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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Century-Old Paper Reported Cure-Alls

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I'M QUOTING today from a newspaper that is 100 years old to the day. It's the same one I quoted several weeks ago when I told the story of the first meeting of the Fathers of Confederation, the centennial of which we celebrated here on Tuesday.

The old newspaper - it was called the Protestant and Evangelical Witness - was loaned to me by Glen MacLaren, New Perth, and it was his brother, Bruce MacLaren, Charlottetown, who suggested several other items that might be interesting. So I've kept them until this week, which seems timely for reproduction.

Readers must agree with me that the constant drumming of insupportable claims for patent medicines over radio and TV sometimes gets monotonous, and at times utterly ridiculous. But the claims of today have nothing on those made 100 years ago.

Dr. Hoofland's German Bitters, for example, could cure just about everything and provides a tonic for those who had been affected.

Let me illustrate:

"IT WILL effectively cure liver complaint, dyspepsia and jaundice. Will cure every case of chronic or nervous disability, disease of the kidneys and diseases arising from a disordered stomach. These diseases included "constipation, inward piles, fulness or blood to the head, acidity of the stomach, nausea, heartburn, disgust for food, fulness or weight to the stomach, sour eructations, sinking or fluttering at the pit of the stomach, swimming of the head, hurried and difficult breathing, fluttering at the heart."

It would also cure "choking or suffocating sensations when in lying posture, dimness of vision, dots or webs before the sight, fever and dull pain in the head, deficiency of perspiration, yellowness of the skin and eyes, pain in the side, back, chest or limbs, sudden flushes of heat, burning in the flesh and even constant imaginings of evil and great depression of spirits."

I should explain that while the advertisement did not actually say the bitters would cure all of these ills directly, it did emphasize that all of these ills were caused by disorders of the digestive organs, and the German Bitters would cure those disorders.

Bitters Cured Almost Everything

BUT THAT is not all. The bitters really were wonderful cure-alls. "They will give you a good appetite, strong, healthy, steady nerves; brisk, energetic and healthy feelings; a good strong healthy and a sound constitution."

The same bitters "will make the weak strong, the delicate will be made hearty, the thin will be made stout, the depressed will be made lively, the shallow complexion will

be cleared, and the dull eye will become clear and bright” if the people so affected will take German Bitters.

For those suffering debility from fevers of any kind the bitters will dispel the fever. “One bottle will have surprising effect on delicate children.”

There is more, but it is of the same type of claims. And the large advertisement concluded by quoting a clergyman who attested to the wonderful healing and restorative powers of the bitters.

There were very few doctors in those days, apparently. And it’s just as well, perhaps, for what would be the purpose of calling a trained medical practitioner if people believed even one-half of the claims for the bitters?

Respiration Method Is Still Good

SO MUCH for the extravagant claims for the patent medicine. An even more interesting part of the old paper is the lengthy description of the Sylvester method of artificial respiration. And the same Bruce MacLaren tells me that the method is almost the same as they are using for artificial respiration today for those who have apparently drowned.

One difference is that people were placed on the floor or ground with their face downward in the Sylvester method, whereas the Holgar-Neilson method now in use places the patient flat on his back, with the head tilted far back to ensure a clear air passage.

But the Sylvester method seems to be making a comeback, I am told. “It actually has some advantages over the Holgar-Neilson method”. I’m not going to expand on that - I’m no first aid expert - but I thought those two notes from 100 years ago today would be interesting to readers of this column.

One more note from the century old paper says that “Holloway’s Pills are effective for all disorders affecting the liver, stomach and bowels”, and that covers a wide range of ailments.

And the claim for the Holloway’s Pills included a flat statement that they were the “best remedy known in the world” for more than 30 ailments that ranged all the way from Ague and Asthma to tumors, ulcers and for Scrofula or Kings Evil, whatever that may have been.

Harbor Activity Is Interesting

STILL ON the 100-year-ago theme, our family have had a splendid view of the activity in the Charlottetown harbor that has been commemorating this week the Confederation ceremonies of 1864.

Spending last week’s vacation in one of our shore-front summer cottages, imagine the thrill to arise one morning and see four Canadian warships anchored in full view of our front door. The view was even more interesting on Tuesday morning - the actual 100th anniversary of the original Confederation conference - when the sleek warships were shrouded in mists which added greatly to the interest of the overall picture.

LATER THAT afternoon the Matheson family - the Jim Campbells from Park Corner were with us - stood on the same spot and we had a splendid view of the 'SS Victoria' entering the harbor with the actors who were representing Sir John A. MacDonald, George Cartier and the rest of the men who came here 100 years ago from what is now Ontario and Quebec to sell their idea of a Canadian Union to the people of the Maritime Provinces.

The previous night, with dozens of friends, we had occupied the same spot for a grand view of the fireworks which were being set off across the harbor in Victoria Park.

The sight of the four warships brilliantly outlined in lights, was one of the most interesting sights we have seen in this harbor for many years.

House Won't Move - Devil Leaves

I'VE BEEN asked not to reveal the location of this old yarn, but a travelling pack pedlar was reported to have been murdered in a house by the owner many years ago. In the intervening years anyone who stayed in the house could hear the sound of someone continually washing his hands. I believe the idea was that the guilty person was trying to wash the blood from his hands.

After the owner died, the house changed hands and the new owners were pestered by the same ghostly noises. Finally they decided they would have to get out of the house, or find some way of stopping the noise which they could no longer tolerate.

A wise old neighbour who had come from the Old Country, suggested they move the house onto a new location. "Very often the curse that has been placed on a home, is on the location or the cellar, not on the house itself", the advisor suggested.

A PROFESSIONAL house mover was hired to move the building. He spent one day getting the house raised from its foundation, and putting long skids under it, so it could be hauled to the chosen location, not far away. Greased planks were provided for skids, so the moving job would be easy, and the time finally came about 10 o'clock next forenoon to hitch the horse into the old stumping machine and move the house off its location.

There was no earthly reason why the building would not move easily, for there was nothing human or physically visible to hold it. But all that the man did was break equipment. A hame strap would break, a trace, or some other part of the equipment. One thing after another broke and was repaired, until well on in the middle of the afternoon another break occurred, and the man threw his cap on the ground in anger and shouted "I can't move this house, neither can anyone else UNTIL THE DEVIL LEAVES IT" as he raised his voice in frustrated anger.

Immediately following that outburst, a big, black dog jumped out of the cellar and loped down a sloping field to a river which ran below. The dog plunged into the water, never more to reappear.

After that I was told, "the house moved easily, and there were no further interruptions."