

The CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER

The Story of the World Today for the Men and Women of Tomorrow

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THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

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The Children's Newspaper was a very successful newspaper which was edited by Arthur Mee from 1919 until his death in 1943.

Subtitled The Story of the World Today for the Men and Women of Tomorrow, the paper epitomised Mee's values and reflected the editor's twin faiths of Christian ethics and the British Empire. Mee believed that children could be guided to better, more creative lives through education.

The first issue on 21 March 1919 was superficially fairly conventional with text in a fairly dense 5 column layout, interspersed with line drawings, and a back page full of half-tone pictures. Many of the articles were on adult themes (Remarkable airship discovery - Science sales airship from extinction; Britannia rules the ways - Ruin of the Railways by the war.; The one hope for the world - Unless the Children support the league, hey labour in vain that build it There were others like The Warhorse comes home - Dumb Hero's Great day; Clemenceau and the Schoolgirls.

A long-running column was Ella Wheeler Wilcox's letter to girls with its sub-headings in the first issue: The building of Lovely Womanhood, the liberty of war-time, a girl's great virtues, and an anchor for years to come.

The story of the Children's Newspaper is essentially the story of the unusual man, Arthur Mee, and his path from very humble beginnings to being regarded as the greatest living journalist.

Arthur Mee was a most unusual man; he was of small stature, of boundless enthusiasm, and of a deep Christian faith. He was in many ways a typical Edwardian man, proud of the progress in material standards achieved in Britain, and convinced of Britain's mission to transmit the benefits of this progress to other nations all over the world.

He was born in Nottingham in 1875, the son of a railwayman who was a pillar of the local Baptist church. Arthur grew up to have strong principles, a great love of England, and an enthusiasm for the British Empire. His first job was as a copy-holder on the Nottingham Evening Post. He taught himself shorthand in his spare time, and this led to his first job as a reporter on the paper.

From these humble beginnings, his energy and persistence helped him to rise up steadily in the world of journalism. In 1903, he had an idea for a new publication Who's Who this week, and presented it to Sir Alfred Harmsworth. It was not accepted, but a counter-offer was made that Mee should become Features Editor of the Daily Mail This led on to other

projects like the Harmsworth Self-Educator: A Golden Key to Success in Life and the Harmsworth History of the World (which made £20,000 profit for Harmsworth, and got Mee his first mortar car).

His next venture, the Children's Encyclopaedia, was even more successful and established his reputation. It was a huge achievement. It was compiled in only two years. It was divided into twelve sections, the first entitled 'The Child's Book of Familiar Things' followed by 'The Child's Book of Wonder' and then Nature, the Earth, All Countries, Great Lives Bible Stories, Famous Books, Stories, Poetry, School Lessons, and Things to Make and Things to Do, For example, the Familiar Things section included accounts of how a lighthouse is built, how a pendulum how wireless telegraphy works how the Forth Bridge was constructed, what it is like down a coal mine, and many other subjects, clock works, all with copious illustrations.

His aim for the Encyclopaedia was to give the nation's children a firm grasp of subjects such as history and geography and practical. It was published as a part-work between 1908 and 1910; it was very successful and was followed by the New Children's Encyclopaedia in March 1910, and in September expanded to a supplement entitled The Little Paper which carried news stories of interest to children. The idea was expanded by Mee in March 1919 when the 12-page weekly tabloid Children's

Newspaper, priced at 1½d was started. It was designed to keep young people up to date with the latest in world news and science. It was educated

by Arthur Maw until his death in 1943 and Hugo Tyerman took over as editor. He started to modernise the paper by adding in features on television and interviews with sporting personalities. After the war, competition became intense

Arthur's achievement was to present knowledge in a form comprehensive form to those who had become literate as a result of the 1871 'education Act, but whose education had ended at 14, leaving them aware of the opportunities of life but unable to exploit them to the full.

**Ella Wheeler Wilcox's
LETTERS TO GIRLS**
It is a great pleasure to be able to give the girl readers of the Children's Newspaper the counsel of a lady whose poems have travelled wherever women speak our English tongue.
1. The Building of Lovely Womanhood
There was never a time in the history of the human race when so much responsibility rested on young girls as now. Society has been thrown into chaos by a world-shaking war, and old ideas and customs have been torn up by the roots. Men have been called away from what for centuries has seemed their

A Girl's Great Virtues
This reaction from the strain of war conditions to the whirl of social amusements is full of danger for us all, and especially for the girl just entering the arena of life. What I would say to her is to remember that the old-fashioned virtues, known as modesty, sincerity, industry, order, courage, frugality, discretion, and self-control, are as important in the building up of lovely womanhood as stars are in the building up of a solar system.
No change of fashions or conventions can lessen the value of these qualities. Without them ideal womanhood is impossible. There may be an exterior brilliancy, which brings a fleeting popularity, but enduring worth, and the charm which outlasts youth, must embrace these qualities.

Arthur Mee's Dream of England.



Children's Newspaper

Additional notes

Prepared by: Piers Nicholson, 2023

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Source: Original research

Additional note: This cartoon appeared in the first issue and is printed here for your interest

