

THE GUARDIAN

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Ashes For Rats

Whatever animal may be the farmer's best friend there is no question about the identity of his worst enemy. It is the common rat. Not content with feasting on the well-earned rations of cattle, pigs, and hens, the rascal proceeds to gnaw into one bag after another, just for deviltry. The resultant loss in feed stolen and in wanton destruction is very considerable; on the national scale it runs into many hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

To make matters worse, the rat is a cunning as well as a brazen thief. Despite all the retaliative measures which have been devised by chemists, trap-makers, and the farmers themselves, he continues to flourish and to carry on his nefarious work as if he did not have a worry in the world. A fortune many times over awaits the man who can find a way to rid the world of this marauding and destructive scoundrel. Perhaps when the scientists have thought up a bomb for every letter of the alphabet they will have time on their hands to deal with the problem in earnest.

An old magazine of 1847 gives what purports to be a "sure cure": common wood ashes. The farmer who wrote to the periodical about it said he just threw the ashes from the kitchen stove around the holes in the barn and rubbed some of the boards with it. That night he heard a terrific squealing which he presumed was from "the caustic nature of the ashes that got among their hair and on their bare feet." This went on for several nights; finally they worked themselves into such a bad nervous condition that they lost all appetite for food and, consequently, all died from malnutrition. Without wishing for one moment to doubt the veracity of that particular farmer, who is not around now to defend himself, we suspect that succeeding generations of rats have built up enough immunity to the nerve-fraying qualities of ashes to guarantee that their evil race will not die out. Just the same it might be worth a try. If successful, we shall want full credit for it; otherwise we shall be glad to hear nothing more about it.

Life Insurance

Two facts stand out in the report of the Life Insurance Association on the business done in 1953. New life insurance totalling \$2,500,000,000 was taken out. The total insurance now in force is \$20,500,000,000 or \$1,370 for every man, woman and child in the country. This is indeed a proud record of saving and thrift.

The second fact, notes an exchange, is even more arresting. When the life insurance business was first begun in this country by a group of business men at Hamilton, Ontario, the purpose was to insure against death: to enable a man to provide for his wife and family. Gradually, however, the emphasis on life insurance has shifted from this original purpose. Today life insurance is more concerned with life than with death. Total payments made by life insurance companies in 1953 were \$265 millions which is \$10 millions in excess of 1952, and a new record.

But the important feature here is that more than half of these payments were made to living policy holders on matured endowments, annuity payments, dividends and the like. The detailed figure for the nine months ended September 30, 1953, are \$77 millions paid on death claims and \$119 millions to living policy holders.

Cattle Markets

Anyone who entertains concern about future markets for animal products, writes Grant MacEwen in the Winnipeg Free Press, would do well to examine the long-time trend in livestock numbers as it is related to human population.

Canada and the United States, considered jointly, had 41 per cent more cattle in 1953 than they had at the beginning of the present century but, only 66 per cent as many cattle for every thousand of human population. At 1900 the two countries had 900 cattle per thousand human population and in 1953, with a total of 103,696,000 cattle, there were only 600 head per thousand people.

The situation is not materially different when sheep and pigs are considered. Reducing all cattle, sheep and pigs to cattle units, (it being assumed that three pigs or

five sheep would be roughly equal to one average cattle beast in point of productivity) the livestock population figures for both countries show 1,278 cattle units per thousand of human population at the turn of the century and 743 cattle units per thousand humans in 1953.

It means that although cattle numbers appear high in these two countries, there is actually only 58 per cent as much potential for meat and milk production in relation to the people to be fed, as there was 53 years ago.

Considering the Canadian nation by itself, the figures tell roughly the same story. While the total cattle units per thousand of human population at the beginning of the century were the same as in the United States, namely 1,278, the number in 1953 was down to 61 per cent or 784 cattle units.

The U. S. expects to have 200 millions of people to feed by 1975. At the current rate of population increase in the two countries, the observer must wonder how long it will be before present food standards will have to be reduced or meat foods imported.

Canadian figures of per capita consumption of meats in 1953 will almost certainly show a substantial increase over any other recent year. Appetites for meats and other foods of animal origin were never better.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Birthday of Prime Minister Louis S. St. Laurent.

The Boy Scout financial campaign commences today with Dr. George Fisher as Provincial chairman. Be prepared.

A report from New Brunswick indicates that that Province's biggest mining year in history closed with a titanium find, several new base metal strikes and drilling operations in a potential uranium deposit.

As was done in Canada last year the Queen's birthday and Victoria Day will be celebrated together. As the 24th of May falls on a Monday it illustrates the point of having the date fixed by statute as "the Monday preceding the 25th of May."

Research on forest biology for the four Atlantic Provinces will be carried on at the Federal Department of Agriculture laboratory at U. N. B. The information so obtained may well contribute heavily to the future wealth of the other three Provinces and be of some, although lesser, value to Prince Edward Island.

The Parliament House at Quebec burned a hundred years ago today, with destruction of the library and philosophical apparatus. It is interesting to note that women could sit and vote in the first Parliament which met there in 1792, a privilege which then went into abeyance for almost a hundred years.

Many writers of science fiction have had their imaginative speculations made a reality by scientific developments in recent years. The latest case of fiction becoming fact is that of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". The Vienna Psychiatric Clinic now has a drug which induces split personality. It is stated that an injection can temporarily release a second personality. The grape has been doing the same thing throughout history.

The recent development of Canadian natural resources, points out the president of the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, was caused by growth of world demands to the point where our resources could be economically exploited. "These forces of demand are certain to grow in the next 25 years." In other words, although there may be ups and downs, the general trend of the Canadian economy will inevitably be upward.

"Twentieth Century civilization appeared to have reached a peak of some sort the other day with the announcement that science has produced a television set that receives and exhibits two different programs at the same time," says the Victoria Times. "This enables the owner to superimpose, for instance, a ten-year-old cowboy movie with a present-day plot, on a present-day comedian with ten-year-old jokes. The result is disorienting with polaroid lenses similar to 3D spectacles and is guaranteed to please at least two members of every TV family. Only one frail defence stands between us and this latest inhuman invasion. The price of the new double-dealing set is \$2,000. But science is working on this problem, too, and threatens to lower the cost to \$600. Then will man's downfall be complete—until someone invents a three-way program set—and in living-rooms all over the land two horrors will bloom where there was but one before."

Lighting The Pathway To Health



The Poet's Corner

FROM IN MEMORIAM

Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be. They are but broken lights of thee, And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know. For knowledge is of things we see: And yet we trust it comes from thee. A beam in darkness; let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more. But more of reverence in us dwell: That mind and soul, according well, May make one music; as before.

But vaster. We are fools and slight: We mock thee when we do not fear: But help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

—Lord Tennyson

Increasing Our Knowledge

(International Union for the Protection of Nature)

Rabbits, myxomatosis, and Nature's equilibrium. — If there be one aspect of Nature Protection more than another, calculated to strike the imagination and make the public aware of the importance of a reasonable and well thought out application of Nature conservation, it is that of the consequences of a rupture of natural equilibrium, brought about by the deliberate or unconscious intervention of Man. The I.U.P.N. is constantly preoccupied by the necessity of calling attention to the most striking examples of such ruptures. The case of rabbits and myxomatosis illustrates, unfortunately; only too perfectly, the doctrine we have been at pains to inculcate. Everyone knows the history of the introduction of the European rabbit to Australia in 1859 and their rapid expansion during the succeeding years despoiling the continent of its native vegetation, destroying the birds of prey, snakes, poison, bull dozers, etc. According to recent statistics, these rabbits ate up as much grass as would have fed forty million sheep.

As a last resort, a virus, Myxomatosis, which spreads through insects (mosquitoes) and birds was employed. It causes tumours, purulent conjunctivitis, severe oedema and is finally fatal to wild as well as domesticated European rabbits. In a few months satisfactory results were obtained, and many hundreds of millions of these rodents were destroyed. However, the Parisian Review "La Nature", already last March, called attention to the fact that one of the animals that preyed on the rabbits, the dingo, or wild dog, is now troubling the sheep farmers, chiefly in Queensland. They are invading the country in quest of new preys, to replace the exterminated rabbits, which used to provide their customary food. To get rid of them, the employment of poisoned baited food is suggested. But will the chain of destruction end there?

The ravages in France from the clandestine introduction of the same virus by a Doctor A. Delille, are well known. Not unlike the wizard's apprentice, and wishing to get rid of the rabbits on his property, he inoculated two of these animals in June, 1952. At the present moment half the departments of France are infected; in certain districts nine tenths of the wild rabbits have been killed. Domestic rabbits are also hit in their turn. The disease did not stop at the French frontier; Belgium, Holland, the Rhineland, and quite recently England, where Dr. Delille's experiment seems to have been repeated, are also contaminated.

In September 1953, the German Hunters Club, becoming alarmed, thought it expedient to publish a special notice about the invasion of myxomatosis, which appeared first in the Mannheim district and has since continued

With Mud And Earth

(National Geographic Society)

Today's world still makes wide-spread use of a down-to-earth building material—earth itself.

Along the Nile, mud bricks that won't wash away in the rain promise to solve a 6,000-year-old housing problem of the Egyptian villager, the fellah.

Modern motels and museums going up in Arizona and New Mexico are made of mud and straw. In Israel, Rhodesia and Australia ordinary dirt is pounded into walls of new houses.

All across the earth's drier regions, the National Geographic Society says, men build with earth in three chief ways: simple mud blocks, adobe, and pisé de terre or rammed earth.

How long ago prehistoric man first shaped mud squares and set them out to dry in the sun is unknown. For at least 6,000 years such bricks have sheltered Egyptian scribes in their living from the Nile Valley, Mesopotamian and early Greek civilizations were founded on humble mud blocks.

In Egypt the making of sun-dried mud brick has not changed one jot since before the Pharaohs. Dark gray Nile silt, mixed with sand or barley straw, is shaped in the same wooden mold and left to dry in the same ancient manner.

When infrequent but torrential rains fall, a fellah's house often just melts away. Recently, however, a Point Four technical team attacked the problem, developing a water-resistant mud brick with materials available to the villagers. Mixed with emulsified asphalt, plus other methods of coating mud brick walls with rain-proofing materials, already has re-

sulted in an alarming manner. It feared that the same bred domestic rabbit may be infected with even greater virulence and rapidly than the others. The Association recommends the employment of a vaccine to render these animals immune, such as has been already employed in France, but it action is only partial and not totally effective. The disease seems now to have reached the country north of Cologne. In France representations multiply and the most violent controversy is following. Sportmen deprived of their game are naturally furious, but some foresters, on the other hand, congratulate themselves on the extinction of rabbits, and have visions of the revival of many nursery plantations, especially of young birch trees, up to the present often destroyed by these rodents. The henhouses are meantime decimated by foxes, who used to like rabbits, but now attack poultry, and also pheasants and partridges, much to the disgust of sportsmen.

Then the hare, a species untriedly to the rabbit and their racial enemy, have taken a new lease of life and begin to increase — but latest accounts seem to report that hares may not be immune from the possibility of myxomatosis — and thus an oscillating modification of animal equilibrium is going on in France today, and will, without doubt, occur in Europe tomorrow. There is another grave consequence, the epizootic disease seems to induce maladies among game keepers and consumers of these dead rabbits, such as a febrile state, conjunctivitis and inflammation of the mucous membranes of the mouth. An inquiry is said to be opened for unintentional injury. Furriers, of course, have to export their rabbit skins from abroad.

Better still, an interprofessional association, grouping gunsmiths, fur merchants and sportsmen, has been formed to defend their interests against the consequences of myxomatosis. And, though this report is not yet confirmed, an echo reaches us that attempts have been made to introduce the American rabbit (Sylvilagus) into France, with the object of repopulating certain shooting grounds. If this rumour is exact, further disasters will lie ahead, because the species of rabbit in question has no edible value, its hide is worth nothing and its adaptive qualities to the most various habitats exceptional. How far will this disturbance caused by the contamination of just two rabbits go? A disturbance which reminds one exactly of how a slight flick of the fingers makes a whole house of cards collapse?

Old Charlottetown

(And P. E. I.)

CALEDONIAN GATHERING

"The first annual gathering of the Caledonian Club took place on Government House grounds on Wednesday last, and was in all respects a most creditable affair. The managing committee spared neither pains nor expense in making their arrangements. The space allotted for the competitors, judges, and members of the Club was neatly enclosed. In addition to temporary benches inside the enclosure, a large unvalued shed, with raised seats, was erected at one side of it for the accommodation of the fair sex. In the centre of the shed were cushioned chairs for Mrs. Dundas, His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, and his suite.

"At ten o'clock the members of the Club, together with the officers of the Benevolent Irish Society, formed a procession at Masonic Hall, and with banners flying, marched to the grounds to the wild thrilling strains of the bagpipes. The number of spectators was between three and four thousand. From an early hour in the morning they were pouring into the City from all the adjacent districts. King's and Prince Counties contributed their quotas. Nova Scotia, too, sent her representatives. Indeed, the gathering was one of which Scotchmen might well be proud. The best of order and harmony prevailed during the day. We did not see a drunken man in the whole assemblage. The games, etc., commenced about 11 o'clock, and were kept up with great spirit and animation till 6 p. m. This was the first attempt of anything of this kind in Prince Edward Island."

—The Islander, Aug. 19, 1904

The Age Old Story

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Notes By The Way

An ability to laugh at the ridiculous is regarded as a great character asset—except for a golf caddy.—Hamilton Spectator.

High school girls are bigger than their mothers were at the same age. We wonder whether they will maintain this advantage through middle age... a weighty problem.—Sault Ste. Marie Star.

The editor of the Mesford Express has a reader who has been driving since 1921 without an accident. One of the reasons advanced for his good record is that he has a horn that is "guaranteed just as good as new" and averages 500 miles to every "blow".—Sudbury Star.

Loss of life in traffic accidents must be reduced, for it is a national disgrace. It is the war that never ends. The Korean war lasted thirty-seven months; American casualties were 142,000; of these about 25,000 were fatalities. Yet in the same time there were 4,200,000 automobile casualties in the United States and of those about 115,000 were fatalities—almost five times as many as caused by war!—Mount Vernon, N.Y., Argus.

Unfortunately many hotel owners view the beverage room as their "pot of gold". Many, in fact, enter the hotel business solely for the purpose of making money from beer rooms. In fact many wouldn't be hotelmen but for that quest for liquor gold. On the other hand Owen Sound offers very definite evidence that there is good money in the hotel business aside entirely from the liquor revenues. This city's two main hotels rank high with any to be found in other centres of similar size.—Owen Sound Sun-Times.

In this area, with its moderate winter climate, there are few who travel by snowshoes. But in some parts of Canada it isn't a lost art. More than 3,000 men and women are attending the Annual International Snowshoers convention at St. Johns, Quebec. Two walked up from the New England states on snowshoes, one 285 miles and the other 319. Snowshoes made a most valuable contribution to the early exploration and development of Canada. The voyageurs used their canoes and bateaux during summer. In winter they mushed on snowshoes behind their dog-teams or, indeed, often ahead of break trail. In the Northland, they still are a boon to trappers and others who travel over the tundra.—Windsor Daily Star.

The magazine Korean Survey has printed samples of folk lore from that sore-ried country. One of the favorite tales often heard is of Paksuni, a Korean Rip Van Winkle, who went to sleep on a mountainside while watching two old men play chess. When he returned to the village on awaking he was told that Paksuni disappeared thirty years before. What a lucky Rip he would have been! Thirty years of Japanese tyranny, the trials of a new republic and the horrors of civil war are what he would have missed. The Rip Van Winkle story always has the pithos of an awakening to find the friends of youth are gone and the village dogs bark at the man who thought he was their friend. But in Korea the man who slept for the last thirty years, even if rising grey and old, might count himself fortunate.—Ottawa Journal.

Things are in a terrible state of chaos. Just when you cut down on coffee to sleep better, the price of it alone is enough to keep you awake at nights.—Hamilton Spectator.

The British people traditionally are sea-faring people, a natural inclination as they are islanders. They think in terms of the sea and indeed none is far from it. Several of their monarchs have had actual experience in the navy, and all of them have been inspired by what the Royal Navy and the Merchant marine mean to their people. Yet, curiously, no British ruling monarch ever has lived directly on the sea. This comes to mind with the purchase by Queen Mother Elizabeth of the 18th century Barrail Castle in the Scottish shire of Caithness. Situated on the north-east tip of Scotland, and overlooking the rugged Pentland Firth it is being renovated for her use. She plans to use it for a summer home. Queen Mother Elizabeth is no longer a ruling monarch. But she will be the first British queen to actually live by the sea.

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