

Pride in Special Gifts — Hated Himself

This is a revealing self-portrait of a man who wielded great influence. On first sight he seems wholly destestable. He started by hating his mother, whose favorite he was, and his picture of the various members of the Harmsworth family — his mother's brothers and sisters is uniformly unflattering. His achievement in pushing the Daily Mirror to the largest

circulation in the Western world seems almost to have dehumanized him.

He speaks disparagingly of almost everyone, of Churchill, de Gaulle, Roosevelt, Kennedy and Johnson. It is not hard to see how his colleagues eventually ganged up on him and deposed him from his suzerainty of the biggest publishing empire in the world.

Yet has has a strong originality and the very perverseness of his views is somehow stimulating. He claims that life has always been difficult because this is not his world, and there is an extraordinary concluding chapter in which he sets forth his ideas on religion, including a perceptive view of the reasons behind the current student uprising.

He confesses: "It is said that to love other people you must first love yourself. I don't know whether this is true, but it is certainly a fact that, at least until recently, I have hated myself." Evidently he was not alone in this feeling.

His unhappy life with his family and at school built up his defenses and equipped him with some effective weapons. One was sarcasm, though he came to learn that this was dangerous. The others were knowledge and foresight. Without undue modesty he admits: "I have always had a wider general knowledge than anyone I have ever met," and "I have a greater gift of foresight than anyone I have ever met, and my life has been such that it is helpful to keep this faculty in constant use."

Whether his judgement is equal to his asserted foresight is debatable. At least he did not hesitate to come to different conclusions on many things than most of his contemporaries. In the newspaper field this was undoubtedly a help.

Whether he could have done as well as he did without the Harmsworth connection is an intriguing question. He constantly plays it down, and this may help account for his deprecatory references to that side of his family. He says that one thing he learned from them was that money isn't everything, as his uncles were wealthy and unhappy.

He has some wryly humorous reminiscences about them. Of Lord Rothermere he recalls: "He once told me that old mistresses were much more expensive than Old Masters, and he had plenty of experience with both."

King's opinion of American newspapers are generally uncomplimentary and he freely expressed them. Nor was he greatly impressed by most American political figures and he feels and said, that American politics are out of date. He asks: "When Americans lead the world in tech-

nology of all kinds, why do they allow their politics to remain in the 'horse and buggy' stage?"

Canadians he described as Americans without the courage of their convictions, and he says: "What always amuses me is talk of the 'emerging nationhood of Canada' and poppycock of that kind."

Canada is not a country: it is the northern fringe of the United States."

Undoubtedly King, as he reveals himself in these memoirs, is both infuriating and nasty. But at times he has flashes of perception which in his chapter on religion he ascribes to great mystics and great artists.

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