

WAR ALL HIS LIFE

A Tribute To Henry Nevinson

HENRY NEVINSON, the famous English journalist, died during the week at the age of 85. Henry Nevinson was not a great popular figure, but to numbers of people in literally dozens of countries—throughout the English-speaking world, in Europe and elsewhere—he was known as a writer of distinction, and one of the most fearless and tireless crusaders of his time. He belonged to that large and influential body of English individualists, men and women of strong views and indomitable courage, who are always on the look-out for adventure, hate tyranny in all its forms, worship freedom, and find friends among people of every political faith and religious creed.

Nevinson described himself as a conservative in tastes and a revolutionary in politics. He was of the breed of the

Italian patriot Garibaldi. He loved liberty more than anything, and through a long life he fought for it with all his strength. He fought for it at home and abroad. He hated injustice and oppression. He championed the cause of the English poor, of the Portuguese slaves in West Africa, of minorities of people struggling for independence everywhere. He took up unpopular causes, was thrown out of political meetings and nearly torn to pieces, reported wars and revolutions, risked his life in the worst climates in the world, and exposed himself to assassination.

"Bugs, Fleas, and Cods' Heads"

Educated at Shrewsbury and Christ Church, Oxford, Nevinson was an undergraduate when Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice in Wonderland* was a don, he heard Ruskin lecture, and saw the aged Carlyle. After Oxford he studied in Germany, and with other English students, taught young Germans to row and to play football. Deeply impressed with what he considered the sound effects of military training in Germany on national physique, he worked out a scheme for

England, but met with no encouragement. His studies of the German Army stood him in good stead when he became a correspondent in a dozen wars. As a young man in England, he joined Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, commanded the first Cadet Company for wage-earning youths in London, and attached himself to the famous Toynbee Hall settlement in the London slums. His home for a time was in Petticoat Lane, among, in his own words: "bugs, fleas, old clothes, slippery cods' heads and other garbage." He went to live among the workers in the Black Country, lodging with an old woman who made nails by hand, and was paid in kind. For some years he was secretary of the London Playing Fields Committee, formed to provide playing spaces for the masses. He described himself and his friends as then: "simultaneously and almost equally attracted by the soldier, enthusiastic for the rebel, clamorous for the poor, and devoted to the beautiful."

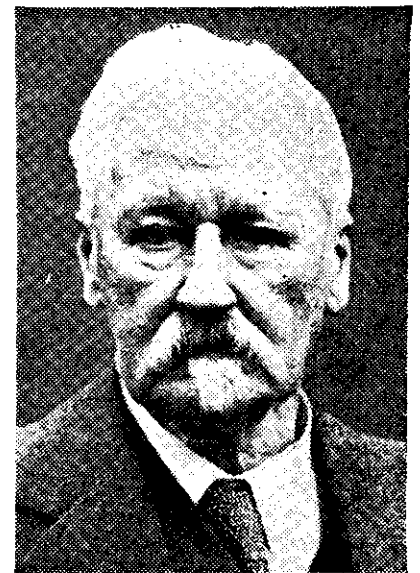
War All Over The World

A great change in Nevinson's life came when he visited Greece in 1894, for he fell in love with that country at once, and ever afterwards he was a champion of Greece and of freedom in the Balkans generally. He began his long career as a war correspondent when he went back to Greece a few years later to report the war between Greece and Turkey for the *Daily Chronicle*, then edited by Massingham. Those were the palmy days of war correspondents, when they came and went in the war zones with comparative freedom, providing their own food and transport. After that short campaign, he was in Crete, instructed to find out what the rebels wanted. He went to Spain for the war with the United States, and then years afterward, saw the fighting in Barcelona. He saw much of the South African War, and was through the Siege of Ladysmith, surviving fever and starvation. In 1903 he was in the Balkans again, and then lectured round England for the Macedonian Relief Fund.

He undertook a particularly difficult and dangerous mission when he went to Portuguese West Africa to investigate labour conditions on the cocoa plantations, and his denunciation of the slavery he found there helped to start a long and bitter controversy, which ended in reform. He witnessed the attempted revolution in Russia in 1905, called on Tolstoy, and strongly supported the Russian Liberals. He was a correspondent in the Balkan War of 1912-13.

Votes For Women

At home he threw himself into the cause of Women's Suffrage, and in the great procession of June 17, 1911, he rode at the head of the Men's Political Union, carrying a flag. When the international crisis came in 1914, he was sent to Central Europe, and returned from Berlin with the British Embassy staff. He worked with an ambulance on the Western Front and then as a correspondent in that area. He went out to Gallipoli, where he was wounded, and witnessed the disastrous failure at Suvla Bay.



HENRY NEVINSON

These are only some of the highlights in the life of one of the most adventurous, courageous and gifted journalists of his age. Nevinson was deeply interested in all great public questions, and numbered among his friends scores of prominent men and women from Dublin to Calcutta, of all shades of opinion. No journalist of his time was held in higher honour. He wrote a great deal, and wrote very well. His name is associated with four great Liberal journals, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily News*, the *Nation*, and the *Manchester Guardian*. Of his books, the most important are the three volumes of his autobiography, which have been reduced to one volume called "Fire of Life." Of this, John Masefield, the Poet Laureate, has said that no better autobiography has been written in England in a hundred years.

He Never Grew Old

Nevinson was the kind of man who never grows old. An interviewer who called on him when he was well over seventy, found him rehearsing for the annual festival of the English Folk Dance Society. Only once did he refuse a challenge, when he declined—at the age of sixty-nine—to go with Amundsen to the North Pole, and he put down his refusal to his being roused out of bed with the offer. If only, he said, it had come after breakfast. A year later, he travelled with the Nairn brothers of New Zealand, from Damascus to Baghdad, when they had what he called a beautiful time digging and hauling the cars out of the mud. When they reached Baghdad, thick with mud, he heard one of the drivers say: "Look here! Whatever happens, we must keep old Bill on the staff as a digger!" This, says Nevinson, was the finest compliment ever paid him in a long and variegated life.

We may fitly conclude with Henry Nevinson's expression of his own creed: "I fall back nearly twenty-three centuries to the Greek philosopher's definition of happiness as 'The exercise of vital powers along the lines of excellence, in a life giving them full scope.' Energy, activity, production! In the exercise of vital powers alone, I am convinced, can the highest happiness be reached."

No one will doubt that Nevinson lived to the full on this principle.

"Sweet Leilani"



THE FIRST Hawaiian interlude in the "Hello from Hollywood" programme will be heard from 3ZB on Wednesday, December 3, at 7.30 p.m., and from 4ZB the following Wednesday. The numbers played were recorded in the ballroom of the famous Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu and the atmosphere is complete down to the distant booming of surf. The band featured is Harry Owens and his Royal Hawaiians who are heard playing "Hawaii Calls," "An Island Melody," "Aloha Kuu Ipo," and the traditional farewell song "Aloha Oe." Al Perry and his Singing Surf Riders are Harry Owens's guest artists. The picture above shows Owens with his small daughter Leilani, who was the inspiration for his song, "Sweet Leilani"