

THE CHURCHILLIAN

WINTER 2012 | VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 4

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL CHURCHILL MUSEUM



WINTER SUNSHINE,
CHARTWELL
Painted Circa 1924

Happy Holidays

CHURCHILL & THE TITANIC: GUILT BY ASSOCIATION • CHURCHILL'S RELEVANCE
THE ACCIDENTAL CHURCHILL • ANECDOTAGE: THE FERTILITY OF CHURCHILL'S THOUGHT



Warm greetings from Fulton at this special time of year and welcome to the Christmas edition of *The Churchillian*. As we look ahead to 2013 there are several dates for you to mark on your calendars: firstly, a new temporary exhibition drawn from our own collection that explores the fascinating, and little known, relationship between Joyce Hall, the dynamic founder of Hallmark Cards, Inc., and Winston Churchill. In early March we celebrate our annual Churchill weekend with its centerpiece event the Enid and R. Crosby Kemper

Lectureship on Sunday, March 3. This year we're delighted to announce that the Kemper lecturer will be Professor Peter Clarke, Professor emeritus at the University of Cambridge and author of a host of scholarly works most recently, *Mr. Churchill's Profession: The Statesman as Author*. This theme will form the basis of his lecture and is a nice accompaniment to David Cannadine's efforts last year that discussed the statesman as artist. Also, I'm delighted to announce that, after a hiatus of several years, in 2013 we will present our Churchill Medal for Leadership once again. This year the award will be presented to former United States Ambassador Stephen F. Brauer of St. Louis, Mo. More details on all these upcoming events can be found in the pages of this *Churchillian*.

It is worth noting that this calendar year, 2012, has been the first in which we have produced regular, quarterly editions of *The Churchillian*. The responses to our efforts, and our investment, in this much more professional and more substantive publication have been wholly positive. As we continue to improve its offerings we aim to blend news and features concerning the National Churchill Museum with articles about what Churchill did, and his ongoing significance, in a magazine that continues to be a by-word for quality, both in terms of content and production. This edition is no exception as we look a number of perspectives on Churchill himself — courtesy of Richard Langworth and Bradley Tolppanen — as well as build on the theme of the contemporary Churchill, considered in part in the autumn edition, and examine his relevance in an article by Justin Lyons. It is worth noting, too, that all previous editions of *The Churchillian* are available on our website and that this resource is a good place to direct other "Churchillians" wherever you find them!

With that all being said, it is my pleasure to thank you all for your support of the National Churchill Museum and, from all of us here and at Westminster College in Fulton, to wish you a very happy Christmas and New Year. I look forward to seeing you in 2013.

Dr. Rob Havers
Executive Director,
National Churchill Museum

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The National Churchill Museum is located on the Westminster College campus in Fulton, Missouri, and designated by Congress as America's National Churchill Museum. 573-592-5369, www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org

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Cover: "Winter Sunshine, Chartwell" (Coombs 142), oil on canvas by Winston Churchill, circa 1924. Art historian Coombs comments, "a famous little picture that in 1925 was entered anonymously in a London exhibition open to amateur painters and won first prize; and in 1947, when entered under a pseudonym, it gained Churchill his first entry at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition."

Special thanks to Churchill Heritage Ltd. for their kind permission to publish "Winter Sunshine, Chartwell" (Coombs 142) from the collection of The National Trust, Chartwell.

AT A GLANCE

the articles in this issue may have no apparent connection, but after preparing them we discern a relationship: the element of chance, and how Churchill coped with events he couldn't control.

Bradley Tolppanen's "The Accidental Churchill" compiles Sir Winston's numerous close calls and brushes with death, from school days at Harrow to old age—a remarkable assortment, occasioned in part by his active life. For someone regarded as a high-living devotee of fine cuisine, cigars and drink, Churchill was remarkably agile, playing polo until his mid-fifties, scrambling along on wartime rambles with much younger staffers puffing to keep up, and riding to hounds in his mid-seventies. But in doing so he courted disaster on many occasions.

The nearest brush came on Fifth Avenue in New York in December 1931, where he looked the wrong way while crossing the street and was hit by a car moving at 35 mph. Suppose he had been killed, the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. mused—or that Lenin had died of typhus in 1895 or Hitler had been cut down on the Western Front in 1916? Surely history would be different. Whole novels could be written about alternate scenarios. (Churchill wrote one himself: "If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg," *The Churchillian*, Autumn 2011.)

In December 1931 Churchill *did* think his life was over. "I am going to be run down and probably killed," he thought before the car struck. He survived—but even Churchill did not expect a similar near-miss just a few weeks later in the Bahamas, where a car nearly ran him down again! "...he leaped out of the way and grabbed the top posts of a board fence," recalled his bodyguard. "This was the only time in my life that I have seen Churchill in the clutch of old-fashioned fear. He shivered and shook. Sweat poured down his face...He looked rather piteously at me and said: 'They almost got me that time, Thompson.'"*

Justin Lyons takes up another aspect of chance and events beyond control in his article on Churchill and human nature, illustrating the statesman's remarkable

combination of fatalism and optimism. Repeatedly Churchill mused that science marches on, while man is still the same, frail creature—capable at once of the heights of glory and depths of depravity. Yet Churchill, Professor Lyons explains, believed humanity could overcome the worst aspects of its nature. He explained why in his famous essay "Fifty Years Hence," and other writings.

Well we may wonder how Churchill lived in the times he did to emerge with any hope at all. (To suggestions that her father was bi-polar or a manic-depressive Lady Soames snorts, "The things he went through would depress anybody.") And yet he retained hope. "For myself I am an optimist," he said in 1954—"it does not seem to be much use being anything else—and I cannot believe that the human race will not find its way through the problems that confront it, although they are separated by a measureless gulf from any they have known before...." We could use that kind of optimism today.

Returning to accidents of fate, we review a book blaming Churchill for the loss of the *Titanic*—which would never have been lost at all had the watchers in her crow's nest been just a little earlier or a little late in signaling the bridge. It is amazing what a precise combination of fate and weather was needed to produce that tragedy—and still more amazing how anyone could manage to pin it on Churchill. But we've heard similar things before.

The reader must decide whether Churchill's final optimism for humanity was warranted, or whether fatalism should have been his dominant view. "We remember the sardonic war-time joke about the optimist and the pessimist," he wrote just after Munich in 1938. "The optimist was the man who did not mind what happened so long as it did not happen to him. The pessimist was the man who lived with the optimist."

—The Editors

*Walter H. Thompson, *Assignment Churchill* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Young, 1955), 109.

THE 2013 ENID AND R. CROSBY KEMPER LECTURE



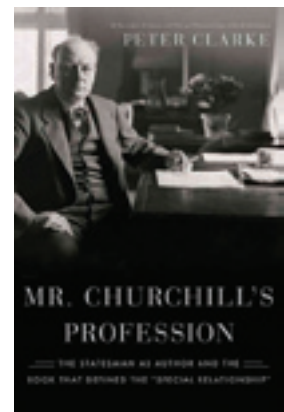
THE NATIONAL
CHURCHILL MUSEUM
ON THE CAMPUS OF
WESTMINSTER COLLEGE,
FULTON, MISSOURI
PRESENTS

PROFESSOR PETER CLARKE
“WINSTON CHURCHILL AS AUTHOR”

SUNDAY, MARCH 3
AT 2 P.M.

THE CHURCH OF
ST MARY, ALDERMANBURY

Peter Frederick Clarke, M.A., Ph.D., Litt.D., F.B.A. was educated at the University of Cambridge where he held progressively more senior academic roles culminating in Professor of Modern British History between 1991-2004 and as a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge (1980-2000). From 2000 until 2004 he also served as the Master of Trinity Hall College, Cambridge, where he now serves as an Honorary Fellow. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (1972) and Fellow of the British Academy (1989), he is the author of 10 books, including *Hope and Glory: Britain, 1900-1990*, Volume 9 of *The Penguin History of Britain* and *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire* (2007). His work on Churchill encompasses a host of invited lectures and presentations and most recently, in 2012, his study of Churchill the author, *Mr. Churchill's Profession: The Statesman as Author*.



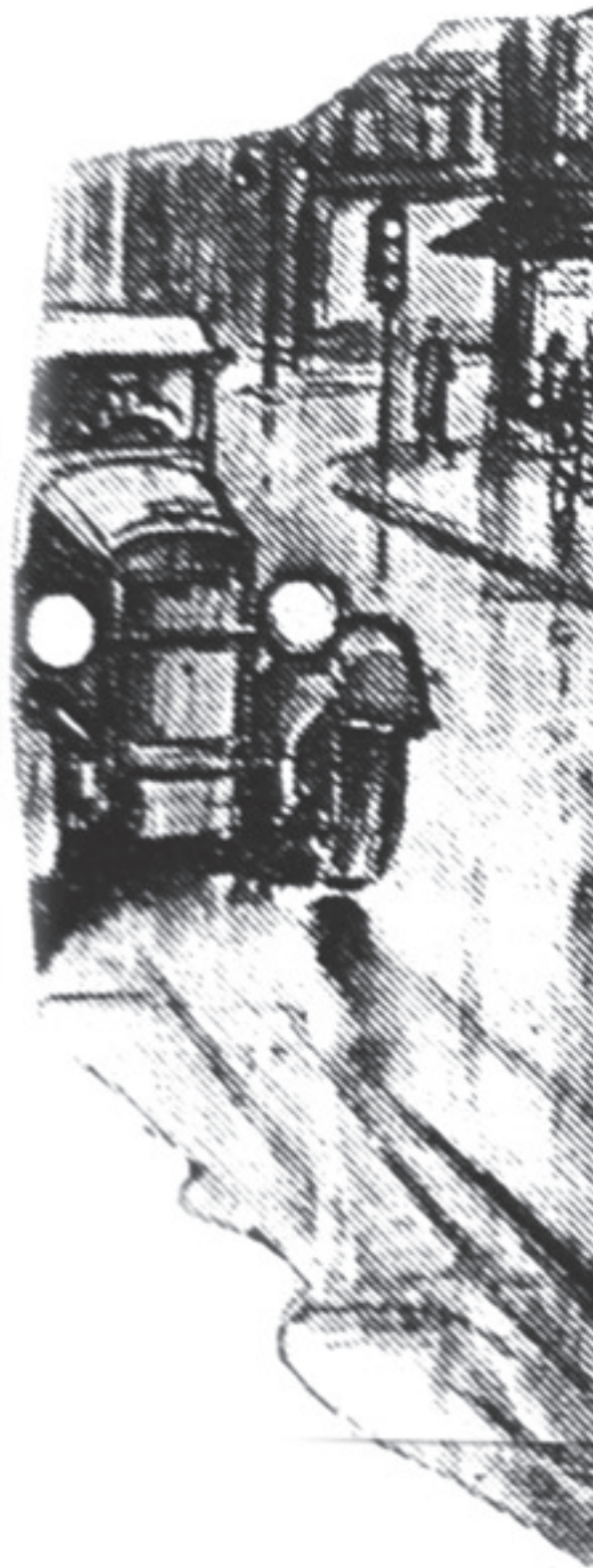


The Accidental Churchill

MISHAPS, TUMBLES AND NARROW ESCAPES

The *Concise Oxford American Dictionary* defines “accident” as “an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury.”¹ Under this definition, Winston Churchill suffered a remarkable number of accidents, surviving them all to die in his own bed at the age of 90. His mishaps, which ranged from life-threatening to relatively minor scrapes, are an interesting assortment.

BY BRADLEY P. TOLPPANEN



Shown left: Churchill's worst accident, New York 1931.

Illustration for Churchill's original article in the *Daily Mail*, January 4, 1932, Cohen C375a.

Note: Churchill was hit by a private car, not a taxi—though this illustration may have been the origin for that longstanding canard. (Scanned from an original by Ronald I. Cohen from his personal collection.)



*"There was an impact, a shock, a concussion
indescribably violent."*

↑ CRASHING

Churchill's first major accident probably took place when he was a 14-year-old Harrow schoolboy. He had bought a bicycle, "a beautiful little machine," with money from his father, and was making rapid progress with his riding. On May 15, 1889 he told Lord Randolph Churchill that he had learned to ride and had peddled eight miles the previous Saturday. Just a month later, however, Churchill had been riding his bicycle when he decided to try a tricycle that was on hand.² Turning the trike too sharply for the speed he was traveling, he crashed, falling with such force that he had to spend a week in the Harrow sickroom with a "slight concussion."³



Winston (far left) and his schoolmates in Mr. Davidson's Small House, Harrow 1888-89. It seems a rather old age to come to grief on a tricycle, but evidently his first accident happened around the time this photograph was taken.

↑ TUMBLING

On January 10, 1893 the 18-year old Churchill, his mother Lady Randolph, and his brother Jack were staying at the estate of his aunt, Lady Wimborne, near Bournemouth. The property included fifty acres of forests, which Churchill recalled as a "small, wild place."⁴ It was ideal territory for the game of chase that he played with his 12-year-old brother and a 14-year-old cousin.

For twenty minutes Churchill ran through the woods ahead of his pursuers. Tiring and out of breath, he decided to evade them by crossing a rustic bridge over a deep gully. When he reached the middle of the 50-yard span he suddenly realized that the route was a mistake. In a piece of brilliant strategy, his pursuers had split up, appearing suddenly at each end of the structure.

Desperately Churchill looked for an avenue of escape. There were many young trees near the bridge; if he jumped

to the top of one, he reasoned, he could slide down easily, the branches snapping off as he went, slowing his descent.

Fearlessly Churchill climbed over the balustrade, hesitating only for a second: "...to plunge or not to plunge, was the question."⁵ Being Churchill, he plunged. Alas, his theory proved faulty. The trees were of no use at all. He tumbled twenty-nine feet, rupturing a kidney.

Unable to rouse him when they reached him, Jack and his cousin raced to fetch Lady Randolph, telling her that Winston had fallen and "won't speak to us." Eminent surgeons were summoned, Lord Randolph raced over from Dublin, and Churchill lay unconscious for three days—a shock to his entire family.⁶

↑ DRIFTING

In August 1893 Churchill and his brother Jack took a walking tour of Switzerland, led by their tutor, J.D.G. Little. After climbing in the mountains, including the Wetterhorn and Monte Rosa, the party reached Lausanne—where Winston Churchill nearly drowned.

In his memoir of youth, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission*, Churchill explains that he went rowing in a small boat on beautiful Lake Lausanne with someone he identifies only as "another boy a little younger than myself" (later identified by Martin Gilbert as his brother.)⁷ A mile or so from shore, the brothers pulled off their clothes and jumped in for a swim. They had great fun.

By the time they decided they'd had enough, their boat had drifted about 100 yards away and a breeze had picked up. As they swam toward the boat it drifted farther away, the awning over its stern acting as a sail. After hard swimming they had only halved the distance, while the breeze was strengthening and both of them, especially Jack, were tiring.

"Up to this point no idea of danger had crossed my mind," Churchill wrote.⁸ But now the boat was moving away from them at the same speed as they could swim.

With no help nearby and the shore too far away, their situation soon became apparent. In the water at Lausanne that day, Churchill "saw Death as near as I believe I have ever seen Him." With the Grim Reaper "swimming in the water at our side, whispering from time to time in the rising wind," he redoubled his efforts to reach the boat.

Outdistancing Jack and swimming for his life,⁹ he twice came within a yard of the boat, only to see it carried off by a gust of wind. At last with a “supreme effort” he caught a hold of its side and clung on just as another breeze caught the awning. He scrambled aboard and quickly rowed back for Jack, who was tired but unaware of the “dull yellow glare of mortal peril that had so suddenly played around us.”¹⁰

🏇 STEEPLE CHASING

As a cadet at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, horses were young Winston’s greatest pleasure. A good rider, he participated in polo and steeple chasing. It hardly compares with his other near-misses, but on a steeplechase course in March 1895 he was left “bruised and very stiff” when the horse he was riding “refused and swerved.” He nearly broke his leg, and required three days bed-rest. Not surprisingly, Lady Randolph was upset by the crash and told her son that steeple chasing was “idiotic” and “fatal.” Winston assured her he would not ride in the military races, yet five days later he raced under the name “Mr. Spencer” aboard a fellow subaltern’s horse in the Challenge Cup, where he finished third.¹¹

🏇 DISLOCATING

Churchill’s first experience in India, in October 1896, was another accident. Having sailed from Southampton with the 4th Hussars on September 11th, he arrived in Bombay harbor twenty-three days later.¹² Eager to disembark for his first glimpse of India, he went ashore independently that afternoon, rather than wait till 8 p.m. for the general landing. With two brother officers he summoned a small boat to take them to the Sassoon Dock, where they came alongside a “great stone wall with dripping steps and iron rings for hand-holds.”¹³

As Churchill grabbed one of the rings the boat, falling with the waves, suddenly dropped beneath him. With his feet

not on the steps to support him, his right shoulder gave “a sharp and peculiar wrench.” Churchill quickly gained his footing and made it ashore, but he had done himself permanent injury. For the rest of his life normal acts, from taking a book from a shelf to swimming, it was easily possible to dislocate his shoulder. He was forced to play polo with his upper arm strapped down by a leather belt.

This odd injury had an even odder benefit: Two years later, in the charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, his “trick” shoulder caused him to arm himself with a Mauser instead of a sword. The pistol permitted him to shoot several attackers at close range, who might well have killed him had his only weapon been his sword.¹⁴

Two months later, after a “rowdy” dinner with fellow officers at Bangalore, someone tied the reins of the horse pulling Churchill’s carriage to its collar instead of the bit.



Lieutenant Churchill, 4th Hussars, 1896. Churchill loved horses, and fell off on several occasions. He also made himself an enemy target by riding grey or white horses to distinguish himself in military actions. (A commander at the Malakand was heard to say, “Who’s that damn fool on the grey?”)

ON HIS BACK “I had got into the habit, through long years of impunity, of dismounting on the offside by throwing the left leg over the horse’s head and slipping to the ground. I have done it thousands of times without misadventure but it is unquestionably slovenly and careless. On this occasion, just at the very second when I was swinging my left leg over the pony’s head, the brute gave a violent leap with the result that I shot through the air in a circle and alighted on my head and shoulders.” — WSC to Lord Curzon, Eaton Hall, April 24, 1922 (Churchill papers: 1/157)

The horse galloped off, and at the first corner Churchill and three other officers were thrown out. Winston bruised and cut his knee, and was out of polo for a month. In March 1897 Churchill fell from his polo pony, bruising a shoulder so that he could hardly use his arms. “The ground out here,” he wrote, “is so terribly hard that a fall is no joke.”¹⁵ In April at a firing range, a bullet shattered the edge of a target, showering him with splinters, one lodging in his thumb. It took an “abominable twenty minutes” of probing to remove it. Recuperating, he thought himself a “cripple” as his left hand was bound and useless while his right arm was too stiff for simple tasks.¹⁶

In Jodhpore for the Inter-Regimental Polo Tournament on February 8, 1899, he fell down a flight of stairs, dislocating his right shoulder again and spraining both ankles, “one of the most unfortunate things that I have ever had happen to me.”¹⁷ Expecting to miss the tournament, he waxed philosophical: “...it is better to have bad luck in the minor pleasures of life than in one’s big undertakings.”¹⁸ But he played despite his injuries, and his team won the biggest sporting event in India.

BLAZING

In August 1908 Churchill survived an early-morning fire that totally destroyed the mansion Burley Hall near Oakham, leased by his cousins Freddie and Henry Guest, who had just renovated it. On August 5th they entertained guests including Churchill and F.E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead. At about one o’clock in the morning of August 6th a maid discovered a fire, which spread rapidly to the beams and was so intense that guests scrambled from their bedrooms to the lawn in “scanty clothing.” Typically, Churchill not only escaped the fire but saved his red morocco despatch box and important documents, while poor F.E. Smith lost his entire wardrobe.

While awaiting the fire brigade Churchill, the Guests and Smith tried to save valuables while directing servants and other guests to safety. Lacking water, it was a one-sided battle. As Churchill was carrying two marble busts to safety, the blazing roof fell in behind him—another narrow escape. Most of the house was destroyed by the time the fire brigades arrived, and continued several hours until it burned itself out.¹⁹

CHURCHILL ON HORSES “And here I say to parents, especially to wealthy parents, ‘Don’t give your son money. As far as you can afford it, give him horses.’ No one ever came to grief — except honourable grief — through riding horses. No hour of life is lost that is spent in the saddle. Young men have often been ruined through owning horses, or through backing horses, but never through riding them; unless of course they break their necks, which, taken at a gallop, is a very good death to die.” — WSC, *My Early Life*, 1930



The Battle of Omdurman, 1898. An illustration from the *Daily Graphic* shows a Col. Martin in a pose Churchill could not have maintained with his strapped right shoulder. At close quarters, Churchill’s Mauser pistol was a better weapon than the sword he would have carried, had his shoulder not been likely to “go out” at key moments.

MOTORING

Churchill was involved in a series of automobile accidents as a passenger or car owner. In October 1901 in Rochdale, Lancashire, Churchill’s servant Emile Violon knocked down a small boy with Churchill’s vehicle; WSC sent money to the boy’s father and offered to pay any fine imposed on Violon.²⁰ In June 1914 on the Thames embankment, a car crossed the road and collided with the Churchills’ car, but Winston and Clementine emerged unscathed.²¹ In February 1920, Churchill survived another crash in Whitehall. Interestingly, that same day Richard Herbert Simmons, Churchill’s chauffeur, was fined £3 for speeding; Simmons argued that he had been urged to hurry by Churchill and Freddie Guest, anxious to get to the War Office—a frequent occurrence, according to many observers. The great man was always in a hurry.²²

In September 1921 in Scotland, Churchill was involved in a collision with a car owned by one Donald Macdonald, who requested compensation. Churchill's secretary wrote that WSC, who was neither the driver nor the owner of the car, did not feel compelled to take any action.²³ Another crunch occurred in July 1922, when WSC was traveling to Sutton Place near Guildford, as the guest of the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, his car followed by two Scotland Yard detectives in a motorcycle with sidecar. At Wisley, Churchill's car overtook a timber lorry, but the detectives, attempting to stay with him, were hit by an oncoming car and one was seriously injured.²⁴

Although Churchill himself was still driving in the 1920s, all his mishaps occurred with someone else behind the wheel. In June 1926, driven by chauffeur Alexander Aley from Chartwell to London with two servants and detective Walter Thompson, Churchill's car collided with a motor van in a thick haze.²⁵ No one was injured except the van driver, a fishmonger named Arthur Crew, who had two broken ribs. Crew took legal action for injuries and damage to his vehicle, turning down Churchill's offer to settle for £77.²⁶ His case centered on the rate of speed of Churchill's car, but the jury denied his claim. Churchill did not want Crew to suffer and sent him £25 a few days later, but the fishmonger continued to pester Churchill for financial help into 1928.²⁷

FLYING

The most dangerous civilian activity Churchill pursued was learning to fly in the earliest days of flight. As First Lord of the Admiralty he took a great interest in the use of aircraft in war, and he was taking flying lessons by 1913. The dangers involved were made very clear when one of his instructors, Captain Gilbert Wildman-Lushington, was tragically killed in a flying accident.

The First Lord was said to be "a very fair pilot" in the air, but much less capable on take-offs and landings.²⁸ Despite needing only a couple more "calm" mornings in the air to achieve his pilot's certificate, Churchill eventually acceded to his family and friends, including F.E. Smith, that he give it up.²⁹

Having traveled on airplanes during World War I, he was still intrigued and briefly resumed flying lessons after the Armistice. This round of lessons was brought to a halt when an airplane he was training in crashed on July 18, 1919. With an instructor, his secretary at the Air Ministry

Churchill in flying gear for a session in one of the flimsy aircraft of 1913, which produced several near-death experiences. Taking up pilot lessons after the Great War, he was dissuaded from continuing them after a take-off crash at Croydon.



Colonel A.J.L. "Jack" Scott, Churchill took off from Croydon aerodrome, reached ninety feet, side-slipped and plunged to the ground. An explosion was only prevented by the quick-thinking Scott, who switched off the ignition before they crashed. Churchill walked away with a few bruises, but Scott suffered a broken leg and it was several weeks before he was fit again.³⁰ Clementine and many others again urged him to stop, and Churchill gave up for good.

PLUNGING

In April 1922 Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, was staying at Eaton Hall in Chester, residence of his friend "Bendor," the Duke of Westminster. Bendor and his guests had finished polo practice when Churchill, dismounting from a frisky pony by throwing his left leg over its neck, suffered "a very disagreeable bump" and plunged to the ground.³¹ Turning a somersault, he had no chance to break his fall and landed heavily on his shoulders and head. "Every scrap of wind was knocked out of my body," he wrote later, "and for some minutes I could not get my breath and rolled about in speechless consternation."³² Although badly bruised, Churchill suffered no broken bones. Never, he thought, had he experienced a worse fall from a horse.

Churchill was confined to bed at Eaton Hall for several days, so bruised that he could only lie still "like a beetle on its back," unable to sit or turn over. He left finally and resumed his duties, still suffering the effects, and rested mainly at his house on Sussex Square London. Within a few days his doctors ordered him to reduce his workload and take a short holiday. He left for the country on May 9th, but a tense situation in Ireland disrupted his plans and he was soon back in London and deeply engaged in the Irish Treaty. It was several weeks before he made a full recovery and in view of his workload, was ordered by his doctors to give up polo for the rest of 1922.³³

▲ NEARLY SQUASHED

In New York City at about 10:30 p.m. on December 13, 1931, Churchill could have lost his life. He had arrived in the U.S. two days earlier to embark on a lecture tour. After dinner he set out for the Fifth Avenue home of his old friend Bernard Baruch, a ten minute drive from his hotel, the Waldorf-Astoria. Hailing a cab, Churchill realized that he did not know the house number (it was 1055). But he'd been there before and was sure he would recognize it. He drove up and down for an hour without success. Growing impatient, Churchill left the cab on the Central Park side between 76th and 77th streets, intending to cross Fifth Avenue to a row of houses that looked familiar.³⁴

Churchill properly looked left and crossed safely to the middle of the avenue, which then had two-way traffic. Then he made the common mistake of Britons in America: he looked left again. Seeing nothing, he stepped into the road—where he was immediately struck by a car coming from the right at 35 mph.

The driver, Mario Constasino (or Contasino; accounts vary) saw the accident coming and slammed on the brakes, but it was too late. “I am going to be run down and probably killed,” Churchill thought.³⁵ Then came the impact, a “concussion indescribably violent.” Traffic stopped and people rushed into the street. Churchill did not lose consciousness, but was flooded with “wave upon wave of convulsive, painful sensations.” He told a policeman who he was and emphasized that he was at fault, not poor Constasino. A passing ambulance was occupied, so a cabbie

KNOCKED DOWN IN NEW YORK “Collision equivalent falling 30 feet onto pavement, equal 6000 foot-pounds of energy. Equivalent stopping 10 pound brick dropped 600 feet, or two charges buckshot pointblank range. Shock probably proportional rate energy transferred. Rate inversely proportional thickness cushion surrounding skeleton and give of frame. If assume average one inch, your body transferred during impact at rate 8000 horsepower. Congratulations on preparing suitable cushion, and skill in taking bump.” — Professor Lindemann to WSC, 30 December 1931, after WSC was hit by a car in New York

laid him unceremoniously on the floor of his taxi and drove with the policeman to nearby Lenox Hill Hospital.

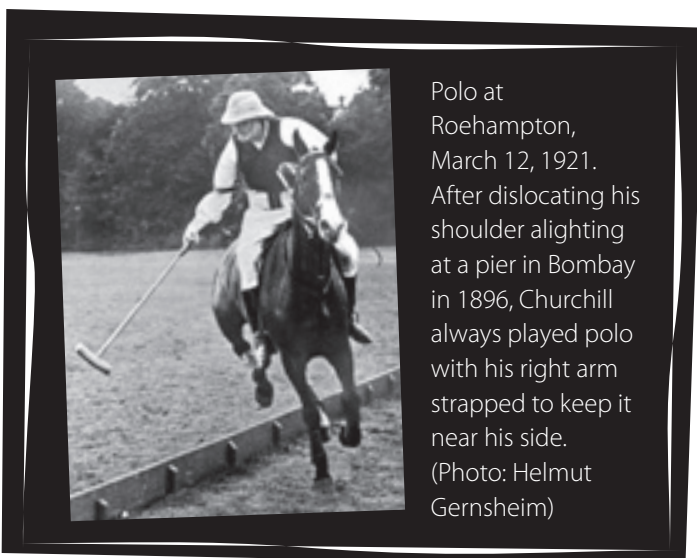
During the drive, Churchill was alarmed at being unable to move his hands and feet. Before he reached the hospital, however, he felt “violent pins and needles” in his upper arms, a welcome sign. Soon he could move his fingers again.³⁶ He was amazed that he had not been “squashed like a gooseberry.”

Considering that his friend Professor Lindemann later calculated that the crash was the equivalent of falling thirty feet onto pavement, Churchill could have been easily killed or permanently injured. He escaped with a concussion, large bruises on his right arm, chest, and leg, and contusions needing sutures on his forehead and nose.³⁷ By December 16th he had recovered sufficiently to offer the *Daily Mail* back in London a “literary gem” on how it feels to be run down by an automobile.

Four days later Churchill received a visit from an anxious Constasino, a young truck driver from Yonkers, whom he presented with a signed copy of *The Unknown War*, final volume of *The World Crisis*, which had recently been published by Scribners.³⁸ Before Christmas he was released from the hospital to rest at his hotel and at the end of the month he left New York to complete his recovery in Nassau. Churchill returned to the United States and began his rescheduled lecture tour in late January.

▲ FAILING AND FALLING

Like many elderly people, Churchill in old age was unsteady on his feet. In November 1960 he tripped over a rug and fell at Hyde Park Gate, his London home.³⁹ A small bone was broken in his back and Sir Winston was confined to his bed for eleven days. Another fall occurred in June 1962,



Polo at Roehampton, March 12, 1921. After dislocating his shoulder alighting at a pier in Bombay in 1896, Churchill always played polo with his right arm strapped to keep it near his side. (Photo: Helmut Gernsheim)

when he was getting out of bed at the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo. This time a bone in his left thigh was broken.⁴⁰ Flown home to London, Churchill underwent a 90-minute operation at Middlesex Hospital to repair the fracture.

Two and half years after his fall in Monte Carlo, Sir Winston Churchill died at Hyde Park Gate on January 24, 1965, the 70th anniversary almost to the hour of his father's death. He had survived not only the battlefields of Cuba, India, Africa, and Flanders, and periodic threats of assassination by Irish or Indian nationalists, but so many unlucky mishaps along the way that one marvels over his survival.

His courage in these misfortunes was as solid as it was in battle. Somewhat of a fatalist, he clearly thought he was being preserved for something important. That something came in 1940, the year, he said, "nothing surpasses." Churchill was quite accurate when, sixty-six years earlier, he wrote his mother about his fall at Jodhpore: "I trust the misfortune will propitiate the gods—offended perhaps at my success & luck elsewhere."⁴¹

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Leaving Lenox Hill Hospital after being struck by a car and nearly killed on Fifth Avenue, New York, 1931. Typically, Churchill sold the story of his accident for \$2500, exonerated the innocent driver, and presented him with an autographed copy of *My Early Life*.

A visibly aging Sir Winston leaving Middlesex Hospital after surgeons repaired a broken thigh, following his June 1962 fall in Monte Carlo. Fearing the worst after the accident, WSC had cabled home: "I want to die in England."



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6. Randolph S. Churchill, 181.
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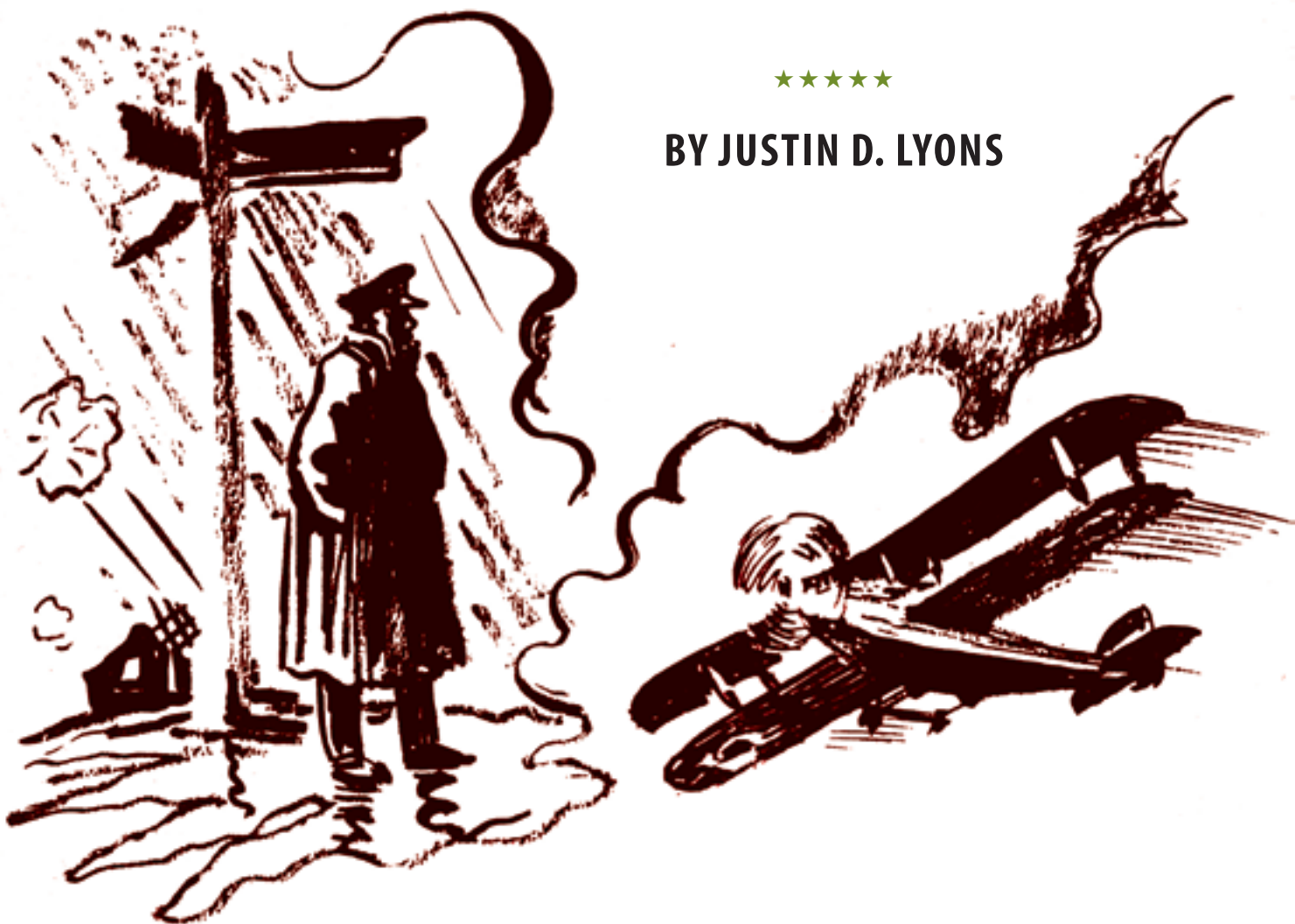
Churchill's Relevance:

Human Nature and the Roots of Liberty

*There can be no argument with the desire to dominate
and this human passion persists in the world.
Neither history nor the facts of human nature
point toward a time when conflict will cease.*

★★★★★

BY JUSTIN D. LYONS



Scientific progress was an issue to which Churchill gave serious thought throughout his adult life—a life which saw world-altering technological changes. In the essay “Fifty Years Hence,” written in 1931, Churchill reflects on the quickening pace of these changes. He describes the enormous and rapid alterations that modern science has brought about in human life—revolutions in food production, transportation, mining, machinery, engineering, communications, and quality of life so momentous that mankind almost dwells in a new world altogether.

But “Fifty Years Hence” pushes beyond the consideration of changes in human affairs to consider the possibility that human beings themselves could be transformed. After all, Churchill writes, these fundamental shifts will subject human life to influences

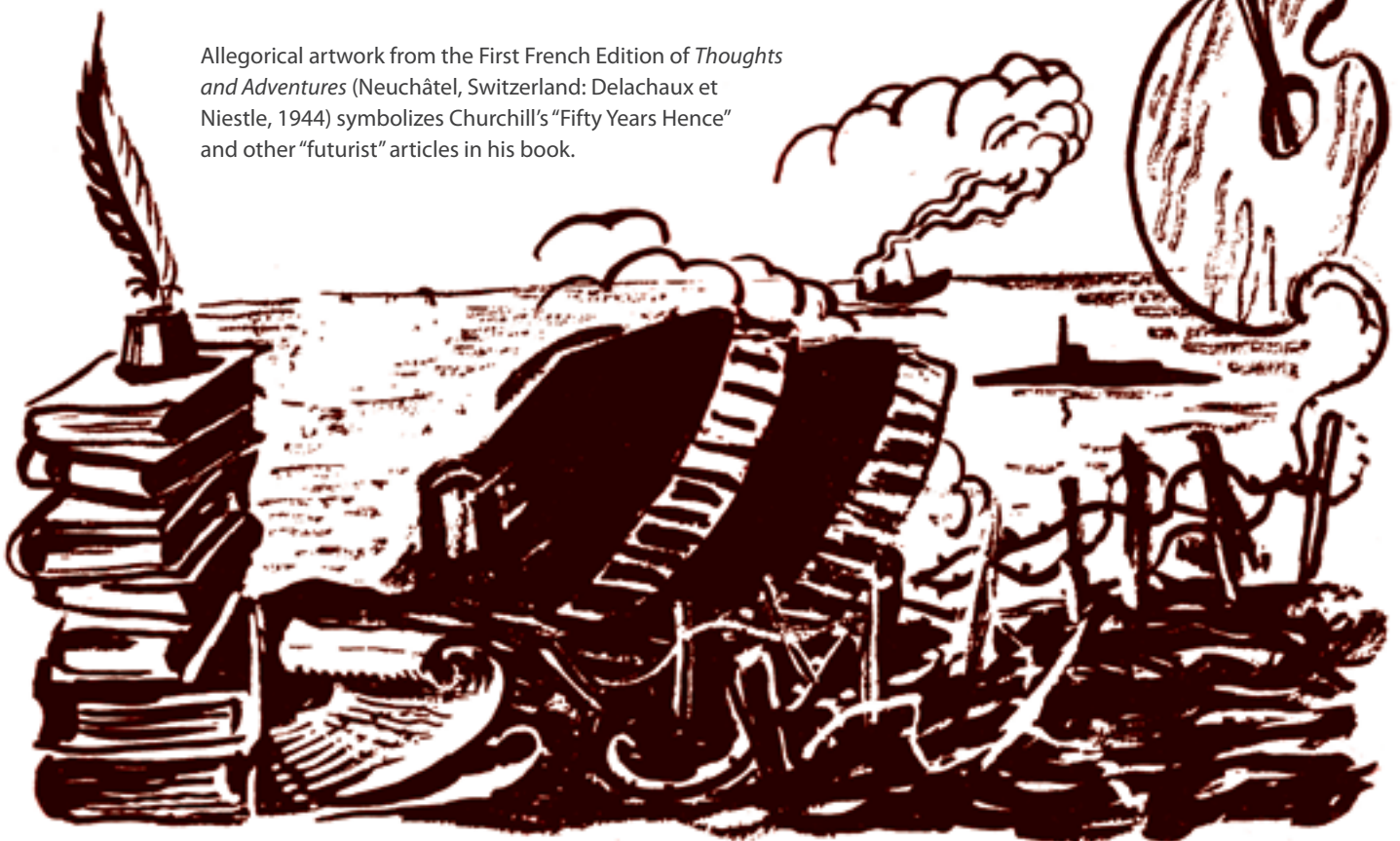
beyond previous experience: “in a future which our children may live to see, powers will be in the hands of men altogether different from any by which human nature has been moulded.” Could human nature be altered by these powers into something different than it is now?

But scientific fruits do not simply fall from the tree. They are cultivated by human beings themselves. Should science acquire the power to alter human nature, it would do so because that power was desired and deliberately applied. The essay as a whole works on the juxtaposition of the benefits of science with its possible evils, and the tone darkens as he reflects on the possibility of a program in which human birth and development are purposefully controlled:

There seems little doubt that it will be possible to carry out in artificial

“If to these tremendous and awful powers is added the pitiless and sub-human wickedness which we now see embodied in one of the most powerful reigning governments, who shall say that the world itself will not be wrecked, or indeed that it ought not to be wrecked?” — WSC

Allegorical artwork from the First French Edition of *Thoughts and Adventures* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Delachaux et Niestle, 1944) symbolizes Churchill’s “Fifty Years Hence” and other “futurist” articles in his book.



surroundings the entire cycle which now leads to the birth of a child. Interference with the mental development of such beings, expert suggestion and treatment in the earlier years, would produce beings specialized to thought or toil. The production of creatures, for instance, which have admirable physical development, with their mental endowment stunted in particular directions, is almost within the range of human power. A being might be produced capable of tending a machine but without other ambitions.

If such a project became feasible, it would not for long remained locked in the closet of possibilities. Churchill notes that the result would be ideally suited to fulfill the theories of Communism, a governing philosophy that finds certain aspects of human nature problematic for the implementation of its programs.

This power of altering humanity might be given into the hands of man, but it is clear that for Churchill, nothing good could come from such a power. First, it must be rejected on moral grounds: “Our minds recoil from such fearful eventualities, and the laws of a Christian civilization will prevent them.”

Second, if a program of this sort could be carried out, it would result only in a corruption. It would produce merely living machines who are no longer really human. This is indicated by Churchill’s careful use of the words “creatures” and “beings” rather than “men” or “humans.” The discussion of this topic began by referencing a play, Rossum’s Universal Robots, in which such a scheme was contemplated. Robots or sub-human creatures would



The atomic bombing of Hiroshima, 6 August 1945.

“... While men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing and measureless speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. The nature of man has remained hitherto practically unchanged. Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, warlike passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy—the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up.” — WSC

be the result of any scientific attempt to alter human nature—which attempt could only have the aim of exploitation and oppression. This power, then, would be wielded by men over their fellow beings for their own interest. That is, some will be altered for the advantage of others. The truly human remains the same, retaining all the old

selfishness, self-interest, and tendency to oppress.

An advance in scientific terms is not necessarily an advance in human terms. By putting great forces at the disposal of man, science puts great forces at the disposal of tyrants: Explosive forces, energy, materials,

machinery will be available upon a scale which can annihilate whole nations. Despotisms and tyrannies will be able to prescribe the lives and even wishes of their subjects in a manner never known since time began. If to these tremendous and awful powers is added the pitiless and sub-human wickedness which we now see embodied in one of the most powerful reigning governments, who shall say that the world itself will not be wrecked, or indeed that it ought not to be wrecked? There are nightmares of the future from which a fortunate collision with some wandering star, reducing the earth to incandescent gas, might be a merciful deliverance.

What, then, has changed? The wickedness of which he speaks is not new, despotisms and tyrannies are not new, they have been among the possibilities and realities for man since time began; they are simply equipped with new and more effective tools. Only the reach of man's power over his fellow beings has changed. Churchill warns of forces different than those by which human nature has been molded, but human nature will not be significantly altered by them; it will only exploit new opportunities.

Churchill does not expect human nature to alter of its own accord—or due to some ingrained principle of history. Human nature could only be altered “unnaturally,” so to speak, and, if such alterations removed the problems presented by human nature for communal society, they would only do so by destroying that nature.

In fact, “Fifty Years Hence” may be said to stress the distinctively human by illuminating the fundamental immutability of human nature. Science may alter the technological character

of the world in which man operates; it does not, however, fundamentally alter the way human beings behave because it does not alter the essential characteristics of humanity:

Certain it is that while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing and measureless speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. The brain of a modern man does not differ in essentials from that of the human beings who fought and loved here millions of years ago. The nature of man has remained hitherto practically unchanged. Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, warlike passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy—the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up...

We have the spectacle of the powers and weapons of man far outstripping the march of his intelligence; we have the march of his intelligence proceeding far more rapidly than the development of his nobility. We may well find ourselves in the presence of ‘the strength of civilization without its mercy.’

To avert this fate the virtues of mankind must be strengthened: “It is therefore above all things important that the moral philosophy and spiritual conceptions of men and nations should hold their own amid these formidable scientific evolutions.” Yet, as he wrote elsewhere, the opportunity to strengthen human character and civilization was always present; it has not occurred because of technological advancement: “Endless possibilities of moral and mental improvement were open to us without any of the blessings or conveniences we now enjoy.”

But the recurring conflicts of history

show that these “possibilities of moral and mental improvement” were, for the most part, not taken. If they were taken, then it was done on the part of individuals or groups, but not by humanity as a whole, and had no lasting effect on man's treatment of his fellows. And the rise of modern science has not made the task easier, but rather much more difficult. The forward march of science offers progress in the material condition of mankind, but it does not offer progress in the moral condition of mankind, although it offers the illusion that it does. Churchill dispels the illusion. Science does not alter essential humanity for the better. In fact, it makes man more dangerous: without improving his character, it places in his hands better and more efficient means of destruction.



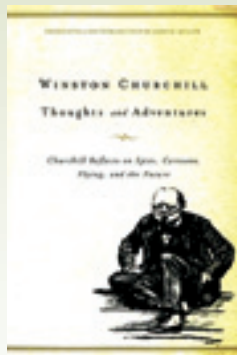
Churchill's discussion of the inability of technological advancement to alter human character means that conflict can never be removed from human affairs. A realistic political approach, then, must start by accepting this fact and continue by making provision for it. After the terrible bloodletting it had suffered in World War I, Britain was so horrified by the terrors of war that it exhibited a strong determination to avoid conflict, as well as a belief that conflict could be avoided. In 1934, the world once again feeling the stirrings of trouble, Churchill addressed this topic:

Many people think that the best way to escape war is to dwell upon its horrors, and to imprint them vividly upon the minds of the younger generation. They flaunt the grisly photographs before their eyes. They fill their ears with tales of carnage. They dilate upon the ineptitude of general and admirals. They denounce

the crime and insensate folly of human strife.

But Churchill points out that however the British felt about armed conflict, they could only speak for themselves. Other nations did not necessarily share the British abhorrence of war. Indeed, Germany, a nation of nearly seventy million citizens, all of them “being taught from childhood to think of war and conquest as a glorious exercise, and death in battle as the noblest fate for man,” was “only a few hours away by air.” In a world where such nations exist, straining every nerve to increase their armed might, obsessing on the dreadfulness of war is of limited usefulness because it fails to address the real question: “All this teaching ought to be very useful in preventing us from attacking or invading any other country, if anyone outside a madhouse wished to do so. But how would it help us if we were attacked ourselves? That is the question we have to ask.”

For Churchill, nations must always take due precautions, realizing that even if they forswear war as a means of policy, they may still have war thrust upon them. Whatever the feelings of the invaded, Churchill doubts that the invaders would agree to engage in debate about their actions. After all, they have their reasons: “They might say ‘You are rich, we are poor. You seem well fed, we are hungry. You have been victorious, we have been defeated. You have valuable colonies, we have none. You have your Navy, where is ours? You have had the past, let us have the future.’” Churchill presents a catalogue of the justifications for conflict, and we must note that not all of them (perhaps, in reality, none of them) are subject to a purely material computation. In addition to a disparity in wealth and resources, there is an



By far the best edition of *Thoughts and Adventures* in print is the new ISI Books edition, edited with a new foreword by James W. Muller, and massively footnoted by the editor Paul H. Courtenay to explain each unfamiliar term and reference for modern readers.

outraged sense of justice, a remembrance of old wounds, and a desire for national greatness, all of which played their part in Germany’s rearmament. But it is the last point that most fully puts the issue of war outside the realm of rational discussion: “Above all, I fear, they would say ‘You are weak and we are strong.’” There can be no argument with the desire to dominate; and this human passion persists in the world.



Between the world wars, Britain was gripped by disarmament mania, hoping to decrease tensions as well as set an example for other nations to follow. Churchill argued that the example had not been followed—that disputes about disarmament had “only bred more ill-will between the nations.” But, even if disarmament were accomplished, Churchill continued, it would not remove the possibility or the fact of war. Conflict, he held, sprung ultimately from human nature and could not be prevented merely by depriving it of advanced weapons: if there is no automatic weapon ready to

hand, a club will serve to exploit the frailties of human flesh:

...history shows on many a page that armaments are not necessarily a cause of war and that want of them is no guarantee of peace. If, for instance, all the explosives all over the globe could be by the wave of a magic wand be robbed of their power and made harmless, so that not a cannon or a rifle could fire, and not a shell or a bomb detonate, that would be a measure of world disarmament far beyond the brightest dreams of Geneva. But would it ensure peace? On the contrary, war would begin almost the next day when enormous masses of fierce men, armed with picks and spades or soon with clubs and spears, would pour over the frontiers into the lands they covet, and would be furiously resisted by the local populations and those who went to their aid. This truth may be unfashionable, unpalatable, unpopular. But it is the truth.

Neither history nor the facts of human nature point toward a time when conflict will cease. Removing the causes of war would be a task greater than addressing material concerns, it would involve the transformation of human behavior: “To remove the causes of war we must go deeper than armaments, we must remove grievances and injustice, we must raise human thought to a higher plane and give a new inspiration to the world. Let moral disarmament come and physical disarmament will soon follow. But what sign of this is there now?” Indeed, what sign of this has there ever been—what indications that it will ever occur?

Yet Churchill’s message was never one of despair or surrender. He did not have a wholly negative view of human nature. He also emphasized that science could not wholly subjugate and

“All this teaching ought to be very useful in preventing us from attacking or invading any other country, if anyone outside a madhouse wished to do so. But how would it help us if we were attacked ourselves? That is the question we have to ask.” — WSC

destroy the positive elements of the human spirit. Nor did he have a wholly negative view of politics or the possibilities of peace. There were freedom-loving nations who had struggled over the difficult ground of self-overcoming aided by healthy constitutionalism and the guiding flame of ethical and moral principle.

Churchill insisted that those nations—by which he meant the liberal democracies—had a task to perform in the world: the political and moral ideas that form the roots of liberty must be adhered to, propagated, and defended. While no scientific progress or alterations in human nature can be expected to mitigate the difficulty of the task, history continues to provide bountiful guidance. Churchill believed that the past could serve as a kind of treasury of human experience from which one could draw counsel for present decisions: the past remains valuable to future human endeavor, whatever changes science may bring, because the challenges presented by human nature will remain constant. Churchill’s desire to teach the lessons of history lies at the core of his statesmanship.

The horizons of this world will always be roiled by the struggles between the light and dark sides of human nature. Historical wisdom guided by prudence will never win a final victory. Churchill never promised such a victory. Instead, he offered that the struggle for justice

and peace is noble and worthy. He stood firmly within the gale and lifted high the banners of right, providing an example from which every subsequent generation may draw hope and inspiration.

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Endnotes

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2. “Fifty Years Hence,” 201.
3. “Fifty Years Hence,” 200.
4. “But might not the lop-sided creatures of this type fit in well with the Communist doctrines of Russia? Might not the Union of Soviet Republics armed with all the power of science find it in harmony with all their aims to produce a race adapted to mechanical tasks and with no other ideas but to obey the Communist State? The present nature of man is tough and resilient. It casts up sparks of genius in the darkest and most unexpected places. But Robots could be made to fit the grisly theories of Communism. There is nothing in the philosophy of Communists to prevent their creation.” “Fifty Years Hence,” 201.
5. The 1921 play *R.U.R. (Rossum’s Universal Robots)*, by Karel Čapek.

6. “Fifty Years Hence,” 201.
7. It does so in two ways—first by making the case that neither time nor technology fundamentally alters man’s ability to live peacefully with his fellow men; second, by noting that increased technology cannot answer or alter the fundamental questions asked by man about his own existence or provide comfort to his soul. I have concentrated on the first point. An excellent discussion of the second point can be found in Harry V. Jaffa, “Can There Be Another Winston Churchill?” in *Statesmanship: Essays in Honor of Sir Winston Spencer Churchill* ed. Harry V. Jaffa (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1981), 29-31.
8. “Fifty Years Hence,” 202-03.
9. “Mankind is Confronted by One Supreme Task,” number XII in the series “Great Events of Our Time,” *News of the World*, 14 November 1937, reprinted in *The Collected Essays of Sir Winston Churchill* (London: Library of Imperial History, 4 vols., 1975) IV 419.
10. In addition to the point that modern science not improve the moral condition of mankind, Churchill emphasizes that it can have a negative effect on that condition by giving powers to the wicked and degenerate they could not otherwise wield: “Mankind is Confronted by One Supreme Task,” 420.
11. “The Causes of War,” November 16, 1934 in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*, ed. Robert Rhodes James (New York: Bowker, 8 vols., 1974) V 5433.
12. “The Causes of War,” 5433.
13. “The Causes of War,” 5435.
14. “The Causes of War,” 5435.
15. See, for example Churchill’s speech at the Mid-Century Conference at M.I.T.: “The Twentieth Century—Its Promise and Its Realization” March 31, 1949 in *Complete Speeches*, VII 7807.

CHURCHILL & THE *TITANIC*: GUILT BY ASSOCIATION



BY RICHARD M. LANGWORTH * ILLUSTRATION BY KEN MARSCHALL

If you wish to sell a Churchill book nowadays,” one historian observed, “you have either to focus on some highly specialized aspect or come up with a new conspiracy theory.” In *Who Sank the Titanic*, we have an exemplary combination of both, and an object lesson in how *not* to indict the ever-indictable Winston Churchill, who left enough proof that he was human to engage critics for another century.

In April 1912, the world’s newest, largest passenger ship set out on her maiden voyage from Britain to New York. Four days later, she struck an iceberg and sank in under three hours, killing 1514 people. The

Titanic was built while Winston Churchill was President of the Board of Trade. Bingo....we have a headline.

Strange’s book offers much research, but not much as there should be. While rightly noting the failure of British lifeboat regulations to keep pace with passenger capacities, for example, he offers no comparisons with other nations’ practices, except for one vague reference to more lifeboats on “some” German ships (61). It is unbalanced to blame ship owners for insufficient lifeboats when they were spending far more than the cost of boats on such safety innovations as sliding watertight compartments. It is generally accepted that the

compartments would have kept *Titanic* afloat had she hit the iceberg at virtually any other angle.

The author criticizes the crew for failure to convey the gravity of the situation: “...they calmed the passengers by making them believe it was not a serious accident” (58). The shipping line, we are told, had failed to give officers training in lifeboat handling (51). Yet somehow they managed successfully to launch all sixteen lifeboats. Many boats left unfilled, which Strange blames on the crew’s unwarranted fear that fully loaded boats might buckle. This was true in some cases, but in fact many people simply refused to board the boats, preferring the apparent safety

of the ship. Fully loaded, the boats on hand could have saved 500 more lives. Indeed we learn that *Titanic's* davits were purposely built to accommodate double the number of boats, sufficient to save all on board—which suggests that the builders were anticipating requirements for greater capacity.

“PARTNERS IN CRIME”

Strange begins by tracing the history of the White Star Line, owner of *Titanic*. He offers convincing evidence of how Thomas Ismay, who had bought White Star in 1867, “cooked” commission minutes questioning the need for more lifeboats in 1888. (Churchill at this time was a Harrow schoolboy.)

Ismay’s ownership, Strange adds, had “momentous consequences for the doomed passengers [and would] directly influence how many lives were to be lost...” White Star ships were “longer, slimmer and faster...courting popularity at the cost of safety at sea” (37). In fact the rival Cunard flagships, *Mauretania* and *Lusitania*, were slimmer and faster, and White Star was specifically *not* attempting challenge Cunard for the Atlantic speed record. The line emphasized luxury, not speed—the opposite of Strange’s description of its ships.

Thomas Ismay, the author continues, went “out of his way to please the rich,” writing them “sycophantic, personal letters” (43). How then could he be so callous toward their safety? Strange actually supplies the answer, by a Member of Parliament, Leslie Scott. Regarding the “unworthy suspicion that ship-owners make money at the risk of human life,” Scott said, “wrecks and loss of life are alike bad business. It is the foundation of a ship-owner’s prosperity in business to win a



Who Sank the Titanic? The Final Verdict, by Robert Strange. Pen & Sword Books, Barnsley, S. Yorkshire, hardbound, illus., 224pp., \$32.95, Kindle \$13.99.

reputation for safe ships and for not losing human lives” (94).

Lengthy chapters filled with words like “conspirators, plotters, wheeler-dealers and partners in crime” detail financier J.P. Morgan’s attempt to establish a steamship monopoly by buying up European lines including White Star (32). The British and German governments, getting wind of Morgan’s plans, thwarted him by requiring ships owned by his company to remain under their national flags and crews, and subject to appropriation by their navies in time of war. The same governments also supported such powerful Morgan line rivals as Cunard and North German Lloyd.

Another easy target is Thomas Ismay’s son, J. Bruce Ismay, chairman of the line from 1899, who sailed on *Titanic*, survived and lived out his life in obloquy. J. Bruce’s statement after the sinking that his ship was constructed with “absolutely no limitation as to cost” was, Strange says, the “Big Lie.” It was “in the interests” of *Titanic's* owners and builders “that nobody should ever question whether financial pressures had contributed to the loss...” What is the evidence of such pressures? We are given none. Not a single memo, not a single directive nor a conversation.

CONSTRUCTION ANOMALIES

Getting into the ship’s actual

construction, the book provides evidence that White Star overstrained resources by building *Olympic* and *Titanic* in the same Belfast shipyard, Harland & Wolff, pushing to get them built and at sea earning money. Other lines, he points out, contracted with various shipyards. It would have improve Strange’s case to note that Cunard’s *Mauretania* and *Lusitania*, built a few years before, were indeed laid down in different yards.

“Conspirators” contributed to the tragedy by using inferior steel, the author suggests. Research on a chunk of hull raised from the wreck “suggested” that excess sulphur and phosphorous, or too little manganese, could have “affected” the hull, which in modern terminology would be “dirty steel.” Strange admits this theory is unproven and controversial, but “if those conclusions are correct,” they would explain why the “comparatively soft blow against the iceberg did so much damage.” I am not sure how he knows whether the blow was hard, soft or in-between.

So where is the proof that the “plotter” ship-builders cut corners and in their greed ordered “dirty steel”? Is there a single document that Morgan, Ismay or their minions urged the use of inferior materials? No, but one fact is certain: “the steel of 1912 was less resistant to stress than the steel of today.” The aircraft of 1912 were less resistant than the aircraft of today, too.

A lengthy chapter on rivets and the hazards of being a riveter (149-57) notes that a few of the ship’s iron rivets had to be replaced or caulked, suggesting that the builders did not order the best quality. Weak rivets “may have” remained, since we now know that the iceberg did not rip the ship open but made a series of punctures, suggesting weak spots.

The rivets chapter proves little except that the “plotter” Lord Pirrie, chairman of Harland & Wolf, insisted on “only men of the very best class” being paid enough to retain their services. Strange concludes there “more and more indications that the quality of riveting on *Titanic* and her sister *Olympic* were perhaps not up to the task.” There’s that word “perhaps” again. The author himself describes the *Olympic* in January 1912, coping with “record-breaking wind and waves...among the worst storms” the liner would ever face (and before her hull was reinforced following *Titanic*’s loss). “*Olympic* appeared to have survived her Atlantic ordeal with flying colours,” he writes.

ENTER CHURCHILL

But we Churchillians will buy this book for the Churchill accusations, so let us turn to them. Strange strongly condemns the Marine Division of Churchill’s Board of Trade, quoting from the *Northern Daily Mail*: “Official mediocrity or stupidity will have the advantage of doing precisely what it thinks fit...We have here a prospect of irritating, meddling and muddling to the benefit of nobody” (43). Not much new when it comes to government agencies.

The Marine Division’s chief inspector was mediocre, the book continues; its advisory committees deferred constantly to ship-owners in the “class-ridden British society.” *The New York Times* cited the Division’s “laxity in regulation and hasty inspection [to which] the world is largely indebted for this awful fatality” (191-92). This leads to the Board of Trade’s man at the top, Winston Churchill.

The reasons adduced for Churchill’s “criminal negligence” in

Marine Division inspections of *Titanic* betray “criminal unfamiliarity” (to use the author’s words) with basic biographic facts. Churchill’s 1908 love letters to Clementine Hozier are cited to suggest that he had “matters other than work on his mind” (77). Also, he was “rebuilding his political reputation after switching political parties” (actually that happened in 1904) and “was obsessively working on a biography of his father” (the book was finished in 1905).

Churchill, the book continues, also had the “growing conviction that he was unfairly being passed over for higher office” (77). “In desperation for political advancement” he had left the Conservatives. “To enhance his reputation with his new colleagues he had enthusiastically embraced the Liberal party’s support of ‘Home Rule’” (94). Not even critical historians have cited such stories. Churchill left the Conservatives over his principled belief in Free Trade; he supported Home Rule through his the influence of Lloyd George (whom Strange calls “Lloyd-George”), and his own innate magnanimity.

But Churchill was head of the Board of Trade. He “could have” chosen a lifeboat committee “that might have been more conscious of passenger safety” (93). He “could have” amended the requirements with “one stroke of his pen.” When questioned in Parliament he simply ducked: “I am advised that it would not be practicable” for large vessels



Churchill at Sheriff Court, Dundee after retaining his seat in the general election of 1910. His initial victory there was in 1908, after losing his seat for Manchester North West. It kept him in Parliament, enabling him to be appointed President of the Board of Trade, this first Cabinet post. (*Illustrated London News*, 1910).

to carry lifeboats for all. Such complacency, Strange writes, proves that no one “was even considering the safety of passengers.”

Lifeboat capacity had been debated since the 1880s, but until the loss of *Titanic* it was never resolved—largely because ship-builders thought improvements in construction like watertight compartments (hardly mentioned in this book) were far more conducive to safety—that a situation like *Titanic* found herself in was highly unlikely. Indeed, the scenario was never duplicated before or after.

Even Churchill’s good acts are twisted against him. When a cargo ship disappeared in 1907 Churchill said, “A public inquiry must be held in all [such] cases...No deviation is to be permitted from this rule” (73). Mr. Strange tells us he was “humiliated” into saying this—and even though it was a principled stand, it exacerbated his poor relations with the Marine Division! Leading of course to the loss of *Titanic*.

Poor relations or not, the book claims, Churchill should have been

on top of things: “...it is hard to believe that the politician in charge of the Marine Division could not have been aware of the ship’s construction” (195). *Au contraire*, it is *easy* to believe—and not because of his “busy personal life” (195).

No biographer has ever recorded Churchill’s personal life interfering with his career, but there are real reasons why he did not overrule his advisors. Churchill saw his role as “the direct defence of Free Trade,” and fostering “the commercial interests of our country, within the limits of state intervention” (Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 2, 280). A colleague reminded me: “Rather than blind ambition, his tenure as Trade Lord prepared the way for some of the most sweeping reforms Britain had seen in economic affairs, and for the energetic reorganization of the Admiralty.” It is true that Churchill found those

together as the main speakers at a controversial Belfast rally in favour of Home Rule.” So what?

An example of how Strange offers conjecture and then assumes it must be true is in his final chapter: “The [construction] faults *may have* arisen because of the pressure of work among rivet teams....Or the rivets themselves *may have* been made of iron with inherent weaknesses” (201; italics mine). Next we read: “Whichever possibility is correct...” The may-haves are now the only possible alternatives.

WHO WAS TO BLAME?

The *Titanic* disaster, as Walter Lord wrote half a century ago, was caused by a conjunction of factors, which contributed to the most freakish of accidents. If only there had been a moon to light the sea ahead. If only there had been the usual Atlantic chop, with waves breaking around

The singularity and hubris of the most luxurious ship afloat being sunk by an ignominious iceberg makes us yearn for someone to blame.

tasks more interesting than lifeboats, rivets and steel plate—which he quite properly assigned to underlings.

If we cannot have proof of a conspiracy, can we have at least the implication of one? Yes: “It would have been odd,” Strange writes, if Churchill hadn’t talked to Lord Pirrie of Harland & Wolff, builders of *Titanic*. Did he or didn’t he? Strange offers nothing to support this innuendo of guilt by association: “There is no record of any discussions” between them, or that Pirrie “unduly influenced” Churchill. Ah, but “the two men were close enough that they later appeared

the iceberg’s edges. If only the crow’s nest warning had come a little earlier—or a little later, causing a head-on crash that would not have holed so many watertight compartments. If only the nearby liner *Californian* had been on the wireless. Yet even then, sea travel was one of the safest forms of transport; hundreds of liners inferior to this one had transported millions of passengers across the Atlantic in those days of vast immigration.

The possibilities of weak plating and inferior rivets are not new to this book. Yet it does force the question, unanswered here, of how *Titanic*’s

sister the *Olympic* managed an illustrious 24-year career, including troop transport during World War I, and several collisions, earning the nickname “Old Reliable,” with faulty rivets and weak plates. *Olympic* was refitted with a double hull after the *Titanic* disaster—but not before she had survived intact the worst Atlantic storm any seaman had ever seen.

The singularity and hubris of the most luxurious ship afloat being sunk by an ignominious iceberg makes us yearn for someone to blame. It is remindful of the Kennedy assassination. We simply couldn’t accept, William Manchester wrote, that a lone loser killed the President. There must be a plot, schemers, suppressed evidence, a cover-up. Just so *Titanic*. Mr. Strange has now satisfied the yen by providing a list of what he calls “partners in crime,” led by Churchill.

Some of them may be guilty. The book offers sound criticisms of the actions of Morgan, Pirrie and the Ismays. But their acts had been questioned long before this book. Churchill, however, is a new one.

“With all her weak rivets, and with all her lack of lifeboats,” we are told, “*Titanic* was built on Winston Churchill’s watch” (197). With all her weak o-rings, and with all her lack of escape hatches, the space shuttle *Challenger* was built on Ronald Reagan’s watch. Mr. Strange’s case against Churchill is as poorly constructed as he claims the *Titanic* was.

Mr. Langworth is a historical consultant to The Churchillian, longtime editor of The Churchill Centre magazine Finest Hour, and editor or publisher of five books on Sir Winston Churchill.

ANECDOTAGE:

The Fertility of Churchill's Thought

BY DAVID DILKS

The duty of a democracy in wartime, said Mr. Churchill in 1943, is not to conceal but to confuse, not to emulate “the silence of the oyster serene in its grotto, but the smudge and blur of the cuttlefish.” The thought may have occurred to many a minister and military man, but the language—unpremeditated, arresting, alliterative—would have been heard on the lips of no other politician of that day or of this.

Churchill liked words to fall into their places “like pennies in a slot.” One of his successors as Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, remarked justly: “There was nothing Winston loved better than to ambush the unexpected word or phrase.”

Self-educated to a remarkable degree, Churchill first felt the desire for learning when a young officer in India. Unlike a young man at university, he devised his own syllabus and had no tutor to correct or guide him. Soon the public, as readers of his articles and books, provided their own set of examinations. His political career was financed by facility with words and from an early stage he relied upon dictation. Hence the cheerful remark, “I lived in fact from mouth to hand” (40).

Even this book of 350,000 words, made possible by the miracles of modern storage and retrieval and well organized by its editor into thirty-four chapters, represents but the tiniest fraction of Churchill's output. Here is Churchill on America and Germany and Russia; on warfare on land, sea and air; on the nuclear age; on painting, religion and science; and much else. Not for him the silence of the oyster or the blur of the cuttlefish; rather, the philosopher's habit of brooding upon large issues, looking for a pattern, relating large themes to each other.

It is commonly said of Churchill that he was too self-centered to take any serious interest in the personalities and aspirations



Churchill in His Own Words: The Life, Times and Opinions of Winston Churchill, Richard M. Langworth, editor. Ebury Press, softbound, illus., 620 pp., \$17 from Amazon UK. An e-book will be published by RosettaBooks in 2013.

of those with whom he dealt. There is no doubt an element of truth in the charge; but not more than that, and it cannot survive a reading of (say) *Great Contemporaries* or indeed of the longest chapter of this book, entitled “People.”

Through many of the quotations shines Churchill's unquenchable faith in Britain and the decency and dauntlessness of her people. This conviction would sometimes spring unbidden into his mind. Elderly reviewers should not, I suppose, lapse into that state which my students used to call “anecdote.” All the same, let me confess with pride that as a boy I heard

Churchill say to the throng outside the Guildhall at Worcester, just after he had received the Freedom of the City: “I am sure that...you will bear yourselves as unconquerable Englishmen and women, spreading our thought and culture by every means over wide circles...always ready to give your lives, not only at the moment of death but to devote your lives to the country to which we owe so much and which is for us a religion on earth...”

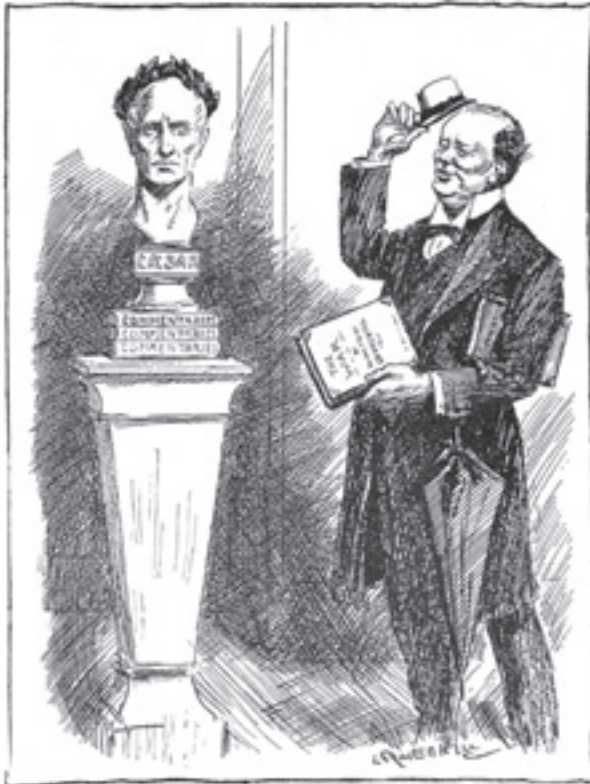
Immense pains have been taken to verify and cross-reference the quotations. This is by far the best book of its kind. Such was Churchill's fertility of thought and language that there is room for a sequel.

Professor Dilks is a former vice-chancellor of the University of Hull and author of *The Great Dominion: Winston Churchill in Canada 1900-1954*.

Churchill On His Headgear

A reader sent us a passage on the eccentricities of politicians, from Huxley's *Antic Hay*: "Some wear curious 'ats, like Winston Churchill." He asks if Churchill was really known for his odd tastes in hats.

He was indeed, and cartoonists had a field day over this in the 1920s. Churchill was also famously photographed in a ten-gallon hat and Indian headdress in America, a pith helmet in Africa, a poilu helmet in World War I, and a Tilley hat in Canada. But Churchill himself pooh-poohed the notion, wrote Peter de Mendelssohn ...



Churchill was much bothered by cartoonists and hats.

"One of the most necessary features of a public man's equipment," he wrote in an amusing essay, "is some distinctive mark which everyone learns to look for and to recognize. Disraeli's forelock, Mr. Gladstone's collars, Lord Randolph Churchill's moustache, Mr. Chamberlain's eyeglass, Mr. Baldwin's pipe — these 'properties' are of the greatest value. I have never indulged in any of them, so to fill the need cartoonists have invented the legend of my hats."

This legend, he explained, was born during the Election of 1910. He was at Southport and went for a walk with his wife along the beach. "A very tiny felt hat — I do not know where it came from — had been packed with my luggage. It lay on the hall table, and without thinking I put it on. As we came back from our walk, there was the photographer, and he took a picture. Ever since, the cartoonists and paragraphists have dwelt on my hats; how many they are, how strange and queer; and how I am always changing them, and what importance I attach to them, and so on. It is all rubbish, and it is all founded on a single photograph."

But deMendelssohn adds:

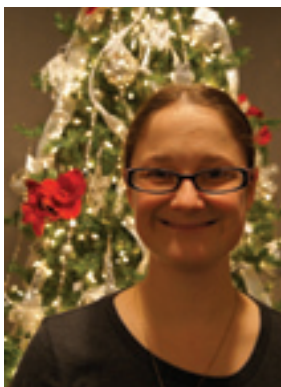
It is a good story but hardly good enough to be true unless he never became aware of the marked difference between his own favourite head-gear and that normally worn by the rest of his fellow-men.

— From Peter de Mendelssohn, *The Age of Churchill* (London: Thames & Hudson; New York, Knopf, 1961. (The Churchill quote is from "Cartoons and Cartoonists," in *Thoughts and Adventures*.)



Top: "Mr. Churchill and Friend": Leonard Raven Hill in *Punch*, 14 February 1923. (Churchill had just published his first volume of WW1 memoirs, *The World Crisis*.)

Bottom: "A New Hat": Sidney Strube in the *Daily Express*, 18 January 1921. (Churchill had moved from the War Office to the Colonial Office in Lloyd George's government.)



Liz Murphy
National Churchill Museum
Archivist/Curator

More Than Cards: The Hallmark/Churchill Connection

This winter we will be curating an in-house exhibition which focuses on the relationship between Joyce C. Hall, founder of Hallmark Cards, Inc., and Winston Churchill, and which sheds light on this fascinating, yet little known, connection. This association is one we have long wanted to examine. When I was initially given a tour of our collections area I was delighted to see the wonderful scale model we have of Blenheim Palace, the birthplace of Winston Churchill. I was told it used to reside in a prominent location within the old exhibition and in fact came from the Hall Foundation. This relationship was one that I was unaware of and developing this exhibition has been the perfect opportunity to delve into it more fully.

Mr. Hall, born near Omaha Nebraska, truly embodies the American Dream. Born into poverty he and his siblings worked odd jobs, starting as young as the fourth grade, to support their family. While working at a local store in his late teens he was presented with an opportunity to buy cards at wholesale and sell them. This all took place in Omaha Nebraska, in partnership with another couple. After an invigorating conversation with a Kansas City cigar salesman who boasted of the Kansas City spirit JC Hall decided in 1910 to end his existing partnership and move to fresh opportunities in Kansas City.

EXHIBIT OPENING

Make plans to join us at the Churchill Museum for an exhibit opening January 16, 2013 from 5:30-7:00 pm. You will get a first peek at the exhibit as well as enjoy refreshments while exploring the exhibition!

JC Hall entered Kansas City with two show boxes of cards and not much else. Fast forward 30 years and Hallmark Cards are now a household name, in the United States and beyond. JC Hall was always on the lookout for new and innovative greeting cards and took careful note of the artistic talents exhibited by Winston Churchill during a visit to Chartwell. He wanted to take those images and produce cards and, while he took

some initial convincing, Mr. Hall eventually convinced Winston Churchill to sign a three year agreement allowing the Hallmark Company to employ Churchill's work on Hallmark Cards.

To discover more about the Churchill Museum and Hall Foundation visit the Museum between January 14, 2013 – March 8, 2013. We will explore this exciting story in depth as well as have several pieces on display donated to the museum from the Hall Foundation.



Mandy Plybon
Education & Public Programs Coordinator

Education and Public Programs Update

TEACHER MEMBERSHIP

We spent some time thinking about how to do more to engage teachers in the National Churchill Museum and we now offer a teacher membership, something special for an educator that is reasonably priced for their use. For \$25, members of the Educator Club receive:

- Two FREE admissions, *per anum*, to assist with the planning of field trips.
- \$2 off the general admission rate (for individuals only).
- One “Buy 2/Get 1 Free admission” coupon for teacher-led field trips per year.
- 10% discount in the Museum Gift Store.
- 15% discount on teacher workshops.
- Quarterly educator e-newsletters with the latest information about programs and resources for students and teachers alike.
- Access to online resources and *The Churchillian*, the Museum’s quarterly publication and perhaps the foremost journal in the field of Churchill studies.

To apply for a membership, educators are required to show a valid school staff badge or a pay stub while homeschool parents need to provide a copy of the Compulsory Instruction Report that they file each year.

WEBSITE

As you read this edition of *The Churchillian*, work is ongoing on our new website. While most of the small edits and reorganization is complete this type of endeavor has no real end as constant editing and the provision of new content is key to ensuring that readers return and key also to ensuring that our website continues to rank favorably on a host of search engines. Currently, I am working on the wedding section of the website. We were able to secure the rights to a fantastic slideshow of images from a recent wedding as well as several impressive photos, all of which will feature in the new wedding section and the wedding brochure.



Kit Freudenberg
Director of Development

Leadership Gallery



**He stood against
appeasement and tyranny.
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The National Churchill Museum brings this story to life. Within our Leadership Gallery and throughout the world through *The Churchillian* magazine, we help people of all ages understand and connect with character qualities demonstrated by Churchill. His successes and his failures — and most importantly, how he responded to these events — made Churchill a leader in the 19th and the 20th centuries. And continues to provide those ideals in the 21st century.

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- Unlimited Museum Experience admission
- Free admission for two guests
- Quarterly magazine, *The Churchillian*, with articles from noted authors and historians
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Churchill Leadership Medal
to Ambassador Stephen F. Brauer.



Ambassador Stephen F. Brauer

The Churchill Leadership Medal is presented to leaders in civic and business organizations who exemplify the leadership qualities demonstrated by Winston Spencer Churchill. Award winners include John Bachmann, William Danforth, Sir John Major and Walter Cronkite.

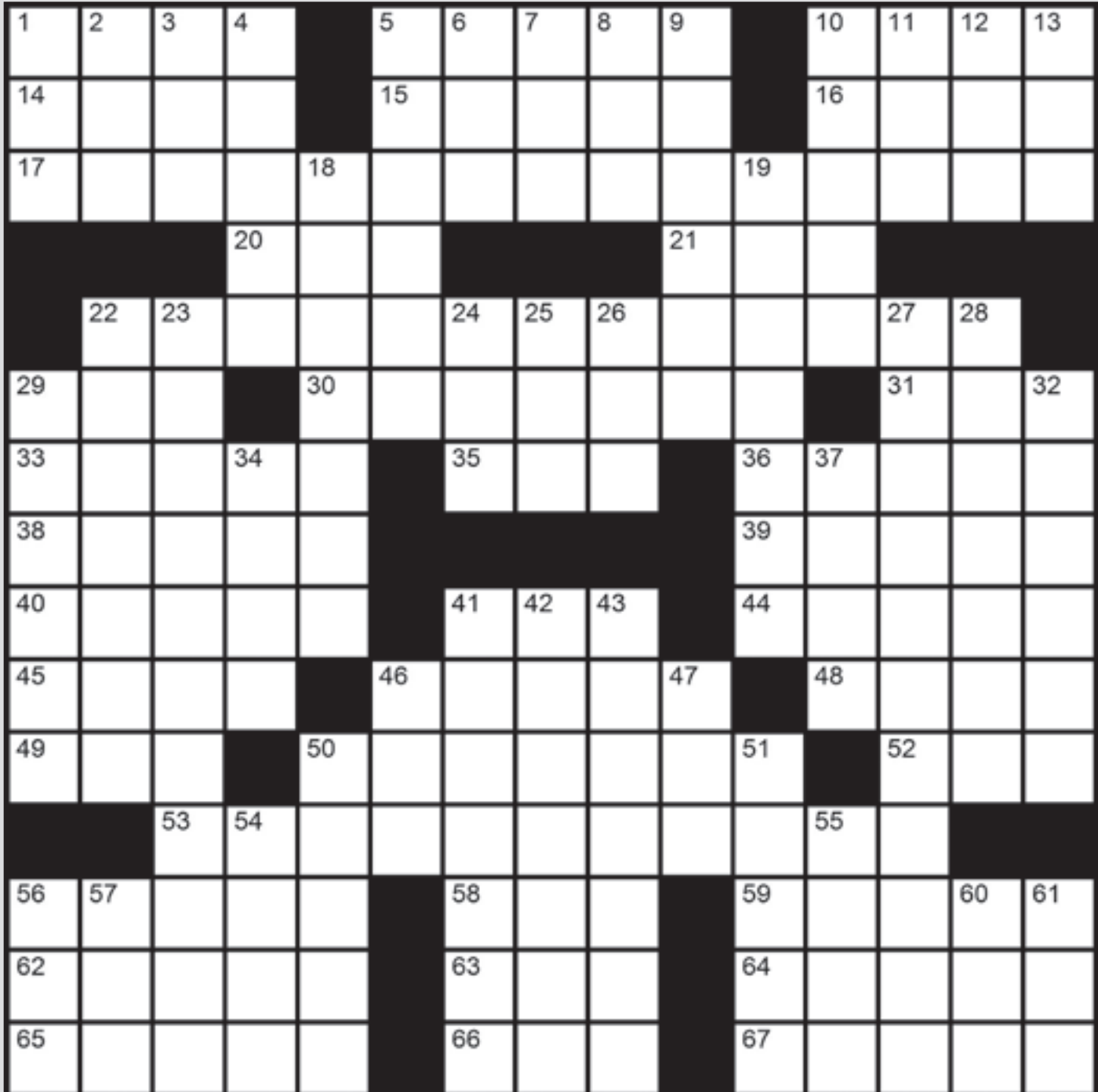


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Thursday, April 18, 2013
Cocktails and Reception at 6 p.m.
Dinner and Program at 7 p.m.
Bellerive Country Club
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Kit Freudenberg at 573-592-5022
Kit.Freudenberg@churchillmemorial.org

THE CHURCHILLIAN CROSSWORD



Crossword designed by Richard J. Mahoney and Brendon Emmett Quigley

Puzzle answers to be published on the Museum's website,
www.NationalChurchillMuseum.org, after Dec. 15, 2012.

ACROSS

- 1 WSC's nickname for his nanny Elizabeth Ann Everest
- 5 Prepare for surgery
- 10 ___ Secretary (WSC title in 1910)
- 14 Arias for one
- 15 Letter preceding iota
- 16 Med. school subj.
- 17 Start of a quote by WSC
- 20 Geometric fig.
- 21 Honorific given Winston in April, 1953
- 22 Quote, part 2
- 29 Philosophical principle from China
- 30 To WSC "terminological inexactitude" described ___ someone
- 31 One-time gas and elec. regulator
- 33 Set
- 35 A short WSC brushstroke on canvas, e.g.
- 36 Introduction to structure
- 38 Advil competitor
- 39 Winston to Randolph, or Randolph to Winston
- 40 No longer ill
- 41 Pale-complexioned
- 44 Mercer University home
- 45 Foozles
- 46 Historical figure of fable
- 48 "A sacred ___" (smoking cigars to WSC)
- 49 ___ power (lifelong WSC advocacy)
- 50 Quote, part 3
- 52 Saphead
- 53 End of the quote
- 56 1953 Literature Prize won by WSC
- 58 Give the title of
- 59 Vine-covered, as college walls
- 62 Helvetica alternative
- 63 Boxer who lost "The Drama in the Bahamas" in 1981
- 64 Marathon warm-ups?
- 65 Empire destroyers
- 66 "Peace May ___ Be Preserved" (1949 WSC at MIT)
- 67 Brat's opposite
- 19 WSC's reluctant buffer to Stalinism in Balkans
- 22 Description of WSC outcome at Gallipoli
- 23 Toontown character who wears overalls
- 24 Describing "Lend Lease" in WW2
- 25 Messenger's letters?
- 26 Cold War spy group
- 27 Doing a ref's job
- 28 Displaces
- 29 What a good criminal avoids leaving
- 32 Frequent French painting and gambling locale for WSC
- 34 Musical Burl
- 37 Ft. Bragg setting
- 41 Follower of a school night
- 42 Stubborn ___
- 43 Spartan's response to "How much does it hurt?"
- 46 Spark's path
- 47 Part of R.P.M.
- 50 Secretaries often hold them
- 51 Watchdog from Japan
- 54 Dinah's mother
- 55 Neck-and-neck
- 56 "Continue To Pester, ___ And Bite" (Martin Gilbert's book on WSC leadership style)
- 57 Gold, to Gustavo
- 60 Supplement with difficulty
- 61 It usually comes with cable

DOWN

- 1 Cornwall to Blenheim dir.
- 2 "Golly!"
- 3 Bullfight yell
- 4 Chop up
- 5 Describing WSC's relationship often with son Randolph
- 6 River of southern Kazakhstan
- 7 Johnny Walker ___ (WSC's favorite scotch)
- 8 Eponymous western tribe
- 9 Low-down dog?
- 10 Winston's ally at Potsdam
- 11 John Lennon Museum founder
- 12 5, in a date
- 13 Schedule info
- 18 Gave way (to)

LETTERS TO *THE CHURCHILLIAN*

Email us any questions about Winston Churchill under the sun, and we'll get the answer from our panel of experts! Send your questions, comments and general musings to TheChurchillian@nationalchurchillmuseum.org.

“OMG” AND ADMIRAL FISHER

I work for *The New York Times Upfront*, a magazine run by Scholastic Inc. and *The New York Times* for high school students. We hope you can verify a recent piece of news. *The Daily Mail* (<http://xrl.us/bnu2ps>) has published a letter written September 9, 1917, by Britain's First Sea Lord, Admiral John Fisher, to First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, where he first used the acronym O.M.G., for “Oh My God.” As you know, “OMG” is a phrase often used by texters, especially teenagers! Is Fisher the originator, and is there a handwritten version of his letter to Churchill?
—Alessandra Potenza, New York, N.Y.

Editor's response: There's no doubt that it's genuine, but we are not sure why the *Daily Mail* thinks this is a discovery. Lord Fisher reproduced the letter in his book, *Memoirs* (American edition, New York: Doran 1919) at page 77. The same letter was reproduced by Admiral Bacon in his biography, *Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2 vols., 1929) II 194.

Fisher had a flamboyant writing style, often signing his letters to Churchill, “Yours till a cinder”—and other loquacious salutations which, given his resignation and disappearance from the Admiralty in May 1915, were somewhat less than sincere. Unfortunately, the Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge reports that they do not have a copy of the original.

Regrettably, we cannot track “O.M.G.” or the spelled-out version to anything Churchill himself said or wrote, though Roosevelt once said “Oh My God” over a silly question at a post-Yalta press conference. And Churchill's best friend, Lord Birkenhead (1872-1930) once cracked: “When Winston is right he is unique. When he is wrong, Oh My God!”

Bottom line: credit “O.M.G.” to Jacky Fisher!

FORGOTTEN THE PAST, CONDEMNED TO RELIVE IT

DID CHURCHILL REALLY STEAL?

Manfred Weidhorn's wonderful article ("Churchill's Use of Kidnapped Phrases," Autumn 2012) suggests that Churchill essentially "stole" from the elder Pitt the lines, "If I were a Boer, I hope I should be fighting in the field" (1901) and, much later, "never, never never..." (...give in, 1941). Perhaps. But what evidence is there that Churchill "stole" the phrase, since theft is a conscious act?

—Warren F. Kimball,
John Island, S.C.

Professor Weidhorn replies: No evidence, only a guess. Is Churchill not likely to have read Pitt's speech or heard of that famous/notorious sentence? In any case, the T.S. Eliot quotation ("minor poets borrow and great poets steal") gives me cover; it uses a harmless sense of "stole." It's not quite what Bernie Madoff did but what Shakespeare did—stealing big-time from Holinshed and Plutarch! Good company to be in.

I am a librarian and I have a patron who inquired about the famous quotation, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

We know it was attributed to George Santayana; however, our patron would like to know when Mr. Churchill first used it. Unfortunately, my colleagues and I have not been able to locate the time or context of quote as it relates to Mr. Churchill. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

— Danielle Janoski, New York, N.Y.

Editor's response: Right! Santayana wrote that in *The Life of Reason* (1905)—the web is full of attributions to Churchill, but it appears he never repeated it. Thorough searches in the newly digitalized Churchill Papers provide no occurrence of Santayana's remark, or even key phrases from it. We are inclined to believe he never quoted Santayana in so many words.

Churchill worried not so much that those who forget the past are condemned to relive it, but that the loss of the past would mean "the most thoughtless of ages. Every day headlines and short views." (1948.) But perhaps his best remark on the subject was this:

"When the situation was manageable it was neglected, and now that it is thoroughly out of hand we apply too late the remedies which then might have effected a cure. There is nothing new in the story. It is as old as the sibylline books. It falls into that long, dismal catalogue of the fruitlessness of experience and the confirmed unteachability of mankind. Want of foresight, unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong--these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history."

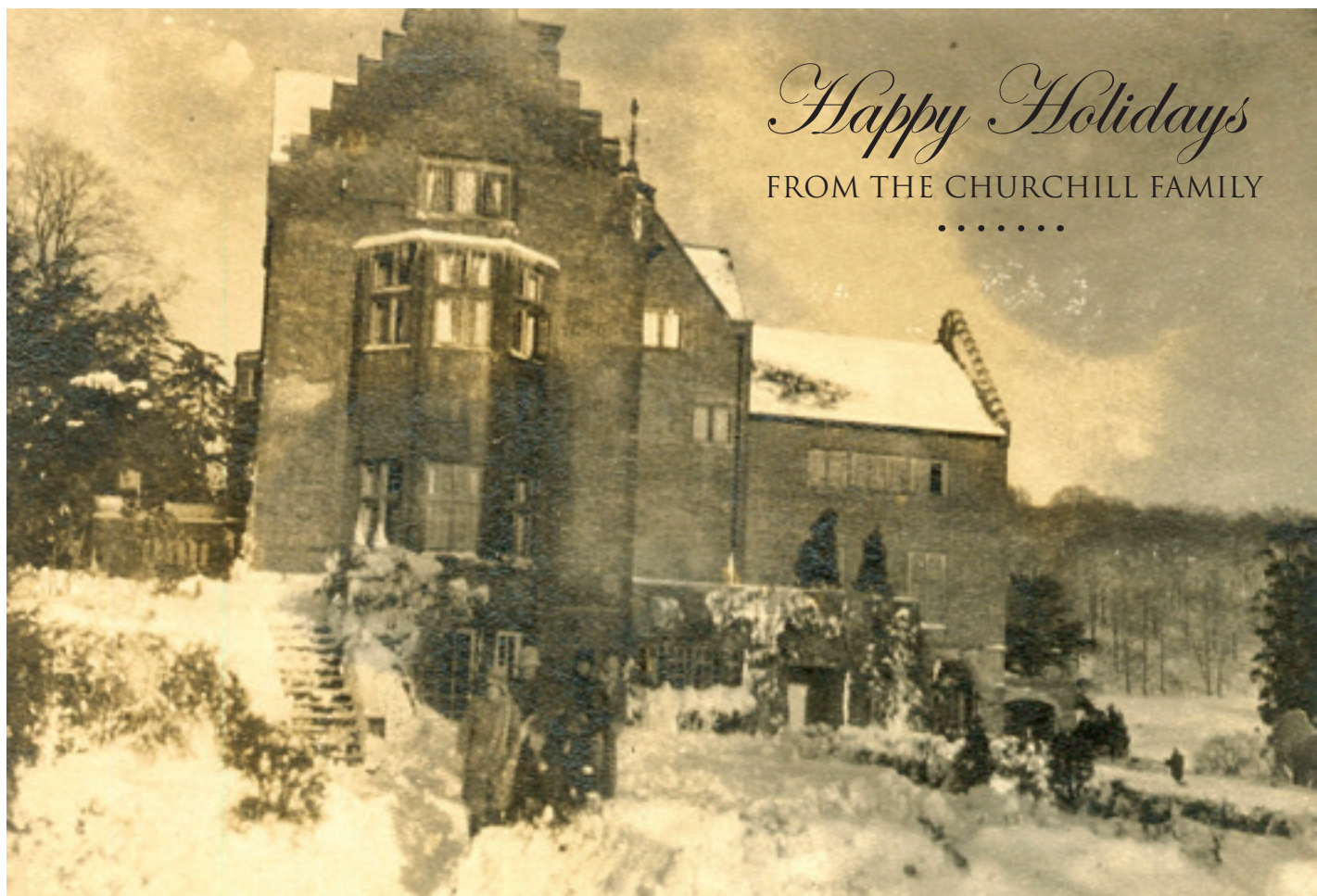
—House of Commons, May 2, 1935, after the Stresa Conference, in which Britain, France and Italy agreed — futilely — to maintain the independence of Austria.



A Day To Remember...



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AT 573.592.6242 FOR MORE INFORMATION.



Happy Holidays

FROM THE CHURCHILL FAMILY





Churchill building a snowman at Chartwell circa 1930

JANUARY

- 1** New Year's Day
Museum closed
- 3** Extended Hours Night
4:30 pm-7:00 pm
- 14** New Exhibit Begins
10:00 am-4:30 pm
*More than Cards:
The Hallmark/Churchill
Connection (On display
until March 8)*
- 16** Exhibit Opening
& Gallery Talk
5:30 pm-7:00 pm

FEBRUARY

- 7** Extended Hours Night
4:30 pm-7:00 pm
- 9** Winston Churchill
Kids Club Party
1:00 pm-3:00 pm


- 12** Teacher Appreciation
Night
4:00 pm-6:00 pm

MARCH

- 1** Night at the Museum
7:30 pm-9:00 am
- 2-3** Churchill Weekend
- 5** Churchill's
"Iron Curtain"
Speech Anniversary
- 7** Extended Hours Night
4:30 pm-7:00 pm
- 19** Did Ya' Know: Series
5:30 pm-6:30 pm
- 25** New Exhibit Begins
10:00 am-4:30 pm
*13th Annual Watercolor
Missouri International
(On display until May 17)*

APRIL

- 4** Extended Hours Night
4:30 pm-7:00 pm
- 7** Watercolor Awards
Ceremony & Gallery
Opening
1:00 pm-3:00 pm
- 10** Homeschool Day
9:00 am-4:00 pm
- 27** In The Community
Series: *The Grand Race*
All day
- 30** Gallery Talk:
Watercolor exhibit
5:30 pm-6:00 pm



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- Paris venues: Arc de Triomphe, Musee de L'Armee and other sites
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