

S. P. Andrew
photo.



HAROLD MONTAGUE RUSHWORTH

—Steel and Velvet

*Specially Written for the
"Radio Record" by
Clyde Carr, M.P.*

IT is as well for me that Captain Rushworth is at present abroad, for he is the most modest of men. In "Who's Who in New Zealand" his story is compressed into nine and a half lines. His war service is described thus: "Joined Durham Light Infantry for service in South Africa, 1902; served in Great War (7th City of London Regiment); wounded; R.A.F.; wounded over Passchendaele; thirteen weeks prisoner in Germany." Many a book has been written about less. A mutual friend has, with difficulty and some artfulness, extracted further information. His courtesy enables me to publish it.

But first, the other brief details from "Who's Who." Member for Bay of Islands since 1928, Rushworth is a farmer at Opua. He was born at Croydon, England, and educated at Rugby and Jesus College, Oxford. A civil engineer and Fellow of the Surveyors' Institute, he was on the staff of the London County Council. It is now my duty to put a little flesh on these bare bones. The Captain himself would not suffer under similar treatment. If one could fix his game leg at the same time, and perhaps extract a little of the iron from his soul, one would have justified one's existence. But he is still at heart that combination of man of peace and militarist-Imperialist which seems so inconsistent.

To begin, then, it is something to have had one's early education at Rugby, the scene of "Tom Brown's School Days," one of England's "great public schools," ever associated with the name of Dr. Arnold. In addition, Rushworth is an Oxford man. We can all envy him that distinction, the very hall-mark of educational privilege. Nothing can disguise it or take its place. Towards the end of the Boer War he gained a commission in the Northumberland Fusiliers, "the Fighting Fifth," but resigned when hostilities ceased.

He then studied law and was called to the bar at the Temple, London, but did not practise. He took up engineering, rising to be chief executive officer over the largest department of that greatest of all local bodies, already referred to, his responsibilities involving a rent roll of several millions a year. After the Great War he resumed his duties with the council, his department, broken up during the holocaust, being reconstructed after his return to work.

So much for that. It is his exploits in the fighting field and the air that are really breath-taking. Rush-

worth arrived in France ahead of his regiment, the 7th Middlesex, which he had joined at the time of Lord Roberts's defence appeal. He helped first as an engineer on special duty in connection with mobilisation, and in the very early days went into the line in charge of a detail, attached to the Worcester Regiment. Shot through the arm in No Man's Land whilst obtaining samples of German wire, he soon signed on again, only to receive extremely dangerous wounds at Loos. On one occasion the company he led was decimated. His intrepidity notwithstanding, eighteen months of surgical operations and patching up notwithstanding, he was pronounced unfit for service. So he may have been, on the ground.

But, like "A Sky Pilot of Arnhem Land," in spite of physical disabilities that would have daunted and damped the courage and confidence of most men, he "wangled his wings." A fighting ace in the Royal Air Force, older by years than was usual, he was brought down from the central blue in an engagement against overwhelming odds on the Belgian side of Passchendaele. This was on August 18, 1917, the Captain's being one of six machines ordered out to "clear the sky" of Von Richthofen's "circus," which had forced down our artillery observation planes. The opponents met over Roulers, six to thirty-one. The "circus" was put out of action and remained so for nearly three months, but only one British machine won home. The Captain was wounded in three places, crashed in a field near Cortemark, and was discovered by the Germans, badly injured. He was court-martialled nine times, and moved to seven different prisons before, on the intervention of the Dutch Ambassador, he was sent home. Commanded to appear at the War Office, he received special thanks for valuable secret information supplied during his imprisonment. In a fortnight he resumed flying duties at Northolt and volunteered for service in the East. Then came the Armistice.

To-day he still plays a great game of tennis, using both hands and placing the ball with such adroitness as to compensate very considerably for his lameness. He was always an athlete, a British Rugby player and a member of the Rugby Council; a runner who could make the hundred in 10.25 seconds. He plays a good game of cricket, is a chess player, a voracious reader, and uses a carpenter's and joiner's tools like a craftsman.

I happen to know that he does not enjoy politics. As the sole representative of the Country Party, he has gone alone, though he is generally classed with the Independents. President of the Douglas Social Credit Association he is, of course, a leading exponent of monetary reform. Some may regard that as his one inevitable cranky-ism. But I strongly disagree. His expositions are marked by complete sanity. I will back him to meet and beat the orthodox Marxian even, on his own ground.

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This concludes Mr. Carr's series of articles. A book embodying the series in the "Radio Record"—and several new ones—will be published shortly.