiarity with the Victory Loan during the First World War, he could talk knowingly about similar loans during the Second. When addressing tourist bureaus he could talk about "Tourist Business" and suggest ways and means of promoting the tourist industry. It may be recalled here that Stead had expressed his views on the subject as early as the 1900s when in his editorials he

discussed the importance and value of good roads. At a meeting of lumbermen Stead spoke on "Lumbering Along" in which he took up the problems peculiar to the lumber industry. To the average audience he often talked on subjects as different as "The International Debts We Owe," "The Standards of Value," "Business Standards," "People Who Work For Me," "Life," "Words," or on more specifically Canadian topics like "Selling Canada" and "Canada's Century."

The international debts that Stead talks about are debts that "cannot be expressed . . . by the sign of the dollar,"<sup>106</sup> and as such "they cannot be paid in the coin of any realm."<sup>107</sup> These debts are the advantages "a generation reaps because of the inventions, discoveries, and struggles of the preceding generations. This address by itself is ample evidence of Stead's versatility, and for this reason I propose to discuss it in some detail. Beginning with the ideas of "the right to representative government for all, and the right to a fair trial for anyone accused of crime"<sup>108</sup> Stead pointed out that

these rights and conceptions were not acquired by easy gestures; they were the fruit of long and bitter struggles, the slow growth of a plant well watered with the blood of our ancestors.<sup>109</sup>

From there he proceeded to the inventors and discoverers whose inventions and discoveries have made life more comfortable, easy, and rid it of deadly diseases. Drawing an impressive list beginning with Watt and Stephenson, he went on to Faraday and Edison and the Wright brothers. His list included Dr. Jefferson (the first to use an anaesthetic in an operation), Banting and Best (the discoverers of insulin), and Bell (the inventor of the telephone). Having dealt exhaustively with the sphere of science and technology he passed on to the field of sports and pointed out how some of our sports are also borrowed:

Scotland . . . gave the world golf,  
and England gave the world football  
and cricket . . . United States  
gave the world baseball, and . . .  
Canada has recently been busy  
giving the United States hockey. <sup>110</sup>

From sport Stead passed on to the "exchange of population which is inevitable in the case of two nations situated as are Canada and the United States."<sup>111</sup>

Here again he drew up long lists of Canadians who had made lasting contributions to the U.S.A. and of Americans who had made similar contributions to Canada, and established that "each country has drawn lavishly upon the energy and ability of its neighbour's citizens."<sup>112</sup> Stead concluded his address

by referring to a debt greater than any of these-- the debt of language.<sup>113</sup> Language was described as the greatest debt because Stead regarded speech as "the great gift to which all human progress is traceable."<sup>114</sup> He elaborated:

The lower animals make no progress from generation to generation because they cannot store up and pass on knowledge acquired by experience. Each new generation has to begin at the beginning, but among humans there is a steadily and rapidly increasing volume of knowledge being passed down to posterity.<sup>115</sup>

Having shown the value of language Stead passed on to the value of literature and ended in a manner similar to his addresses on Canadian literature. After describing the difference between literature and history as felt by him he said:

I began to feel that perhaps, after all, it was the poets and writers of a nation who came nearest discovering its soul and presented its true character, rather than the warriors or even the statesmen.<sup>116</sup>

Emphasizing the invaluable debt we owe to literature Stead concluded:

Whether we know it or not, not a thought takes shape in our minds that is not in some degree influenced or inspired by those geniuses from Chaucer to Rudyard Kipling who have made our language

what it is and who have placed us all under a debt which never will be paid.

His addresses on the "Standards of Value" and "Business Standards" harked back to the topic broached in his talk on "Business Morality." In all these Stead spoke of the immorality of charging a price that was far in excess of the value of a product. In "People Who Work For Me" Stead pointed out the debt he owed to the legions of nameless people who made power, bread, and news available to him at such a minimal price. The address was concluded with a mention of the police, the fire brigade, the health department, the community services, the teachers in educational institutions--in short, "all who contribute to what are called the amenities of life."<sup>118</sup> In "Life" Stead laid stress on the fact that life ought not to be judged by the abundance of a man's possessions. This thought had occasionally come through in his novels and was not altogether new. Recognition of the intrinsic worth of a man had been given by most of his heroines--Myrtle Vane, Irene Hardy, Jean Lane, and Zen. "Words," which proved very popular, emphasized the importance of using the right word in the right place.

The English language is like a jigsaw puzzle, there is the right word, and it must fit into the right place. 119

He favored small words because in his opinion they served the purpose better than long and distinguished words.

In "Selling Canada" and "Canada's Century" Stead's topic was the steady progress made by Canada in all spheres, and the promise that it seemed to hold that the twentieth century assuredly would be Canada's century as the nineteenth century had been the U.S.A.'s.

To a more religious group Stead spoke on subjects like "Morale" or "The Beginnings of the Glebe." Here again he was equally successful as he could talk very convincingly of the high standards of morality that he set for himself and his characters; these same standards he now set for his audience.

This is by no means a comprehensive coverage. Connected with his official publicity work he gave numerous talks on the National Parks and Canada's Playgrounds. In these Stead outlined the beauty and fascination of the national parks. These talks were modified to suit the taste of the audience he was addressing. For instance, when addressing the Ottawa Fish and Game Club on January 19, 1942, Stead spoke

on "Sport Fishing in the National Parks," and when speaking to the Field Naturalists' Association he shifted the emphasis to health springs and showed them films covering the area from Lake Louise to Lac Beauvert. This was on October 25, 1945. Similarly, when addressing Tourist Bureaus he made "National Parks and the Tourist Industry" the subject of his talks. On one occasion he addressed the Canadian Association of Travel and Publicity Bureaus at Quebec on "Good is not Good Enough," in which he coaxed people to work harder so that they may improve on their own achievements. It is an impressive list, but still an incomplete one.

Excellent as a speaker, Stead gave a number of addresses over the radio also. I have already referred to his two Book Week addresses over the CRCO. But those were not the only ones. On May 12, 1936, Stead was asked to speak on the CKCO about the Red Cross. In November 1940 he gave a number of radio addresses at various places. He started in Spokane on November 1, on to Vancouver on November 6, Banff on the 7th, and Calgary on the 9th. No information has come to light regarding the subject of these talks or the radio stations involved.<sup>120</sup> On May 21, 1941, he arranged with a certain Claire Wallace to give

broadcasts in connection with the national parks.

On August 5, 1941, Stead again spoke on the CFKY and on the KHQ on October 31, 1941. In these talks he spoke about Canada and the War. Stead's last radio experience however was not an address; he was asked to read out a script on the buffalo over the CBC on October 12, 1944.

In becoming a speaker Stead had not ceased to be a writer. Rather, his speaking was supplementary to his writing, and it is not uncommon to find him writing out his speeches and even getting them published.<sup>121</sup> His career as a writer suffered, no doubt, as these numerous activities left him little or no time for creative effort. But these causes are secondary; the chief cause for his decline as a writer seems to have been his new surroundings where he allowed his talent to be gradually channelized into publicity work, and the little time that was left him was taken up by writing of a more commercial nature. Mostly commissioned work, it brought in money but not recognition, which again shows how the writer was gradually swallowed by the commercial man in Stead.

In 1936 when the new Department of Mines and Resources had been created and Stead made responsible

for the publicity of the national parks, a new field of writing had opened up for him. He then turned to producing articles which would publicize the parks as well as bring in money. The first of these was an article on "The Playgrounds of the Prairies" which was published by the Canadian Geographical Journal in February 1938. Stead followed this success by another on "Canada's Maritime Playgrounds" which was completed on January 11, 1939. It too was immediately published --appearing in the February issue of the Geographical Journal. Not all articles on the parks were published in such prestigious journals; many were written in compliance with particular requests from papers or institutions and often went unacknowledged. It would be dull to cite all the examples of such articles and the ones written to refute the adverse criticism on some of the parks.<sup>122</sup> He was kept busy writing letters to editors, editorials, articles, and all sorts of publicity material.

In August 1942 Stead became a member of the Editorial Committee of the Canadian Geographical Journal. This brought him in closer contact with Gordon Dallyn, secretary and editor of the Journal, and provided a ready outlet for any geographical articles that he might care to write. Being a man

of varied and versatile interests the Editorial Committee of the Canadian Geographical Society often asked him to write articles on special subjects. This was another form of commissioned work that Stead began to undertake. The first such instance was on September 24, 1943, when the Society asked him to write on "Recreation after the War." Since the war was still on and the end was nowhere in sight, the article, if written, must have got misplaced in the files of the Journal.

On June 7, 1944, Alfredo Silva, editor of "La Union," Valparaiso, and Carlos Reyes of the Editors' Press (Personal) in New York City, called on Stead and asked him for articles on the national parks. They wanted the writeups to be not longer than 700 words, and wished to have them supplemented with pictures. Though an unusual request, Stead worked on the articles and sent the writeups plus 15 photographs by July 6. These kind of instances can be multiplied, but I have cited this as an indication of how much Stead was writing--perhaps more than he had been writing in his younger days, but the publicity job wrapped him in anonymity. And much of his time was taken up by writing for other people, in reviewing and improving work already done, in supplying material

to interested parties. It is impossible to quote every instance though Stead has left us a fairly detailed diary (in this respect at least). I might mention a few instances of his review work: in 1941 he reviewed Watt's article on Forest and Tourist Industry and made it fit for publication; in 1942 he revised an article on Flowerpot Island which was subsequently published by the Canadian Geographical Journal; in 1943 he rewrote "Expansion of the North" by one W.T. for the Information Bureau; in 1944 he revised Berresford's article on "The Province of Manitoba," and Colonel Craig's on "Public Domain." The same year he also rewrote Perdue's article on the Alaska Highway for publication in the U.S. National Parks Magazine. In addition to all this revising and reviewing his time was taken up in preparing speeches and radio broadcasts for various senior government officials. In August 1944, an A.L. Joliffe called on Stead and asked him to revise the article on Canadian Immigration for inclusion in the Encyclopaedia Americana. It was done and sent within a few days. Although no longer with the Department of Immigration he was often asked to do publicity and other work for the Department.

When peace seemed to be around the corner,

publicity work received added impetus and Stead wrote and drafted many articles on the programme of parks publicity after the war. His position had become that of an anonymous supplier--writing and supplying material which was either absorbed into other writings, or which, with a few alterations, appeared under somebody else's signature. Dr. Charles Camsell, who had been president of the Geographical Society until 1936 found Stead very useful for this kind of work. He often asked him to prepare radio broadcasts, speeches, and articles for him. In 1943 Stead wrote out a radio address on "Canada's Industrial Future" which was broadcast over the NBC; in 1944 he wrote an article on behalf of Dr. Camsell for the Royal Society of Arts, London (England). Later, the same article was awarded a prize of 100 guineas. On December 6, 1945, Stead's diary entry reads:

It was announced in yesterday's papers that a prize of 100 guineas had been awarded Dr. Camsell for a contribution in England on Canada's New North read to the Royal Society of Arts, London. As I wrote this article based on material supplied by Dr. Camsell I am anonymously gratified. 123

He was gradually getting used to anonymity. Gordon Dallyn asked him if he would ghost-write an article and offered \$50.00 for it. This is the first

recorded instance where Stead agreed to ghost-write for money. He had been writing for other people before this, but it had been part of his work or done out of sheer good will; but now it was offered to him as a commercial proposition, and he accepted it.

Thus is Stead's growing commercialism reflected in small instances. Though willing to write on behalf of someone for \$50.00 he refused to write an article for the R.C.M.P. Quarterly which would have appeared under his name, simply because he knew he would receive no money for it. On January 15, 1947, he had received a call from Sergeant Howard, editor of the Quarterly, who requested Stead to write for them but made it very plain that they would not be able to pay him. Stead declined, saying that he did not have time.

Thoroughly steeped in the national parks and highways, Stead was the recognized authority on them, and consequently expected to keep up a regular supply of press releases and articles on them to various newspapers, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, Books of Knowledge, etc. He was occasionally asked to go through theses written on the national parks or to write introductions to books on the subject. But his talent did not go entirely unrecognized even in

publicity work. His earlier article on the Prairie Playgrounds was issued in booklet form along with another article on "Playgrounds of Eastern Canada" in 1945. Stead's close association with the parks and highways qualified him to write with authority on the subject and see how these could be used to promote tourism. This perhaps explains the preponderance of non-fictional articles in later years.

A great admirer of Theodore Roosevelt, Stead lost no time in writing an obituary on his death and sent it the Canadian Geographical Journal where it was published in the May 1945 issue. In response to a letter from Myra McKellar, a teacher at Chester-ville, Manitoba, Stead wrote his article on "Early Days at Chesterville" which was later published by the Southern Manitoba Review on September 13, 1956. His address on "Words" had proved so popular that on June 1, 1945, he received a letter from a Mr. Martin, who owned a press, evincing interest in bringing out the speech in booklet form. Seeing the prospect of a commercial venture Stead sent the desired three copies of "Words" and by August it had gone to the press.

Although Stead himself had no time to pursue his publications, he occasionally received an unexpected offer, as for instance in the case of Words.

In December 1945, Charles Clay brought out The Maple's Praise of Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1882-1945, published by Tower Books, Ottawa. Stead's obituary on Roosevelt, which had appeared in the Journal, was also included.

Stead's anonymous writings kept increasing. On January 8, 1946, he completed an article on Mount Eisenhower, when in honor of General Eisenhower, the former Castle Mountain on the Banff-Lake Louise highway was renamed, and gave it to Gordon Dallyn with some Kodachrome slides. The article was published in the Canadian Geographical Journal under E.W. Edwards' name.

Stead was due to retire from government service on September 4, 1945. But on March 5, he had an interview with the Controller and Director regarding continuing service after sixty-five. Stead agreed to continue in view of the war, and on March 6, initialled the recommendation that his time should be extended beyond September 4, 1945. He did not, however, seem very enthusiastic about continuing in government service. He had not been keeping well of late. His heart had been giving him trouble since February 1929.<sup>124</sup> In 1935 he suffered from a numbness

in the leg that led to a complete check-up which revealed that he was having high blood pressure. Since March 22, 1945, his teeth had also been troubling him. Besides, the civil service held no attraction for Stead; there had been problems in the service. His diary entry for April 14, 1945, gives an indication: "Much distress in Civil Service because Parliament has not voted money for salary cheques due today."<sup>125</sup>

Family problems were also increasing. His sister, Nett, whom he visited every year when he went travelling to the west, was down with pernicious anaemia and the doctor pronounced her condition to be "grave." Stead's correspondence with her picked up speed around the time of his retirement, which would indicate a greater concern and anxiety on account of her health. The world situation was also tense. On August 12, "a false report that Japan had accepted the Allies' conditions set off premature celebrations around the world."<sup>126</sup> On August 13, Stead wrote in his diary: "The world is waiting word from Japan like an expectant father at a maternity hospital."<sup>127</sup> The tension ended on August 14, when Prime Minister Atlee announced that Japan had accepted the Allies' terms and the war was over.

For almost twenty years Stead had succumbed to the commercial instinct. He had been so busy during this time making money and a reputation that he did not have time for his family; and his sons grew up and reached maturity without knowing that a father can also be a companion. The depression had come and gone; likewise the war. But Stead continued to slog at the dull routine of office work and commercial writing. His creative work was already a thing of the past; and with pangs of regret Stead began to realize that Canadian literature had moved ahead of him, and that he had failed to keep pace with it. But as a practical man he had rendered a good account of himself. His children were educated and settled down. His wife and he were comfortably well off, and with diminishing family responsibilities they had more leisure and had money to entertain more often than they had done in earlier years. They used their new found leisure and money to enjoy themselves and did so by going to movies, and restaurants, and on holiday trips in the neighborhood of Ottawa.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Saunders, Introduction to Grain (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969), p. v.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>3</sup> Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country (University of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Saunders, p. vii.

<sup>5</sup> Grove's characters are 'gigantic' in their psychological and emotional intensity. The reference is not to their physique.

<sup>6</sup> Edward A. McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> Harrison, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Davey, "Rereading Stead's Grain," Studies in Canadian Literature 4, 1 (Winter 1979), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

14 J.D. Logan and Donald G. French, Highways of Canadian Literature (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1924), p. 307.

15 Ibid., p. 307.

16 E.C. Thompson, The Critical Study of the Poetry and Prose of Robert Stead, Prairie Poet and Novelist (M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1965), p. 190.

17 Harrison, p. 91.

18 Davey, pp. 7-25.

19 McCourt, p. 99.

20 Ibid., p. 99.

21 A.T. Elder, "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J.C. Stead," Canadian Literature No. 17 (Summer 1963), p. 46. This opinion is also supported by Harrison, p. 104.

22 Thompson, M.A. Thesis, p. 201.

23 McCourt, p. 99.

24 Ibid., p. 100.

25 Leslie Mundwiler, "Robert Stead--Home in the First Place," Essays on Canadian Writing No. 11 (Summer 1978), p. 199.

26 Davey, p. 11.

27 Of February 5, 1927.

28 Letter from Robert Stead to John McClelland dated July 22, 1935, in Stead Papers, vol. I folder

5. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.) Stead subscribed to a clipping agency when his earlier novels were published but available evidence would suggest that after his move to Ottawa the services of the clipping agency were discontinued, which accounts for the absence of records of reviews of The Smoking Flax, Grain, and The Copper Disc.

29 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 4. There is no consistent method followed by Stead or his publishers in their references to the books. All possible care has been taken to reproduce them as in the originals. Sometimes they put the titles in capitals.

30 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 1.

31 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated January 14, 1926, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

32 Ibid.

33 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

34 Letter from Stead to John McClelland dated July 22, 1935, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

35 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

36 Ibid.

37 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated September 28, 1926, in SP, vol. I, folder 4.

38 Ibid.

39 In 1963-64 it was serialized by Free Press Weekly Prairie Farmer.

40 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 7.

41 Saunders, p. vi.

- 42 The manuscript bears the date January 7, 1924. It is in SP, vol. IV, folder 20.
- 43 The manuscript is in SP, vol. IV, folder 20.
- 44 Stead's third son, Robert, was born in 1918.
- 45 Kilo was Watt's nick name.
- 46 Beaver was Board's nick name.
- 47 Unrecorded interview with Helen Stead, wife of Stanley Stead, on May 11, 1979.
- 48 Letter in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 49 Letter from L.E. Parsons to Stead dated November 26, 1926, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 50 Letter from Parsons to Stead dated December 14, 1928, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 51 Letter from Parsons to Stead dated December 12, 1929, in SP, vol. II, folder 10.
- 52 Thompson, M.A. Thesis, p. 25.
- 53 Entry in Diary, July 1929, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated July 21, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.
- 56 Letter in SP, vol. I, folder 5.
- 57 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated September 11, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

58 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated December 3, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

59 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated December 6, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

60 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated December 10, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

61 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated December 15, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

62 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated December 21, 1930, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

63 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated January 2, 1931, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

64 Information from Stead's diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

65 Lorne's family consisted of his wife Jean, and a daughter Janet.

66 Their daughter Janet was born on June 17, 1929, and their son Bruce on February 12, 1933.

67 Mentioned by R.A. Stead in an unrecorded interview on May 4, 1979.

68 Interview with Helen.

69 Unrecorded interview with Jean Stead, wife of Lorne Stead, on May 10, 1979.

70 Interview with Helen.

71 Interview with R.A. Stead on May 4, 1979.

72 Interview with Helen.

- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Interview with Jean.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Unrecorded interview with Janet Milks, daughter of Lorne and Jean Stead, on May 8, 1979.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated December 15, 1932, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated December 17, 1932, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.
- 83 Letter dated July 16, 1935, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.
- 84 Letter from Stead to John McClelland dated July 22, 1935, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 I have not been able to discover what AFG stands for.
- 89 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated April 29, 1936, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

90 Letter from Stead to John McClelland dated May 1, 1936, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

91 Mr. Aley of Longmans Green.

92 Stead quotes Ann Elmo in his letter to John McClelland dated June 2, 1936, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

93 Letter from McClelland & Stewart to Stead dated November 25, 1937, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

94 Entry in Diary, November 4, 1935, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

95 Entry in Diary, July 19, 1939, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

96 Entry in Diary, July 16, 1939, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

97 Interview with R.A. Stead on May 4, 1979.

98 Interview with Jean.

99 Italy had also declared war on June 10, 1940.

100 The Ottawa Citizen, February 6, 1946.

101 "The Reading Public in Canada," The Canadian Bookman (January 1919), pp. 5-6.

102 At the Monday Club on March 24; at the YMCA luncheon on March 28; for the Ottawa Business and Professional Women's Club on April 8; and for the Newbolt Club on May 6.

103 Letter from Stead to John McClelland dated December 15, 1932, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

104 He was asked to preside at a meeting held on September 22, 1931.

105 He was asked by Eric Gaskell on August 20, 1942. Information from diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

106 Robert J.C. Stead, "The International Debts We Owe," The Rotarian (December 1935), p. 19.

107 Ibid., p. 52.

108 Ibid., p. 20.

109 Ibid., p. 20.

110 Ibid., p. 22.

111 Ibid., p. 22.

112 Ibid., p. 23.

113 Ibid., p. 23.

114 Ibid., p. 52.

115 Ibid., p. 52.

116 Ibid., p. 52.

117 Ibid., p. 52.

118 Robert J.C. Stead, "People Who Work For Me," The Rotarian (August 1948), p. 16.

119 Robert J.C. Stead, Words (Ottawa: Runge Press, 1943), p. 7.

120 Information from Stead's diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

121 Stead's "People Who Work For Me" and "Words" were subsequently published in booklet form, and

"The International Debts We Owe" in The Rotarian. Many of his addresses on Canadian literature were also published.

122 To give a few examples: an article on national parks was written for W.L. MacIlquham, Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Institute of Engineering, Ottawa; an article refuting Austin Cross's criticism of Prince Albert National Park was sent to The Ottawa Citizen in January 1941; writeups on the subject were also sent to Encyclopaedia Americana; an editorial to Ferguson, managing editor of The Winnipeg Free Press in March 1943.

123 Entry in Diary in SP, vol II, folder 11.

124 The entries in Stead's diary are for February 2 and 9, 1929, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

125 Entry in Diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

126 Entry in Diary, August 12, 1945, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

127 Entry in Diary, August 13, 1945, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

Chapter VI  
Creative Decline

In 1946 Stead the artist began to grow restless again. For over ten years he had not produced any creative work. Since the time McClelland & Stewart had returned the manuscript of "Dry Water" in November 1937, his office and other occupations had left him little or no time for revising or changing it. But he had not forgotten about it. On February 27, 1946, he sent the manuscript, under the title "Prairie Farm," to Collins, who returned it very promptly. Stead then opened negotiations with Thomas Allen. The prospects seemed bright; on June 15, over a lunch appointment at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa, Allen agreed to accept the story provided Stead would cut it down to about 75,000 words by October 1. The terms of publication were also immediately settled, Allen agreeing to pay 10% for the first 5,000; 12½% for the next 5,000; and 15% thereafter. The price was also fixed, at \$2.50, and Allen promised to try to place the book in the U.S. and in Britain.<sup>1</sup> All the terms being

acceptable to him, Stead shortened the manuscript and sent it in August 1946. He heard nothing from Allen and began to grow impatient. After waiting almost seven months he wrote to Allen asking him what had become of the proposed publication. On October 5, one Mr. Scott, Allen's representative, met Stead at the Chateau and returned the manuscript. It was not to be published; Allen had failed to get an American publisher and would not undertake it alone.

Stead's impatience and frustration is easily understood when we bear in mind that on June 29 that year the question of his retirement had been renewed. He had had a discussion with the Director regarding the appointment of his successor, and had been advised that Homer Robinson would be reporting for duty in another week's time. On July 10, Robinson joined duty as Associate Superintendent of Information. With Robinson installed, Stead left for Prince Edward Island on July 13, for his "first real vacation" since the war had started.<sup>2</sup> He came back just three weeks before his meeting with Allen.

Throughout Stead's career with the Federal Government he found an outlet for his fondness for travel, managing an annual tour to the west during

which he inspected parks, met press people to renew publicity contracts, and looked up old friends and relatives.<sup>3</sup> On these trips he succeeded in combining duty with pleasure, and occasionally managed to promote his novels as well. He looked forward to these trips, as did his friends and associates in the west, who frequently arranged a tight schedule of meetings, addresses, and dinners. His appointment provided not only those long annual tours but shorter trips to conferences and meetings too. To mention only a few, between January 20 and April 6, 1942, he made frequent trips to Montreal and Toronto in connection with the Wild Life Conference to be held in the summer of that year. On June 19 he again left for Montreal to attend the Adirondack Resorts Association Convention which ended on June 22. His trips extended beyond just official business, for he often accepted invitations to give addresses which entailed short trips, or travelled to out of town conferences. It would be fruitless to enumerate all the addresses he gave at various Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs in Hull, Perth, Kingston, Smiths-Falls, London (Ontario), Montreal, Toronto, and other neighboring places; but to give a few examples would be worthwhile:<sup>4</sup> On January 18, 1943, he accepted J.A. Carroll's invitation to address

the annual meeting of the Ontario Horticultural Association held on February 25 at Toronto;<sup>5</sup> in 1944, he attended an Outdoor Writers' Conference at Columbus, Ohio, from February 21 to 23. Besides, Stead seldom missed the CAA conventions and meetings even if they were held elsewhere than Ottawa.

His roving instinct extended even further; he frequently went on holidays, accompanied by Nettie in later years.<sup>6</sup> The diaries note such a holiday at Dalhousie Lake in Ontario in the summer of 1936,<sup>7</sup> a long holiday trip to the west in March 1940, and a trip to Davidson in Quebec from August 2 to August 14, 1943. These are only a few. In addition to these longer trips, Stead, alone or with Nettie, made shorter ones to Mississippi Lake, Golden Lake, Perth,<sup>8</sup> Lanark, Middleville, and Chesterville, in the general Ottawa area. He also owned a cottage at Carleton Place where they could go for week-ends.

As he was due to retire in 1946, Stead was naturally anxious to make a last "farewell tour" to the west before relinquishing his duties. It was finally decided that he could take his cherished trip on his "own time but at departmental expense."<sup>8</sup> On September 3, he was given a farewell party to mark the end of his official duties, and five days

later he left on his final tour.

This trip being on his own time, he could afford to make it more leisurely than any of his earlier journeys. He may have also been conscious that this was a farewell to the places that had very special significance for him. Having lived on the prairies for the first thirty-nine years of his life, Stead, though domiciled in Ottawa, continued psychologically to belong to the vast plains of Manitoba and the foothills of Alberta;<sup>9</sup> and this trip was his endeavour to say goodbye to all the places in the west that he had known and loved. From Ottawa he went to Kenora; then, after a short halt, on to Winnipeg on the 12th, to Mather on the 13th, and to Cartwright on the 14th. He stayed four days in this town of his youth before returning to Winnipeg for a week and then on to Calgary via Brandon, to Edmonton, back to Calgary, then on to Banff, Vancouver, and Victoria. On his way home, he stopped a third time at Calgary, and visited Medicine Hat also. After some seven weeks absence he returned to Ottawa, on October 24, where he was received at the station by Lorne, Bob, and Elizabeth. The following day he was informed that an "O in C" had been passed making his retirement effective from March

6, 1947.<sup>10</sup>

While on this tour Stead called on John McAra and discussed with him the prospects of reviving the Magnet. Seeing his retirement imminent, he agreed to spend more time writing for him from now on. He also revived many of his old contacts with press men and publishers--perhaps an indication that he was planning to fall back on commercial writing after his superannuation.

On his return, the Lands, Parks, and Forests Branch arranged a grand farewell on November 8 for Robert and Nettie Stead, where eulogistic speeches were read, and the Honorable J. Allison Glen spoke in very friendly terms concerning Stead's retirement. Stead was presented with a travelling bag and an illuminated address, and Nettie received a bouquet.

Stead was giving thought not only to commercial writing, but also to his old manuscript of "Dry Water," now entitled "Prairie Farm" which he was anxious to see off the press. In September 1947 he revised it again and sent it to Lorne Pierce of the Ryerson Press. This time it was called "But Yet The Soil Remains."<sup>11</sup> The comment given by one "Ket," a critic for the Ryerson Press, was rather favorable. It is worth quoting in full:

This story of a Manitoba farmer is one that is worthy of the Ryerson Press. The author has a good story in the life of Donald Strand from 1890 to 1929, and he tells it well. It is not common in a novel to have a successful farmer as the hero, and the treatment of farming in Western Canada is well done in favour of the farmer, and that "calling" in general. Character portrayal is good, and the development of Donald's character over the years is almost the core of the story. The author has been careful of the tiniest detail even, and has made many delightful observations that will be remembered for some time. This is more especially true of the boy's early life.<sup>12</sup>

The commendation was followed by its flaw which, according to "Ket" was "roughness due to abridgment"<sup>13</sup> but he was confident that it would make a good selling book if its loose ends could be woven in more closely.

Guided by his critic Lorne Pierce accordingly wrote to Stead:

I like your manuscript tremendously and would say that it was accepted for the fact that we have just off the press this week McCourt's Fiction Award winner, Music at the Close, and it is a dead mate for your own. The subject is very similar. May I suggest that you submit this for the Ryerson Fiction Award<sup>14</sup> closing the last day of February and, if you like, leave the manuscript with us? You stand an excellent chance of winning. However, you must decide in your own best interests.<sup>15</sup>

Stead agreed to this suggestion and let the manuscript lie with them. On February 19 he sent Lorne Pierce a reminder, and his novel "But Yet The Soil Remains" was entered for the Ryerson Fiction Award.<sup>16</sup> At one stage it seemed that Stead might win the prize, but this novel did not have the good fortune of his earlier ones. On March 15, 1948, Stead received a letter from Lorne Pierce's secretary saying that his novel was in the finals for the Ryerson Award; but on April 17 his manuscript was returned to him with the information that Ryerson had decided not to make an award that year.

As pointed out by Stead to McClelland, "But Yet The Soil Remains" is certainly his most ambitious work. Though lacking in action it is perhaps the best novel that he wrote. The characters are sharply and distinctly drawn, and Stead manages to create the prairie background with greater authenticity than in any of his previous ones. He depicts the gambling spirit that infected the west during the 1920s and shows how even the farmers were lured into speculation in the hope of making easy money. With the insight of a psychologist he portrays the alternating feelings of hope and assurance on the one hand, and doubt and misgivings on the other, in people who

are novices in the field. He catches the tempo of the times and conveys it very effectively; the ups and downs in the stock-exchange with their frantic buying and selling; the fall in prices and speculation profits; the indecision of people whether to hold on or to sell; the desperation of those who put in their last cent to stave off calamity; and the ruthlessness with which many were wiped out--all this comes out with a great sense of immediacy. The accurate descriptions of the busy telephone lines and the crowded banks as people rush to and fro unable to save the situation give us the same sense of urgency that marked the crash. And when the bottom finally falls out, Stead shows the effects of the crash and how different persons react differently. Jimmie Wayne commits suicide (as many others did). After his death Ellen tells Donald:

We wanted children, but they never came. Perhaps that is why he grew to be so absorbed in business. It was a game to him, and he played it all too strenuously. But he did not have your background. The Waynes were never as solid as the Strands.

("BYTSR," p. 319)<sup>17</sup>

Donald's son comes to him like the return of the prodigal and wants his father to get him out of the fix. He is however not going to give in like

Jimmie even if his father cannot help him. He has come prepared; he has stolen money from the bank, and tells Donald his plan of stealing a car and crossing the border. He knows that he will get caught finally, but there is defiance rather than diffidence in his attitude.

Stead was right when he described this novel as "a character story."<sup>18</sup> The characterization in it is as good, if not better, than the characterization in Grain. We find the same psychological insight as shown in his treatment of Gander, but there is a difference. The range of characterization in this novel is much wider. In Grain it was primarily Gander's character that had been so subtly and psychologically portrayed, but in this novel Donald, Jimmie, Clara, and Ellen, are all equally well conceived and portrayed with their individual traits and characters. Clara in particular is something unique in the Stead canon. In the conception of her character Stead shows a skill and insight which is unmatched among early prairie writers. As a character in prairie fiction she stands quite apart. Through her, Stead succeeds in showing "the change in outlook, environment, and personal philosophy"<sup>19</sup> which he had set out to depict.

Dissatisfied and disappointed in her marriage to Donald, Clara seeks an outlet for her pent up emotions by indulging in a flirtation with Jimmie Wayne, and has the courage to tell Donald that she enjoyed her flirtation. She even has the capacity to see that her husband is still very much in love with his cousin, Ellen. She tells him: "You're in love with Ellen. You always have been in love with Ellen" ("BYTSR," p. 305). Clara goes on:

" . . . in Winnipeg you were so absorbed with her that when I started a flirtation with Jimmie to distract your attention you couldn't see it."

"So you were flirting with Jimmie?"  
He was amazed at the ease of her confession.

"Why not? If one can't have love one must have--something."

"Love? But you didn't want love. You have never encouraged love. You have kept me at arm's length. Until lately--"

"Thank Jimmie for that."

"Jimmie?"

"Of course. Oh, Donald, do you know so little? I found flirtation pleasant, like a healing rain after a long drought. Does it surprise you that I came to life again?"

("BYTSR," pp. 305-306)

It is an unusual confession; but in this novel there are other unusual things also. Stead takes up problems which he had never touched upon before in any of his earlier novels. His heroes and heroines were frequently happily married, and if

they did not marry where they loved, they still did not talk of breaking up their marriages. Jo in Grain is one of Stead's few heroines who confess that they have made a mistake. But she is not prepared to leave Dick, and Gander walks off from the scene. Zen in Dennison Grant confesses having made a similar mistake and even thinks of leaving Transley, but has qualms about taking such a decision and changes her mind. Clara is more forward than either. She indulges in flirtation knowingly. And she is more practical than them, because she is not thinking of leaving Donald; she does not suggest divorce or running away, but "an understanding." She tells Donald very bluntly:

" . . . Oh, don't you see the futility of it all? Ellen would suit you, Jimmie would suit me. Why should we continue being four fools because we made a mistake thirty years ago? We are not young now, Donald. Why not seize what happiness we can?"

("BYTSR," p. 307)

She goes on to tell him that she is going to Winnipeg for a visit. But Donald, as Stead's alter ego, is deeply entrenched in his strict moral upbringing and cannot see eye to eye with her. He tells her: "If you go you need not come back" ("BYTSR," p. 308). Then:

She drew away from his chair. The muscles of her hands were tightened with anger.

"So that is your ultimatum," she answered. "I have tried to meet you on a fair basis. I have tried to spare you public reproach. But all my life you have ruled me. You will rule me no longer. I am going."

("BYTSR," p. 308)

It is obvious that Clara was "not strong enough to master him, and yet too strong to yield" ("BYTSR," p. 215). And because she can neither dominate nor yield she maintains a sort of "perpetual armed truce" ("BYTSR," p. 215). Although Donald knows that Ellen was the ideal mate for him he could not break "the thongs of convention and of a certain moral restraint which seemed to be woven into his fibre" ("BYTSR," p. 311). This is where he differs from Clara and finds it difficult to share her more modern view point.

At this point in the story Stead's Puritanism intervenes and by a Hardyean stroke of irony the bottom falls out and news of Jimmie's suicide comes just as Clara is preparing to leave. One cannot help noticing that Stead's novels often lead towards the breaking up of a marriage, but he never allows it to happen. In Dennison Grant both Zen and Dennison

themselves reverse their decision; in "But Yet The Soil Remains" the change is forced upon the characters from outside.

We might pause for a moment to look into the marriage of Clara and Donald, to see how two persons who are so different from one another could have fallen in love and decided to get married. The love was on Donald's side--not love--infatuation rather; and Clara had been only a scheming 'hussy' trying to hook the most eligible bachelor. She was not cut out to be a farmer's wife, and cannot value Donald's success. In one of their quarrels she tells him that she intends to stick by him if he is going to become Member of Parliament. She has her heart set on it. "I think I could do the position justice," she says ("BYTSR," p. 306). Donald's retort leads to the quarrel:

"If I am not good enough for you now I never will be."

"Perhaps not, but I might be reconciled to my fate--if you were a Member."

"I haven't done so badly for you," he defended himself. "I have the best farm in the municipality. I have had a measure of success--"

"Success! Your kind of success! Bulls and cows and hogs and wheat! But what about my kind of success?"

("BYTSR," p. 306)

Stead is careful to point out that Donald, even before his marriage, realized that Clara was not meant for the farm. In love with Ellen, whom he could not marry because she was his cousin, he was torn between two attractions: There was Clara on the one hand, beautiful, delicate, and refined; on the other hand, there was Hester who would have made a good wife. The conflict has been presented rather well:

The following morning brought clearness of purpose. He would marry Clara. Fortunately he had made no commitment with Hester; fortunately, too, he had not pressed for privileges she might have been pliable enough to yield. Yet he felt he owed it to Hester to see her and make the situation plain. Although they had not been engaged, they had been going together, and, in the custom of the community, that practice, when long continued, had its own implications. He would see her that night. And if the visit could be cut short enough, there might be time to call at Tom's.

But as he rode his slow course up and down the prairie field all that day the thread of his purpose again became entangled. The witchery which Clara had woven about him dissolved under sunlight, and cold Reason began to shape his course. Reason told him he was making a mistake. Reason told him Hester would do his bidding; was strong and healthy and used to the hard work of the farm, to early rising and scratching and digging and mending; she would help him to make money and she would not be too insistent about spending it. On all these points Clara was a less certain quantity.

("BYTSR," p. 161)

Though

all the logic was against Clara. Yet his heart speeded up when he tried to picture Clara as his wife, and thoughts of Hester left him almost unstirred.

("BYTSR," p. 112)

So, Donald chooses Clara, knowing her to be the "less certain quantity." It is a choice based on impulse. And when his marriage fails, Donald's and Clara's pride conceals the fact from neighbors and children:

When they went out together they were as respectable and courteous a couple as could be met in the whole Alder Creek District. But romance between them was dead.

("BYTSR," p. 189a)

Ellen's character is equally well drawn. She is more typical of the prairie women but has a notion that cousins should not marry. And though she loves Donald, sees marriage between them as impossible. Stead makes a mockery of her whole life. She gives up Donald for the sake of children, but for her the children never come.

Here too, as in Grain, Stead uses the prairie landscape to mirror the feelings and emotions of his characters. When Ellen comes back to her old surroundings, physically it is the same landscape, but it

seems to partake of Ellen's feelings:

The creek where so often she had played as a child still cut its circuitous route across the corner of the farm, but its voice was silent and its shallow depression partly filled with drifted snow. Away stretched the prairies, no longer prairies but the dead aftermath of the season's cultivation, not yet blanketed in their winter shrouds but covered thinly with a dirty patchwork of snow and drifted dust. The dull sky which curtained the horizon seemed an appropriate drop-piece for the still tragedy of her life.

("BYTSR," p. 322)

In "But Yet The Soil Remains" even more than in the incomplete manuscript Stead tries to appreciate the good points of the new generation. Frustrated in his marriage, Donald cannot help admiring the younger generation "with its amazing frankness, its willingness to face facts" and wonders if they might "perhaps escape the fog in which its more conventional elders were so hopelessly lost" ("BYTSR," p. 190). There is no clash and no condemnation in this novel; instead, there is ample recognition that times, attitudes, and view points have changed. "Standards have changed," Donald remarks at another time. He goes on:

I remember at the dances if a girl showed her ankle we thought she was bold; now if she doesn't show her knee you think she is deformed.

("BYTSR," p. 182)

Although Grove is usually recognized as a better writer than Stead, in the depiction of women Stead is the superior artist. While Grove's women tend to belong to one of two categories,<sup>20</sup> Stead's women move more freely and are more complex and average, and hence, more true to life. Stead is the finer artist not only in his depiction of women, but also in his dialogues. The language spoken by his characters has a definite ease of manner and naturalness of idiom and tone that is markedly lacking in Grove.

By way of conclusion we might say that Stead's "But Yet The Soil Remains" is, to all appearances, better than any of his earlier novels. He reveals himself as a maturer artist with a greater understanding of character and situation. And yet it does not break too much new ground. It is as autobiographical as the others. Its theme of homesteading, which forms the first part, is based largely on the writer's own experiences. The location of the homestead and the school at the corner of the Strand homestead; the teacher who walked six miles to and back from school and boarded with the Strands; the closing down of the school during the winter months; their strict observance of the Sabbath; their ploughing of the virgin

land; and the "Scottish strain" in Uncle Jim's ancestry, are too obviously autobiographical to need enlargement. Even his description of the train and how it was an improvement on the immigrant trains of earlier days, smacks of a personal experience:

The seats were not of wooden slats, but were covered with red plush, very luxurious in his eyes, and no one was stretched out in them trying to sleep. A few men had come on board wearing great coonskin or buffalo coats; some were chatting amiably and others were settling down to read the morning Free Press. A row of bright brass lamps hung from along the centre of the car, and when the train started . . . the lamps began to rattle and jingle in a very enjoyable manner.

("BYTSR," p. 3)

In the third part, however, Stead does break new ground. It revolves about Donald, the successful farmer, with his problems, his conflicts, and his resolutions. Lacking in action, it is not lacking in the conflict and clash of personalities. But Stead fails with his ending. He gives an impression that Jimmie has to be killed in order to prevent Clara from leaving Donald. With one stroke he saves both marriages. This weakness in endings suggests that perhaps the artist in Stead would have brought his stories to a different close had his own morality and Presbyterianism not stood in the way. In this

work however this is only a minor flaw in an otherwise good novel. But it is unfortunate that by the time this was written the depression interfered with its publication, for this is one novel of Stead's which should have a place in Canadian literature. (I plan to edit it and publish it after completing my dissertation.)<sup>21</sup> It is more typical of the prairies because it paints the unpleasant as well as the idyllic, and thus achieves a truer realism than that of his earlier novels. In "But Yet The Soil Remains" Stead overcomes many of his former limitations. Had it been published then, it might have bolstered Stead's critical reputation.

Failure to get it published made Stead increasingly aware of the futility of his creative work. Relieved by now from official duties, he plunged headlong into commercial writing, and started accepting more and more invitations to give addresses, which he had had to decline earlier due to shortage of time. Now, with more time on his hands, he turned his attention to his long-neglected manuscripts and tried to promote them.

Sometime in January 1947 he discussed with P.J. Jennings the prospect of an anthology of his work featuring prairie scenes and events. Jennings

was of the opinion that it would be well received. But the matter was not pursued; either Stead lacked the will to go along with Jennings' suggestions, or he was convinced that his creative writing had become outdated. For him failure of the last novel came to mean the end of his creative career. He turned his attention to the Canadian Geographical Journal instead, and began to write a series of geographical articles on Calgary, Ontario, Edmonton, New Brunswick, etc. The Calgary one was the first to be completed and Gordon Dallyn paid \$100.00 for it.<sup>22</sup> This was in April 1947, although the article was not published until April 1948.

While Stead was working on the New Brunswick article Dallyn asked him to suspend that and to do one on British Columbia instead. This he wrote in less than a month<sup>23</sup> and it was published in the August issue of the Geographical Journal. Then Stead completed his article on New Brunswick. Although it was written and paid for in 1947, its publication was postponed indefinitely.<sup>24</sup> Impressed by Stead's handling and presentation of the geographical articles, Leland Case, who was then editor of The Rotarian, asked Stead for an article on Canada's geography. Quick to honor his commitments, Stead mailed the

desired article within a week. In October 1947 Dallyn asked Stead if he would do an "Aspects article" on Alberta. Stead agreed and was paid \$150.00 for it. On October 23, Dallyn again met him and told him that the New Brunswick article might have to appear under somebody else's name. Stead did not object in principle but felt that he should be paid more for it, his argument being that if he was not to get the honor at least he should get more money. Dallyn promised to see if he could pay \$200.00 for it but made no definite commitment to that effect. What exactly the terms of publication eventually were it has not been possible to ascertain, but the article was not published under his name. Even the Alberta article did not appear under Stead's name.

On receiving the Alberta article, Dallyn asked Stead to write one on the North West Territories, but immediately after, changed his mind and telephoned him not to start work on it until further notice.

With no commissioned work on his hands, Stead began to revise and rework his address on "People Who Work For Me" as a magazine article. When it was ready, he sent it to Leland Case who paid \$75.00 for it. Then

in March, Dallyn was back asking Stead to do an article on "Calgary to Golden."

It was around this time that Stead's manuscript of "But Yet The Soil Remains" came back from Ryerson. The result was that Stead became possessed by a great urge to write fiction once more. He struggled hard on a book which he intended to call "All Rivers Run Into The Sea," but was unable to give it form or shape. Frustrated in this attempt he sat down to rework his Bail Jumper which he had come to consider "stilted" and juvenile in many ways.<sup>26</sup> He condensed it to "20 or 25 thousand words" in the hope that he might be able to sell it "to the Standard, Family Herald, or some such paper."<sup>27</sup> There is however no evidence that The Bail Jumper appeared in its revised form in any of these papers (or anywhere else for that matter).

By the end of March Stead had completed the requested article on "The Great Divide" and handed it to Dallyn; the latter was very apologetic but said he could not pay more than \$50.00 for it. Dallyn also asked him to do a similar article on Jasper which was published under the title "The Yellowhead Pass." There is evidence in the diaries to show that he was asked to write articles on Newfoundland and Labrador.

and that he wrote them, but there is no indication that they were ever published. Payment was made for the Labrador one at least. A member of the Geographical Journal's Editorial Committee,<sup>28</sup> Stead suggested at one of the meetings that he might write an article dealing with the area between Morrisburg and Cornwall which would be submerged once development on the St. Lawrence had taken place. This suggestion was accepted and resulted in "The Taming of the St. Lawrence" which was published in the Canadian Geographical Journal in its November 1955 issue. On Webster's death he was asked to provide a quick writeup to be published in the Geographical Journal.

In addition to all this writing Stead also did much revising, rewriting, and editing, for Dallyn. This kept him busy no doubt; but as the days passed, the satisfaction derived from such work was readily declining. Things would brighten up occasionally, as for instance, on January 22, 1948, when a Mrs. Gertrude Walker called on him, seeking permission to use some of The Smoking Flax stories in children's broadcasts over the CFRA. He readily granted permission. Another such a bright spot must have been when he received a copy of Northern Medley which contained his poem "The Squad of One."<sup>29</sup>

The urge for creative work kept growing stronger; he made a few abortive attempts but found he had been immersed in commercialism too long to shake it off. The more he thought over his predicament the more his frustration grew until it gradually engulfed him. This feeling became so strong that even when he was holidaying at Golden Lake in July 1948, it oppressed him so much that, even amid the beautiful natural surroundings he wrote:

Nevertheless I have a feeling of fruitlessness--of accomplishing nothing, or nearly nothing. Life without some achievement seems hardly worth living. May get back to creative work if only for the mental occupation.<sup>30</sup>

But Stead was not one to allow depression to settle long over him. Possessed of a practical and happy disposition, he was inclined to accept things as they were rather than waste his days in pining over things that could not be.

Although he had never been a teacher throughout his checkered career, in October 1948, he was offered a teaching assignment at Carleton College. Stead felt diffident about teaching, feeling that he did not have sufficient background, and declined. But the following year when Wilfrid Eggleston asked him to give a series of lectures on "Writing as a

Hobby" he readily agreed. He started his lectures on November 15. The first one, in which he sketched his own background, was well received, and he began to enjoy his new profession, so much so that he later expressed his willingness to Eggleston to undertake more teaching work. This led to the institution of his Creative Writing classes at Carleton College which proved very popular. The first Creative Writing Course was held from January 24 to March 28, 1950.<sup>31</sup> On January 23, 1951, he was also asked to give a special lecture on "Prairie Fiction."

In April 1949, Stead had started his correspondence with Lorne Pierce with plans to revive his Songs of the Prairies, or to issue a new collection of poems under the title "Ballads of the Foothills." But the matter was soon dropped and no reason assigned.

Now that Stead was comparatively free, Leland Case often asked him to cover Rotary Conventions, and write impressionistic stories about them. Stead did not always accept such assignments. In May 1949 he turned down Case's request asking him to cover the Convention at New York, but agreed to attend and write on one held at Detroit in 1950. For the latter, Case offered \$150.00 plus expenses. (We do not know if a similar offer had been made in 1949.) The writeup

on the Rotary Convention was published in The Rotarian under the title "History was Made in Detroit."

But as the years passed, both Robert's and Nettie's health began to cause some concern. He had to cut down on his activities and writing. Troubled by ill-health he began to feel that he was getting old. The result, recorded in his diary, was a growing preoccupation with thoughts of old age and death. These thoughts were reflected in all that he did and thought. Since his retirement he began to show a greater and more poignant awareness of his illness or death of any friend, colleague, or relative. On March 13, 1948, he records that he had been contemplating an address on "Haywire," based on the idea that as one grows in years one is figuratively held together by haywire, like an outworn machine. Fears of old age and death came to haunt him more often. Nettie suffered from high blood pressure and diabetes and had to be under the constant care of Dr. Service, the family doctor. Stead suffered from chronic high blood pressure and was always fearful on account of his heart,<sup>32</sup> and since November 1944 he had been having dental problems also. These ended in May 1947, by which time he had had his teeth "refitted;" but on top of these major health problems he was

occasionally beset by minor ailments, like a cold, or flu, or an inflammation, or a boil. Of a hypochondriacal nature, he tended to exaggerate his ailments and wallow in self-pity; and though these were slight indispositions in themselves, they succeeded in clouding his usually happy disposition.

A reasonably cheerful man under normal circumstances, Stead was, when ill, a difficult patient, who would lose both patience and heart over trivial afflictions.<sup>33</sup> Fed up with his indispositions, he remarked to Nettie on the morning of April 25, 1948: "I am getting to be like an old car, always requiring some repair."

Nettie, her own health not of the best, did not seem to attach too much importance to her condition but endeavoured to be a perfect companion. She had been put on an insulin diet since January 1947 but did not let that deter them from eating and entertaining at restaurants. In November, Elizabeth and Bob, who had been staying with them for some time, decided to move to their own apartment on 193 McLeod Street. They were to move on the 17th, so Nettie threw a small party for Elizabeth on the 12th. The strain, however, proved too much. On the 24th her blood pressure shot up so high that Dr. Service advised her complete bed rest. Her condition

was so serious, with her blood pressure at 280, that one of the doctors had to watch by her bedside all night. Stead's anxiety took the form of a depression with the result that he started feeling very low himself. On November 29 when he learnt of the death of his friend, P.J. Jennings, his depression further deepened. Seeing that the newspapers did not even mention his friend's death, saddened him still more and he could not help musing on how short-lived is popularity and fame.

With Nettie's illness the task of keeping house fell to Stead. Not being a handy man about the house he had to depend on his daughters-in-law, Elizabeth and Jean, to help with the cooking and housekeeping. But in spite of their assistance he remained tense and worried, and by December his blood pressure was as high as Nettie's. Both being advised rest, Stead engaged a Mrs. Gray as hired help, at \$50.00 a month. But she proved quite unsatisfactory: engaged on the 13th, on the 14th, which was a Sunday, she went off for early mass and returned so late that breakfast time was long past. After less than ten days, on December 22, she was paid \$15.00 and discharged, as by then Nettie's health had improved somewhat.

On December 19 the diary records the death of Duncan Campbell Scott. With the news of anyone's death Stead's depression always worsened and he felt the loss of friends and contemporaries very keenly. On the 21st, when Nettie was a little better, he called on Scott's family.

When Christmas came round that year there was no festive spirit. "It was not a merry Christmas" Stead confided in his diary.<sup>34</sup> There was reason for this gloom: there had been a series of bad news: Jim and Addie Stewart had lost their daughter Grace,<sup>35</sup> Bob and Elizabeth had had the flu, Bruce was laid up, and Nettie's illness made it impossible to accept a dinner invitation. But Stead was thankful that Nettie was improving. On Christmas day she came down for breakfast for the first time since being confined to bed. The strain however proved too much and on December 31, their wedding anniversary, which had always been celebrated in style, there was only a family get-together.

Nettie was no longer able to manage the house in her precarious state of health, and Stead engaged a Jean Moodie to do their cooking. Though more efficient than Mrs. Gray she was less dependable. In the midst of all these problems Stead received a letter

from his sister, Nett, on February 4, 1948, informing him that her husband, Wes, had had a stroke. Despite Stead's concern, he could not go to visit her for neither he nor Nettie was well. Nettie's illness proved quite a long one. From November to March she was confined to bed. That meant no socializing, no entertainment, and no outings until March 25, when Dr. Service told Stead that she could begin going out. On the 30th she took a short walk, followed by a car ride on April 4, when they had dinner at Lorne's. On April 8 Stead took Nettie for an eye examination and she was prescribed glasses. With great misgivings he took her out for their first entertainment since her illness--to see the Barbara Ann show.<sup>36</sup> Fond of movies, on the 16th they went to see "Nicholas Nickleby." But the quick succession of outings tired Nettie and by the 28th she had another relapse, from which she took some three weeks to recover. On May 30 she went for her first long trip since November, when they drove with Bob and Elizabeth to Carleton Place.

1948 seemed a bad year for the health of the whole family. Lorne was a chronic patient of high blood pressure; Helen, their second daughter-in-law, had to be operated on and was hospitalized; the

youngest son, Bob, was laid up with a boil. So much sickness around him made Stead feel that his family had begun to disintegrate. On May 2, he wrote in his diary: "Our family is pretty well shot to pieces."

However, matters improved before the year was out. Everyone recovered, with the exception of his brother-in-law; and life returned to normal. His sister Nett's husband had survived his stroke, but his death was expected any time. Stead, feeling better now, was in a constant state of preparedness to go west whenever the news might come; but he was also aware that Nettie was not well enough to accompany him, and made arrangements with Bob and Elizabeth who agreed to come and live with her during Stead's absence. The wire came on September 30.

Nett did not long outlive her husband; she died on January 25, 1949. At her death Stead could not help reflecting that ~~now~~ only he and his sister, Margaret, were left of their original family.

The year had started with deaths, and a sense of gloom and unhappiness seemed to persist for a while. Nett's death was followed by the death of one of his nieces (Margaret's daughter) in February. But the year had its bright spots too. Nettie had considerably improved and was able to resume a more or less normal

life. On March 13, she accompanied her husband to church and on the 14th went with him to the Rotary Club.

Although Nett had died in January, the funeral did not take place until the spring. Stead left for the west again on May 18, arriving in Winnipeg on the 20th, where he made arrangements to have her body removed to Mather, where the funeral was to take place on the 21st. (Mather is situated east of Cartwright, about halfway between Cartwright and Clearwater.) The funeral left Stead comparatively unmoved. He wrote:

Because of the length of time which had elapsed since Nett's death it all seemed a little unreal to me. I could not impress myself with what was actually occurring.<sup>37</sup>

He returned from Mather to find Nettie unwell again, this time suffering from a numb arm. The information distressed him greatly--perhaps he was getting tired of her prolonged illness. They were not able to take their usual holiday during the year because, as Stead writes:

it seems hazardous to do so on acct. of Nettie's health, partly because of Elizabeth's approaching confinement, and partly because we find our own house more comfortable than any hotel, cottage, or tourist camp.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to these reasons Stead states that he had become a "regular baseball fan"<sup>39</sup> which would imply a shift from his roving and travelling instinct to something less exciting, such as watching baseball-- not an absolutely new interest in Stead's life. Not a keen sportsman, he had nevertheless played baseball and bowled.<sup>40</sup> His interest in the former was mentioned by Helen who told me how Nettie had said, on one occasion in Cartwright, that when Lorne was due and she was in labor, Stead was out playing baseball.<sup>41</sup>

Elizabeth's confinement, mentioned by Stead, came in August. On the 28th she gave birth to a daughter, who was subsequently named Susan Gail.

With Stead's growing problems and ill-health he thought it advisable to cut down on his activities. He had represented the city of Ottawa Public School Board on the Carnegie Library Board since 1944. On December 15, 1949, he put in his resignation, feeling that the work did not interest him enough and that perhaps others could do it better. Nettie's frequent indispositions and his own indifferent state of health left him with misgivings and a feeling of the encroachment of age. On his seventieth birthday he wrote:

I suppose I can now be properly called  
an old man although I do not feel it.  
But I have made my allotted span; any-

thing more is to the good. Grateful for being in pretty good health, with my immediate family circle unbroken,<sup>42</sup> and with sufficient means for the mode of life, to which I have accustomed myself.<sup>43</sup>

After his seventieth birthday the misgivings became more pronounced as he felt that he was living on borrowed time now--his allotted span of three score and ten being over.

Though the immediate family circle was not broken, it showed signs of wear and tear; it had also both enlarged and narrowed down. All three sons were now married and settled down with growing families,<sup>44</sup> which left Stead and Nettie alone to look after each other during their spells of ill-health. But being by themselves also provided them the leisure to do and enjoy things that had not been possible when they were younger with the responsibilities of a growing family. Movies and eating out at restaurants became a regular pattern of entertainment for them; and Stead satisfied his travelling instinct by shorter trips to neighboring places in lieu of his longer tours of the west. Though he could not travel as extensively as he had during his years of active employment in publicity, he still travelled as often. Lanark, which is only an hour or so's drive from Ottawa, became one of his

favorite resorts. Nettie and he knew some of the Stead and MacDonald families living there; Stead also had a number of cousins living around and in Lanark. While visiting Lanark and Middleville in the course of my research I encountered quite a few people who still remembered him and recounted enthusiastically his frequent trips to the countryside. They were almost unanimous on two points: that Stead kept his contacts alive by meeting people,<sup>45</sup> and that he was very fond of fishing and might be seen on quiet Sunday afternoons, sitting with his line on the bank of the little stream (named Clyde after Scotland's famous river) that runs through Lanark.

Stead's fears were not amiss, for on March 26, 1951, he had his attack of coronary thrombosis. He woke up at about two in the morning with a severe pain in his chest; when the pain persisted, Nettie called Dr. Service who found Stead's blood pressure fallen to 80/60 and his pulse almost inarticulate. He was hospitalized immediately, where he made steady progress, and by the following forenoon the blood pressure was back to 145. On April 7 he came home from the hospital.

On April 2, while Stead was still in the hospital, his sister, Margaret, who had been ailing for

some time , died.

Stead was many months convalescing at home. A difficult patient, he would indulge in self-pity when he was low, and question why God allowed him, who had lived a good life, to suffer this or that ailment. His religion had taught him that if one lived a good life one did not suffer. And when he saw his friends and contemporaries enjoying better health, he could not help envying them.<sup>46</sup> This might very well have been the beginning of his doubts and dissatisfaction with the religion in which he had been brought up.

Stead being demanding as a patient, Nettie found it difficult to cope with him, and a practical nurse, Mrs. Delorme, was engaged at \$3.00 a day to look after him. It took Stead a long time to recover. From March 26 to May 29 he was confined to bed. As soon as he was better, the family, knowing his fondness for travel, took him out for a drive, but he became jittery on the way and insisted on going home. This was on June 12; but by the 23rd he was considerably better and allowed to come down for his meals. On July 1, Nettie and he went for their first restaurant meal since his illness, and on the 11th they went for to their first movie. By November he was feeling fit

enough to resume his classes and began his Creative Writing Course at Carleton College on November 9. On the 18th Elizabeth's second daughter was born. She was named Allison Elizabeth after Stead's friend, W.T. Allison, and her mother.

December 1951 was a happy time for the family. Stead was feeling fully recovered, and their youngest son, Bob, had been appointed Deputy Naval Secretary. The news was extremely gratifying and after a gap of some years Christmas again proved an occasion of good cheer. On December 31, Nettie and he also celebrated their golden anniversary. But even such an occasion would not allow Nettie to relax her rigid ideas on drink. Helen recalled how when ginger ale was served in champagne glasses, one man began to scoff. The guests were naturally disappointed; they knew the Steads were teetotalers but expected something stronger than ginger ale at least.<sup>47</sup>

Since his illness Stead had had perforce to cut down on his numerous activities. He had been unable to attend any of the Canadian Geographical Journal's editorial meetings. Feeling that he was no more than a figurehead now, he wrote to Dallyn on January 5, 1952, tendering his resignation as Chairman of the Committee. (He had been appointed

Chairman in April 1949.) Dallyn however insisted on his continuing as a member; but he was no longer an active one.

On May 7, 1952, Nettie again complained of numbness in her right arm. She was advised rest, and a nurse was engaged to look after her. Janet's marriage had already been fixed to be performed at the end of the month.<sup>48</sup> The ceremony was to be held at St. Luke's Church on Somerset Street in Ottawa. Nettie insisted on attending the wedding: "she said she would go even if it killed her because this would be the only grandchild she would see married."<sup>49</sup> The marriage was followed by a reception at a local restaurant. Photographs shown to me by Janet showed both Stead and Nettie standing outside saying goodbye with a very wistful and far-away look on their faces.

Nettie's health was failing rapidly; she had literally compelled herself to attend the wedding. This time Dr. Service was not able to treat her for long as he himself got an attack of coronary thrombosis. During the initial period his patients were naturally neglected, but as soon as he was a little better, Miss Lewis, his secretary, phoned to say that Dr. Service had asked his friend and colleague, a Dr. J.T.M. Fraser of Island Park Drive to look after her.

Whether it was the change in doctors that affected Nettie adversely, or simply that her time had come, it is difficult to say. But rest and treatment did not help her this time and there were no signs of improvement. On the contrary, by July, her condition had worsened and she was suffering from a palpitating heart as well. When a cardiogram was finally taken on July 28 the doctors could offer very little hope.

Nettie's prolonged illness and the doctor's frank appraisal of her condition prepared Stead for her death. The end came on August 6, 1952. Mrs. Frost, the hired help, called Stead after breakfast saying that Nettie wanted him. Stead's account of her last moments reads:

I found her lying quietly in the bed and asked what was the matter. She said, "I don't feel very well." As I sat there wondering whether I should call the doctor--he had been in yesterday and said she was getting along alright--she suddenly gave a little cry and flung herself toward me. I held her in my arms for perhaps a minute when she sank back on her pillow, gave a few gasps, and expired. It all happened in perhaps five minutes, and I don't think she suffered more than a few seconds. I called Lorne and Bob, who came at once, and we got Dr. Service in a little while and he confirmed our fears. So my dear wife who had fought a brave fight against very high blood pressure for many years,

and during the last few years against diabetes also, passed away with hardly a struggle. I was so glad that she was spared a stroke or long helplessness, which would have broken her energetic heart, that grief<sup>50</sup> did not seize very heavily upon me.

Prepared for the end Stead did not react very strongly to Nettie's illness and death. It is surprising in one so closely attached to his wife, and one who exaggerated and magnified his own ailments. Or was it that he was too much of an egoist and too taken up by his own personal problems to react any differently? His subsequent reaction also indicates a kind of indulgence in self-pity; he writes repeatedly that though he could get accustomed to Nettie's absence he could not get used to the idea of being without a companion.

Surprisingly Nettie had left very explicit instructions that she should be cremated and not buried. She had a strange and inexplicable fear of the grave, of being put into the cold, dark earth. Her wishes were carried out. The funeral took place at two o'clock on August 8.

Although Stead wrote in his diary that "grief did not seize very heavily" upon him, the sense of Nettie's loss deepened as the days passed by. In an attempt to escape his oppressive loneliness Stead

decided to visit his second son, Stan, at Ignace. He left Ottawa on the 26th but returned on September 1, cutting short his stay, when he realized that he could not escape the loneliness that had come over his life after Nettie's death, and that the sense of loneliness did not lessen by going away. He wrote:

The sense of Nettie's death grows upon me, and I expect I shall miss her more, rather than less as time goes by.<sup>51</sup>

It is only natural that Stead missed Nettie on every occasion. Theirs had been a long and happy marriage and, what is sometimes more important, they had a sense of companionship with each other. He missed her on every occasion--at home, at movies, at outings, and on his birthday. This feeling of missing her more was again expressed in his diary on September 6:

One month ago today I lost my life's companion. I seem to feel her absence more than I did then.<sup>52</sup>

Without Nettie, Stead gave up his drives to the countryside and even contemplated selling his car, since he felt he had no use for it. Though he tried to live a normal life and get into the old routine of teaching and working he could not face being by himself. Stead writes that he "got accustomed to missing her"<sup>53</sup> but he could not get accustomed to the fact that he

was alone. He was not quite himself, and with this growing sense of loneliness a visible decline set in.<sup>54</sup>

By the 50s the artist in Stead was almost dead. After the unpublished "But Yet The Soil Remains" the spring of creativity had obviously run dry, for though he occasionally wished to renew his creative work, he never succeeded in doing so. With growing years his health required more attention and even his non-fictional writing petered out. The 40s thus saw not only the death of Stead the artist, but also the withering away of Stead the non-fictional writer and public speaker. The end of this decade points to a shift from outside interests to a greater concentration on family and home. This may have been partly due to his wife's frequent lapses in health; there being no one else (the sons all married and settled) he had perforce to look after her in her sickness. Nettie's physical decline affected him: it made him feel very depressed and led him to brood on old age and death, and it induced a negative way of thinking of which we do not find any evidence before this time. This depression and negative attitude were further deepened on Nettie's death, which left him with an ever-increasing sense of loneliness.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Entry in diary, June 15, 1946, Stead Papers, vol. II, folder 11. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

<sup>2</sup> Entry in diary, July 13, 1946, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

<sup>3</sup> In 1937 he went on a trip from June 19 to August 8 to inspect the western parks; in 1940 he toured the west from October 27 to November 16; in 1941 from May 25 to August 19, and again from October 24 to November 11; in 1944 from May 23 to June 30; and in 1945 from May 24 to June 22.

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive list refer to Appendix III.

<sup>5</sup> J.A. Carroll was Secretary of the Association.

<sup>6</sup> Nettie did not accompany Stead on his trips as long as the children were too young to be left alone, but when they were older she always accompanied him.

<sup>7</sup> From June 29 to July 18.

<sup>8</sup> Entry in diary, September 1946, in SP, vol. II, folder 13.

<sup>9</sup> This view is also supported by a clipping from The Toronto Globe & Mail in SP, vol. XIII, folder 49, which reads: "Though he has lived 30 years in Ottawa he still thinks of Calgary as his home."

<sup>10</sup> Entry in diary in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

11 Letter from Robert Stead to Lorne Pierce, undated, Lorne Pierce Papers (Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston), Box XVI. (The Lorne Pierce Papers are not numbered, nor are they in folders like the Stead Papers.)

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 The Ryerson Fiction Award was an annual literary prize created in 1941 (for 1942) by the Ryerson Press of Toronto "to stimulate the production of novels that are skilfully written, rich in their interpretations, and genuinely creative in their approach to life." The value of the prize was \$1000.00 until 1956.

15 Letter from Lorne Pierce to Stead dated November 10, 1947, Lorne Pierce Papers, Box XVI.

16 Letter from Stead to Lorne Pierce dated February 19, 1948, Lorne Pierce Papers, Box XVII.

17 The manuscript of "But Yet The Soil Remains" is in SP, vol. V, folder 21.

18 Letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart dated December 15, 1932, in SP, vol. I, folder 5.

19 Ibid.

20 Lorraine McMullen, "Women in Grove's Novels" in The Grove Symposium ed. by John Nause (University of Ottawa Press, 1974), pp. 67-76.

21 I have already been granted permission regarding the publication of "But Yet The Soil Remains" from Stead's trustees.

22 Gordon Dallyn was Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Geographical Journal.

23 Dallyn asked for the article on April 10 and on April 29 it was delivered to him.

24 The article was given to Dallyn on June 19, and Stead received payment for it on August 15, 1947.

25 This was in September 1947.

26 Entry in diary, March 15, 1948, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

27 Entry in diary, March 24, 1948, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

28 Stead had been a member of the Editorial Committee of the Canadian Geographical Journal since 1943.

29 Mentioned in diary, November 25, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

30 Entry in diary, July 15, 1948, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

31 The last course was held in 1955.

32 Stead's heart had been giving him trouble since February 2, 1926. Evidence in diary, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

33 Unrecorded interview with R.A. Stead on May 4, 1979.

34 Entry in diary, December 25, 1947, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.

35 Addie Stewart, a MacDonald, was distantly related to the Steads. But ever since they had moved to Ottawa had become very close to them. Jim, Addie's husband, and Stead got along very well, so they often visited the Stewarts in Lanark. Grace was their daughter.

- 36 This was on April 14, 1948.
- 37 Entry in diary, May 21, 1949, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.
- 38 Entry in diary, 1949, in SP, vol. II, folder 13.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Unrecorded interview with Gordon Urquhart on May 12, 1979.
- 41 Unrecorded interview with Helen Stead, wife of Stanley Stead, on May 11, 1979.
- 42 By "immediate family circle" Stead meant his wife and children.
- 43 Entry in diary, September 4, 1950, in SP, vol. II, folder 11.
- 44 Lorne already had two children and Bob one. Of the sons Stan alone did not have any children.
- 45 This sounds paradoxical because these people did not seem to know the Steads too well.
- 46 This side of Stead's character was explained by his son, R.A. Stead, in an unrecorded interview with him on March 14, 1979.
- 47 Interview with Helen.
- 48 Janet was Lorne's daughter, and grand-daughter of Nettie and Robert Stead. The marriage was held on May 31, 1952.
- 49 Unrecorded interview with Janet Milks, daughter of Lorne and Jean, on May 8, 1979.

50 Entry in diary, August 6, 1952, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

51 Entry in diary, August 26, 1952, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

52 Entry in diary, September 6, 1952, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

53 Entry in diary, October 6, 1952, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

54 Mentioned by Wilfrid Eggleston as well as by R.A. Stead in their individual interviews.

## Chapter VII

### The Final Years

It was perhaps fortunate that Stead revived his association with Nancy Rankin at this time. Their acquaintance had been a long one and dated back to the Manitoba days when Nancy was a teacher in the west and Norman Rankin, her husband, a newspaperman. Norman became a war hero (of the 1914 war) with many medals and decorations. After Norman's death Nancy took to publicity work, and still later, became a newspaper woman. Since 1932 Stead and she had met occasionally at Editors' meetings and conferences. They were good friends, who had often enjoyed a cup of tea together, and after 1923 had exchanged Christmas cards, but there was nothing serious between them. By all reports Stead was, throughout his marriage, a very faithful and devoted husband.

After Nettie's death Stead wrote to Nancy about his loss. On receiving the letter she promptly sent him a letter of condolence, which he acknowledged

as promptly. Gradually their correspondence picked up speed, and Stead started finding in her an intellectual companionship which filled, to a certain extent, the gap created by Nettie's death. By October the acquaintanceship had ripened into a friendship so that on the 22nd Stead made a rail trip to Hudson, which is not very far from Montreal, to visit Nancy.

Though the sense of bereavement did not grow less, Stead found a pleasant distraction in his frequent letters and telephone calls to Nancy. It would, however, be unfair to think that Stead had forgotten Nettie so soon. The diaries reveal the gradual acceptance of the inevitable on his part. On November 6, he writes:

I cannot say the sense of bereavement grows less, but perhaps I do not think of it so continually.

On January 1, 1953, when assessing the year gone by, he wrote:

I am becoming accustomed to her absence;  
I do not expect her to meet me at the door or call 'Goodnight' any more, but a great vacancy remains . . .

Stead repeatedly mentions in his diaries that it was easier to get used to her absence than to the lack of companionship, but he was always aware of a great vacancy which he tried to fill up "with work, parti-

cularly correspondence."<sup>2</sup>

By November the correspondence between Nancy and Stead had greatly increased, and by December they were planning a holiday together. By January the letters were further supplemented by telephone calls which became longer and more frequent as the days passed by. It was obvious that Stead was turning to Nancy more and more to fill up the vacuum created by Nettie's death. By January his dependence on her had grown so much that he began contemplating a serious relationship with her. On January 22, he had a "confidential talk" with Dr. Fraser, who was the then Minister of the Glebe United Church. He discussed the same subject with his sons, Lorne and Bob, Stan not being so easy to reach as he was in Ignace. It is interesting to note that even in such a personal thing as a diary Stead does not write explicitly. It is a fairly easy guess what the "confidential talk" had been and what he had discussed with his sons, but Stead does not write about his contemplated marriage in clear terms. This either speaks of a certain natural reticence on his part, or a feeling of doing something that would not receive a hundred-per-cent approval. Perhaps Stead feared the latter. After his talk with his sons he writes that he was happy they approved; he says he

was so delighted with their approval that he called Nancy the same evening to convey the good news to her.

With the stamp of approval given by his family and the Minister, Stead felt more open about his affair with Nancy. He could visit her whenever he pleased and had the opportunity, and no kind of weather could prevent him from going. There is an instance on record of how he got up at six-thirty one morning, even though it was snowing heavily, and got ready for his trip "to Hudson in very beautiful wonderland."<sup>3</sup> He records that this was one of his most memorable trips, and when he returned home he phoned Nancy to tell her so. As the romance progressed the telephone calls grew more frequent and not a single day went by when he did not write to her or talk to her on the telephone or both.

Though of a practical bent Stead did not mind running "ruinous telephone bills"<sup>4</sup> because he felt that it was "only once in a lifetime"<sup>5</sup> that he was doing so. On February 6, Nancy finally agreed to marry him.

After Stead's frequent week-end trips to Hudson the empty house seemed emptier still on coming home. Back in the old house he would often experience misgivings about the future and his proposed marriage, but still decided on going ahead. These misgivings occasionally produced a considerable conflict in his

mind, eased somewhat when he consulted Dr. Ansley, who, in addition to being a family friend of both Stead and Nancy, was also a psychologist. When Stead discussed his domestic situation with Dr. Ansley, the latter advised early action and allayed his fears. But the conflict would not be quietened. Perhaps his own Puritan upbringing hampered him from the enjoyment of life:

Since visiting Hudson yesterday my mind has been in a turmoil of misgivings. But I do feel that the only thing to do is to go on; anything else would be likely much worse.

In contrast to these fears were his fears of loneliness. There were times when the thought of being alone would so upset him that anything else were preferable to that. There is, for instance, an entry in the diary when he got up one night, on Mrs. Frost's off day, "feeling weak," and found his pulse also "regular but weak." Though he took a Digitalis and started feeling better, he could not help reflecting that

it is possible [he] might pass out this way some time. If [he] had no one would have known until Bob and Elizabeth called.

With Dr. Ansley's help and guidance Stead managed to solve his dilemma. On March 13, 1953, Nancy

arrived at Ottawa and was received at the station by Stead and Grace Ansley, the doctor's wife. Nancy stayed at the Ansleys. On March 14 the wedding date was announced for May 1. She met Stead's sons Lorne and Bob with their wives and children at a dinner hosted by the Ansleys on the 14th. Stead now decided to stop behaving like a romantic youngster and resolved not to visit Hudson "except on invitation" and not telephone "except on matters of importance."<sup>8</sup>

Yet Stead was weak in sticking to his decision. When Mrs. Frost was called away owing to the death of a relative, Stead promptly phoned Nancy and had an invitation extended to him for the week-end. This was on March 27, only a fortnight after his resolution not to visit her.

Stead's involvement with Nancy had made him a young man all over again. He began to show greater concern about his looks, even to having a wart removed from his head.<sup>9</sup> He also went in for treatment of some "black spots" on his cheeks.<sup>10</sup> Of course it is quite possible that these things may have been a matter of routine and may have had no connection with his budding romance with Nancy, but this is the first time these are mentioned in the diary. And judging from the manner in which Stead recorded everything

of any import, it would seem he had not bothered about these blemishes earlier in life. Besides, he was making preparations for his forthcoming marriage and this seems to be part of the preparations. On March 24 he had also ordered a new suit and written out a new will.

Stead's attachment to Nancy helps us to understand the romantic strain in his temperament, a strain which seems to characterize all his fictional heroes, and perhaps is autobiographical in nature. It is of course unfortunate that we have no evidence in the form of letters, diaries, or documents, or even people who might remember, to tell us about his earlier romance and courtship with Nettie.

From letters and telephone calls the romance progressed to week-end visits--those continued despite Stead's resolutions to the contrary. On April 10, Nancy arrived in Ottawa, and although Stan and his wife were living with Stead, stayed overnight at his house. This was her first meeting with Stan and Helen. The next day she selected a wedding ring and left for Hudson on the evening train.

On the 12th Nancy called Stead to assure him that Stan and Helen could stay with them, as long as

they liked. This must have relieved him as he had been quite perturbed on receiving Stan's letter telling him that they were coming to Ottawa. Bob and Elizabeth had, however, told him not to worry, and that they would put up Stan and Helen if necessary. Of all the sons Stan was the most excited about his father's forthcoming marriage. He was positively "thrilled" and "delighted" over the idea of having "outgoing step-sisters."<sup>11</sup>

Although Stead's immediate family and close friends had approved of his intention to marry a second time, many friends and relatives frowned upon his behavior and decision. Criticism and reproach was directed to the haste he had evinced in marrying again. Nettie's sister, Mary Cluff, wrote a very nasty letter to him condemning his conduct. This hurt Stead very much, especially since she had, on an earlier occasion, seemingly approved, extending an invitation to him and Nancy to visit her at Vancouver; but in her second letter she wrote explicitly that she did not want him to visit her with his wife. Stead's sons, however, felt it would be better for him to remarry at the earliest, as they had witnessed the decline that had set in after Nettie's death.<sup>12</sup> Although Stead had had a feeling that his son, Bob, did not approve of

his decision to hasten things up when Stead decided to marry sooner than intended, there is no definite indication that there was any note of disapproval.<sup>13</sup> Bob, on the contrary, denied any such feeling on his part.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the boys realized that companionship was very essential for him, and by all reports, Nancy was a wonderful person and would have made an excellent companion. However, Stead was now determined to go ahead despite implicit and sometimes explicit condemnation.

The marriage took place on May 1, in the manse of the Glebe United Church, and was performed by the Reverend Dr. Fraser. A few hours of socializing at the house on 193 Second Avenue followed the ceremony, and after that Nancy and he left by train for a trip to the west.

Arriving at Moose Jaw on the 3rd they met Nancy's sister and family. At the other towns they visited--Calgary, Banff, Vancouver, and Victoria--they looked up the few friends that were still left there. They started homeward on the 12th and reached Ottawa on the 20th. Shortly after, on June 2, to be precise, Stan and Helen moved from the Stead home to their own house on 150 Laurier West.

Married and settled, the romantic fervor of

both Stead and Nancy soon died down; and when August came around Stead was filled with memories of Nettie and her death a year ago. On August 6, 1953, he wrote in his diary:

Today is an unhappy anniversary, but I am trying to be as sane about it as possible, and what more can I say?

On August 13, he called Hulse & Playfair, funeral directors, and arranged to have Nettie's ashes scattered over the rapids at Champlain Bridge where Nettie and he had spent "many an hour looking at the river there."<sup>15</sup> Stead felt that if "she could have any consciousness of it she would like that disposal as well as any."<sup>16</sup>

Gradually, life became a dull routine again, broken more frequently by illness than by anything else. In October 1953 Stead fell victim to a "non-functioning gall bladder," which was discovered when Dr. Service ordered an X-ray in connection with a severe intestinal pain which had refused to subside with the aid of pain killers. The discovery coupled with the pain, induced in Stead a depression that was so overwhelming that on the 10th he started "feeling that suicide was the only honourable course for those who have passed their usefulness."<sup>17</sup> An optimist by nature Stead's depression could not last<sup>A1</sup> and by October 11, he was feeling better. The

momentary cloud had passed away. He records:

I have outgrown the Great Depression mentioned Oct. 10, which I think must have been due to some physical condition. I am again interested in living a while longer.<sup>18</sup>

On October 14 he even began his Creative Writing Course for the season. The last class which was held on February 10, ended with a pleasant social evening at Stead's house, this being a long established practice with him. Lena Eggleston<sup>19</sup> who usually came over on these occasions has testified to the popularity Stead enjoyed as a teacher.

Though life settled down into the old routine, life for Stead with Nancy was not quite the same as his life with Nettie had been. The difference in the life style was perhaps due to the difference between Nancy and Nettie. With Nettie Stead had found someone who shared his beliefs, faith, and moral background. She had the same kind of Presbyterian upbringing as Stead and followed an ethical code as strict--rather, even stricter--than his. But Nancy was different. She did not profess too much religion or faith of any kind, was vivacious and full of fun, and was not hampered in her enjoyment of life by any moral reservations. The Egglestons, who were friends with the Steads

throughout their life in Ottawa and knew both Nettie and Nancy, have confirmed these views. They felt that Nettie had been all those things that Nancy was not: she had been prim, prudish, church-going, and motherly. But Nancy was none of these. A publicity woman who had long enjoyed her career and independence, Nancy was typical of the emancipated woman of the time. So, when Stead married Nancy, he found life with her very different from what it had been with Nettie. Because of differences in thinking and attitudes a cleavage in life styles gradually set in. The most obvious feature of this cleavage is Stead's church-going. Nettie and he had been regular church-goers, and only illness could prevent them from going. But Nancy did not fancy going to church. Stead missed a couple of Sundays but the habit was too strong to break and he started going alone.

Stead's own faith seems to have undergone a rigorous introspection around this time, and he now started attending the Unitarian Church instead of the Presbyterian, which he had attended all his life prior to Nettie's death. The Unitarian Church offered more of a meeting place for intelligent minds, a place where people came together to discuss religion rather than being instructed in morality. Since Stead did not enjoy being told what he should do, he may have found

this atmosphere more congenial.<sup>20</sup> The switch over might also indicate a certain amount of doubt and disbelief which had lately undermined Stead's religious outlook. His move to the Unitarian Church would indicate a growing away from a faith in Jesus, though not from a faith in God. Stead was very reticent about his religious doubts which had set in after Nettie's death; so much so that though he had been attending the Unitarian Church, his family came to know of the change-over only after his death.<sup>21</sup>

Another change in life style occurred in Stead's attitude towards alcohol. He had never been a drinking man; as long as Nettie lived, no liquor of any kind was kept in the house. But Nancy, who was a social drinker herself and had more liberal views on the subject, started maintaining a cellar, though Stead used it for medicinal rather than social purposes. Nettie's strict attitude towards alcoholic beverages might be better appreciated in the light of the fact that she had seen a few cases in her relatives where drinking had proved to be the undoing of a family.<sup>22</sup> She could not imagine a house serving drinks and not succumbing to the evil influence, and could not conceive the idea of social drinking.<sup>23</sup>

Removed from the strait and ethical influence

of Nettie, Stead slowly opened up after his marriage to Nancy.<sup>24</sup> They differed not only in their attitude towards drinking but also in their housekeeping and general habits. Though both liked to entertain, Nettie's thrifty habits had prevented them from socializing on a large scale. But no such scruples held Nancy back in her entertaining.<sup>25</sup>

Another fundamental difference between Nancy and Nettie was in their roles as housewife and career woman. Nettie, wife and mother primarily, centred her life around Stead, caring for him, his home and children in younger days, and accompanying him on trips, excursions, and outings in later life. She was truly his "life's companion."<sup>26</sup> But Nancy's loyalties were divided between Stead, her career, and her former family. She could not give him the same amount of attention and time as Nettie had given him. We frequently hear of Nancy going off on trips to Hudson and Montreal, to meetings, and, on one occasion, to attend the Shakespeare festival at Stratford. On all these occasions Stead stayed alone in Ottawa. It should not, therefore, be surprising if he continued to miss Nettie despite his second marriage. It would not be mere guess work to say that both Nancy and Stead were a little disappointed and that the

marriage did not prove as fulfilling as each had hoped.<sup>27</sup>

On January 1, 1954, Stead wrote:

The big event for me this year of course has been my marriage to Nancy Rankin, a venturesome thing to do, but one which is turning out most happily for both of us. It has also brought us into happy contact with members of each other's family, and other friends, which has widened and enriched our lives . . .

Yet, he soon began to realize that there was not much fun in this marriage. He had been prompted into taking this decision out of sheer loneliness, and to his great disappointment, he found he was still lonely; Nancy had failed to give him the sort of companionship that he looked for. No wonder he began to miss Nettie more and more, to miss things which he had taken for granted with her; such as her fabulous cooking and the lovely cakes she used to bake for him.<sup>28</sup> Stead's fondness for desserts was mentioned by Helen who told me that whenever he would treat the family out for a meal, he would order just a sandwich for himself, but would choose the largest dessert.<sup>29</sup>

Life on the whole seemed to have turned quiet and disappointing for Stead. The one bright spot came when, on November 25, 1954, a son, Richard, was born to Bob and Elizabeth. When he first saw the baby he

was immensely moved. Now, feeling himself an old man, he felt "that this was the continuation of life."<sup>30</sup> Helen who mentioned this to me found it difficult to convey in words how the birth of this grandson affected him. It was one of those rare occasions when Stead's feelings were revealed to onlookers.

Though getting on in years and leading a somewhat retired life, Stead continued his Creative Writing Course at Carleton College. The last meeting for the 1954-55 season was held on February 16, and, adhering to the long-established practice, was held at his house. On this occasion, as on previous ones, Lena Eggleston, whose new book Mountain Shadows had been recently published, was also invited. She usually helped Mrs. Stead socially in looking after the students, but this time most of the questions were also directed to her.

The latter part of 1955 was particularly depressing for Stead. His own health kept deteriorating, which perhaps he could accept, but what kept worrying him more was the knowledge that both Lorne and Stan were suffering from heart ailments.<sup>31</sup> In September 1955, Lorne was laid up with what the doctors called "a hypertension spasm."<sup>32</sup> From then on there was no improvement in his health, and on

December 30 he was admitted to the hospital for a check-up and treatment of nerves and blood pressure.

The only bright spot of the year to relieve the gloom was the marriage of Stead's grandson Bruce.<sup>33</sup> The wedding was held at St. Giles Church, followed by the wedding reception at Lorne's house. Stead attended both.

Getting on in years and keeping indifferent health, he was not able to do much travelling. Since his honeymoon trip to the west he had hardly gone anywhere except for a couple of trips to Montreal. On October 7, 1956, however, Stead decided to take Nancy to Lanark to show her the place where he was born. But not feeling fit enough to drive, they went by taxi.<sup>34</sup>

This year Stead declined teaching his Creative Writing Course and informed Eggleston accordingly. He tried to cut down on his obligations still further by phoning Dallyn and expressing a desire to retire from the Editorial Committee of the Canadian Geographical Journal.<sup>35</sup> As it was, he had not been attending their meetings since his illness and was hardly an active member any more. But Dallyn would not hear of it.

By 1957 Stead's health had further degenerated. In January he developed a lump on the right side of his

head which began to bleed. Dr. Service told him that it was skin cancer, which, though not serious by itself, could prove serious in view of his heart condition. His blood pressure was again over 200, and he was, on the whole, run down and unwell; his ankles were swollen due to his heart trouble. He was put on Digitalis and asked to rest for a week.

But Stead's troubles were not only physical; he was also mentally disturbed. In February 1956 Stan had a heart attack, and was now a chronic sufferer of angina.<sup>36</sup> Lorne, who had been ailing for some time, was operated on for high blood pressure at the beginning of 1957. Although the operation had been successful, his blood pressure came down so suddenly that he had a stroke. His condition was pronounced to be critical, and on the morning of February 27 he died.<sup>37</sup>

Lorne's death left Stead a broken man in many ways. Most of the family members I interviewed remember him as being "very feeble" when he came to attend the funeral.<sup>38</sup> For Nettie's death he had been prepared; but Lorne's came as an unexpected blow; and his own declining health made it still more difficult to bear. He had missed Nettie but gradually got used to her absence, but he could not get reconciled to Lorne's death. On his birthday that year he wrote:

Bereavement has invaded my family  
with the death of Lorne, to which  
I find it hard to be reconciled . . . 39

The family had begun to disintegrate. With Lorne already dead, Stead was greatly perturbed when Stan got an attack of bronchial pneumonia early in 1958. Stan was still not fully recovered when Stead, on February 10, while going for a Rotary luncheon, fell in front of the Chateau Laurier at Ottawa and broke his arm above the elbow.<sup>40</sup> It was fortunate that Dr. Service, who had also come for the luncheon, was there to attend to him immediately, and make necessary arrangements for hospital care.

Stead's fall proved a great setback to him. It left him with a constant fear that he might fall again, with the result that he stopped going out or moving around any more than he had to. He feared to venture out of the house, and from a very active person became inactive and sedentary, in marked contrast to his former active life. This had its adverse effects too. When an active person becomes inactive it is not unusual to see a rapid decline set in; and this is what happened to Stead. His health deteriorated rapidly; he could not even wear his shoes, and became more and more of an invalid as the days passed.<sup>41</sup>

Nancy was beset with her own problems. Her son, Scott, died in January 1959. She was finding it difficult to cope with Stead's growing invalidism, although there were nurses to help. Moreover, she had always been a woman on the go and could not readily accept being tied down. So Stead was moved to the St. Vincent Nursing Home, and after a month to the Pearley Nursing Home in south Ottawa.<sup>42</sup>

On February 3, 1959, when Stan died at the Ottawa Civic Hospital, Stead was not even affected. Nothing seemed to make an impact on him. Ever since his fall in February the year before, Stead had been going steadily downhill in spirit as well as in body. He stopped making diary entries after July 9, 1958. It seems, though there is no evidence to that effect, that his physical decline induced a corresponding mental decline during the last few months of his life. The only basis for this assumption is the unanimity with which the family members told me that Stan's death did not affect him at all--he did not realize what was happening.<sup>43</sup> In any case the end was not too far for him. He died at the Nursing Home on June 25, 1959. The funeral was held on the 28th at two o'clock in the afternoon.

Stead, like Nettie, did not relish the idea of

being buried, and was therefore, cremated. Service was conducted by Dr. Fraser of the Glebe Church and Dr. Donald of the Unitarian Church. The ashes were disposed of by Hulse & Playfair in almost the same manner as Nettie's--scattered in the Ottawa River near Bate Island along the Champlain Bridge between Ottawa and Hull.<sup>44</sup>

Dead before his seventy-ninth birthday, Stead's success is reflected in the estate he left behind. In keeping with the more commonly accepted standard of success he had accumulated a capital of \$200,000.00. Nancy moved to Montreal after Stead's death, and the house on 193 Second Avenue, which he had bought for \$6,000.00 in 1919, was sold for \$16,000.00.<sup>45</sup>

Though this was one kind of success Stead had wished for, it was not the only kind; he had desired and won success as an artist as well, but the two achievements did not correspond. The books he wrote for artistic fulfilment failed to sell well; the last one was not even published. What brought no artistic satisfaction proved commercially successful. He craved reputation and fame and got them, first as poet, then as novelist, and finally as public speaker; but his one novel of consequence failed to bring either money or fame.

Stead's records of his life are singularly reticent (even in his diary) on matters where one would have expected a greater amount of sentiment or emotion. This deep-seated reserve appears to be a marked aspect of his personality, as it was mentioned by friends and family members when I interviewed them individually. Most of them described him as being "quiet and retiring" or "dignified and reserved."<sup>46</sup>

The absence of emotional and sentimental embellishment in the diaries may be explained further by the fact that Stead had, in 1950, made a digest of all his diaries, and in so doing, had reduced them to an objective record of events and happenings.<sup>47</sup> In February the same year he had "read and destroyed his old files."<sup>48</sup>

It is difficult to guess why he did so. It may be that he was conscious of his significance and feared that some day his diaries and papers might be pried into. The consciousness of posterity is reflected also in the methodical manner in which he arranged the papers that have been preserved: they have been sorted out and put in order, each clipping in its proper place, each review preserved, and all correspondence intact. But again, he preserved the correspondence with publishers, friends, press men, etc.; but no personal letters. This would also point to his consciousness

of future generations who might search his papers, seeking to invade his privacy; so he put no private things into them. He perhaps could not be reconciled to the thought that someone else should see them.

This feeling of reserve and inviolability could very well be an extension of his fastidiousness in being properly dressed all the time. He never believed in wearing shorts, always long pants; preferred suits to combinations; wore a tie even on the hottest day in summer; and used a hat most of the time.<sup>49</sup> He did not like to be seen in his shirt sleeves and always wore a coat when the weather permitted. It is the same attitude that is reflected in the arrangement of his papers. I should however point out that a certain carelessness is evident after the publication of The Smoking Flax. After that the correspondence is incomplete, and most of the clippings missing. For Grain there is not a single clipping in the files. The reviews of The Smoking Flax are also missing. Could it be that Stead felt too frustrated with the reception that had been accorded to his books in later years? Could it be that when his reputation declined he may have started feeling that it was not worth putting things in order for a posterity who might never look at him? We can only conjecture that this may have been the cause of his carelessness.

Born in 1880, Stead lived to see the transformation of Canada from a land of empty rolling prairie to a highly advanced country. He saw two world wars and the historic depression of the 1930s. In addition to these events he saw science progress and change the world from horse and steam and coal-oil to an age of electricity, automobile, and aircraft.

Writing at a time when relatively few Canadians were writing, especially of the prairie scene, Stead has left a definite mark on Canadian literature.

Beginning his literary career as a poet Stead treated the themes of pioneering and homesteading with the same "seriousness of purpose" which Elder ascribes only to the novels.<sup>50</sup> It is true that Stead failed to make a lasting impression as a poet because of stereotyped matter and the use of metres and forms that reduce his verse almost to the level of doggerel; yet despite the juvenile nature of his poetry, Stead succeeded in doing for the prairies in verse what Service had done for the Yukon.

On Canadian fiction the mark is more definite and significant. In perspective was see that his position is, as Thompson says, that of a bridge:

He is a transitional figure in the western novel, who occupies, virtually alone, the middle ground between the

last great romantic of Canadian western fiction, "Ralph Connor", and the first fully realistic novelist, Frederick Philip Grove . . . 51

In his hands Canadian fiction matured; and with his injection of realism into the romantic novel of the day, the Canadian novel came of age.

Though a quiet and reserved man himself, Stead could describe people with all their emotional intensities. Helen also said in her interview that she could not imagine her father-in-law describing "people who were so human and warm" as the characters of his books. She added: "I could imagine him writing the poetry;" but she could not imagine him writing such realistic novels. Stead's realism is not confined to characterization alone, it extends also to background and situations.

His realism is limited by omission and not by fantasy or a pastoral vision. He was conventional in his life, and his novels, too, follow a conventional pattern; and thus often mislead the reader into viewing them as pure romance, overlooking the realistic details that undermine the romanticism. Although Stead lived during very exciting times, he was not able to infuse the excitement into his fiction: his heroes have nothing heroic about them, frequently they are

frustrated, mediocre men made of a subdued heroic fibre. The upshot was that Stead failed to make a permanent mark in his own time. Though a popular writer, he was never regarded as one who would and should have a place in Canadian literature. But his significance should not be under-estimated, and I concur with Thompson who puts it very succinctly:

His poetry and novels do make a bridge between the two traditions: they constitute a unique record of the growth, change and development of the Canadian West in the forty years from 1880 to 1920.<sup>52</sup>

Stead's importance to Canadian literature is not only in his writing but also in his fight for the cause of the Canadian author and publisher. As first president of the Ottawa branch, and second national president of the CAA, he fought to better copyright laws and protect the Canadian author's and publisher's rights. In addition, he was a public figure of considerable répute. The Ottawa Citizen, in its obituary, claimed that he had "established an international reputation as a speaker."<sup>53</sup> This may be an exaggeration, but it is the exaggeration of a truth, for he was "known throughout the length and breadth of Canada as well as many sections of the United States."<sup>54</sup> Although Stead had not written anything for a long

time before his death, newspapers across Canada took note of his passing. Stead had made his mark in his country's consciousness.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Entry in diary, November 6, 1952, in Stead Papers, vol. II, folder 12. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.)

<sup>2</sup> Entry in diary, January 1, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>3</sup> Entry in diary, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>4</sup> Entry in diary, March 26, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Entry in diary, March 6, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>7</sup> Entry in diary, November 16, 1952, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>8</sup> Entry in diary, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>9</sup> Entry in diary, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>10</sup> Entry in diary, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

<sup>11</sup> Unrecorded interview with Helen Stead, wife of Stanley Stead, on May 11, 1979. Nancy had two daughters and a son by her former marriage.

<sup>12</sup> Mentioned by Wilfrid Eggleston and R.A. Stead.

- 13 Stead writes about his feeling that Bob was "not very strong for it" in his diary on March 10, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 14 Unrecorded interview with R.A. Stead; son of Robert Stead, on May 4, 1979.
- 15 Entry in diary, August 13, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Entry in diary, October 10, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 18 Entry in diary, October 11, 1953, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 19 Unrecorded interview with Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Eggleston on November 19, 1978. This was mentioned by Mrs. Lena Eggleston.
- 20 Unrecorded interview with R.A. Stead on March 14, 1979.
- 21 Taped interview with R.A. Stead on March 7, 1979.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Interview with Helen.
- 24 Unrecorded interview with Janet Milks, daughter of Lorne and Jean Stead, on May 8, 1979.
- 25 Interview with Helen.
- 26 Stead frequently uses this phrase when referring to Nettie.
- 27 Interview with Helen.
- 28 Ibid.

- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Entry in diary, January 1, 1956, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 32 Entry in diary, September 9, 1955, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 33 The wedding was held on May 5, 1956. He married one Eileen Poulin.
- 34 Entry in diary, October 7, 1956, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 35 This was on October 22, 1956.
- 36 Interview with Helen.
- 37 Interview with Janet.
- 38 Mentioned by Helen, Jean, and R.A. Stead.
- 39 Entry in diary, September 4, 1957, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 40 Entry in diary, February 10, 1958, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.
- 41 Interview with R.A. Stead on March 14, 1979.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Mentioned by Helen, Jean, and R.A. Stead.
- 44 Interview with R.A. Stead on March 14, 1979.
- 45 Ibid.

46 Miss Agnes Yuill described him as "quiet and retiring" while Dr. Thomson described him as "dignified and reserved."

47 Entry in diary, May 25, 1950, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

48 Entry in diary, February 8, 1950, in SP, vol. II, folder 12.

49 Interview with R.A. Stead on March 14, 1979.

50 A.T. Elder, "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J.C. Stead," Canadian Literature No. 17 (Summer 1963), p. 44.

51 E.C. Thompson, The Critical Study of the Poetry and Prose of Robert Stead, Prairie Poet and Novelist (M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1965), p. 212.

52 Ibid., p. 212.

53 "Noted Author and Poet R.J.C. Stead Dies, 78," The Ottawa Citizen, June 26, 1959.

54 Ibid.

Appendix I

Robert Stead m. Margaret Dick

Richard Thompson m. May Campbell

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Marion b. April 11, 1865	Margaret b. January 17, 1867	Lillian b. October 23, 1870	Jeanetta b. May 21, 1873	Robert J.C. Stead b. September 4, 1880
--------------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------	--

m.

Nettie May Wallace

---

Lorne  
m. Jean

Stanley  
m. Helen

Robert  
m. Elizabeth

---

Janet  
b. June  
17, 1929

Bruce  
b. February  
12, 1933

Susan Gail  
b. August  
28, 1949

Allison  
b. November  
18, 1951

Richard  
b. November  
25, 1954

Appendix II

The following is an account of the money received by Stead for his various publications. Only definite payments have been listed, and though every attempt has been made to make it as complete as possible it still remains fragmentary and incomplete.

For The Bail Jumper:

						-	sh	-	d	
Money received on	Sept. 30,	1914	. . .	12	-	17	-	4		
"	"	Mar. 13,	1915	. . .	15	-	13	-	4	
"	"	"	31,	1915	. . .	16	-	9	-	2
"	"	"	"	1916	. . .	1	-	9	-	0
"	"	"	"	1917	. . .	0	-	1	-	10
"	"	"	"	1919	. . .	0	-	1	-	10
"	"	"	"	1920	. . .	0	-	1	-	7
"	"	"	"	1921	. . .	0	-	1	-	2
"	"	Sept. 30,	1921	. . .	0	-	5	-	1	
Total amount received				. . .	47	-	0	-	4	
(Information is from <u>Stead Papers</u> , vol. I, folder 3.)										

For The Homesteaders:

Money received on	March 31,	1917	. . .	11	-	8	-	3	
"	"	"	1918	. . .	0	-	1	-	1
"	"	"	1919	. . .	0	-	1	-	2
"	"	"	1920	. . .	0	-	4	-	7
"	"	"	1921	. . .	0	-	3	-	5
Total amount received				. . .	11	-	18	-	6

This is the amount Stead received from T. Fisher

Unwin, and does not indicate royalty received on books sold in Canada. On August 3, 1917, Unwin had written to Stead saying that they would not be giving him any royalty "on the subsequent sale of HS in Canada" and that he should "look to the Musson Book Co., for royalties on the sales which they would make in Canada."

For serial rights for The Homesteaders Stead received:

\$250.00	from	<u>Western Newspaper Union</u>
\$100.00	"	<u>The Westminster</u>
\$ 80.00	"	<u>Farm and Ranch Review</u>
\$ 50.00	"	<u>Farm and Dairy</u>

For The Cow Puncher:

Money received on	May 9, 1919	. . . . .	\$106.88
"	"	" Feb. 13, 1920	. . . . . \$180.04
"	"	" Sept. 1, 1920	. . . . . \$ 33.92
"	"	" Sept. 5, 1921	. . . . . \$215.78
"	"	" Feb. 17, 1922	. . . . . \$101.38
"	"	" Aug. 26, 1922	. . . . . \$ 51.22
"	"	" Feb. 9, 1923	. . . . . \$ 45.37
"	"	" Aug. 13, 1923	. . . . . \$ 17.88
"	"	" Feb. 9, 1924	. . . . . \$ 49.38
"	"	" Aug. 14, 1924	. . . . . \$ 19.68
"	"	" Feb. 10, 1925	. . . . . \$ 16.50
"	"	" Aug. 13, 1925	. . . . . \$ 23.15
"	"	" Feb. 19, 1926	. . . . . \$ 21.51
"	"	" Aug. 14, 1926	. . . . . \$ 13.10
"	"	" Feb. 10, 1927	. . . . . \$ 10.06
Total amount received		. . . . .	\$905.85

About the serial rights for The Cow Puncher the amounts received are not available. We only know that Stead received \$500.00 from the Western Newspaper Union.

In addition to these amounts Stead also received a cheque for 8 shillings and 6 pence on February 16, 1921.

For Neighbours no information is available except that the Western Newspaper Union paid \$300.00 for the serial rights and \$40.00 for abridging.

For Why Don't They Cheer?:

	- sh - d
Money received on Nov. 28, 1918 . . .	21 - 0 - 0
" " " Mar. 31, 1919 . . .	45 - 3 - 0
" " " " " 1920 . . .	1 - 1 - 5
" " " " " 1921 . . .	0 - 0 - 9
" " " " " 1923 . . .	0 - 11 - 0
" " " " " 1925 . . .	0 - 4 - 4
" " " " " 1926 . . .	1 - 2 - 1
" " " " " 1927 . . .	0 - 0 - 5
" " " " " 1928 . . .	0 - 0 - 5
Total amount received . . .	69 - 0 - 5

For The Smoking Flax:

Amount due on publication, on Nov. 19, 1924 . . .	\$1,500.00
" " " 2504 copies at 30 cents a copy, on Jan. 31, 1925	\$ 751.20
" " " on March 20, 1925, being balance of royalty promised	\$1,500.00
" " " 321 copies on July 31, 1925 . . .	\$ 96.30
" " " 267 " " " 1926 . . .	\$ 20.03
" " " 396 " " Jan. 31, 1927 . . .	\$ 29.70
" " " 235 " " July 30, 1927 . . .	\$ 17.60
" " " 275 " " Jan. 31, 1928 . . .	\$ 20.62
" " " 101 " " July 31, 1928 . . .	\$ 7.57
Total amount received . . .	\$3,843.02

In addition to this Stead received:

\$10.00 from the Banner Press for serial rights  
\$10.00 " " Waterloo Chronicle for serial rights

For Grain:

Money received on	December 15, 1926						\$1000.00
"	"	"	Jan. 31, 1927, for 2080 copies				624.00
"	"	"	July 30, 1927, "	86	"		25.80
"	"	"	Jan. 31, 1928, "	32	"		9.60
"	"	"	July 30, 1928, "	265	"		19.87
"	"	"	Jan. 31, 1929, "	260	"		19.50
"	"	"	July 30, 1929, "	84	"		6.30
"	"	"	Mar. 13, 1930, "	95	"		7.13
"	"	"	July 31, 1930, "	48	"		3.60
"	"	"	" " 1931, "	38	"		2.85
"	"	"	" " 1932, "	23	"		1.73
"	"	"	Jan. " 1933, "	10	"		.75
"	"	"	July " 1933, "	32	"		2.40
Total amount received							<u>\$1723.53</u>

On The Copper Disc the information is very scanty.

\$500.00 were paid on February 28, 1931  
 \$ 69.00 " " " July 1, 1931

In addition to this he was paid for serials as follows:

\$100.00 from the Cleveland Plaindealer  
 \$ 75.00 " " Kansas City Star  
 \$200.00 " " Boston Post

Of these amounts half went to the author and half to the publishers.

This is all the information available on the books. But, payments were made for articles and stories by the Western Newspaper Union and the Canadian Geographical Journal. These payments were as follows:

Payments made by the Canadian Geographical Journal:

\$100.00	for the article on	Calgary
\$100.00	" " " "	Highways of British Columbia
\$150.00	" " " "	New Brunswick
\$150.00	" " " "	Alberta
\$ 50.00	" " " "	The Great Divide
\$ 60.00	" " " "	Labrador
\$ 25.00	" " " "	A New Brunswick Memorial
\$ 50.00	" " " "	Webster
\$125.00	" " " "	St. Lawrence

No figure is available for the money received for his article on "The Yellowhead Pass."

Payments made by the Western Newspaper Union:

\$500.00	for serial rights of	<u>The Cow Puncher</u>
\$300.00	" " " "	<u>Neighbours</u>
\$250.00	" " " "	<u>The Homesteaders</u>
\$200.00	" " " "	<u>Zen of the Y.D.</u>
\$240.00	" ) short stories	
\$ 40.00	" abridging	<u>Neighbours</u>

Payments made by The Rotarian:

\$150.00	for covering the	Detroit Convention
\$ 75.00	" "People Who Work For Me"	
\$ 5.00	" a Limerick	

Miscellaneous Payments:

\$150.00	by <u>Capper's Farmer</u>	for "Holy Night"
\$ 85.00	" <u>Canadian Home Journal</u>	for "Holy Night"
\$ 7.50	" Ryerson Press	for using the poem "Prairie Born" in <u>Argosy to Adventure</u>

### Appendix III

The following is a list of addresses delivered by Robert Stead. Where there is a manuscript its location is indicated, but where there is none, no mention has been made. SP has been used for the Stead Papers at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

"Address for St. Andrew's Day." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 38.

"The Product of the Plains." Delivered on the 96th Anniversary of the IOOF on April 28, 1915.

"Literature and Advertising." Delivered to the members of the Calgary Ad Club on April 28, 1915.

"Business Morality." Delivered before the Calgary Fortnightly Club on February 17, 1916.

"Adventures in Authorship." Delivered at:  
Fortnightly Club (Calgary) on February 14, 1917.  
Strathmore Club " March 7, 1917.  
Methodist Church (Calgary) " March 13, 1917.

On Immigration. Delivered at:  
Ad Club (Calgary) on June 7, 1917.  
The Plaza (Calgary) " June 8, 1917.

"The New Federation." Delivered at:  
The Forum (Calgary) on January 6, 1918.  
Methodist Church (Calgary) " March 3, 1918.

On Canadian Literature. Delivered at:  
Dickens Fellowship Club (Calgary) on April 10, 1918.  
Ministerial Association (Ottawa) " November 8, 1921.

Kingston Rotary Club on November 17, 1921.  
 Young Men's Canada Club " November 22, 1921.

"The Commercial Side of Literature." Delivered at:  
 First Baptist Church (Calgary) on February 20,  
 1919.

"Canadian American Relations." Delivered at:  
 Chicago Rotary Club on May 4, 1920.

"Canadian Literature and National Identity." Delivered  
 at:  
 Canada Club Luncheon on August 8, 1921.  
 At Regina (place not known) " " 18, 1921.  
 At Edmonton (place not known) " " 31, 1921.  
 At Saskatoon { " " " } " September 3, 1921.  
 Women's Club (Ottawa) " October 31, 1921.

On Matters Concerning Canadian Authors and Publishers  
 and their Problems. Delivered at:  
 Kingston Rotary Club on November 17, 1921.

On Literature. MS in SP, vol. X, folder 39, CAA address.  
 Delivered some time in 1923.

Address at the Third Annual Convention, CAA. Delivered  
 some time in 1924.

"The Machine Age." Delivered at:  
 Glebe Church Men's Club on February 3, 1928.  
 Regina Rotary Club " May 11, 1930.  
 Moose Jaw Canadian Club " May 13, 1930.  
 Hull Rotary Club " November 27, 1930.  
 First Baptist Church,  
 Men's Club (Ottawa) " January 30, 1931.  
 Glebe United Church,  
 Women's Club (Ottawa) " February 3, 1931.  
 Young Men's Association " March 3, 1931.  
 Young People's Society of  
 Kinburn " May 8, 1931.  
 Erskine Church, Men's Club on October 5, 1931.  
 Prince of Wales Lodge " October 23, 1931.  
 United Church, Carleton  
 Place " November 2, 1931.  
 Stewarton United Church,  
 Men's Club " November 9, 1931.  
 Ottawa Kinsmen's Club " November 14, 1931.  
 St. Luke's Church, Ottawa,  
 Men's Club " March 31, 1932.

- "Selling Canada." Delivered at:  
 Montreal Ad Club on October 10, 1928.  
 Montreal Ad Club " September 2, 1936.  
 Eastern Townships Settlement  
 Society and Eastern Townships  
 Associated Boards of Trade at  
 Magog on October 1, 1936.  
 Advertising and Sales  
 Club (London, Ontario) " October 19, 1936.
- "The Causes of the Depression." Delivered at:  
 Hull Rotary Club on January 28, 1932.
- "Land Settlement." Delivered at:  
 Ganonoque Rotary Club on October 19, 1932.  
 Moncton (N.B.) Rotary Club " January 22, 1934.  
 Quebec City Rotary Club " January 23, 1934.  
 Eastern Townships Settlement  
 Society and Board of Trade at  
 Cowansville (Quebec) " October 4, 1934.
- "Early Days in Manitoba." Delivered at:  
 Glebe Curling Club (Ottawa) on January 21, 1933.
- "Technocracy." Delivered at:  
 St. James United Church on January 22, 1933.  
 Ottawa Hundred Club " February 1, 1933.  
 Gastronomic Club (Ottawa) " March 10, 1933.
- "Canadian History and Constitutional Set-Up."  
 Delivered at:  
 Rochester Rotary Club on September 19, 1933.  
 Cortland (N.Y.) Rotary Club " September 19, 1933.  
 Oswego Rotary Club " September 20, 1933.  
 Watertown Rotary Club " September 20, 1933.  
 Joint meeting of service clubs  
 at Binghamton, New York, on September 22, 1933.  
 High School Teachers' Convention  
 at Potsdam, New York, on October 6, 1933.  
 Normal School (Potsdam, N.Y.) " October 24, 1933.  
 Rotary Club (Potsdam, N.Y.) " October 25, 1933.  
 Rotary Clubs of Malone and  
 Chateaugay at Malone " March 22, 1934.
- "Early Days on the Prairies." Delivered at:  
 Teachers' Convention at South Mountain  
 on October 5, 1933.  
 Belleville Rotary Ladies Nite " October 16, 1933.  
 District Boy Scout Leaders " November 22, 1933.

Chalmer's Church, Ottawa,  
Men's Club on October 30, 1934.  
Lisgar Collegiate History  
Group (Ottawa) " November 6, 1934.  
Picnic at Rosetta " July 6, 1935.

"Aims and Objects of Rotary." Delivered at:  
Hull Rotary Club on October 26, 1933.  
Renfrew Rotary Club " February 26, 1934.  
Hull Rotary Club " March 8, 1934.

"Value of Tradition." Delivered during the Book Week  
on November 6, 1933.

"The Art of Public Speaking." Delivered at:  
YMCA Public Speaking Club on November 14, 1933.

"Business Standards." Delivered at:  
Ottawa Kiwanis Club on November 25, 1933.

"Early Days in Western Canada." Delivered at:  
Ottawa Secondary School Men  
Teachers at Trafalgar House on February 23, 1934.  
Westboro United Church " February 22, 1935.  
Russell Community Club " April 1, 1935.  
St. Andrew's Church (Ottawa) " March 29, 1937.  
United Church (McLeod St., Ottawa) January 19, 1947.

"International Debts We Owe." Later published in The  
Rotarian, December 1935. Delivered at:  
Rotary Conference at Ottawa on May 7, 1934.  
" Club " Waterloo " September 18, 1934.  
" " " Seneca Falls " September 19, 1934.  
" " " Geneva " September 20, 1934.  
" " " Clifton Springs " September 21, 1934.  
" " " Newark on September 22, 1934.  
" " " Syracuse " September 23, 1934.  
St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa, " November 8, 1934.  
Men's Association " November 14, 1934.  
Stewarton United Church " January 16, 1935.  
Knox Church (place not known) " February 8, 1935.  
Kemptville Rotary Club  
District Rotary Convention at  
Niagara Falls " May 21, 1935.  
Buffalo Rotary Club " September 26, 1935.  
Uttica and Rome Rotary Clubs " January 9, 1936.  
Lindsay (Ontario) Rotary Club " January 20, 1936.

"Tourist Business." Delivered at:  
 Sherbrooke Rotary Club on June 12, 1934.  
 Montreal Rotary Club " October 9, 1934.  
 Manitoba Division,  
 Canadian Weekly Newspapers  
 Association " September 13, 1935.

"Life." Delivered at:  
 Ontario Funeral Directors (Ottawa) on July 26, 1934.  
 Toronto Rotary Club " November 23, 1934.  
 Hull Rotary Club " December 13, 1934.  
 Convention of Canadian Tourist  
 Association " June 7, 1935.  
 Young People's Friendship Hour  
 (Ottawa) " February 10, 1936.  
 Toronto Industrial Accident Ass. " April 23, 1936.  
 Unitarian Church (Ottawa) " February 16, 1947.

"Standards of Value." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Lions Club on October 3, 1934  
 Almonte Hundred Club " October 18, 1934.

"Land Settlement in Canada." Delivered at:  
 American Railway Development Association  
 (Chicago) on December 6, 1934.

"Codes or Chaos." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Rotary Club on February 25, 1935.

"Immigration and Land Settlement." Delivered at:  
 Conference on Immigration Policy  
 at Montreal on June 13, 1935.

"Past and Present in Manitoba." Delivered at:  
 Winchester Hundred Club on September 20, 1935.

"Western Canada." Delivered at:  
 Inter-state Rotary meeting (Smiths-Falls)  
 on November 1, 1935.

"National Neighbours." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Kiwanis Club on February 5, 1937.

"The Point of View." Delivered at:  
 Portland Rotary Club on April 18, 1937.

"The Gold Standard." Delivered at:  
 Rotary Conference (Montreal) on May 4, 1937.

- "National Parks." Delivered at:  
 Pembroke Kiwanis Club on October 4, 1937.  
 Ontario Horticultural Ass. (Toronto) " February 25, 1943.  
 Ontario Government Tourist Conference (Toronto) " April 14, 1944.  
 Physical Fitness Conference (Ottawa) " May 23, 1944.  
 United Church (Ottawa) " May 28, 1944.  
 Leamington Golf Club " July 12, 1944.  
 Field Naturalists' Association October 25, 1945.  
 Canadian Weekly Newspapers Ass. March 14, 1946.  
 Montreal Scouters' Club on April 16, 1947.
- "Our National Playgrounds." Delivered at:  
 Wheelman's Club (Montreal) on December 16, 1937.
- "Canada's National Parks." Delivered at:  
 Peterboro Kiwanis Club on August 24, 1939.
- "Canadian Books and the War." Delivered at:  
 YMCA Discussion Group on November 17, 1939.
- "How To Tell A Rotarian." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Rotary Club on December 11, 1939.
- "Morale." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Life Underwriter's Ass. on January 30, 1941.  
 Atheneum Club " January 13, 1942.  
 Smiths-Falls Rotary Club " February 6, 1942.  
 Perth Canadian Club " February 27, 1942.
- "Canada at War." Delivered at:  
 Pacific North-West Tourist Association (Spokane) on October 30, 1941.
- "Sport Fishing in the National Parks." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Fish and Game Club on January 19, 1942.
- "Past, Present, and Future." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. Delivered at:  
 Joint meeting Ottawa and Hull Rotary Clubs on February 23, 1942.  
 Perth Canadian Club " February 27, 1942.  
 Glebe Men's Club " March 3, 1942.  
 St. Paul's United Church (Cornwall) " March 22, 1942.

Pembroke Kiwanis Club on March 16, 1942.  
 Ottawa Kinsmen's Club " June 11, 1942.  
 Aylmer Rotary Club " October 4, 1942.  
 Ottawa Lions Club " March 23, 1943.  
 Ottawa Women's Club " April 6, 1943.  
 Zonta Club, Ottawa " June 23, 1943.  
 Rotary Assembly (Ganonoque)" July 12, 1943.  
 YMCA Dormitory Club (Ottawa) December 20, 1943.  
 Brockville Rotary 25th  
 Anniversary " April 29, 1946.  
 Kingston Rotary Club " March 6, 1947.

"The Price Ceiling." Delivered at:the B  
 Brockville Rotary Club on March 9, 1942.

"Words." Later published in booklet form. Delivered at:

Hull Rotary Club on July 23, 1943.  
 Ottawa Rotary Club " October 25, 1943.  
 Glebe Men's Association " November 2, 1943.  
 CAA (Ottawa) " November 24, 1943.  
 Nepean High School " December 3, 1943.  
 St. Matthew's Church Fellow-  
 ship Association " February 14, 1944.  
 Rideau Curling Club Luncheon April 7, 1945.  
 Chalmer's Church, Ottawa,  
 Men's Association " April 20, 1945.  
 Civic Hospital Nurses (Ottawa) May 14, 1945.  
 Ottawa Public School Teachers'  
 Association on May 15, 1945.  
 Ottawa Kiwanis Club " July 27, 1945.  
 Ottawa Dentists' Wives' Ass." September 25, 1945.  
 Ottawa Architects' Ass. " December 17, 1945.  
 St. Matthew's Church, Ottawa,  
 Men's Association " January 23, 1946.  
 YMCA Discussion Group (Ottawa) January 24, 1946.  
 St. John's Lutheran Brother-  
 hood (Ottawa) on February 19, 1946.  
 Gyro Club, Ottawa " May 1, 1946.  
 Y's Men's Club (Ottawa) " May 8, 1946.  
 Business and Professional  
 Men's Association (Ottawa) " October 30, 1946.  
 Hawkesbury Rotary Club " December 17, 1946.  
 Ottawa Institute for the Blind January 27, 1947.  
 Druggists' Ass. (Hull) on February 8, 1947.  
 Pembroke Rotary Club " February 11, 1947.  
 Carleton College Journalism  
 class " October 20, 1947.  
 Montreal Rotary meeting " November 4, 1947.  
 Kemptville Rotary Ladies Nite November 21, 1947.

Commercial Travellers' Association (Ottawa) on February 14, 1948.  
 Canadian Authors' Convention (Ottawa) " June 13, 1948.  
 Rotary Club (Smiths-Falls) " July 23, 1948.  
 Knox Church, Ottawa, Men's Association " March 17, 1949.  
 Malone Rotary Club " July 7, 1949.  
 Chief Accountants' Ass. (Ottawa) " October 27, 1949.  
 Oddfellows at Smiths-Falls " January 27, 1949.  
 United Church, Ottawa, Men's Association " February 10, 1950.  
 Connaught School " October 16, 1950.  
 Ottawa Normal School " January 19, 1951.  
 Sales and Advertising Club (Ottawa) " March 9, 1954.  
 Lions Club (Russell, Ontario) October 12, 1954.  
 United Church, Manotick, Men's Association " February 17, 1955.  
 Hydro-electricity Consumers' Convention (Ottawa) " February 23, 1956.

"Unite and Conquer." Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 78th Congress, First Session, Washington, June 4, 1943, p. A3018.  
 Delivered at:  
 152-district Rotary Conference at Finch (Michigan) on May 7, 1943.  
 Perth Canadian Club " November 12, 1943.

"The National Parks in the Post-War Period."  
 Delivered at:  
 Tourist Convention (Quebec) on December 1, 1943.

"The Call of the Out-of-Doors." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. Delivered at:  
 Montreal Rotary Club on May 16, 1944.  
 Belleville Kiwanis Club " April 2, 1946.  
 Pictou Rotary Club " April 9, 1946.  
 New York Rotary Club " April 25, 1946.

"National Parks and the Tourist Industry."  
 Delivered at:  
 Kemptville Rotary Club on September 21, 1944.  
 Winnipeg Rotary Club " September 18, 1946.  
 Calgary Board of Trade " September 27, 1946.  
 Victoria Rotary Club " October 10, 1946.

- "Union in War and Peace." Delivered at:  
Watertown Rotary Club on May 23, 1945.
- "Victory Loan." Delivered at:  
Norlite Building Staff on October 24, 1945.  
Forest Products Laboratory " October 25, 1945.
- "Authors, Poets, and the Tourist Industry."  
Delivered at:  
CAA Convention (Montreal) on December 1, 1945.
- "Canada's Neglected Industry." MS in SP, vol. X,  
folder 40. Delivered at:  
Ottawa Canadian Club on February 5, 1946.
- "Beginnings of the Glebe." Delivered at:  
Glebe Church 50th Anniversary social on March 13,  
1946.
- "Can There Be A Canadian Literature?" MS in SP,  
vol. X, folder 38. Delivered at:  
Ottawa Monday Club on March 24, 1947.  
Ottawa YMCA Club " March 28, 1947.  
Ottawa Business and Profess-  
ional Women's Club " April 8, 1947.  
Newbolt Club " May 6, 1947.  
University Women's Club " November 23, 1950.
- "The Lure of the Out-of-Doors." Delivered at:  
Columbus Rotary Club on May 20, 1946.
- "Your Northern Neighbour." MS in SP, vol. X, folder  
40. Delivered at:  
Kit Kat Club (Columbus, Ohio) on May 21, 1946.  
U.S. Wood Screw Bureau (Monte-  
bello) " June 23, 1949.  
(An address similar to this one had been delivered  
at the Rotary Club, Washington, D.C., on May 18,  
1936.)
- "Patience Please." Delivered at:  
Rotary Club 30th Anniversary (Ottawa) on  
November 25, 1946.
- "People Who Work For Me." MS in SP, vol. X, folder  
40. Later published in booklet form.  
Delivered at:

- Ottawa Insurance Association on September 25, 1947.  
 Perth Rotary Club " September 29, 1947.  
 Ottawa Women of Rotary " October 26, 1947.  
 Glebe Church Couples' Club " October 16, 1947.  
 Kemptville Rotary Club " August 13, 1948.  
 Glebe Business and Professional  
 Men's Association (Ottawa) on September 27, 1948.  
 Brockville Kiwanis Club " June 14, 1949.  
 Hull Rotary Club " February 23, 1950.  
 Glebe Curling Club " March 11, 1950.  
 Smiths-Falls Brotherhood of  
 Railwaymen " November 2, 1952.  
 Y Lunch " October 11, 1955.  
 Ottawa West Rotary Club " January 8, 1957.
- "Good is not Good Enough." Delivered at:  
 Canadian Association of Travel  
 and Publicity Bureaus (Quebec) on October 14, 1948.
- "The Business Side of Literature." Book Week address.  
 Delivered at:  
 Carleton College on November 3, 1948.
- "Purposes of Rotary." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa Rotary Club on April 4, 1949.
- "Early Days at Chesterville." Later published in  
 the Southern Manitoba Review. Delivered at:  
 Parents and Teachers Association,  
 Broadview School on October 5, 1949.
- "Writing as a Hobby." A series of lectures delivered  
 at Carleton College in November and December 1949.
- "Community Service." Delivered at:  
 Past Presidents Luncheon on March 8, 1950.  
 (Presumably Rotary Club.)
- On the Detroit Convention. Delivered at:  
 Kemptville Rotary Club on August 11, 1950.
- "Prairie Fiction." Delivered at:  
 Carleton College on January 23, 1951.
- "Our Emaciated Dollar." Delivered at:  
 Ottawa YMCA Luncheon on February 2, 1951.

"Reading for Fun." Delivered at:  
Ottawa YMCA Discussion Club on March 13, 1953.  
Laurentian Club " March 23, 1953.  
Kemptville Rotary Club " July 3, 1953.  
Ottawa Rotary Club " May 10, 1954.  
Westboro Kiwanis Club " August 15, 1955.

On Canada's Century. MS in SP, vol. X, folder 38.  
Delivered at:  
Ottawa Kiwanis Club on June 30, 1955.

"Manitoba Then and Now." Delivered at:  
St. Matthew's Church (Ottawa) on November 5, 1956.

#### Appendix IV

The following is a list of the books owned by Stead. This list was supplied by his son, Mr. R. A. Stead, and though incomplete, was the best that was available under the circumstances. In many cases only an author is mentioned and no title given; Mr. R.A. Stead explained that in most such cases it was a collection of the writer's works. No marginalia of any kind was found in any of the books.

Rudyard Kipling: Poetry  
Longfellow: "  
Robert Burns: "  
James L. Hughes: "  
Rupert Brooke: "  
Charles G.D. Roberts: Poetry  
Bliss Carman: "  
Pauline Johnson: "  
James Whitecomb Riley: "  
William Osler: "  
William Wordsworth: "  
Alfred Tennyson: "

The World's Best Poetry, five volumes. Published  
by National Library Congress, New York, 1904.

Robert Service: Rhymes of a Rolling Stone  
Rhymes of a Red Cross Man

Edgar Guest:

Edward Fitzgerald: Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

Edna Jaques:

Sir Walter Scott: Waverley  
Red Gauntlet

Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter

Oliver Wendell Holmes: The Poet at the Breakfast  
Table  
The Autocrat of the Breakfast  
Table

Peter McArthur: Familiar Fields

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The Cow Puncher. New York: A. L. Burt Co., 1918.

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Dennison Grant: A Novel of Today. Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1920.

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New York: George H. Doran Co., 1924.

Grain. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1926.

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Prairie Born and Other Poems. Toronto: Briggs, 1911.

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People Who Work For Me. Calgary: John D. McAra, 1948.

Calgary, City of the Foothills. Canadian Geographical Society, 1949.

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"Dry Water." MS in Stead Papers, vol. V and VI, folders 21-25. (The Stead Papers are at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, and are unnumbered. Subsequent references to them will be as SP.) The title of this novel was later changed to "But Yet The Soil Remains."

Untitled and incomplete novel beginning "The office of Howard & Smart . . ." MS in SP, vol. IV, folder 20.

## Manuscripts: Short Stories

- "The Microphone is Blind." MS in SP, vol. VII, folder 29. (Undated)
- "The Sandway Confession." MS in SP, vol. VII, folder 29. (Undated)
- "\$UCCE\$\$." MS in SP, vol. VII, folder 29. (Undated)
- "A Made-to-Order Scoop." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30. (1906)
- "A Feminine Trust-Buster." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30. (1909)
- "Outside." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30. (1913)
- "The Switch at Broken Ridge." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 30. (1920)
- "A Home of Your Own." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 34 (1925)
- "Home Comes First." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 31. (1925)
- "Marie Frost was a sales girl . . ." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 31. (1925)
- "The two girls paused . . ." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 31. (1925)
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"Heads or Hearts." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 33.  
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"Say it to Sylvia." MS in SP, vol. VIII, folder 33.  
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"After reading 'To Him That Hath' . . ." MS in SP,  
vol. X, folder 39. (Undated)

"Autobiography." MS in SP, vol. X, folder, 40.  
(Undated)

"The Flight of Time." MS in SP, vol. VII, folder  
29. (Undated)

"My First Offence." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 38.  
(Undated)

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X, folder 38. (Undated)

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"Conception of a New Novel after hearing Creatore's  
Band, August 23rd, 1922." MS in SP, vol. X,  
folder 39. (1922)

"The problem of problems . . ." MS in SP, vol. X,  
folder 39. (1922)

"Wheat, the Pioneer Cereal." MS in SP, vol. X,  
folder 39. (March 1923)

"A Literary Controversy." MS in SP, vol. X, folder  
39. (November 1924)

"An Appreciation." MS in SP, vol.  folder 39.  
(1924)

"Bibliography." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 39. (1924)

- "Ralph Connor." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 39. (1924)
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- "Early Homesteading in Manitoba." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. (1933)
- "Monuments to Peace." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. (1937)
- "Training for Democracy." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. (1937)
- "Alberta, named in honour . . ." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. (1939)
- "My qualifications to speak to a rural-urban gathering . . ." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. (1942)
- "When the McAra family arrived . . ." MS in SP, vol. X, folder 40. (1950)

Manuscripts: Poems

- "And we had seen the morning sun . . ." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)
- "The breeze sighs slowly through the lispig grass . . ." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)
- "The Builders." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)
- "Death." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)
- "Dedication." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)
- "The House That Jack Built." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)
- "Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth . . ." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Undated)

- "Oh Lonely God." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36.  
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- "Sweet child, you are too young to know . . ." MS  
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- "The waking giant of the later sleep . . ." MS in  
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- "Dear Heart, I felt the breezes blow . . ." MS in  
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- "Dear Hugh." MS in SP, vol. IX, folder 36. (Christmas  
1935)
- "The years are slipping by . . ." MS in SP, vol. II,  
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- "How Simpson Cashed His Bluff." Canadian Progress, May 1913, pp. 13-15.
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