W. P. Crozier.

In 1879 in the mining town of Stanhope in Durham, Mrs. Richard Crozier, wife of a young Wesleyan Minister, gave birth to her fourth son William Percival. When the news was taken to her husband he displayed no particular elation, for to show one's emotions indicated weakness of character, but he thanked God for the gift of another son and earnestly prayed that the child might walk in the paths of righteousness all his life.

The Reverend Richard Crozier, then thirty-three, was a man of noble appearance. His naturally kindly features he hid behind a formidable beard and when roused by some tale of unprincipled conduct he eyes flashed with the fire of the prophets as he thundered forth his condemnation. He had but little education, but when he spoke he had a voice whose sound was like the sea - "Righteousness, righteousness, righteousness," was his unceasing cry to the miners whose souls it was his mission to save, only by righteousness could they be saved from a deeper and darker pit than that in which they spent most of their earthly lives.

Rev Richard Crozier

In the same year at The Breezes, a pleasant house in Kersal, Manchester, a second son John Russell, was born to the wife of young Mr. Charles Prestwich Scott, the editor of the Manchester Guardian. For eight years he had been making righteousness readable in the newspaper which he was to control for another fifty three years. Prom the age of twenty-five he had had to direct the work of men many years his senior and to cloak the youthful lines of his face, he, too, had grown a fine, jutting, brown beard.

He was a poor speaker but his pen had a voice whose sound swelled above the clatter of the looms in the cotton mills of Lancashire and was heard in the capitals of Europe.

It is doubtful if, at that time, the Wesleyan Minister had ever read "The Manchester Guardian" though he might have known the name of C. P. Scott. Certainly Scott had never heard of the Rev. Richard Crozier. Yet apart from a widely differing social environment and authority they had much in common. Both were strong men, both were ruled by principle, caring nothing for the vanities of the world, each in the same year had produced a son who was to guide the fortunes of "The Manchester Guardian", Crozier as editor and John Russell Scott as business manager.

The arrival of another member of the family brought new problems to the Stanhope household, The stipend of a Wesleyan Minister in those days would today be regarded as inadequate pay for an office boy. There was another mouth to be fed but no more food to put into it. Elizabeth Crozier, as mothers do, simply cut down her own allowance, already meagre, to negligible proportions and as the baby grew there was proportionately less for his father and brothers. Ministers, although near the poverty line, must always be good hosts. Visiting clergy must be entertained; no one sent away without the hospitable offering of food and drink. If that meant there would not be enough for the family, well self-denial was a noble virtue.

If the family larder was sometimes bare there was no shortage of spiritual sustenance. Evening and morning prayers every day and chapel twice on Sundays. The Bible lay always open on the sideboard. Although a doctor might be called to a sick child the real cure lay in prayer and the only assurance against further ills was to lead a more righteous life.

Every disease, every accident, was a sign of the Divine displeasure for some sin which perhaps the prostrate sinner was unaware he had committed.

In this atmosphere heavily laden with a sense of guilt, unworthiness, and impending heavenly wrath, young William grew from infancy to boyhood. He was taught the meaning of fear, not only of the physical chastisement of his father but the infinitely more terrible fate reserved for him by a Deity mortally offended by the sin of reading a newspaper on Sunday. He learnt also to examine the moral aspects of every action. Another child, even his older and less sensitive brothers, might cut a school lesson to watch a miners' football match but William would ask himself "Is it right?" and if it was not, he would not go. But sometimes he could not persuade himself that some of the things labelled "sins" by his father were really very wicked. From the age of five when he could already read fluently he spent every spare moment pouring over books or papers. But upon Sunday it was a "sin" to read anything but the Bible and Fox's Book of Martyrs. The heavy calf-bound volumes were read from cover to cover, the engravings of the martyrs, writhing on their stakes as their lower parts melted into dripping, became indelibly printed on the boy's photographic mind.

The results were not what his father expected. During the whole of Crozier's adult life he never entered a church or chapel except at his wedding and as an act of courtesy at a memorial service to a departed colleague. The book of Martyrs he gave to his own children to read - whenever of course they had time

from pleasanter occupations, as an example of man's intolerance for man.
But the moral values and something of the bigotry of his father's household remained with him all his life. Every project, whether in his private life or in the business of the Manchester Guardian, was submitted to his simple test "is it right?". If it was right then it was in accord with his own moral code, which, though he would vigorously have denied it, was singularly like that of the Wesleyan Methodists. He was never able to shake off the distrust of Rome instilled into him in his childhood. The father would have helped to light the faggots at the stake, the son merely regretted that "these people have no independence of mind". On nearly every other subject his mind was open and he could be influenced by reasoned argument but about Rome his mind had been closed in the little house in Stanhope where the Scarlet woman stood side by side with Satan.
It was soon clear to his parents that William was an exceptional child. He could read, not haltingly but easily and with deep concentration, before he was six and in games with his brothers, although the youngest he showed a natural capacity for leadership. Somehow or other his father managed to send him to a small private school. Here he was invariably near the top of the class in every subject except mathematics. In later years he once comforted one of his own children, awed by the parental academic perfection, who had a similar inability to add and subtract, with the information that he had at the age of seven received no marks at all for an examination paper in arithmetic. If his education was somewhat better that that of the miner's sons his home life was scarcely more comfortable. The Reverend Richard Crozier believed that bearing pain and tribulation unmoved and practising self-discipline were steps along the road to salvation. No doubt his wife, herself ailing, struggling to maintain husband and four sons on a pittance thought that Providence had provided opportunities for self-discipline in ample measure but this view was not shared by her husband.
There was in the North of England a form of combat known as "purring" - perhaps it still goes on in some remote corner to which the softening influences of the South and the Welfare State have not penetrated. The game is simple and requires two players each wearing a pair of heavy hobnailed boots. They stand a short distance apart and by turns kick each other upon the shins. The loser is the player who first cries "enough" or who first falls down. It is considered more creditable to fall down, The brothers were encouraged to play this game both amongst themselves and with other boys. Their bloody shins might bring cries of anguish from their mother, but from their father there was a smile of approval and "well done, my boy" for victor or vanquished who came in with dry eyes and gave no sign of the acute pain he must have been feeling. Stoicism was not only for children. The minister when he had an aching tooth could have gone to the local dentist who would gladly have extracted it for nothing. Instead he tied a piece of cord round the offending member. The free end he secured to the post at the foot of the stairs. Then he would jerk back his head vigorously until the tooth came out, William, when he had children of his own did not encourage them to batter each other's shins butt shared his father's belief that to bear the unpleasant without complaint was good for the soul. Once, when one of his children had been playing tennis on a hot day and came rushing into the house for a glass of water he said gently "You know, it would be an admirable self-discipline, if you decided to do without it". He was trying in a kindly, twentieth century way, to instill the lessons he had learnt through "purring".
His mother died while he was still a boy [#]. He rarely spoke of her for he did not wish to reopen the wound which her death had made. Of her four Sons, William was the closest to her. She was gentle, kindly and sympathetic. Those qualities she gave to her son.
It was his gentleness, his almost woman-like care for the happiness of others that softened the sterner virtues he had inherited from his father. He was guided in all he did by principle, but if principle conflicted with kindness then kindness carried the day. The gentle Elizabeth was stronger in her son than the uncompromising old minister.
The old man died aged 95. His son never allowed him to know that he was an agnostic. Principle dictated that the children of a man who had no faith in doctrinal religion ought not to be baptised. But they were also the grandchildren of a Wesleyan minister who would be hurt and disappointed if he were not allowed to perform the ceremony, So the ceremony took place and gave great happiness to the old minister.
When the family moved from Durham to Oldham, William was sent to the Manchester Grammar School where he soon made his mark on the classical side. His poor sight prevented him from taking part in most games, but he became one of the school's leading athletes winning many medals for running, particularly the half mile. For years he kept these medals at the back of a drawer in his desk. Sometimes he would unlock it and let his children play with them. Then one day they were gone. He had sold them to raise money to pay the never-abating flow of doctors bills incurred by frequent illness in the family. He was always proud of his old school and was delighted when he was asked to be a Governor.

From the grammar school he obtained a scholarship to Trinity College Oxford, but this only covered the fees for tuition. Somehow the money had to be raised for board and lodging. His father provided all he could, a few pounds, and William earned a little by writing but it was not enough to provide even a modest living by Oxford standards. But he was not to be deterred. He was used to a meagre diet and by rigid application to study he hoped he could subdue the pangs of hunger. During his four years at Oxford he lived mostly upon porridge and bread, eating other food only when compelled by the college rules to dine in hail. It was the custom in those days for the wealthy commoners, stimulated by wine, to pelt the unfortunate scholars with bread. “It was unkind” he said years later “but one could always collect the bread thrown at one and put it in one’s pocket to eat the next day”.

At Trinity he had a brilliant academic career, obtaining a First class in Literae Humaniores. Lack of food made it impossible for him to take part in sport. Once he was asked to cox a tub pair on the river. He was delighted .thinking that he had found a form of recreation which did not demand the expenditure of too much energy, but owing to his defective sight, he steered the pair into a racing eight. He was not asked to cox again. The semi-starvation to which he subjected himself at Oxford sowed the seeds of the internal trouble which harassed him all his life and caused his early death.

When he had taken his degree he started work. For him there could be no holiday. He found employment as assistant master at a school in Yorkshire. He never spoke of his experiences there, but in 1934 Mr. Geoffrey Dennis, who had been a boy at that school, wrote a novel which showed that it had been a place little better than Dotheboys Hall, the savageries of which must have appalled the sensitive young man from Oxford. Mr. Dennis thus described Crozier at the school

“A young master, nervous and clever, who taught higher forms chiefly and took us of the bottom class twice a week only, for history. I liked his face best of all the masters’ faces; pince-nez in my mind always added mildness and beauty, and he was gentle even behind them. He never struck. I thought he liked me because I was one of our forms two stars at history.”

Crozier stayed only a few months at the school before accepting a post on the editorial staff of The Times, He was not there long and in 1904 he joined the Manchester Guardian which he was to serve for forty years, twelve of them as Editor.

Crozier’s work inside the Manchester Guardian office, both as chief assistant to C.P. Scott and later as Editor, has been described elsewhere. It will be sufficient here to quote this estimate of him written by a colleague when he was News Editor.

“He suggests a wheel of immense importance in a highly complicated machine, revolving steadily and remorselessly and causing a multitude of other wheels, great and small to revolve with it. It is hard for the younger generation to realise that the machine used to work and the light to shine without him; and yet they undoubtedly did. Perhaps the truth is that the extra wheel has made the machine run a little faster, and that the old illuminant glows more brightly through a clearer glass.. Perhaps it is rather more than this. Turn up the files of fifteen or twenty years ago and compare them with those of today. It is as though a Welsbach mantle had been slipped over a Bunsen burner.”

He was exceedingly shy and quite lacking in the ability to make conventional small talk. When not at work or with his family be liked to be alone. Once when walking in Wales with his family he went into a hotel for tea only to rush out again pushing the children before him and whispering “Don’t lets bother about tea, so-and-so is in there (he named a member of his staff) and I’d have to talk”.

He was always a better listener than a talker. He liked people to get down to the real matter of the conversation as soon as possible and to cut out the conventionalities. He had no capacity for drawing other reticent men out and for this reason when he began to visit statesmen in London he called more frequently upon those who were ready talkers than those who, like himself preferred to listen. If he took a favourable view of the man he had called to see he would note in his diary that he was “clearheaded” or “vigorous” but as for the man, be he Minister or Ambassador, who wasted time talking about the weather or who laughed too much, he was recorded as “lightweight”.

He detested lukewarmness, he would almost have preferred that a man should be vigorously wicked than that he should be neither good nor bad. “O1d X’?” he once said in answer to a question about the capacity of a certain minister “Oh there is no harm in X, no harm at all in X”. From him that was a condemnation. He had a somewhat acid humour.. When a local tradesman called upon him to protest because as Editor he had turned down some advertisements on the ground of’ their vulgarity he noted ”I thought him a downright person like his advertisements”. The supporters of the moral rearmament campaign once waited on him to ask for the paper’s help to promote their work. They told him how a certain shop steward in a factory had been fomenting unrest and the management, in fear of the trade union would not dismiss him. Fortified, however by their conversion to moral rearmament the directors had at last decided to be brave and dispense with his services, W.P.C. recorded afterwards: “I could not help wondering why moral rearmament had not converted the shop steward.”

He believed in the power of example. His staff had to travel to the office by the uncomfortable

Manchester trams or walk. As Editor he could have had a car provided to him, but he chose to go the same way. In the last years of his life, when he was a semi-invalid he occasionally gave way under the pressure of his wife and his colleagues and consented to go by car, but it must stop a little way from the office so that it should not be thought that he was taking special privileges to himself.
Normally wet or fine he went to the office on the No. 40 tramcar. He pretended that he preferred this method as it gave him longer than the car journey to read one of the Pocket Shakespeares which he carried always in a his pocket. In fact he could not approve what he ca1led "the ostentation" of driving in a hired car,
But he liked motoring and had, a little Morris two-seater which he bought for £50 from a colleague. When, helped by a legacy, the family acquired a larger car the little one had to go. It would be quite unpardonable "ostentation' to have two cars. Yet his journeys on the swaying top of the clattering Manchester trams must have caused him some pain. As Editor he would use his paper to defend the rights of the working man, it was the acknowledged champion of the unfortunate and the underprivileged but as an individual he neither liked nor understood the manual worker. Once when he returned home on a. rainy day after a long tram journey in which he had sat between two damp labourers he remarked, "The British working man is a fine fellow - but I wish he had not such a strong smell'.
Of women he had not a great opinion. His love of freedom demanded that they should be given equal rights with men but that did not mean that it must be accepted that they had equal abilities. He once had a long talk with Mts. Roosevelt. He did not record a word of what she said but merely noted "I found her a clear-headed woman - and businesslike'. With the exception of his wife to whom he told even the most highly secret matters that came to his knowledge during the war, he doubted the discretion of the opposite sex.
Cruelty in any form roused him to anger. It made no matter whether the sufferer was a rabbit, a schoolboys a Jew or a convict. If he were convinced that an individual or a community were being savagely persecuted, then no consideration was allowed to stand in the way of his denunciation, both as an individual and as Editor of the Manchester Guardian. For this reason from the moment that Hitler came to power the Manchester Guardian never ceased to expose the horrors of the concentration camps and to bring to the notice of the complacent British public the brutal persecution of the Jews. The paper lost readers, he was not deterred: the Government protested - but Whitehall remonstrances did not alter the fact that hundreds of Jews were being daily tortured for no other reason than that they were Jews. The Guardian was banned in Germany - that was evidence of the truth of the Guardian's reports. So persistent was his exposure of the Nazi bestialities and his support of the Jews that many people, unable to appreciate that a man of great spirit can vehemently support a cause in which he has no personal interest, supposed that he was himself a Jew. One of his children at that time at Oxford, was taken aside one Sunday by a Fellow of the college. We were glad to see you at chapel this morning" he said "We had not expected you there in view of your father's religion". It was not only in the paper that W.P.C. fought for the
protection of the persecuted. Although he hated any form of personal publicity and never attended any public function if he could avoid it he agreed to be the chief speaker at a mass meeting in the Free Trade Hail to protest against the Nazi persecutions. Long before the meeting was due to begin the great hall, so soon to be bombed by the Germans, almost it seemed in retaliation, was tightly packed. This is what he said:

> "At the time when Herr Hitler came to power, at the end of February 1932, no one knew but many were anxious about his intentions regarding the Jews, for we remembered that he had for years founded a campaign, built up a party, and fed his followers on every variety of appeal to prejudice and passion against the half million Jews in Germany. Many feared the worst but I think that few really believed that the worst would happen. Most people, probably, would have agreed with the historian who, speaking of a date some sixty years ago, declared that the grant of civil liberties to all German Jews had then been "fully, and we may hope finally, secured". So we all thought, and what is immeasurably shocking is that the German Government should have turned its back on civil liberty and equal justice between races and religions and should be marching firmly back into the Dark Ages from which every civilized country has slowly freed itself.
> I should draw a certain distinction between the brutalities which have been perpetrated against the Jews and the political and economic persecution which is now in full vigour. No one, however, must suggest that the outrages have been exaggerated; on the contrary, only a part of them has been told. No trustworthy individual, no responsible newspaper, relates more than comes within his own or its own knowledge, and if you added together the sum of all their

knowledge, the sum of what individual investigators and individual newspapers have reported, you would still have only a fraction of the violence that has taken place. Nor must anyone seek to excuse the German Government or to diminish its direct responsibility. If a man lets loose a tiger, he must not complain if when it proves to be a man-killer, people say that he is responsible for the killing. Still less must he complain if he is proved, by his own words, to have bred the tiger with the intention, someday, of letting it loose on society. The short answer to those who seek to palliate the acts of violence against the Jews is that the leaders of the German Government had incited them, must have expected them, did not stay them, and must bear the guilt for them at the bar of history.

But worse in some ways than brutality and outrage is the attack, calculated and systematic, on the right of the German Jews to civic equality and justice in their own country, The German Government, and the German people if it approves, are rejecting, are seeking to reverse, that long historical process by which the Jews have slowly won, in one country after another, the rights of citizenship. From the days when the Romans twice destroyed Jerusalem and drove the plough over its ruins the Jews were harried from country to country over the face of the Earth; they were driven from Russia for 600 years, from England for 400 years, from France and Germany, Spain and Portugal, with every form of cruelty and insult until, returning at last, they were accorded, now in one country, now in another, the various rights of citizenship, until they reached complete equality among almost all the peoples that we call civilized,

It is a shocking thing that Germany, of all countries, should be turning her back on the march of toleration and justice towards the Jews, For Germany owes much to her Jews. Not only now but a century ago, two and three centuries ago, if you look back, you will find the names of German Jews who were famous beyond their own country for their services to learning and to commerce. And it was, one might remind the Germans, on of the most remarkable of their own Kings, Frederick the Great of Prussia, who said that "no country ever got any good by injuring that nation". Germany is injuring herself, but that at the moment is not our concern, She is doing a great wrong to the Jews; she is even doing them a wrong which has never been done to them since 70 B.C. When, at the Siege of Jerusalem, many of the starving Jews in the city sought to escape, the Emperor Titus gave orders that they should be driven back on the city that they might die of' starvation, but that was war; That was Rome, the most cruel of peoples in the age of cruelty. Today a Christian state depriving the Jews of their means of living forbids them from escaping from the land in which it dooms them to ruin and starvation. - a feat of statesmanship that is divided only from Roman cruelty by its cold-blooded meanness.

It is difficult to separate a Government from its people and to say that the actions of the one do not represent the character of the other. But this we may say; many of us have in the past respected and admired the German people and we shall do so again. But wherever the immediate responsibility for this persecution of the Jews now lies, the responsibility for its suppression, the obligation to restore full civic rights, equal justice, equal opportunity to the Jews, will ultimately lie with the whole German people, and until they have discharged their responsibility, until they have fulfilled their obligation, we shall unceasingly protest."

Soon afterwards there appeared on the wall of his study a framed certificate. Not much to look at and largely unintelligible to him as most of it was written in Hebrew. It was a facsimile of a page from the Golden Book of the Jews, in which his name had been inscribed - the highest honour which the Jewish community can bestow upon a Gentile.

Although he had never been a soldier in the 1914 war - he had tried to volunteer but had been rejected with a weak heart, he had a remarkable knowledge of military affairs. He wrote the Manchester Guardian History of the War (1914) and was a keen student of military and naval history and did not hesitate to make it clear that from time to time he doubted the competence of the military chiefs. He was also a great patriot. When a foreign ambassador spoke quite jocularly but slightingly of our troops he replied with fire "our people are not only dogged, but determined and courageous and will so win the war",

He had begin to make visits to see Personages soon after he became Editor in 1932 ,but on the outbreak of War he went to London much more frequently.

He would work at the Guardian till midnight and then take the train to London. Except for an hour or so spent at luncheon or breakfast with his married children in London he would spend all day talking with Ministers. He worked to a carefully regulated time table so that he could see as many people as possible in one day. As he rode in a taxi - or when time permitted a bus or tube (for taxis, even in London were a little ostentatious) he would note down the heads of his recent conversation, Then at

night in the hotel or travelling back at Manchester in the train he would write out in longhand a verbatim account of his interviews. Next day at the office his manuscript would be typed out by his secretary. Sometimes he learnt secrets which, if disclosed, would have endangered military security. Then he did not think it right to place this responsibility on a subordinate and his wife, sitting up into the small hours, copied out his papers. If he wished to show a copy of his record of an interview to a colleague he would cause it to be delivered to him without any indication of the identity of the person concerned. Later, by another hand, he would send the name. In this way he ensured that the confidence, imposed in him by the Great, would not be endangered.

The candour of the ministers, from the Prime Minister downwards when they talked with him, was a tribute not only to him but to the memory of C. P. Scott and to the tradition of 'fair play' with which he had endowed his paper. What was told to the Editor of the Manchester Guardian in confidence remained in confidence.

Although the Editors of some other newspapers did not always have such scruples about disclosing privately acquired information, W.P.C. never condemned them. "After all" he said to a man who complained that a certain popular paper had disclosed information they could only have had from a confidential source "their readers expect it".

He had some admiration for the popular press, particularly as a means of entertainment. He was offered, but declined, the Editorship of the Daily News and it is improbable that he would have felt any sense of fulfillment if he had accepted it. He could never have consented to the breaking up of a leading article with lines of stars or the appearance on the main news page of half a column of matter about the arrival of a film star in London.

He had a great liking and respect for Lord Beaverbrook whose 'dynamic energy' he admired and devoted much space in his memoirs to a description of the 'Beaver' at work during the war. He was himself a man of boundless energy but towards the close of his life he said to a colleague rather sadly "I wish I had half Beaverbrook's vigour".

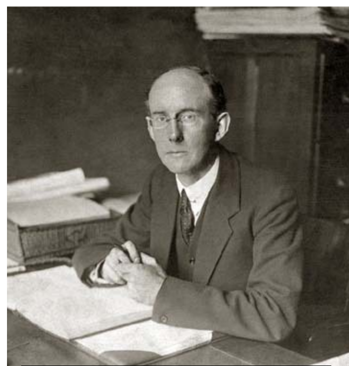
From his undergraduate days at Oxford he had suffered with troubles of the digestion. Shortly before the war he developed a duodenal ulcer and was ordered to follow a restricted diet.

For the last ten years of his life he suffered from the inconvenience of having to have special foods prepared and also from the nagging irritation of a congenital skin disease which even his powerful will could not subdue.

He was a total abstainer and nonsmoker. "Good God, man" Mr. Winston Churchill once said to him "There is nothing you can give up". But there was. He could give up his life. He died upon April 16, 1944, worn out before his time in the service of his paper and in the cause of humanity.

When the war ended the Allies found in Berlin the names of those whom the Nazis proposed to 'liquidate' immediately had they invaded this country. The name of W.P.Crozier was high upon the list. Perhaps he could have had no more fitting tribute.

[#] This is not entirely true – she died in 1902, at around the time of WP's 23rd birthday, when he was completing his undergraduate studies at Oxford.



WP Crozier 1920