

THE GUARDIAN

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"The Strongest Memory is Weaker Than the Weakest Ink"

CHARLOTTETOWN, SATURDAY, DEC. 22, 1951

Some Timely Reflections

At this Christmas season, as on many similar occasions, it is worth asking ourselves why world conditions are so out of tune with the message of gladness and goodwill. Have men failed because they have sought a better world on too superficial a level? Is the secret of failure to be discovered not so much in faulty planning and inept diplomacy as in some deep disorder in human nature—what theologians call original sin? A writer in the London Times raises this question, and suggests that if this is where the truth lies—if man's greatest enemy is within himself—if the chaos of the world is but the chaos of the individual soul writ large—then the religious observance of Christmas may well, if rightly used, point the way to the remedy of the present malaise.

The Christian gospel does proclaim a message to men in their corporate capacity—its concern with the Kingdom of God is evidence of this. But, more particularly, it speaks to each individual. St. Paul frequently speaks of "newness of life" as the supreme gift of the Gospel. It is all too possible to look for a better world order on a level where, simply because the diagnosis of present evils is not sufficiently radical, and because the attempted remedies tend to deal with mere symptoms and do not tackle the roots of the disease, there can be no assurance of permanence.

The union of nations for mutual defense, security councils, welfare states—all these are necessary in the contemporary world situation. But deeper than all is the need for a readjustment of personal and corporate life to the world of the spirit, which involves not only an acceptance of Christian ethical values, but a personal relationship which has been symbolized supremely and for all time in the cradle at Bethlehem. The nature of this relationship is made clear in the teaching and example of Jesus. It is the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty, the seeking and doing of His will, the willing acceptance of all the implications of divine sonship and human brotherhood. Failure to accept this simple truth accounts for our sense of frustration in the midst of unprecedented scientific progress and social and economic development. So much has been attempted, and yet so little that makes for true human happiness and stability has been accomplished. Creeds and particular modes of worship have indeed their significance in this connection, but underlying them all is the necessity of transforming our attitude of mind. The Christmas festival is an opportunity for every Christian to build his own Bethlehem in his heart.

Cultural Council

Historically the arts, that is the fine arts, have flourished most when they could find a patron or patrons in high place. Artists are notoriously unskilful in the arts of business and for that very reason do not show up well in the hurly-burly of a competitive market. In the past those patrons have been kings, tyrants, emperors, popes, merchant princes and industrialists who had the means and inclination to relieve genius of the task of breadwinning so that art might be served and incidentally the patron celebrated.

In more democratic times genius has been hard put to it to survive, much less flourish. Generally the artist must earn his daily bread in ways unconnected with his art or else pander to the lowest common denominator of popular taste.

The present proposal that the Canadian Government set up a council to help painters, musicians, writers, scientists and students is at least a hint that it may be possible for a democracy to encourage the arts at least as effectively as did ancient princes. At any rate the experiment is well worth making.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Monday, it should be noted, is the next Market Day, the last before Christmas.

Tomorrow, the fourth Sunday in Advent.

Dr. Curtis is to be congratulated on his promotion to be Deputy Minister of Health in succession to Lieut.-Col. Fielding, now Deputy Provincial Secretary. He has a

splendid educational and practical medical record which ensures that he will make good in his department.

We have both Christmas Sunday and Christmas Day for celebrations next week.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill will broadcast to the British nations today; the King on Tuesday.

It will not be long now before the blessed Christmas bells will be pealing out their joyful sounds.

The Christmas tree is the focus of holiday pleasure, but unless common sense rules are followed it can be a threat to safety.

Trade is booming, farming is remunerative; only regret is that our potato supply is insufficient to meet the demand.

As the result of a request by the Americans, British soldiers in Korea recently recorded a selection of favourite Christmas carols.

A two-and-a-half million Provincial Government 4% bond loan at \$96.20 has been issued to repay previous loans and to provide for capital expenditures on highways and public buildings.

Though old age and blind pensions are to go into force next week, it will not be till toward the end of January that cheques will be received.

Further cuts in the British bacon and candy rations serve as reminders of our own relatively fortunate situation—and of the sacrifices of others which make it possible.

Troops in Korea are receiving Christmas presents from the Chinese Communists. Psychologically that should have more beneficial effect on the donors than on the recipients.

Visual storm signals, such as that blown down at Souris this week, have long served a useful purpose but today they are very largely relics. The real warnings are passed in more up-to-date fashion.

All that is now necessary to make the St. Lawrence seaway feasible—apart from the raising of the money—is the Royal Assent to the legislation passed this last week by both Commons and Senate. Maritime opposition was insignificant, and purely theoretical.

Canadians are not concerned on any large scale, but the lists being released of prisoners in Communist hands means joy to many families that have been under a cloud of doubt, but they mean also heartbreak for the families of missing servicemen whose names are not included.

It is a satisfaction having wise financial advisers in government such as Britain now has. First repayments on Canadian and United States post-war loans to Britain fall due Dec. 31 and ministers in London favor meeting them in full. The U. S. loan was \$4,359,000,000 and Canada's \$1,250,000,000 (Canadian). The agreement specified annual repayments spread over the remainder of this century.

George Eliot (Marian Evans), English novelist, died this date 1880. She edited the Westminster Review and contributed to it and to Blackwood. "Adam Bede" was her first novel, followed by "The Mill on the Floss", which is generally regarded as her masterpiece, although "Middlemarch", despite over-elaboration of plot and language, is also favored.

The threat of the closure on debate in the House of Commons used to be looked upon as a challenge to all democratically inclined members to stand on guard of their rights to talk as long as they could on the measure involved in the dispute. It is so long since anybody heard of the "big stick" behind the Prime Minister's back that the official opposition could hardly believe it was still there. It seemed too bad that it should be brought out to delay the return home for Christmas of the hard-working, liberty-loving legislators.

Senate Leader John Haig, P.C., declares that elevation to membership in the Senate does not come easily. It is unlikely for any green individual unless (1) the senator currently representing his section of the country should die; (2) the political party to which he adhered faithfully chanced to be in office at the time and (3) other influential party members in the same area, meeting to decide whom they'd like to get rid of, should pick his name. Added Senator Haig: "The Senate has many faults, but it has its good points in that it puts Canada before everything else."

That Ice Problem Again



Mirage For Consumers

(The Printed Word)

By the time the joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate get along in the study of the proposal to prevent a manufacturer from fixing the retail price of his goods, the public, if it follows the technicalities of argument, will be as befuddled as the MacQuarrie committee which recommends such a law. The interim report of that committee, which purports to discuss the pros and cons dispassionately, reaches conclusions about as valid and valuable as a long-range weather forecast. Possibly it discusses the world of merchandising as it should be, dismissing sin as blandly and innocently as Marie Antoinette recommended cake when bread was absent. But it is as far from reality as an unsympathetic maiden aunt who knows not the problems of parents.

The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix has a point when it urges that the interests of neither the large stores nor the small retailer are important in comparison with the interests of the consumer. The large store is pictured as poised ready to rip the bottom out of the price structure the moment the wicked manufacturer is forced to withdraw his maintained retail price. The little fellow in business, as a consequence, is seen as cowering before the expected onslaught.

It is assumed that a price fixed by the manufacturer gives the retailer a larger spread between buying and selling prices than he would get if the price were not fixed. The MacQuarrie committee just states this as a fact with no justification whatever. It is not even always true of luxury goods.

Probably evidence that maintained prices are generally low prices could easily be found. In fact, most merchants will say that their margin of profit is less on the fixed-price goods, nationally advertised, than on other lines.

It must be remembered that the objective of the manufacturer in fixing the retail price is not to assure the retailer a comfortable existence but to make sure that the ultimate market for the brand will be broad, and not confined to the great stores and mail-order houses. Advertising is depended upon to create the demand so that merchants are forced to stock the goods. The markup is only sufficient to keep the retailer displaying them.

It is argued that the trend toward price maintenance is a factor in higher prices. But this does not square with the current and universal concern among retailers about lower spreads and lower net profits per dollar of sales. This has been going on for years, with the result that today, despite higher wages, taxes and other costs, foodstuffs (to mention a non-luxury) are distributed at less markup than ever before.

It would take a Stevens army of accountants and much time to determine whether all price-advance or maintained lines are above or below price spreads on other goods. What should be of more concern is whether there is adequate competition in the getting of goods from producer to consumer. Any retailer will say there is severe competition, and some glory in it. Even the merchant in the remote village knows (and his customer knows) about mail-orders and there would be a surplus of newspaper if merchants were not forever struggling to lure to their own cash registers a larger share of the consumer's dollar. The argument that maintained prices tend to lower competition is a plausibility of theory not borne out by practice.

Entirely ignored by the author of the MacQuarrie report is the fact (pointed out before) that merchants live on averages. If they don't get enough profit on one item they must make up the deficiency on others. So even if the proposed law reduced some prices (perhaps on gold watches), other prices would rise (perhaps on furniture). All merchants today are fighting two forces—higher costs on the one hand and a diminishing spread on the other. When higher net profits are reported on

Old Charlottetown

(And F. E. L.)

ROAD ACT DEFECTS

"The present Road Law is, in many respects, faulty. A man residing in Charlottetown, by paying five, or three shillings for two horses, or one, respectively, may keep his carriage, or gig, and out up the roads all over the country; but a farmer is required to pay ten shillings for two horses, and eight shillings for one, besides two shillings for each additional horse above two. The extravagance of the tax defeats the object of it, as is usually the case with extravagant taxes. It is very rarely paid.

The practice is for a farmer, having perhaps half a dozen horses, to go on the road himself for a couple of days, for a bit of a frolic with a friendly overseer, talk over the news, and not labour, but dawdle, and thus, like a wise man, he keeps his eighteen shillings in his pocket. There is no sufficient reason why the tax should be higher in the country than in town, and if the owner of two or more horses had only to pay five shillings, double the money would be collected, and thrice the labour performed for that five shillings, by contract, than the farmer is now in the habit of personally executing. It may be some consolation for farmers to be informed that there is no road tax on mares.

"Another great defect in the Road Law is exempting all persons over 60 years of age. A man in indigent circumstances, and infirm health, should be exempted at any age; but it is difficult to perceive why our most substantial farmers, who would have to pay more than any other class in the country, if road money were collected by tolls, should be permitted to cut up the highways, altogether free of expense. But the privilege is very much abused. It is hard for a man to swear to the date of his birth—no oath is required—and it is becoming quite a common practice for men hardly turned of fifty, to tell the overseer that they are ten years older."

—The Islander, Nov. 29, 1850.

The Poet's Corner

ANNO DOMINI

Thus the sun rose as never sun before Across the land, and mounting with the lark, Heartened the fisher putting out from shore, Arouned the shepherd in the stone-roofed dark, Traced in pure gold the lilies of the field, And pierced the gateway in the cobbled wall To wake the Roman drowsing on his shield, To wreathe the sleeping child within the stall.

O never, had a sun so shone before In all the years of time as on that day! Blest were the winging larks, the lambs at play, The handmaid sweeping out an arched inn door, Blest were the lilies and the springing corn And all that lived the day that Christ was born.

—Lenore A. Pratt.

The Age-Old Story

Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God. the financial pages, they are due to higher volume. The net per dollar of sales has been dropping.

Christmas In France

(By Albert Mousset)

The mysteries of the Christian religion have a large place in the popular traditions of literature, art and music of France, but not one has had such a lasting influence, such diverse interpretation in national customs as the Christmas festival.

Until the end of the Middle Ages Christmas marked the start of the official year in a great number of French provinces. Historic events enhanced the significance of this date in the minds of the faithful. The celebration of the Nativity was associated with the most memorable episode in the life of Charlemagne, and not least with that night in the year 800 when, in a flood of light, he was crowned, "great and pacific emperor." It was also a Christmas Day when Baudouin, the brother of Godefroy de Bouillon, had himself crowned in the very city on over the sacraments from the Prophet Samuel himself.

With its poetic sense of mystic sequences, French medieval art grouped into one cycle the adoration of the Angels, the baptism of Jesus and the Feast of Cana, calling it the Theophany.

But what impressed the people most of all in this festival was its joyous side. The Christmas serenade expresses the jubilation of those who witnessed the Nativity in vivid terms. The faithful were inspired by the words of the Bible and indulged in celebrations combining piety with simple exuberance. While the birth of Jesus drew large and pious crowds into the churches, the secular festivities carried the celebrating on over the first days of the new year. It was the "joyous week" of the original mixture of sacred and profane came the delightful traditions that have been perpetuated to our day.

First, there were countless songs of popular origin, with rustic themes evoking the shepherds of the Adoration and their simple emotion at beholding the infant God. These arose in the eleventh century. By the sixteenth century thousands of them existed in all the local dialects of France. These Christmas Carols have an important place in literary history. For, while retaining their religious name, they were soon to include couplets based on the same popular tunes but with a secular significance.

There was a "Royal Carol" sung in honour of the king; political carols, composed in honour of distinguished personalities; and gay carols with humor taken from episodes in daily life. In the eighteenth century the tradition had been preserved. We have evidence in the Burgundian carols (some of which were written to tunes taken from Lullu), that were sung in Dijon and obtained great comic effect, if frequently somewhat unkind, from the misadventures of high society. They were combined with gavottes and minuets as interludes.

The early Christmas also developed and became the "mystery plays" the biblical tragedies performed in the cathedral squares where the French theatre first came into existence. These consisted of a series of scenes interspersed with singing in which supernatural and human, pathetic and comic elements mingled, the whole thing often lasting for half a day and thoroughly fascinating their audiences.

For the last twenty years people in Paris have been able to go to reconstructions of these "mystery plays", and on the occasion of the bi-millennium celebrations of the Capital performances took place in the square before Notre-Dame Cathedral. Everyone knows about the Passion Play which the Bavarian town of Oberammergau produced every ten years with amateur actors in commemoration of a vow made in 1684. A fact, of which not so many people are aware, is that there have been and still are performances of a similar character in France, only the subject in this case is not taken from the Passion but relates to the birth of Jesus.

Two centuries before the tradition was established at Oberam-

Notes By The Way

"Are You Eating Too Much Beef?"—headline of an article. We are not, and it's been just ages since we dissolved any pearls in our wine. — Kingston Whig-Standard.

Fluorination of Edmonton's water supply to reduce tooth decay is to be recommended shortly to the city board of health. It should be approved by the board and in turn, by city council, for its value now has been established by experiments elsewhere. It has also been acknowledged, if cautiously, by the Federal Department of Health, while it has been endorsed in the United States by the federal public health service and the National Dental Association. — Edmonton Journal.

Officials report that in recent weeks signal lamps in the vicinity of the CNR-New York Central diamond, west of the CNR station, have been shattered by bullets from small-calibre rifles and pellets from air guns. Investigating officers have concluded that youngsters out on week-end hunting expeditions are responsible for the damage. Anyone convicted of a charge of interfering with railway signals can be sent to penitentiary for a maximum of five years. — Cornwall Standard-Freeholder.

In 1949 the expectation of life at birth in the United States reached an all-time high of 77.6 years—almost half a year greater than in 1948. There has been a gain of fully four years since 1939-1941 and of 18 1-2 years since 1900-1902. The advantage of women over men with respect to longevity is greater now than ever before. In 1949 white women outlived white men by an average of 5.6 years, compared with 4.5 years at the beginning of the decade. — Metropolitan Life Bulletin.

Three dogs of the boxer breed amuse passengers at King's Lynn, Norfolk railway station by lively exhibitions of football. Head dog is seven-year-old Toby. The others are his sons, Boxer and Dusty, and all three are owned by Mr. G. Fuller of the Greyfriars Tavern opposite the station. Fuller has learned much of the craft of football, and passengers describe them as "almost human." — London Daily Mail.

Alberta can no longer boast with strict accuracy, that it is the only rat-free area in North America. The discovery last month of a well-established colony on a farm in the Altario district, four miles inside the Alberta-Saskatchewan boundary, shows that the rats are with us, at last, and that they are almost surely here to stay. Nevertheless, Alberta can still

mergau, a Christmas play was performed every year by the inhabitants of Monthery, twenty kilometres from Paris. The parts of the biblical characters were acted by the more educated villagers, who were coached by the clergy. Country folk flocked in from the surrounding district and set their offerings before a stable representing the creche at Bethlehem.

This custom died out in the eighteenth century, but another one became established. At Seguret, in the Vaulcuse region, on Christmas night, a company of young actors performs an old pastoral play about every five years to an audience of country people only. All the familiar figures of the creche are featured—the Shepherds, the Wise Men and the Angels, as well as characters from regional folklore.

It would be quite impossible to give any complete list of all the traditional legends and beliefs associated with Christmas, the most popular of all the holidays that inspire devotion in the faithful. The origin of most of them is lost in the mist of the ages, or belongs to that common heritage of early mankind, traces of which are to be found in many countries. But each has given them the mark of its own spiritual values.

boast, with strict accuracy, that it has fewer rats than any other area on this continent, and that the rat population is still of negligible proportions. The effort now should be to make absolutely sure it stays that way. — Calgary Herald.

It is becoming quite a familiar sight to see wooden clogs on young men as New Canadians from Holland begin to take their place in the community. At that the wooden shoes are probably every bit as comfortable as the heavy work boots with hob nails that are worn in this country. — Brockville Recorder and Times.

Toronto's MOH plans the introduction of fluorine into Toronto's water supply in the hope that it will prevent tooth decay, especially in children. Not as a reflection upon the proposal, but as an interesting comment upon the complexity of modern water treatment, it may be pointed out that Toronto tap water will then at times contain: Chlorine, sulphadiazole, alumina sulphate and fluoride. The chlorine is habitually used, but in varying quantities and according to the state of the water. The sulphadiazole is used to neutralize the chlorine when the dosage is heavy. The alum is added when there is much suspended matter in the water. — Toronto Star.

The Loch Ness monster has been seen again, this time by Colonel Patrick Grant of Knockie, near Inverness. It was seen by Colonel Grant while he was motoring to Glenmoriston. "I was passing the bay at Inchardoch," he said, "when I noticed a great disturbance in the water about 150 yards from the shore. There was a flat calm in the bay at the time, so that the commotion in the water was unmistakable. I saw a length, perhaps six feet of some object showing a foot or less out of the water and as I looked, the object disappeared, and then reappeared a moment later, at least a hundred yards away and nearer the shore. "The speed of movement was very great. The object disappeared and must have dived, as I saw no wake of anything. I have learned much of the craft of football, and passengers describe them as "almost human." — London Daily Mail.

In reply to my note on a wasal and its young, Commander Phipps Hornby sends me his tale of a personal encounter. Wheeling his bicycle uphill in Scotland, he met two young weasels, one run over by another bicycle and dead, the other standing by and "repeatedly calling to it, to all appearances with concern and distress." On the Commander's approach, the little beast "screamed with rage" and bit the front tire of the bicycle again and again. It then disappeared into the grassy bank. This incident supports the contention that even the most predatory of wild animals possess warmth of family feeling, mourn one another's deaths and do not think of their deceased relations in terms solely of "calory intake." — London Spectator.

Facing a long illness and knowing he would not recover, a husband transferred his bank account of \$20,000 to his wife. He did this so that he might relieve himself of the task of paying household and other expenses, including heavy hospital bills which he knew would continue to come in until his death. He was also fully aware that within a short time he would be physically unable to sign cheques to take care of these bills. What the man did not realize is that under Canadian law, one cannot give money to the wife that way, that is without paying a penalty. After the man died, the widow was billed for \$1,900—that being the gift tax on \$20,000. Under ordinary circumstances, the government would not have collected anything from the man's estate, since the value of it was not sufficiently large to be affected by the Succession Duties Act.— Fort William Times-Journal.

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