



W. R. STANSELL--THE MAN

Firm in faith, courageous in the face of adversity, gifted with that indomitable will to win, that intangible quality of determination which in every contest sustains the winner through those final deciding moments when losers weaken--this is the man who heads London Motors, Limited.

IN THE year 1884 a lad barely turned thirteen years and small for his age, left his home near the little village of Courtland, forty miles from London, and turned a resolute befeckled face towards St. Thomas, the portal leading to the great and mysterious world of his dream future. A few hesitating steps carried the boy a short piece down the dusty road, where he paused and turned slowly to look once more at the man well past the prime of life, who leaned heavily over a white picket gate.

Perhaps it was the sight of tears trickling an unfamiliar course over strong cheeks which moved the boy strangely, for he suddenly dropped the worn valise which contained all his few possessions and ran back to where the man was standing. His hands were caught in a tight grip.

"Dad," he said, "I'm going to make you proud of me some day!" and then he turned once more down the white ribbon of road.

The boy was "Billy" Stansell. Today he is William Riley Stansell, President of London Motors, Limited, a success in the business world and a man among men.

It was by no easy path that Mr. Stansell reached the pinnacle of his success. His road was beset continually with difficulties which only his indomitable will and his bulldog perseverance, enabled him to overcome. The ladder which he was forced to climb was full of rotten rungs which gave way continually just as the goal was in sight. Probably his success can be summed up best in the lines of Addison: "If you wish to succeed in life make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counsellor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian angel."

When "Billy," as he was called then, left the house of his father to seek a fortune in the business world, he was not equipped with what today would be considered even a primary education. He had received but little schooling, for in the 80's farming was an ill-paying proposition, even in the fertile acres of Southwestern Ontario, and the boy rarely could be spared from the farm work. In fact, at this stage of his career, he could hardly write his name so that it could be deciphered by those outside the family circle.

He arrived in the city covered with dust and with only thirty cents in his pocket. Although he was tired he immediately hunted up a bakeshop where he had been promised a position. The baker took one look at the lad and then told him he was much too small for the job. He was a big-hearted man, however, and when he saw the crestfallen expression on the boy's face, he started to question him. After he had learned the whole story he put "Billy" to work. The lad lost no time in making capital out of his ambitions, for he worked hard, day and night; and although weary after his day's toil in the heat and the dust, he devoted every spare hour to study. He realized the handicap the lack of knowledge had placed upon him; he knew that in study lay his only opportunity for advancement. Burning the midnight oil wasn't a very pleasant task when every bone in his body ached from his daily routine of hard work. Ten or twelve or more hours of being at everybody's beck and call, of being on his feet in the shop, and delivering, made even his sturdy little legs feel pretty shaky.

For six strenuous years he worked and studied his constant application to his work and his habit of exploring the byways as well as the highways bringing to him not only a thorough knowledge of his business, but a deep understanding of human nature. So well did the boy, who a few years before had been "too small," do his work, that at the age of nineteen he was given full charge of the shop.

About this time he decided that he was getting in a rut, and that St. Thomas, wonderful though it had appeared to his boyish vision, did not hold the opportunity he wanted. The desire to see other cities and learn other men's ways of doing things, induced him to accept a position in Kingston, where he was in charge of the largest shop in the city. This same desire took him from Kingston to Windsor, where he was associated with A. L. Thibadeau, who at that time controlled the largest bakery in that town.

His next move was to Dundee, Mich., where his experience and executive ability brought him more remuneration than was possible in Canada at that time. A year and a half later found him proprietor of his own business in Adrian, Mich. This enterprise proved a big success, but his market was limited, and he sold out to go into partnership with his brother in Mount Clements, Mich. It was then that the first great misfortune entered his life, for fire wiped out his whole business and left him penniless. Although his capital had disappeared and his ambition had received a bad jolt, this apparent calamity proved to be a blessing in disguise. The loss of every dollar he had in the world only made the flame of his ambition burn more brightly, and brought other qualities, hitherto submerged under the demands of a routine life, to the surface. Although he hadn't realized it, his training for the past years had fitted him for something a great deal bigger than the bakery business. His years of dealing with the public had developed his qualities of salesmanship. This selling ability placed his feet in a new path—a path that led to undreamed possibilities, and opened up vistas of golden opportunity.

As salesman with the Reid Machinery Company, of York, Pa., and later with the Lynn-Superior Machinery Company, of Cincinnati, Ohio, Mr. Stansell found an outlet for the energy and enthusiasm with which nature had endowed him so liberally. His venture into the wider markets of wholesale selling brought to him a better grasp of modern business; his contact with bigger men gave him a vision of bigger things in his own life. His mechanical ability manifested itself in improving and perfecting various machinery for the Lynn-Superior Machinery Company, that today is a world standard.

At this time Detroit was looming up as a centre of a great new industry. The automobile, long regarded as a rich man's toy, was coming into its own. Big businessmen were beginning to appreciate the commercial possibilities that this business offered, and hardy pioneers were blazing the trail to success in this field. Many men whose names are today known the world over, were associating themselves with the automobile business, and Mr. Stansell was among the first. A fact worth men-

tioning is that within a few weeks of Mr. Stansell's jumping into the automobile game, he was followed by Arthur M. Peck, president of the Lynn-Superior Machinery Company, his former employer.

Success attended Mr. Stansell's initial effort in his new business. Under the name of the Lexington-Detroit Motor Sales, with show-rooms on Lafayette Boulevard, he pioneered the Lexington car in Detroit.

Business so far surpassed his expectations, that, within a short time, he found it necessary to secure larger quarters. From the status of a small agency he had grown to be one of the early outstanding figures of the automobile business in Detroit.

His new show-rooms were situated at 975 and 977 Woodward avenue, at the corner of Warren avenue. Here he originated the famous "Auto Corner" of that city, and as the Robertson-Stansell Motor Sales, he began making automobile sales records that are unsurpassed to date. To the Lexington was added the exclusive selling right for the State of Michigan for the Premier and McFarlan. In these three lines, the "Hoosier Big Three," as Mr. Stansell called it, he had a trio of autos that featured Quality. The first car of each of these lines, ever placed in Michigan was sold personally by Mr. Stansell.

Always a student, he devoted every possible moment to the study of mechanical features of the cars he handled. In addition to being a high-class salesman, he became an expert mechanically; the minutes, hours, and days he spent in the workshop acquainted him with every mechanical detail.

Even in these days he had a vision of putting his own car on the market; he dreamed of building a car that would make a place for itself among the great cars of the world. Canadian by birth and upbringing, he looked forward to producing, in Canada, Canada's Quality Car.

It was his intention to incorporate all the best features of the cars he was studying, and the many improvements he had worked out into this car of which he dreamed.

The war broke out, and for many months the automobile business was in a state of semi-inactivity. Many firms and many salesmen found the going very difficult during this period, but Mr. Stansell's business ran along as usual. In fact it was at this time that Mr. Stansell broke the record for Woodward avenue, by selling five cars in one afternoon. However, the Government stepped in and took over the Lexington, Premier and McFarlan plants for war purposes, and he found himself in the position of having nothing to sell.

This gave him an opportunity to devote his whole time to the mechanical study of automobiles. He entered the Packard plant of Detroit, and was made an assistant foreman. In this capacity he worked in practically every department, and had his opportunity of studying this great car from the standpoint of the builder. While with the Packard he received an attractive offer from the Tower-Ayres people, who were behind the Denby Motor Truck of Detroit. Mr. Stansell was made sales manager, and incidentally established a few records with this concern in this capacity. He was appointed by the management to investigate and clear up the Denby Truck situation in Chatham, Ontario, where the Canadian plant was being established. This he did satisfactorily, and had offered to him the general managership for Canada. However, he refused this post, as he felt that the goal towards which he had been striving for many years was at last in sight—his cherished dream of some day building a purely Canadian car in Canada.

Inducements were offered him to locate his plant in Amherstburg, Ont., and in association with certain American interests, he established his plant there.

Due to the fact that the control was not in the hands of Mr. Stansell, he found himself handicapped seriously in the building of his first cars. As the weeks went on it became increasingly evident to him that he was faced with the alternatives of being associated with men whose business standards were not in accordance with his code of ethics, or of pulling out of Amherstburg completely. The latter course was the one he chose, although it involved losing his months of hard work and the sacrificing of every dollar he had put into it personally. He sold out his interests for practically nothing, but he carried with him his biggest assets, energy, integrity and determination.

In Rev. L. W. Reid, pastor of the Hale Street Methodist Church, Mr. Stansell has a warm personal friend. When Mr. Reid learned that his friend had sold out his interests in Amherstburg, he wrote urging him to come to London. Acting on his advice, Mr. Stansell came to London to look over the prospects for establishing his plant in this city. As the result of the trip he secured the Geo. White & Sons' plant on King street, in the heart of the city, and adjoining buildings on King and Blount streets. In addition to this property he also secured a factory site on Hale street, with frontage on the main line of the Grand Trunk Railway.

For months he and his organization have been working night and day attending to the innumerable details that are part of such a gigantic undertaking as London Motors, Limited. The result of their labors is that today the company is on the verge of production, and the dream of a lifetime is a reality.

Despite enough experiences to fill a lifetime of the ordinary man, Mr. Stansell is barely in his prime. His figure is erect, and his step is full of elasticity; he is as full of enthusiasm, pep and confidence, as an untried college youth.

His face bears only the lines traced by stern determination. His square jaws denote tremendous strength of character. His eyes are of the kind about which the famous Dr. Leask wrote when he said: "Men with grey eyes are keen and energetic, and they usually are capable of much sympathy." They are unusually clear, and they look straight into the eyes of the person to whom Mr. Stansell talks.

One cannot go into the presence of Mr. Stansell without feeling his magnetic personality.

Samuel Smiles once said: "The great high-road of human welfare lies along the high-road of steadfast well-doing, and they who are the most persistent, and they who work in the truest spirit, will invariably be the most successful. Success treads on the heels of every right effort."

Whether or not Mr. Stansell comes within the rules laid down by the great philosopher the reader must judge by what has gone before. What has been written is a true narrative of all those things which have occurred in the career of a successful businessman, who made his father proud that he had a son.

Associated with Mr. Stansell as executives of London Motors, Limited, are men of like character--men whose integrity is beyond question--vigorous, forceful examples of Canadian initiative.