

A KIND message has come from my fellow subjects of the British Crown in the Fiji Islands. It says they would like me to speak direct to them. For many years, the message explains, they have heard my voice week after week talking about the affairs of the world, but they have not felt that I was thinking especially of them, so they would be glad if I could speak to them and tell them perhaps something of the man behind the voice. I feel proud to have had so kind a message from them. It makes me feel sorry that I have never been able to see them in their homes or to know more of them and their beautiful islands than can be learned from books. I did hope to pay them a visit 24 years ago, but was then prevented from getting any nearer to Fiji than the western coast of Canada and the United States. Why this was I shall say in a moment. I can perhaps explain it better if I begin by saying something about myself.

### The Things That Mattered

As I shall be 74 years old this month, I suppose I am quite an old fellow. Yet though my hair is grey and there is not as much of it as there used to be, I don't feel really old. This may be because I have never had time to worry about myself, and have always been watching what was going on in the world. Since I was 21 I have been thinking and writing about the things that might do good or harm to England and the British Commonwealth and Empire of which the Fiji Islands form one part. For a long time the things that mattered most seemed to be in Europe. England, as you know, is not quite in Europe, though her south-east coast is only 21 miles away from the northern coast of France. Before I was 21 I went to Europe and tried to learn about France, Germany, Italy, and other European countries, and I only came home again in October, 1913, when I was 42. I came home then because I knew that Germany under her restless Emperor with her strong army and navy meant soon to begin a great war against France, Russia, and England. People at home didn't understand this, and I wanted to warn them so that they could get ready to resist a German attack. When I got home and began to warn them most of them wouldn't listen. They thought they were in no danger, yet some of them knew the truth and wanted England to be ready. One of these was Mr. Winston Churchill, who at that time was looking after the British Navy. He, at any rate, made sure that the Navy would be ready.

That war began, as you know, in August, 1914. It lasted 4 years and 2 months. Germany who started it was beaten at last, though not so badly as she has been beaten in the second Great War, which has just come to an end.

### "The Greatest English Newspaper"

Between 1914 and 1918 I was helping to write the greatest English newspaper, *The Times* of London. And I also helped to spoil some plans which the enemy had made. My job was to keep an eye on foreign affairs, and as the war was fought mostly in Europe I had often to go to the front to see things for myself. When it was over I became Editor of *The Times* of which my friend,

## CALLING THE ISLANDS

### Wickham Steed Talks About Himself



BBC photograph

★ *RECENTLY* some of his listeners in the South Seas wrote to ask Wickham Steed (above) to tell them something about the man behind the voice that they had been hearing for so long in BBC broadcasts. So in a recent talk he gave them the answer, in simple language—and here it is.

Lord Northcliffe, was then the chief owner. It was he who in 1921 wanted to find out what Japan was after in the Pacific Ocean. So he asked me to go with him to China and Japan and to visit the Fiji Islands on our way to New Zealand and Australia. I should have liked to go, but by the time we reached Vancouver in British Columbia we thought it better that I should leave him there while I went back to watch a big international gathering, which was going to be held in Washington in November, 1921, to settle affairs in the Pacific Ocean. One of those affairs was the alliance between England and Japan which had then lasted nearly 20 years. Japan had used the alliance to cover up her plans for getting hold of China and India and for ruling over the whole Pacific Ocean. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, which knew about the Japanese plans, were very worried. They thought the alliance between England and Japan ought to come to an end. Lord Northcliffe and I thought so too, so instead of going with him to the Fiji Islands I went back to Washington, where in November, 1921, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was brought to an end.

### Entry Into Broadcasting

Soon after he came back from his long voyage, Lord Northcliffe died. *The Times* was sold to another chief owner. I left it in November, 1922, and began to work for myself. A few years later the BBC asked me to try broadcasting. I did so, and for some time my voice was often heard in England; but it wasn't till the BBC extended its empire service

in 1938 that I could be heard in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Fiji Islands. By that time, as in 1913, I knew quite well that Germany, with Hitler at her head, was getting ready to start another war, and that she would again attack England and France. Mr. Winston Churchill, of whom I saw a good deal in those days, knew too, and said so. The Government wouldn't listen to him. Like a good many people in England, the Government hoped that if we were kind to the Germans and the Japanese they wouldn't attack us. Mr. Churchill thought, and I agreed with him, that the kinder we were, the weaker the Germans would believe us to be, and the more certainly would they attack us.

When they did attack us he was taken into the Government to look after the Navy once more. A few months later he became our greatest war leader.

### Into Bed and Out Again

I wasn't quite so brave. Whenever I could I spent a day or two with my wife, whose job it was to look after people in the country whom the Government had sent away from London for safety. My wife's mother had turned her big house, which had been my home in the country, into a hospital for the wives of soldiers. My wife helped her too. But just before the war began, in September, 1939, I went to London and stayed there for a good time. In fact, I was always there for the greater part of every week. Sometimes it was very noisy. Once a German bomb fell 50 yards from my house, blew me into bed, and out again. We all felt rather helpless, because at

first we had few guns to fire at the German aircraft. We got more guns, and it was a great comfort to hear them shooting at the Germans, even if the noise made it hard to sleep. Londoners also liked to feel that they were in the front-line, sharing the dangers of the soldiers and sailors, airmen, and merchant seamen who were fighting the enemy. In all those years I hardly saw anybody who looked frightened. Thousands of houses were smashed, tens of thousands of people were killed, yet somehow or other we carried on.

### Speaking From a Cellar

Several times I had to go to the BBC at midnight or later to broadcast my talks. The streets were pitch dark, my house was three miles away, there were no trains or cabs and I had to drive my own car; but the war required that somebody should stay in the car when I got out of it, so three plucky women who worked in my house volunteered to come with me in turn and sit in the car outside the BBC. Often there were air raids, but those brave women never showed fear. I wonder whether you in the Fiji Islands knew where my voice came from when you heard it. Sometimes it came from a sort of cellar under the BBC, four floors below the level of the street. The BBC was often hit by German bombs and scores of its staff were killed or wounded. There was no fright amongst them. They just kept on keeping on.

By that time my wife had come to London to cook for me. For some weeks the flying bombs came over all day and all night. One night I counted 19 before I could go to sleep, and another night 13. They were the only things that ever made me hide my head under the bedclothes. All the same we never doubted that we and our Allies would win the war, so it was easy for me to say, week by week, how things were going, and to tell you in the Fiji Islands that we were not downhearted. I had only to tell the truth, as I saw it round me. But the way the people behaved made one proud to be an Englishman, just as you ought to be proud to be citizens of the British Empire.

### It May be Harder Now

Now it's all over, and we have to get back to the ways of peace. This may be more difficult than it was to keep cheerful during the war. It's easy to be brave in times of danger. It isn't so easy to put up with discomfort when the danger is past. Still we shall do that too. Food may be scarce, clothes may be shabby, taxes may take away half of what we earn. Who shall grumble while we set about making England and the Commonwealth and Empire better places to live in than they ever were. We have learned that we are all members of one great family who must go on helping each other.

You, too, in the Fiji Islands are members of that family. So, too, are our fellow citizens in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and many other parts of the world. To you, and to them all, I should like to say, Be of good cheer, and work for the future.

### "A Sort of Personal Message"

Now that victory has come I feel that I owe you a response to your kind and friendly message. I am very grateful for

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