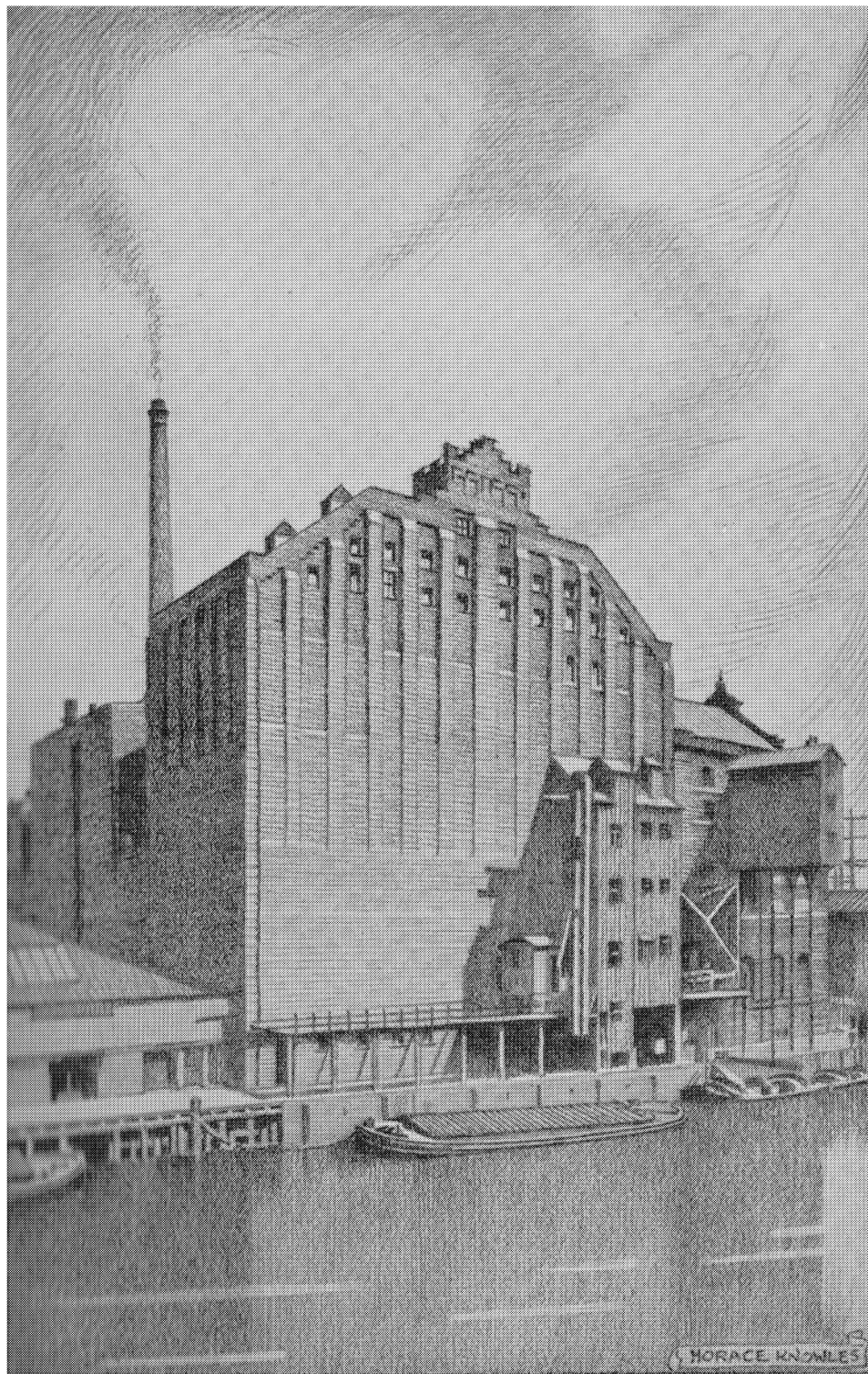


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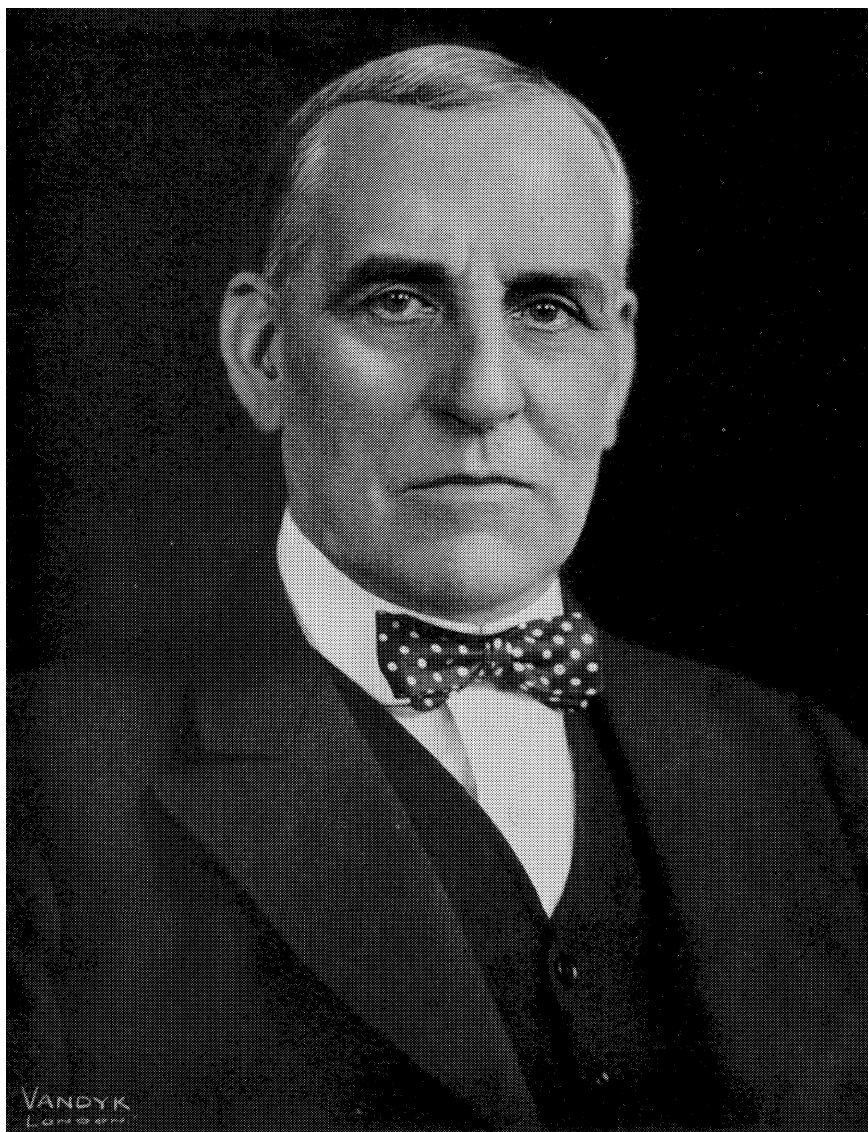


THROUGH THE MILL

*Commissioned by the Joseph Rank Trust
to mark the 150th anniversary of Joseph Rank's birth*

11A Station Road West,
Oxted
Surrey
RH8 9EE

01883 717 919
secretary@ranktrust.org
www.ranktrust.org



Joseph Rank

The Life of Joseph Rank

THROUGH THE MILL

BY

R. G. BURNETT

Man shall not live by bread alone

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Author's Note

THE AUTHOR wishes to thank the many friends and business associates of Joseph Rank who have offered recollections or lent letters. He is indebted especially for counsel to the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Gregory and Mr. L. F. Sheppick, the Editor of *Milling*; Mr. Sheppick's guidance on technical questions concerning the milling trade, and his reading of the proofs, have been invaluable.

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Prologue

JOSEPH RANK'S last visit to Hull was overshadowed by tragedy. Those who stood beside him as he gazed upon the ruin of the mills he had built in his prime were deeply aware of it. So, no doubt, was he. But he gave no sign. He was always at his best when facing difficulty.

The Clarence Mills, his first great achievement and the symbol of his life's work, had been destroyed by German bombs. True, the high stacks and the lofty outer walls still stood beside the murky river, but they were no more than a gaunt and broken shell. Where the heavy rollers had ground the grain, where the mighty engines had throbbed night and day, all was silent as a tomb. Some men would have looked upon it as a tomb, the final grave of valiant and high-hearted enterprise.

As Joseph Rank looked at those blackened walls, a man far in the eighth decade of his life, only a few months from its end, his mind must have returned to the days when he first planned these mills. It was his boldest venture. It marked his emergence from the mass of men. It laid the foundations of his fortune, and of many another's. All that he became, all he was able to do for his countrymen, was there in embryo. The mill became a landmark. It may be said to have done much to establish the commercial prosperity of Hull. It was the apple of his eye. Now—only desolation remained.

Yet of the little group about him in the yard he asked only one question, in his blunt, Yorkshire way: 'Did you get the horses out?'

Yes—they had got the horses out. Every one of them. That satisfied him. He had always loved horses, and could not bear to think of any of them suffering. As for the mills, turning back to the car, he exclaimed: 'What's done can't be undone. It's no good thinking of the past. It's the future that matters. A few bombs can't destroy our work. After the war we shall build new and better 'mills.'

And he drove away without a backward glance.

Part One

Hull, 1854—1904

Chapter One

Birth, Ancestry, and Boyhood

TO UNDERSTAND the life of Joseph Rank it is necessary to see it in perspective, in the frame of the Victorian age in which he grew to maturity. Born during the Crimean War, when Palmerston was still a force, he absorbed the characteristics of that period, during which unprecedented changes took place in the social and industrial life of England. Queen Victoria had been on the throne only seventeen years, and the Prince Consort was still at her side.

The first sixty years of Joseph Rank's life were spent in the halcyon period for enterprising individualism that now seems so remote and ended with the first World War. That river of blood has few bridges over which later generations can pass. The whole Western world was changed. Standards of value collapsed. Conditions of life and commerce that had been commonly accepted began to seem not only unjustified but inexcusable. It is difficult now to realize that they were taken for granted by all but a few.

When Joseph Rank started in business for himself the electric telegraph was a novelty. The railways were still primitive. It was the age of the bustle, the muff, buttoned boots, the Noah's Ark, plush sofas, the aspidistra, the 'growler' and the hansom cab, Moody and Sankey, the Hyde Park Crystal Palace, stuffy 'withdrawing' rooms and stuffier social customs.

The acme of commerce was to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. Labour was ill paid. The prevailing economy was that of scarcity. Factory welfare was almost unheard of; Lord Shaftesbury's reforms had yet to win their way. 'The captain of industry', though sometimes benevolent, remained an autocrat. The critical voices of social reform were 'as one crying in the wilderness'—even John Ruskin and young Bernard Shaw. Success, the god most men worshipped, was understood only in terms of acquisition.

Those features of the England in which Joseph Rank grew up set

their stamp upon him. However much a man may differ from his contemporaries, he is inevitably influenced, if not wholly fashioned, by the age into which he is born, and Joseph Rank was not in that respect an exception. To achieve what he did achieve he needed a driving force that was perhaps more typical of Victorian industry than that of a later day; he was a pioneer, and pioneers have to be resolute or they would never cut their way through to success.

Do the times mould the unusual man, or does he bend them to his will? Doubtless both influences are at work, and it is in the long-drawn-out conflict that progress is achieved. Joseph Rank contributed not a little to social and industrial change, as will be seen; but he in turn bore the marks of that exacting and inescapable struggle. It was his lot to emerge in what has been described as 'an age of unprecedented development'. 'Within the lifetime of a single man we passed from general illiteracy to democratic suffrage, from stage coaches to railways and telegraphs.' British Imperialism was at its height. 'The Victorian Englishman felt that he was a member of the greatest nation in the world at the most important epoch of human history, and that he must rise to the occasion.' Only 'the fittest' had any right to survive; the weak must go to the wall. Thrift and hard work were the twin guardians of the straight and narrow road.

That was the background of Joseph Rank's life, and it explains much that otherwise would seem obscure and inexplicable.

Joseph Rank was born in a cottage attached to his father's windmill on the Holderness Road, Hull, on 28th March 1854, half an hour before midnight—which, according to superstition, is a lucky hour for a birth. The mill, though without its wide-flung arms and no longer in use, still stands on the old site, but the cottage was pulled down when the road was widened many years ago.

Milling may be said to have been in Joseph's blood, for both his father and his grandfather owned and operated windmills and had a reputation for selling good-quality flour. His father, James Rank, son of John, was born in 1829, the eldest of a family of eight—four sons and four daughters. In 1851 he married Mary Ann Parrott of Saltmarsh, who was four years younger than himself, and, to their great sorrow, their first child, a boy, an infant of four months, died, on 31st December 1852. The ache in his

mother's heart was assuaged by the coming of Joseph two years later, and it will be readily understood that she yearned over him with a yearning that established between them an intimate relationship of which he was conscious to his last days. Nor was that relationship disturbed by the birth of two other boys in the mill cottage in 1855 and 1857.

Alas! however, in March 1858, calamity befell the miller's family; the mother, never fully recovering from the birth of her fourth son, ailed and died.

That was a grievous day for Joseph Rank, as in later years he came to see. Although he was only four when she was taken from the home that so much needed her, she had already exercised a decisive and lasting influence over him. As with so many other men who have achieved great success in life, much of his mother remained in him and moulded his career. He often spoke of her and expressed the wish that he could more clearly remember her. Physically she had not been strong. She seems to have known that she would not 'make old bones'. When anticipating the arrival of her fourth child, she exclaimed to a relative: 'I wonder if I shall live until Joe is three years old. . . .' If she had lived his boyhood would have been happier.

She was a woman of character, attractive in appearance and winsome in her ways. Her father, Joseph Parrott of Saltmarsh, was at one time a builder of ships in partnership with his brother Benjamin, and later they both moved into Hull, built schooners, and sailed these craft themselves between Hull and Hamburg. Bluff and lusty, Joseph Parrott was an independent, adventurous East Yorkshireman—he married four wives, put out to sea in all weathers, was beholden to no man, and, it is said, captained the first schooner to be fitted with paddle-wheel engines. Those were rough, pioneering days, in the classic tradition of the English seamen, and frequently the master took his wife with him on the voyage, no matter how hazardous it might be. On at least one occasion Benjamin had to lash his wife to the mast to prevent her from being washed overboard.

James Rank, Joseph's father, although upright in business, was not as strong in character as his famous son proved to be. He came of the line of Wreghitt of Patrington, on his mother's side—she having been Margaret Wreghitt, born 1804, daughter of a Patrington

ton watchmaker and engraver, and one of a family of nine girls. Joseph Rank once said: 'I can remember my grandmother saying there was a Mrs. Bonham living in the same place, Patrington, who had nine boys, and she said to Mrs. Wreghitt that she would not "swop her nine lads for nine lasses".' James Rank, however, took his pick from the 'nine lasses', and doubtless believed he had chosen the bonniest. How they met, and the circumstances of their courtship, are now forgotten, but the Ranks certainly had associations with Patrington, as in 1831 the Misses J. and M. Rank carried on a millinery business in the town. Moreover, in the chancel floor of Patrington Church is a stone, in fairly good preservation, with the inscription: 'Mary, daughter of Robert Ranck, died October 30th, 1797', which suggests that the roots of the Ranks go a long way back into the history of East Yorkshire.

The Hopper family, into which John Wreghitt married in the late eighteenth century, were also millers at Patrington. That perhaps helped to serve as an introduction between James Rank and his bride. 'I do not know where my grandfather first started milling', wrote Joseph Rank, 'but I presume at Patrington.'

Joseph's father was looked upon as a very just and fair-dealing man. In appearance he was striking. It is said that when someone was asked by a man going into the Hull market how he should find James Rank, he was told to pick out 'the best-looking man on the market'—and he found him easily. Three years after his first wife's death, he married Ellen Stephenson, and in the next thirteen years four girls and five boys were born to them.

His affairs at the Holderness mill do not appear to have prospered as he had expected. Perhaps it was for this reason, and possibly also, on his second marriage, to escape from memories inseparable from the old mill cottage, that he acquired a mill on the other side of the river, which at that time was still a frontier between town and country.

Some idea of the difficulties confronting millers in those days may be derived from the fact that from the upper floor of the Holderness mill more than twenty windmills could be seen in the small area visible toward the bank of the River Hull. The mill was surrounded by green fields and country lanes. The miller went about his work to the accompaniment of lowing cattle and singing birds. It was a primitive, country life, and the methods of milling

had not changed for centuries; with such keen local competition, lack of any but the simplest transport, and dependence upon the wheat crops of local farmers, it was by no means easy to make a good living. James Rank, with his new wife, went to live at Stepney, across the river, and settled down to a life that seems to have been more prosperous than that which he had known, but was probably less happy.

James Rank was a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, but his first wife had been a 'Primitive'. The Parrotts, it would appear, were among the earliest members of the Primitive Methodist Church, whose founder, William Clowes, had lived a wild life as an apprentice in Hull, working at the Humberside Pottery. Clowes went back to Hull as a minister in 1819, and in May of the following year the first Conference of the 'Primitives' was held in the city. Mary Ann Parrott must often have seen and talked with Clowes during her girlhood; he died in 1851. There is reason to believe that her father was converted under the influence of the sensational revival of religion brought about by the unconventional preaching of William Clowes and the 'Ranters', and Joseph Rank always had a special affection for the Primitive Methodists.

On moving to 'the hamlet of Stepney', James Rank joined with the Wesleyans, who had a small meeting-place, opened in 1849 on the Beverley Road, only a few yards away from his windmill. As his business prospered, so, no doubt, he increased his financial aid for the growing cause, and soon there was a project to build a chapel worthy of its enthusiastic congregation. It was opened in 1868—a fine Gothic building, which became a fashionable centre for the well-to-do Methodist merchants and their families. In its Sunday school, Joseph, with his two brothers, his four half-brothers, and his half-sister, received his early religious training.

He was not as happy as a boy should be. The death of his mother left a wound that never healed, and his stepmother failed to mother him. She lacked sympathy with him. Perhaps it was natural that she should favour her own children. She seems to have made little effort to conceal such favouritism. The boy sensed that he was being treated differently from the others, and felt he was neglected. Whatever lasting psychological effect may

have followed, there certainly was a physical result that hampered him all his life.

Like Mephibosheth, the son of Solomon, from early childhood he 'was lame in both his feet'. The deformity, he thought, was due to his stepmother making him wear boots that were too small for him, and ignoring or overriding his protests. When he was older he had always to wear boots specially made for him. It would not have been surprising if such experiences had had a crippling effect upon his spirit as well as his body; but the struggle he had to wage, while tending to harden him, tempered his character as fire tempers steel. The sense of not being wanted, coupled with a child's inarticulate longing for a doting mother whom he would never see again, cannot have failed to overshadow the years that should have been carefree; and it perhaps partly accounts for the retarded development that made him seem slow and indolent, not only to his unsympathetic stepmother, but also to his father, who appears to have regarded him as anything but a lad of promise.

As was customary in those days, before the Education Act of 1870 and the coming of the Board Schools, Joseph Rank's schooling was sketchy and, by modern standards, brief; although he stayed on longer than most boys of his age.

He was sent to a small private school at Swinefleet, near Goole, which was kept by a coloured Anglican clergyman named Haynes. This fact did not come to light until Joseph Rank, then over eighty, happened to say that he had had booksellers all over the world searching for a book on advice to young men which had helped him greatly as a youth. Somehow the remark got into the newspapers and was seen by a Doncaster draper whose father attended the same school at Swinefleet. By one of those coincidences which make life more enthralling than fiction, the draper found a copy of what he thought was the book in the threepenny box of a second-hand bookstall. His delight at the discovery was increased when, turning to the last page, he found written inside the back cover: 'Mr. Jas. Rank, Stepney Mill, Hull.' He at once sent the book to Joseph Rank, who acknowledged it with a scrap of autobiography that illuminates this early period.

I am afraid I have forgotten the names of the boys who were at the Rev. Haynes' school at Swinefleet and then at Goole, though I have not for-

gotten he gave me one or two good hidings, so that I shall remember him as long as I live—I do not know if there is not a mark on my thigh yet that was made by his riding whip, but it was there for a good many years. I cannot remember the book, *Why and Because*—I have been looking out, I think, for the why and the wherefore all my life, but I believe one of the books that did me the most good of any I ever read was one called *Mercantile Morals*. I remember writing in the copy book, though I do not recollect whether it was at Swinefleet or not, that ‘Honesty is the best policy’, but to my astonishment this phrase contradicted what I had got in my mind and showed me that we ought to be honest from a higher reason than policy, because a man who is honest simply because of policy cannot, in the strict sense of the term, claim to be strictly honest.

The book, *Why and Because, or, the Curious Child Answered: Teaching Children of Early Ages to Think and Investigate*, is a small volume, bound in yellow cardboard covers, with seventy-two pages, and is the work of the Rev. David Blair, ‘Author of the *First Catechism*, the *Universal Preceptor*, the *Tutor’s Key*, *Registers for Schools*, *Grammar of Natural Philosophy*, etc., etc.’ Printed for the author, it was published by Dorton and Co., Holborn Hill, presumably London (though it doesn’t say so), price one shilling. Its popularity is attested by the declaration, ‘the thirty-ninth edition’.

The date of publication is 1859, and in a foreword ‘the Author’ says he ‘considers it due to himself and the Public, to guard Parents and Tutors against imitations, and surreptitious editions of his works, by which the purposes of Tuition, and the original plans of the Author, are often frustrated’. And he modestly adds: ‘All his works are original, and, as may be expected, all imitations and copies of them are inferior.’ In the Preface, ‘the Author’, addressing ‘all anxious Tutors’, recommends as a book of general reference Sir Richard Phillips’s *Million of Facts*, and continues: ‘The Author’s *Catechisms*, this *Why and Because*, his *Familiar Vocabulary of Technical Words*, his *Universal Preceptor*, and the *Million of Facts*, constitute, in fact, such a course of Liberal Education and Practical Knowledge as never before were submitted to the public and if the next is not a wise and improved generation, it will not be for want of literary tools.’

Having thus challenged those who might be expected to profit by his work, ‘the Author’ proceeds to demonstrate ‘the Socratic method applied to all subjects of youthful enquiry and curiosity’, beginning

with 'Why do seven days make a week?' and ranging over many peaks of historical, mathematical, geographical, astronomical, geometrical, geological, zoological, and theological knowledge. As a compendium of information it must be allowed its place; and at the close, after explaining why 'the system of the planets' is called Copernican, 'the Author' promises: 'If Instructors of youth give due encouragement to this Part, the same author may, when leisure permits, be induced to prepare a Second Part, not less interesting and useful.'

Doubtless Haynes, who later became the Vicar of Swinefleet, in true Dotheboys style—Dickens had created Nicholas only twenty years before this book was published—thwacked the 'Why and the Wherefore' into Joseph and his fellow pupils. Later the school was transferred to what is now Empston Villa at Goole.

Joseph left school at the age of fourteen, and began to work for his father at the mill. By modern standards his educational opportunities were small; yet an examination of *Why and Because* suggests that a boy who mastered such compendiums of general knowledge would have at his disposal a range of useful and accurate information likely to be of great assistance to him in a practical career.

His father, it must again be said, was not as sympathetic as the lad had a right to expect. He thought the boy was slow, unwilling, and dreamy; indeed, something of a dunce. Only one member of the family seems to have had any confidence in him—his uncle, Tom Eyre, who, in spite of all appearances, predicted his success. In later days, when Joseph went off to inspect mills, saying he was going to have a roller mill, it was Tom who declared, in his broad Yorkshire way: 'He'd mak' money while he slept.'

Nobody else thought much of him when he began to work in the mill—though, from various accounts, they had evidence enough that he could sleep! It was said that he had been lazy at school; now they said he was lazy at work. He certainly would much rather play cricket on the Stepney pitch—a game for which he always cherished a great delight. He found no pleasure in the mill.

At cricket he was known as a 'slogger'. The field at Skidby adjoined the mill of Ben Thompson, who was a cricketer of the slow and steady sort, but he used to say that whenever the team that included 'young Joe Rank' came to play there was always

a larger number of spectators than at any other time. They came to see some big hitting, and were not often disappointed—he generally livened things up.

One day when Ben Thompson came to Rank's mill for some bran Joseph was lying asleep on the sacking. 'Tak' the lad as well as the bran,' cried his father. 'He's good for nowt—he'll never be much use in the world!'

An old Stepney resident remembers the boy well.

My father in the 'eighties and 'nineties used to go round collecting subscriptions for our chapel anniversary. He always called on Mr. James Rank. He often related to me with glee that while he was talking Mr. Rank suddenly went to the room-door and shouted upstairs, 'Hurry up, Joe; you'll be late'. And, turning to my Dad, he said: 'I don't know whatever I shall make of that lad. He can't get a move on.'

It is true that, both in speech and movement, he was never hurried. 'But that deliberation was more rapid than much fussy energy. He was sure in his judgement and direct in his methods.' However, neither his judgement nor his methods commended themselves to his father.

Sometimes he would be sent out to collect money, with the satchel strapped to his back, and on one occasion it was stolen. His father was furious, and made him pay every penny of the money out of his own earnings, which were seven-and-sixpence a week. Out of that meagre wage he had to clothe himself, and he went without an overcoat in the bitterest weather because he could not afford to buy one.

Often he would ask Tom Eyre or his brothers for tobacco, and they would say, 'Where's yours, Joe?' 'Oh, well,' he would counter, 'I'd just like to try yours'—and save his money. That perhaps provokes a smile, and a joke about his shrewdness; but there is a serious side to the recollection—it could have been no joke for the lad at the time, and while the constant preoccupation with the problem of how to make his meagre allowance go round trained him to live frugally, it also developed a streak in his nature to proportions that in later days sometimes led to misunderstanding. Here lies the root of that ultra-carefulness in the spending of money which balanced his prodigal generosity. Throughout his life, while contributing lavishly to many great and good causes, he spent little on himself.

In adolescence few people ever tried to understand him. Only his Aunt Alice, Mrs. Eyre—old John's eldest daughter—really welcomed him, and was glad of his company; he went about with her a great deal, and when he prospered he was always very good to her. To the others he seemed dull and slow and clumsy, and none of them realized how much their attitude may have had to do with his being so; yet, if only they had known it, the very slowness they resented was to play a necessary part in his subsequent career. For it enabled him to keep his head when all about him were losing theirs, and blaming it on him; and to trust himself when all men doubted him, and 'make allowance for their doubting too'. Kipling might have been thinking of him when he wrote that poem. Yet even Mrs. Eyre, who in many ways favoured him, did not endorse her husband's good opinion of his future. She, like the others, sometimes spoke of him as 'soft Joe'.

Nevertheless, there is need to guard against drawing too dark a picture. Awkward as he must have felt in James Rank's divided household, he was not a cuckoo in the nest. For example, he was highly indignant at the treatment meted out to his eldest half-sister. She married a Hull publican and went to live in a public-house in a rough quarter of the city, where fights were common every Saturday night; her husband made a barmaid of her, and bitterly did she rue the day she met him. When Joseph learned what was happening he tried to interfere on her behalf, and is said to have fought the publican to a standstill. It may well be that this had something to do with the uncompromising stand he made for teetotalism—he knew at first hand the effects of the evil he felt it his duty to oppose.

There were two stories of this period that Joseph Rank related on several occasions: 'When I was a young man, before I saw the error of my ways, I used to knock about with a lot of rough chaps who were good enough for anything. Among other things, we used to go to the old Botanic Gardens, where athletic sports were run in those days. We did a bit of betting, but it did not take me long to realize that the bookies were the winners, and so I turned bookie in a small way, and made money out of it.'

Another incident he used to talk about occurred at Hull's Annual Fair. One of the attractions was the swinging of a large wooden mallet, hitting a spring that sent an arrow up a long number-shaft,

and if it reached the top it rang a bell. He overheard a group of his pals saying they would let Joe in for paying by arranging that whoever had the lowest number to his credit should pay for the lot. He wasn't standing for that. He got up extra early, went down to the fair ground when the showman was getting ready, had a chat with the man in charge, and gave him a tip to show him the knack of swinging the mallet—it is like the swing of a golf club or the 'follow through' of a tennis racket. When in the evening they got round to the fair ground his pals were astonished to find that he rang the bell every time. Laughing at the recollection, he would say: 'So, you see, I got my sport for nothing.'

Sometimes his father would take Joseph with him when he went to call upon his customers. The boy treasured those opportunities, for they broke down, if only temporarily, some of the barriers between them. 'I remember when I was quite a boy,' he once said, 'I should think about fifteen or sixteen years of age—I knew something about grinding because I started when I was fourteen—one day my father went to a mill and left me in his dog-cart backed under an archway leading into the mill. I wandered in on the ground floor, where the meal was coming from the stones, and I felt it. When my father came out, I said: "These people do not make good flour, and the reason is they are grinding it too dead. The stones want lifting." He replied: "You mind your own business. Let every miller do what he likes."' "

Such an attitude was bound to discourage, and young Joe was driven more and more into the fastness of his secret self. His introspective tendencies were increased; to those who lacked the sympathy to understand him he appeared to be sullen and selfish, whereas he probably longed for companionship. The insight that blossoms from kindness might have banished much of the melancholy of adolescence; whether it would ultimately have served him so well as the obtuseness which aroused in him the will to struggle and defeat it may be doubted. Working long hours at the mill, learning by experience how to do all the jobs in and around it, he went on—though without realizing the significance of what was happening—preparing himself for the career that in the fullness of time was to open out before him. He also did most of his father's book-keeping, which was done in a very simple manner in those days. There was no overtime—everybody had to work as long as

the wind blew. On Saturdays there were no afternoons off, but if there was no wind they were allowed to leave at six o'clock.

To his father he remained an enigma. So much so that when one day he was talking to an old friend, Lindsay, a miller who had come from Scotland on business, he said—catching sight of Joseph in the mill—'I don't know what I'm going to do with that boy. So far as I can see, he's good for nothing. He's nineteen, but all he thinks about is cricket. I can't make him work.'

'Oh, I shouldn't worry too much about that, James,' replied the Scotsman. 'My own lad's much the same. Young people aren't like they were when we were young. They don't take things seriously enough.' He hesitated for a moment, and then exclaimed: 'I'll tell you what—why not let us exchange lads for a bit? Let Joe come up with me, and I'll send my boy down to you, and see if that will do any good. Maybe they'd do better if they weren't working for their fathers.'

So Joseph went north as a journeyman miller. He was paid eighteen shillings a week, and had to keep himself on it—it was no use writing home for more.

In after years he rarely spoke of that experience. It did not last long enough, however, to embitter him. Relief came with tragic unexpectedness. Before he had been in Lindsay's employment twelve months—though not before Lindsay had told James Rank, 'I've had the better of the bargain'—his father died suddenly, on 24th October 1874, and he was recalled to Hull.

Chapter Two

His First Mill

THE QUESTION now confronting young Joseph Rank was—would he, as the eldest son, inherit responsibility for running the mill? His father's will provided the answer. Trustees had been appointed, and the future of the business depended upon their decision.

In view of his father's low estimate of his ability, and his step-mother's attitude, it is not surprising that he found himself excluded from ownership. He continued for a while to work at the mill, and indeed did the wheat buying and ran the mill itself; but he was not allowed to go to the firm's customers—a restraint which he endured for five months. Doubtless the trustees—after deliberations that are not likely to have been lengthy—acted in what they believed to be the best interests of the widow; but such cavalier treatment must have been a great shock to the young man. If he had not resented it, he would have been less than human. He did resent it; and his resentment led him to break completely with the family business.

The trustees, it must be conceded, were not without reasons for their action. In those days Joseph was a little irresponsible. He found a refuge from inward uncertainties in the companionship of men who encouraged him to share their taste for liquor. Always fond of dancing, he would stay out until the small hours—a fact he did not overlook when, in due time, his own sons wanted to dance. He would say: 'Well, all right—but, remember, breakfast is at seven-thirty, and we start for the mill at eight o'clock. If you're not there on time, the dancing stops.'

A windmill, dependent on the vagaries of the weather, had to be operated at any hour of the day or night when the sails were caught up and whirled around; and this meant that the millers had to wait, with as much patience as they could muster, upon Nature's fickle moods. Often Joseph would play 'ha'penny nap' with other lads until two and three o'clock in the morning, and then sleep on

the sacks so as to be ready for an early start. Horse-racing also attracted him, and he would have his 'flutter' with the rest. One day he bet 10 to 1 in pounds on 'Lady Golightly', with Fred Archer up. Almost to the last moment Archer was riding well, but he lost by a short head. 'What a fool I am', Joseph exclaimed, 'Would I be mug enough to bet ten sacks of flour against one?' As a result of that experience, he said he would do better as a bookmaker.

At twenty he was compelled to face the fact that he was not considered qualified enough to manage his father's business. It was prosperous, according to the standards of that day. James Rank left a moderate fortune, more than £30,000—a large sum in real value in 1874. The share of it bequeathed to Joseph was £500.

It was with that capital, in September 1875, that he started business on his own account, renting a small windmill on the Holderness Road from a man named Waddingham. Why did he go back to the neighbourhood of the place in which he was born? Not only because it was near his birthplace, but because of an honourable desire not to set up near the Stepney mill and so enter into close competition with his family. That was his deliberate decision; and all who knew the man will realize how long and realistically, even at that distant date, he would weigh the pros and cons.

From no point of view was it an easy decision to make. By that time he well knew the hazards against which he would have to contend. A windmill at the best of times was a chancy weapon with which to try one's fortune, and many a Quixote has met with disaster by working as well as by tilting at one. Many a time he sat for hours in that little mill with his feet in a sack to try to keep them warm until the perverse heavens consented to let loose a wind that would set the machinery working; and often, weary with long waiting, he fell asleep.

He had to do all the work himself. He ground the wheat, collected the flour into sacks, went out himself to canvass for orders, and delivered the sacks of flour by means of a horse and cart driven by himself. He could not have bought his experience in a harder school.

Hull at that time was not only much smaller and much less

prosperous than it is to-day, but was almost isolated even from the rest of Yorkshire, to say nothing of more distant parts of England. The railway had reached Hull, it is true, but only tentatively, as it were, and on a single track. The river was still the main highway to the outer world—by coastal tramp and steamboat; for 'the liner' she was not yet 'a lady'. Hence the community, even in the port itself, was in many respects primitive—clannish, crude by later standards, cut off from other English groups. The docks had not yet been developed; many of them had not been thought of. 'Sail' still predominated on the Humber.

It is true that the grosser brutalities of the Victorian age were being modified if not abolished, but humanitarianism had not as yet gained ascendancy in England as a whole, let alone in the agricultural community in which Joseph Rank was making his first experiments in trade. It was only seven years since murderers were hanged in public outside the county prison to provide a ghoulish holiday. The Board Schools were not yet properly afoot. Trade unions had yet to win even their earliest successes in the provision of reasonable wages and decent labour conditions. Masters were a law unto themselves; and if, like Joseph Rank, they employed only themselves, it was natural that, in an honest endeavour to make good, they should put up with conditions that nowadays seem intolerable, and work the clock round even if profits at times were astoundingly meagre.

In many respects England was in a ferment. Thomas Carlyle had thundered forth his doctrine of work, with which Joseph Rank would have agreed if he had ever heard of it; and John Ruskin was playing upon the reed of his incomparable style tunes that would have horrified Joseph if they had ever come to his ear. But he had little ear for music, and the harmonies of English literature largely passed him by. He was busy, night and day, doing his best to win a competence from his windmill; he had no time for reading or listening to music.

The one great outside interest for him then, as in all his later years, was cricket. He played it with zest all the summer, and he would go many miles to see it played by first-rate professionals. W. G. Grace was his hero, and when 'the doctor' battled valiantly against the visiting Australians in 1878 his enthusiasm overflowed. Indeed, he often said that if at that time he had saved enough

money to bring him in a pound a week he would have given up any idea of business and have gone in for cricket.

Certainly there seemed little prospect of making his fortune with the Waddingham Mill. For all his hard, monotonous work, the recompense was scanty and disheartening. Nevertheless, he persevered, disproving the adverse comments passed upon him by critics within his own family. Whatever else he may have been, he certainly was industrious and enterprising. Hard and exacting as the work undoubtedly was, he had no thought of giving up: defeat was not in his vocabulary. He just went painstakingly on, and, like others of the hardy milling stock, thought nothing of carrying twenty-stone sacks from mill to cart and from the cart into the customer's shop.

He did not find it easy to get customers, for there were already too many windmills in the neighbourhood, and the miller whose business he had taken over had not been able to make it pay—otherwise he would not have left it. One of the earliest, if not actually the first, of Joseph Rank's customers kept a butcher's and pork shop at Number 3 Garbutt Street, Holderness Road, which is now Barnsley Street. She had been buying her flour from a Mr. Tinegate, who had a mill opposite the street end, and he brought Joseph Rank to the house and introduced him as his successor, and asked if she would continue to give him her support. Her reply was that if he made good flour and charged a fair price she would not change.

He called regularly, and used to carry a sack at a time on his back from the mill, which was only about a hundred and fifty yards away. When he had emptied his sacks he would sit on the floor and talk to the two girls of the household; and their mother would say, 'Now, Joseph, there's a wind blowing—you don't want to be here talking to our girls'; and off he would go.

One Monday morning when he was twenty-three years old he went to get his horse out as usual, but she was in a fresh and frisky mood. Before he had time to realize the danger, she had knocked him down and damaged his knee. He felt the effects of the injury long years afterward. Hobbling to the house of a friend, he was advised to see a doctor at once. 'I should go to Robert Craven, if I were you—he's the best man for that sort of thing.' So off he went—in his cart, and dressed in his working clothes.

The doctor, he thought, would probably estimate his fee by his patient's appearance—so he got a pound's worth of attention for half a guinea.

Thinking about the accident, and seeking some explanation for it, he remembered that on the Sunday morning he had been playing cards—his favourite 'ha'penny nap'. 'Ah,' thought he, 'that's why it happened.' He thereupon made up his mind, not merely to give up playing cards on Sunday, but working at the mill on Sunday also; and from then on, no matter how busy he might be, or how urgent the work that had to be done, he always closed down at midnight on Saturday. Whatever he was doing, he would leave it—just close his books and go to bed.

At this period he was a lanky young fellow, tall and robust, 'as strong as a horse'. He had a good head, with level brows, and frank, humorous eyes; and he had cultivated a wisp of dark moustache. Dressed in his Sunday best, after the fashion of the 'seventies, with jacket buttoned up to the collar, at which the cravat could only just be seen, and tight-fitting trousers, he was by no means unattractive, as the girls of the day realized.

By this time he may be said fully to have 'served his time' at his trade and become an efficient, though by no means as yet a successful, miller. There was nothing about the mill he could not do. In common with many of his contemporaries who were determined to go on to fame and fortune, he had started at the lowest rung of the ladder; much of his power in climbing to the top was due to his detailed knowledge and first-hand experience. He would always know exactly what his men had to do, how it should be done, and how he himself had done it.

'I started with mending bags and sweeping floors,' he once told a journalist in one of the rare interviews he gave, 'and went on to grinding, packing, and the dressing of the old millstones. We did not have much else but English wheat to grind, and we used to mix the different kinds, sack and sack of Square Head, Golden Crop, Creeping, Nursery, and other different kinds of English wheat which were grown in those days. There were no divides; everything was straight-made flour at that time. If we wanted to make a little superfine, we used to buy a little Danzig wheat, and later on Californian wheat came in. I remember when first this

wheat was brought to English mills, they did not know how to deal with it. As a youth, I was set on with a watering can to water it, to try to mellow it down to make it work more kindly on the stones.'

Gradually it became clear to him that he could not go on indefinitely without help in the mill. So it came about that he engaged his first operative, selecting him with something of the detailed care he always gave to the enlistment of employees.

One Saturday afternoon Joseph Rank had been playing cards with friends and, contrary to his resolve, had continued until past midnight and had therefore been playing on Sunday.

On the following morning, when his carter was preparing to load his wagon, by some mischance the man had his knee crushed by the wheel. It was a serious matter for the hard-pressed miller; for it meant that again he would have to carry on alone. Moreover, he felt he must look after the man and his family while the leg was mending. Shocked by this occurrence, he at once believed that a judgement had been passed on him for relaxing his principles and misusing even a small part of the Sabbath, and he made up his mind there and then that never again would he so merit in this way what seemed to him a punishment.

After struggling on for a time in dependence upon the wind as a source of motive power, he realized that he would never get very far that way, and began to ponder on the problem of alternative and more reliable propulsion. After long cogitation he decided to make what must have appeared to him a daring experiment. Why not get an engine that would turn the stones when the sails were idle? He made inquiries, consulted advertisements, visited manufacturers, and presently bought a noisy, temperamental gas engine and installed it in the mill. It was capable of driving two pairs of four-foot French stones. At once the producing capacity of his mill was considerably increased. The experiment was a nine-days' wonder in the district, and other millers looked on incredulously or scoffingly, according to their nature. There is always plenty of chaff about a mill.

Not only, however, did the engine provide Joseph Rank with a further step toward success in his business, but it brought him a lifelong friendship with one who shared with him the admiration

of the citizens of Hull. One morning there came to the mill a young man who had set up his household in Filey Parade, almost opposite. Joseph, in his working clothes, white with flour from head to foot, came out in answer to the friendly hail. Very politely, the newcomer asked if it really was necessary to use such a noisy engine to the disturbance of the neighbours. 'It's going from early morning until late at night, Mr. Rank; it doesn't give us much peace, you know.'

'Oh, I don't know about that,' he said. 'I don't start it up before six in the morning, and I've always finished by ten o'clock at night.'

The twinkle in his eye was not lost upon the visitor, who, nevertheless, was scarcely reassured by the remark. 'Still'—as Joseph Rank would say when he recalled the incident—'what could I do? I couldn't make the engine make less noise, and I had to run my business.' As time soon showed, they were both good business men, and there was no ill-feeling between them; in fact, from that moment, T. R. Ferens and Joseph Rank became ever closer friends. Neither of them knew, as they stood chatting in the mill yard, how intertwined their lives were to be, and how they were to run in friendly rivalry, not only in business, but in good works.

Ferens, who had come to Hull as a comparatively poor lad, was beginning to make his way; though the moment was as yet far distant when he was to announce to the board of Reckitts, 'Well, gentlemen, I think you'll find I now have a controlling number of shares in the firm'. Both the youngsters chatting at the mill-door were men of destiny, but if anyone had told them then that one would become a multi-millionaire and the other a leading politician and patron of the arts they simply would not have believed it. Each was battling against odds, and the issue was as yet very far from settled.

Of the two, Ferens was at that moment the more successful. He was already regarded as a likely leader of men. But as for Joseph Rank, few of his most intimate acquaintances would have offered to back his chances of even a moderate success. Misfortune seemed to haunt him—as he himself must have thought when the man who was his sole assistant fell on the accursed engine and had to be taken to the infirmary. Work as he might, the mill would not prosper.

When he sat over his accounts into the early hours of the morning it was with a deepening despair.

However, youth, be it never so melancholy in its moods, is not for long without hope. If its thoughts are long, long thoughts, they usually conjure up castles in the air, and it is well known to what imaginings a young man's fancy turns in spring. Joseph, it is true, had saddled himself too heavily with responsibility for a carefree canter in that direction, but he liked dancing and, in spite of his physical disability, could dance very well; hence the girls—who had the feeling that too much work and not enough play was making Joe a dull boy—found him at least good company as a dancing partner. He might not know what to say to them, and was not the most gallant of gay youngsters, but on the polished floor he could waltz, as they said, 'divinely'. As for the lancers and the polka and the rest of the dances of those days, he delighted in them all. There would be fiddle and harp at Christmas party and harvest home in farmhouse and barn, and he would be invited to the jollifications by the farmers whose wheat he bought.

At one such dance he met the two daughters of Farmer Voase, who were to play so intimate a part in his life. Three young men had been invited to a week-end party—Jim and Joe and Jack, of whom Joseph, just twenty-one, was the eldest. All three were taken with the Voase girls, and for some time there was good-humoured rivalry.

Presently Joseph began to seek business with Farmer Voase, at Ouborough Farm, Skirlaugh, Holderness, more often than the necessities of trade strictly warranted. The shrewd Yorkshire farmer doubtless smiled to himself at the bland persistence of the young miller, and the girls played the age-long comedy, teasing and encouraging and frigidly discouraging the lad who was certainly seeking to court one of them, though nobody—perhaps not even himself—could be certain whether it was the quiet Emily or her more vivacious sister. It is all blurred now by the mists of time, so that no clear outlines can be discerned. At length, however, he made up his mind—and proposed to Emily.

It was a fortunate day for Joseph Rank when she accepted him. A girl of beautiful character and homely ways, she developed into a patient, loving, resourceful wife and mother. She made for him

in their early days of struggle a home that was a haven of peace, disturbed only by the stormy temper against which, as he would frankly avow, he often had to battle through the years. And when they became rich she remained unaffected, serene, and unspoiled, without social ambition or extravagant tastes, making the larger house as homely to live in as the villa on the Holderness Road. Joseph Rank's choice of Emily Voase, and her decision to throw in her lot with him, did much to shape the pattern of his career.

The young couple were married, in 1880, in the parish church, and set up their first home in Wilton Street, on the Holderness Road, where the eldest son and daughter were born.

Chapter Three
Foundations of Fortune

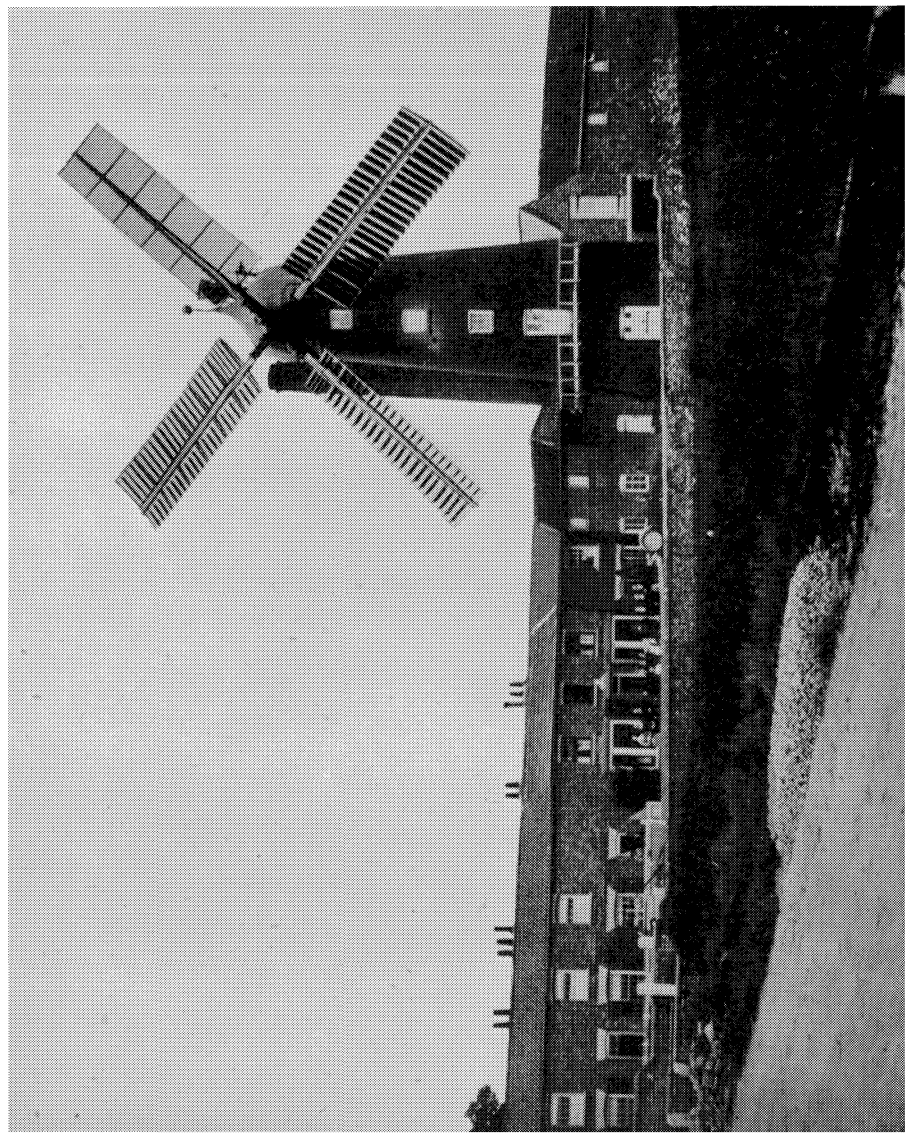
JOSEPH RANK had now to face the first great economic crisis of his career, a moment of dramatic choice. In future years, as his life-stream broadened and deepened, many formidable obstacles, in themselves immeasurably bigger, had to be overrun or by-passed; but none would have been encountered had he failed to win this battle. At the very moment when he persuaded Emily Voase to become his wife he realized that financially he was on the way to ruin.

It was a test for the character of any man. A weakling would have gone under, but his most envious critics could never call him that. Resolutely he set himself to grapple with reality. No ugly detail was ignored. It became clear, not only that he was losing money, but that as long as he struggled on at Waddingham's Mill he would probably continue to lose it and his small capital would soon dwindle to nothing.

There is no means now of discovering whether, or to what extent, he told Emily about his dilemma. We can only make deductions from what is known of his way of dealing with subsequent crises, which suggests that, in all probability, he talked to her as little as he could about business matters, as they walked the country lanes and attended the country dances. It is likely that she had no idea of the torment of his mind. Certainly he was far from being an impetuous lover, but that, she knew, was the nature of the man—he was never impetuous about anything. He fought his business battle alone.

A fragment of autobiography, written at the time in a little notebook that has been preserved, records what happened.

When I commenced business at Waddingham's Mill, Holderness Road, I had about £500. I was there about five years and lost £200. This opened my eyes to the fact that it was no use patching up old things: it was like serving a second apprenticeship. At the end of this time I found myself engaged to be married, with only £300 to furnish a home and



Joseph Romk's birthplace, Holderness Road, Hull

carry on business. Something must be done before I got married, as this small sum would not do for me.

In the first place I began to keep account of my expenses and to see where I should be able to curtail them, as I intended to live on something less than I made, whatever sum that might be.

After that I began to look out for another mill, as I found I should not be able to make much above a comfortable living. I went into Wales, Somerset, Devonshire, and wrote about several mills, but could not find one to suit me that I could work with my small capital. At last I heard that Abram Bros., millers in Hull, had had an offer from Mr. Alfred West to grind with Mr. Thomas Richardson, as he had let his trade dwindle down to nothing much; and, as Abram's did not know whether or no they would accept the offer, I asked Mr. West if he would give me the second offer, and as they in a week or two did not come up to scratch, but were running about looking at other mills, Mr. West determined not to wait any longer for them, but gave me the offer, which I accepted the same day.

That was the turning point in my business career. I have read somewhere there is a tide in every man's life which if taken at the flood leads on to fortune. This must have been my turn, as in the first three months I was at Holderness Road Corn Mill I cleared the £200 that I had lost at Waddingham's Mill. This was from January 1880 up to the end of March.

After this I thought I might get married, so on June 15 1880 I took Emily Voase for better or worse, after due consideration, and on taking stock on July 1 1880, I found I was still prospering, as I had made my £500 into £731.

Many years later Joseph Rank elaborated this first account in the only record of his early experiences ever published above his own signature. Referring to his first windmill, he said: 'I was only making from twenty-five to thirty sacks of flour per week, and selling from two to three tons of provender. The margins were very different then from what they are today, but even with the margins obtained, I could only clear about £5 per week when I had done my best.' Moreover, he went on: 'I realized the limitations and erratic character of the windmill offered no scope for any serious extension of business, even when this power was added to, as I had done, by a portable gas engine.'

I started at West's Mill at the beginning of 1880, having run the windmill for about five years, and I found, through having bought a portable engine

and silk dressing machine, and in various other ways having tried to improve the old mill, that when I came to realize my assets, I had only £300. This really opened my eyes to the fact that it was no use patching up old places. . . . This venture at West's Mill, however, suited my small capital very well, as the mill was divided into a flour mill and a seed-crushing plant, the engine being placed between the two plants. The mill contained five pairs of French stones and one pair of Grey stones.

The agreement I made with Mr. West was on the basis of two shillings per quarter for a minimum quantity, reducing to one shilling and sixpence per quarter for a maximum quantity of wheat ground per week. Then I got married, and my wife and I made up our minds that, whatever money we made, we would live on half or less. Many people ask me for the secret of my success. I think it mainly lies in that resolve, because I could easily have spent all the money I made in the first year and then have only lived on the same standard as my friends. I got Mr. West to improve his mill somewhat on condition that I increased my trade, and the amount of extra money I paid him went to clear off the cost of improvement.

'If I am asked to state the guiding principles of my life'—he was, it should be remembered, addressing millers in their trade paper—'I think it would be: firstly, personal attention to business, and, secondly, living within one's income.'

Alfred West was a Quaker, and it was a chance encounter in the street that led Joseph Rank to inquire about his mill. When he made his offer, the Quaker asked: 'And is your future made for the next world, Mr. Rank?'

Joseph Rank's shrewdness was shown in the arrangement he made with his co-tenant about the days on which each should work the plant. Joseph, concealing his own preference, told Richardson he could please himself whether he used the mill from Monday to Wednesday or from Thursday to Saturday. He was secretly delighted when Richardson chose the first three days of the week. That suited him—it gave him three days' start in which he could go out and get his orders while his competitor was grinding his wheat.

During the next five years Joseph Rank, having won the opening battle of his campaign, consolidated his position, brought up his supplies, and made ready for the next advance. Financially, he never looked back. He and his young wife did not deviate from

their resolution to live on much less than their income. In order that the business might be solidly founded, they went without many things enjoyed by their neighbours and friends.

His wife devoted herself wholly to establishing the home and bringing up the children. Her gentleness balanced his sterner nature. It was perhaps inevitable that the constant struggle, in the face of keen competition, to make the mill pay exposed him to hardening influences; but she did much to counteract their effect upon his character. She also helped him to make up his books. On Saturday nights they would pore over them until midnight; but the moment the clock struck they would put them away, and not open them again until Monday.

Without the quiet, gentle, self-sacrificing partnership of his wife, Joseph Rank might not have achieved the success that soon began to show itself. At first he could scarcely believe the evidence of his accounts. Gradually, however, it became apparent that the tide of their fortunes had indeed turned. They decided to leave Wilton Street and rent Holborn Cottage, situated at the back of West's Mill, which he was running at the time, and here two more of the children were born. On leaving Holborn Cottage they rented one of the four houses known as Chestnut Villas, which then stood on the Holderness Road in a lonely row surrounded by fields. The villas are still there, although since those days Hull has reached out and built up the whole area, and the road has been widened to take first the horse-drawn trams and later electric trams and trolley-buses. At Chestnut Villas three other children were born, one of whom died in infancy.

To illustrate the discipline the Ranks imposed upon themselves, it is recalled that Emily, noting that there was always a piano in her friends' drawing-rooms, thought she ought to have one also. She spoke to her husband about it. He didn't see any necessity for a piano, but, after a while, to humour her, he said, 'Very well, my dear—when I make my first extra fifty pounds profit you shall have your piano.' She got it much earlier than either he or she expected.

Now there came into Joseph Rank's life another young man who, like T. R. Ferens, was to remain an intimate friend all through his life. He lived in the house at the opposite end of Chestnut Villas—a young architect, then only just making his first tentative experiments in a profession that was to bring him wide-

spread honour. Alfred Gelder had married a playmate of Emily's, and it was therefore natural that the four young married people should soon become, not only neighbours, but the closest of friends. The women, as young women will, were in and out of each other's houses, in consultation about the problems of housekeeping and the worries of bringing up a young family. Joseph, always quick to acknowledge sound ability, saw that Gelder was likely to go far. They soon understood one another, and with T. R. Ferens, who also lived nearby, formed an intimate fellowship that only death could sever. Probably, at that early date, nobody but Joseph Rank would have listened with agreement if anyone had forecast that the day would come when Alfred Gelder would work in an office in a street named after himself.

One night a fire broke out on premises close to West's Mill. It happened that the first news of it came to Alfred Gelder, and he rushed round to the Ranks' house and banged upon the front door. But Joseph, like his Old Testament namesake, was a sound sleeper, and to wake him up Gelder had to throw stones at the bedroom window. Presently the window was flung up, and Joseph poked out his head and angrily demanded to know what all the row was about. 'There's a fire in Southcoates Lane,' shouted Gelder, 'and your mill's in danger; you'd better come down at once.' Joseph paused reflectively for a moment, and then asked: 'Which way is the wind blowing?' 'Well, at present it's blowing away from the mill,' answered Gelder. Whereupon Joseph exclaimed: 'That's all right then. Don't worry. I'm going back to bed'; and back to bed he went—and the wind didn't change.

In the first years of their married life Joseph Rank and his wife began to attend the services at the parish church. Since leaving the Beverley Road Sunday school, he had rarely gone to church at all, but his new responsibilities, doubtless reinforced by the Victorian convention, led him to take a more serious view. There came a Sunday, however, when the vicar preached a sermon strongly emphasizing predestination. Joseph Rank waylaid him afterwards, to say: 'Mr. Davis, I'd like to be sure I understood your argument. You say that God determines, before a child is born, whether he shall be saved or damned?' The vicar agreed. 'Then, if I had two sons,' said his questioner, 'no matter what their abilities might be, according to your belief one might be predestined for Heaven

and the other predestined for Hell? If I believed *that*, I'd never be responsible for bringing another child into the world!

When he reached home he told his wife what had happened. 'I've done with that church,' he said. 'I can't believe that stuff!' They at once decided to try somewhere else. Alfred Gelder invited them to share his pew one Sunday in Kingston Wesleyan Chapel. They went, and that morning the preacher was the Rev. Simpson Johnson, one of the ablest Methodist ministers of his generation, then in the full power of his early promise. Joseph Rank was much impressed, and presently decided to rent a pew.

Kingston Chapel was then a large, square building, with four tall Corinthian pillars marking its imposing portico. When the Ranks joined it, the premises throbbed with industry, Sunday and weekday. Dr. W. L. Watkinson, preacher and wit, was brought up and served his Methodist apprenticeship there.

'On Sundays, rain or snow, morning, afternoon, and evening,' says one who knew the Ranks in those days, 'Mr. Rank used to walk with one or two of the family to Kingston Chapel, at least a mile away; although he had to pass Brunswick, he invariably preferred to go to what he called his spiritual birthplace. I lived a few doors from his home and, as a boy, used to enjoy seeing him off for a ride on horseback on Saturday afternoons into Holderness with Alfred Gelder and T. R. Ferens, who also lived within a hundred yards. Occasionally Mr. Rank was an absentee—then we knew he had gone to cricket.'

Observers, both hostile and friendly, when attempting to explain the phenomenal rise of Joseph Rank, have frequently pointed out that he was singularly fortunate in the men who served him, and especially in those who came to him at the beginning and helped him to build up the business. To speak of 'luck' in this connexion, however, is to do him less than justice. His choice of men was deliberate, the outcome not of luck, but of judgement. He appeared to exercise a sixth sense when appraising the inherent qualities of those who offered to throw in their lot with him, an insight that stood him in good stead and contributed much to his rapid and unfaltering progress. Moreover, his ability to choose men was based to a considerable extent upon his knowledge of phrenology. During the next ten years he gathered around him,

and trained for his purpose, a little group who were to be the key-men of the firm—able and shrewd and courageous, men of integrity who worked together as a team in spite of marked individuality. They differed from one another in idiosyncrasy and temperament; being Yorkshiremen, they were outspoken in criticism and as blunt as their master; they spoke their minds freely both to each other and to him—and not always with discretion; yet they stayed with him through the long innings, stood by him even when the game seemed to be going against them, and kept their heads when he was recklessly punishing the bowling and slogging every ball for six.

The first of the long succession was John S. Kemp. A Methodist, he heard that Joseph Rank needed additional help, and in 1884 he went to West's Mill and offered his services. At once Joseph Rank engaged him, and soon they became fast friends. John Kemp had many talents and quickly proved himself invaluable to his employer. When he joined the staff, making it three (including the principal!) the whole of the office equipment 'could have been placed on a handcart without any danger to that vehicle'. For some time he was the sole assistant on the commercial side of the business, acting as traveller and book-keeper and general factotum.

It is to be doubted if even he, who soon established himself on relations of some intimacy with his employer, knew what latent ambitions were stirring in the fertile mind of Joseph Rank; for Joseph, a man of few words, could be very close. It had already become plain that there was money—perhaps big money—to be made through improved methods of flour milling; but Joseph's estimates were still modest, and he could not possibly have known that the plans he was then preparing were as one grain of wheat in a cartload compared with the prospects that would presently open up before him.

Gradually he had increased his business connexions and was now working the mill to its full capacity. But the capacity was small—at best, even now that it had one or two pairs of rollers as well as several stones, the output was only from two to three sacks of flour per hour. Moreover, he could use the mill only on three days of the week. He saw that he must look about for a mill of his own in which he could not only grind wheat all the week round, but also introduce more up-to-date and economical machinery.

It was a moment of decision for the British milling industry, though he did not realize that; just as he, with all but a few of his contemporaries, had no idea that he had come to a watershed in English social and economic history. All he knew was that wind-mills were out-of-date and that it was high time to revolutionize flour-making and dispense with a primitive system handed down through the long centuries. He knew well enough that American flour had become a serious competitor, and he knew also that the imported flour was of a better quality than that which he was manufacturing even on his combined stone and roller process. Staunch patriot as he always was, and living then in an era of imperialistic expansion and consolidation, he saw no reason why the English millers should be beaten in their own land by 'foreigners', even if those 'foreigners' were only cousins once removed. Thus his own latent powers and the pressure of national and world events combined to urge him on to fresh experiments and new exploits.

He was ready to seize the opportunities that awaited him around the corner. It can be seen now, as his life is reviewed in perspective, that all that had happened to him up to this time had equipped him for the tasks that now claimed his attention. The pattern was beginning to show itself. Not that he saw it. He worked and planned with growing confidence in his own abilities and in the possibilities of advancement, with indeed a deepening sense of destiny, and yet with only a limited conception of the nature of those possibilities and little, if any, idea of the great place that was to be his in the industry of his choice.

Thirty years of age, married, and with a family, master of his own business if not yet of his own mill, tasting already the first-fruits of keen enterprise, he had reached the stature of a man. No longer could anybody think of him as 'soft Joe'; the day was near at hand when the malicious would describe him as 'hard-headed Joseph'. Certainly his character was firm and solid; he knew his own mind; he had settled opinions; he could drive a hard bargain; but whereas he had been lax in habit in the years gone by, he was now fully alive to his responsibilities and a dependable member both of the community and of the Church of his choice.

An English historian has said that 'the opinions of a man born in, say, 1780, rest upon one set of data, while the opinions of a man

born in 1800, or 1820, or 1850 rest upon quite another'. The remark is equally true of later generations. The opinions of a man born in 1854 rest upon one set of data, while the opinions of a man born in 1900, or 1920, rest on quite another. Joseph Rank unreservedly embraced that Evangelical religion which, as Halévy says, was 'the moral cement of English society' during the nineteenth century; it would be as unfair as it would be futile to blame him for not manifesting the more liberal standards of the twentieth.

Chapter Four

Break with the Past

THE NEXT step in Joseph Rank's career is best described in his own words:

I think it was about the year 1883 that I saw the first roller mill, when I went with a friend to Messrs. Ingleby's Mill at Tadcaster, which mill had started to grind on the roller system. I saw at once there the great advantage to be gained by grinding with steel rollers in preference to mill-stones. Although at that time the mill was not automatic, and they had to move the products about in sacks, the flour was in every way better. Mr. Upton, who recently retired from Buchanan's [a famous milling firm that was taken over by Joseph Rank Ltd.], was at Tadcaster at that time, and showed me round; I came back fully convinced that I ought to have a roller mill, and I tried all I could to persuade Mr. West to put a roller plant in his mill, but he would not do so, and unfortunately I had not quite enough money to do it myself.

However, I found my trade had begun to increase, and in 1885 I built and started a small roller mill of six sacks an hour capacity in Williamson Street, Hull. How I managed to do it with my limited means, I find it difficult to explain, as I had to finance the buying, yet I always succeeded in finding the money to pay cash when I could buy a parcel of wheat at threepence a quarter less.

That last sentence, in which keenness in buying is lit up with a flash of humour, is revealingly typical. Whatever graces Joseph Rank may have lacked, he had the saving grace of humour, and a gift for putting what he wanted to say in memorable, pithy, and often pungent sentences.

Looking back as a multi-millionaire from his industrial 'heights of Abraham' over the world he had conquered, he could not be expected fully to recapture the thrill of what had happened forty-four years before. His return from Tadcaster was by no means the quiet event he speaks of so calmly. He knew well enough that he had come to a vital cross-roads, and equally well he knew which road he should take. The question was, had he the self-confidence

to take it? There were anxious consultations at home. There were anxious consultations at the mill. There were anxious cogitations in his own mind as, day after day, he drove out seeking new orders and supplying old customers.

He did not hurry a decision, for that was never his way; he surveyed the prospect from every vantage point, exacting 'a full look at the Worst'—and built the mill. He had to borrow money to do so, but that was not so difficult; he was recognized by now as a young miller of promise, a man of sound judgement, living well within his means, a citizen of substance, and a Methodist—he had faith in himself, reinforced by the faith his friends had in him. So he closed his account with Alfred West and started out on the next adventure.

The Alexandra Mill, in Williamson Street, Hull, was opened on 5th April 1885, with a plant capable of turning out six sacks per hour. With what mingled hopes and apprehensions he watched the machinery put into motion!

Joseph Rank said, at the time: 'I shall be satisfied if we can run this mill twelve hours a day.' The facts were that he was able to set on additional hands, and run it until midnight, by July of *that year* (within three months), and by the following September both night and day shifts were necessary. The mill was extended from time to time to a maximum of a thirteen-sacks-an-hour plant.

John Kemp was still the only man in the office, and he also worked as a part-time commercial traveller, as well as keeping the books and serving as cashier. The travelling was done among the small shops in Hull. On Mondays, starting at half-past eight in the morning, Joseph Rank would take his own pony-trap and do part of the city while John Kemp, hiring a similar conveyance, started at the top of Beverley Road, at Cottingham Road corner, and worked down all the shops, gathering orders, which he left with a customer in Norfolk Street. A rullyman (a miller's carter) called for them at midday, and the orders were all delivered that same afternoon. The terms to the shops were on a basis of from seven to fourteen days' credit, a rule Joseph Rank always afterwards maintained. He believed in paying cash himself, and hated to be in debt only one degree less than he disliked others to be in debt to him. He always said he never went out on a Monday without

coming back with a new account opened, and sometimes it took him until eight o'clock at night.

This new phase in the expansion of the business coincided with Joseph Rank's religious conversion, and there can be no question that in his own mind the two decisive events were intertwined.

The ministry of Simpson Johnson bore its fruit in an evangelistic mission conducted in Waltham Street Methodist Chapel in 1883. Joseph Rank was present at the Sunday evening service, when the crowded congregation sang, at the close, one of Ira Sankey's hymns:

'Tis the promise of God full salvation to give
Unto him who on Jesus His Son will believe.

As the chorus was fervently sung—

Hallelujah, 'tis done!
I believe on the Son,
I'm saved by the blood of the Crucified One;

Joseph Rank—as he afterwards declared—said to himself, 'I can have it if I believe. Why shouldn't I believe now?' The preacher urged them to sing the chorus again, and as they did so Joseph Rank made his decision—and sang, as loudly as the rest: 'Hallelujah, 'tis done!'

To the end of his life, in triumph and in tragedy, 'come wind, come weather', he walked in the light of that conversion. His Christian belief was simple, the faith of a child. He himself used to say that he did not find it easy to obey, but he never failed to trust. Until this moment of surrender he had given a conventional allegiance to Methodism; from now on his religion became a consuming passion.

To say that is not to minimize other factors than the Methodist belief in instant conversion. That doctrine does not rule out the need for long and patient discipline, and Joseph Rank was not always patient and was soon more accustomed to administer discipline than submit to it. Yet he entered fully into the fellowship of the Methodist Church, sought to understand its precepts, and regularly attended its meetings both on Sundays and weekdays. He joined a fellowship group, known in Methodism as a class-meeting, where social differences are unrecognized and the leader is first among equals. Before long he was taking an ever-increasing part in the active life of both Church and Sunday School.

In this same year he met for the first time a Methodist minister who greatly influenced him—the Rev. Thomas Champness. It happened that in July the Wesleyan Methodist Conference met in Hull. Joseph Rank was one of the representatives, and he was introduced to Champness, then a man of fifty, in the heyday of his powers. Champness had founded a weekly newspaper devoted exclusively to evangelism, the very title of which—*Joyful News*—proclaimed his radiant faith, and had also established the 'Joyful News Mission'. He was planning to open a Home for the training of lay evangelists—a dream which came true in 1889 when he acquired for that purpose Castleton Hall, Rochdale, the forerunner of Cliff College, which still carries on the work in the lovely valley of the Derbyshire Derwent.

Thomas Champness had much in common with Joseph Rank, as they soon discovered. He was direct in his methods, had a gift for sparkling epigram, was utterly fearless, and loved cricket—all of which commended him to his new-found friend. He had no patience with ecclesiastical pomposity and was frequently in trouble with the pundits of the Wesleyan Conference; and that did not harm him in Joseph Rank's estimation. While he had a high ideal of the Christian ministry, he did not conceal his criticism of what he called the 'mistletoe minister', concerning whom he wrote a scathing article in his paper, saying that, like the beautiful but useless parasitic plant, such a minister was 'ornamental, but not useful', and, 'everyone knows, will do no good, if he does no harm'. 'Such a brother', said he, 'should retire into some more private position instead of continuing to be a parasite, who, however picturesque, is of no use to the body which supports him.' Joseph Rank, now a subscriber to *Joyful News*—a paper he bought every week for the rest of his life—enjoyed reading that article as much as Thomas Champness enjoyed writing it, and supported him against those who would have penalized him for being so 'recklessly outspoken'.

There was a furore in the Wesleyan Conference of 1888. The offending article was read from the platform, to the accompaniment of cries of 'Shame', and evoked a heated discussion. Thomas Champness did not flinch. He replied in his paper, declaring that 'none of those who cried "Shame" when the article was read in the Conference denied the truth of it'. It had been asserted that he

should have made his protest to the Conference rather than in print to the people, and to that he retorted:

We are reminded of what was said to the saintly Richard Baxter when he printed his famous sermon to ministers. He was told that he ought not to have published the sermon in English, but Latin, so that the common people could not read it. He retaliated by saying: 'When you sin in Latin I will reprove you in Latin, but when you sin in English I will reprove you in English.' We say that when the men of whom we complained neglect their duty in Conference only, then we will speak of them in Conference only; but as their circuits show the manner of the man who has dwelt there, and as their incompetence is open to the world, we shall have something to say by means of the newspaper.

That was the sort of thing to rouse Joseph Rank. He and Champness both understood the common people because they belonged to them. Neither was overawed by authority; he did what he believed to be right, having first prayed about it—and nobody could divert him from his chosen course. Thomas Champness had started life in a very poor home and before entering the ministry had worked as a bricklayer. His sense of humour enabled him to enjoy every moment of a life that was often fraught with peril and pain. In the pulpit he might be flamboyant, and in his youth he was addicted to red waistcoats, but he had a passion for souls and he would go to any length to win men for Christ.

He saw that working men would not be attracted by dull philosophical sermons or the sedate conventions of ritualistic churches, and Joseph Rank agreed with him. Thomas Champness wanted to train working men to preach to working men. When he began to do so, in 1885, he said: 'If a man cannot get his living at his trade, whether he be a ploughman, a blacksmith, or a schoolmaster, it is no use his coming to me. . . . Do you think the Lord Jesus would have called Peter, James, and John to be fishers of men if they had not been good fishermen, and known how to catch fish?' That was a phrase Joseph Rank might have used himself; indeed, it may be that he subconsciously echoed it when he once said, in speaking of his travellers: 'In my business all the cats must catch mice.'

If he had become a preacher, as at the time of his conversion he had some thought of trying to do, he might have been another Thomas Champness; but, as he often amused himself by saying, he found he 'hadn't got the gift of the gab'.

Among the strongest ties between the two men was their delight in cricket. As a boy Thomas Champness had been a good batsman and a tricky underhand bowler. His brother William said: 'Near to our home there was a large piece of land, upon which the Hulme Town Hall now stands. Often in the summer months he would have me up before four a.m. that we might have an hour or so of cricket before we went to work. On our way to the open space he would "knock up" several other lads, and then, with two bricks on end and one across the top, we would have a fine game.'

No wonder Rank and Champness got on well together. It didn't matter that one favoured Lancashire and the other Yorkshire—they would wrangle merrily over 'the Wars of the Roses' and dispute the rival claims of bowlers and batsmen, and then pray together or plan some scheme for the expansion of evangelism. Joseph Rank once paid this tribute to his friend:

The best man I've ever known was Thomas Champness. No man influenced me more than he did. One day, walking round my garden when I lived in Hull, he stopped and said, 'Mr. Rank, do you know that I'm in a race?' I said, 'You in a race? How old are you?' He said, 'Sixty-nine.' 'Well,' I said, 'you can't run at sixty-nine. Your heart's in a poor way, and your wind is weak.' 'Ah, but I'm in a good race—I'm in the race to be the best man that God can make me this side of Heaven!' Then he took hold of my coat-collar and said, 'Mr. Rank, I want you to be in that race'.

Joseph Rank would pause there, wait for a moment, and add: 'I'm still in it.' Such was the influence of the unconventional evangelist who did more than anybody else to encourage Joseph Rank along the road that led to truly amazing service in the Methodist Church.

The Alexandra Mill was not the first roller mill to be erected in Hull, but Joseph Rank made up his mind that it should be the best. He studied the most up-to-date milling systems of the time and went to see for himself how they worked. Thorough in all things, even then, he mastered the details of the latest processes before he launched his new venture. Patience, caution, and a keen eye for essentials helped him to make sound preparations, and when the mill was opened there seemed to be good promise of success.

From boyhood he had always loved animals, and he took an especial pride in his horses, particularly the mare he drove in the

dog-cart when canvassing for orders. Horse and vehicle were well-groomed and smart. In the middle of the day he would be seen riding up the Holderness Road—'young Joe Rank dashing home for dinner'; a habit he continued throughout his long residence in Hull. His first horseman, Usher, was as much of a 'card' as his master, and an expert at his job—as 'Uncle Slater' discovered when he tried to plant upon him a horse he couldn't otherwise get rid of because it could not be properly broken in; Usher soon scented trouble and sent the horse back. Later Thomas Sleight became the groom, and in old age he used to tell his children that 'Mr. Rank was always very particular about his horse being clean. He would take his silk handkerchief from his pocket and rub it over the horse to see if there was any dirt on him.'

Joseph Rank was usually in a hurry. One day he suddenly took the reins from the groom, exclaiming: 'Sleight, don't let the horse go to sleep—time's money!' Ever after that, he drove his young master wherever he wanted to be very quickly. They were good friends, and Joseph Rank recognized in Sleight a first-class horseman.

It soon became apparent that the Alexandra Mill was going to succeed, although within the industry the new methods were at first scoffed at, if not resented and condemned. But Joseph Rank could see farther ahead than most of his competitors. For all his native caution, he had the courage of his perceptions. Once convinced that the flour manufactured by the new roller method of gradual reduction was an improvement on the product of what he called 'sudden death' between the crude millstones—whiter in colour and better for pastry—he did not hesitate. He saw, too, that if British millers did not reform their industry the superior flour, imported in ever-increasing quantities primarily from Hungary and America, would oust the flour manufactured in Britain. The Americans had a double advantage; not only did they use the new machinery, but they also had vast quantities of fine-quality wheat grown on the rich soil of the Middle West.

Yet many of the home millers strongly condemned the new flour. 'I do not remember that either doctors or scientists at that time had discovered that the imported flour was in any way inimical to health or advocated the use of the flour that "still retained the germ",' says an expert. The opposition was rooted in trade conservatism rather than a concern for public health; but the roller

system had come to stay, and not all the Partington brooms could keep back the tide. Merchants shipped the American flour across the Atlantic, the grocers pushed it along with other goods, the public liked it, and the sales of home-ground flour steadily declined.

Then the British millers began to wake up. For they had to admit that the consumers not only insisted upon having it, but cheerfully paid a higher price for it. Yet the prejudice of many millers persisted. They and their forebears had always used mill-stones and what was good enough for their fathers was good enough for them. Come what may, they would carry on with windmill and watermill. No doubt the cost of scrapping machinery—much of it in good condition, even if modelled on devices that had been used almost since the beginning of English history—was one determining factor, but a review of the trade papers of the period shows that it was not the most important one.

Such considerations did not hold back Joseph Rank. Having made his decision, he set himself to overcome every obstacle, raised the necessary capital—he used to say, half-jokingly, that he must have been a financier by instinct or he would never have succeeded in getting enough money to build that first mill—and went ahead. He put in the most up-to-date machinery he could get. The first apparatus, like every installation Mr. Rank put up throughout his life, was big enough to allow for expansion of the mill. He built for progress—and inevitably the progress was achieved.

His skill as a miller was demonstrated by the quality of the flour, which sold readily, and trade steadily increased. Soon it became necessary to increase the staff. He engaged a man to go out selling flour one or two days at the beginning of the week, giving his time for the remainder of the week to clerical work; but that was soon found to be inadequate. At this juncture Joseph Rank again demonstrated his flair for choosing the right men for his purpose, and training them to fulfil that purpose. For some time he had had his eye upon a young man whom he had met at the fellowship meetings of the Church and at the house of a mutual friend. He was employed by a Hull firm of grocers and, like John Kemp, was a Wesleyan lay preacher. Joseph Rank saw in him gifts that promised sound and trustworthy service, and took him on at the mill. W. H. Raylor has himself described what happened:



Joseph Rank's first mill at Hull

My direct association with Mr. Joseph Rank began on March 1, 1886. It was a day to be remembered. When I started from home the ground was covered with snow, and on my way to the mill office it was snowing heavily, and continued so all through the day, being a foot deep by night. At that time the greater portion of any mill's manufacture was disposed of within horse-cartage distance from the mill. The master miller himself usually acted as the principal traveller or salesman, being assisted by the book-keeper or some other on the office staff. Very few, if any, millers then employed men as travellers or salesmen only, and, I believe, my engagement in this capacity was an innovation. Customers had to be found to take the products from Alexandra Mill, then seven sacks per hour in capacity, and districts away from Hull had to be brought in, as well as more customers secured in the town itself. The time for this development was propitious.

On his way to the mill he met a tradesman who knew Joseph Rank well.

After a 'Good morning' he asked what I was doing there out of my way. I told him I was joining Joseph Rank as a traveller. His reply was not reassuring: 'Why, he's a sick man; he won't last another six months, mark my words. He'll work himself to death—it's a mistake.' I paid little attention to the suggestion that he was a sick man, as I certainly did not consider he had any appearance of it.

Shortly after, still on my way, I came up with a baker, a well-to-do shopkeeper whom I knew well. He hailed me and said: 'Why, I hear, Bill, you're joining Joe Rank.' I answered: 'Yes, I'm on my way to start now.' 'Well,' said he, 'let me tell you, you're a d——d fool. I've known him since he was a lad—I dealt with his father before him. You'll not stand him a month, or else he won't have any use for you by then. You are a fool; you've left your Uncle's (a colloquialism) and you'll be out of a job next thing you know.' Very encouraging! But I had burnt my boats, and must go on.

When I reached the mill I went across the mill yard to the office, which was a small detached building with a single window, and one desk along the wall under the window. As I opened the door a man edged down from the desk and asked my business.

I told him I had come to see Mr. Rank as I was starting work. 'What as?' he inquired. 'A traveller,' I replied. 'Oh! another of them, are you? You're the third since I've been here in three months, and I'm leaving on Saturday.'

I asked him in what capacity he was employed. 'A clerk,' he answered. Before he could supply me with further information, Mr. Rank entered

the office and, standing with his back to the fire, built in the angle of the wall, asked me a few questions and then went across into the mill, returning in a few minutes to collect his accounts for his day's journey. Mr. Rank himself had a horse and trap for his journey, taking a groom with him to mind the horse while he was in customers' shops, and this morning I got into the trap with them and set out on my first journey for the firm.

The method he adopted to try me out was this—after he had informed the customer of my engagement, and that I should be calling on them after on my own, he handed me the account of the customer to present and take the cash, and stood back and let me get on with the rest of the transaction, but taking no action in any way; making, I presume, his own judgement of the way I handled the customer. I don't remember that he offered any criticism or advice either at the time or at the end of the day—a long and trying one which, like other days, came to an end at last.

As it had continued snowing all the day without cessation I was very cold and tired, and when I got to my rooms, I went to sleep in my chair; and the efforts of my landlady to wake me to go to bed being unsuccessful, the good soul built up a big fire, threw a rug around me, and there I spent the night, being still asleep in the morning at getting-up time.

The next day I was given a number of accounts, and went on a pre-arranged district of the town by myself, having been told to fill the day up by trying to get fresh customers. Mr. Rank held it as a principle of business then, and never afterwards departed from it, that 'If you are not getting new customers, and so increasing your trade, it is going the other way and decreasing'.

So began an association which ripened into friendship and lasted until Joseph Rank's death, long before which W. H. Raylor, like John Kemp, had become a director of the firm. Joseph Rank's judgement of men was rarely at fault. As for his treatment of them, their record of long service speaks for itself.

Chapter Five

Experiments in Roller Milling

LOOKING BACK, it is not difficult to see why many of his contemporaries thought Joseph Rank was acting foolishly when he opened the Alexandra Mill. To the conventionally-minded his enterprise appeared to invite ignominious defeat. The times, they believed, were unpropitious. In the eyes of many, the British milling trade was doomed.

That they did not lack evidence to support these gloomy prophecies is shown by the report, published in 1887, of a special committee of the National Association of British and Irish Millers, 'appointed to investigate the present depression in the milling trade'. Examination of that report underlines the vision and courage shown by Joseph Rank in expanding his business at the precise moment when leading flour millers despaired of making a living. It is evident that the National Association was far from being adequately representative. In the 'eighties, British industrialists did not favour co-operative effort, even when it was primarily devised for their protection, and the millers must have been among the most conservative.

Yet the trading situation was grave. The milling industry of the United Kingdom had been gradually declining for many years, and now at last a serious alarm was sounded. 'For some years', says the report, 'a steady import of fine flour was made from Austria-Hungary, where the science of milling was better understood than in England, and where the roller process was first introduced on a large scale. The principle there acted on was and is to make from the same run of wheat several qualities of flour, and as a demand sprang up for very white flour in England and France, whilst the inhabitants of Hungary were buyers of the darker and coarser qualities, it was a natural and legitimate method of trading. When after a time the attention of English and American millers was drawn to the subject, the millers of these countries promptly introduced roller machinery, and this has resulted in the construction in

America of vast factories for the avowed purpose of supplying England and other countries, where no import duty exists, with flour.'

The simple fact was that even large roller mills in England, Scotland, and Ireland were standing idle—to say nothing of the older-fashioned windmills and watermills. The market was flooded with American flour, the American miller 'striking his averages', as he tactfully expressed it; in plainer words, consigning flour to the United Kingdom to be sold for what it would bring—thus undercutting the British millers—while making up for losses in the higher prices of his sales in the U.S.A. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that between 1851 and 1881, whereas the population of England and Wales increased from 17,927,609 to 25,974,439, the number of millers of corn (masters and men together) dropped from 36,076 to 23,462—a population increase of 12,046,830 and a decrease in millers of 12,614. Yet bread was 'the staff of life'. Even the poorest families had, somehow or other, to get a little of it. There could be no doubt where most of it was manufactured. In ten months, 1886–7, foreign imports of flour increased by 2,308,390 sacks of 280 lb. Between 1879 and 1887 the number of flour mills in the United Kingdom had fallen from 10,450 to 8,814, though allowance must be made for the erection of 460 roller mills with a greater capacity of production.

In the report it is argued, perhaps a little speciously, that 'at the present time the majority of the British millers are as skilful, and their mills as efficient and as scientifically worked, as any in the world, with the possible exception of some of the chief Hungarian flour mills; there is also no doubt but that the millers of the United Kingdom are able and willing to manufacture all the flour the inhabitants of these islands can consume. Any introduction of foreign flour can therefore only result in injury to the British and Irish millers, as every bag of flour thus imported takes from the mills of this country, and deprives our workpeople of the labour by which they live.'

Moreover, the American millers—whose home trade was protected by a twenty per cent. tariff against competition from the United Kingdom or elsewhere—had other great advantages. The American railway companies provided special freight rates so that the millers could buy wheat in the west, have it ground anywhere on the way to the coast, and ship it through as flour to Europe.

In the port of London the English miller was actually penalized against the merchants who bought imported flour, for while flour was delivered to the purchaser free of all expense, the crew working the flour from the ship, millers had to meet a charge of 1s. 9d. per ton for unloading wheat. On a business of 2,000 sacks of flour per week that charge amounted to £1,400 a year!

Nor was it only the flour trade that was affected. Thirty per cent. of the wheat provided cattle food, bought by American farmers at from one-fourth to one-half the price English farmers had to pay. In Minneapolis, for example, a 'very strong company, with large capital', was organized to establish great stockyards near the city, and leading millers were interested in the scheme. To show what could be done by feeding the cattle on hay and bran, prospective clients were presented with 'a fine roast of beef' so fattened, and the Editor of the *Northwestern Miller*, having also been favoured with a sample, wrote that he could 'truthfully say that a finer roast of beef never left the block. It was tender, juicy, marbled with fat, fine grained, and would have pleased the palate of England's most fastidious epicure.'

As a Birmingham milling firm commented—after pointing out that in thirty years, although the population of the city had more than doubled, the number of large flour mills had been reduced from twelve to six, and that within a radius of thirty miles between thirty and forty had closed down—'there must be something very wrong when a manufacturing business like this, the demand for the products of which does not go out of fashion, finds itself beaten out of its legitimate field'. The proportion of foreign breadstuffs had been raised 'to nearly three-fourths of the whole consumption'; and what effect, it is pertinently added, would this have 'upon the eventual supply of our daily food, should we have the misfortune to disagree with some of the countries from whence we draw our supplies? Though we may depend upon the foreigner for wheat, it might be most inconvenient to rely upon America for the manufactured article flour, for if she finds us depending upon her for this article she will make us pay smartly for it, and in the event of a quarrel she could stop our supply, so that even if wheat were procurable, our mills being closed, the inconvenience would be most serious to the country.'

That, then, was the situation confronting Joseph Rank when he

determined upon his policy of expansion. It throws into vivid relief those qualities of pertinacity, individualism, and insight which marked him as a man not cast in an ordinary mould. Difficulties never daunted him; he thrived upon them. At the very moment when other millers were in despair, and proclaiming the doom of the trade, he quietly laid the foundations of a success unprecedented in the British milling industry. He had few advantages. Others had fortunes, his capital was small; others had elaborately planned roller mills, he had to experiment modestly on partly borrowed capital; others had wealthy partners and experienced staffs, he was alone save for the assistance of two young men who had come to him from other trades. Yet in twenty years he was the leading flour miller in England, with a reputation that had girdled the world.

Where lies the explanation? He could himself never say. Who else, then, could be expected to define it, except to say that he had that mysterious quality men call genius?

The problem of finance was in itself at this period enough to baffle any man. For, although the mill was beginning to yield surprising profits, as the output of the business increased more capital was needed to meet even the limited credit that had to be given to customers. Only the closest personal scrutiny of every account, and the strictest observance of every detail of the credit terms, prevented bad debts. Joseph Rank never would tolerate such debts, and in the 'eighties he simply could not afford to incur them. It was at once an enforced discipline and a first-rate business training. Those who in the time of his greater prosperity decried what they were pleased to call his hardness in this respect either did not know or chose to ignore the circumstances of these early years. Not that the criticism ever had validity. Joseph Rank simply would not incur the risks of long-term credit—why should he?—and his critics had to admit that he himself practised the principles he expected in others.

Most of the local trade at the Williamson Street Mill was done on a weekly credit basis, although the country traders were given a fortnight's or a month's credit, according to the interval between the salesman's visits—thus conditioned by the trading necessities and limitations of the mill. There was no discount for prompt

payment. The price, Joseph Rank said from the beginning, was fair—take it or leave it. So strictly were the credit terms adhered to that if a customer did not pay his account when it fell due his further orders were not dispatched. That rule was never broken, even if it meant losing the account of a trader of whose financial soundness there could be no doubt. To Joseph Rank a rule was a rule and must not be broken. Those who did not know him soon discovered this iron quality, and respected it. The reputation thus solidly built up, based upon qualities of character within himself and not upon any external expediency, established his ascendancy both as a buyer and a seller. Men knew they could depend upon him. What he said he would do, he *would* do.

To John Kemp and W. H. Raylor he made no secret of the fact that he had not sufficient capital to give extended credit, even if he had thought it wise to do so. He often said: 'My ledger is the only test of a customer's soundness to which I give attention. If he can't pay on time, however good he may be, and however much I'd like to have his trade, we must close his account—and find somebody else who can pay.'

His strong asset as a miller was the superiority of the flour made by the new process; its white colour and its better bread-making qualities, due not only to the method of manufacture, but also to the use of wheat from other countries. Until now, with the limited exception of wheats from the Baltic, the flour made in England was almost entirely from home-grown wheat which not only had a generally soft character, but in bad seasons produced very poor bread. The new roller process, it will thus be seen, not only in time reduced the price of bread, but also improved its quality; impurities were removed, and the standard of cleanliness at the mill was raised enormously.

During the early days of the Alexandra Mill deliveries of Indian wheat began to arrive in Hull. They were unsuitable for grinding by stones, and were almost, if not entirely, an unknown quantity to British millers. Hard and brittle, they just could not be profitably reduced to flour by stone-grinding. Mills equipped with the roller system began to experiment by mixing the Indian wheat with British wheat. At that time only small and infrequent shipments came to Hull from North America. For obvious economic and

geographical reasons, Californian and other U.S.A. imports were taken mainly by mills on the west coast. Those wheats were of good quality, comparatively clean, and with little of the difficulties experienced in dealing with Indian wheat.

Joseph Rank early saw great possibilities in the use of Indian wheat. Relatively, although the quality was good, the price was cheap—lower than the general price of other wheats. The wheat from Karachi, Delhi, and Bombay, however, presented difficulties to the miller. These varieties had a hardness that must be reduced if they were to be ground into flour, and it was in solving that problem that a process was invented which developed into a very important part of the science of milling—conditioning.

As a beginning, the primitive method of pouring water into the sacks of wheat was tried, but with only limited success. So Joseph Rank introduced a machine which, though very rudimentary, enabled him to use a considerably greater percentage of the wheat in his grist than competing millers were using.

A beginning had been made in opening up a trade in Lincolnshire for which there were good, cheap transport facilities by water and rail. W. H. Raylor was sent into the country to develop it.

By the new process it became possible to make two or more qualities or grades of flour from the same wheat—something that could never be done when the wheat was ground by stones; and the flour thus made was much whiter than the stone flour or the remainder of the flour produced in the grinding process. It was largely due to this that a market was found among the many millers still working with stones, and in the early stages of Raylor's work in the country he sold to such millers the Patent flour—as it was called—to improve their own. They mixed it in to meet the competition, not only of imported flour, but also of that made by the new process. This helped many of them, assisted by the grinding of meal for cattle, to carry on business, more or less successfully, for some years, in spite of the changes that had taken place in the industry. W. H. Raylor has many interesting recollections of those days.

My work covered most of the towns and many of the villages in Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire. As many of the mills were in quite out-of-the-way places the only means of reaching them from the nearest railway station was either by horse transport or on foot, and my work was done on 'Shanks's pony'.

My journeys involved walking distances from about eight miles to twenty miles in the day, the longest journey occurring fortunately only monthly. This journey was not finished until late at night, and the last stage was about two miles on a lonely country road. As I was usually carrying a considerable amount of money (all in cash in those days), on winter nights I was often nervous of that last stretch, lest I should be stopped and robbed; but a very friendly customer, whose mill was my last call before the journey, had a bull terrier dog trained to watch his cart, etc., and when I started off he would call the dog and tell him to go with me, which he regularly did, walking to heel until I reached the next village, when I would pat him and say 'Thank you',—and off he would trot home again.

Mr. Rank used to scrutinize my book on my return to the office very closely. He required me not only to enter cash and orders, but also each call made; and if cash or orders were missing some written explanation had to be given. Expenses also were closely noted, although they were small, as one didn't stay at first-class hotels in those days.

While the business was being consolidated, necessarily absorbing most of Joseph Rank's time, he did not neglect either his home or his church. Mrs. Rank brought up their growing family in the warm-hearted Yorkshire home at Chestnut Villas, providing for him a retreat from the anxieties and preoccupations of life at the mill. In addition to the elder children, James Voase, Dorothy, and Ethel, four others were born—Rowland, Hilda, Joseph Arthur, and Rita (who died in infancy). They were a very happy family, and their parents entered fully into their games and frolics. There was always plenty of fun, into which Joseph Rank could always be counted upon to enter—those who encountered him only in business would have been surprised if they could have seen him at home, romping with the children and laughing and joking in the company of his friends.

Between 1881 and 1889 his progress was solid but unspectacular. He and his wife lived in the quiet way to which they had accustomed themselves, spending carefully, building solid foundations for their home, regularly attending the Wesleyan Church, content to find their pleasures in the simple joys of home life and a small circle of friends. There were few of the distractions of a later age. They had to make their own amusements. Cricket remained a passion with Father, and as the boys grew up he would teach them how to hold a bat and how to lure a batsman with a cunningly-delivered

ball; but any other game aroused his interest, and he would play always with a boyish concentration and eagerness to win.

It became necessary to enlarge the capacity of the mill, and when an opportunity came to acquire a small roller mill in Lincolnshire he bought it and sent John Kemp over to manage it. The mutual regard and friendship of the two men had grown steadily through the years. John Kemp had proved himself to be all that Joseph Rank had seen in him, and was always a trusted counsellor. He would say exactly what he thought—a quality always appreciated by the blunt Yorkshire miller, even if his appreciation was not invariably apparent at the time.

With the taking over of a second mill it was necessary to add to the travellers, and thus it was that another young man who was to stay with Joseph Rank throughout his life and also to become a director, joined the keen and adventurous band. Frank T. Green became traveller and market salesman for the Boston mill, transferring to Hull two years later, and he soon found that his new employer responded to enthusiasm for progress. Then, as always, the miller was approachable. He would never waste time, but he was a good listener if he thought any useful information could be secured. He thoroughly understood the motto: 'Hear all, and say nowt.' Anyone who had a suggestion to make, no matter how humble his position, could be sure of a hearing. Like Lord Northcliffe, Joseph Rank was as willing to consider ideas expressed by the junior clerk or the liftman as by men in executive positions.

F. T. Green, then about eighteen, counting on his new employer's interest in cricket, asked one summer day if he could put in a bit of extra time, get his work up to date, and thus have most of a day off to go and see a county cricket match at a nearby seaside town. The cricket turned out to be slow, and as the time dragged, and he had no companions, he tired of the game some time before there was a train for home. 'The thought struck me', he says, 'that we did not do any business in this place, and as I knew the price of flour I thought I'd have a shot at trying to sell some. I managed to sell forty bags—and in a short time I was a commercial traveller out every day of the week.'

That was how Joseph Rank always reacted to enterprise. He was never afraid to take a risk, either with men or on the exchange.

That his traveller was the youngest in the district did not bother him; soon the young man was buying English wheat on country markets, with authority to make out and sign cheques so that the farmers could cash them at the local bank the same day. A reminiscence of F. T. Green's offers a glimpse of the way Joseph Rank trained his men.

There was one occasion in the early history of the firm that always sticks in my memory. The price of flour at that time was fixed by Mr. Rank himself, according to the fluctuation of the wheat market. On one occasion, when the market was advancing rapidly, I received a telegram instructing me that from the receipt of the wire I was to sell no more flour except at one shilling advance.

Earlier in the day I had tried hard to secure an order from a man upon whom I had called weekly for over a year without any success. He was one of those individuals with whom it was very difficult to enter into conversation; all you could get out of him was an abrupt 'No'. Quite by accident, I ran across him later in the day, and with youthful enthusiasm I did not forget to tell him what a bargain he had missed by not buying. His reply was: 'I did not miss anything, because I got in touch with a miller with whom I trade and booked one hundred sacks at the same price you offered.' In my youthful inexperience of human nature I replied: 'Why, if you had bid me a shilling less I would have taken it', and, thinking I was on safe ground, as he had already bought, I followed up by saying that I would even take the risk of doing it now at a shilling less than I had offered him in the morning. To my surprise and consternation, he said: 'All right, I'll take you at your word and have a hundred sacks.' Thoughts on my journey home were not very pleasant; I looked like having ten pounds to pay myself to get out of this mess.

On arriving at the office, I was asked by Mr. Rank if I had received his wire and had ceased offering at the old price. My reply was that I had not sold any flour afterwards at the old price, but I had sold a hundred sacks at a shilling less. He, of course, looked angry; but when I told him exactly what had happened, to my amazement he burst out laughing and said, 'You have been properly had. This experience may be worth a lot to me in the future, so I will stand the loss this time; but let it be a lesson to you not to try these clever tricks on again; and at the end of twelve months let me know what further business you have done with that man.'

As may be seen from that incident, Joseph Rank had sympathy to spare for anyone who went to him frankly and admitted that he had made a mistake; what he never would tolerate was duplicity,

or an attempt to cloak an error. In the very early days a clerk, acting temporarily in place of the cashier, who was ill, found that his cash was short. He wisely told 'the Governor' at once, and, after satisfying himself that it was a genuine mistake, Joseph Rank made up the loss himself, saying: 'Now, be more careful next time.'

He knew well enough that he was not above making mistakes himself. There was an occasion when he unintentionally misled a merchant on the exchange concerning the price at which he could buy a consignment of wheat from another merchant. The original seller took the price for a very large quantity. As soon as he realized what he had done, Joseph Rank called the seller to him and insisted that the price should be altered to the figure at which he had first offered. 'I have heard many a man say he was a hard beggar at making a bargain,' said one who knew him well, 'but once a transaction was agreed to there was no more trouble. Whether the market went against him or not, he could be relied upon to carry out his part without a murmur.'

His own practice was reflected in the advice he gave to a young man who was beginning to attend the exchange. 'Don't talk about any clever things you may think you have done,' he said. 'If you have to talk about business, tell them of the mistakes you have made—for you are sure to make some. If your competitors tell you the clever things they have done, it may be useful information for you in the future.'

He would take unlimited pains to instruct his men in what he believed were the most successful ways of business, and those who have been identified with him throughout his career bear testimony to their personal indebtedness to him. It was he who first recognized in them abilities and promise which were not apparent to others, and perhaps not even to themselves; it was he who encouraged them to develop those gifts; and it was to him that they chiefly owed their success. They sometimes found him trying, for he could be brusque and disregardful of their susceptibilities; he would at times drive them as hard as he drove himself, not realizing, it may be, all that was involved; but they did not leave him—and he could not have held them against their will. That surely is an answer to certain calumnies that have been whispered from time to time, though rarely spoken out openly.

Chapter Six

The Clarence Mill

JOSEPH RANK'S next move was important, not only for him, but for the city of Hull and, indeed, an even wider sphere.

Early one evening when the Alexandra Mill had been running about four years, W. H. Raylor was on his way back from his weekly journey to Gainsboro' and Brigg markets when he met his chief in Queen Street, Hull.

'Hullo!' the miller jokingly exclaimed, 'have you started returning in the middle of the afternoon?' Then, more seriously, he asked: 'D'you think we could sell more flour if we had it to sell?'

'Undoubtedly,' said Raylor, knowing there was more behind that question than might at first seem likely; 'but only if we open up new ground. I don't think there's much more to be done on the ground we cover.'

Then came a vital question that was often to be discussed later.

'Tell me this,' said Joseph Rank; 'as a salesman would you prefer to sell a flour as good as that of our competitors at threepence a sack less or sell flour sixpence better in quality at the same price as the competitor?'

Unhesitatingly came the reply: 'At threepence a sack less.'

Then the miller told him he had just left a solicitor's office after buying a piece of land on the River Hull near the recently-opened Clarence Street Bridge, and intended to build there a mill capable of turning out twenty sacks per hour—and with room for expansion.

That solicitor was Charles E. Gresham, a friend from their boyhood—the only one among his friends who, all down the years, called him 'Joe'. The deal carried through that day was the first of many the two men were to see through together. Later C. E. Gresham became the solicitor to the company, and was Joseph Rank's legal adviser in many a ticklish transaction.

Talking over the new project, the miller and his traveller walked together to the Alexandra Mill, and Joseph Rank disclosed his

conviction, arrived at after long and anxious thought, that he had built his first mill in the wrong place.

'I didn't see far enough ahead,' he said. 'I ought to have known that, with no water or rail facilities, the site would not be good enough. We ought to be near the water. It's the cheapest form of transport. With a mill at the riverside, see how easy it would be to bring in the wheat from the ocean-going ships. Besides, we could handle it in bulk and save much labour. Barges can bring it from the ships in the Humber straight to the mill. We'll have up-to-date machinery to shoot it into storage bins, without having to fill it into sacks—that saving of cost would be a profit in itself. I think I shall scrap the Alexandra Mill and concentrate on the new one.'

Raylor reminded him of something he had said before they had secured a full, steady sale for the output at Williamson Street: 'When we can get this mill running full time'—it was then doing seven sacks an hour—'I shall be quite satisfied. Anybody that likes can have the big mills.'

The reminder amused him. 'Ah,' he said, with a laugh, 'but I've grown since then. We're doing eleven sacks now, and we've found that the people will have our flour. We can't stand still, you know, and we can't keep up with the growing trade unless we increase our capacity.'

He was convinced that it would be merely adding to his initial mistake if he further developed the Alexandra Mill. Having made up his mind about that, he went ahead with new plans. It would be foolish to move farther in what he knew to be the wrong direction. He would begin all over again where water transport was available. True, the new site had one serious disadvantage; it was not possible to get a railway siding on to it. But the railway company gave a rebate for cartage, and as the North-Eastern Railway yards were only five minutes' walk away he thought he might even make a small profit on the cartage—a surmise which proved to be correct.

Events followed speedily. Joseph Rank always took a long time to come to a decision about any important question, but as soon as he had made his decision it had to be implemented immediately. Every contract had a time-clause reducing to the minimum the period in which it must be carried out. As he had impressed upon

his groom long before: 'Time's money.' Contractors had to fulfil their obligations to the letter, stimulated wherever possible by a premium and penalty provisions. He could not afford to risk costly delays. He was working on what, in the circumstances, can only be described as a small capital, and until the plant began to be productive it was 'pay, pay, pay'—everything in terms of cash going out and nothing coming in.

Soon after the turn of the year the work was completed. Owing to its position, Joseph Rank decided to call his new enterprise the Clarence Mill, and at the appointed time barges began to bring wheat from the grain-ships up the River Hull to the quay. There was much excitement in the city. Those who could look ahead foresaw that the year 1891 brought with it the promise of far-reaching commercial development. The whole community, rich and poor, should benefit. The volume of trade at the port would vastly increase. There would be new opportunities for all. For it is impossible to establish one such business as this without attracting other enterprises of similar magnitude, to say nothing of the development in the shipping trade and all its numerous accessories. In a sense, every hammer blow that resounded along the river as the Clarence Mill took shape heralded the dawn of modern Hull. The ancient worthies who in bygone centuries had experimented here—the Guild of Shipmen, the Company of Merchant Adventurers, the Fellowship of Merchants, the Company of Coopers, and the freemen who practised their trades independently of all others—would have smiled approval if they could have seen what was happening.

Unprecedented progress lay ahead. It was within the memory, not only of the old inhabitants, but of the men and women in their fifties that defective water-supply and bad sanitation had brought cholera and other epidemics to the city. Many of those who watched the new machinery being erected could remember seeing the tar-barrels 'burning weirdly in the public streets as a primitive antidote to infection'. Already there had been sweeping changes, and the standards of public health were being raised; but industrial expansion enabled more money to be spent on all good purposes, and, as one result, the death rate was reduced from 23·8 per thousand in 1874 to 16 per thousand in 1905.

The need for drastic changes in the lay-out of the city had

already been recognized. It was altered almost out of recognition during the last decade of the nineteenth century. To use the words of Sir Albert Rollitt, main roads were widened, and in place of narrow, crooked, crowded thoroughfares and congested areas, spacious avenues and stately streets appeared. A new pure-water supply was provided. Transport facilities were improved. On the outskirts of the town new dwellings were built for workmen within reasonable distance of their work. Vast schemes were initiated for the modernizing of the docks, with the building of new and better bridges to remove causes of delay, inconvenience, and loss of time, tides, and trains. The day of electricity was still in the future, unsuspected save by the few; but already the city, whose streets and squares were appropriately dominated by the tall column commemorating the emancipator, William Wilberforce, was entering upon a new emancipation, emerging from comparative obscurity into a place in the sun among the greatest ports of the world.

As for shipping, less than thirty years before 'the sailing of whalers from Hull—the last, the S.S. *Diana*, setting out singly in 1865—was a sight to see . . . with their tops and top-mast look-out tubs dressed with evergreens as, amid ringing cheers of crowds, they left the Docks for Greenland or Davis Straits, or Baffin's Bay'. Yet, long before that—in 1796—the first steamship ever to be seen afloat in England made her trials on the River Hull. The 'quick Yorkshire grip of the economic principles of marine propulsion, and especially of the economical efficiency of the screw-propeller, as compared with the paddle, and of the compound engine', enabled Hull to benefit from ocean trade. Thomas Wilson founded with a single steamer the firm which won for itself an honoured place in the world's shipping companies, as also did William Bailey and William Leatham. In view of all this, it is not surprising to learn that it was a Hull man, Mr. Witty, who invented the first oscillating marine engine; and 'the mariner's compass, invented at Amalfi, in Italy, is said to have been perfected at Hull, and a Hull ship to have been the first navigated by it during a long voyage'.

The citizens of Hull had much to live up to. Their ancestors had made history. The Queen's Dock, the first stone of which had been laid with great ceremony in 1775, was probably the first dock constructed in England. Between that date and 1885 eight other docks had been constructed, and now they were to be tested to

capacity, improved and extended, and equipped with the most modern appliances.

The whole countryside was soon agog with the news of Joseph Rank's new mill. It was planned to hold two thirty-sack plants, one on each side, but at first he installed only one plant of twenty-sack capacity, using the other side of the building as a flour warehouse. There were significant innovations that set engineers all over Britain discussing the revolutionary changes that were opening up new vistas of possibility. The grain silo, for example, in which the wheat would be stored before passing through the roller process, was fitted with a discharging elevator equipment—certainly one of the first, if not actually the first, in the country. The silo held twenty thousand quarters of grain, and the elevator capacity was forty tons per hour. Moreover, the engine put in to run the mill, a triple-expansion engine of five hundred horse-power, was the first of its type to be used in a flour-mill; hitherto it had been customary to use compound engines. Since the erection of the Alexandra Mill new machines had been invented for dealing with the detailed work of milling, and Joseph Rank took the best available advice and introduced every new invention he could acquire to make his mill as efficient and as modern as possible.

Characteristically, he would have no elaborate opening ceremony. Outward show had no attraction for him. It was not that he failed to appreciate a proper sense of drama in such a moment; when, that historic morning, he drove down to the mill he was as excited as a schoolboy—although the excitement could only be guessed by those who knew him well. At the appointed time the engine was started, and the mill began its long and successful career—and that was that.

Before it had been running many days an unexpected misfortune befell. One morning work began as usual when, to the perplexity and consternation of all concerned, the engine stopped dead, and refused to budge. There were urgent consultations, an exhaustive overhaul of the machinery, a detailed examination of the pumps; all possible causes were investigated for long and wearing hours during which the mill was at a standstill. Then the experts made a new trial, and to everybody's relief all seemed well again. The engine worked, the mill turned out its twenty sacks an hour; but

not for long. Unaccountably, silence fell again like a breath of doom. By this time it was evening, and it occurred to somebody that it was almost the same hour as it had been when the mill stopped in the morning. That clue led to the discovery. The engine's condenser, known technically as a surface type, used a large supply of water to convert the exhaust steam, after it had passed through the cylinders, back into water again. That water, still hot, was returned to the boilers, thus greatly reducing the amount of coal used for raising steam. The water was drawn by the engine pumps from the River Hull through pipes laid underground from the engine to the river; but it was a tidal river, and the sudden stoppage of the mill coincided with the ebb tide.

Swift investigation revealed the cause of the trouble: air had got into the pipeline when the trench in which it was laid was uncovered by the tide. At once the pipe was laid bare and examined to see if there was any fracture or leaking joint, but none could be discovered. It was six weeks before the difficulty was finally located and put right, and during that time the mill could be run only after the tide had reached a given point; which meant that it had to remain idle from two to three hours every night and morning. The navvies worked with haste and laid the pipes at a lower level, so that there would always be a supply of water whether the tide was up or down.

What all this must have meant to Joseph Rank may be imagined. One who at the time was a lad working on the warehouse floor remembers him pacing up and down, with his cap gripped in his hand, muttering: 'Whatever shall I do? Not a bag of flour in the place, any amount of orders, and the mill stopped!' Remember, his capital was not large. He had big sums to repay. The whole financial burden was his alone. He hated to disappoint customers. No wonder he was almost distracted. Yet at such critical moments he was at his best. He would conceal his fears in the presence of those who were dealing with the practical problem. He would never harry them. He knew that, like himself, they must keep a cool brain if the difficulties were to be overcome.

Fortunately, he had not yet closed the Alexandra Mill, as he had intended to do, and so he was able to use it to make up at least some of the deficiency. He kept it running even when the Clarence Mill had recovered itself, for trade grew rapidly—so rapidly that

he had soon to add the second twenty-sack plant and build a new warehouse. Then he transferred the best of the machinery from the Alexandra Mill to the first plant in the Clarence Mill, bringing its capacity up to thirty sacks an hour, and putting in another triple-expansion engine. So the business grew. Its success seemed assured. Yet, absorbed as he was by new experiments, he always had a nostalgic affection for the mill in Williamson Street. Years after, when visiting the Clarence Mill, he spotted a man he remembered—he never forgot a face, especially if the man had been employed by him over a long period; and going over to him, he said: 'You were at the little mill in Williamson Street, weren't you? I thought so. Ah, that was the mill that made the money.'

Yet it would seem crude enough nowadays. Before it was closed some of the spouts were tied up with string. There was no light in the basement and no light in the screen-room. At night the men had to use a lamp. Joseph Rank would come trotting up in his pony-trap, still going out to get his own orders. Farm hands from the country would stand by the mill doors, looking for a job; big, strong young men would offer themselves for eighteen shillings a week to carry corn. All the imported wheat for this small mill had to come by road from the Alexandra Dock; the cost of carting it was uneconomically high, and when it reached the mill it had to be stacked in the yard—Indian wheat would be piled twenty feet high. As for purifiers, there were only four; nowadays it all seems absurdly primitive. Yet the mill made good flour, according to the standard of the period, and trade prospered.

The attitude of the men to their employer is illustrated by the comments of one who recalls the closing of that mill.

'Mr. Rank and Mr. Raylor came down on the Saturday morning and gave instructions to take the feed off at ten a.m. We ran the mill until four p.m., and then stopped. I don't know how they felt when we left the mill that day, but myself, I felt I had lost a great friend. I am sure Mr. Rank felt the parting very much. We all had instructions to go from the mill to Clarence Street on the Monday morning.'

That Joseph Rank, far from being defeated by unexpected misfortune, could actually use it to enhance not only his own prospects but those of others, was demonstrated after the breakdown of the Clarence Mill.

In order to develop trade and find a market for the extra output at the new mill he had appointed W. H. Raylor to open an agency for the firm in Newcastle, and engaged another man to take over the Lincolnshire district. Raylor was to go to Newcastle when the mill was running steadily—a prospect that seemed to offer good opportunity for improving his position.

This arrangement was now upset. Joseph Rank did not think it advisable to open up in Newcastle until the mill had been put right, and so Raylor was given odd work to fill in his time at the office. During the weeks of delay the news came that a milling business in Newcastle was having to close down, and the two principal salesmen, who had virtually run the business and had a large and valuable connexion in the district, applied for the Rank agency. This was not a chance to be refused, as Raylor at once realized. Nor did Joseph Rank hesitate. He made terms with them—a deal that was speedily justified.

But what was Raylor to do? He pointed out to his employer the unsatisfactory position from his point of view; not questioning the wisdom of what had been done, for he knew he would have done the same himself, but giving frank expression to his natural disquietude. The miller, however, had his plans. He knew that Raylor had served the greater part of his apprenticeship as an engineer, only leaving through force of circumstance, and presently he suggested that he should give up travelling and devote himself to the practical and technical side of milling. 'You can make yourself of value to the firm', he pointed out, 'by specializing on the technical side; I'll see that you get the necessary training.'

The young man had every reason to be glad of the choice he made, after discussing it with his wife. He knew he would have to satisfy exacting conditions and win first-class results in the examinations; it meant working, at the mill and at home or school, from six in the morning until ten o'clock at night every day of the week except Sundays. But he knew also that, if he did his part, Joseph Rank would fulfil his promise. He passed the examinations, and was given the position of mill manager.

That glimpse of a bygone day illuminates the conditions that prevailed in the milling industry. Hours of work were long, and wages were low. Yet men were proud of their work—not only craftsmen, but the unskilled operatives. There was a personal

relationship between master and man that is rarely to be found nowadays. The mill foreman, for instance, would on occasion speak his mind freely. He was a fine craftsman and a man of strong character; the firm 'owed a good deal to the foreman's help'. Once in heated argument, when strong words were spoken on both sides, Joseph Rank exclaimed: 'Headley, I won't allow you to speak to me like that.' Whereupon the flashing reply came: 'You can't hinder me; I've said it.' Joseph Rank turned away and walked to his office, his face plainly showing that he had enjoyed the sally, as he always did enjoy an apt and ready retort.

Chapter Seven

Sunday Observance

WITH A GROWING family and a prospering business, Joseph Rank felt the time had come to leave Chestnut Villas. He and his wife had been happy there, but it was no longer large enough for their needs. Accordingly, he acquired Willersley House, a large residence standing in pleasant grounds in Pearson Park, which was then a suburb of Hull. This meant also removing his membership from Kingston Wesleyan Chapel. He joined the Queen's Road Church, nearer his new home; then a fine building in the classical style of architecture, and a centre of enthusiastic activity.

Here it was that Joseph Rank began the long service he gave to Sunday schools. It is a side of his life that seems to be little understood beyond the borders of Methodism. He felt a call to teach children and lead them into knowledge of God, and he began with his own. At Willersley House on Sunday afternoons he would gather his family together, sing with them the children's hymns and read from the Bible. After a while he joined the staff of the Queen's Road Sunday school, and his obvious flair for the work soon resulted in his being appointed Joint Superintendent. From that day until the second German war broke out in 1939—virtually half a century—he was never absent from school on a Sunday unless away on holiday or on some pressing business tour abroad. No business claim, however urgent, was allowed to interfere if he was at home. A business man, hearing of this after his death, exclaimed: 'But that's real sacrifice.' 'Not for him', was the reply. 'He revelled in it. The children meant much to him. It was a pleasure for him to be with them.' 'Well, I can't understand it', said he, who thought he had known 'Joe Rank'. 'I don't mind giving away a bit of money here and there myself; but to give your *time*—and to *children*! That's a horse of quite another colour. I like to play a game of golf or have a quiet afternoon to myself on Sundays. . . . I didn't know he was like that.'

How he managed to prepare his lessons was a mystery even to his colleagues in the school. Among those he pressed into service at Queen's Road was Frederick Till, who well remembers those days. 'He urged me to take a class and help with the secretarial work', he says. 'I never could understand how he made ready his lessons and addresses, though I know that every Saturday night he spent some time at home with his Bible and the *Sunday School Magazine*. He ignored books like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and *The Swiss Family Robinson*; he'd say: "I leave the story books to you." He was always in sympathy with young people, and a good visitor of absentees; and his clear, direct addresses were long remembered.'

One of his old scholars retains a vivid impression of him. 'My brother and I', she writes, 'attended the Queen's Road Wesleyan Sunday school until we were well in our teens. At that time Mr. Rank was the Superintendent. He comes vividly back to my mind as a heavily-built, very dark man, with a thick black beard and a loud voice that was rather awe-inspiring at times, but there was always a kindly expression in his eyes. He loved children, and worked very hard to instil Christian principles into them. It was choice to hear him give out the hymns in his big voice, one of his favourites being: "Who is on the Lord's side?"

'Among the senior boys in the class to which my brother belonged was James Rank, known to the boys as Jimmy. He used to be up to boyish pranks, and was usually chewing nuts and sweets. His father's eye would be on him, and also on other boys who were full of life. With a twinkle in his eye, he would say: "Now, you lads, just you behave yourselves, or I'll turn you out." But he loved the lads, and they knew it. He used to be anxious to get the children to go in for the Scripture examinations, and he always showed his appreciation when they passed. . . . I, for one, spent many happy hours under his guidance.'

Those experiences at Queen's Road were a source of comfort to him in old age. In 1943, not many months before he died, he was much cheered by a letter from a lady in Hull who gave him news about the training of the student nurses at the Victoria Hospital, in which he had shown lasting and practical interest over a very long period, and also said she had been a Queen's Road girl. 'I am interested to know of your long association with Queen's

Road', he told her. 'Of course, it is many years since I was the Superintendent, and I am pleased to know you still retain your interest and that although the members are reduced the work is still very much alive. The war undoubtedly, on account of evacuations, and the young people joining H.M. Forces, has affected most places throughout the country, and it is up to those who are left to try and keep the work going until the war is over and people are able once again to return.' Having dictated that, the old man, obviously affected by the memories that came crowding into his mind, added this characteristic postscript: 'I am glad to have your letter, it is good to be reminded of some of the things one did in one's youth, but I am now drawn to the words in Ecclesiastes: "In the day when the keeper of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened. . . ."' The student of psychology may perhaps read between these lines.

It was not surprising that, in his eighty-ninth year, he should think of himself as having been a stripling in the Queen's Road days, but in fact he had passed his fortieth birthday. He had by then grown a thick dark beard, and his tall, commanding figure, always spare and in perfect physical condition—for every morning without fail he went through vigorous physical exercises (a daily habit he continued to within a few weeks of his death)—was a familiar sight in the streets of Hull. Men pointed him out as he strode along—never hurried, yet never dawdling. He was always dressed neatly and quietly, and even then he wore the blue-and-white bow-tie that he preferred all down the years.

A story is told of a citizen of Hull indicating two men walking in the High Street, a very well-dressed man followed by one shabbily-dressed, and saying to a friend: 'Look, there's Mr. Rank, the millionaire miller.'

'Oh, is that so?' came the reply. 'The one in front?'

'No, no—the other man. The one in front is his traveller; he isn't rich enough to dress carelessly.'

But the tale is apocryphal. It is true that Joseph Rank would never spend money extravagantly, especially upon himself, and he certainly cared little about clothes; but, as a business acquaintance said of him, 'he always looked the part'—and 'the part' was an important one. For by this time his business success marked him

out as a man of influence, and the people of Hull had begun to regard him as a leading citizen.

In the 'nineties he was already rich, but as yet far from being a millionaire. Nevertheless, he was a man to be reckoned with, not only in Hull, but wherever the flour-milling business flourished—perhaps even more so wherever it failed to flourish. As yet he had not become a national figure, but the coming events had begun to trace, if only faintly, its shadow. The ball of success was being bowled to him on a good wicket; and many interested people were watching closely to see whether he would, as in his cricketing days, 'smack it for six'.

Only those who were nearest to him, perhaps at this moment only his wife, knew of his resolve to use his growing wealth for other than his own purposes. That wealth had come unexpectedly; or, at least, the magnitude and rapidity of its growth had astonished him. Like a snowball, with gathering momentum it doubled and redoubled itself. Let those who criticize ask themselves how many another man, thus enriched beyond his wildest dreams, would have spent the money. Joseph Rank's simple Methodist faith held him to a very different course—a course that can be best understood in the light of that faith. It was inevitable that some of the men with whom he did business should regard him as an enigma. They had no key. For those who measure success only in the terms of their own pleasures it is incomprehensible that a rich man should find *pleasure* in superintending a Sunday school, building mission halls, and visiting poor children in their homes.

It was now that he determined to devote a high percentage of his personal profits to religious and philanthropic works. Somebody has suggested that he 'made a bargain with the Lord', declaring that he would give a proportion of his earnings so long as 'Thou prosperest me'. He used sometimes to tell those with whom he was closely associated about a business man who did something of that sort, and, finding that the spending of large sums of money for good causes was in itself a difficult and exacting task, wearied in well-doing and ceased to carry out his promise. Gradually prosperity fell away from him, and did not return until he had renewed his vows and went back to his former charitable ways.

It would be foolish to suggest that he found no pleasure in the

making of money. No keener bargainer could anywhere be found. It was an axiom with him that no transaction in business should be done without a profit—and the higher the better. In that he did not differ from other successful men who achieved big things in spite of initial handicaps. Where he did differ from them was in his use of the money when he had made it; and that cannot be properly understood apart from his acceptance of the precepts of John Wesley.

From the time when it became clear to him that he was going to be rich he regarded his wealth as held in stewardship; and he believed that he would have to account for his use of it. Hence, on the one hand, his steadfast refusal either to squander it himself or allow anybody else to do so, and, on the other, his patient, personal interest in every gift made in his name, be it large or small.

He talked all this over with his friend Thomas Champness, and even asked him to become his almoner, saying he was anxious that the money should be used in the best possible way, to the glory of God. Champness, however, was not the man to do that. Such responsibilities, in his view, should be shouldered, not passed to somebody else. Well did he know that the spending of large sums of money could be as onerous as amassing them—and perhaps better for the soul. He, therefore, urged Joseph Rank to supervise his own giving, regarding it as a trust to be exercised with prayerful and anxious care.

A well-meaning friend on the Hull Exchange once offered him advice on this subject. 'I hear you're giving a deal of money away, Mr. Rank. Let me give you a tip. That sort of thing can waste a lot of time. Now, I have many calls on my purse—all of us have. But I don't handle them all myself. I've given my secretary a free hand up to a certain figure. Beyond that, of course, he has to get my sanction; but I trust his judgement in the smaller things. It saves no end of time and bother.' But Joseph Rank did not give like that. Whatever he gave, he gave himself, after careful consideration. Thomas Champness's words remained with him; he felt himself to be personally responsible, and was content to bear what at times was a heavy burden.

Another result of his allegiance to the Wesleyan Methodist Church was his determination never to allow his mills to be operated on Sunday. He would not himself give any attention to

business after midnight on Saturday until Monday morning, and he would not allow his employees to 'break the Sabbath'. The Clarence Mill was run from one a.m. on Monday to nine p.m. on Saturday. The men came in at midnight on the Sunday, and had instructions not to go into the mill until the clock had struck. His attitude on this question, and the shrewdness with which he would seize an opportunity to help a young man to develop his character on what seemed to him right lines, is provided by an incident that took place early in the history of the Clarence Mill. The young man thus recalls it:

When opening up Manchester ground, I used to go home to Hull on Friday nights and return on Monday morning by a train which would land me in Manchester about ten o'clock in the morning. On one Saturday morning in the office I mentioned to the manager that I thought of going back on Sunday night. Mr. Rank overheard me—which I had not intended that he should—and later called me privately and wanted to know what I really had said. I told him I felt I was too late getting to Manchester on the Monday morning and other salesmen were ahead of me. Let me quote his own words: 'Have we begun to travel on Sundays? Look here, young man, let me tell you the favour of the Almighty is worth more to me than the Clarence Mills. Monday morning at ten o'clock will be quite all right for you. Let the other men get in front.'

That is only one instance of many I could mention. On my appointment to my present position I recall the thrill I felt when he placed his hand upon my shoulder and expressed the hope that in the move he was asking me to make I should be happy, and that I was being providentially led.

'There was never anything of the "big boss" about Mr. Rank,' remarked one who was a junior clerk in the office during 1891 and 1892. That was while offices were being built at Clarence Street, adjacent to the new mill, and the office staff still used the old buildings in Williamson Street. They were all in one room, and the furnishings were of the simplest character. This was, it is true, during the primitive experimental days, but even at the height of his success 'the Governor' preferred simplicity. Sometimes his competitors, whom he visited on business, would proudly display their premises. He would go around with them and seem impressed, but would make no comment.

As he became more and more successful in business he and his wife continued to live without any extravagance. The home was

a very happy one. They maintained unbroken their associations with church and Sunday school, drawing their friends from among the Methodists. He still enjoyed a game of cricket, when he could find time for it, and at Willersley House on many an evening keen billiards would be played with his friends Alfred Gelder, T. R. Ferens, C. E. Gresham, and often the Wesleyan parson. In the intervals of scoring they settled many a knotty point of Methodist procedure.

Like Ferens, Joseph Rank's passion for Sunday schools grew as the years passed. He loved children, and the children loved him. He found as much delight in his superintendency at Queen's Road as in the control of his great business.

One of the ministers who went to serve in Hull was the Rev. George Marris. In his ninetieth year as these words are written, he is still savouring life and clearly recalls many associations with the miller and his family. It can be well understood that his keen sense of humour and quiet independence endeared him to Joseph Rank. In spite of some differences of opinion, involving plain speech on both sides, the two men—as Yorkshire folk would say—became 'fast friends'.

The minister soon realized the importance of the work his Sunday School Superintendent was doing, and he saw also that inadequate premises were hampering its effective development. Without saying anything to Joseph Rank, he began to look around for a site on which a new and better building could be built. When he had found it, he told him what he had done, outlined the possibilities, and asked if he would be prepared to back the scheme financially. It must have been among the first Methodist schemes in which Joseph Rank was invited to co-operate, and his reply was based on the principle he always afterwards adopted in similar circumstances. First he asked how much the minister thought he could raise; and then said he would double that sum, whatever it proved to be.

The building was erected on a fine site next to the church. Joseph Rank saw to it that it was properly equipped. For those days, it was one of the best in Methodism—an early experiment in the graded school. That was in accordance with Joseph Rank's conviction that, for the children, only the best was good enough. He saw clearly that upon them depended the future of the Church.

Although so generous in other ways, in those years he would not give to ministers or their children. He thought the parsons had done better in the early Methodist days on very small incomes, and should not be 'pampered'!

In Church as well as business life he would often do the unexpected thing. That, no doubt, helped to keep the children interested—they could never quite be sure what was coming next; nor could the members of the class-meeting of which he had now become the leader. Many of the members were poor, but in class there was no difference between Joseph Rank and his coachman; just as they would kneel side by side at the Communion rail in absolute equality, so they would give their testimony in the meeting. Not that he was ever conscious of any difference elsewhere. At business he was the boss, but he did not think of himself as being any better than the others—they might at times irritate him, but afterwards he would reflect that probably he irritated them just as much; he would lose his temper—the temper which was to him indeed 'a messenger of Satan' to buffet him—but the storm would pass as simply as it broke; differences of income and status simply did not exist in his mind—there was not a scrap of the snob in his personality.

One evening in Hull an old pensioner reached the room on the ground floor of the premises in which Mr. Rank's class usually met, but was bitterly disappointed to find it closed for decoration. A notice directed the members to meet upstairs. The old man could not climb the stairs, and, almost in tears, turned away to go home again. Before he had gone far, however, he met Mr. Rank, who stopped and asked him why he was looking so miserable and why he wasn't heading for class. The old man disconsolately told him what had happened. 'Why, is that all!' cried the leader. 'We'll soon put that right. You come along with me.' When they reached the foot of the stairs he suddenly stooped, and said: 'Now, get on my back. I'll carry you up—I've carried many a sack of flour heavier than you!'—and in that unconventional fashion they mounted the stairs to class.

In any discussion, whether in a business council or a church group, he would say bluntly what he thought, with a Yorkshire disregard for minor courtesies, and even his fellow Yorkshiremen

did not always relish his treatment of them. At Queen's Road Church one evening he attended a meeting of the leaders after a long and trying day of unusually exacting business, and, in an irritable mood, began to criticize in very strong terms a member of the meeting who was not in the room. George Marris was presiding and, taking the first opportunity, quietly said: 'If I were you, Mr. Rank, I shouldn't go any farther along that line.' The miller was furious. 'Are you telling me to sit down?' he demanded. 'Well, yes, Mr. Rank, if you put it that way,' the minister replied, calmly, 'I should advise you to sit down.' He at once sat down, but as soon as the Benediction had been pronounced, instead of chatting for a few minutes and saying good night, as he usually did, he went out in a rage.

When the minister reached home he said to his wife: 'Mary, I think you had better begin packing. I have upset Mr. Rank, and I feel we shall have to leave Hull at Conference.'

The next morning, while the minister and his wife were at breakfast—in gloomy mood, for neither of them wanted to uproot themselves as yet from a city they both liked and from a ministry which he regarded as full of possibilities for good service—they heard the front-door bell ring, and the maid announced that Mr. Rank had called. In the drawing-room the minister found Joseph Rank pacing up and down in much agitation of mind, looking pale and haggard. Turning as the door opened, he said at once in his forthright way: 'Mr. Marris, I've come to ask your forgiveness. You were right and I was wrong. I haven't been able to sleep all night. I oughtn't to have said what I did.'

At once, gripping his hand, the minister responded: 'That's all right, Mr. Rank; there's no need to ask my forgiveness. I only tried to save you from yourself; but—let me say this: I was faced with a temptation last night—the temptation to say to myself, "I know what I ought to do; indeed, what I should do at once if anybody else was talking like that. But Mr. Rank is Mr. Rank—and he's a rich man, and powerful; I'd better let him go on."'

Joseph Rank respected his minister all the more for that. As for George Marris, he often declared that Joseph Rank was the most generous and deeply spiritual layman with whom he had been associated throughout his ministry.

That incident may be matched with a memory of Gipsy Smith's.

He describes it as a story which has left a mark on him and has never worn away.

I went to stay with him for the opening of the Kingsway Hall, London. He was to preside and I was one of the speakers. The morning of the opening while at breakfast with the family something happened, I cannot remember now what it was, and Mr. Rank, who had had a restless night and was worried about many things in his business, lost control of his temper and showed signs of irritation. It was soon over. Very soon he became his own dear sweet self.

After breakfast, just before starting for his office in the city, he left instructions for his daughter, Hilda, to direct me to his office in time to get a meal before the service began at Kingsway. I found him in the office at the time arranged. He instantly put away everything, put on his hat and coat, and said: 'We'll walk. I want to talk to you.'

Taking my arm, he said: 'Gipsy, I've been worried all day because of what happened this morning, and I want you to forgive me.' He made no excuses for his weakness. He said: 'I want to feel you are not ashamed of me.'

And as we walked along Cheapside, past the old Newgate Jail and over Holborn Viaduct, we talked and prayed together. As the traffic roared by us and the people of the city hurried to catch buses, trams, and trains for their homes, here were two men walking the pavement of that city having definite fellowship with God and with one another.

That one little bit out of his life revealed to me the secret of his joy, his power, and his success. And I am a better man, a better preacher, and a more consecrated evangelist because of my association with him for the greater part of my life.

Sometimes Joseph Rank's concern for the efficiency of preaching led him to adopt an attitude inconsistent with the practice of the Church. It was so when he complained to George Marris about a minister who, as it seemed to him, was not preaching the Gospel. After speaking his mind, he said: 'You're the boss, aren't you? You should do as I do in my business.'

'And what is that?' the minister inquired.

'Every Friday I have my travellers before me, and I go over what they have done during the week. If they have done well I urge them to improve on it; but if their account is down, I say, "You must do better than this next week, Mr. —, or you and I will have to part company." That's what you should say. Ask him how many people he has saved, and if his report is unsatisfactory, get rid of him.'

The superintendent minister replied: 'I might adopt that plan if the people were like your sacks of flour, without wills of their own, Mr. Rank.' The incident ended in a laugh, but Joseph Rank's point of view was entirely consistent with his religious aims, and would have found an echo in the heart of Thomas Champness.

Joseph Rank revealed in another incident concerning his own family that in dealing with children his judgement was not infallible. Mr. Marris thought it would be a good thing to invite James Rank, then a boy, to preside over a juvenile missionary meeting, and James agreed to do so; but his father, when he heard of it, was not pleased. He spoke to the lad about it, and asked: 'Whose money are you going to give?'

'Well, I've promised to do it, Dad,' said the boy, 'but I really didn't want to. I'm nervous about what I'm going to say.'

'Oh, you are, are you?' exclaimed his father. 'I see; but are you nervous about what you're going to give?'

Such incidents, however, were rare; for they were a united family. Joseph Rank was at his best when they went for their summer holiday to Bridlington or Filey or Scarborough—but most often to Scarborough, in Cricket Week. He delighted in the cricket festival, where for many years 'the doctor', W. G. Grace, was the chief attraction. Mrs. Rank would usually go by train, taking the luggage with her; but the children always accompanied their father by road—some on bicycles, some on horseback, the groom driving the victoria and Joseph Rank either riding on horseback or driving the dog-cart. The miller would throw off his worries and responsibilities and enter wholeheartedly into the fun, enjoying every moment of it, especially the meal beside the open road.

After a while it became known that he was usually to be found at Scarborough during the festival, and friends and business acquaintances would come from all parts of Great Britain and stay at the same hotel, or in neighbouring hotels, making a great and sometimes hilarious party. Apart from his holiday in Scotland, it was the only relaxation Joseph Rank allowed himself in the year, and even then he would be in touch with his mill, following daily the fluctuations of the wheat market, sending instructions to his staff—and doing not a little business with his fellow revellers.

Chapter Eight

The Miller's Methods

THE DECADE upon which Joseph Rank now entered was a revolutionary period in the milling trade. As yet he had only laid the foundations of his business. In spite of the rapidly increasing profits, he had many misgivings and anxieties; for the hazards of the wheat market were in number as the grains of sand on a seashore.

He soon proved himself to be a shrewd judge of the grain markets, and his competitors began to affirm that, whereas they relied for their profits on merchandizing, he placed reliance on margins of profit from his flour sales. It was an inadequate rationalization. He knew well enough the market risks, and realized that a more solid basis was required if he was to continue to develop his flour milling. To do what he now wanted to do he must be both a good miller and a good merchant; it was not enough to be either the one or the other. In both realms he had to meet uncompromising opposition. It was necessary to put back into the business most of the profits he had made at a high cost of enterprise and risk.

For the technical organization of his business he relied as much upon himself and his staff as he did on the commercial side of it. In every detail he planned on the principle of self-reliance. The 'systems' of the millers, like the stars in their courses, differ from one another in glory; and in this, as in so many other details of management and organization, Joseph Rank was a law unto himself. Certainly he had to buy his machines and accessories from the engineers, thus using inventions equally usable by his competitors; but he made them his own, for he used them in ways devised by himself and his associates. Some said he was old-fashioned. Perhaps in some respects he was; but a thing is not necessarily useless because it is old. Most of his competitors lived to revise their estimate of his methods.

Among the many innovations he introduced in the period now under review was a change in his way of buying foreign wheat.

It had been the custom for merchants not otherwise interested in flour milling to import whole cargoes of wheat, ultimately selling it to millers in the district, and with his customary shrewdness Joseph Rank realized that it would be in the interests of the business if he bought cargoes himself; and this he decided to do.

'But for what happened at this stage of his career', says one qualified to judge, 'in my opinion his development would have been as a merchant rather than as a great miller. With his qualifications he would have been a great merchant.'

At times a full cargo of any particular class of wheat would exceed his own immediate requirements for milling, and he therefore offered the wheat he did not need through merchants for sale to other millers. This was something new in the trade, and in two important districts the millers met to discuss the implications of the development; and, in part out of resentment of his enterprise and in part because they imagined, quite erroneously, that he was offering to sell because 'he had bitten off more than he could chew', they decided to refuse to buy. 'Why', they asked, 'should we help Rank to get rid of dear wheat?' Thus they thought they would catch him out at his own game. He would discover that, instead of having acquired the wheat at cheaper prices, he had in fact, paid too dearly for it.

When Joseph Rank heard of this, he smiled sardonically; but also it aroused in him the combative instinct that was never wholly dormant. 'Very well,' he said, 'if they won't have my wheat I'll give them the flour instead.' As a result he put in hand the erection of another thirty-sacks-per-hour plant. Thus the consequences were more far-reaching than even he had imagined. He outsold his competitors, and ultimately absorbed many of them.

Even in his own city of Hull, the merchants engaged in the selling of imported grain, fearing he was usurping their function, tried to form a 'ring' against him by refusing to buy or sell his wheat; and their action was only defeated by a large firm of grain merchants declining to join in the boycott, saying they would always be prepared to sell wheat to anyone who had the cash to pay for it.

When the second riverside mill was put in he closed the Alexandra Mill, and it was not long before the second mill had to be further increased. That meant more work for the men of Hull

and headaches for competing millers. It will be readily understood that he did not make himself popular with men who preferred the jog-trot methods of earlier times. He was unaffected by calumny or criticism. Convinced of the wisdom and necessity of the course he had set for himself, he went steadily on, like a navigator who has absolute confidence in his ability to steer through the deep water.

One of Joseph Rank's half-sisters had married a man who owned a small seed-crushing mill; and, although it stood on a good water-side site, success eluded them, so he went to his brother-in-law for advice. Joseph Rank was too much of a realist to mix sentiment—even family sentiment—and business; any proposition that was to commend itself to him must justify itself in the hard terms of the market. On investigation, he recognized the value of the site and decided that he could make the mill pay; so he took it over, bought the freehold of the site and the goodwill of the mill, safeguarded his brother-in-law's financial interests in it, engaged as manager an experienced oil-mill foreman, brought the plant up to date, and turned a failure into a great success. John Kemp was appointed office manager, and for some years trade expanded, despite much keen competition. For Joseph Rank it remained a secondary interest; yet so completely was his judgement vindicated that ultimately he disposed of it at a very substantial profit. Before doing so, he had seen it develop phenomenally, until the seed crushed in the mill reached five hundred tons a week. Yet he disliked the business, and was glad to be rid of it.

On one other occasion he dabbled in a similar enterprise. A firm trading as the Premier Oil Extracting Works, at Stoneferry, farther up the River Hull, approached him for help at a time of financial embarrassment; they had sought to develop and exploit a patented process for extracting oil from seeds by saturating the crushed seeds with volatile oils instead of using hydraulic presses. The idea was a good one, but its commercial application seemed faulty. Again, however, Joseph Rank, in spite of appearances, saw opportunity where others had failed. The site, with a long frontage on the water, was almost perfect, and, after consulting experts, he bought the plant, buildings, and patent rights on very favourable terms.

In doing so, he took a risk; but his previous experience with his

brother-in-law's mill led him to believe that he could improve upon what so far had been done. He had confidence in its patent, and his confidence was abundantly justified. Engaging a clever young chemist to control the scientific side of the business and introducing vital economies in the working of the plant, he soon converted an unprofitable venture into a sound profit-earning concern, and eventually sold it advantageously to a syndicate.

Thus to win victory where others had met with defeat always gave him intense pleasure, and it happened repeatedly throughout his business life. Some have attributed his uninterrupted success to what they called his 'Midas touch', but that is an inadequate simplification. It is true that in business everything he touched turned to gold. The reason is to be found, not in a fairy gift of magic, but in shrewd observation, cold calculation, and cautious enterprise. His prosperity was the reward of unremitting application to detail, an unsentimental assessment of real values, and an almost uncanny certainty in deciding when to buy and when to sell. His friends marvelled at his courage, sometimes trembled at what they thought was temerity, and were astonished by his achievement; but he neither trembled nor saw need for astonishment. Having decided upon a line of action, like a commander in the field, he expected the results implied in that action; astonishment might have been provoked by their non-appearance, but was never a condition of their emergence. Frequently he weathered storms that drove his competitors on to the rocks: that was due to superior navigation; but if he had been pressed for an explanation he would have said simply: 'It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

At this stage in Joseph Rank's career the motor car was only a dream in the mind of its inventor; for all forms of road transport the horse was still supreme. He loved horses, and took pride, not only in the high-steppers in his stables at Willersley House, but also in the heavy cart-horses used to draw wheat to the mills and flour to the quays or railway stations or local customers.

Hull and its environs were flat, and the firm used lorries (locally known as rullies) in two sizes; a single horse would pull the two-and-a-half-ton lorry and a double-horse team the five-ton lorry. Obviously this could be done only by powerful animals in the best

of condition. It was a question of elementary necessity, but to Joseph Rank there was more than that. He would have only the best, selected after the most scrupulous examination; and once brought into his stables they had to be looked after with the utmost care. He took a personal pride in them, partly for their own sake and partly because he knew the value of inducing admiration in his fellow townsmen as they saw the splendid horses pulling their heavy loads along the streets. Soon he had as many as thirty draught horses. Like the men, they had to do their full share of work, but he would not have them overworked.

The head horseman in these early years became a trusted friend as well as a loyal servant. He had been a farm labourer when Joseph Rank took him on, and was a man of experience in more than the ways of horses, as the following story shows. When interviewing him, Joseph Rank asked: 'Are you an abstainer?' 'What's that?' Pinckney inquired. 'Well—do you drink beer or spirits?' Pinckney thought for a moment, and then replied: 'I never *buys* any!' His prospective employer, always quick to appreciate a witty reply, laughed—and said that was near enough to being a teetotaler for him. At first Pinckney was engaged as a lorry driver, but he soon demonstrated his skill in the arts of horsemanship and was put in charge of the stables.

The lorry drivers, like everybody else in the business, had to keep their wits about them and be always on the look-out for 'the Governor'. They never knew when they might come upon him striding along the streets of Hull. If he saw any team travelling in a leisurely, slack way he would take mental note of the driver and, when the teams returned in the evening, send for him, tell him what he had seen, and add: 'The horses reflect the man who is driving 'em. If the driver is lazy they soon know it, and go at his pace. So, smarten yourself up, Tom—remember, Rank's horses have got to beat all the others in town.'

He even had his own way of getting new stock. He commissioned a local horse-dealer, giving him authority to buy any likely horse he encountered; but the deal was always subject to a month's trial at work, and if the head horseman did not approve the purchase the dealer had to take the animal back. Very few horses were returned; the dealer saw to that—to Joseph Rank's advantage. Like the uncle who once thought he could sell 'simple

Joe' a 'dud', they discovered that in dealing with him they needed to be always on the alert.

Pinckney was as much a lover of horses as his master, and looked after them so well that there was rarely any need for calling in a veterinary surgeon. When a horse was reported sick and off work, Joseph Rank would say: 'If Pinckney can't cure him no "vet" can, and it's only wasting money to have him.' On very infrequent occasions Pinckney would himself ask that a veterinary surgeon should be consulted, as he doubted his ability to treat the animal satisfactorily. His master would say: 'You do what you think should be done. If you can't deal with it, none of those fellows can, and I shan't blame you.' The firm hardly ever lost a horse.

Pinckney was a 'character', and so was his wife. Often Joseph Rank met them with their family, all looking smart and tidy, on their way to church on Sunday morning, and once he offered to give ten pounds to Pinckney's wife if she would write down how she made her money do so well. But Pinckney was independent, and refused even to ask her.

Not only did 'the Governor' delight in good draught horses, he liked to drive a good horse himself; and he found out one day that one of the junior clerks, the son of a saddler, knew a lot about horses of the riding or driving type. It happened that among the new horses was a young mare, just broken in, that had attracted attention as being of likely promise. Joseph Rank sent for young Carr, and gave him a couple of hours off duty to see if he could 'make' the horse. He did so to such good purpose that the animal was sold at a high figure, and Carr started 'making' another. Later he left the firm and set up in horse-dealing himself, exporting horses and even taking them to America for sale there. He was soon in a large way of business, and prospered exceedingly.

That is only one of many examples of Joseph Rank's gift for discovering and fostering in his employees talents hitherto latent or unsuspected. A shrewd and persistent trainer of men, he encouraged those who worked for him to take an interest in the technical as well as the practical aspects of the mill, and if they passed the necessary examinations, thereby becoming more efficient, he would give them small increases in wages.

Having chosen with remarkable shrewdness the men he thought would serve him well, he would spare no trouble in seeing that they were employed to the best advantage. He expected them to work as hard as he did himself, which was to set a very high standard. His advice and instructions were always practical. Here are some of his slogans—in which, like a true Victorian, he delighted:

Do your best and leave the rest.

Do the right with all your might.

Do it now; procrastination is the thief of time.

Never trade backwards.

If your job turns out right, don't be satisfied to leave it at that; try to improve it, and keep on trying.

Always be learning.

Does such advice sound trite? Those who act upon it, succeed. They were good slogans for youngsters, and the man who offered the advice practised it himself.

He invariably insisted that straight dealing not only paid but should be practised whether it seemed to pay or not; and he would not in his own transactions deviate from that conviction.

An illustration may be taken from the days when he bought local wheat. The farmers would bring samples in small quantities, from ten to fifty quarters, and do business on the crowded exchange. There was little time for making notes, but Joseph Rank had a prodigious memory. He would return to his office at the end of the day, carrying a bag with anything from ten to fifty samples in it, summon a clerk and, without any note except the tag with the seller's name attached to the sample, call out the quantity and price of each order, whether it was to be delivered by rail or road, and all the conditions of the purchase.

Sometimes a seller would leave his sample, saying: 'I don't know just how much it is worth to-day; do your best for me.' If the wheat was of the right quality, Joseph Rank would usually put it at the top price for the day—although he might not if he was making a bargain with a keen seller! On the market he was trusted; everybody knew that, whatever happened, 'Rank would be as good as his word'.

Purchases of foreign wheat were usually made on the exchange, but he made a habit of visiting the offices of the more important

merchants about six o'clock in the evening, when their salesmen had got back from Manchester or Leeds or other distant markets, usually picking up in this way valuable information. Frequently he would find that there were balances of shipments left unsold, and in that way he made many a good purchase. No detail was too small to merit his attention. He well knew that the price of success is eternal vigilance.

Chapter Nine

Phrenology and Business

THE PACE of progress for Joseph Rank accelerated as the nineteenth century approached its close. Before Hull celebrated, with feast and pageant, illuminations and torchlight procession, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, he had become one of the wealthiest men in the North, and was beginning to receive intimations of even wider fame. In Hull his name already opened doors otherwise difficult to open, and provoked both criticism and respect. Attempts were made to induce him to reconsider his decision not to take part in municipal government, but he saw no reason for changing it; nor would he accept appointment even as a magistrate. His business and his church activities filled the whole of his time, and he believed in the concentration, not the dissipation, of energy. Unlike his friend, T. R. Ferens, who by now was driving ahead as a politician, he heard no call to such public service. Often the siren voices must have been alluring, but he wisely held to his conviction that to yield would be to risk shipwreck on the rocks of incompatibility. Nature had not endowed him with the gifts of the politician or the orator, and he was content with what he felt to be the limitations of his natural gifts.

In business he had now won the opening rounds of his fight against the competition of American flour. He had beaten it from the ring in the North-east. But, as invariably happens, one problem was no sooner solved than another, as formidable as the first, presented itself. The bakers in the district most easily accessible, being Yorkshiremen, and therefore as 'canny' as the Scots, demanded only the better grades of flour. Like the tramp whose disreputable figure was beginning to appear on railway station advertisements, they had found out what seemed best and decided to 'use none other'.

This meant that Joseph Rank was left with a considerable proportion of lower quality flour for which he had no sale in his own

neighbourhood. The pressure of events began to push him on toward decisions of whose magnitude he as yet had no faintest intimation. Although the sale of American flour had almost ceased in the East Riding of Yorkshire, it still flooded the London market, where American millers had found it possible to dump large quantities of their lower grades.

Millers in the wheat-growing counties round about London—especially Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex—sent their flour, made from English wheat, up to Town still expecting a ready sale; and London bakers found they could profitably mix the strong imported flour with the softer and more colourful English-wheat flour and greatly please their customers. Now Joseph Rank knew that the lower-grade flour he could not sell on a sufficiently large scale in the North was whiter and more tasty than the American lower grades, and it occurred to him that he could profitably compete against the Americans in London.

He set up an agency not far from the Baltic Exchange. The experiment justified itself from the beginning, and before long it was necessary to open a London office and establish a selling staff there. A promising young man, W. Escritt, later to become a director, was given charge of the new department, which grew so rapidly that an additional agency to deal with western trade was established in Cardiff. The development presaged a break with Hull. It became essential for Joseph Rank to divide his time between London and the North. Great events began to loom ahead. He would presently be faced with a crisis upon the outcome of which depended far more than at the moment even his ranging prevision could foresee.

Observers in the milling trade have at times described him as a cautious, slow-moving man; and, as has been seen, he was no stranger to caution. Yet he knew when to fling it to the winds. He could match great opportunity with great daring. It is true that he would never cross a bridge until he had tested it in every possible way; but as soon as he was satisfied that it would not let him down, over he would go—often into unknown country he had only explored in imagination; and if he could not always predict the magnitude of the dangers and opportunities to be encountered, he saw enough of them to be ready with a successful plan of campaign.

In Hull it became known to ambitious youngsters that a promising career was open to the right man at Joseph Rank's. Among those who tried their luck was W. Watkinson, who in 1895 had just completed his apprenticeship in the offices of the Hull Dock Company, having served there for five years. The North-Eastern Railway Company had taken over the business, and, on emerging from apprenticeship, he applied for appointment to the permanent staff. To his disgust, he was offered only one pound a week as salary, and he began to look for a job offering better rewards. A friend had already joined Joseph Rank's staff, and in reply to Watkinson's inquiry said: 'Oh, it's all right there. Plenty of scope for an ambitious man. Why don't you come over?'

Securing an interview with the manager, young Watkinson went to the Clarence Mill, and on his way in saw a tall, bearded man tossing a sample of wheat in his hand as he talked with an assistant. Before many minutes had passed Watkinson was facing that man; for as soon as the manager learned that he could type and write shorthand he said he thought they could do with him, and took him in to see 'the Governor'. Until then there had been no shorthand typist in the place. Within a week Watkinson was taking down Joseph Rank's letters, thus beginning a relationship not to be broken for nearly fifty years, during which he acted as his chief's personal and confidential secretary, and later as the secretary of the company. A man of discretion, he guarded many secrets; and anyone who imagined he could 'get a line on the boss' by approaching his secretary soon found it necessary to think again.

When Joseph Rank had thoroughly tested his new clerk's efficiency and reliability he took him more and more into his confidence, and trained him so that he could lift many a burden from his shoulders; for hitherto much time had been taken up in dealing personally with matters that could be handled by a fully-competent secretary. 'You will find there are many things I shall want you to remember,' he said one morning, 'but you must never write them down. I shall forget all about them, but the moment I want the information I shall expect you to supply it.'

Joseph Rank was ever 'a very secret man'. Even in the nineties he did not let his left hand know what his right hand was doing. Publicity for the business he was ever ready to sanction, but never publicity for himself. During protracted and difficult negotiations,

he clearly needed someone he could trust with vital information to be shared by no one else.

When Watkinson let it be known that he was going to Joseph Rank's his friends said, 'You'll never get on there'; and when he asked why they should say that, they replied: 'because to do anything in that firm you've got to be two things—a teetotaler and a Wesleyan; and you're an Anglican.' Nevertheless, although he remained a member of the Church of England, and for long years has been a churchwarden, he found that no handicap. At times his employer would chaff him about it, but he always respected his conviction.

Watkinson soon found, on joining the firm, that its methods were far from modern—as modernity was judged in the late evening of Victoria's reign. One day Joseph Rank saw him using one of the 'new-fangled' fountain-pens, and asked: 'What's that you've got?' On being told, he said: 'How long does the ink last?'

'Well, I only have to fill it about once a week, Mr. Rank. You know, you really ought to have one. It would save you a lot of time.'

He could rarely resist that argument.

'Well,' said he, 'perhaps I will. Get me some to try out.'

Watkinson got half a dozen, of different makes, on approval, and he tried them all. 'They all seem alike to me', he said. 'Where's the difference?' In the end he bought one—and for twenty years whenever the pen ran dry he rang for Watkinson to fill it. Then came a day when, as sometimes happened, their relationship was strained. The bell rang, Watkinson went into the Board Room in which Joseph Rank had his desk, and the pen was handed to him as usual.

'Very well, sir', he exclaimed. 'But there's one thing I'd like to say.'

'What's that?' snapped 'the Governor'.

'Only that I'm a very expensive man to be filling fountain-pens.' He was never asked to fill one again.

Joseph Rank, however much he might be angered at the moment, never resented that sort of attitude. He liked to be stood up to. He had no time for toadies. Let a man be a man, and give blow for blow. Having a ready wit himself, he appreciated it in others. Above all else he admired, and expected from his employees,

the quality he called 'nous'. If he said, 'The man's got nous', it was praise indeed. The word implied for him a host of qualities, not the least of which were tact, gumption, adaptability, perseverance, common sense, and a nose for the market.

Among Mr. Rank's foibles was a firm belief in the science of phrenology—a belief that was more common in Victorian England than it is to-day. Mr. G. M. Young, in *Victorian England*, speaks of 'the phrenology of George Combe (an addiction shared by Cobden)', and adds: 'Phrenology was regularly taught in Mechanics' Institutes, and did, I think, help to keep the idea of personality alive under the steam-roller of respectability.' Anyone who applied for a post at Joseph Rank's was likely to undergo—all unsuspectingly—the close phrenological scrutiny of his prospective employer.

In those days 'the Governor' invariably interviewed all applicants himself; and, while asking sharply-worded questions, from his position of advantage behind his desk would study the applicant's head. A large nose, or ears set well down the head, would especially impress him. And the head must always be a big one, well shaped and balanced. It is said—though perhaps the tale is apocryphal—that he has even been known to get the candidate out of the room on some pretext while he solemnly tried on his hat.

In the city of Hull a certain 'Professor' Hatfield had set up a studio in which he practised the 'art' of phrenology, and one day Joseph Rank, who had long been interested in it himself, took it into his head to have the 'bumps' of his sons and most of the staff examined. One trusted colleague was highly indignant when the 'professor' blandly declared that he was lacking in energy—a point likely to be noted by his employer. James Rank recalls, among his early memories, that when he used to go in a pony-trap to fetch his father at the Williamson Street mill there was always in the office a phrenologist's plaster head and a book on phrenology. Joseph Rank, whenever he had time to spare, would take down the head from the mantelpiece and carefully study it in conjunction with the book. When he met Hatfield he probably consulted him to check up on his own findings. Certainly he took such factors seriously into consideration when making new appointments; weighing, for example, the chances of men marked out for key positions being able to work together harmoniously.

An amusing incident in this connection is recalled by W. H. Raylor. On a plaster model of a man's head the various propensities, feelings, and faculties were indicated by bits of printed paper stuck in their appropriate places according to the empirical system of F. J. Gall, and his followers, J. K. Spurzheim and G. Combe. One morning, on arriving for the day's work, Raylor was astonished to see that the bump of acquisitiveness had displaced that of constructiveness, and where there should be evidence of veneration there was, alas! evidence of combativeness. The charwoman, in an unusually vigorous spasm of dusting, had swept off the labels—and, ignorant of the accepted phases of the mind, had stuck them on again with a sublime disregard of science.

As the young assistant, with some amusement, was surveying her handiwork the office door swung open and in came Joseph Rank. He was furious when he saw what had happened, and was only pacified when Raylor offered to put the labels back in their rightful positions. 'Can you?' he asked, incredulously; and when Raylor not only said he could, but proceeded, there and then, to do so, he made no attempt to dissemble his admiration. Perhaps the young man at that moment laid the foundations of his success in the firm.

Chapter Ten

Zeal of the Methodist

WHILE ATTENDING to the intricate and time-absorbing details of his constantly expanding business, Joseph Rank did not neglect his Church. Although careful to prevent a mingling of the two chief strands in his life's interest, and thereby incurring the criticism that he kept his business and his religion in separate compartments, he devoted the bulk of such spare time as he allowed himself to the affairs of the fashionable church at Queen's Road.

But he was not satisfied with what it was doing. Highly successful as it undoubtedly was in many respects, more than paying its way, crowded on Sundays with well-to-do merchants and their families, it did not satisfy that strain in him which marked him as a true Methodist in that it revealed his belief that the Gospel should be preached not only to those who need it but to those who need it most. There was in him, undimmed by his contacts with the markets, a missionary zeal which must be given full place in any presentation of his character, for it is fundamental to the understanding of his complex and sometimes puzzling life.

As superintendent of the Sunday school he was dissatisfied because most of the children came from prosperous homes. Yet round about were thousands of workmen's dwellings, the children of which ran wild in the streets and never came into the church or the school. He began to realize that they never would come so long as Queen's Road remained a fashionable church; and, what was more, that their parents could never be induced to enter those select portals either. Many of the men were now working for him, and he felt a certain moral responsibility; convinced that he had himself 'found salvation', he was anxious that they should share in it too.

It is a cheap jibe to say, as some have said, that he was more interested in preaching to them than in paying them well. Whatever may justly be affirmed concerning wages and conditions of

labour, there can be no doubt that his concern for what he conceived to be their spiritual well-being was genuine and sincere. He had nothing to gain by it. Most of the other leading employers did not emulate it. According to the standards of the time, he would have been fully justified in ignoring such considerations altogether; what the men did out of working hours could reasonably be held to be nothing to do with him; but such an attitude was not in his nature. He had a concern for them: he believed that without the Gospel, as he understood it, they were in danger of being lost eternally; and for that reason alone he made up his mind that, whatever the cost, something effective must be done by the Church to reach them with its message.

Hence there came a day in 1900 when he unburdened his soul to a colleague on the staff of the Queen's Road school. 'Come what may,' he declared, 'we must get hold of the people who don't go to any place of worship—these crowds of working men and women; and we must, somehow or other, attract their children.' A few Sundays later he asked his friend to meet him with his bicycle at five o'clock on the following morning—how John Wesley would have approved!—to look for a site for a church more suited to their needs.

'But why five o'clock?'

'Because', Joseph Rank said, 'the less I'm seen nosing around the better; prices would go up.'

Several early morning cycle rides were undertaken before they found what they wanted, but at last a site was secured. The Thornton Street Chapel had been destroyed by fire, and when they had surveyed the ruins, he said: 'We'll build a mission hall to take its place.'

It was an ambitious plan that he and his friends worked out; in the end it included the erection of three halls and up-to-date school premises. Nor did it commend itself to those church members who were satisfied with things as they were. It was necessary to secure the approval of the Wesleyan Conference, which was to meet that year at York; and it soon became clear that there would be strenuous and resourceful opposition; for in those early days of central missions much prejudice had to be overcome and every advance had to be fought for, and only the most determined advocacy, backed by practical methods, had any chance of success. But by this time Joseph Rank was accustomed to getting his way,



Joseph Rank at the age of twenty-three

and he had a genius for handling just such situations. At the critical moment in the Conference, without having consulted anyone—even T. R. Ferens—he quietly rose and said: ‘We are going to have those halls in Hull; and if the Wesleyans won’t foot the bill, Mr. Ferens and I will.’ That closed the debate. The scheme was carried—and Rank and Ferens, between them, in the end had themselves to pay almost the entire cost.

What followed emphasized in a new way Joseph Rank’s loyalty to old friends. Several of those who supported the scheme thought that the very latest architectural ideas should be embodied, and wanted to advertise for plans on a competitive basis. He would not agree. ‘No,’ he said, ‘we’ve got an architect in Hull—a Methodist—who can do the job. Alfred Gelder shall draw up the plans and see the scheme through.’ So it was that the young architect undertook his first big ecclesiastical commission, building successively the Queen’s Hall, the Thornton Hall, and the King’s Hall.

At the annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Joseph Rank was rapidly becoming something of a celebrity. Not that he often took a prominent part in the debates, he had little use for limelight; but behind the scenes his influence was powerful, both in his own city of Hull and in a wider sphere.

To foster what became known as the Forward Movement, planned to make possible a more adventurous evangelism whereby the masses of the people might be brought within the orbit of the Church, Sir Robert Perks proposed to the Conference that the opening of the twentieth century should be marked by the launching of a great Thanksgiving Fund. His idea was that a million Methodists should be persuaded to subscribe a guinea each and that their autographs should be enrolled and deposited in the library of the new Central Hall at Westminster. The scheme was adopted, but after public meetings had been held throughout the land, and appeals made in every district, the full accomplishment of the task was found to be impossible; £800,000 in gifts and promises had been secured, and there seemed little prospect of raising more.

Among those who were concerned about this impasse was Joseph Rank’s old friend and minister, the Rev. George Marris, and they had long talks about it. They began to plan ways of adding to the Fund. At first Joseph Rank doubled the amount raised in the

Queen's Road circuit. Then he doubled the sum raised in the whole of the Hull District. He had it in mind, however, to do much more than that. By now he was extremely wealthy, although no one could have guessed it from his style of living; but frugal methods had been ingrained in him and the idea that had come to him must have seemed fantastic. He said nothing of it to anybody, but brooded over it and secretly debated its wisdom—or foolishness. Hence George Marris was taken by surprise when, at Conference, Joseph Rank suddenly sought him out and said: 'I want to announce a gift to this Fund, of which as yet I have told nobody; but I'm terribly nervous—my throat is parched and my tongue seems to cleave to my mouth. I dare not attempt to speak.'

The minister wasted no time. He went out to the buffet and brought a glass of lemonade. Thus fortified, Joseph Rank moved with his minister to a front pew, and when the opportunity came, with great trepidation he mounted the tribune and startled the Conference by promising an immediate gift of £20,000.

That act of generosity set him on an unprecedented course of philanthropy and brought him many troubles. He was bombarded constantly with appeals from needy causes and hopeful people, including countless cadgers. He discovered, if he had not done so already, that the rich man who wishes to preserve faith in human nature must fight without ceasing the temptation to regard everyone who approaches him as somebody 'on the make'. He did successfully resist that temptation; for his faith in God enabled him to hold on to his faith in Man—although he was realist enough, and experienced enough, not to put it too high. Moreover, he found that even those who appealed to him successfully did not always return good for good. Not all who accepted his gifts forbore to criticize him behind his back.

He was apt to be as outspoken in his condemnation of what he regarded as slackness in ministers as he was in condemnation of business ineptitude, and this also brought criticism. An illustration is recalled by W. H. Raylor, then manager of the Clarence Mill and himself a Methodist lay preacher.

One evening I had gone to bed, when the door bell rang, and, going to answer it, I found the Rev. Thomas Rogers there, full of apologies, but very indignant. After we had sat down over a rejuvenated fire, I learned

from him that he had just come from a meeting of ministers and some senior official laymen, and that Mr. Rank had spoken in strong terms about the lack of ministerial effort, and had gone so far as to say that if the representatives of business houses offered their wares with the same indifference as the ministers exhibited in their work the business men would soon be 'broke'. Mr. Rogers, who was in the chair, hotly replied that, if all reports were true, if Mr. Rank paid his employees at the same rates as the other millers, instead of less, it would give him more justification for criticizing other people for dereliction of duty. Mr. Rank replied by asking him if he knew myself, his mill manager. On learning that he did, he suggested that he could readily ascertain from me the truth or otherwise of the reports referred to—which, by the way, were quite general in the town.

I had to reply by saying that I, as manager, was always anxious to get the best men I could in any capacity, and I had not found any way in which I could get them to come to us, and remain, except by paying them the top rate of wages current in the industry; and that this the firm was doing. I had to admit that, compared with some other trades, the rates paid by flour millers were low; but as a firm we always paid the top rates obtaining in flour milling.

On another occasion Joseph Rank was taunted by a merchant about paying his men badly. He asked if he knew personally three of his more responsible men, mentioning them by name. Yes, he knew them fairly well. Did he consider them to be of average ability and character for their positions? On being informed that they certainly would conform to that standard, Joseph Rank replied that they were anyone's men, and would certainly have no difficulty in getting appointments if they left him. That being so, while they were on the best of terms with him, he did not flatter himself they remained with him because they had a very special affection for him, other than as a fair employer. They stayed because he paid them sufficiently well to make it difficult for them to get better appointments elsewhere, and they recognized their interest was to remain with him.

'Really, the standard of pay or salary was not the prime factor in the service and loyalty, or even the ability of the men he had gathered around him', says one who served him for a lifetime. 'Nor was it even the most important item—although undoubtedly he might have found it more difficult to retain the service of his more responsible men at lower pay.'

It cannot be said that he was an easy man to serve at any time. During the period of the rapid growth of the firm, when he had to grapple with many worrying and exhausting problems, and had to be constantly driving in order to get things done as quickly and as efficiently as he knew they must be done, he was often difficult and domineering. He never could suffer fools gladly, and in moments of stress would sometimes lash with an unmerciful tongue, not only his closest associates, but even his sons. Moreover, during the time of enlargement and increase, additional capital was constantly needed to finance greater output, with the result that costs of all sorts were kept down to a minimum.

He strongly held the view, which he discussed freely, that a man's ability and integrity were not in any way dependent on his social position, and that therefore it was sound policy to draw employees from classes and businesses that were not accustomed to a high standard of wages. These men, he knew, readily appreciated a better standard of salary, or wages, than they had been accustomed to, and their social status and standard of living did not necessitate heavy household expenses. One dictum of his about types of men may be recalled: 'There are men of ability and cleverness, but no principle; there are men of integrity, but little ability; and there are men of ability and of high integrity; but, while there are lots that come in the first two classes, the third class are scarce, and need looking for.'

Both on the commercial and the technical sides of his business, however, he would always promote to better positions, as they arose, the men of his own staff, rather than engage men from other firms; and, in view of the constant expansion, openings for advancement were frequent. His constant contention was that the firm should always be training men for better positions, and when any man showed special interest or ability he was given all the encouragement and help that was possible. He would counter the suggestion that he might be training them to go to some competitor by saying: 'Who can do better for them than we can? I can always pay them as well as they can get elsewhere.'

The rapid expansion of the business, constantly absorbing the more able and active men in better-paid positions, was unquestionably an important factor in the success of this policy, and also in the enthusiasm and loyalty of the men.

His attitude to competition was similar. When, for instance, a wealthy firm built a mill in Hull and transferred their manufacture from an inland town, the fear was expressed that their coming would make it more difficult for Joseph Rank's to meet the competition; but his attitude was one of satisfaction rather than of doubt concerning the effect upon his trade, and he said: 'The more millers there are in the port the more the port will be used by shippers of grain—and that means cheaper wheat for us to compete with. Their coming will help to make a market in Hull. We've got as good a mill as they have; and if our men are not as good as theirs it will wake 'em up, and they'll have to become as good, or better.'

It will thus be seen that his outlook, constantly widening, was fitting him for the greater tasks that lay ahead. He went steadily on, improving his trade, keeping abreast of changing methods, ready to take advantage of any good opportunity.

At home his wife was always his understanding and patient helper. After the noise and worry of the mill, the keen competition of mart and exchange, and the clamour of a trade that was making ever greater demands upon his resources of nerve and enterprise, it was possible for him to forget it all in the quietness and peace of the home she kept for him. Moreover, she shared his simple religious faith and encouraged him in his giving. They remained very much in love, unspoiled by wealth because they had never surrendered to its temptations; in essence they remained simple and unaffected, content to find their pleasures with the children in the normal games of home and family life like any sensible and unpretentious citizens. Their loyalty to Methodism helped them to counteract any tendencies they may have had to seek amusement in an artificial world. They continued to find their friends in the Church of their choice, and never grew away from the simplicities or hankered after more sophisticated society.

Those who had the opportunity of observing the life of that home are convinced that Providence had a guiding hand when Joseph Rank chose his wife. She was made for him, as he himself so often said. Her patience, her unselfishness, her calm under stress, her good health, and her will for hard work, were qualities which in her early married life made it possible for her to help

build up his business. If she had been selfish, frivolous, quick-tempered, and unwilling to face hard work his life might have been very different.

When they planned to save, spending in the first years of their married life only a third of their income, she lost touch with some of her friends and gave up almost any social interests to which she had been accustomed. Her patience was an antidote to his hasty temper. When the children were young she was the mediator in all their little difficulties and troubles.

In those days she was always busy about the house, and did her own baking in the kitchen. The smell of home-baked bread is a part of the children's memories of their Yorkshire home. A large family, they were brought up in a strict and simple routine, in which the red-letter days were picnics in the country, blackberry-picking excursions with bramble-cake for tea afterwards, drives to grandfather's farm at Ouborough in the gig seated between father and mother.

When they were away at school it was Mother who would write regularly every week with the news of simple things that had happened at home.

Before school days she used to read to them on Sunday evening from some favourite book, and they still remember some of those stories. As they grew older they would be taken to church morning and evening, and in the afternoon their father held a Bible Class for them, until they were old enough to go with him to Sunday school. 'At this time', says one daughter, 'I think we were all a little feared of him, and were continually coaxing Mother to ask him for permission for various things we wanted to do; she often did, but sometimes she would insist on our making our own requests, probably prompted by Father—and so we would screw up our courage. How amazing it seems to be remembering this now, when one knows—as one grew older, and Father perhaps more mellow—how very approachable he really was. Mother was the peacemaker with us all; she loved her family and was never happier than when we were all together. She welcomed all our friends and entered into, and enjoyed, all our fun. I think one only comes to know one's mother, and realize all she means, when one marries; then one has so much in common. I still remember her first visit, and the joy and pride in showing her our home—

and, when she left, her teasing remark written in the visitors' book: "taught how to be tidy."

To her husband, as has been seen, she was, during the years of struggle and achievement, a source of strength and quiet confidence. Without her, it is to be doubted if he would have succeeded as he did either in business or in his religious life.

During the time they were at Willersley House, Pearson Park, the youngest child was born. The others were just beginning, or just finishing, their school days, some at boarding schools and others at local schools. It was a busy household, with all the comings and goings, and the children filled the home with friends.

At all stages of their development Joseph Rank took a keen interest in his children, entering into their games and sports and joking over their escapades. On a Bank Holiday frequently the boys would get up a 'Sports Day' for the family and friends. Joseph Rank always championed the cause of the youngest and weakest, claiming for them better handicaps than those meted out by the boys and being very delighted if any of his daughters managed to beat their brothers. He played tennis, croquet, and billiards as well as cricket with them in those days. A game to him was a serious business, and if he even suspected any cheating, the unfortunate culprit was sent off to bed.

He did not approve of his children going to the theatre or public dances, but he always took the whole family once a year to the Circus in Hull, and was ever ready to welcome their friends, encouraging them to have little dances at home; for he believed in young people finding their pleasures and recreations in their own home.

Again he was insistent that they should all go to the Sunday school, and later on they became teachers in his own school. At this time he suffered greatly from the lameness in his feet—more so than in later years. Frequently on his journeys to and fro on Sundays he would speak of the burning pain, likening it to walking on red-hot cinders, but when he was urged to take more rest he waived the suggestion aside, saying: "The Lord's work must be done."

They were a lively family, and many tales are told of pranks at home and at the mills. One must suffice. After James had left school, and was looking very important as he went about the

Clarence Street Mill in a suit of overalls, his youngest brother, Arthur, came home on holiday. Jim took him round, 'to show him a thing or two', and, catching him at an unguarded moment, pushed him into a dump of sweepings. A little later they both went into the sample room with their father to look at some bread. Here was Arthur's chance. 'Don't you think this bread smells a bit mouldy, Jim?' he inquired. Immediately James leaned over to put his nose close to the bread, and Arthur, who had concealed three or four pounds of flour in a small bag, emptied it over his head and down his neck. The manager was standing by, and expected 'to hear the Governor raise the roof at this waste'; but, instead, he turned round with a laugh and said: 'I don't know what Jim has been up to, but I'll bet that makes it square!'

The comment was wholly in character. People were often surprised by what seemed to them his unexpected reaction to some problem or event. Usually that was because they did not realize how keen a sense of humour was hidden behind his apparently grave demeanour, just as others who did business with him sometimes were misled by what they regarded as 'slowness in the uptake'. For example, a bank manager who hardly knew him had a visit from Joseph Rank one day. Afterwards he said: 'When he came into the office I thought, "How quiet, almost dull and heavy, he is. I'll do a good bargain for the bank with him." But I soon found he was far from the dull and heavy man I had imagined him to be—and I must admit he made very satisfactory terms for Joseph Rank!'

It was about this time that he applied to his bank for a substantial loan, necessitated by his building schemes; an interview was arranged at Leeds. The manager, however, was not enamoured of the idea. During the following week Joseph Rank found out the time at which the bank directors were sitting and asked to see them. They did not at first seem disposed to allow him the overdraft he needed, but he pointed out to them that for years he had been making £5,000 a year and living on less than £500; if, he demanded, they were unwilling, in those circumstances, to lend money, what *did* they propose to do with it? His argument, and his forthright presentation of it, were irresistible, and he had his way.

Chapter Eleven

The Assurance of Success

BY THE TURN of the century the milling business of Joseph Rank, registered as an incorporated company in May 1899, was among the foremost enterprises of provincial England. By his own initiative and energy, directed by organizing and other business gifts of a high order, and governed by implicit faith in the leading of Providence, he had risen from obscurity to a position of great and growing power. Yet in character and habit he remained simple and unpretentious, without social ambition, content to serve the Church of his choice and enjoy the family life of the average middle-class citizen.

He said of himself: 'In my private life I have not much time to spare, as most of my time is filled with business and Church work. I do play a little golf, but I am afraid that, to a certain extent, the social side of my life has been neglected.' He had seen milling, as he put it, 'turned topsy-turvy'. When he began, the method was what he called 'sudden death'—the crude crushing of the ancient millstones, scarcely different from that in vogue when his namesake hoarded corn in Egypt. 'Now', he said, 'it is gradual reduction. There is no doubt that under the present system much more high-class flour is made than would have been possible under the old stone system.'

Much of the credit for that achievement is rightfully his, and the whole nation benefited. He never allowed himself or his business associates to forget that the quality of bread, the staple food alike of rich and poor, is of vital national importance. In the words used by the Editor of *Milling*, the journal of the trade: 'One of the factors which led to the wonderful success of the firm undoubtedly has been that it has made as one of its first and foremost rules that nothing but the highest classes of wheat should be used. As the baker relies on good flour to make good loaves, so does the miller depend on good wheat for manufacturing a high-class product.'

It should be remembered that, then as now, the wheat-growing

capacity of Great Britain was unable to provide more than a small proportion of the milling needs. That difficulty, however, overcome by vast imports of foreign wheat of differing varieties, actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise; it challenged the ingenuity of such men as Joseph Rank, who by skilful blending produced flour of better quality than would probably have been manufactured if, as in the U.S.A., there had been immense areas of rolling corn from which to draw inexhaustible supplies. Expert chemists were employed to analyse the peculiar properties of the differing types of wheat to be blended, and by milling and baking tests the mixture was built up 'so that the special properties of strength, or colour, or flavour of the Manitoba, Australian, Winter, Plate, or other wheats were combined in their best and fullest measure to produce in bread the perfect loaf'.

The new mills also introduced methods of cleansing and purification previously unknown. It used to be said, by millers and public alike, 'You've got to eat a peck of dirt before you die'; but the saying has for long been out-of-date so far as flour-milling is concerned. Nowadays, before the actual grinding begins, the raw material of our daily bread is subjected to a series of elaborate and systematic treatments by which dust and grit and other harmful elements are eliminated. As for the reduction of the wheat into flour, each stage of the elaborate and highly scientific process has been brought by patient study and experiment near to perfection. A modern flour mill is a model of organization, ingenuity, and arrangement.

Joseph Rank was justifiably proud both of the mills he had built beside the River Hull and the brands of flour produced there—notably those he called 'As You Like it' and 'Family Pride'—which, either as flour for home baking or as bread, went into many of the homes of England, both stately and otherwise.

As the years went by he had many opportunities of entering public life, both municipally in Hull and in a wider sphere, but if ever he was attracted he knew better than to yield. For politics he had no inclination, perhaps no aptitude. He would sometimes chaff his friends, especially T. R. Ferens, now in full career as a Liberal politician, about the vagaries, inconsistencies, and broken pledges that litter the floor of the House of Commons. Democrat

as he instinctively was in his entire lack of class prejudice, he nevertheless shared Carlyle's belief in the need for heroes; he read few books, and certainly did not come under the spell of the rugged peasant-philosopher from Craigenputtock, but he knew, from his own experience, how low was the general level of intelligence and how rare, as well as highly marketable, were qualities of leadership.

His interest in politics was never passionate; he was no party man. Under the influence of Ferens, he would lean toward the Liberals, though it cannot be said that he saw much need for social reform; the movement within the Wesleyan Methodist Church to quicken the social conscience of the people enlisted no support from him. Religion seemed to him a personal concern. 'Let the parsons leave economics to those who understand it,' he would say. The one political theory which engaged his enthusiastic support was Tariff Reform, which he advocated both in private conversation and at meetings of the milling trade. This pre-occupation was due not so much to political theory as to his experience as a miller. Sufficient explanation is to be found in the facts concerning the importation of American flour, outlined in a previous chapter.

He put the case explicitly when he said: 'Everybody who knows me is aware that I am a Tariff Reformer. I am not a man to build a laundry and give the work to somebody else; and as long as this country has a million unemployed, I think it's a mistake to allow manufactured articles to come here. I am not a believer in the so-called free trade arguments, but I do believe in fair trade, and I think that if we had fair trade the country would be able to look after itself. We have a tariff, or taxes, on certain goods coming into this country, such as tea, coffee, tobacco—goods we cannot produce ourselves—whereas other countries tax goods that they themselves can produce, thus raising their revenue in protecting their own industries, which, to my mind, is like killing two birds with one stone.'

He would never swerve from that view, and naturally it took him into the inner circles of the Tariff Reform movement, for as an advocate he had obvious qualifications. The only political group on which he ever served was Joseph Chamberlain's Tariff Reform Council. He came to know Chamberlain well, and the two men had much in common; but their political alliance went no farther

than co-operation in this, for Joseph Rank, extremely practical policy.

His view of industrial organization was summed up thus by himself: 'We cannot get away from the law of the survival of the fittest, whether we like it or not. It is a natural law, and human nature without competition would become effete. "Ca' canny" may last for a time, but if it is carried on for two or three generations Englishmen, who are perhaps the quickest and most adaptable workers in the world, will lose their capacity for work, and other nationalities will rise to the top.' That deep conviction explains much in his life and work, and only in the light of it is his business career, with its self-reliance and ruthless drive, likely to be understood. It was the spring of what men sometimes called his inexorable hardness; it governed, to a large extent, his conduct both in the internal organization of his business and in his attitude toward his competitors. Yet, behind all his insistence upon efficiency and what he regarded as the iron laws of competition, there was a natural kindliness and a ready sympathy unseen by those who judged only by surface values. He did not wear his heart on his sleeve, and when carrying through a business deal he would allow nothing to outbalance his cold economic judgement. Yet no one would more warmly endorse the view of a member of the Milling Trade Organization Committee who said: 'If it be granted that the weakest must go to the wall . . . it is far simpler, far cheaper, and infinitely more pleasant to send him there with a pension than as a cripple.'

As for Joseph Rank's wizardry on the wheat markets, many specialists—and not least his competitors—would have liked to know the secret. He probably did not know it himself. Instinct defies analysis. There was a large element of intuition in his ability to decide when apparent risks could safely be disregarded; but, like the journalist's comparable gift for scenting a good story, it was supplemented—and, indeed, perhaps only made possible—by close and unflagging study and the application of common sense. If genius is ten per cent. inspiration it is certainly ninety per cent. perspiration—and that is true whether the work involved be the writing of a poem, the painting of a picture, the planning of a campaign, or the working of a mill. Perhaps one of the best hints he ever gave to those who sought for the secret of his success

was his comment that 'a man who carries sufficient stock to keep his mills working comfortably, and buys every week, is the man in the long run who makes the most money, unless he is a very fortunate judge of the markets, as I reckon that he has to be right twice out of three times to make wheat speculation pay'.

It cannot be denied that Joseph Rank was, of all men, 'a very fortunate judge of the markets'; but he stoutly maintained that he was not in any adverse sense a speculator. Gambling, by which he meant the staking of money on an outcome determined by chance instead of skill, certainly had no allurements for his very practical and cautious mind.

Discussing the topic on the Pacific Exchange one day, he said to a merchant: 'Gambling's a mug's game. I learnt that long ago. I never gamble.'

'No,' was the dry reply, 'taking a risk on the wheat market's good enough for you.' He enjoyed the joke, but it had not the barb his friend imagined. It is true that wheat prices at times fluctuated alarmingly; that cargoes had to be bought on trust when they were thousands of miles away; and that fortunes, however difficult to make on the Baltic or the Pacific, could be lost overnight by reckless or ill-considered buying. Joseph Rank faced the risks without a tremor and always seemed to know instinctively what to do.

Anyone who imagined that such decisions were arrived at lightly and without much hard work was far from appreciating the facts. He had an infinite capacity for taking pains.

No business detail was too trivial for him to give consideration to it, as the following anecdote from one who entered his employment fifty years ago will indicate. The first shorthand-typist to be used in the General Office, he found when he arrived that there was only one typewriter, which was fully employed by Joseph Rank's secretary, and so it was necessary to buy another. 'A machine was obtained on trial, but before Mr. Rank would finally decide to buy it he had a mechanic in from the mill to give his opinion on it, and to say whether it would stand up to good, hard work.'

Another example of this painstaking attention to detail concerns Joseph Rank's method of finding out whether a candidate for a post was telling the truth about his career. Experience taught him to beware of glib talk. He would invariably ask the applicant

at what age he left school, and then go through the list of positions he had held, with length of service in each. By mentally adding up the years involved and comparing the result with the applicant's present age he could tell at once if the man was trying to hide something. Often, in that way, he—or the assistants whom he trained to make the same test—would discover that there was something the candidate was anxious not to divulge.

Many stories could be told about his personal relations with the mill operatives in the Hull days. He was always interested in their welfare, and especially in their sports. Sometimes in summer, cricket matches would be arranged between departments of the Clarence Mills. On one such occasion the office team had fixed a match with a club from outside, and Joseph Rank consented to play. As the cricket ground was some distance from the railway station, he engaged four-wheeled horse cabs (it was long before the days of the taxi) to take them to the ground. No sooner had they started out, however, than it came on to rain, which developed quickly into a downpour. Reaching the field, they stayed in the cabs, waiting for it to stop; but there was no sign of improvement. At last, thoroughly depressed, somebody said he thought it wouldn't stop that day and it would be as well to give up the match. But the rival team was also on the ground, and Joseph Rank's characteristic reply was: 'Until those other chaps are tired of waiting I'm not going to be. We'll stick it out, if we have to stay here all day—unless they give in.'

When the Clarence Mills had been running about six years it was announced that all employees were to have a trip to Scarborough, with all expenses paid—free railway tickets, provision for dinner and tea at an hotel, and tickets for the Aquarium (centre of innumerable amusements in the true Victorian style) in case the day was wet. In the afternoon there was to be a cricket match in the College grounds—Millers *versus* the Office Staff. It was a great day out—the first of many; and after tea Joseph Rank made one of his rare speeches, congratulating the millers on a fine victory and adding: 'Anyhow, we'll give the office another chance before long to see what they can do.' That happy family gathering was long remembered and talked about. When they got back to the Paragon Station, Hull, the men lined up spontaneously, made

a passage for 'the Governor' and his family to pass through, and sang 'For he's a jolly good fellow'. Joseph Rank was a proud man that day. One of those who were in the crowd adds a further recollection.

Some weeks later we had notice that the mill cricket team was to go to play at Hornsea, on the invitation of John Kemp, to give the office staff a chance to beat the millers; wickets to be pitched eleven a.m. Did the office put up a team? I'll say they did! I can remember a few of the team—Mr. Joseph Rank, Mr. James Rank, Mr. Arthur Rank, Mr. Watkinson, and another—I can't remember his name—who was going to South Africa on the Monday. I mention him because he was one of the best men in the office team. We had a great day, cigars and cigarettes being handed around at intervals, and everyone happy.

We tossed up, and I won the toss, and sent the office in to bat, thinking we should soon finish that lot! But what a surprise was in store! I set the field and myself fielded point, my usual place. Anyone who has seen Mr. Rank bat knows how hard he could hit, and nearly all his strokes went to point—and at speed! I am afraid a lot of them were too hot to stop. He offered a bat to the man who made the biggest hit, and this was won by the man who went to South Africa on the Monday. Well, the office gave us a big beating that day, and I never forgot it. After the match we were all invited to tea, and so ended a very enjoyable day.

Mr. Rank always gave us all the support he could in matters concerning sport. We had three good teams, and our first team took some beating. I once went to see a Mr. Pearson—'Toppy' Pearson, as he was generally called. 'Good evening,' he said, 'what can I do for you?' 'I want to rent one of your fields for Rank's Cricket Club.' 'Who do you mean?' he said. 'The only Rank I know is Joe Rank. All right, have it your own way. I wouldn't let any of my fields for cricket to anyone else; but seeing it's for Joe Rank's chaps—well, that's different. I went to the same school as he did, but he never was Mr. Rank to me; Joe we all called him at school, and we ain't altering it now. You can have the six-acre field at six pounds a year.' It was a field off Southcoats Lane, and there many a thrilling game was played.

In those days Joseph Rank sprang many surprises. One Saturday it was suddenly announced that the mills would shut down at four o'clock and all employees were invited to tea at the Oddfellows' Hall in Charlotte Street—tea at six, to be followed by a meeting. Everybody wondered what was coming. The concert began, without anybody knowing what was going to happen. A certain tension deprived the singers of some of the appreciation that was their due,

for it was felt that Mr. Rank must have something of exceptional interest to say.

Without ceremony, he presently stood up and began: 'Mr. Chairman and workers all, I've had much pleasure in calling this meeting. I might say it's taken me some time to think out what I have to say to you to-night. I am very pleased to tell you that the business has been very successful. I don't put all the success down to myself. I put a lot of it down to God. I also put a lot of it down to you—that is, office staff, millers—all of you. After a lot of consideration I have decided to give each man a bonus. I feel that everybody in the mills is interested in his work, and I want this interest to continue. The bonus will vary—some will get, say, four shillings a week extra, some a bit more, and so on. This money will be kept by the firm for the men, and interest will accumulate year by year.'

Doubtless that sounds a little strange in these more sophisticated days. But Joseph Rank knew his men. He would have admitted frankly that he wanted to get the best he could from them, but that was not his sole motive. He understood them, he knew how to talk to them simply and directly, and he knew that if he did not save the money for them they would never save it for themselves.

His shrewdness and interest in his men were alike demonstrated when he offered prizes up to ten pounds for improvements that could be used to make the running of the mills more efficient. At once everybody was 'on his toes'. The improvements were forthcoming—one man, for example, got the maximum award for a patent oil device for use on the engines. He became the Chief Engineer at Hull. Men who proved their worth were promoted and given larger opportunities. Those who showed themselves to be interested in the technique of their jobs were encouraged to attend classes in the firm's time. That, to Joseph Rank, was simply common sense: the mill benefited, and so did the men.

Not that they were always appreciative or did not at times have a sense of grievance; but when things go wrong it isn't always 'the boss' who is to blame. One Friday morning Joseph Rank, when passing through the office, met one of the engine-drivers. 'Now, A——,' he said, 'what are you after?'

'Just arranging about wages, sir; as you know, I'm leaving to-morrow.'



Mrs. Emily Rank

'Leaving?' he exclaimed. 'What do you mean? I don't know anything about this—what's the idea?'

'I'm going to sea, sir; I can get more money there.'

'If it's more money you want, stop where you are; you can have more money here.'

'I'm sorry, but it's too late, sir. I've signed on, and I'm bound to go.'

'Why didn't you ask your foreman?'

'I did, sir, and he said there was nothing doing.'

Seeing there was no more he could do, Joseph Rank wished the man well, and turned away. As soon as he reached his office he sent for the foreman, and gave him the dressing-down that perhaps only he could give—a lesson the man probably remembered to the end of his life. It is not always realized that the head of a great business is not accountable for every act of petty injustice that may be done in his name.

As the nineteenth century drew toward its close, overshadowed in England by the Boer War and anxiety concerning the news about 'the soldiers of the Queen', Joseph Rank approached his fiftieth year, which he had always regarded as a significant dividing line.

Like her other subjects, he was greatly affected by the death of the Queen. Although for a while there was little outward sign of change, and life went on in much the same way under Edward the Seventh as under Victoria, the nation, and indeed the world, was on the eve of changes that would radically affect the lives of both rich and poor. As Dr. G. M. Trevelyan says in *English Social History*—

... when the reign and the century came to an end, a tremendous revolution in all human affairs was imminent. The internal-combustion engine had been invented, and its space-annihilating consequences were about to be disclosed. The motor-car and the motor-lorry, the submarine, the tank, the aeroplane were about to plunge the world into a new era, widely different from the past in peace and in war. And England would be the country most concerned of all, because she would lose half the benefit of her insular position ... the new age of motor traction on the roads made a more rapid social and economic revolution in the first forty years of the twentieth century than railways and machinery had made before. In the age of the railway, supplemented by horse traffic and

bicycles, the pace of changes, the disappearance of local and provincial differences though rapid, was limited. But, under the new conditions England bade fair to become one huge unplanned suburb.

Glimmerings of all this presented themselves in Joseph Rank's intuitive mind. He began to move in a larger orbit. He saw to it that his children had a much better education than he had had himself, even though he did not share the view, then becoming current, that education was a magic cure for every social and economic ill. He sent his second son, Rowland, and later his third son, Arthur, to The Leys School, Cambridge. His eldest son, James, went first to a Board School and then to Western College at Harrogate. The three elder daughters were sent to the Wintersdorf School, Southport. When, in 1902, he, who had never left the shores of his native island, decided to see for himself some of the mills in the United States of America, he took with him his eldest son, James.

They travelled extensively, visiting not only New York and the Atlantic seaboard, but also the Middle West, so full of interest for an English miller. The seemingly illimitable expanse of wheatland was to the visitors a strange new world, but Joseph Rank instinctively understood the independent-minded Yankee farmers and workers. At Kansas City he was invited to address a crowded meeting of millers, and he told them bluntly that, although he would buy wheat in the United States in ever larger quantities, he would make war relentlessly against imports of American flour, which, he calmly assured them, he regarded as inferior to his own. His words certainly did not make him popular, but they were reinforced by his reputation, which had been reflected in the Chairman's introduction of him as 'the mighty miller of Hull', a phrase that was taken up by the newspapers and the public.

It is an interesting coincidence that, forty-two years later almost to the day, his son, J. Arthur Rank, thwarted in an attempt to come to a film agreement with certain powerful interests in the United States of America, exclaimed: 'Very well, I'll do what my father did with the American millers—take you on on your own terms, and we'll see who's the best man.'

That was precisely what Joseph Rank said he would do, and as soon as he returned to England he did it. No man rejoiced more in an honest combat, with no quarter given; he had, as he well

knew, much of the Old Adam in him. His first action was to have two loaves made, one baked with imported American flour and the other with his own best flour, and exhibited them on the Mark Lane Corn Exchange in London—to the annoyance of some; but no one could withstand the demonstration or effectively counter his argument.

Hence, in fighting mood, he came to the cross-roads of his fiftieth year and the threshold of new and greater adventures. After long and anxious consideration he decided that the time had come to move the headquarters of his business to London, however much, as a Hull man, he regretted the necessity. Great new mills must be built in the south of England. To resist the imperative demands of the new age would be to invite disaster. He saw clearly that there could be no marking of time; the choice was simply—go on or go under. He had no doubt about what to do. Cost what it may, he must go on. So the lad who thirty years earlier had swept the floor of his father's mill and carried heavy sacks of flour on his back was now a millionaire and one of the most powerful millers in England. The pilgrim had reached a vital milestone. What lay ahead could not clearly be foreseen. He had no reason to suppose that the road would be easier than that by which he had come or that the storms that awaited him would be less searching than those through which he had made his relentless way. But he still cherished his confidence in the Providence of God, and his equal confidence in his own abilities.

Part Two

London, 1904—1943

Chapter Twelve
Days of Crisis

THE YEAR 1904 was a landmark in the life of Joseph Rank, a year of great decisions. He often used to say that running a business was like riding a bicycle—you either had to keep on pedalling ahead or you just fell off; there was no stopping still or going backwards. At the age of fifty, with such an achievement behind him, another man might have been tempted to sit back and take his ease, leaving to others the hurly-burly. Not so Joseph Rank. It was his nature ever to go on. For him business was pleasure, and apart from Church work, his family, and a game of golf or billiards, he had no other interests. He read little. He had no liking for music, or the theatre, or for art. Milling, with its to him fascinating problems, absorbed almost the whole of his attention.

It had now become clear that the immediate and solid success of the selling agencies established in London and Cardiff warranted the building of new mills in those areas, and the milling industry throughout the land was soon agog with rumour. He lost no time, for 'time's money' and, moreover, delay would involve enhancement of site values. As always when planning a new venture, he kept his ideas to himself, talking of them only to the few men—as few as possible—whom it was necessary for him to consult: his own experts and the agents empowered to sell the land and equipment he needed. No general ever planned a campaign with greater circumspection. After inspecting various sites in the London area, he leased one from the London Dock Company, now the Port of London Authority, on the Victoria Dock, down East, where ocean-going steamers up to 8,000 tons could be berthed alongside; and built a mill capable of turning out forty sacks of flour every hour. The land he acquired was of sufficient acreage to make possible an eventual extension of the mill to a 200-sacks capacity, with ample room for the necessary storage accommodation.

That, in itself, was a titanic project; for he had it in mind to

build the biggest flour-mill in the United Kingdom. Yet at the same time he entered into agreements with the Barry Dock Railway Company to lease a site for an up-to-date 80-sacks mill, with berths at the quayside for both coastal craft and deep-sea liners.

Many were the prophecies of disaster by millers and financiers, and the general state of the milling trade seemed to justify them; but Joseph Rank knew what he was doing. Long before he decided to build he had taken the full measure, not only of the dangers, but of the possibilities of success. As ever, caution and daring were blended in his action. It was not until he was actually securing the trade needed to justify the expansion that he went ahead with these vast projects.

Although the great new mill was to be built in London, he entrusted men from Hull with its erection, and W. H. Raylor and the leading millwright of the Clarence Mills were sent up to see that the job was done properly. As with every scheme Joseph Rank carried through, it had to be done, not only with the minimum of delay, but in such a way that the output of flour should begin at the earliest possible moment, even before all the ancillary requirements were completed. The contractors had to work to a timetable strictly enforced. Milling plant was installed before the buildings were completed, two floors having yet to be added when the great machines were brought up the Thames.

In spite of all his other commitments, he made the journey to London each week to see for himself what progress was being made. His 'drive' was relentless. Indeed, there were times when even W. H. Raylor, used as he was to 'the Governor's' ways, felt he must protest.

He went farther than I could bear without objecting, and once we had words which developed into shouting at each other in the mill yard. Mr. Rank, recognizing the indignity of the affair, took his leave and returned to the City office. From there he presently spoke to me on the phone. I hadn't cooled off by then, and I confidently expected to be discharged for what I had said to him. When he spoke he took most of the fire out of me by saying: 'I think we both forgot ourselves this afternoon.' I made an evasive reply, as I couldn't trust myself to speak my mind, and he went on, without anything further being said: 'You had better come up to the hotel to-night and have dinner with me, and we will talk this

over quietly after dinner.' We did, and when I left to catch my train I think we both knew each other better.

I frequently met Mr. Rank at dinner at the Liverpool Street Hotel quietly to discuss matters of business after the meal. The hotel was the one mainly used by the milling engineers, and we occasionally had one or other of these men join us at dinner, and afterwards retired to the coffee-room, where we usually found one or two more. At a time when new inventions of machines and variations of sectional processes were constantly being put forward, these meetings often developed into full-dress discussions on the merits or otherwise of various details and changes advocated. Mr. Rank would not take much part in the discussion, but would, now and then, put in a query or suggestion, quietly noting what was being said.

While all this was going on in London plans were also being made ready, and machinery and fittings being acquired, for the Welsh Mill, and Joseph Rank made flying visits to Barry; and all the time he was also closely attending to the Hull business, never missing a chance to make a success even more successful. When, for instance, land became available on the other side of Clarence Street, with not only a river frontage, but facilities for railway sidings, he bought it at once, and plans were laid for the erection there of two new mills, fully equipped, of larger capacity even than the mills that had been running since 1900.

Again he demonstrated his readiness to try out any new invention that promised to improve his methods of milling. His judgement of wheats was remarkable, amounting to intuitive knowledge. The various wheats available in England in peacetime, brought from all parts of the world, vary greatly in colour, shape, structure, and value, and the flour produced from them is as widely various. Not only do the wheats from North America differ from those grown in Australia or India and elsewhere in qualities suitable for making bread, but different cargoes or parcels of wheat from the same country frequently vary in milling quality and value. United States and Canadian wheats were usually sold according to grades standardized in the country of their origin—a custom which, as will be seen, led to many disputes and brought about a crisis among the British millers; but the remainder of the world's wheats were sold on samples sent in advance of shipment of the cargo. Those samples, sealed and held by both buyer and seller, were the only

evidence on which the miller could decide whether or not to buy. Often the quantities involved in such transactions were enormous. It was in exercising his judgement of the quality of the sample—a judgement that could be formed only by what he could see and feel as he held it in his hand—that Joseph Rank demonstrated his unusual skill, and laid the foundations of his achievements.

The flour made in British mills has to be produced from a mixture of the different wheats offered from the world's supply. These, obviously, are available at different periods of the year, according to the harvest-times; but, in one country or another, somewhere in the world, fields are, all the year round, 'white unto harvest', and the miller shows his skill and knowledge by deciding how much of each kind to use in the grist to produce the desired quality of flour. Much was grist to Joseph Rank's mill that was unused by others.

It was in this same year, 1904, that Joseph Rank became the President of the National Association of British and Irish Millers. He had for a long time seen the wisdom of supporting such an association, for the industry was disorganized and subject to all manner of uneconomic competition. His forceful personality was bound to make itself felt in the Association's counsels, even apart from the powerful position he had won for himself in the industry, and on several occasions he had been invited to accept the Presidency. Hitherto he had not felt at liberty to do so, but at last he yielded to friendly pressure, and at Harrogate, on 14th June, he was installed in the Chair.

For the Association, as for the industry, the prevailing atmosphere was one of deceptive calm—the calm before the storm. Probably he felt that to be so as he confronted his fellow industrialists to deliver his Presidential address, though how many of his listeners shared that feeling it is impossible to guess. Apparently the retiring President did not, for he said that the year had been an uneventful one; and after a mild dissertation on the inadvisability of bad debts, he introduced his successor, who, he said, 'is too well known to all of you to need any introduction from me; he is very energetic, and a strong-minded man'.

What thoughts were passing through Joseph Rank's mind as he quietly rose to speak can only be surmised; but with his knowledge of his own plans for invading London and Wales, and with his

unconcealed conviction that the trade would have to undergo drastic revolutionary changes, he must have realized that the next few years would be years of testing for them all. The *Proceedings* of the Association show only too well that much heartburning lay immediately ahead for every person in the room. As an old campaigner, he said little about his own plans; indeed, fulfilling his interpretation of the rules of public speaking—and perhaps remembering that the ideal chairman should know how to ‘stand up, speak up, and shut up’—he demonstrated a wit that was the soul of brevity. After thanking his fellow members for the confidence they had reposed in him by electing him to ‘the highest office that the Association could bestow’, he said:

Some seem to think I might have held the office before if I had cared to do so, but I have shrunk from taking the position because I felt the office always brought responsibility. Then, again, I have thought that I was only young and ought to stand aside so that older members might occupy the position. I made up my mind years ago that, unless compelled, I would not accept the office until I was fifty years old. Having attained that age, I have been elected to the office, and I felt I could not say Nay, although, as you are doubtless aware, I have my hands pretty full with two or three little extensions of business just now; but, feeling that I should have the support of the Council and every member of the Association, I am glad to respond to the call. You have chosen me for better or worse, and I have no doubt you will bear with me for one year.

Then came a characteristically witty comment:

You have already had samples of my speech-making, and if the bulk does not come up to the sample, you must make due allowance for handling and size of same. In case of arbitration, I am afraid I shall feel rather strange in the chair, as I am more used to being a free lance. I recognize that ours is an important Association, for the work of the miller gets into everybody’s mouth. A friend of mine the other day said we ought to get almost everything we ask for, seeing that we could poison half the nation before they knew where they were! The public, however, need not feel alarmed at this, seeing that our endeavours are to make flour as pure as possible.

He went on to say he thought the Association could do more to help millers than it had in the past. ‘Some speak of me as a strong man. I don’t know what that means exactly, but as your President

I feel I shall be as strong as the weakest of you, and as strong as you make me.' Then he touched, for a moment, on the question of wheat contracts, especially urging that 'it was foolish to buy on the American certificate as final', referring to the certificate issued in the United States of America, which, in his view, had frequently deceived British buyers—and in this he showed that he was aware of coming struggles both in the Association and within the whole industry. He wanted American wheat to be bought on sample, like Russian or Argentine wheat, and so get rid of 'those pernicious certificates'. He next turned to a question on which he expressed himself strongly and with typical generosity—the Benevolent Fund, which, he contended, was not being supported as it should be. He said:

The amount now available is something over £2,700. That is a disgrace to us as a body of millers, who are not poor men—I am not. We should set about increasing the fund. We ought to have at least £10,000 at our disposal. I was thinking of the matter, and that suggestion came to me on Sunday. The Benevolent Society is a charitable one, and I thought it all right to think about on a Sunday, and to attempt to do good to those who have been less fortunate than ourselves. My suggestion is that every member of the Association should contribute one pound per sack per hour capacity for the next three years; that would place the society in a flourishing condition and hurt no one. I also suggest that the milling engineers—who are never so pleased as when they have their hands in the millers' pockets!—might contribute one pound per sack of every new plant they laid down during the same period. The millers of England can do better than they have done, and I ask you to put your shoulders to the wheel. I am willing to contribute that amount for three years, and I hope the rest of the millers will do the same. The man who has a small mill would not have so much to pay. We have a right to help our unfortunate brothers; some of us who are present might have been in the same position, and I don't think you will lose anything.

This plan was based on the same principles of mutual aid to which he always turned when giving away large sums of money. It did not, however, on this occasion, achieve his aim. When he relinquished his office in London in the following year he spoke his mind about that, and also about American competition. Declaring that he could not say he was sorry he had come to the end of his term, he said:

I can't say I am altogether satisfied with the results. I should have been better pleased if I could have carried the total abolition of the American Certificate Final; but I am sorry to say that British millers are still in the old place; they are in the hands of the Americans, who can do with them as they please. It is not as if the present position of the American grain trade in regard to these certificates and to the whole system of grading was received with complete approval by the Americans themselves. I read the other day of a strong resolution being passed by the Fraternity of Operative Millers of America against what they called the 'doctoring' of wheat. By that they meant the passing through the elevators of defective grain which was doctored up, and blended and brought out to pass as something it was not. At any rate, the various Associations in America to which I refer have recommended that measures should be taken to stop the wrongful blending and mixing of wheat. I cannot help thinking we have lost a great opportunity this year, an opportunity which may never come back again.

He then briefly recounted the efforts he had made, unsuccessfully, to persuade millers both in London and Liverpool to enter into a bond not to accept the American certificate. The Liverpool millers had refused, saying: 'Why should we sign a bond?' He had tried to explain why, but had not been able to convince them, although he honestly believed the step he had suggested would have benefited the Liverpool millers more than any others in the Kingdom. Continuing, he said:

Millers have had a good year, so far as I am aware. If I meet a miller who is grumbling at the state of business, I am inclined to think it is his own fault.

Speaking later of the Benevolent Fund, he said it seemed difficult to get the millers to respond. At present, he agreed, there did not seem very much need for a Millers' Benevolent Society, but the acute competition, to which the new President, Mr. William Edgar Nicholls, had 'prophetically alluded' in his address, was bound to come, and when it did it would leave many worthy objects for the Society they were trying to strengthen and build up. He added:

I was talking the other day to a large miller in the North of England who said he did not see anybody around him who was in need of assistance. I cannot help thinking that that was no excuse at all. As I told him, he sold flour all over England, and as he got customers here, there, and everywhere, he was bound to hurt someone or another. Just now, perhaps,

the damage may not be very great, but the time must come when someone would be left stranded and in real need of all the help the Society could give him. It is a very true saying that no one knows when misfortune might come. I remember well being in a tramcar in Hull one day and hearing somebody I did not know refer to myself that as I had gone up like a rocket I might come down one day like a stick. I hope never to be in such a case, but if it should happen I should come on the Benevolent!

It is again characteristic that, although the plan he proposed did not go through, he nevertheless gave £500 to the fund.

It remained for his eldest son, James, as President, following his father's example, to succeed in giving effect to his father's wish to augment the Permanent Fund of the Benevolent Society. He did this in 1929, to celebrate the jubilee of the Association, and the Fund was raised from £12,000 to £25,000, his father contributing generously to the appeal.

Chapter Thirteen

Views on Tariff Reform

JOSEPH RANK'S prophetic words concerning the state of the British milling industry were justified by events even sooner than he could have thought likely. His successor in the Presidency of the National Association, William Edgar Nicholls, Chairman of Spillers Milling and Associated Industries Ltd., one of the ablest of the British millers, made this known in his long and, in many respects, masterly address to the Convention of 1905. Referring to the repeated efforts that had been made 'to establish a community of interest' among millers, through the formation of local associations, he recalled that after a plebiscite of the trade had been taken the question had been allowed to lapse. He had no quarrel with that, as in his view the proposals specifically made at that time were 'totally inapplicable to our industry'. Then followed this clear warning:

Since then there has been no progress in the formation of local associations, and there is no question that the position to-day is properly described as one of acute competition, a competition which, in my judgement, will become even keener with the march of time, and the obvious question is: When shall we reach breaking point? The circumstances under which this acute competition has again arisen have been exceptional, and not least is the fact that for all practical purposes American flour dropped out of our British markets about the middle of last year, in consequence of which there has been a rush, on the part of those who thought themselves able to supply the vacuum thus created, to increase their output either by increasing the capacity of their existing mills or by the erection of further buildings. It is, I think, a fair assumption that the British production of flour was increased by two million sacks last year, and that there is every possibility that this will be still further added to during the current year. One cannot suppose that if American competition again becomes an active factor, those who have provided for an increased output are going to subside without a struggle; that would be very unlike the British miller.

American competition did again 'become an active factor', and the British millers acted exactly as the President well knew they would act. Mr. Nicholls (afterwards Sir William Edgar Nicholls) made another point which should be interpolated here, quoting the words of a past-President, Mr. W. Vernon:

Some members have complained that overlapping is brought about by overproduction at the large port mills, but it seems to me that there can be no overproduction in this country so long as we do not grind all the flour which the nation consumes.

And he added:

I am absolutely sure a large international flour trade could be done if the almost insurmountable fiscal barriers of practically all other nations did not materially prevent this trade. Millers of every class would undoubtedly prefer that any excess make, at any time, should find this international outlet, rather than it should become a weight on the home market, and result perhaps in a cutting down of profits to an invisible margin. Would Mr. Balfour's policy of Retaliation accomplish this? I leave each one of you to make his own answer.

There was no doubt about Joseph Rank's answer. He thought it would. He was strongly in favour of Protection, on the ground that trading conditions were unfair so long as, for example, British flour could not be exported to the United States of America without having to pay a high tariff while American flour could freely enter the markets of the United Kingdom.

The cessation of American competition was short-lived. In 1907 the President, Albert E. Humphries, in a special memorandum, affirmed that the imports of foreign flour in 1906 were as large as in 1904. He addressed an urgent letter to each member of the Council, saying:

I am frequently receiving communications from all parts of the country as to the lamentable state of the milling trade, and I received some time ago a suggestion from influential quarters that a General Meeting should be called to consider the condition of the trade. I cannot lose sight of the facts that if such a meeting be called, the majority will have no power to enforce their decisions on the minority, and that unless there be a sufficiently satisfactory prospect of some good being accomplished, a meeting together of millers suffering acutely and ready to 'blow off steam' may actually do harm unless at least some tangible proposals are placed before it.

Furthermore, I cannot shut my eyes to the extreme difficulty of bringing about any concerted action by a trade whose individual members possess such an extremely independent spirit as ours do; but, on the other hand, if there be any hope of our adopting some form of concerted action, or if a meeting of the trade at a convenient place, and not unduly restricted as to the time at its disposal, would in any degree tend to mitigate the evils from which we as a trade suffer, I should be lacking in my duty if I failed to call such a meeting.

And the memorandum in which, 'after much consideration', he embodied his views as to possible alternative courses, declared:

The extreme competition of recent times has weeded out the weak firms and bad mills, so that those now trading are themselves 'survivals' and presumably 'fit'. At any rate, serious complaints of the state of the trade come from every direction, including many from millers who are admittedly at the very head of the trade as to their commercial and technical standing. It seems, therefore, that a speedy remedy for the unprofitable state of our trade is not to be found so much in individual efforts at technical improvements in the mills as in some concerted action whereby the whole trade can secure a greater margin between the cost of the raw material and the value of the finished products.

The value of local associations as a means of effectually controlling prices was declared to be nil: 'Directly any local benefit as to prices is secured, firms from a distance, who have a surplus, dump it at ruinous prices outside their district, a course which may help the firms in question, but which must and has, in the long run, worked ruinously for all.' Referring to statistics, the President added:

The normal increase of population would represent an increased consumption of flour per annum equal to about 50 sacks per hour, but the figures of the corn trade (see Beerbohm, 11th January, 1907) disclose the fact that in recent years there has been no increase in the consumption of flour in the United Kingdom . . . [it] equals just over 5,000 sacks per working hour, reckoning 7,000 working hours per annum. Of these 5,000 sacks, foreign imports equal about 700. It is safe to say that the full capacity of British mills is considerably more than 4,300 sacks per hour. . . .

The argument was put forward that one way by which this situation might be remedied was by reducing output by five per cent., 'so that the quantity made shall not be in excess of requirements, and for a time should be substantially less'.

This point of view was concerned solely with the millers' desire

to obtain better margins of profit; it was not likely to commend itself to Joseph Rank, who, although perhaps the keenest of them all as a business man, nevertheless had too much public spirit to allow himself to be governed solely by such considerations. A policy of limitation of output was not, in his view, legitimate or even tolerable. Providing milling methods were up-to-date and economic, a maximum, not a minimum, output should be the aim. It certainly was his aim. He wanted his mills to turn out steadily the utmost possible amount of the very best flour he could manufacture; and, in fact, at this very time he was building new mills, greatly increasing his output, and becoming more and more a dominating influence in the world's corn trade. He probably read with less indignation another passage in the memorandum, in which the President seemed to look ahead with an almost startling clearness of vision:

With a continuance of the present bad times, some mills may be closed. Whether it be possible to buy out and close some may be worth consideration, but a proposal more likely to be feasible would be that millers representing in the aggregate a great output should declare their capacity on a basis of their 1906 output, and between them make arrangements whereby a few mills should stand idle for, say, twelve months, or, better still, arrangements whereby a greater number of mills should stand idle for a few weeks each. Those who run should agree to an assessment of penny or twopence per sack, which would be divided *pro rata* among those who stand idle. This might be tried for, say, twelve months, or until the imports of foreign flour diminish sufficiently to make such a scheme unnecessary. . . .

Such proposals came to nothing, but, as will be seen, they foreshadowed grave developments which in time plunged the industry into an even worse 'Slough of Despond'.

Joseph Rank, however, placed his faith in a fighting policy of ruthless industrial efficiency and equally ruthless war upon foreign imports. He was then, as ever, a 'bonny fechter'. As his competitors in the National Association, as well as those outside it, well knew, and were soon to know even more decisively, he could both take and give hard knocks. Compromise was alien to his nature. In his view a mill that was uneconomically managed, or incapable of producing the best quality flour for the markets for which it worked, had no rightful place, and should go under. His

advocacy of the Benevolent Society had already proved beyond all doubt his genuine concern for the miller as a man, but he had no sympathy for him as a miller if he could not properly do his job. Moreover, that sympathy—unlike the professions of concern made by others who refused to offer practical help—was backed by a willingness to pay into a national fund for a period of years one pound per sack capacity of all his mills.* He could not more convincingly have demonstrated his sincerity, and if his advice had been taken there would have been less suffering in the tragic events that lay ahead.

It is not necessary to add more at this point about the state of the trade; enough has been said to show that Joseph Rank could hardly have chosen a more difficult period in which to expand still farther the great business he had founded in Hull. Those who gloomily—or perhaps hopefully—prophesied for him utter ruin seemed to have reason on their side. But they reckoned without other, and imponderable, qualities. Joseph Rank had as clear a head as any miller in the world, and could calculate as coldly and as accurately; but he was also a man of faith—and, in the long run, faith is greater than reason.

When he became President of the National Association in 1904, Joseph Rank was requested by the members to prepare a paper on Fiscal Reform. That paper, read in session on 16th June, gives in the most authentic manner, and in his own long-pondered words, his mature views on the issue that was to become one of the most controversial of the many political questions of the day. He made other speeches on the subject during the next few years, but his arguments are all crystallized in this address. He began:

I am a thorough believer in Fiscal Reform, and feel certain that we shall have to do something in this direction if we mean to hold our own with other nations. We have been for many years considered the first commercial nation in the world, and there is no need for us to lose that position in the future if we will only set our house in order. At the present time we are run very tightly both by America and Germany and we should endeavour to find out the secret of their prosperity, and copy from them any policy that would be helpful to us in the future. There is no doubt that tariffs have been a great help to the different industries of America and Germany. Whether or no the Trusts are going to do them as much harm as the tariff has done good I cannot say, and I feel it would be wise for us, in

introducing Fiscal Reform, also to make it illegal to form these Trusts. This might be a difficulty, but I understand that in France they have a law which makes it illegal, and whatever the French can do, surely we, as Englishmen, are able to do.

To some, that point may seem a strange one for Joseph Rank to be making, especially in view of the future development of his business. It is worthy of note as a milestone in his onward march. Continuing, he said:

I would like to speak about what the open door is doing for us. I calculate that through this open door is coming about twenty per cent. of the manufactured articles that we need. Now I think that every one of you will admit that if we were to import the whole of the hundred per cent., our country would be a commercial nation no longer, but just a place for a few millionaires and rich men to live in. It would be altogether our commercial ruin. Now I hold that if the loss of this hundred per cent. would be so disastrous, to the extent of the twenty per cent. which we have now lost we have been injured. I know that politicians will say this is absurd, and altogether impossible, but it is neither, though it may be improbable. We have already lost seventy-five to eighty per cent. in some of our home trades; for instance, one we are very closely allied to—milling machinery. It has been estimated that about seventy-five per cent. of the milling machinery used in this country at the present time is of foreign manufacture.

Here his argument was precisely the same as the argument he expounded on temperance platforms. Alcohol used as a beverage, he maintained, was a poison. That being so, to use it in moderation as a beverage must be harmful; hence the only safe policy was to abstain from drinking it altogether. He was in absolute agreement with the preacher who, when told he should moderate his language when denouncing drink from the pulpit, refused to do so on the ground that it was like a chemist removing the label 'Poison' from a bottle and substituting 'To be used moderately'.

Proceeding to answer the contention that only the manufacturer could benefit from a duty on imported goods, he declared:

Out of the forty-two millions of people in this country, forty millions of them are living out of the manufacturer, for I estimate that there is only about one million who can live on agriculture, and perhaps another on investments abroad, leaving the remainder altogether dependent upon our industries; so that everybody practically—it does not matter whether he is

a chimney sweep, a solicitor, a labourer, an architect, a doctor, a retailer, a builder, or a baker—is dependent upon our manufacturers for their welfare and prosperity. Make the manufacturer prosperous, and, to some extent, you must make everybody else in the country prosperous. If a man makes money, it is no good to him if he buries it; he can't eat it, and he has to spend it, and as soon as he begins to do so other members of the community are sure to benefit. In America the employee sees this, and is desirous to make his employer prosperous, knowing that if this is done he is bound to get a share in some way or other. It is no use men asking for higher wages when an industry is languishing. If things are prosperous, they can demand more wages, and are sure to have the sympathy of the public behind them.

Reminding his hearers that producers were consumers as well, he quoted a favourite aphorism: 'The man who can make two blades of grass grow in the place of one is a public benefactor.' He had a very high opinion of British powers of invention and industrial acumen, and maintained that these qualities should be protected in the highest interests of the nation:

It is time that commercial men took these matters up, and did not leave them in the hands of professional and academic men. They very blandly tell us that we must go in for higher and technical education, that we must bring ourselves into line by introducing improved machinery; but in many respects in technical knowledge we are ahead of other countries. We were once the workshop of the world, and although other nations have got part of our trade, our weavers yet go on with the looms, and teach foreigners how to work them. The same applies to other machinery; we have had to teach these other nations a great deal of what they know. On equal lines the English workman has yet nought to fear from the workmen of any nation. I believe we have as fine men in England still as any in the world, and given equal chances, they will be able to hold their own; but when we allow other countries, without any protest whatever, to handicap us in the race for commercial supremacy we are bound in the long run to suffer great loss.

A characteristic touch of humour brought broad smiles when he interpolated: 'A man said to me the other day: "It would be a fine thing for you if they put a tax on flour. I should want some capital in the milling business if they did," showing at once that, although he was a rabid free-trader, he acknowledged the fact that if the industry was protected it would be a good thing for the investor.'

Our professors of political economy have said that 'if you protect an industry it will be allowed to languish. A man protected will be careless and indifferent, knowing that he will be altogether safe.' That may be a good theory, but in practice it is altogether wrong, for when a man feels there is something in a thing worth doing he does it well, and nobody wants to increase his manufacture unless he is doing well in the business. This is the very thing which encourages all enterprise. If we do not wish to encourage our industries, or we neglect to do it, we are bound to lose in the end. It means that gradually, perhaps slowly, we shall have our home manufactures taken away from us. Surely we have a right to our home trade, and I believe in Britain for the British. . . .

I have often said that I would not hold up my hand for a duty on flour for myself. I am still of the same opinion, but when I consider my country, which I love, I feel that in her interest, and in the interest of the working classes, we should adopt the same systems that are in vogue in other nations. There is no doubt of one thing, and that is that the worker would be bound to receive benefits far beyond anything he might lose. By doing this we should be able to find work for our people at home, and it would not be necessary for them to emigrate in the large numbers in which they have been doing for some years; and we should see, when they did emigrate, that we gave them some advantages if they go to our Colonies in preference to the States. If labour produces wealth, we should do all we can to find employment for our own people. The tariff I would suggest to put on is the same as every other nation has against us, so that any alteration they might afterwards make could be easily adjustable by us. Our Empire is the largest in the world, and we would like to keep it in the supreme position. Then why should we not adopt the same system as they have in the States of America?

His pride in the Empire gleamed through these words:

We have a great Empire, and one which may be greater, for we have unbounded mineral wealth, practically every kind of climate, and some soil which is the most fertile in the world, our resources are unlimited, in fact many times those of any other nation. It is an Empire on which the sun never sets, and I hope never will. Our Empire has cost us a tremendous amount in blood and treasure, and after we have won it, why should we be willing to leave the door open to the foreigner, as we are now doing?

This point of view was modified by subsequent events, but he could not foresee that in 1904. In later years the Dominions of Canada and Australia became large exporters of flour, and claimed,

as independent members of the Commonwealth, that on account of the money they had spent to secure the trade, they had a right to it.

Turning to another aspect of the question, he said that a year ago he had not been able to see how it would be in the interest of the country to put a tax on wheat; but he had now come to the conclusion that it would possibly be advantageous, without increasing the cost of food, to encourage farmers to grow more cereals:

We in this country are only growing a third of the amount of wheat that we grew sixty years ago, and half the quantity that we grew forty years ago. On the other hand, in the protected countries of France and Germany they are growing much more wheat than they did forty years ago—in France an average of eight million quarters more, and in Germany five million quarters more in the last twenty-five years; so you will see that in those two countries, through the encouragement given by tariffs to the agriculturists, instead of growing half the quantity they did forty years ago they are growing altogether thirteen million quarters more. What this means in extra wealth to the country I cannot say, but it appears to me from this that we have been receiving cheap breadstuffs through the protection given to these French and German agriculturists; for we all know, as wheat buyers, what effect it has on the markets when France has to import five million quarters of wheat to make up any deficiency in their supply. Supposing these two countries had wanted thirteen million quarters more yearly the last few years than they have been importing. The price would not have been thirty shillings, but I guess it would have been nearer forty-five shillings, for when France has to import any considerable quantity, say five million quarters, we know it generally lifts the market anywhere from three shillings to five shillings a quarter. How does this compare with the cry of the politician: 'Dearer bread'? I think this is proof conclusive that through protection we have been receiving breadstuffs much cheaper than we should have been if there had been no protection, and no encouragement to the agriculturists of France and Germany; and if this is going to have the same effect if we encourage our agriculturists of the Empire, would it not be a splendid thing all round, seeing that we might in a very few years be able to grow in the Empire all the breadstuffs required for our population?

Fortunately for us there are no wheats that mix better with our home-grown wheats than those of Canada, India, and Australia, from a combination of which we can make a loaf second to none. It is a most astonishing thing that the people of this country should be gulled by the cries of the politicians, 'Dearer bread', 'Increasing the cost of living', and also of production in this country, seeing that when Joseph Leiter, by

trying to corner the wheat of the world, eventually raised the price about one pound per quarter, and bread about three-halfpence a four-pound loaf. There was no outcry from the politicians, and we never heard a word about increased cost of living, or production, or of famine, and we saw then, as we do now, bread kicking about in many of the poorer districts of the cities; but as soon as Mr. Chamberlain proposes to protect and encourage our agriculturists, there is immediately a great outcry. If we grew in our Empire all the wheat that we required, we should not only be self-supporting, but we should be secure against any of these rings that the Americans have from time to time formed, and will continue to do if their source is the principal supply.

Concluding, he said he hoped his remarks would be received in the true spirit of Englishmen: 'I am not a party politician, and I hope I never shall be; I believe in the measures that are for the highest interests of the country, and the well-being of the people who live therein, and for this reason would never put party first, as many are doing to-day.'

As may be imagined, that speech caused a flutter in many devotees. Dealing as it did with one of the most inflammable controversies of the day, from the point of view of one who was recognized as likely soon to be the most influential flour-miller in the land, it excited widespread attention and discussion. Both those who agreed and those who disagreed with his views had to admit, as one of his fellow members of the National Association said, that he 'was a thorough Englishman before a politician'.

An incident that gave him great pleasure during his year in office was the announcement that the gold medal of the Association, awarded only after a severe test of milling ability—a test so severe, in fact, that for several years no award had been made—had been won by a milling student in his employment at Hull.

'I asked him', said Joseph Rank, 'to come up to London to receive the medal at this meeting, but he declined. The fact is that, like many millers, he is of a rather reserved nature, and doesn't care much about talking in public—in which he is like his master! In Hull we are very proud of the honour that has come our way.'

He went on to extol the value of technical training, saying he was afraid some millers did not put the classes at their true worth or appreciate the value of the certificates granted after training and examination. 'I have recently interviewed several millers,' he said,

‘and on asking one man if he had a certificate of any kind he answered: “No; with the firm for which I have worked, if a man were known to attend a class it would be enough to get him his ticket.” All I can say is that such people stand in their own light. I should like to see every miller taking a keen interest in milling classes, because I am sure there is no better means of training up intelligent and capable millers.’

In October of the following year Joseph Rank visited Paris, where an International Congress of Millers met in one of the spacious saloons of the Palais d’Orsay Hotel. The Congress opened with a General Meeting of the National Association, and at one point discussion turned to the question of Indian wheat imports, on which Mr. Rank could speak with authority. He did not however, make a speech, excusing himself by saying that, for one thing, he had a sore throat. But, he said humorously, they had heard the President say he had made up his mind how the markets were going, and yet he had not told them to what he had made up his mind!

He is more bashful than a certain milling editor, who began to prophesy about a year ago as to the course of the markets, and I am bound to say that up to the present his vaticinations have been verified. If he keeps on being right it will be a matter for consideration for me as to whether I should not retain that gentleman’s services. As for Indian wheat, that is a matter the millers have entirely in their own hands. If they will all make up their minds to buy the wheat with not more than two-and-a-half or one-and-a-half per cent. of impurities—if they will insist on that in their contracts—they will gradually get the wheats quite clean.

A glimpse of his mind on the question of production policy was seen when he referred to the President’s statement that during the previous year two million sacks had been added to the capacity of the British mills and another one million were being added that year: ‘All I can say is that British millers had better keep on adding one million sacks a year for ten years, until all the imports of foreign flour come to an end.’

On the closing day of the Congress the visitors were entertained to lunch by the municipality of Paris, and the President of the French Republic received, in his study at the Elysée, a small deputation, of whom Joseph Rank was one of the three English representatives.

Chapter Fourteen

New Enterprise

THE CENTRE of gravity of the Joseph Rank mills now moved southward. It had been prophetic to name the new venture in Silvertown, East London, the Premier Mills. Massive in size, equipped with the most modern machinery, situated on England's greatest waterway at the very gate of one of the world's greatest ports, they were aptly described in *Milling*, the leading journal of the trade, as the best 'to be found within the confines of our native land'. The writer, after quoting 'the glory of London is the Thames', commented: 'Silvertown, however, is not a lucrative proposition for the artist, but commercially it has great possibilities. By means of its docks, it is in touch with all foreign countries, and yet it is on the doorstep of the Metropolis, the Mecca of trade. As a site for a flour mill, its advantages go unchallenged.'

Events have amply justified that statement. The buildings had an imposing appearance, with pleasing proportions, from whatever direction they were approached. Joseph Rank saw the completed mills in imagination before even the first brick was laid; and, although in the early years only part of the venture could be put into operation, the gradual enlargement during the next decade, far from spoiling the design, fulfilled and completed it. The additions, while strictly maintaining utility, added grace and dignity to the scheme; at first sight, the compact assembly appeared to be one huge building, but closer inspection revealed a series of parallel buildings with the spacious main warehouses at one end and the towering silo house and engine-rooms at the other. The numerous departments, each a separate entity, were welded into a unity, enabling the work of the whole to be co-ordinated with a minimum of trouble and time.

Although very different in design, the Atlantic Mills at Barry, eight miles from Cardiff, the work of the same designer, were equally effective. In the bleak surroundings of the docks, they

stood out as a vast, tall, unified series of buildings, towering into the sky.

As these two mighty projects developed, Joseph Rank realized that, much as he loved his native heath, he would have to go south. He decided to transform the London agency into the headquarters of the business, and took a suite of offices at Baltic House, in Leadenhall Street. For himself and his family he acquired a house, Bushey Down, on Tooting Bec Common. It was for them all a big upheaval, accomplished in spite of many difficulties and not without wrenches of the heart. However, they were a united family, practised in making their own fun, and they soon settled down to the new life. It was here that their parents began to enjoy some relaxation after bringing up their large family, Mrs. Rank enjoying the companionship of the older girls and fully entering into the merriment of the summer fêtes and tennis parties and the Christmas charades and amateur dramatics. The two eldest girls were married by now, which made a big blank in the home, but fortunately the elder of them lived only a few minutes' walk away. The youngest child had been born in 1896, a vivacious, independent-spirited girl, who added greatly to the gaiety of the household.

In all his effort to get the new mills built and operating as speedily as possible, for every day involved a huge expenditure and no income to balance it, Joseph Rank upheld his rule not to work on Sunday.

The uncompromising nature of his conviction on this matter was shown when a breakdown at one of his large mills in the north reduced output by more than half for at least three weeks; indeed, at one time it looked as if the stoppage would go on for much longer. The commercial manager was at his wit's end to know how to deal with the mounting total of orders that could not be supplied. In order to make up some of the leeway, he decided to run the part of the mill that was still in action right through the week-end.

Joseph Rank knew nothing of this until, at the close of the following week, the manufacture sheet revealed what had been done. Immediately, he left home and travelled north through the night, and on the following morning was down at the mills soon after eight o'clock. He wasted no words. He asked the manager: 'Did you run the mills through last Sunday?'

'Yes, sir', he replied, and began to explain; but he was cut short.

'Why didn't you telephone London and ask permission to do it?'

'Well, sir, I knew that if I did I should only get a refusal; and we were in such an awful mess that I felt we had to pull the ox out of the pit even though it was the Sabbath Day.'

That touch of humour allayed 'the Governor's' wrath a little, and his eyes began to twinkle.

'That's all very well,' he said, 'but I don't like it. I don't like it. You know the rule. My mills are never run on Sunday. Now, don't you ever do it again.'

Nothing more was said. He knew when to leave well alone.

Not that he was always like that. On another occasion quantities of flour had been missing from the mill over a long period. Joseph Rank hated any sort of waste, but this was worse—it was evident that extensive pilfering was going on, and he made up his mind to stop it. When every other plan had failed, the police were called in, and one morning a detective went to Joseph Rank and told him the culprit had been discovered. 'Who is it?' he asked. The name given was that of a foreman who had been with the firm from the early days—a man he had liked and trusted. After expressing pained surprise, he said: 'Well, I'll deal with him. I don't want to bring any charge against him.'

'I'm afraid it's too late, sir. He's admitted his guilt, and we've arrested him. We shall have to charge him—and he'll certainly go down the line.'

Greatly troubled and perplexed, that evening Joseph Rank walked alone to the street of workmen's dwellings where he knew the man lived. As he came to the house, he noted the tidy curtains and the clean, whitened window-sills and step; it looked, as he had expected, thoroughly respectable. He knocked on the door, and as soon as the wife saw him she burst into tears.

'Now, it's no use crying', he said in kindly tones. 'Will you let me come in?'

She admitted him, and in the quiet little parlour he said: 'Your man's done wrong. I'm afraid he'll have to go to prison—probably, they say, for six months. Now, tell me—what made him do it?'

It was a pitiful story to which he listened—of domestic trouble and debt; and when she had finished he exclaimed: 'But why ever didn't he come to me? Surely he knew I would have helped him?'

That was always his point of view. He regarded himself as the father, so to speak, of a big business family, and perhaps did not sufficiently understand the spirit of independence in his men—though, of course, there must have been other, and less honourable, motives in this man's case.

'Well, now,' he went on, 'there's no need for you to worry. While he's serving his sentence your money will come to you just as it always has done; and when he comes out, send him round to see me.'

The man served his sentence and then called at the office. Joseph Rank told him exactly what he thought of him, read him a lecture on the sin of dishonesty, and then he said: 'Well, that's that. You've had your lesson. You'll understand that I can't take you on again. But—now, listen. In ——— street there's quite a good little provision business. It's for sale. I want you to buy it. Oh, I'll find the money—and put you in to run it. So—go along and get it.' He did, and the business thrived.

Just as he did not believe in dispensing charity indiscriminately, so he refused to be swayed by sentiment against his better judgement in dealing with such incidents. He assessed every case according to the facts known to him. Several men who had fallen by embezzlement with other employers were helped by him to regain their livelihood and their manhood, and sometimes when travellers had robbed him, and the case had been so bad that he felt compelled to prosecute, he supported the wife and family while the culprit was the guest of His Majesty—and also helped the man when he came out of prison.

He was generous when he felt that it was right to be so, but he abhorred—and could scent afar off—what he described as 'a cadge'. One of his managers used to chaff him about a real cadger who always seemed able to pitch a hard-luck story and get something out of him. One day when Joseph Rank was visiting the locality he said to the manager: 'When I go on to the Exchange, if you see So-and-so making for me, have me called to the door or the telephone. He's always cadging, and I don't like refusing him because his father did me a good turn more than once in my early days.' The stratagem went according to plan, but as the manager watched he was not surprised to see him, as he left hurriedly, shake hands with the man—for he felt sure Joseph Rank's hand was not empty. Later

he suggested jocularly that, as usual, the fellow had succeeded. 'Ah, well,' grinned 'the Governor', 'after all, his father was a good sort.'

To the end of his life he could never resist the appeal of anyone from Hull. His secretary knew that, and so when anybody from the 'home town' called—as they frequently did—to pitch a hard-luck story at the London office, usually begging for the fare back, he generally helped him. An incident of the sort occurred not long after headquarters had been moved to London. Joseph Rank happened to be away, and the secretary had to decide on his own what should be done.

The man's tale was plausible enough. All he wanted was his steamer money—the cheapest way home; but in talking he let it be known that he had not had anything to eat all day. The secretary gave him a sovereign, to cover his fare and some food—and the fellow went away satisfied.

When Joseph Rank returned he was told what had been done, and in a flash came the question: 'Whose money did you give him?'

'Oh, it's all right, Mr. Rank. I don't mind standing it. I'm quite sure he was genuine.'

'No, no—here's the money. But, remember—I have never authorized you to spend my money—have I?'

It has sometimes been said that he would more willingly sign a cheque for thousands of pounds to help found a mission hall than put his hand into his pocket to give a few shillings to a poor man. If there be any truth in that statement, it must be balanced by others: only those he met when visiting poor children from his Sunday schools can say what he did for them—the extent of his casual, unrecorded gifts can never be estimated.

Yet the contradiction implied in the secretary's story is matched by many another. When the Southall Mission was founded Joseph Rank was the chief donor, and presided at the opening meeting, staying the night with the minister. Before going to bed he asked how much had still to be raised if the work was to start without debt. Told that it was £4,750, he at once wrote out a cheque for that amount and handed it over. Next morning the minister went to see him off at the station, and when the boy came with the papers asked what newspaper he would like. 'The *Morning Post*', said Joseph Rank; but when the minister went to buy it, the lad said: 'It's twopence to-day, sir. They've put up the price.'

'Then I won't have it', exclaimed the millionaire; and he would not allow his friend to buy it for him.

While the swift success of both the London and the Barry mills demanded constant expansion of plant and premises another challenging opportunity confronted Joseph Rank; this time in Ireland. It became clear to him that the Irish trade, which required a special type of flour, quite different from the flour suitable for England, could be carried on more effectively from Liverpool than from Barry, hitherto its source of supply. Although this involved a huge new enterprise, following closely upon building schemes which in themselves might well have been regarded as exhausting, and at a time when the industry as a whole was passing through an economic crisis that put many millers out of the market, Joseph Rank did not falter. He felt himself again to be on the crest of flood-tide. Leasing a site on the Birkenhead Docks, he erected upon it a mill capable of turning out a hundred sacks an hour.

The magnitude of that task cannot readily be imagined. His total responsibilities had now reached colossal proportions. No wonder his critics again foretold disaster; even his friends feared what the future might hold for him. It seemed almost impossible that one man would be able to carry such a burden; but he did not propose to carry it alone. He had seen to it that his sons were thoroughly trained in the milling business, and now they were able to help him in the new developments. All three had been apprenticed to the practical work; Rowland with Brown, of Dorchester; Arthur with William Luker, of Luton; and James in his father's mill at Hull—where his father expected a very great deal from him all the time. In addition, Joseph Rank had himself trained a group of experts second to none in the industry; men who had by now become his chiefs-of-staff, who were thoroughly grounded in his methods, and served him with loyalty and friendship. He had thus made ready for the great days of expansion, and he went ahead quietly, unhurried, without self-distrust, purposeful and relentless.

His character stood the tests, even if perhaps—as was to be expected—it hardened as it battled with unnumbered obstacles and difficulties. At this period there was no rest for himself, and he gave his associates no rest either. He would ring them up at all hours of day or night, at the most unlikely moments and sometimes

from most unlikely places. He expected them to be as single-minded and as constantly on the alert as he was himself.

The only respite he allowed himself was his voluntary service in church and Sunday school, and those who knew how hard-pressed he was, and had at least an inkling of the difficulties with which daily he had to grapple, marvelled that he should continue to give so much of his time to his Methodist class meeting on week-nights and his school on Sundays. The fact is that his devotion to such voluntary work, and the faith that prompted and inspired it, enshrined the secret of his peace of mind and steadfastness of purpose. It provided him with an interest completely dissociated from the cares of business, refreshed him in mind and spirit by giving him occupation in which profit-making and the wielding of commercial power had no part, and so helped to purify motive and supply spiritual invigoration. He himself was probably not conscious of such facts; it is to be doubted whether he ever attempted to analyse his reasons for religious and philanthropic preoccupation: he was not a man of introspective habit.

His eldest son gives a glimpse of his father at this time. James, then in his early twenties, had served his apprenticeship to the trade, and his father sent him to Barry, to show what he could do there. He was paid only a small wage, out of which he had to keep himself, and lived in lodgings in the town. 'People say my father was hard', he said. 'That's quite true. He was hard on me. While I was at Cardiff he sometimes made my life almost unbearable. He used to come over to Cardiff every few weeks, and he always checked up on what I had been doing. He would never give praise if things went well, but if they didn't . . .! It was a severe training—but it was good for me. I needed tough handling. I had to get lodgings I could afford, and make do on my money; and I knew it was no use asking for any more. I'm glad now that he handled me like that—whatever I am, my father made me. That was always his way. He got people to work for him, after choosing them with great care, and then he made them. Not only did he see in them talents and probabilities they themselves had not suspected: he encouraged and fostered the development of those gifts, not hesitating to drive them unmercifully when he felt such a course to be necessary. To my mind, that was an integral part of his unique character.'

The years from 1905 to the outbreak of war in 1914 were very strenuous for Joseph Rank, but his iron constitution stood all tests. His zest for work was insatiable. Apart from personally supervising all that was done at headquarters, he regularly and frequently visited the mills at Hull, Barry, and Liverpool, taking with him as technical adviser, W. H. Raylor, who has set down a brief record of those strenuous adventures.

We travelled by the evening train, arriving at our destination about ten o'clock. Mr. Rank had the priceless faculty of being able to get a short sleep anywhere and at any time. On the train we would discuss business for a while, and then he would say: 'I'm going to sleep for half an hour or so'—and without further ado he would close his eyes and sleep soundly, waking punctually at the end of the stated time.

It was our practice to take with us the statistical returns of the previous week's running of all the mills—records which dealt fully, and in great detail, with both the commercial and the technical work. After his rest he awakened very fresh and fit to examine exhaustively all the recorded details and question and discuss any unsatisfactory item, with which I was expected to be fully informed. As I was unable to sleep at will, this close examination at the end of the long day was often a trying experience.

Why did we make the journey by the evening train? Mr. Rank had strong views on the saving of time, and would frequently comment that we were just as well off travelling as sitting in our hotel, and that by doing so, and making these four-hour journeys in the evenings, we practically saved, or gained, a day in each week. Obviously the fact that he did it himself was the strongest of his arguments. He was really a good travelling companion, but apart from business subjects did not talk much; nor did he want me to talk—which rather suited me, as after we had finished our work I could read without interruption.

Naturally, making these journeys together over several years, we had many confidential conversations, and I learnt many things about his personal experience and views on business, politics, and religion. He was, however, not the man to discuss religion in the abstract. His faith was simple and forthright, literally without complications, and his philanthropy was the expression of it. He made no secret of his enjoyment in making money, but never for its own sake, either to hoard or to spend. His personal necessities were moderate. He had no use for show or display in any form. Anything that savoured of ostentation was entirely averse to him, nor did the usual things money can buy make much appeal to him. I have never thought that ambition, as such, was

a factor of more than usual importance in his character. That he would be dominant among his competitors goes without saying.

As for his philanthropic activities, there was in his mind a very clear-cut and definite opinion that philanthropy had no place whatever in business; to make it possible at all, it must be kept a thing apart; and, while his word was his bond and he the soul of what he thought was right, a bargain or an agreement was to him the same to the end. He would hold to it, however it affected himself, and ask for neither pity nor consideration if it went against him; and he would hold rigidly to this action when it concerned others in relation to himself. He was very quick to recognize ability, but not to acknowledge it to the person concerned. In later years, when his good nature and circumstances allowed us to talk as man to man, I told him: 'I never remember, in our long association, your giving a word of praise or satisfaction to any one of your staff.' His reply was characteristic: 'Perhaps not—but they heard about it quick enough if their work was not properly done.'

Nevertheless, he was always willing to give a young man a chance if he felt confident of his ability. One who came to high position in the firm recalls the day when, although there were others of more mature age on the office staff, 'the Governor' appointed him over their heads as Chief of the Forwarding Department, which at that time ranked next to the office manager.

He made it very clear to a certain gentleman that I was in charge of the department and was not to be interfered with—that was a result of his finding him going through the Forwarding Department correspondence and orders. Mr. Rank told him, politely but firmly, to go back to his own department, as he would not have given me the position if he had not thought I could do the work.

I also recall how, in the early days of the London mills, it was my duty every morning to take in all the travellers' orders to Mr. Rank, and he used personally to go through every one. I found afterwards that this was not only to see what each traveller was doing, and check up the prices, but also to familiarize himself with the names of the customers and the relative size of the firms with whom he was doing business.

That was yet another example of the close and untiring attention he invariably gave to the detailed working of his business—undoubtedly one of the chief reasons for his continued great success.

Chapter Fifteen

The Tooting Mission

THE CENTRAL place occupied by religion in Joseph Rank's personal and family life was again seen when he came to live in London.

On his very first Sunday morning he walked over the Common and offered his services as a teacher in the Sunday school. He was told that at the moment there was no vacancy, but he was not to be put off like that. 'Haven't you got any naughty boys?' he asked. 'I'll take a class of the naughtiest in the school.' Who could resist such an offer? He soon had his class, and a lively handful they were; but he was more than equal to all their pranks, and quickly won their respect. The class was soon among the best in the school.

Among the members of the church was Sir Henry Holloway, and the two men became very close friends in spite of many differences of temperament and outlook. Both were strong in character and accustomed to having their own way, and although they shared a deep loyalty to Methodism, and an untiring zeal for the Kingdom of God, they did not always agree on the methods by which the Gospel should be presented to 'those that are without'. Sir Henry, whose influence was rooted in a long and honoured association with the Methodist Society at Upper Tooting, loved the Anglican liturgy which was followed every Sunday morning, and preferred a form of worship which found expression in dignity and order. Joseph Rank's ideas were quite different. He was much more the Nonconformist. Ritual had little or no appeal for him. He felt that while the sedate practices of Upper Tooting were all very well for the comfortably situated middle-class people who, at that time, flocked into the fashionable suburban church, they would never attract the working people who lived near by; and, as in Hull, his chief concern was to reach the artisans and the labourers and persuade them to accept what he felt to be a saving and transforming experience.

That concern lay at the root of his personal religion. It would never let him go. It drove him like a passion. He made up his mind that, no matter what opposition might be aroused or what difficulties might be encountered, he would provide for the working folk and their families a simple Gospel service in a hall in which they would feel at home as they never would in an ornate church; and that determination was reinforced when, on a Sunday morning, he heard a Communist orator on Tooting Broadway deriding the Church, attacking Christianity, and expounding the full dogma of materialism. He knew that the services at Upper Tooting, however effective for their own purpose, could never meet such a challenge as this. The Broadway itself must be invaded, and a vigorous attack made upon the stronghold of atheism. He decided, there and then, that a mission hall should be built in the very centre of this crowded thoroughfare, and that an attempt should be made to attract the throng away from political agitators and into the Methodist Church. It was his Hull experience all over again.

He lost no time in urging his plans upon his fellow Methodists. They were not all as enthusiastic as he; they had not seen what he had seen: the challenge of the Broadway had passed them by. Among those who did realize the urgency of the problem, however, was Sir Henry Holloway, who supported his friend's project and helped to make it possible.

They understood one another both in agreement and disagreement, and recognized each other's sincere love of Methodism. Each lived about a mile from the church; neither would at that time have dreamed of using a conveyance on Sunday, and each was in his pew both morning and evening, rain or shine, winter or summer. The church was fortunate in having such leadership.

The minister was Dr. J. T. Wardle Stafford, then a young man, later to become a popular preacher both in Britain and in Canada, and President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference at Hull in 1920. Recalling the Joseph Rank of those days, he said, not long before his death:

He was on fire for the Kingdom of God, and essentially a Methodist. I doubt if he would have fitted into any other ecclesiastical type. He loved the class meeting, and would frequently testify that what Divine Grace had done for him it could do for others. He believed in con-

versions, and would whimsically wonder whether preachers who did not see signs following were in their true vocation.

Simplicity was one of the hallmarks of his career. Even his food, especially in later life, was of the most elementary sort. While others desired more elaborate dishes he was content with a very simple menu. I heard him once remark that a certain stipend which he named should be sufficient for any God-sent preacher of the Gospel. I countered him by saying: 'You don't live on that sum, Mr. Rank.' To which he replied: 'I don't live on much more. Indeed, my personal expenses don't go beyond that figure.'

To some he appeared stern and unyielding, but there were lovely nooks and crannies in his nature. He would have the minister and his family to dinner on Christmas Day, and he and Mrs. Rank would reveal their charming gifts of hospitality. He was 'all out' for the Kingdom.

Certainly he was 'all out' for a Mission in Tooting. He fired others with his vision, including the members of his own family, who worked earnestly for the project. A group of zealous men and women gathered around him, sharing his conviction that no time should be lost in launching the new venture. A committee was formed. The advice of leading Methodist authorities was sought, if not always taken. He threw himself into the crusade, as he by now regarded it, with the same energy, concentration, and driving force that he had lavished upon the building of his mills. The force of his attack was irresistible, and the plan began to take shape.

Then came the all-important question: who among the missionaries of Methodism should be invited to undertake this pioneering experiment? Joseph Rank went for advice to his old friend, and first minister, the Rev. Simpson Johnson, who was now the Secretary of the Wesleyan Conference, and thus in a unique position to know; and what Joseph Rank learned in official headquarters confirmed what had already begun to take form in his mind; the leader should be E. Aldom French, an energetic and fearless young preacher who had founded a mission at the Dome in Brighton, and was attracting a large cosmopolitan crowd every Sunday evening.

Would he come to Tooting? Simpson Johnson thought he would, and at once began to see to it that he did. Joseph Rank had heard of French from his daughter Hilda, then at Wintersdorf

School, Southport; she had been much impressed by an address he gave at the school, and wrote to her father enthusiastically, which convinced him that here was the man to appeal to young people.

He invited the minister to his London office and, without wasting words, outlined what he thought could be done. French was attracted by the prospect, but before giving any definite answer to Joseph Rank's invitation he said there was one important question he felt impelled to ask. He understood that Joseph Rank was a Tariff Reformer, and thought he would probably be sensitive on social questions.

'I believe', he said, 'in certain social implications of the Gospel with which I very much doubt if you would agree, and there will be times when I shall feel it my duty to speak my mind quite frankly about them. Would you interfere, Mr. Rank?'

After pondering the matter with his customary deliberation, the miller replied: 'I might offer you some advice.'

That was quite a different thing; 'I'm always willing to listen to advice, even if I don't always act upon it.'

Whereupon Joseph Rank made it clear that he would never think of interfering with what the minister felt called upon to preach. Aldom French moved to Tooting at the next Conference, and found that his new Treasurer, although not always accommodating, and especially critical in financial matters and details of organization, respected his views on theological and social questions even if they did not at all points win his approval.

After much anxious preparation and planning, the Tooting Central Hall was opened on 10th November 1910—one of the greatest moments in Joseph Rank's life. It meant more to him than even a successful transaction in his business. Before long the hall was crowded regularly on Sunday evenings with working men and their families, as many as 1,700 people.

T. R. Ferens presided at the opening meeting, and, as the great crowd sang the old hymns, exclaimed: 'This is like Yorkshire.' Folk from Upper Tooting had come to support the experiment, but Joseph Rank found his chief delight in the row upon row of working men from the neighbourhood. They were the men he most wanted to see. When he rose to make his first speech as Treasurer of the Mission he was enthusiastically cheered, for, although he concealed his share in the generous giving, they knew

that he had provided the greater part of the £33,000 that the hall had cost.

A characteristic turn in his brief speech referred to Ferens: 'He has been a good example to me for many years. He has been giving away ever since I knew him, and I suppose he is better off to-day than ever he was.' The chairman probably wondered what was coming next; for you never knew, when these two were together on a Methodist platform; once, in Hull, when a proposed central hall was under discussion, Ferens suddenly said: 'I'll give £3,000 as a beginning, and I think Mr. Rank will give £5,000'—and, without speaking a word, Joseph Rank nodded assent, and the scheme was launched.

Before he sat down, the new Treasurer turned to Simpson Johnson and said: 'But for this man this hall might never have been built; for it was he who led me out of darkness into light.'

One other significant fact may be gleaned from that evening's achievement. There had been no lack of pessimists to throw cold water over the enthusiasts, and doubtless some of them were present. It was all very well, they said, to organize such a rally as this: the novelty would soon wear off, and then what would happen? The huge hall would be a liability and failure would be complete. T. R. Ferens evidently knew about that, and he spoke of what he and Joseph Rank and others had done in Hull.

'It was said that the first of our three halls would never be filled, but it was filled from the first Sunday. The second, it was predicted, could hardly hope to succeed; but it also was filled from the beginning. As for the third, its failure was held to be certain; but it, too, was crowded from the start. We thus had three successful halls for a population of 200,000. If London were supplied with halls at the same rate, you would need to provide accommodation for another 150,000 people. One secret of the popularity of the movement is that all the seats are free. Not that I advocate a "cheap religion". It is obligatory upon the people to make some return for the benefits they receive; but when they come to God's house they should feel they can sit where they like.'

That perfectly expressed Joseph Rank's point of view. He wanted a hall in which the poorest of the people could feel at home, an atmosphere of warm friendliness and understanding. The fact that men had come in their caps and were not quite sure

whether they should take them off seemed to him a justification of the enterprise. They would never come to a middle-class church. They would feel out of place—but here they were at home.

From the beginning the Mission succeeded in its purpose and for many years the evening congregation was one of the largest in England.

Joseph Rank himself superintended the Sunday school, gathering around him a group of teachers as single-minded as himself. That school, and the Monday evening fellowship meeting, came to mean more to him than almost anything else in his life.

Only matters of the utmost importance were allowed to interfere with his regular attendance. He would conduct the morning school, attend the eleven o'clock service, be back again for afternoon school, and also for a time attended the popular service at night. When he gave up his house, Bushey Down, and went to live at Kingswood Warren, Tadworth, several miles away, he allowed nothing to interfere with his regular attendance. One or other of the family would drive him over. That went on until the war of 1914-18, when, at the age of sixty-five, he learned to drive the car himself.

Members of the family who were at home worked in the Mission, teaching in the Sunday school and giving leadership in the girls' club and the boys' club. During the week also they played their part in visiting the homes round about the Mission area. After the morning school on Sunday, Joseph Rank would stay on at the hall. He always took sandwiches and a flask of tea or a bottle of lemonade, and would eat his frugal lunch in the vestry. Then he would visit the homes of any children who had not come to school, to find out if they were ill; he became a familiar and welcome visitor in the working-class houses round about the Mission. He continued to do so for many years; indeed, to the outbreak of the Second World War. It might have astonished the Pressmen who, to his annoyance, described him as the richest man in England, if they could have seen him at the sick bed of a poor child or seated, completely at ease, with the family in a small Tooting parlour.

Why did he do it? He could have spent his leisure hours pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of happiness in very different ways. The answer can only be that he found a deep and abiding delight in

doing what seemed to him to be the work God called upon him to do. In spite of his wealth, he was at heart a simple Methodist who genuinely wanted to say to everybody he met: 'Oh, let me commend my Saviour to you.' He would speak of religious matters quite simply in conversation. If somebody said or did something of which he disapproved he would say, without a trace of embarrassment or artificiality: 'How can you say that and look your Saviour in the face?' There was about him always something of the directness and simplicity of a child. Doubtless that was one reason why he got on so well with children. Succeeding generations of children came under his influence, and the school flourished. And in this work, carried through with a surprising humility, thoroughness, and conscientiousness, he found not only a perfect antidote to the fret and care of business competition, but also the happiness that always comes of unselfish service. The Sunday school was a great success from the start. By the end of the first year 1,700 children were enrolled. The premises were extended and the school became fully graded.

His Monday evening society class may be placed in the same category. It had to be a very exceptional engagement to prevent him from attending. Aldom French established it, his Treasurer sitting, on the first evening, next to Sir Henry Holloway's gardener, and telling the story of his conversion. After a while he took over the leadership, and maintained it for more than thirty years.

In conducting the class, as in running the school, his methods, judged by modern standards, were old-fashioned. He liked the old hymns. He had no knowledge of, or interest in, Biblical criticism. He accepted the Bible literally. Never would he encourage discussion of problems concerning the relative values of the various books, the historicity of the Gospels, or questions of interpretation. If he ever gave any thought to such things, he recognized that he was not competent to deal with them. Not himself troubled by doubts or misgivings, for his mind was not made that way, he felt no need to equip himself to meet any that might arise in other people's. His faith was radiant and complete—and it was infectious. The class members who came week after week caught something of his joy in the Christian experience and drew warmth from his absolute trust. They saw a very different Joseph Rank from the keen business man whom his competitors learned to fear;

to them he was a sympathetic friend who was always ready to listen to their testimony and help in any difficulty.

He would say with disarming simplicity: 'As I have come along to class to-night I've been so happy. What is it that gives me such joy? "Ah," you may say, "it's your money. You've got all you need, and more." But no, it isn't that. If I lost everything I've got in money and material things I should still have this joy. It's because I love Jesus—and I know He loves me.' No one who heard him could doubt the truth of that assertion. In such matters he was wholly without guile. He just did not set his heart upon material treasure. Many may find that difficult to understand, especially if they have known him only in the market place; yet his whole life proclaims the fact, and those who do not see it will always misunderstand him. That expression of quiet joy in the presence of God was always his theme on mission platforms in the industrial centres of the British Isles—spoken out with an artless sincerity in halls crammed with people, often including many of his own workmen and their wives; and he would say the same thing, with equal ingenuousness, at a Rotary luncheon or a dinner attended by leaders in big business. It certainly could be said of him that he was never ashamed to own his Lord.

Monday evening, all down the years, was set aside for the class. Only once was he ever late for it; and that, characteristically, was through a cricket match. He had gone to the Oval, where England and Australia were playing a Test Match, and at the close of play his car was held in an immense traffic jam. When at last he did arrive he smilingly explained what had happened—and was forgiven.

The boys in the Sunday school were his special interest, and he was highly delighted when one Sunday a smart lad said to him: 'Mr. Rank, some of us boys have been thinking it would be a fine thing if you would invite us to come over to your mills and let us see how you make all your money.' He arranged for the whole class to be taken to Silvertown, and provided for them a tea that increased their admiration—a touch of hospitality he did not always show to his best customers; but they were apt to look for something stronger than tea, and he did not believe in dispensing it.

Sometimes he was criticized because of that. One business man, indulging ironic exaggeration, declared that Joseph Rank, instead of clinching a business deal with the lavish refreshment expected

of a millionaire, 'would, as like as not, take you into a side-street café and offer you a glass of milk'. Well, it is true that frugality had long been his habit; but there were other reasons. He saw no reason why business discussions should be 'oiled' with alcohol. Such drinking, he was convinced, undermined both health and judgement, and he had no wish to take advantage of such impairment.

From the beginning of the Mission he kept a strict eye on all its finances. No item, however trivial, escaped his scrutiny: he applied to what he invariably thought of as 'the Lord's work' the same patient and scrupulous attention he gave to business. His secretary kept the books, and every detail had to be in perfect order.

Such untiring vigilance over expenditure, at times betraying him into something akin to meanness, was balanced by an extraordinary personal generosity that was not limited to his contributions to Mission funds. Although he preferred to cloak his actions, and many acts of kindness were known only to himself and those who benefited, some became known. One such will represent a host of others. He rang up the minister one day, saying he had heard that a member of his class was leaving his home and his business.

'Do you know why?' he asked. 'Is anything wrong?'

'Well, the fact is, Mr. Rank, his business hasn't been doing too well, and he just can't afford to keep it on.'

'Then go and see him, and tell him that if he wants £100 he can have it.'

The sum he needed proved to be smaller than that, and the business was not closed.

Another member of the Mission fell into the hands of money-lenders. Joseph Rank sent for him, listened to his depressing story, and asked: 'Exactly how much do you owe?'

'A thousand pounds.'

After underlining the man's stupidity in allowing himself to drift into such a position, Joseph Rank paid it, and put him on his feet again. It would be possible to multiply such deeds, but even then the half could not be told.

Like other men of his temperament, he had little respect for a man who would not stand up for himself. He admired courage, especially moral courage; and not least in someone who felt it incumbent to oppose him; and he would never hesitate to apologize when he knew himself to be in the wrong.

On a day early in the history of the Mission he allowed irritability to betray him into speaking rudely to the superintendent, who at once protested strongly. 'You are quite right', he exclaimed. 'I was at fault. A minister should never let a layman trample on him'—a saying Aldom French put to good use on later occasions.

Often during these years he was carrying tremendous burdens, and it was, therefore, not surprising that at times he should be tired and difficult. Yet in class he would throw off all his cares. He meant every word when he suddenly exclaimed: 'I felt so happy as I came to the meeting to-night I could have shouted for joy.' Luke Wiseman was on the platform with him once at a crowded anniversary in the north, and a few days later said to a friend: 'He was wonderful—he simply radiated joy and happiness. I'm afraid he's going to die.' But he lived for many years after that.

Yet there were other times when he felt his wealth and responsibilities as an almost unbearable burden, and once he said to Aldom French: 'I wish I hadn't got all this money.'

When the success of the Tooting Central Hall was established beyond all doubt, Joseph Rank decided to proceed with a second venture that had for long been maturing in his fertile mind. Not far away, but in quite a different type of neighbourhood, he built the Southfield's Central Hall, at a cost of £40,000.

To start the building fund he first placed £30,000 with a local bank, astutely defeating the manager in a discussion as to whether the rate of interest should be 3 or $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The neighbourhood in which it was planned to build the hall was very different from that in which the Tooting Mission had been started, and Aldom French realized that a more elaborate building would be necessary. He and Sir Alfred Gelder, the architect, had many consultations before the plan was ready. As they went into the committee room for the final decision, Sir Alfred whispered to him: 'Rank will knock £5,000 off these estimates. He always does.' But for once he had not guessed accurately. Joseph Rank was as alive to the needs of the district as his missionary, and fully approved the scheme.

Much more could be written about the evangelistic adventures of the Tooting Mission. No London mission has done better work. Through its agencies many men and women have been enabled to turn 'from darkness into light', and much of the credit for what

has been done must go to Joseph Rank. He would never claim it. He always underestimated it. Yet in the times of depression and difficulty that inevitably come to such a man it was a comfort to him to know that the vision he had seen when he joined the church at Upper Tooting had become an achievement comparable with the best in the long history of Methodism.

Chapter Sixteen

The Port Millers Challenged

ALTHOUGH Joseph Rank's business ventures flourished exceedingly, perhaps even beyond his dreams, the flour-milling trade as a whole offered a very different story, as the *Proceedings* of the National Association between 1906 and 1910 indicate. Much agitation was going on throughout the mills of the United Kingdom, and this was focused into a conflict of opinion between the port millers and the millers who carried on their business inland. In 1907 the President, Mr. W. R. Mallett, a cultured and widely-read Exonian, brought the discussion to a head in a witty and good-tempered Presidential address.

Some figures he used will emphasize the position. First he sought to show how much the milling capacity of the mills at the ports had increased. In 1890, at 1,515 sacks per hour, the total capacity was 9,847,500 sacks; in 1906, at 3,025 sacks per hour, it had reached 19,662,500 sacks—in each case calculating 130 hours weekly, 50 weeks in the year. During the same period, according to this calculation, the total capacity of all the inland mills had fallen from 16,852,000 sacks to 13,947,000; and imported flour from 7,200,000 to 5,676,000.

'Thus,' he said, 'while our annual requirements have increased from, say, 34,000,000 sacks to 39,250,000, inland mills have decreased in production more than 3,000,000 sacks, while port mills have increased roundly 10,000,000.'

He had no blame for the port millers, although he himself was not one of them: 'The situation must be accepted and dealt with as it exists to-day, for we are face to face with one of those great changes in commercial economy consequent mainly on the shifting of the balance of our food supply from internal fields to foreign, which is resistless in its effect, sweeping away all personal considerations, and against which all individual effort is futile and misplaced.'

Those were the words of a clear-headed man. Less clear-headed,

and certainly less well-informed critics have sometimes blamed Joseph Rank (and other port millers) for what the President frankly admitted had been 'the enormous losses suffered by interior mill owners.' The criticism cannot be regarded as reasonable, or even fair. To feed the enormously increased population of the country it was imperative that ever larger quantities of wheat from abroad should be used in the making of bread; and common-sense economics necessitated that, to reduce manufacturing costs and therefore the cost of the people's bread, the up-to-date mills should not be many miles inland, but at the edge of the water where the grain-ships discharged their cargo.

This was recognized by Mr. Mallett; though himself an inland miller, he paid tribute to 'the energy and enterprise which have led the owners of the large port mills to embark huge sums in the construction of such monuments of such mechanical skill'; and he made known, for the first time publicly, the formation of a Port Millers' Committee, of which Joseph Rank was a leading member.

A former President, Mr. William Edgar Nicholls, quoted most aptly—as the Convention was meeting in the West Country—a saying of James Anthony Froude's: 'A good stiff prejudice is a very useful thing. It is like a rusty weather-cock which will yield to a strong blast of convictions, but it does not veer round and round in compliance with every shifting current of opinion.' That was a point of view warmly endorsed by Joseph Rank. Indeed, he gave evidence of it when he intervened in the debate. After emphasizing that a great revolution had been going on in the trade, he said:

At my first mill I had to turn the wheat over and water it with a watering-can. This was to mellow the wheat for grinding. Now, instead of growing our own wheat we have to depend more and more upon other countries for our supplies. That has altered our milling altogether. I have recently been visiting Wiltshire. Round about that county there are mills which just grind pig's food and cattle food. I was told that the occupiers of the mills were very prosperous years ago. They came next to the squire and parson in the district; but the mills now stand still. The gentlemen who worked the mills a few years ago got their supplies from the district and made splendid profits. Those days are gone, and I am afraid gone for ever, and if they think that by any means they can bring them back again they are making a great mistake. Let every man make a profit. If I were

so circumstanced that I could not make a profit, I should make a move either out of the trade or to a better position.

I have been a small miller; there is not a smaller miller in the room than I have been. I could not then turn over five pounds a week, and if I had not found a mill where I could make a profit, I should now be an employee. . . . The millers can formulate in some way or other an equitable Sale Note, and perhaps afterwards, by reasoning together, we might fix a price. Most of the millers know what is doing in their own districts, and have their own Sale Note; but at the same time other millers are coming in, and it would be an advantage to them to know on what lines to sell.

This last point was made in reference to the suggestion that an attempt should be made to devise a plan whereby selling terms should be purged of certain practices which brought about unfair trading.

In 1908 the problem was again faced at a General Meeting of the National Association, when millers outside the Association were invited to be present. The President, after appealing to them to join the Association before they left the meeting, declared that they stood at the parting of the ways. He moved a resolution embodying, in general terms, the views of the National Millers' Committee, urging that such efforts as had been made 'may not occur again in our generation'. He stood for a system of uniformity of contract, and insistence upon proper conditions of sale. Flour, he said, 'has been delivered, and I believe is even now being delivered, at eight shillings to ten shillings per sack loss, to the utter demoralization, not only of our own business, but that of the baking trade also, by which whole districts have been kept down to an unprofitable level in the price of bread by unscrupulous members of that trade, who, without any wit or foresight on their part, have been "protected" by their friends, the millers' travellers, and found themselves the possessors of cheap flour "booked" to them after a rise, and thereupon promptly used to destroy the profits of legitimate traders'. He, therefore, supported the proposed National Sale Note and the by-laws imposing substantial penalties for infringement.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to go into the long and at times heated debate that ensued, except to record the part taken in it by Joseph Rank. He seconded the resolution in a speech that

made clear his own position and displayed his strength of character. The existing state of the trade, he roundly declared, was unsatisfactory:

The big attendance here to-day is in itself a confession that the present conditions want alteration. Whether or not this Sale Note is going to do everything that is expected of it I cannot say, but I am certain that if it is adopted and carried out, and faithfully adhered to by everybody, it will go a long way to improve matters in the trade. We are here to-day to see what can be done, but I am quite ready to believe that many millers would rather be in the country this afternoon playing golf, and I can assure you that the millers who spent ten days working on the National Millers' Committee would much rather have spent them on the golf-links.

The result of those labours was before them, and he was not going to urge them to accept it if they did not think it was in their interest to do so.

If the millers here to-day will not have it, well, then, I suppose we must go on much as before; but I can assure you that, whether you accept the Sale Note or not, I myself am not going to work on the basis on which some members of the trade have been working. I have not myself much reason to grumble; on the whole, the trade has been very kind to me, but I honestly believe that if all millers would accept this Sale Note, and abide by it, things would be made smoother for everyone.

Speaking of the penalties proposed, he said that for himself he would rather be without penalties; but, on the other hand, it had to be considered that they were likely to give backbone to the trade.

It has been argued, and it is a fair argument, that the penalties would give the millers a better grip over their travellers. That argument can be pushed too far. Personally, I am not inclined to believe that the millers are in the hands of their travellers unless they wish to be. A miller has only to say to his salesman: 'You are to sell flour on these terms, and no others.' Then if the salesman doesn't follow out his instructions, all his employer need say to him is: 'If you can't do the business on my terms, you must leave the trade to someone else.'

He well knew that there were great diversities of opinion in the trade, but if they could not bring their minds to some definite conclusion they would never be able to move forward at all.

'I have been told', he said, 'that I am the most hated man in the trade, but I cannot think why.' Whereupon a voice from the centre

of the room called out: 'That's because you're so good-looking!'

'It had never struck me in that light', he said; 'and really it doesn't matter whether I'm good-looking or not!'

Before I sit down I want to say this—I do not believe in selling flour without a profit, and, further, I will tell you that I never have sold flour without a profit; but it is quite possible that I have sold flour to persons who have sold it without a profit. We have heard complaints of people who have delivered flour twelve months after they had sold it. Well, I have done that myself, and for some time it paid very well. There came a time, when the markets went up, when it didn't pay; but possibly the time may come again when it might pay. There certainly has been a great deal of trouble over the question of distant deliveries. Some bakers are quite ready to take in flour so long as it keeps rising a shilling a sack, but as soon as prices drop so much as sixpence things become awkward for the seller. It seems to me what the trade wants is a Sale Note by which we can stand, and, moreover, a contract our buyers will stand by, even if the markets are going against them.

In that last comment he epitomized his whole trading philosophy.

It is unnecessary to follow the long and complicated discussion that ensued in the General Meeting. Although the official resolutions were passed, opinion was much divided; as the President—Mr. William Edgar Nicholls, serving for a second term—said in 1908: 'Technically, indeed, the scheme . . . was passed, but in the absence of anything approaching complete unanimity such important and far-reaching proposals cannot be considered as definitely accepted by the milling trade.'

So the unregulated competition—'competition with a hatchet'—went on. Enough has been quoted from the records of debate to show that Joseph Rank had stood with those who tried to stem the tide; but when all the efforts proved to be in vain he felt he had no alternative but to go ahead with his own business, be the competition never so fierce. He did not attend the 1908 Convention, held at Cardiff; but his son, James, who was then working at the Barry Mill, made his first appearance in that assembly to say he thought his father's views were pretty well known. His father was willing to go on with the Sale Note as soon as the other port millers were willing to do so. The President said:

Mr. Joseph Rank's view is this. He has repeatedly emphasized it. He says: 'I am prepared to adopt this contract which you have drawn up.

In fact, I have adopted it; it is now in force. I am prepared to enter into a penalty bond provided that some few of my large competitors will also do the same thing. I do not expect'—that is the line Mr. Rank takes—'I do not expect that the millers of the country are going to adopt a universal Sale Note as a whole, but if some seven or eight of the larger port millers, including myself, will sign the penalty bond, I am prepared to go ahead.'

The situation could not have been made more plain. At the next Convention, in Chester—when, by the way, the President, Mr. John Frost, presented to the National Association the copy-right of the old song *The Miller of the Dee*, an 'interesting piece of old English music discovered and re-set by Dr. Joseph Bridge, of Chester, a brother of Dr. Bridge of Westminster Abbey'—the problem was again discussed, and later the General Meeting adopted a 'National Flour Contract'.

Nevertheless, still greater troubles lay ahead, and the industry had to face recurring crises; but in spite of that, Joseph Rank, steadily and defiantly holding the wheel, navigated the mighty ship that was his business through all the raging storms. No peril or upheaval was allowed to divert him from his course.

All through this period, when, in spite of difficulties that brought ruin to many millers, he became more and more powerful, he lived modestly and continued to spend little on himself. A writer in the *Hull Daily Mail* made a point that was well known to the citizens of Joseph Rank's native town:

When his business was in its first stages of progress Mr. Rank, of necessity, had to demand hard work from those he employed, with hours many young people would shiver at in these days. Yet he did not live one life and expect another from his fellow men. He worked hard and denied himself luxuries, as well as perhaps necessities, in order to provide capital for his undertaking. When, however, that was established on a sound basis, to provide employment for an ever-growing army, then his consideration for all around him increased and widened. The reactions of Joseph Rank's business ability, hard work, and self-denial in his young days on the homes and shops of Hull, because of the wages his company paid out week by week, can never be estimated.

He was not of the company of employers who experimented with novel schemes of social improvement such as Bournville or

Port Sunlight, but he had a way of springing pleasant surprises on his men. One Christmas, for example, all employees received two weeks' pay in their packet. It came suddenly; no one knew anything about it until they got it. 'I think Holton Road, Barry, that Christmas Eve was one of the busiest ever known', says one who recalls what happened there. 'Wives, husbands, and children had the time of their lives. Many a toast was given to Mr. Rank that night. The news fled all over Barry: "Have you heard? Rank's men have all got two weeks' pay!" It was talked about for many a long day.'

Although he had gone to live in the south, Joseph Rank maintained his close interest in the affairs of Hull, and especially of Hull Methodism. He spent some time every week in the old city, and was much sought after by folk who needed his help and advice; and, while his assistants did all they could to shield him from the too importunate, he maintained his practice of giving personal attention to all who managed to reach him. For many years after he left Hull he would go back just before Christmas, have an early meal, and then take a taxi and visit some of the old folk, leaving each of them something to cheer them up for Christmas. Of his culminating stroke of generosity, the Joseph Rank Benevolent Fund, from which hundreds of poor people have received, and are still receiving, substantial help, something will have to be said later.

Chapter Seventeen

War: 1914—1918

ONLY those who were closely associated with Joseph Rank knew what obstacles he had to overcome, and what tremendous decisions he had to make, in the years immediately preceding the first Great War—but they knew how swiftly and decisively he could take a hurdle.

In 1912, for example, he saw that the necessities of his Irish trade demanded that he should have mills on the north-west coast. He had already considered building a mill at Liverpool, but it was suggested to him that he should acquire an existing mill. The negotiations for acquiring the business were, however, unsuccessful, whereupon he proceeded with his original intention to build a new mill.

Competitors sometimes marvelled that, in pushing his business on and on, undertaking vast extensions, and incurring what seemed to them to be great risks, he never appeared to be anxious or flurried. The secret lay in his devotional life. Whenever he was faced with difficulty, whether in business or private life, it was his invariable habit to make it a subject for prayer. At home he read his Bible every day, morning and evening, following a systematic course of study, and during the day would often refer to the Scripture passage that had made up his early morning 'portion'. Thus, escaping from business preoccupations, he was enabled 'to possess his soul in peace'.

In this he was not unlike another man of affairs—C. P. Scott, of the *Manchester Guardian*. His biographer, J. L. Hammond, once said something about 'Worrying for days over a decision and then worrying after it was made as to its wisdom'. Scott replied—'Never do that. It is a waste of energy, and interferes with clear judgement. When I am forced to make a difficult decision, I think it over quietly—weigh up all the facts, consider the rights and wrongs of the case, and come to a decision. I never worry afterwards about the difficulties, because when, after a considered judgement, I have come to a decision, I allow nothing to alter it,

and that is the end.' At times he risked fortune, reputation, the *Manchester Guardian* itself, in what seemed to others a forlorn hope; and yet in the crisis of the storm he would be calm. People wondered how he could maintain that quiet mind. The explanation lay in his belief in the over-ruling providence of God. He 'once told his daughter that he spent half an hour every day in meditation'. Joseph Rank was like that. His spiritual resources, like the widow's cruse of oil, were inexhaustible.

Right up to the brink of war in 1914 the great business of Joseph Rank Limited continued to flourish and expand. He was not among those who were greatly disturbed by 'the German peril'. For once, perhaps, his refusal to worry led him into a false sense of security. Like other men of affairs, he was disturbed by the brutal event at Sarajevo and the persistent crises that followed; but, also like the majority of his fellow countrymen, he thought the danger of war, such as it was, would pass, just as it had done over Agadir and Algeciras.

Indeed, so confident was he during the hot days of that lovely English summer—when, as it seemed later, sunshine mocked the fond hopes of men—that he would not hear of postponing, much less abandoning, his plans for a visit to Austria. Even a week before that fateful fourth of August, he did not believe there would be war; he thought the Germans could see far enough ahead to realize that if they unsheathed the sword they would perish by the sword. So, on the Tuesday before the British Government delivered its ultimatum to Germany, he set out, with his wife, for Marienbad, where he was to undergo a cure for rheumatism.

Members of his family gathered at Victoria to see them off, and in those last moments on the platform he was concerned, not about the troubles on the continent to which he was heading, but the business problems he was leaving to the care of his sons and his managers. Just before the train steamed out, he exclaimed: 'You must do the best you can, you young men.' But, he insisted, whatever they did they were not to buy a particular type of wheat. As he was giving them final words of advice, the guard blew his whistle, the green flag fluttered, and the continental express slid from the platform. Quite oblivious of the danger that awaited them, Joseph Rank and his wife had started upon one of the most perilous adven-

tures of their lives. They were actually in Austria on the following Monday—celebrated in Britain by vast Bank Holiday crowds basking for the last time in the sunshine of an England that was never to be the same again—when the ultimatum expired and war was declared between England and Germany. Only when it was too late did they realize they were caught on the wrong side of the fence.

At first it seemed as though they would be interned, and have to remain as prisoners until the end of the war. Joseph Rank had to exercise all his will-power to abstain from worry during those awful weeks. He was completely cut off from all news of how the business was being affected by the world-shaking events—and while he had confidence in the little group of men who were carrying on at home, it was natural that he should imagine they would find it difficult to weather such a storm without their captain.

What, he wondered, were the 'young men' doing? They might ruin the business! But, as a matter of fact, 'the young men', with their expert advisers and helpers, took command as he would have done himself. They acted swiftly, boldly, and decisively, put aside his instructions, faced the new situation, and brought the ship safely through the tempest. That he appreciated what they did was shown by the way in which in after years he praised their exploits—to others. He conspicuously avoided the subject when talking to them. It was the old Victorian reticence. As Mr. Bagnet in *Bleak House* said of his wife: 'The old girl—can't do anything—that don't do her credit. More or less. I never say so. Discipline must be maintained.'

It should be added that in Austria Mr. and Mrs. Rank received the utmost consideration and the kindest of treatment. The hotel keeper kept them at his comfortable establishment for nothing, as in the circumstances they could get no money; and when the war was over he was fully reimbursed. After about six weeks an exchange was arranged between non-military Austrians in England and non-military English in Austria, and Joseph Rank and his wife were in the party sent home to England.

When the first wave of unfounded optimism had passed, and it was realized by the nation as a whole that the war was likely to be hard and long, the problem of food supplies became paramount and the maintenance of an adequate output of flour

for the making of the people's bread a necessity of the first national importance. Not only, as Napoleon said, does the army 'march on its stomach', but the morale and working efficiency of the civilian population also depends upon its day-to-day nourishment. Clearly a primary condition of victory was the physical sustenance of the community, and in an island dependent in large measure upon imports even for the raw material of its daily bread that sustenance could be constantly provided only at great cost.

The difficulties were further increased by the German indiscriminate U-boat campaign. A determined and resourceful enemy, fully awake to the possibilities of successful blockade, bent all the powers of his cunning and unscrupulous mind upon starving the British people. How near he came to achieving his diabolical purpose the history of those critical years has disclosed. He was defeated by British bravery, ingenuity, and tenacity; and among the men who had a decisive share in the victory on the home front was Joseph Rank.

Few men knew the wheat resources of the world, and how to tap them, better than he. All his energy and skill were devoted to keeping his vast mills in full production, and this he was able to do in spite of all the perils. Whereas he had expected that war would undermine the foundations of his business and confront him with a dilemma of frightening proportions, he found that in fact trading opportunities in the milling industry greatly increased. Moreover, he knew, long before the Government realized the extent of the danger, that a very serious food situation would arise unless drastic action was taken on a national scale. He felt that the Asquith Government was as vacillating in its handling of food problems as in its munitions policy, and believed the revolt of Lloyd George to be the only way of cutting through the noose that threatened to strangle the nation.

It has often been said that at a critical moment, when our food supply was gravely endangered and the enemy was trying to corner immense quantities of wheat, Joseph Rank stepped in with his encyclopædic knowledge of the world's wheat markets, outwitted the Germans, and made the nation's bread secure. Precisely what justification there may be for such statements cannot now be discovered. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that his advice was sought, and acted upon, by the State. When eventually the Wheat

Control Board was established, he was made a member of it and placed all his resources at its disposal.

At a critical period of the war, when Britain was facing grave difficulties, Joseph Rank formed the strong opinion that the British Government, rather than sell certain cargoes of wheat, should hold the wheat in warehouses, distributed through different parts of the country, as a defence reserve. He urged this policy upon the Rt. Hon. Walter Runciman, who was then President of the Board of Trade. It did not, however, commend itself to Mr. Runciman. Whereupon Joseph Rank, convinced both that it was in the national interest for the Government to hold the wheat and that the price would appreciate, said: 'Well, if the Government will not buy it, I shall.' Eventually he did.

If he had been socially ambitious he could have had a title, but he preferred to remain as he was.

Both during and after the war, like every other industrialist, he had his share of labour troubles. His handling of them was characteristically direct. It was inevitable in a business which by this time was employing over 2,750 people that there should be occasional disgruntlement. On one such occasion the operatives at Hull went on strike, and the London men, although they had no real grievance, wired to say they would come out in sympathy. Joseph Rank, as soon as he heard what they had done, wanted to know what their trouble was; and the men asked to be allowed to send a deputation.

He at once agreed. As the men came in he stood at the door of the board-room and shook hands with each one, asking for his name and inviting him to sit down. Most of the men were young, but they had chosen an older operative to be their spokesman.

'Well, now,' began Joseph Rank, taking his seat at the head of the table, 'what's all the trouble about? You know, this is a fine thing—to walk out like this when you have a contract saying you will give a week's notice. What would you say if I sacked you, or locked you out, and didn't pay you a week's wages? But we won't go into that. Tell me, what's the trouble?'

The spokesman, perhaps not so self-confident as he would like to seem, began aggressively: 'It's this way, Guv'nor. I'm a tee-totaller and a non-smoker, and when I've made up my mind I take a deal of shifting.'

Sitting eagerly forward in his chair, 'the Governor' replied at once: 'I'm glad to meet you, because there is another man in this room who is a teetotaller and a non-smoker, and when he makes up his mind he is a bad one to shift. Now, look here—we shan't get anywhere that way. My experience is that if a dispute like this is allowed to go on, both sides are hurt. But, remember—when you're starving, I shall still have my bread-and-butter. Now, let's cut the cackle and get down to it. What's all the trouble about?'

In twenty minutes they had solved the problem, and the men went away satisfied.

It was not always as easy as that. When, on another occasion, a strike broke out at Hull Joseph Rank would not negotiate with the Union leader. 'No,' he said obstinately, 'I'll have nothing to do with the man. Let the men come to me direct, and talk it out; then I'll see what I can do.' But the Union leader was equally obstinate, and the men obeyed him; and the dispute dragged on for five or six weeks before the men gave in. During that time Joseph Rank surreptitiously helped the women and children, well knowing that they would fare the worst—but on what to him was a question of principle he would never give way.

Such labour difficulties were by no means the only troubles that had to be faced during wartime. When the Germans began to send over Zeppelins and, later, bombing aeroplanes, new risks had to be faced and new dangers overcome; and, although they were not to be compared with the murderous attacks of the Second World War, they seemed grave enough at the time.

Two of his sons, Rowland and Arthur, joined the Army and fought in France. Rowland was badly gassed toward the end—an experience from which he never really recovered. Undoubtedly it had much to do with his premature death.

In spite of all anxieties, business or domestic, Joseph Rank retained his serenity of mind and heart. At the worst moments in the fortunes of his mills and in the darkest moments of the war he concealed from others any misgivings he may have felt. He gave himself completely to the work of maintaining the output of his various enterprises, finding recreation only in an occasional game of golf or tennis and, at home, billiards and table tennis, playing always with a fierce concentration and a determination not to be beaten.

Chapter Eighteen

'Valley of the Shadow'

SUDDENLY without a hint of what was to befall, he suffered the most devastating blow of his life.

All through the years of struggle Emily Rank had been his gentle, strong, sustaining helpmeet; and when success came to them she remained the same charming, practical, unspoilt, understanding, lovable woman. She was retiring in disposition, always self-effacing, although she had strong likes and dislikes, and could express them very forcibly. When the boys got into mischief she was always their champion, hiding their misdeeds if she could do so—which was never easy, as their father seemed to sense anything they did not want him to know. He would at times be very angry about something they had done, or failed to do, and she would take their part in their absence as well as in their presence; often she gave him a stern lecture on what she regarded as his hardness to the boys.

She was industrious, hard-working, and economical, as a farmer's daughter is likely to be. In the first years of their married life she had to do all the work of the house herself, but when she had plenty of maids she was never idle, and usually had some piece of work in her hands. When the grandchildren came along she was in her element; she was passionately fond of children.

The habit, made necessary in the early days, of being very careful in the spending of money remained with her to the last. She continued to account for every penny. But her ideas of economy were sound. For household needs or for the children's dresses she would buy only the best material: 'something that wears well', she would say, 'will be cheaper in the long run.' When her husband's duties as a Methodist steward involved her in responsibility for equipping the manses of the ministers she saw that they were well furnished and provided with good linen, sometimes having to insist upon her point of view in opposition to his ideas.

She encouraged her children to bring their friends to the house,

and enjoyed their fun and banter. Excellent housewife that she was, she saw to it that there was always plenty of good food for the large house-parties of young folk. There were never too many for her, although there were seven of her own, each with a circle of friends. She enjoyed having the young people around her, and said they helped to keep her young. When friends from Hull came to stay she always wanted her children to be at home and help to entertain them. Everybody was made to feel welcome, whether they were friends or strangers, distinguished people or humble folk; if any visitors were nervous and ill-at-ease she had the happy gift of banishing their fears. As for publicity, she disliked it even more than her husband. At a meeting she would, if possible, avoid the platform and sit at the back. When bazaars had to be opened she would get the girls to play the part in turn; she would go with them to spend the money.

She was closely interested in the Victoria Hospital for Sick Children at Hull, and did much to help its splendid work. Her other great interest outside the home was in missionary work among women overseas. She was a member of the Methodist Women's Work Committee, and attended with regularity, ever ready to do what she could financially or in any other way.

In later years she knew she had high blood-pressure, and when she went to the Mission House, then in Bishopsgate, London, for a meeting, she always had in her bag a card with her name and address, just in case she was taken ill on the way. Her daughters would try to persuade her to go by taxi from London Bridge Station, but she thought that far too extravagant. It was quite a triumph when, one pouring wet day, she did hail one. Her daughter Dorothy was her great companion, and she usually consulted her when she felt she needed support.

Joseph Rank depended upon her more than he knew. When the children asked him if they could do something or go somewhere, he would say: 'Ask your mother.' He felt she was always at hand. She was completely unselfish, and he knew it. Whenever he came home, early or late, there she was—waiting to welcome him. They were wholly devoted to each other, and wholly dependent on one another.

One day, returning with her daughter after visiting her grandchildren, she suddenly complained of a violent pain in her head.

She lay down on a sofa. A doctor was sent for, but he came too late; almost before the household could realize what was happening she had gone.

At first Joseph Rank was distracted with grief, but after a while he became calmer. His victory was won. As in every crisis he had to face, he turned resolutely from the backward look and summoned all his resources of faith and courage. Here was a mystery, grievous and perplexing, impenetrable to the perception of man; but in the darkness he could still trust. If, he reasoned, God had allowed this to come upon him it must be for a good purpose, and all would be well. He did not grieve for his wife. To do that would have been to deny his faith. He believed she was with God, taken into His presence, like Enoch, in the twinkling of an eye, without suffering or weakness.

He would have no gloom. The rooms must not be darkened. The windows of her apartment, in which she lay in the everlasting silence of death, must be kept wide open to the sunlight. At her side—the dear companion of his days—he knelt and prayed. What could all his wealth have meant to him then? If it had been possessions in which he had put his faith, they would have mocked him, like idols with hearts of stone. No one knows what long, dark thoughts may have crowded through his mind in those hours, but whatever they may have been there was light in that Valley of the Shadow; the light without which there could be no shadow, the light of renewal and of hope.

A revealing little incident must be recorded. He always liked to have children in the house, and one of his granddaughters had been staying with them. The family rightly felt that it was no place for her now, and so the car was sent for—to take her home. Grief-stricken, those who had so unexpectedly lost their mother were fearful that if they spoke to her she would see their distress, and be alarmed; and they did not as yet want her to know what had happened. But Joseph Rank saw more deeply into the heart of a child, and he would not let her go away without a word. He knew she would be hurt if Grandpa didn't come to see her off. So he went to her, and walked out to the car, as radiant as he always was in the presence of a child. To her, Grandpa seemed just as usual. It was a lovely thing to do, and what it cost him nobody can say. That, perhaps, was the real Joseph Rank.

Emily Voase, whom he had wooed and won in his moody way more than thirty years before, was laid to rest in the country churchyard at Sutton, in Surrey, the service being conducted by the Rev. E. Aldom French. In his brief address the minister quoted Shelley's *Adonais*, altering the personal pronoun:

Peace, peace! she is not dead, she doth not sleep—
She hath awakened from the dream of life. . . .
She lives, she wakes—'tis Death is dead, not she.

That thought comforted Joseph Rank, as he faced life again, and went on alone.

Chapter Nineteen

Foibles and Characteristics

FROM NOW on a more lonely man, Joseph Rank plunged even more deeply, if that were possible, into the pre-occupations of business. There was much to absorb his time and attention. The Government control of the milling industry, which began to operate in 1917, introduced new elements which artificially dissipated much of the reorganization brought about before the war by the logic and pressure of economic necessity. Mills that had seemed to have little future were renewed in vigour by the zoning made desirable by the need for geographically limited distribution. When peace returned and normal conditions of trading were restored the inevitable results of that policy involved the mills in many difficulties.

Joseph Rank grappled with the situation in his usual energetic way, working all hours of the day and often far into the night. His chief associates had little rest. Their only respite from his inexorable drive was when he was in the train on his way to Hull or Cardiff or Liverpool.

Physically he was at his peak. His iron constitution seemed capable of withstanding any strain. Only an occasional attack of rheumatism gave him any cause for concern, and, like all men of such robust health, he was inclined to exaggerate the danger of that enemy when it invaded his bones. To repel it, he would go off for a few days to some English spa, when it was no longer possible to travel abroad, and sedulously drink the waters and submit to the prescribed diet. Frequently Droitwich attracted him, and at the Worcestershire Brine Baths Hotel he would swim before breakfast in the salt-water baths and play golf in his usual strenuous fashion during the morning; and the enemy was soon banished.

Not long after the war, opportunities came to reorganize his Irish trade, and he lost no time in developing them, in spite of the troubled state of the country. His eldest son, James, initiated the idea, and Joseph Rank, wise in this as in other matters, began to

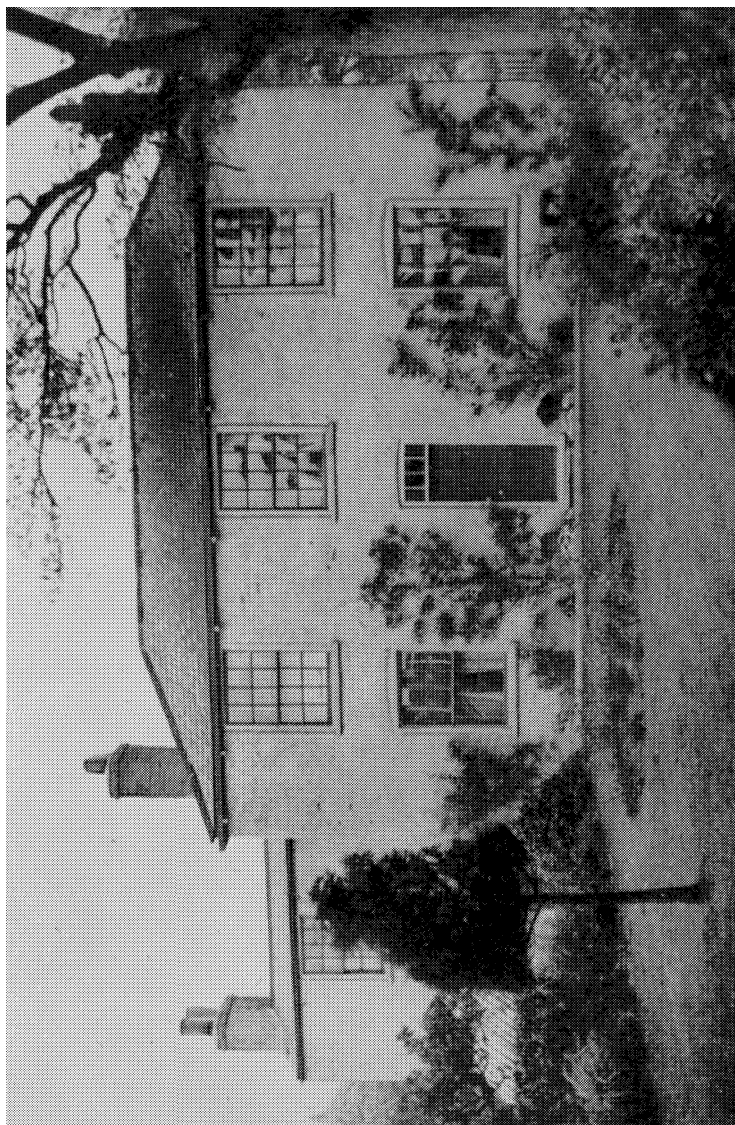
give way to the younger generation. He encouraged his sons to take increasing responsibility, always ready to advise them from a judgement based upon long experience. Until now he had supplied Ireland from his mills at Birkenhead. That meant bringing imported wheat from North America to Liverpool, by-passing the island, and shipping the flour back across the Irish Channel, thus not only wasting time and energy, but importing what inevitably appeared to be a 'foreign' product. By bringing the wheat straight into Ireland and milling it there, he would be able to offer the Irish people flour made in their own country by their own countrymen—both Northern and Southern Ireland. There could be no doubt how that would appeal to the mercurial Irish.

With this in mind, he visited Ireland, in company with W. H. Raylor, to inspect a site; but at this time the opportunity occurred to acquire two firms at Limerick, both controlled by the same miller, whose reputation was high throughout 'the Green Isle', and he took the two businesses over, mill, dock, and silo, retaining the Irish staff, with the former owner as general manager.

Before long, other mills at Cork and Mallow were added, as well as a group of small mills that had only been kept going by order of the Government. Thus began another period of building and experiment, in which he renewed his zest for pioneering. Now, however, he had vast resources of experience to draw upon and could thus keep all risks at a minimum; he entered into the inheritance of past mistakes and speedily established a great and enduring success. He made new mills out of old and built large modern plants in Cork, Limerick, and Belfast.

These were for him days of intense activity and pleasure. In his sixth decade he was as active, as full of drive, and as eagerly adventurous as he had ever been; he renewed his youth, even looking younger than he had done since his thirties, for he shaved his beard. His figure had remained spare. Tall and loose-limbed, striding along with purposeful air, his physical strength was matched by a tireless vigour of mind, as contractors and staff sometimes ruefully testified. No detail was ever too small for his attention. What he wanted done had to be done exactly as he ordered, and he would have neither excuse nor delay.

Many tales could be told of his adventures in that land of surprises. One such concerns a trip with Raylor to inspect a site for



'Ouborough', Skirlaugh, near Hull, Mrs. Emily Rank's birthplace

a new mill said to be better than the site at Limerick. It was at Foynes, the only spot on the River Shannon where the water was deep enough to take the big ocean-going ships; vessels above a certain tonnage had to be lightened in the estuary before they could go on to discharge their cargoes in Limerick Docks.

Joseph Rank had never seen the Lakes of Killarney, and as they were not far away he thought it would be a pleasant interlude to spend the Saturday afternoon and Sunday at the famous beauty spot. A car was hired from Limerick, and they set off, with a lackadaisical Irish driver. Out in open country, miles from any town, the car suddenly stopped, and nothing would persuade it to go another yard. The driver blandly told them there was a hole in the base casting of the radiator, and it had naturally run dry. For his part, he viewed the situation with the philosophic humour typical of his race—a humour his passengers found it impossible to share; and assured them that it was only necessary for them to fetch some water in a petrol tin—then he would soon put the car right again. While his passengers went in search of a stream, he cut a thick twig from the hedge, peeled off the skin, plugged the hole, and calmly sat down to wait until the millionaire and his manager returned from their quest, which turned out to be far from an easy one. However, after a time they appeared, perspiring but triumphant; he took the overflowing tin, poured in the water, declared that all would now be well, and started off again. They reached the Lakes Hotel without further misadventure, and the Irishman, with all the appearance of sincerity, declared he would have the radiator patched up in time for their return on Monday morning.

Instead of being able to see something of the lovely countryside, they had to remain in or near the grounds of the Lakes Hotel all the week-end; their only reading matter the *Joyful News* and the *Methodist Recorder*, which Joseph Rank had brought with him. On the Monday, Joseph Rank had a timetable of important engagements to fulfil at Limerick, and they started early as arranged; but when they had gone about ten miles the car stopped half-way up a long hill. There was not a house in sight. All the driver had done to insure against a repetition of Saturday's calamity had been to provide himself with two or three sprigots of hard wood at Killarney—so much for his promised 'patch'! He produced one of

these, saying it would put things right; but he had forgotten to bring a can of water. Where was water to be found? He thought profoundly for a while; then—oh yes, he knew: there was a farm away beyond, which they could not see; but he knew where it was, and he would fetch the water. He did so—at his own pace; and after a long time, returned and managed to start the car again. Ultimately they reached Limerick, not at eleven o'clock in the morning as arranged, but in the middle of the afternoon—the timetable of engagements utterly wrecked. They learned afterwards that the driver, who was also the owner of the car, far from trying to have the leak mended, had spent the Sunday touring the Lakes with some of his friends. It was a revealing, exasperating lesson in the subtleties of the Irish temperament.

Joseph Rank visited Ireland at intervals, for many years, consolidating his ever-expanding business. He made his last journey there at the age of eighty-three, when he and Raylor again hired a car for a week's tour of the mills at Belfast, Limerick, Mallow, and Cork.

Taxi drivers never did well out of him. He preferred to walk. If, on emerging from a railway station, a companion suggested that the weather justified calling a cab, he would say: 'A drop of rain won't hurt us.'

Sometimes in his office he would ask for one of his sons, only to be told he had just left, perhaps on a visit to one of the provincial mills. 'H'm!' he would grunt. 'And I suppose he's taken a taxi to the station. I should go by Tube—and be there first.'

After discussing an important deal, and giving instructions that his decision should be communicated to the client without delay, he would sometimes call his secretary to his desk and say: 'You put in a trunk call to that man. There was no need for that. A letter would have done just as well. He won't do anything about it until to-morrow, and the letter would have been on his desk in the morning. It's a waste of three and six. You really must look after these things.'

When he was in that mood even his oldest associates were liable to 'catch it'.

Joseph Rank had no private room of his own at the firm's London headquarters. When the move from Hull was made he said he would be away so much it wouldn't be worth while his having

a room that would only be locked up and wasted most of the time. He had a desk for himself in the Board Room, and from there conducted the affairs of the largest flour-milling business in the world.

His hatred of waste led him on one occasion to do something that was doubtless criticized by those who saw it, and was indeed harsh and from one point of view unfeeling, although from another it may be interpreted differently. It was on one of his visits to the Hull office, and after lunch he said to the manager: 'I've bought two or three little things to take back home with me. D'you think somebody could do them up into a parcel for me by the time I am ready to go?'

One of the lads in the office was told to do so. 'See you make a nice, tidy parcel; it's for the Governor to take with him, don't forget.'

Proud to be asked, the lad did his best, and made a presentable parcel, tying it up with plenty of string and making a strong handle with which to carry it. When the time came for departure Joseph Rank asked if his parcel was ready. When it was brought to him he looked at it closely, and then asked: 'Who did that up?'

'One of the office boys, sir.'

'Oh! Send him in to me.'

Told that 'the Governor' wanted to see him, the boy, conscious of having, as he thought, done a good job, put his tie straight and marched in, all smiles, expecting compliments—and perhaps a tip.

Joseph Rank looked at him dourly. 'Did you do this parcel up, my boy?'

'Why, yes, sir!'

'Whose string did you use?' The question was rapped out.

'W-why, the firm's, sir', the lad stammered.

'Exactly. Couldn't you find some old bits of string to knot together—there's probably plenty in the waste-paper basket. It would serve you right if I made you undo it and find some bits to do it up again. Never waste string like that.'

Harsh treatment? Yes, but Joseph Rank had himself been to a harsh school, and knew the value of it; in his blunt way he was perhaps chiefly concerned to give the boy what he regarded as a much-needed lesson. Certainly the lad would never forget it.

Any semblance of ostentation was repugnant to him. In all he did he was simple and direct. He had no time for pretentiousness. Just as he hated obsequiousness in subordinates, so he was unaffected in his treatment of them. The lift-man in the Leadenhall Street offices once told a visitor that 'the Governor' always sent him out a cup of tea when he was having one himself in the middle of the afternoon.

One day he received a letter from a small girl who said she had heard that he had paid a large sum of money to clear the debt of the Mission at which she was a Sunday scholar, and would he like to help her collect five pounds for missions overseas? It would not have been surprising if so busy a man had dismissed the letter as unimportant and either neglected to answer it or told his secretary to send a perfunctory reply—but that was not his way. He wrote her a delightful personal letter to say how pleased he was that she was collecting for missions, and he told her that he himself had once wanted to be a missionary. That letter, still treasured by the child, not only encouraged her, but revealed the quality of the man.

Some years before, the missionary to whom that little girl showed her letter was asked by Joseph Rank to be the speaker at a meeting in the Tooting Central Hall, and went over from Bristol for the occasion. After the meeting Joseph Rank asked: 'What are your expenses?'

'I have no expenses', said the minister. 'It is a pleasure to come and help you.'

'Thanks', he replied—and said no more. Like the Quakers, he would always take 'Nay' for an answer. But two days later the missionary received from him 'a lovely letter of thanks and a cheque for £50 for the work of the Mission'—a generous and gracious gesture.

Another missionary, equally well-known, saw the other side of his host's make-up. He also went to speak at a meeting in Tooting, and when Joseph Rank asked what his expenses were he said—although he had come only from another part of London—'Shall we say a guinea, Mr. Rank?'

'I'll give you a pound', he exclaimed—and there was nothing more.

As will be seen later, the charitable demands upon his time were reaching immense proportions. Although wherever he helped he insisted that the gift should be anonymous, it soon became widely

known that he was ready to support evangelistic work on a big scale, and requests poured in from every part of the United Kingdom. Few mission anniversaries in Methodism failed to pay tribute to the generosity of 'The Anonymous Donor', and the phrase came to accentuate rather than disguise his identity. This genuinely annoyed and distressed him, but there was nothing he could do about it.

A glimpse of his friendly generosity is provided by a friend of many years, John Crowlesmith, the veteran writer of the 'Layman's Diary' in Joseph Rank's favourite *Joyful News*.

We were putting up a mission hall and, of course, wanted help. We were received by the millionaire in an office quite devoid of anything approaching comfort—yet he gave us over £6,000 to help on the Lord's work.

On another occasion, I had been instrumental in the erection of a Sunday school building for which Mr. Rank had given very generous help. We had other schemes, and one day we caught Mr. Rank at an easy time for him and he decided to visit and personally inspect the ground and decide as to the worthiness of our scheme (a thing he would always do, if it were possible, when he was asked to help); his one test as to 'worthiness' being that the scheme should aim at reaching with God's call folk outside the Churches. We drove Mr. Rank over our wide circuit, and showed him its urgent needs. He visited the new school building, and I remember his pat on my shoulder as he remarked: 'I hope folk will always spend my money as well as you have done here.'

Then we went to my home—Ensor Walters (the late Rev. C. Ensor Walters, General Secretary of the London Mission), Rank, and our superintendent minister—to tea. How well I remember that day. Mr. Rank was enjoying himself. He was engaged on work for his Lord. We were all happy and thankful and made a very good party. My wife, anxious to help on the good work after the mind of a Methodist matron, had provided a sumptuous tea in honour of the visit of our Methodist millionaire. As we entered the lounge, Rank turned to me with his eyes twinkling and said: 'You know, I can't afford to live like this.' Then to my wife he remarked: 'My dear, all I want is a thin slice of bread with a scraping of butter and a weak cup of tea.' Such were his simple tastes—yet as a result of that visit a very successful church hall now stands in the centre of a 'new population', paid for very largely by the generous gifts of this 'man of God'.

He was not always enamoured of the teaching provided at theological colleges. His own faith was that of a child and his training

and experience had not made him tolerant of more sophisticated minds. Hence when his friend, Edmund Lamplough, the shipping broker, and the Rev. Dr. John H. Ritson, Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, were appointed by the Wesleyan Conference jointly to be responsible for raising £150,000 then badly needed by the ministerial training colleges, they foresaw difficulties in securing Joseph Rank's aid, which could make so great a difference to their plans.

The question was one of the outstanding problems considered by the Wesleyan Conference when it met in Birmingham. It happened that Crowlesmith was staying at the same hotel as the miller, and on the morning of the Ministerial Training debate, when he came down to breakfast, he found his friend seated at a small table for two.

We two were alone, as by an engaging sweep of the hand he invited me to join him. Conversation veered round gradually to what was then known as the Ministerial Fund—Ritson had exhausted himself in unsparing effort and Lamplough had almost impoverished himself by generous giving, and yet the fund lacked some £25,000 to £30,000 before it could be completed. We talked it over with our bacon and egg, and finally I ventured the question: 'Are you not going to help them, Mr. Rank?'

J. R. sat up, and we looked each other squarely in the eye. 'So you think I ought to give this money, do you?' he queried sharply. 'No,' I replied, 'I should not presume to advise a man like you as to what he ought to do, but, as far as one can see, without you the appeal cannot succeed.' A pause. Then suddenly Rank pushed back his chair and stood before me, his long lean figure erect and resolute, his breakfast unfinished. 'What's the matter?' I asked. 'I have not offended you, have I?' 'No,' replied Mr. Rank quietly, 'I am going up to my bedroom to ask Jesus what I am to do.' Without another word or look, he left me. I never heard another word about the incident, but in Conference that day it was announced the Fund had been completed.

His consuming zeal out of business hours was for evangelism, and if he took a narrow view of it the explanation is to be found in his early limitations. It may seem odd that one who encouraged his workmen to take advantage of every possible opportunity for technical education should be suspicious of scholarship in religion; but so it was. When discussing missionary questions, he would sometimes say: 'You know, I don't think it's any use educating

the natives. I don't believe in all this education. I didn't have much myself, and I haven't done so badly.' When, in reply, it was pointed out to him that, nevertheless, he had sent his sons and daughters to first-rate schools, he would merely smile enigmatically.

He never deviated from his conviction that the supreme mission of the Church was to save sinners. The certain way to gain his support was to convince him that it was needed for that purpose. His theology was that of Charles Wesley, whose exposition of the Atonement he unquestionably accepted:

He dies to atone
For sins not His own;
Your debt He hath paid, and your work He hath done. . . .

He purchased the grace
Which now I embrace:
O Father, Thou knowest He hath died in my place.

Chapter Twenty

Post-War Expansion

THE UNECONOMIC condition of the milling industry as a whole, which had been accentuated by the circumstances of the War of 1914-18, left a post-war legacy of confusion, suspicion, and strife among the millers. The differences between the inland millers and the port millers that had provoked such controversy during the decade before the war, and had lain in abeyance during the period of Government control, now became as acute as ever. It was clear to all far-sighted leaders in the trade that only drastic treatment was likely to restore to health a patient whose weaknesses had been aggravated by pampering.

What that treatment should be, however, was a subject of hot dispute. Whatever agreement existed on diagnosis, there was dangerous and even angry disagreement on prescription. There was much coming and going among those who sought to influence the decisions of the National Association of British and Irish Millers; specialists were called in for consultation (or rashly offered their services), and out of a pigeon-hole was brought a plan put forward before the war by one who had devised many ingenious schemes in his day to help lame industries over awkward stiles—H. Osborne O'Hagen.

It would be irrelevant to go into intricate details concerning the differing plans that were propounded. As for the O'Hagen scheme, it is written for all to read in the second volume of his extraordinary autobiography, *Leaves from My Life*. His acute mind saw that, as six-sevenths of all the flour used in these islands was made from imported corn, it was inevitable that the huge mills established at the ports should dominate the trade. That was exactly what Joseph Rank had foreseen many years before. O'Hagen thus sums up the situation:

After a time, speculating in wheat became less profitable, and then it was realized, even by the port millers, that, owing to the capacity of production in the milling trade, and to the reckless form of trading which

had long been carried on and excessively indulged in, no profits were being made, nor were they likely to be made for many years to come, for reckless competition, though having the effect of preventing profits, did not force competitors out of the business. If one fell by the way, someone stepped in, reorganized the business, and made it a powerful competitor, so it was seen that there was no hope of bringing about a better state of things by driving competitors out of the business. It was necessary that something should be done, for flour was generally selling at a lower price than it cost to produce and deliver.

It must be remembered that, whoever O'Hagen was speaking for, it was not Joseph Rank, of whose business it certainly could not truthfully be said that no profits were being made. He continued all through his long career to trade at a satisfactory profit, and could say that from the day he built his first roller mill in Williamson Street, Hull, he had never lost money on any enterprise he undertook. Yet it was a fact that, owing to wartime conditions as well as other factors, the milling capacity of the United Kingdom was considerably—some said fifteen per cent.—more than could be sold.

There was much overlapping; and also some of the methods of business were, to say the least, uneconomic: forward selling for long periods often involving the millers in a loss, for the price of wheat was always fluctuating. All this had been the background of the National Association debates of 1905-10, when Joseph Rank urged the necessity for a national sale agreement with penalties for those who broke it; but the state of the trade remained chaotic. It had long been obvious to him that only a strong policy, agreed among the most powerful millers, could cure these grievous ills; but he knew also, from personal experience, that not all could be trusted to abide by agreements, into which some entered with mental reservations. There were so many ways by which less scrupulous firms might, while agreeing to a 'sale note' and to certain prices, by devious and secret methods still sell their flour at special rates and so throw the industry again into chaos.

O'Hagen proposed the formation of 'The Millers' Insurance Company Limited' to carry on all the usual business of an insurance company—fire, accident, guarantee, and all other insurance except life and marine business; but the main object would be to issue special policies guaranteeing to each policy-holder the output and

sale, in every year of the continuance of the policy, of the same amount as he had sold and delivered in the preceding year. Briefly, the scheme was that each policy should be valid for fifteen years; that failure to observe the terms and conditions should cancel it; that the initial premium should be a shilling per sack (for 100,000 sacks, £5,000) plus a continuing premium of threepence per sack on every sack of flour made and sold, on a quarterly statement; that at the end of each year the company should pay three shillings for every sack the miller had failed to make and deliver below the number he had insured, provided the claim did not exceed twenty per cent. of the number of sacks insured; that, on the other hand, if the miller made, insured, and delivered flour in excess of the amount insured he should pay to the company three shillings a sack in excess; that the initial premiums of a shilling a sack (estimated probably to total £1,000,000) should be kept intact, invested in gilt-edged securities in the names of appointed trustees, to be held until the expiration of the policies, when the fund, consisting of the original premiums together with any amounts the trustees might hold in respect of lapsed policies, should be divided among the then existing policy-holders in strict proportion to the amounts for which they were insured—thus any miller insuring the policy and the amount of his initial premium could include it as a substantial asset in his annual accounts.

All claims in respect of a shortage in the insurers' deliveries would be paid out of a separate account made up of the continuing premiums and any sums received from premiums paid on excess quantities of flour. Each year, when all payments in and out had been made, the balance of the fund should be returned to the policy holders. The company was to be 'mutual' in principle: every policy holder would be entitled to take up one five-pound share for every thousand sacks insured.

Fundamentally the assumption was that no miller would strive to exceed his output of the previous year or push his sales to the extent of his insured sackage, and the economies thought to be involved included the abolition of forward sales, the cessation of sales at cost price or under, the reduction of travellers, and many incidental savings when severe competition ceased. The scheme, its originator was careful to point out, 'did not seek to enforce on any miller any directions as to how to conduct his business. He

could buy as he liked, mill and sell what quantities he liked, and on what terms he liked, and to stiffen him in selling at a profit he had his policy, which entitled him to claim compensation if he failed to make and sell his full quantities'.

However, the plan did not at the time receive sufficient support to carry it into operation. 'One very important and respected member of the trade', said Mr. O'Hagen, 'told me privately that he did not intend to accept the scheme, although his son, who really conducted his business, was a very active member of my committee. This dear old gentleman attended several of my meetings, never raised a point against any part of my proposals, but always when I had finished proposed a vote of thanks to me, and in so doing alluded to me as the fairy godmother who had come to save the trade. I had very little doubt that I should get his ultimate assent to the proposals.'

In 1923 a plan, very similar in outline—indeed, O'Hagen claimed that it was his own—was published in the National Association's *Proceedings* and widely discussed; but it was still found to be unacceptable. Some years later in the south of France O'Hagen met 'the head of the greatest milling firm' and said that if he was favourable to putting the scheme forward again he would do so, but he received no encouragement.

By this time Joseph Rank had found other ways of dealing with the problem. It may be said that temperamentally he was always too keen an individualist to make an easy yoke-fellow. He believed in what seemed to him to be fair competition. In an open market he asked for no quarter for himself and offered none to others. Consistently, all through the years, he had advocated an efficient ambulance service to deal with casualties on the battlefield of milling competition; it was not his fault that others refused to co-operate and so contributed to the increased suffering of those who, to use O'Hagen's characteristically evangelical phrase, 'fell by the way'.

It would be as absurd to paint him as a figure of perfection as it would be to maintain that he could have been other than he was. Like other men, he had his varying moods; indeed, perhaps, more than many other men. Moreover, he was inevitably 'of his generation'; Victorian standards were in him perpetuated far into a very

different world. To blame him for that would be as irrational as to blame an apple for not being an orange or a painter for not writing music. As he would have put it, he was 'as God made him'. Certainly his present attitude was dictated by the dual factors of the qualities with which he was endowed at birth and the circumstances of his upbringing, environment, and struggle for survival. His inflexible belief in the sanctity of agreements freely entered into bred in him contempt for competitors who broke agreements whenever it suited their pockets to do so; and one in particular was, in his view, so persistently and blatantly unreliable that he would have nothing to do with any rationalization scheme to which he was a party. Indeed, for years that fact was an unsurmountable stumbling block. When it was overcome, Joseph Rank joined in a rationalization scheme which owed much to the energy and foresight of his eldest son, James V. Rank.

That day, however, was still remote at the time now under consideration. Joseph Rank dealt with the problems of the uneconomically organized trade in his own shrewd and forthright way. He had an uncompromising intolerance of inefficiency. Fundamentalist as in many respects he was, he sufficiently subscribed to Darwin's theory to believe in the survival of the fittest; and there was in him also sufficient of the Old Adam to persuade him that the fittest included himself. So he set about acquiring the mills of competitors in areas where he wanted still farther to expand his trade; and the next decade saw many acquisitions that brought much heart-burning and made him more enemies.

Joseph Rank first purchased the business of the Riverside Milling Company and Messrs. John Ure and Sons of Glasgow. As Ure's mills were uneconomically situated, the business was transferred after a short time to the Riverside Mills, the mill being sufficiently enlarged to deal with both businesses. Later, by stages, the Riverside Mills were enlarged and greatly increased in capacity. Extended storage facilities were added, together with a plant for maize-flaking for cattle.

The flour mills of Messrs. Buchanan's, of Birkenhead, came into the market, and he purchased the business, together with land, buildings, and plant. Much greater development was made at this centre in the manufacture of cubes for cattle feeding and provender, very large plants being erected, together with storage and ware-

houses. Messrs. Rigby's mill and business were later purchased, the mill being run for some time before it was ultimately dismantled and a new mill built on the land at Buchanan's Mills, together with a silo of large capacity.

The business and mills of Messrs. Henry Leatham and Sons were purchased as a going concern conjointly by Messrs. Spillers Limited and Joseph Rank Limited. They were among the largest millers in the country at that time; and, without going into further details, Joseph Rank Limited took over the Cleveland Mills at Thornaby-on-Tees, Milner's of Elland, another small mill at Malton, and Messrs. Appleton's Mill at Hull. These mills were of considerable capacity, but, with the exception of Cleveland, out-of-date in machinery and badly placed for sites. Ultimately Appleton's and Milner's were closed down; Cleveland was remodelled and brought up to date and has since been considerably enlarged. Joseph Rank also purchased the business and plant of Messrs. Herdman and Sons, Edinburgh; W. Sutcliffe and Sons, Manchester; Kirby's Limited, Selby; J. Appleby and Sons, Liverpool; Hanley and Sons, Doncaster; and built a large block of mills and silos in Belfast to furnish the Irish trade in Northern Ireland.

At a later date the business, plants, and assets of the Associated London Flour Millers Limited, London, as well as Greenwood and Sons of Manchester and Blackburn, were acquired and the companies controlled by Ranks Limited, London.

All these plants were reorganized, in many places new properties were built; the plants were brought up to the most effective standard under Joseph Rank's control.

It would be foolish to deny that these transactions brought much anxiety and even repining to many whose businesses were absorbed. Yet those who were taken over—always on generous terms: the owners, managers, and staffs being retained—speak with appreciation of the treatment they received from Joseph Rank. He invariably arranged for the business to be carried on by the directors who had previously been responsible—aided, naturally, by Mr. Rank's own experts—and under the old name. True, the directors, like the staff, were expected to be up to a good standard of efficiency; if they were not their contracts would not be renewed; and, human nature being what it is, it is not surprising that he should have been accused of unfairness and harsh inconsiderateness. Nor would

it be reasonable to suppose that such complaints were entirely without foundation. In the heat of battle things are done that cannot be justified in times of peace. In handling such vast concerns as it became his lot to handle, it is difficult, if not impossible, completely to avoid injustice and unfairness, and he had to take the responsibility, not only for what he did himself, but also for what was done by subordinates in his name. He accepted that fact, and his back was broad. Moreover, if a portrait of him is not to be distorted it must be said that he was not always sensitive to other people's feelings and that in the commercial ring he did not pull his punches. If anybody was hurt, he would take the view that they had probably done their best to hurt him; the victims of competition were simply the unfit, and as such must go to the wall.

It will perhaps seem strange to some that he saw no inconsistency between that view of the law of the jungle and the Methodist view of the law of Christ—but that was how he was made. He had no pity for what he regarded as inefficient trading, but he had a very practical sympathy for the insolvent trader. That is shown again and again in his life, and that is where he felt his Christianity came in: it lay behind, and inspired, his repeated efforts to persuade his fellow millers to make generous provision for those who might become the victims of the economic storm.

He would himself have been the last man to claim perfection. He was conscious of many flaws in a nature hardened by the incessant stress of business struggle. Otherwise he would not have described himself, as in fact he did, as 'a sinner saved by grace'—he even wanted that inscription on his grave. The legitimate aim of biography is not to excuse, much less condemn, but rather to understand, and to paint a portrait not demonstrably unfaithful. Let it, therefore, be said that in many respects he fell short of his own ideal for himself, and that he was aware of much 'weakness within'. Yet even his most bitter opponents recognized that he was a just man who would never knowingly permit an unjust action and would at once seek to remedy any such that came to his notice.

As the years went by his sons and son-in-law took over a larger share of responsibility for running the business. Under his expert guidance, they had acquired the necessary qualifications, and he lost no opportunity of increasing their fitness for what he knew must ultimately devolve upon them. Nevertheless, there was no abate-

ment of his interest. He retained his grasp of the markets and his grip on the wheel of his still-expanding business, but he gave a larger proportion of his time to his religious and charitable aims, seeking to put to the most constructive use the wealth that had come to him through successful trading.

Chapter Twenty-One

His Handling of Men

IN HIS HANDLING of men, especially within his business, Joseph Rank was apt to make inordinate demands. His methods were dictatorial. Like the centurion, he could say: 'I say unto this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it'; and, while he was in many respects considerate and kindly, especially when those about him were ill or in trouble, he could be brusque and unreasonable when he felt changes to be necessary. It was not his policy to let men settle down. From his travellers, for example, he expected constant increase in trade; and a man who achieved unusual success, far from being allowed to rest upon his laurels, was given a more difficult district and expected to improve upon his previous achievement.

Having decided that a change must be made in the management of a mill or an office, he would act with the swiftness of a general who knew he must forestall counter-moves. One afternoon he called to his desk in London a young man whom he had marked out as being of more than average promise, and, without the slightest warning, told him he was to take over a key post in one of the mills in the north. He spoke as if the whole question had been settled, never thinking to ask whether the man wanted to go.

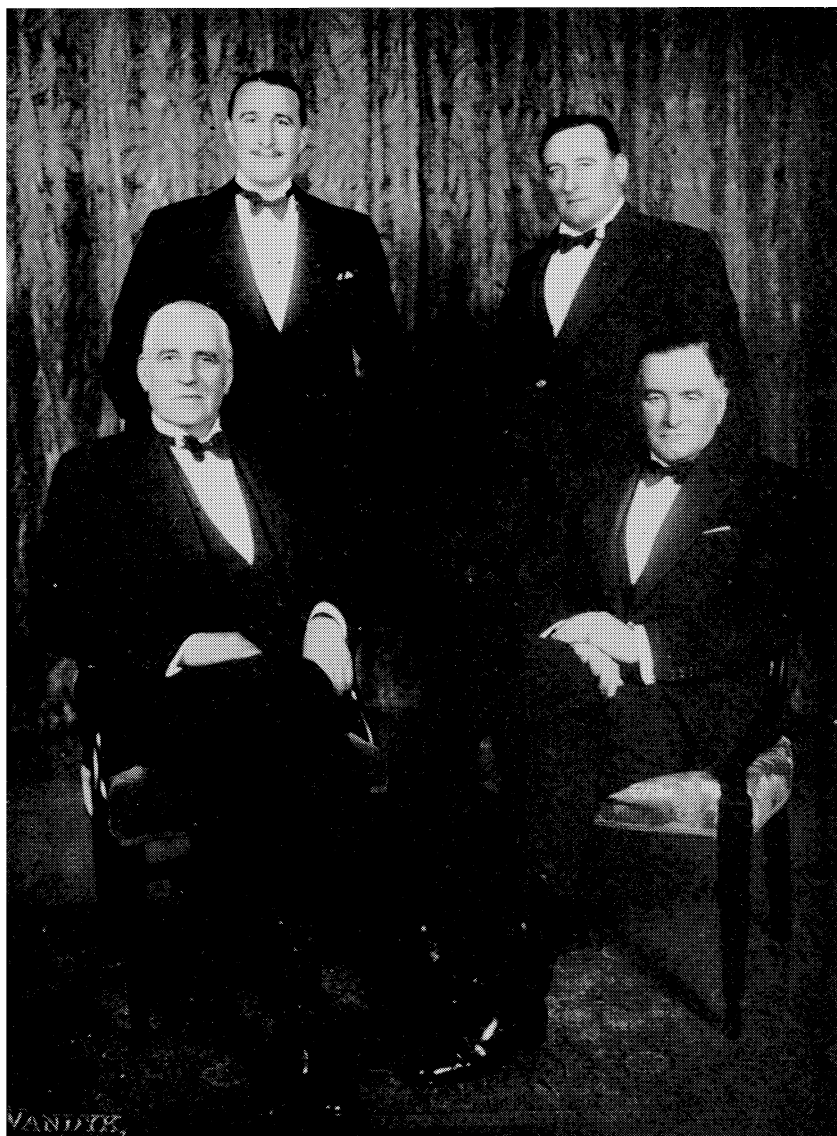
'When do you want me to take over, sir?'

'At once', said Joseph Rank, determined to face the northern staff with a *fait accompli*. Opening a Bradshaw, he glanced at his watch and said: 'There's a train at four o'clock. If you hurry you can catch it.'

But the young man hesitated.

'I'm quite willing to go,' he said, 'but I can hardly rush off like that, without consulting my wife.'

That point of view had never occurred to Joseph Rank, and momentarily he showed some annoyance. Then he exclaimed: 'Oh, very well. But there's no time to be lost; much depends upon that.'



Joseph Rank with his sons on his eightieth birthday

You must go first thing in the morning'—and his tone left no doubt that in such affairs he considered wives to be of secondary importance.

Not even the oldest of his friends was immune from his sometimes caustic criticism. Once when he and Sir Alfred Gelder were going over a mill that had to be rebuilt, he turned to the manager, with Sir Alfred standing beside him, and said: 'Don't have those twiddly bits put on the top next time—they're no use to the mill; they're only put there to help the reputation of the architect.'

If the Methodist Conference was held in Hull or Manchester or Liverpool, or any other city where he had an office, he would combine attendance at it with business engagements. On a day when Conference assembled at the Central Hall in Manchester he went first to Rank's office, and after seeing to the necessary business asked the young man with whom he had been talking how far it was to the hall. Knowing his Chief's peculiarities, he did not offer to drive him over in his car, but asked: 'Well, sir, will you walk or take a tram?'

'How much time would the tram save?'

'Very little, sir; you could probably walk just as quickly.'

'Then, I'll walk. D'you think you could spare time to show me the way?'

After giving the question ostentatious consideration, he replied, 'Well, yes, sir, I think I could just manage that.'

'The Governor' was pleased at that, and they set out at a brisk pace. In one of the side streets a young woman overtook, and passed, them. Joseph Rank stopped in vexation. 'When I was younger', he exclaimed bitterly, 'I'd let nobody pass me! Now even women can pass me in the street. I must be getting old!' He was nearly eighty!

His passion for cricket remained. In August, no matter how much business might seem to require his presence in London, he would say: 'I'm going to Scarborough, whatever happens. I work hard all the year round, so I'm entitled to a little relaxation.' And off to Scarborough he would go. His cronies would be there, and there would be much banter and leg-pulling. Leyland, the Yorkshireman, was known as his 'pet'. When he arrived at the ground, and went to his seat in the enclosure, he would be greeted by:

'Your pet's doing well, Mr. Rank.' Or: 'Come on, Mr. Rank—your pet's out.'

Sometimes on a hot summer afternoon in London he would slip away to Lords, especially if Yorkshire was playing. He went to see Bradman bat in the last Test Match before the 1939 war. Soon after four o'clock, after sitting for some hours in the hot sun, he left to catch a train that would enable him to reach Hull about ten o'clock at night—and this when he was eighty-five years of age. The visits to Lords or the Oval were immensely enjoyed by him. During the interval he would go to the telephone, to ask if anything needing his attention had turned up at the office; then back to his place and enjoy sandwiches and 'ginger-pop'. On such occasions he was like a schoolboy. He would get wildly excited, and at times exasperated by what he regarded as somebody's 'lazy fielding'.

His love of animals was deep-rooted and sustained. A horse or a dog always attracted him, and he would stop in the street to admire a thoroughbred. If, on a visit to a mill, he could not be found when he was wanted on the telephone the staff knew he would probably be in the stables talking to the head horseman or discussing the points of a draught-horse as it was exercised before him in the mill yard. There was nothing he liked better than a bit of horse-dealing. He would be more pleased about making ten pounds out of the sale of a horse than over making thousands in a wheat transaction.

Once when the wheat market had turned round very unexpectedly one of the outside managers rang up and said he must speak urgently to 'the Governor' about the price of some wheat. The reply was: 'We've been trying to get him ourselves for half an hour, as we're anxious to have his decision about several cargoes; but, as far as we can make out, he has gone to Guildford to buy some pigs.'

It is not surprising that his family inherited this tendency; the sons' interest in the breeding and training of horses and dogs is undoubtedly traceable to their mother's upbringing as a farmer's daughter and their father's passion for animals. When his son James began to show an interest in the Turf, the old man was much perturbed, and would be very angry when journalists sometimes confused their names and printed paragraphs about 'the millionaire Methodist racehorse owner'. Nevertheless, when Joseph Rank visited James at Godstone or Rowland at Bognor he would spend

happy hours in the stables and the kennels, knowing the animals by their names, appraising their good points, and discussing their prospects.

The second Mrs. Rank—his first wife's sister, whom he married in 1918—liked to watch a good race, and would drive over to Epsom for the Derby, her husband usually waiting in the car—but as keen to know the result as anybody else. Often, in his last years, when his son's colours were up in a 'classic', he would ring up his office a few minutes after the race and ask, 'Anything fresh?' He would be told what had happened on the wheat markets, and there would be a pause.

'Anything else?'

'No—I don't think so, sir.'

A further pause, and then: 'Oh, by the way, my wife would like to know—how did James's horse do in the St. Leger?'

When in 1938 his son won that classic race with 'Scottish Union' the old man did not disguise his pleasure.

His apparent inconsiderateness when exercising autocratic control of his staff was balanced by almost excessive generosity if one of his men broke down under the admittedly severe strain. One example must serve for many. His personal secretary had a serious illness and was away for several weeks, and, becoming anxious, Joseph Rank sent one of his young men out to his home to find out just how he was getting on. Learning that the patient was much worse than had been realized, he left the house feeling that if something were not done quickly nothing would save him, and so he hurried to the nearest telephone kiosk and rang up S. B. Askew, Joseph Rank's son-in-law.

Within a few moments Askew was speaking to Joseph Rank. 'Is he an alarmist?' asked J. R., referring to the emissary. And being assured to the contrary, he said: 'Very well. Ring up my specialist at once, and ask him to go out to-night.'

The famous doctor, a royal physician, immediately responded to the call and within a short time an emergency operation was performed and the patient's life was saved. On such occasions Joseph Rank would act swiftly, regardless of expense.

Nor was his generosity confined to those who had served him well. The Rev. J. A. Broadbelt, who was for several years Superintendent of the Tooting Mission, has many stories of his treatment

of men who had fallen into disgrace and were faced with ruin. One concerns a certain man, a lifelong Methodist, who had given way to temptation and had been sent to prison for embezzlement. He wrote to the minister toward the end of his sentence and begged him to come and see him in prison. In the cell he poured out his remorse and then said: 'In a few weeks I shall come out. But what am I to do? I've got no job to go to. Surely there must be some way by which I can make good. You know Mr. Joseph Rank, sir; don't you think you could persuade him to do something for me?'

Feeling he must at least try, Broadbelt arranged an interview and told Joseph Rank the whole story. But no—'I'm sorry, Broadbelt, but I don't see what I can do. You see, I have to consider others now; they wouldn't like it.'

'Oh, but Mr. Rank, I'm sure they would agree if you told them you wanted it.'

'But I've seen so many of these men. He'll probably only go and do the same thing again.'

'I don't think he will, Mr. Rank. Anyway, why not give him another chance?'

'Well, I don't know; sometimes it's hopeless . . .'

The minister quietly interrupted: 'Mr. Rank—there's hope for every sinner this side of Hell. Isn't that our Gospel?'

Joseph Rank could not resist that appeal. The man got his second chance, as a traveller—and did well; so well, in fact, that not only did he win back his reputation and re-establish his home more prosperously than before, but a rival firm of millers enticed him away—to the indignation of Joseph Rank, who felt that loyalty ought to have made such a thing impossible.

Like other well-known men, he was constantly badgered by the inquisitive and the importunate, to say nothing of sharks and charlatans. Mentally unbalanced people wrote on various pretexts, religious or otherwise, including one who said that during the War of 1914-18 he had intended to shoot him. Beggars were as numerous as autumn leaves; especially when, as occasionally happened, the newspapers—always to his annoyance—referred to his liberality and described him as the richest man in England.

Well-meaning people, seeking to advance some cause in which they were interested, would even 'gate-crash' upon him at his

private house in the country; and sometimes profess astonishment that his reception of them was less than cordial.

One such unheralded visitor was a coloured minister with more zeal than discretion. He had a good cause to expound, but lacked the gift of brevity. Joseph Rank received him kindly enough, but the good fellow talked and talked and talked, and there seemed to be no way of stopping him. At last, in desperation, J. R. took up the man's hat, put it on his head, turned him right-about, and said: 'Now you really must go: I can't spare you another minute.'

If the public knew little of his generosity it was because he did his best to conceal it. A host of humble folk benefited in ways that were unknown even to members of his family; it was only after his death that some of them became known. An example is provided by a minister who, during a period of five years in Torquay, became friendly with the President of the local Jewish Synagogue. He says:

One morning, while having coffee with him and three other Jewish merchants from London, the name of Joseph Rank was mentioned. One of the group said that his neighbour, a London Jewish baker, told him he owed a big debt to the generosity of Mr. Rank. Some years before, owing to circumstances beyond his control, he suffered serious financial adversity, which brought him to the verge of bankruptcy. His biggest creditors were Joseph Rank Limited.

He was advised to see Mr. Rank personally. An appointment was made, and he told him about his circumstances. Joseph Rank asked him how much he owed the firm; it was nearly four hundred pounds. He gave him a cheque for this amount, and told him to bank it and pay his debt with his own cheque. He said: 'Don't tell anyone of what I have done. I shall not expect you to repay me, but I hope you will do as much business as you can with my firm in the future; but that is not a condition of my gift.' This generous assistance saved the baker from losing all he had. It was the turning point in his business life, and henceforth he prospered so much that he was able to do a big amount of trade with the firm. He said: 'I consider Mr. Joseph Rank to be the finest man I have ever met.' This tribute to him made a deep impression upon those who heard it. In these days, when there is so much prejudice against the Jews, it is good to hear such an expression of appreciation of kindness shown by a Gentile.

Once a miller who was in difficulties went to Joseph Rank and asked if, to save him, he would buy up his business. 'Yes,' he

said, 'I'll buy if you want me to. But don't act hastily. You're overwrought now. Don't let us do anything for the present. Go home and pray about it, and talk to your wife about it. Then, if you decide to go on I'll lend you the money to settle your debts. Or, on the other hand, if you decide you still want to sell—I'll buy.' The miller acted on that advice, and his debts were met by Joseph Rank, who bought the business many years later—and at a much higher figure.

Another miller in the West of England, a Methodist, got into difficulties, and one of the principals of the firm found he was not paying for his wheat. When this was brought to Joseph Rank's notice, he said: 'That's all right. I'm looking after that. If he can't pay, I'll settle for him. He'll come through presently.'

As for tales told about his treatment of millers whose business he either bought or in competition undersold, the fact is that whenever he bought he did so at a good price. If the miller would not sell, he acted as one brought up in the hard school of Victorian *laissez-faire* might be expected to act, and gave as little quarter as he would expect for himself if he were similarly placed. But usually the public benefited, and after the transaction it was sometimes obvious why the miller had had to sell out. More than one admitted: 'We spent our time hunting and fishing, and left the business to look after itself.' It did not surprise him that such diversion of interest should lead to bankruptcy.

He knew from his own experience that success is the reward of persistent industry. What to others might seem petty details, beneath their notice, were to him data upon which to build up a judgement affecting, and perhaps dictating, great decisions. Thus he always read *Milling* with the closest attention, and not least the small advertisements to see who were advertising for men; for out of such (to others) meagre information he could build up a far-reaching and penetrating opinion.

He was always ready to look at a new thing. Having listened attentively, with a power of concentration that for the time excluded everything else, he would end an interview by saying: 'Put it down on paper, and show what it will cost.' If he could be shown that it would pay, he would do it. That was always his attitude toward a new scheme, whether for a machine or a sports club or a mission hall.

Invariably he was open to the argument that a good cause could be well served by diverting to it the money spent on things not essential. An illustration of this is the impression made upon him late in his life by a speaker at a missionary conference who, by a clever use of statistics, maintained that if people would stop smoking and give the money to overseas missions a very large sum would become available and much more effective work be done. For the rest of his life, after hearing that, Joseph Rank did not smoke. He referred to this incident when he presided over the annual overseas missionary demonstration in the Royal Albert Hall, London.

In the last years of his life he became something of a legendary figure to the men in his mills and offices. Some of them had been with him for forty years and more; many were Methodists and had been members of his class meeting in Hull or London. His visits to the various mills were never feared by his employees, in spite of the fact that he could at times deal sternly with them. They knew that in a dispute he would always listen to what they had to say, and that he would treat them as men, not simply as 'hands'. If they had been long in his service he would ask for them, or recognize them, and talk freely of 'the old days'. He would want to know how they were getting on and what their children were doing. Such interest came naturally to him; it was never feigned. He did genuinely care. One of the mill managers summed up this trait in these words:

His visits to me, usually once a year, were occasions of untold helpfulness and encouragement; and there was one thing about these visits that struck me—that we would talk of business matters during the day, but once we left the office not one single word of business was mentioned. He would be, perhaps, taking the night train to London, and we would go down to the hotel for a meal and spend the waiting time in the lounge; but during that time no word of business was spoken. The conversation turned to former experiences, social and religious, when we all lived in Hull, and I experienced hours of real enjoyment, and certainly an hour of blessing, and I am sure he also thoroughly enjoyed the talk of old times. Sometimes it was difficult to realize that he was the employer and I the employee. What a life of simplicity and dislike of notoriety he lived—never pushing himself forward to gain public notice.

There were occasions when he had to spend a night in Edinburgh, and he stayed with me in my house. Never was there a visitor who gave

greater pleasure to me and my family than Mr. Rank. In those hours he never talked of business, but of social life and family matters, and he always took a great interest in the life of the children. I shall carry to the end of my life very blessed memories of my association with so distinguished a character as Mr. Rank. His loss to an old servant like myself is very real.

Others among those who served him have paid similar tribute. Their testimony may confidently be balanced against the criticisms of those who allowed their knowledge of other aspects of his character, or their envious prejudice, to colour judgement. He asked for no favours, and was content to be assessed by those who had been longest in his service.

Chapter Twenty-Two

'Give All You Can'

IT WOULD BE unfitting to approach the necessary task of recording Joseph Rank's philanthropic gifts in any other mood than one of diffidence. Anything that in the least suggested boastfulness would be anathema to him. During his life he took every possible means of hiding his light as a public benefactor under whatever bushel might be at hand, but if his career is to be properly understood there must be some account, however inadequate and incomplete, of his amazing generosity.

He gave away enormous sums of money. It may well be doubted if ever any man bestowed gifts as lavishly upon the Christian Church. What is even more remarkable, he did so with a personal scrutiny of detail unequalled in the history of philanthropy. That can be explained only by his deep concern that a trust which he was convinced had been reposed in him from above should be in every respect satisfactorily discharged. Not even Andrew Carnegie spent himself more unsparingly in giving. The autobiography of the great American-Scot was among the few books appreciated by Joseph Rank, who was much struck by Carnegie's statement that early in his career he made up his mind to go entirely contrary to the adage not to put all one's eggs in one basket: 'I determined that the proper policy was "to put all good eggs in one basket and then watch that basket".' The miller felt that his own experience bore out that decision.

As he approached his eighth decade, although still vigorous both in mind and body, he began to consider how best to systematize and perpetuate the benefactions that lay nearest to his heart. His first thought, as always, was for Hull. From the early days of his prosperity he contributed to many good causes in his native city, especially its hospitals and the relief of poverty; and now he determined to ensure that such support should go on after his death. For that purpose he set aside £300,000 and established the Joseph Rank Benevolent Fund. The Trust Deed defines its scope and

application: for 'poor persons of good character who from age, ill-health, accident, or infirmity, are wholly or in part unable to maintain themselves by their own exertions'. Only those who have lived for 'not less than ten years within the fifteen years next before the announcement of any payment' within Kingston-upon-Hull, or within two miles of its boundary, are eligible for benefit.

Since 1934 the Fund has lifted hundreds of people out of the Slough of Despond. At present over £250 is being paid out each week. The maximum weekly payment to a single person is fifteen shillings; for a married couple thirty shillings. Over 580 are now receiving allowances, including many aged spinsters left destitute after devoting their lives to the care of their parents. It is not surprising that when the benefaction became known the Hull City Council passed a special resolution recording Joseph Rank's 'splendid generosity in all matters for the public good . . . for many years' and expressing gratitude for 'the magnificent way in which he has now established his charitable trusts which will make his name remembered for many generations to follow'. At the meeting the Sheriff spoke also of the grant, made simultaneously with this gift, providing for an annual contribution of ten per cent. up to £7,000 of the public subscriptions to the Lord Mayor's Hospital Sunday Fund. Sir Alfred Gelder pointed to another characteristic feature of the scheme: its freedom from all political and sectarian bias. 'We have scarcely realized the significance of the gift', he said. 'It almost takes our breath away.'

It should be added that no employee of Ranks Limited is receiving payments from the Fund; the firm provides for its own pensioners.

Perhaps Arthur Mee's comment in *The Children's Newspaper* is the best that can be made: 'Here we have a good deed and a good man who, after eighty years of life in the world, is not weary of well-doing. He is known far and wide for the generosity of his charity, and we recall that once he offered us £50,000 for a crusade *if we could guarantee results.*'

By far the greater part of Joseph Rank's gifts, however, went to the Methodist Church. They varied widely in size and significance, ranging from small sums for the repair of some village chapel to incredible amounts for missionary work at home and abroad.

He gave proportionately the same care in deciding upon small donations as in bestowing fortunes, and for a while his conscientious determination to examine for himself every request threatened to engulf him in a sea of other people's troubles. He believed simply and sincerely that the money had been entrusted to him and that he would have to account for every penny of it, and his chief purpose in life was centred in its wise and well-planned distribution. Every appeal came to his desk. No secretary was empowered to deal even with the most trivial. As may be imagined, those who wrote to him painted their pictures in the darkest colours, and his daily post was a never-ebbing flood of tragedy and despair. He was now an old man, rich in experience, but not emotionally dried-up. Fearing the effect upon him, some members of his family attempted to persuade him to delegate some of the responsibility, but for a long time he would not hear of it; eventually, however, he saw the need for such a plan, and set up a Trust to administer his gifts to Methodism. Some years later certain of his charitable trusts were co-ordinated, with his son-in-law, the Rev. F. Bartlett Lang, as its Secretary.

He wrote or dictated innumerable letters during those years dealing with quite small sums, and sometimes explaining why he could give nothing at all. In one, to a correspondent who asked for help in providing a sports field for young people, he said he felt it was more necessary to provide places of worship in new areas. 'The young people ought to find their own recreation ground.' And he added an interesting autobiographical fragment:

I used to be very good at cricket; in fact, when I was a young man of twenty I used to walk about three miles each way to Aberdeen to play for one-and-a-half hours after having worked from six o'clock in the morning until six in the evening. I believe in recreation for young people, but I think they ought to pay for this themselves, which they could easily do if they were to give up some of the things that they would be better without.

Among his chief concerns in dispensing money was his anxiety to stimulate and not discourage local giving. He knew that a church, like any other organization, is valued in proportion to the sacrifice its members are willing to make for its upkeep. Hence whenever he responded to an invitation to support a building or extension scheme he would do so in the form of a challenge,

promising to provide a definite percentage of the sum raised by the people themselves. This was not always understood, and once it led to an amusing situation in which he turned the tables on a business friend. Hearing that Joseph Rank had agreed to double the collection at a certain mission anniversary, he thought he would make the miller pay more than he intended; so he persuaded several of his well-to-do business friends to go with him to the meeting and each put £50 into the collection; but to his surprise, Joseph Rank, instead of showing dismay, was delighted—had not his offer been intended to stimulate local effort?

Another story told about him in this connexion concerns a bazaar at a Methodist mission. At one of the stalls he inquired the price of a shawl. The stallholder, seeing a chance not to be missed, at once said: '£5 to you, Mr. Rank.' 'Oh,' he said, with a smile, 'but Mrs. Rank really has more shawls than she knows what to do with. I'll give you £2 for it.' For some time they haggled, and eventually he bought it for £3. The lady, herself no inexpert bargainer, may have thought him mean; if so, she was astonished when later it was announced that he had doubled the total proceeds.

It would be tedious to record a hundredth part even of his gifts of £1,000 and over to Methodist missions; almost every industrial town in Great Britain, from Glasgow to Devonport, Swansea to Hull, received such sums. But although the recital would be wearisome, every cheque meant to some harassed missionary the lifting of a load, sometimes an intolerable and crippling load.

Nor was the Methodist Church in Ireland overlooked. His business interests there, and his wish to provide warm and commodious mission halls likely to attract the workpeople, led him to contribute, over a long period, many thousands of pounds.

For many years he sent £10,000 a year for the evangelistic work of the Methodist missions in London, in addition to large sums for special needs; and his annual contribution to the Chapel Committee, which is responsible for the fabric of the churches of Methodism, often exceeded £25,000. In 1933 its Secretary, the late Rev. John Hornabrook, put on record some memories that illuminate Joseph Rank's generosity and character. After saying that from 1897 to 1921, although Joseph Rank had often come to the aid of the Department, he had himself seldom met him, he continues:

In the year 1921, however, I received a letter from him asking me to make an appointment to meet him in London. That day, as things turned out, was to me, in my official life, as 'the beginning of a day'. It is not too much to say that the result of that interview revolutionized, as far as finance is concerned, the procedure of the Chapel Committee. The generous and timely help of the munificent donor enabled me to initiate and carry out scores of important building and debt schemes which otherwise could not have been touched.

At the time of receiving the letter I knew nothing as to what was in his mind, but, needless to say, I gladly complied with his request. He met me at the Home Mission Office at Westminster. After the usual greetings, I said: 'Well, Mr. Rank, what is it you want to see me about?' He replied in that subdued tone which always characterized him when he was about to make a generous offer: 'I want to give you some of the Lord's money.' I said: 'That is good news, Mr. Rank. How much do you think of handing over to me?' He replied, in the same modest tone: 'Seventy thousand pounds.' I said: 'That's a large sum. I think the best way to deal with it would be to place it in the hands of the Board of Trustees for Chapel Purposes. You would then know that it was under Connexional supervision, and if anything happened to me no difficulty would arise.' To this he at once agreed.

I further undertook that no grant should be made from this particular Fund without consultation with him. The £70,000 was soon exhausted. Large sums were allocated toward several important schemes, but the fountain having once been opened the fertilizing streams continued to flow, and they have flowed ever since.

Five years ago Mr. Rank sent £50,000 to the Chapel Office as the nucleus of a Fund to be called 'The Special Extension Fund'. During the five years he has contributed over a quarter of a million to this Fund. I have before me a list of his gifts through the Chapel Office since 1921. They amount to £633,575. This sum includes £75,000 forwarded by him for the purchase of the ground rents at Westminster (the Methodist Headquarters) which yield an income of £3,000 a year—a permanent endowment of the Extension Fund. In addition to this large sum, at least £30,000 has been made in interest on various sums which were held for specific cases that had not yet matured. Mr. Rank, in founding the Special Extension Fund, made it a condition that in the disposal of grants his name should not transpire. Every grant is made from the Extension Fund.

The above by no means exhausts the munificent gifts toward chapel building which Mr. Rank has made. I know of very large sums which he has contributed to various schemes without passing the money through

the Chapel Committee, though in nearly all these cases the gift was made after consultation with us. Then his private gifts, made without reference to any departments, have been on a very large scale; and, last but not least, there is the help which he has rendered to the London Extension Fund.

After Mr. Hornabrook's retirement and death Joseph Rank continued his support, and the total amount of his gifts to this one department of the Church exceeded a million pounds.

As a further example of that painstaking attention to detail to which reference has been made, it may now be recorded that some years ago, by means of an ingenious plan worked out by himself, he benefited at one stroke both the Hull Cricket Club and the Hull Royal Infirmary. There came to see him in London a representative from the Cricket Club to enlist his aid in a crisis that had arisen. The cricket ground lies near the railway, and the railway company, wishing to extend their sidings, had made an offer for it. Would Joseph Rank, whose interest in the club was well known, save the situation by purchasing the ground? He said he would think it over, and in doing so he saw how he could at one stroke endow two institutions.

He bought the cricket ground, thus preserving it for local sport, and presented the deeds to the Royal Infirmary, stipulating, on the one hand, that the Governors should not sell the ground without the Club's consent, and, on the other, that the Club should pay rent to the Royal Infirmary equal to five per cent. interest on the capital sum.

Ever since the day when, as a young miller, he was comforted and enheartened by the simple message of a Methodist lay preacher in Hull, Joseph Rank had cherished a deep respect and admiration for local preachers. He would respond to any call likely to foster their welfare, especially if the aim was to help aged and infirm members of that warm-hearted brotherhood. In 1933, when an old friend of his was President of an association expressly designed to help such preachers who were in want at the end of their day, he sent for the General Secretary, W. E. Noddings, saying he wanted to make a donation to the funds.

When the Secretary reached the office in Leadenhall Street he was at first told that Joseph Rank could not receive him; would he

call some other time? But, no—he had an appointment, and would wait. Presently he was shown into another room, and there ‘the Governor’ came to him, saying frankly: ‘Sorry to have kept you: I’ve been having a nap.’

Obviously glad to see his visitor, he went on to speak glowingly of what the great army of volunteer preachers was doing for Methodism. Then he began to speak of what it was in his mind to do, but without mentioning any specific sum; indeed, it dawned upon the visitor that he was being invited to say how much money the Association could use. Naturally, he was on his guard. Perhaps, he thought, Joseph Rank was ready to give as much as a thousand pounds, and therefore it would be unwise to mention a smaller amount. His astonishment may be imagined when suddenly the miller said casually: ‘Well, now, Mr. Noddings, I thought of giving you £40,000.’

Maintaining such composure as he could summon, he tried adequately to express the thanks of the Association, and then asked how the giver would wish the money to be spent. There were no conditions. It would be paid into the general fund, to be used according to its rules at the discretion of the General Committee.

‘There is no need to say anything about it to anybody,’ said Joseph Rank. ‘I don’t want my name to appear in connexion with it. Simply regard it as a gift from an appreciative friend of local preachers.’

Four years later, early one Saturday morning, W. E. Noddings was at work in his Westminster office when there was a knock at the door and in walked Joseph Rank. For some time he paced agitatedly up and down, up and down, pouring out his concern at the condition of Methodism. He was in a mood to be critical of ministers. The future of the Church, he declared, rested mainly upon the laymen, and especially the lay preachers.

‘If Methodism is going to be saved,’ he said, ‘it will be by our local preachers. The Church can never repay what she owes to them.’ Then he quietly said he had decided to add to his previous gift a further £25,000.

Not only did he contribute thus generously towards the welfare of the old preachers; he gave much to the Connexional Committee responsible for the recruitment and training of laymen for the pulpit, and in 1940 the Treasurer, Mr. (now Sir) George Knight,

was able to announce that 'the Anonymous Donor' had contributed £20,000.

It was because of his belief in lay leadership that throughout his life he took a close and practical interest in Cliff College, which had evolved from the working men's school founded by his friend Thomas Champness. He was a member of its governing committee. The Principal, Samuel Chadwick, as he lay dying, expressed a wish to see him, and at much personal inconvenience Joseph Rank motored down to Derbyshire with the Rev. J. A. Broadbelt. They spent some time in Chadwick's bedroom and he spoke of many things concerning the future of the College, enlisting his friend's aid in the achievement of projects long pondered in his heart.

Many other causes profited by Joseph Rank's interest, including the National Children's Home and Orphanage, the Wesley Deaconess Order, and the Wesley Memorial Church at Epworth in Lincolnshire. He also gave £25,000 to the Commemoration Fund when the Methodist Churches united, £30,000 to the Methodist War Emergency Fund, repeated gifts of £1,000 to the National Temperance Hospital, over £60,000 to the Hull Royal Infirmary, and large sums to the Victoria Hospital for Sick Children at Hull.

Nor, in spite of his criticisms, did he forget the aged ministers of Methodism. Without warning one day he asked the Rev. Dr. Robert Bond for the balance sheet of the Fund, and finding, as he expected, that the need was great, he at once wrote a cheque for £100,000.

Immense as those gifts were, however, they were eclipsed by his generosity in supporting missionary work overseas. There is no doubt that in this he was greatly stimulated by the enthusiasm of his first wife.

It will be recalled that at one time he thought of becoming a missionary himself. That dream was denied him, and he sought compensation by providing the means for others to do the work. As his prosperity grew, he increased his contributions.

No more fitting memorial to Emily Rank could have been provided than the Karim Nagar Hospital in Hyderabad, India, which bears her name. It was built in 1920. A glimpse into his mind at that time is provided by one of the missionaries of the

hospital, Miss Alice Hawkins, who describes an interview she had with him when she came home on furlough in 1926. She had not revealed her intention to anyone at the Methodist Mission House, and as she went up in the lift she says she was very nervous. Moreover, when facing him at his desk she felt at first that she was not interesting him. He asked no questions, and scarcely spoke. She wondered what more she could tell him; and then happened to mention the caste work:

He looked up and said: 'Have you many caste people in your Hospital?' At once I felt I had captured his interest, and I lost my nervousness. I told him as briefly as I could of a rajah who had come from his palace some sixty miles away across the Godavery River to ask Dr. Joan Drake if she would go to the palace and remain with his wife for her first confinement. This was, indeed, a great honour. It was impossible for the doctor to leave the work at the Hospital for probably three or four weeks; so it was decided that I should go. It was monsoon weather; no motor could go, as the road was only a cart-track through jungle.

At this point Mr. Rank said: 'It was very unusual for you to be spared for so long. Couldn't she have been brought to the hospital?' I explained that we had no private wards—nothing suitable for a ranee, the wife of a high-caste Hindu. He asked: 'Would she have come in if you had been able to give her a high-caste ward?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I am quite sure she would; and other caste people have made inquiries about the possibility of caste quarters.' Then, almost without thinking, I said: 'Mr. Rank, will you help us again by giving a new block for what in England one would call paying patients?' Without hesitating, he said: 'Yes, I will. What would it cost?' I told him I did not know; estimates would have to be made, and the Building Committee consulted. Then he said: 'I am very interested in all you tell me; I'll give you £600.' I thanked him as heartily as I could. I had been in his office only about fifteen minutes.

On the following Wednesday she received a letter asking her to be at the office in Leadenhall Street the next day at two-thirty, and as she stepped out of the lift she saw one of the Missionary Secretaries, the Rev. W. J. Noble, who greeted her humorously with: 'What have you been doing?'

'I'm sure I don't know why I've been sent for', she said. His reply was: 'You wait and see.' She recalls:

At that moment he was asked to see Mr. Rank and I was left alone, but I felt quite happy about it all. In a minute or so, I was called in; not,

this time, into a private office, but into a large room with samples of grain or flour on the table. Mr. Rank and Mr. Noble stood at the far end. Mr. Rank shook my hand very heartily and said: 'Sit yonder, Miss Hawkins.' There was no business dignity; he was just himself, and I felt at home. 'Well,' he said, 'I've been making inquiries about the work at the Karim Nagar Hospital. I'm told you were very modest in your request for the additional wards. I've heard all about it, and I'm going to give you £1,000—not £600, as I said before. Mr. Noble will see it goes to your Chairman, the Rev. C. W. Posnett; I know him well. I'm delighted to see you to-day, and I pray that God will richly bless the hospital.'

For a moment I had nothing to say. £1,000—what a gift! Then he added: 'I like things to progress. . . .' He took me to the lift, and said: 'Good-bye; thank you for coming.' I shall never forget his kindness, his generosity, his humility, his graciousness—a great man, who has done great things, thanking *me* for responding to his call.

The Emily Rank Memorial Hospital, however, was but a tiny part of Joseph Rank's gifts to the Methodist Missionary Society. They began more than half a century ago, and were always made anonymously; few people outside the Mission House, and not all who worked within it, knew the identity of the giver. Until the death, in 1929, of the Treasurer, Williamson Lamplough, the cheques always went to him, with strict instructions from his old friend not to disclose their source. When Lamplough died, Joseph Rank expressed the wish that the Rev. Walter J. Noble, later the senior Secretary and President of the Methodist Conference, should act for the Society in conversations with him concerning his interest in the work and his gifts to it. Joseph Rank rarely went himself to the Mission House, which was then in Bishopsgate, not far from his London headquarters. He would ring up and ask W. J. Noble to come and see him for a talk about missionary affairs. 'The memory of some of those conversations is most vivid,' says Mr. Noble, 'and has always been very helpful to me.'

The list of his gifts since 1920, compiled after careful research, can only be described as amazing; yet it cannot be regarded as complete—it excludes large sums contributed before that date, and takes no account of any interest on funds invested or left on deposit. It is impossible adequately to convey either the true magnitude of such giving or the incalculable value of it in terms

of Christian witness and service—by evangelists, educationists, doctors, and nurses—in all parts of the world. 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel' was an injunction Joseph Rank could not himself obey; yet by his incredible generosity he was able, through the Missionary Society, to make the whole world his parish. It was to him, as well as to the missionaries whose work he financed, that children in China and India and Africa owed their lives when they were healed in mission hospitals, that women in jungle and backwoods owed enlightenment and liberation, that men in primitive tribes among outcast people owed release from the thralldom of pagan priest and devil-doctor, that multitudes of untutored and unprivileged people—yellow and black and brown—as well as chiefs and rajahs and high State officials owed their opportunity to hear the Word of God proclaimed to them by preacher and exhorter, and to read, or have read to them, the New Testament in their own tongue.

As in all his giving, but perhaps supremely in his missionary giving, Joseph Rank was interested himself, to a surprising degree, in the work toward which he contributed. For him the writing of a cheque was not a cold and formal act. He wanted to know how it was going to be spent. He wanted to share, in some measure, the burden of suffering it was intended to relieve. He wanted to be sure that it would, above all else, commend to others the Saviour who meant so much to him.

In 1920 he contributed to the Missionary Society's Special Fund, including the China Appeal, £100,000. In 1925 he gave £10,000 to the Emergency Fund and over £875,000 to the Centenary Fund for Property—used for the purchase of land and the erection of buildings in the Mission Field; for which he also sent £25,000 in 1928 and £50,000 in 1929. Additional to these and other gifts, he continued his normal annual contribution of £4,000.

Then in 1931 came the national crisis and slump, and the Missionary Society entered upon its most anxious period. Almost everywhere subscriptions dwindled. The officials and committee of the Society were faced with so serious a financial position that retrenchment became inevitable and it seemed as if the work would suffer irreparable curtailment.

Joseph Rank saw in that a golden opportunity. He asked W. J. Noble to come to his office, and made suggestions that greatly

enheartened the Secretary; but when he tried to put his appreciation into words, saying how good it was of Joseph Rank to act in this way at a time of national financial difficulty, the miller—perhaps remembering a phrase he used in his presidential address at a Convention nearly thirty years before—waved the protestations aside, saying: 'The slump doesn't affect me so much; come what may, the people must have bread.'

So substantially did he increase his gifts that the Missionary Society, although having to introduce many economies, was able to maintain its work without crippling retrenchment. His annual gifts during the next few years were: 1931, £63,700; 1932, £122,000; 1933, £74,176; 1934, £72,000; 1935, £55,000; 1936, £67,500; 1937, £67,178; 1938, £206,000 (including £150,000 for the Property Fund); and in 1939, £44,101. His total contributions to the funds between 1920 and 1939 amounted to the colossal sum of £1,135,687. It is right that such figures should be recorded, although he himself kept them secret.

On a day in 1939 he again sent for W. J. Noble and told him he had decided the time had come to make provision for the perpetuation of his gifts. He said that, although he felt well enough, he was getting on in years—he was actually eighty-four. Moreover, the world was in turmoil, and although, as in 1914, he was still an optimist and did not believe war to be inevitable, nevertheless nobody knew what might happen. Hence he made up his mind to make a final settlement. For some years he had contributed at least £50,000 a year, and he wanted that to go on after his death; so he had arranged to hand over to the Methodist Missionary Society a block of special shares in Ranks Limited, and certain gilt-edged securities; and from 1st July 1939 the dividends would be received direct by the Society. The total value of the shares thus handed over was £1,275,688.

Asked how he wished the money to be used, he said there were no conditions. The Society was to have absolute control over it, and use it as the Committee deemed wise. The Secretary left Mr. Rank's office that day with a light heart, in spite of the clouds of war he knew were fast spreading from the horizon. Never before had so vast a gift been made to any missionary society.

Since 1920 Joseph Rank's contributions had exceeded £2,411,376.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Freedom of Hull

A FINANCIAL sensation was the announcement in 1933 of the creation, on 17th November, of Ranks Limited. It was front-page news all over the world. The boy who had swept the floor of his father's mill at Hull was now the head of the largest firm of flour millers and grain importers in Great Britain, and his fame had spread over every continent.

The share capital of the business, which had taken over Joseph Rank Limited, totalled £7,295,600, and for the first time a substantial proportion was offered to the public—2,206,500 cumulative 'A' preference shares of £1 each at 26s. per share and 1,103,250 ordinary shares of 5s. each at 12s. 6d. per share. Characteristically, provision was made that in the allotment of shares preference should be given, as far as possible, to employees of the firm, who were asked to apply on a special pink form. Joseph Rank remained Chairman, the other directors being the Managing Directors of Joseph Rank Limited—his two sons, James Voase Rank and Joseph Arthur Rank, and his son-in-law, Sidney Bruce Askew. Two men who had been associated with him since Joseph Rank's first experiments in roller milling, W. H. Raylor and F. T. Green, were among the seven subscribers to the First Preference Shares who signed the Memorandum of Association.

Thus was the seal set upon the industrial career of a man who had started with few advantages and many disadvantages. The publicity inseparable from such a transaction was distasteful to him, but he could not avoid it. The 'mighty miller of Hull' had reached the peak of his phenomenal business career.

In the following year he reached his eightieth birthday, and the occasion was seized by many to express their recognition of his achievements. In the milling trade Press, in the religious Press, and elsewhere congratulations were showered upon him. He took it all in his stride, in no danger of being 'puffed up'. Except for

occasional attacks by his old enemy rheumatism, he remained extraordinarily well. To a specialist whom he called in for consultation when he felt he needed an overhaul, and who asked, 'Well, Mr. Rank, what do you think is the matter with you?' he replied, pointing to a chandelier over their heads, 'I used to be able to kick up to that chandelier—but I can't do it now!'—and at once disproved his words by kicking it.

On another occasion, when he was worried because, when lying on his back, he could no longer swing one leg quite so high as the other, the specialist was assuring him that he was extraordinarily fit when his own doctor, Lord Dawson of Penn, walked in, exclaiming: 'Rank is bothered because he can't any longer put both his big toes in his mouth!' Even in extreme old age he was exceedingly supple. He did his exercises every morning. It was never difficult for him to touch his toes, or the floor, without bending his knees. He would bend and lace up his boots vigorously without so much as one extra puff. Lithe and lean in figure, he seemed tireless both mentally and physically.

The decision to confer upon him the Freedom of Kingston-upon-Hull came to him as a crowning honour. It was the only public honour he ever accepted, and he, who could have been a peer, valued it above rubies. Since 1885 there had been twenty-one Honorary Freemen of his native city, including such distinguished men as the Marquis of Ripon, Viscount Long, Earl Haig, W. M. Hughes, Earl Beatty, and David Lloyd George. The ceremony took place in the Guildhall at Hull on 11th July 1935. It was a delight to him that his old friend, Sir Alfred Gelder, was among the leading citizens of Hull who were present to do him honour, but he missed that other close friend with whom he had been associated all down the years, T. R. Ferens, who had died in 1930.

It was a happy inspiration that prompted the Lord Mayor and the City Council to provide for the Freedom Scroll a silver casket wrought in the shape of a windmill. This beautiful model, bearing the Coat of Arms of the city, and greatly treasured by the new Freeman, was designed by a Hull craftsman, the chief millwright at Joseph Rank's own Clarence Mills. As for the ceremony, it was planned to suit his preference for simplicity—a gathering of friends, dignified, quiet, and sincere.

When he came to reply to the flattering things said about him

by the chief citizens of Hull, he said simply: 'I claim no credit for success in life. I have but used one gift of common sense, and I have always been supported by loyal and devoted fellow workers in my business'; and he quietly added: 'I have followed the rule of John Wesley—"Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can"; and I have found more joy in giving than in getting.'

Although he took a smaller part in the running of the business now, he still presided over the Board meetings, and retained a shrewd interest in the wheat market. Moreover, his love of a bargain was as keen as ever. Once, it is said, he told the Board he thought the price of wheat would go up, and they ought to buy. 'Oh, no, Father', said one of the sons. 'It will be stable for some time.'

He left it at that, but at the next meeting they said: 'You were quite right, sir. The price did go up. We ought to have bought.'

'I did buy', he replied, with a chuckle; 'and I'll sell to you—at the market price.' It was a profitable deal.

The incident may have recalled to his mind what he once said to the head of the wheat department at one of the mills. The man had jokingly remarked that the department, which was responsible for buying the grain, was 'the golden department of the industry'.

'It's nothing of the sort', he retorted. 'I could go on the market and in ten minutes buy enough wheat to supply the mills for six months. But it's no use buying the wheat unless the flour is sold.'

In his dealings with men, whether they were humble employees or eminent in the professions, he was always direct, saying out plainly whatever occurred to him. Innumerable examples could be quoted. At the funeral of an old friend, the Dead March from *Saul* was played. On the way out, Joseph Rank said to Lord Marshall: 'What do they want to play that solemn stuff for? I hope they won't do it when I'm gone. They should play "Pop goes the Weasel".'

Lord Marshall, who was deaf, exclaimed: 'Eh? What's that?'

Then in a loud voice, startling the departing congregation, he repeated: 'It ought to be "Pop goes the Weasel".' People stared, but he didn't mind.

At a business conference he would see to the root of a problem in a flash of insight. Often when the travellers had gathered to

discuss their difficulties, one and another would air their views, and introduce points for discussion. Joseph Rank would listen attentively for a while, and then, brushing aside all irrelevancies, would say: 'Now, gentlemen, let us come to the point. Our business is simply to sell flour.' He could always point the way to a simple and effective solution.

One day, when prices had gone up, John Kemp urged that they should sell. Joseph Rank was for holding on. 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may', quoted Kemp. The miller retorted: 'I'm discussing the wheat market, not gardening!' He would not budge—and, as usual, he was right.

He had a special liking for the butler at a house he frequently visited. One day he said to him: 'Thomas, I hear you've been betting. I shouldn't do that if I were you. Betting's no use unless you lay the odds yourself. The only way to make money at it is to be the bookmaker.'

'Thank you, sir', said Thomas. 'I believe you're right.'

A few days later he gave notice to leave, saying he had decided to take Mr. Rank's advice—and become a bookmaker. 'Here's a nice thing!' said his master to Joseph Rank. 'He has been with us for fifteen years—the best butler we've ever had; and you advise him to take up bookmaking.' The old man laughed, and said: 'It won't be long before he's back again'; and, sure enough, after a few weeks—back he came.

The last time Joseph Rank visited the house he said: 'Well, Thomas, I hope you're not backing my son's horses.'

'Oh, no, sir; I've given up betting.'

'That's right. You know, people who back horses are like lambs.'

'Indeed, sir? I'm afraid I don't understand. . . .'

'Well, they gambol and frolic, they get mixed up with blacklegs, and in the end they get fleeced.'

He continued his visits to Droitwich and other spas, seeking relief from rheumatism, and on one such visit an incident occurred that demonstrates both his forthright manner in controversy and his pride in milling. On arrival he was overhauled by a doctor, who asked him his age. When he learned that he was over eighty, he professed great surprise, and complimented him on his physique, saying it was that of a man twenty years younger. A few days later the same doctor gave a lecture on diet, and stressed the qualities of

brown bread, urging the company not to eat white bread and even going so far as to describe it as 'poison'. When he sat down, Joseph Rank got up. 'When I came into this establishment', he said, 'you told me I had a wonderful physique for a man of eighty. You gave me a clean bill of health and told me I ought to live many years yet. Now you tell us that white bread is bad for our health. But all through my life I've eaten white bread. On your showing, it doesn't seem to have done me any harm!'

With more leisure from the business, Joseph Rank began to indulge his lifelong interest in farming. At his home at Colley Corner, Surrey, he had nearly thirty acres of land, which he developed as a farm. It never lost money. He could not understand why farmers grumbled that they were unable to make their farms pay. He would buy cattle, fatten them up, and sell them a few months later. On Monday morning he was usually to be found at the Redhill Cattle Market, chatting to the farmers, poking the cows and appraising their qualities with an expert eye, and following with close interest the auction sale. His formula for profitable farming was simply: 'I always buy when prices are down, and sell when they go up.'

In the early nineteen-thirties he decided it would be a good thing to build a mill at Southampton. His co-directors did not think it necessary, so he said: 'Very well, I'll do it on my own.' Losing no time, he secured a site on the Southern Railway New Docks estate and built there the most modern flour mill in the country.

The old zest was still on fire within him and he spent much time superintending the work himself. He was never content to leave even the details of such a scheme to other people. Owing to the nature of the ground near the water, it was necessary first to sink piles, and he disagreed with the engineers concerning the depth they thought necessary; in his view sufficient strength would be given to the building if the piles went to a depth several feet less than they advised. No doubt the possibility of reducing expense was a powerful factor in his judgement, but there was more in it than that—what nowadays is called 'a hunch', that sixth sense that so often had enabled him to win advantage. He trusted his 'hunch', and insisted that his calculations should be adopted—and

experience confirmed his judgement. Later, his son Arthur asked him how he had arrived at his conclusion. His answer was: 'I went home and prayed about it.'

For a while this great enterprise absorbed almost all his attention. He saw to it that the best and most up-to-date machinery was installed, and took an immense pride in the mill; so that when it was grievously bombed early in the war his family, fearful of the effect upon him in old age, tried to keep from him the photographs of the damage. To their consternation, however, he announced his intention of going to see for himself what had happened; and, try as they would, they could not dissuade him.

But they need not have been fearful. He surveyed the ruined buildings, calmly discussed with his experts what should be done after the war to build even better mills, and went home. It was his way—to look, not back, but ahead. How many times in his long career did he say when something had gone wrong: 'We've been fools; but never mind—it's no good looking backward.'

Another example of his sustained activity during his eighth decade is provided by his daughter Hilda, who recalls attending with him the Methodist Conference at Newcastle in 1936.

I was really supposed to be looking after him. He rushed from a Board Meeting to catch the one-twenty train at King's Cross, and was busy with a huge bag of papers all the way there. He was very fit and well. He slept very well all night, in spite of roaring traffic, and trams running until late and beginning again at three o'clock in the morning—to say nothing of road repairs in progress. He seemed able to eat anything and everything at the hotel—no trouble with his digestion at eighty-two!

He had full days at Conference, with many people seeking and gaining interviews; and he also visited the office of Joseph Rank Limited at Newcastle. He told me that forty years ago he felt strongly tempted to give up business, when he had made enough money for his children, and become an evangelist. He only gave up the idea because he felt God had prospered him in business and he could best help the work of God in that way; but he now wondered if he had done the right thing; and also he said: 'I don't think I shall come to Conference again—at any rate, until I have given up business. When I have nothing else to do it will be nice to pass the time, but too much time is wasted there at present. . . .'

That was, however, a passing mood. When in 1938 the Conference met in Hull, Joseph Rank was present. He put up at the Royal

Station Hotel, and he entertained those who travelled with him by recalling scenes and adventures of his youth. Was he not returning to the scene of his former triumphs? 'He was very amusing when paying his bill,' his daughter recollects, 'as he felt they had overcharged him. He complained to the waiter several times about it! Eightpence for an apple, instead of sixpence! He said he usually gave the head waiter half a crown, and thought he must be a rich man!'

Although, in some ways, old-fashioned, he was as up-to-date in business as any man in the trade—which did not necessarily mean that he approved every new-fangled scheme; and although theologically his ideas were those of a previous generation he was modern in his outlook concerning some of the controversies within the Church. On the question of dancing, for instance. He had always liked dancing; and when his grandchildren wanted to learn he would say to their mothers: 'Why not? It's far better than stupid games like "Postman's Knock", with kissing behind the door. Let things be done openly. Dancing under proper conditions will do them good, not harm.' It was another manifestation of his Yorkshire bluntness; let things be done openly, not furtively—and let common sense have its way.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Closing Years

HAVING LONG since passed the Psalmist's three score years and ten, Joseph Rank in extreme old age suffered neither physical nor mental decline; apart from a little deafness and rheumatism, he had few disabilities. He maintained his interest in the problems of the grain trade and there was no abatement in his love for Methodism.

The time came when he could no longer undertake to go over so regularly from Colley Corner to the Tooting Mission, though he did not entirely sever his contact. Not far from his home was the Redhill Central Hall, and he attended its services, wet or fine, with a loyal regularity. He had given up his society class, and told the minister at Tooting that he would transfer his membership to the Redhill Mission.

'But what about the Sunday school?'

'Ah, yes, I was forgetting that. No, I can't give up the Sunday school. I'll keep on my membership.'

When, however, in 1939, Europe, for the second time in twenty-five years, burst into a flame of war, circumstances compelled a severance. He had no illusions about the menace to trade and civilization, but nothing could shake his quiet confidence that 'the old country' would win through.

In 1940 his second wife died suddenly of a stroke, as her sister had died. Again his faith enabled him to sustain the blow. He went on, lonelier now, but still upheld, as he often put it, by 'my never-failing Friend'. Religion did for him what wealth could never have done. It gave him serenity and peace; it saved him from disillusionment and cynicism. A well-known Methodist scholar and preacher who had no predilection in his favour—who, indeed, had been criticized by him and had in turn criticized his critic—described him as one of the few rich men likely to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Not that he was now a millionaire. He had already given away most of his money. The world was sur-

prised when, after his death, it became known that he had left 'only £70,000'. Comparison with other rich men would be revealing. Where others had been content to minister to their own pleasure, finding delight in the abundance of their riches, he—who doubtless liked money as much as they did—poured out his fortune for the use of the Church, saying he would be content to die 'a poor man'.

He began to feel that his house, Colley Corner, was too big for him. The time was approaching when the lease would have to be renewed if he was to stay on, and he thought it would be simpler for those who would have to wind up his estate if he moved into a smaller place. The family tried to dissuade him. 'You're a big man, father; you wouldn't be comfortable in a small house.' Oh, but yes he would! 'I was born in a cottage; why shouldn't I die in one?'

Hearing of what seemed to be a suitable house, he went to look at it; but when the moment for decision came his lifelong habit of caution prevailed and he told the agent he would think it over. When, next day, he decided to close with the offer he learned that the house had been sold to another client. He was much disturbed about that; for he felt he had been slow, and was 'losing grip'. Presently another house became available, and he was attracted by it, partly because its grounds adjoined those of his son Arthur at Reigate Heath; but again difficulties arose, and he could not acquire it. He read such signs to mean that Providence was satisfied that he should remain where he was until the end.

So life went on for him. All who met him in those days found a happy man. The Redhill minister, the Rev. Charles Hulbert, once asked him what it was that had given him most satisfaction in life. His money? No, not that. The great power he had wielded as the head of the biggest flour-milling business in the British Isles? No, not that. Then, what? 'Nothing gives me more consolation to-day than my work in the Sunday school.'

In the world of business he was respected as much for his character as for his shrewdness. When he walked on the Baltic Exchange for the last time men turned to look at his tall, commanding figure; for they sensed that this was an occasion, and that they were in the presence of a great personality.

Joseph Rank was a typical Victorian. He was reared in a hard school and he gave his own family the same lesson. When his children were growing up he sanctioned few indulgences. There was nothing unkind about that; it was for their ultimate good, as they have since realized and acknowledged. Mrs. Rank's gentle disposition served to soften any appearance of harshness on the father's part.

His object was to instil into his children a sense of thrift and duty. 'I think', he said, in a letter to one of his daughters, 'I owe some of my good health to-day to having no money for buses when I was young.' Again, he recalled that in the first year of his married life, 'we lived on less than a hundred pounds per annum. It took a little doing, but it was worth it, for it helped me to get a good start in life and was the foundation of a fortune.' When he became more prosperous, he reminded his daughter: 'my household expenses did not exceed five hundred pounds a year.'

Like many another Victorian father, he set his family a high example, and to the end of his life he would occasionally remind them of their duty.

One quotation from a letter to his daughter shows how he worked himself: 'Went to bed about eleven o'clock, got up next morning about four-thirty, and caught a train leaving Newcastle at five-seven.' He was just as thorough in recreation as in work. He told his grandson Paul that if he went in to bat first he should carry his bat through the innings and make a good score, a piece of advice he 'toned down' by remarking that 'a good bat may be out for a duck'. At work or at play he wished to be successful, and this was the lesson he tried to inculcate into his family.

He had twenty-five grandchildren and three great grandchildren, and he took a great interest in them all and was intensely proud of them. Of his eleven grandsons, seven were serving in His Majesty's Forces, and he followed their movements with keen interest, enjoying their visits to him when on leave. When one of them fell on the field of battle he felt the loss grievously. He was anxious also about another, who spent long, weary years in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. As for the three youngest grandsons, who were still at school, he delighted in their company, and never tired of offering advice and counsel, giving them many hints on choosing a career—and how to play his favourite game of cricket. He was

ever ready to chaff and tease his numerous granddaughters, who in their turn loved him and enjoyed being with him.

When he was at his windmill, when he was part-time occupier of West's mill at Hull, when he built the mill at Williamson Street in that city, did he ever foresee the time when he might become a multi-millionaire? There is no record of it, and there is every reason to doubt such an assumption. On the contrary, there were anxious times when he might have thought that adventure had carried him beyond the bounds of prudence. There came a moment, however, when he was able to view his prospects with satisfaction, and that was when he recorded in his personal diary that he was worth £350,000. He is reputed to have said that the first thousand was the hardest to make, and no doubt that was true.

The discipline Joseph Rank imposed upon himself throughout his life was in part responsible for his serenity during the enemy air raids of 1940-1: his Methodist faith supplied the rest. He was less concerned about the safety of his life than the destruction of the mills which were the monuments of his work.

Several references to the raids appeared in letters that he wrote to his daughter Hilda. On 29th July 1940 he told her that he was at Southampton during an 'alert'. 'The mill was stopped and the men went into shelters,' he said, 'but I kept going round the place and did not see or hear any planes about.'

On 20th August 1940 he reported that while in his garden 'we heard a tremendous explosion'. He was advised to lie flat on the grass. 'I did for a minute or two; then decided to rise and make for the house.' Later in the same month he wrote that 'the Germans are over here at the moment', and added: 'I think it is an advantage to be deaf, for I sleep through the raids.'

On 29th September 1940 he commented sorrowfully on the destruction a week earlier of the Premier Mills, Victoria Dock. 'It is very upsetting', he wrote in further reference to this disaster, 'to have parts of your life destroyed in a few minutes. . . . Anyway', he consoled himself, 'we are still living. That is something to be thankful for, and we must keep on counting our blessings.' Nevertheless, the matter weighed heavily on his mind, for on 14th October 1940 he lamented that 'what with our losses and the behaviour of the Government and the bombers, things are trying for an old man'.

His anxiety was increased by the bombing of the Southampton mill and by damage done to two of the Company's mills at Merseyside. 'If our Hull mill is hit', he wrote, 'it might be serious.' His mind had always turned to personal economies. 'I think', he said, 'we shall have to reduce our expenditure drastically. I can live on very little. I have done it before. Two pounds a week would do for me in case of need.'

The greatest blow, and the one he feared, came early in October 1941, when he informed his daughter that 'the Clarence Mills at Hull were set on fire and all the mills were burnt out and some of our warehouses and silos. 'This', he said, 'is a very serious matter for the Company. How we are going to supply our customers in the North of England is very difficult to say. We have got to be as cheerful as possible. Some of my life-work seems to be going fast away. If these demons go on knocking down the flour mills, what are we going to do for bread? At present, it is plentiful and cheap, and as long as we have this we shall not starve.'

Whatever qualms he experienced inwardly and expressed to members of his family, outwardly his behaviour was stoical. After the destruction of the Clarence Mills, for which he entertained a special affection, he went to Hull to cheer up the employees at the mill! He was genuinely concerned about the workpeople and warmly supported all the plans to place them in other employment. Further, he was evolving plans for reconstruction. He was still the leader of the organization he had developed from the small windmill in the Holderness Road, Hull.

The disasters were a woeful shock to him, but there was something that gave him immense satisfaction, though he showed it in his attitude rather than in words, and that was the courage and optimism of the men he had trained, including his sons. There was no fear in their vision of the future. They took it for granted that he would expect them to rebuild his life's work, and he was pleased and confident. He felt that he had had a good innings, and was satisfied that the direction of the business he had founded and built up would be in the best possible hands.

He went on calmly and in his usual health until within a fortnight of his death. Soon after attending his last Board Meeting, he was taken ill. Lord Dawson was called to his bedside and at first there seemed no reason to be alarmed, but he became rapidly

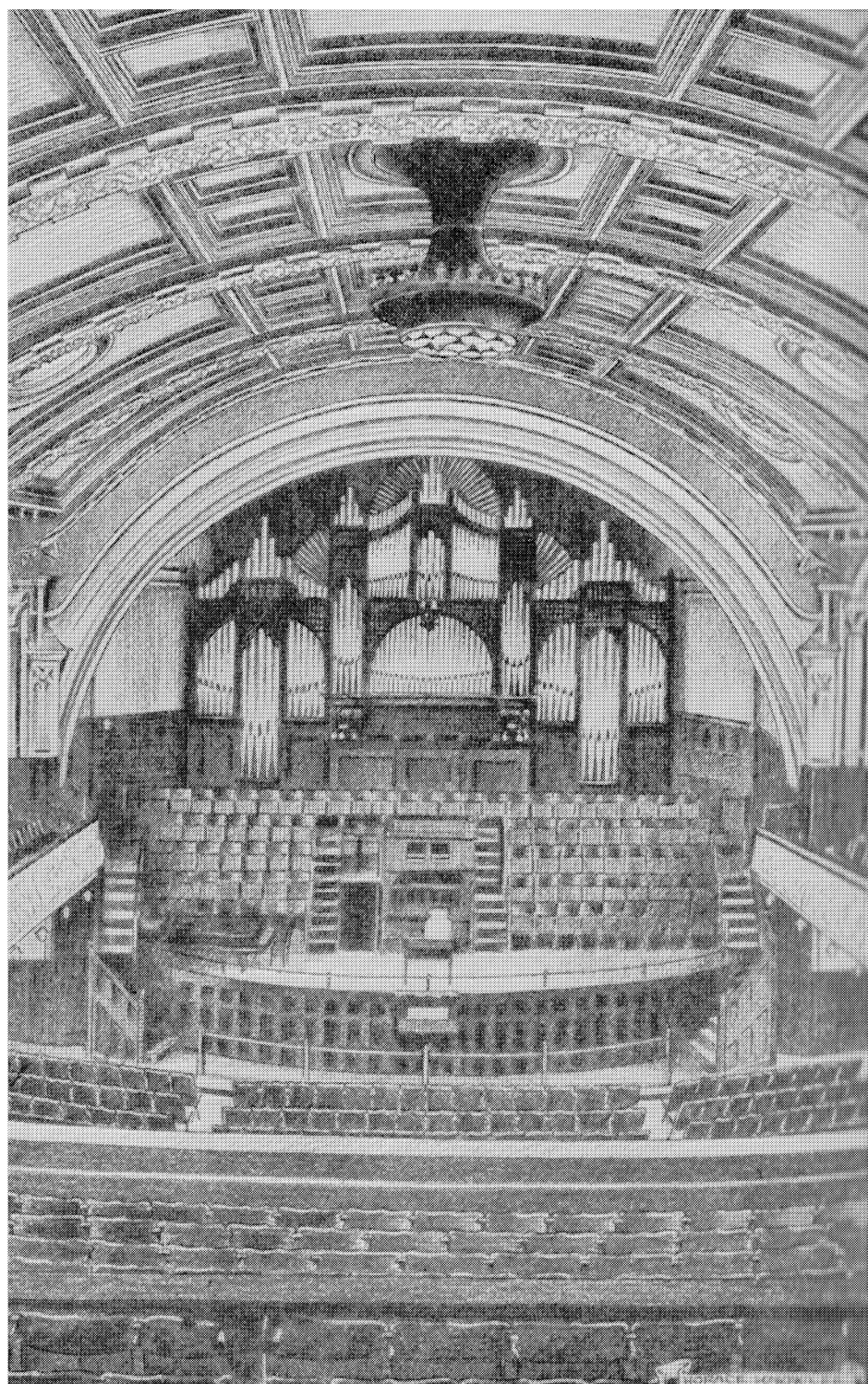
worse and on 13th. November 1943, after a period of semi-consciousness, he died.

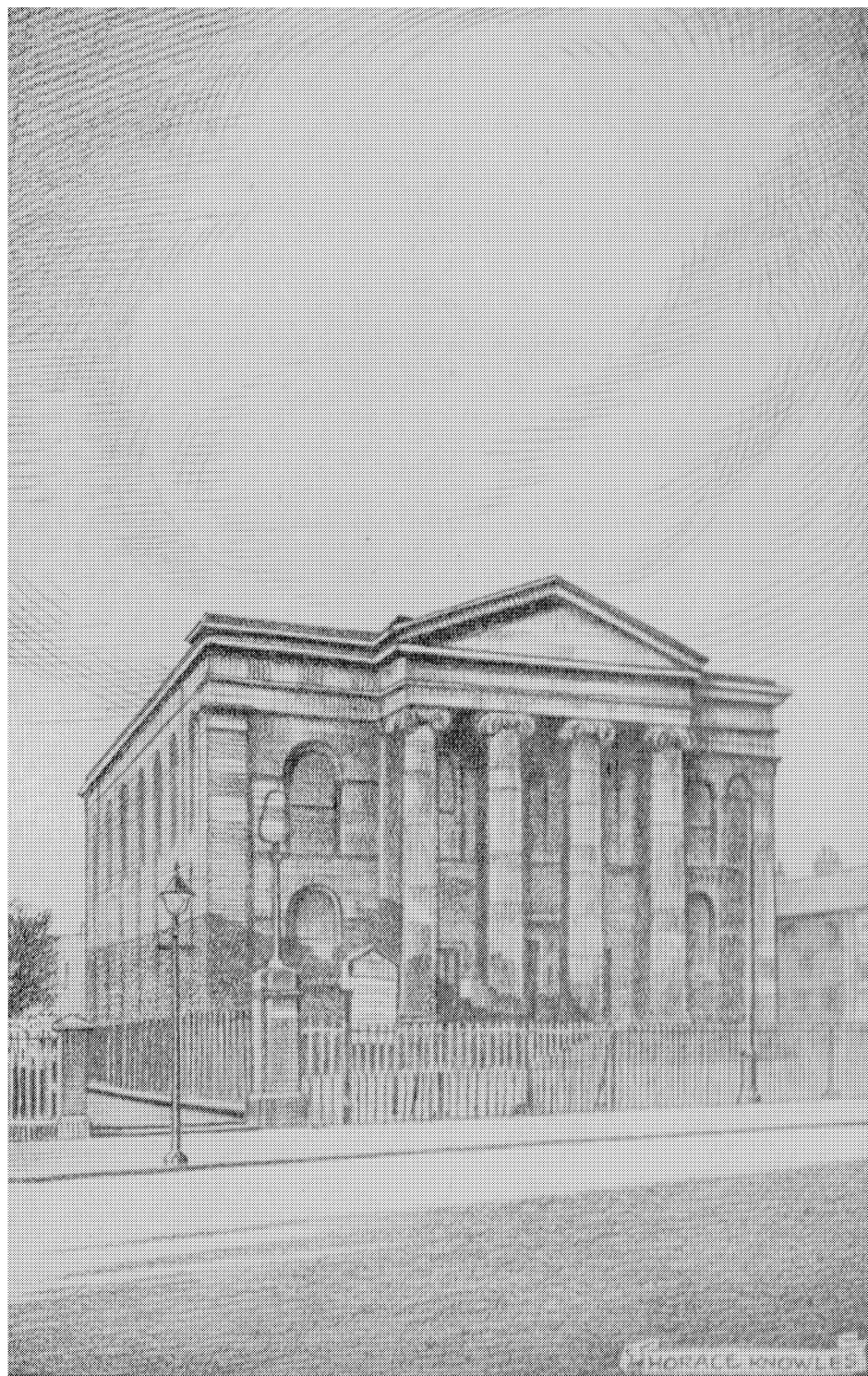
Tributes to his memory were paid throughout the Press of the free world, and the B.B.C. announcement was heard by one of his grandsons in a German prisoner-of-war camp. After a private service conducted by his son-in-law, his body was laid in the family grave at Sutton, Surrey. Representative crowds gathered for the memorial services held simultaneously at Wesley's Chapel, London, and in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Hull, and Liverpool, when hymns were sung that he himself had chosen.

Epilogue

SO WE COME to the end of the story of a man who was a giant among men. What was the secret of his extraordinary success? He began life with few endowments. He had neither riches nor influence. As a boy he was neglected. Of education he had little. Throughout life he had to rely upon his own initiative. In many respects, judged by modern standards both in business and religion, he was old-fashioned. Yet he built and maintained what was probably the most successful milling enterprise in the world, and was equally successful with children in the Sunday school. Why? Simply because both children and men knew they could trust him. His life can be summed up in a few words—thrift, hard work, humility, honesty, fidelity, and a deep religious faith. They are of the sovereign good of human nature, and outweigh all the less admirable characteristics. Like a good commander, he knew how to train, and trust, his subordinates; their loyalty through all the years of his active life is his best memorial.

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