

THE GUARDIAN

Authorized as Second Class Mail Post Office Department, Ottawa. The Island Guardian Publishing Co. Editor and Managing Director, Ian A. Burnett, Associate Editor, Frank Walker. CIRCULATION "Covers Prince Edward Island like the dew" "The strongest memory is weaker than the weakest ink."

CHARLOTTETOWN SATURDAY, DEC. 26, 1953

The Queen's Grace

The late John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir, preferred the old form "The King's Grace" to the more modern "His Majesty" in connection with King George V. Even more suitable is it to Queen Elizabeth, the gracious sovereign lady of a Commonwealth which is made up of diverse peoples living in every climate who nevertheless feel a bond of brotherhood.

What is essential is the gracious personality of the Head of the Commonwealth. The deeply felt but indefinable community that is the Commonwealth must have some focal point which will epitomize a thousand feelings and reasons and show the reality of the family group.

In her message to her peoples and the world on Christmas day, the first since her Coronation, the Queen must have raised the hope in many breasts that an Elizabethan age is indeed dawning. Mankind has too long been weighed down by circumstances. The time has come for the daring spirit of man to challenge the wide seas of ignorance and fear and inhumanity.

Christmas On Monday

It may well be that in future Christmas will always fall on a week-end. Next year it will be on Saturday, in 1955 on Sunday and thereafter, if the World Calendar is adopted, Christmas will always be on a Monday. The reason for January 1, 1956 being a probable date for calendar reform being made effective is that at that time the old and the new calendars will coincide.

This is a much simpler matter than the last calendar reform. When Gregory XIII reformed the calendar in 1582 it was necessary to drop ten days in order to start the new calendar in accord with the sun. When England finally got around to accepting the reform the number of days which had to be dropped had mounted to eleven.

Some of the reasons for correcting the calendar are to make the several quarters and half years of equal length, which they are far from being at present. The 12 months will consist of identical quarters and every month will have 26 weekdays plus either four or five Sundays; the months of the quarter will have 31, 30 and 30 days and the first day of each quarter will be a Sunday.

The four quarters total 364 days so that it is necessary to insert an extra day at the end of the year and a second extra day at the end of the half-year in leap years to maintain the correct relation with the solar year. These, it is proposed, will be designated World Days and be treated as holidays. The calendar is perpetual and probably the most noticeable difference for most people will be the doing away with having a new calendar each year. By the same token it means that it will no longer be necessary to work out new time-tables each year.

Beria's Execution

Those who have tears to shed over the fate of Lavrenti Beria and his executed colleagues in Soviet Russia are probably few, if any; but the whole episode, staged at a time when Christendom is celebrating the most joyous festival of the year, strikes a jarring note that appears to have been purposely planned, just as were all the steps in the farcical trials, the phony confessions, and the grim finale before the firing squad at Moscow on Wednesday. Soviet army leaders, it is said, never forgot the lesson of 1936 when Stalin used the secret police to purge the army. Now, in 1953, Malenkov has used the army to purge the secret police. Even the state prosecutor was an army man. The dictator's future will now depend solely on the army's continued allegiance to him. In the days of ancient Rome, the emperors retained power by similar means, and paid the price in a precarious tenure which frequently resulted in their own murder by a rival military favorite.

But the Soviets have added a macabre touch to the examples of history in their methods of obtaining "confessions" which are now part of normal procedure in Communist courts. Defendants are not brought to trial until these confessions have been obtained by the prosecution. In Beria's case, it is alleged that he was "an agent for thirty-four years with trans-Caucasian anti-Soviet organizations," one of them associated with British intelligence. Such an absurd accusation, if true, would reflect anything but credit upon the efficiency of the whole Soviet administration. Stalin must have been a fool to have been hoodwinked all these years by his own right-hand man, to whom he gave power of life and death over millions of Soviet citizens and who used it—as every Russian knows—to send many to exile or death. How many, the world will never know; but the question must occur to the most unthinking party adherent that he may well be among the next victims of the witch-hunt for traitors. The army itself will have to develop its own secret police system, with another Beria in the background fated perhaps to perish by the same means.

Where cunning and treachery are the only props to power, purges and massacres may be expected to follow each other at an accelerated pace. If history is any guide to the future, it can safely be predicted that the Soviet tyranny will collapse of its own inherent rottenness. In the meantime, however, its shadow stretches across one-fourth of the world's population, and it is armed with all the latest devices of science to pursue its sinister ends.

A Good Motto

"I count only the hours that are serene" was the motto written over an old-sundial in Venice. It would hardly be practical as a rigid rule of life for of course there are many things in the run of a year which are anything but serene and these, too, may contain some things which are good. And yet there is a lesson in the classical words which it would do us all good to take to heart. We may not be able to omit all fretful cares and worries from the calendar of our days, but at least we can subordinate them to the things which are joyous and inspiring. Smiles are worth more than scowls any time and one bright gentle moment is better than a hundred vexed ones. Fears are annoying things; they do not need to be destructive things. The more one ponders them the more formidable they appear. The best way to put a bad fear to rout is by dwelling on a good hope.

1953 has had its share, perhaps more than its share, of disquieting things but it has many fine things to its credit and perhaps, on balance, the good has outweighed the evil. At any rate this is much the better thought to take into the New Year. Turning to the sunny side of things is a very good habit; like all good habits it has to be kept in constant repair or its chief enemy—in this case, persistent gloom—will wreck it.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Boxing Day. . . . Festival of St. Stephen. . . . Tomorrow, the first Sunday after Christmas. . . . Souris is well on the way towards becoming one of the more important fishery centres of the Atlantic Provinces. . . . The decision of the United States to continue its contribution, at least on a reduced scale, to the Atlantic weather ship service is to be welcomed. It is doubtful if the service could have been carried on without American participation.

The production picture in Britain is encouraging indeed. The British people put up with austerity partly to permit the replacement of worn-out capital equipment and partly to contribute towards world security. Their self denial is now paying dividends.

It must seem remarkable to the older generation of fishermen that Irish Moss should have become the leading island sea product in volume and third in value, being topped only by lobster (by a long way) and by oysters. That, however, is only one of many revolutionary changes taking place in our fishing industry.

James Stephens, Irish poet and novelist, died this date 1950. Born in Dublin, he was in sympathy with the Irish nationalists. His work combines realism with Celtic myth and legend. His original fairy stories, "The Crock of Gold", were published in 1912 and his collection of "Irish Fairy Tales" in 1923. Some of his later works were "The Charwoman's Daughter", "In the Land of Youth" and "Kings and the Moon".

Plenty Of A Good Thing



The Poet's Corner

THE AFTERTONE The harpist spreads her hands along the strings. Careless them to silence, and so the music that she wove, the oboe sings. Among the ferny violins, the flutes With throatsweet sweetness flee the threat of drums. Up the harmonic zenith, and then fall To be extinguished as the trumpet comes. Out of the forest sounding a final call. All but the harp as through a single throat. Climb to a chord and cease, but I can hear Between the hands of silence, one That still eluded them, pulsating clear. As in the dark a jewel may ename. One ray of light we did not know was there. —Robert Hillyer.

Old Charlottetown

NAUFRAGE REBELLION "We are happy that we can at last announce the suppression of this long talked of rebellion, the fame of which may almost expect to rival in historical renown the memorable siege of Malpeque. It terminated in the conviction of three daring disturbers of the public peace at the late assizes held at Georgetown. Our readers will, no doubt, be prepared to hear a most harrowing account of the hangings, drawings and quarterings which generally signalize the suppression of such civil convulsions in countries less happily situated than this—and we have prepared several reams of pot paper, to print off in the cheapest and most approved form, the dying speeches of those whose treasons, stratagems and spoils have so long disturbed the slumbers of all the old maids and dowagers within, and the absentee proprietors without the bounds of the Island Prince Edward. We must beg our readers, however, to withhold their sympathies on this occasion, as nothing more serious occurred than three of the offenders (one a female) being sentenced to one month's imprisonment each in the common jail of Georgetown." —Royal Gazette, March 17, 1835.

Constituency Boundaries

(Windsor Star) A parliamentary committee, at the request of Hon. C. G. Power, is to consider the whole question of federal constituencies, to see if some better method cannot be found to determine their boundaries. At present redistributions are made by a committee of the Commons, with all the political implications that course involves. Often there are suggestions of gerrymandering and, in the past, there have been many reasons for such suggestions. But the fault is not entirely that of the party in power which has a majority on the redistribution committee. Very frequently the final outcome is a result of agreements, tacit or otherwise, between politicians of the various parties. Conservative members, for instance, might agree to certain changes if certain constituencies in which they are primarily interested are left alone. Mr. Power's principal point is that many constituencies, normally urban ones, have a far larger population than others, usually rural. This is true, and it can mean that two rural votes are worth as much as three urban ones in the election of a member. That, at first sight, seems unfair.

There is another factor, however, an urban constituency may com-

Notes By The Way

Overwork is the main thing that causes that rundown feeling, says a noted doctor. The medical profession may be overdoing its bid for popularity. —Hamilton Spectator. An Oklahoma auctioneer was found unconscious in bed from gas. Must have talked in his sleep. —Hamilton Spectator. The promise that atomic power is just around the corner will mean much, if where the corner is there is not just a big hole. —Moose Jaw Times-Herald.

According to figures announced by Britain's health minister the cost of state medical insurance is still sickening. —Hamilton Spectator. There is something profoundly disillusioning about the recent report of a court case in Stockholm, in which a Swedish court was ordered to pay about \$95 in damages for his frisky behavior at an exclusive fancy dress ball. The court was alleged to have exploded 50 gas-filled balloons with his cigarette, thereby inflicting painful burns on 10 of his fellow-astrotates. Most Canadians have always had the idea—instilled by romantic novels and Hollywood movies—that social gatherings of the European nobility were dignified and formal affairs—minuets and deep bows and all that sort of thing. It is a shock to find the lords and ladies exploding balloons in each other's faces and the party winding up in court. Human beings seem to be distressingly alike, these days, whether one encounters them on Skid Row or in Burke's Peerage. —Edmonton Journal.

Penelope Platypus has faced the experts. These platyp—should we say platypusses?—are, by any reckoning, improbable creatures of paradox. Unpredictable, too. Take Penelope—who, with her mate, Cecil, lives at the Bronx Zoo. Some time ago Penelope dug herself a tunnel in the ground, proceeded to carry eucalyptus leaves into it. It's the same everywhere. Many of the old crafts and trades are dying out because young people are not troubling to learn how to use them. There are fewer and fewer spinning wheels in country kitchens, and it's getting harder to find a good blacksmith or harness maker in some regions. And even in the wild depths of tropical Africa the village tom-tom drums have grown old and worn, and they are not being replaced. There are no young people learning to beat them. We must admit that sending messages by drum beats through the jungles is the most primitive means of talking to the next village, but we are amused at how the Belgian Congo information centre in London explains the new trend: "Letters sent by mail have more glamor than tom-tom messages." —Saint John Telegraph Journal.

The Age Old Story

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

TO OUR MANY POLICY-HOLDERS throughout the Province and beyond, we extend the Season's Greetings and best wishes for Happiness, Peace and Prosperity in the New Year. HYNDMAN & CO. LTD. The Oldest Insurance Agency in Prince Edward Island. Offices: CHARLOTTETOWN - SUMMERSIDE - MONTAGUE

The Passing Scene

By Observer ANNUAL REPORT ON BABETTE! It is now more than a year since Babette, the most beautiful and charming kitten in the world, was brought by kind friends to our house. Shortly after her arrival I wrote an article entitled "Babette, Feline Philosopher" Since then I have had periodical requests for something in a similar vein. I some mysterious manner known only to the feline intelligentsia. Babette herself was quite aware of these requests. All summer long she has been begging me to forget about political and philosophical matters long enough, as she puts it, "to write something about a really important person," meaning, of course, herself. About a month ago I promised her a full column right after Christmas, provided that meanwhile she would resolve to be good. It has been hard for her at times, for mischief is in her heart, but I must say she has been a good cat. No sharpening of claws on the antique furniture, no prowling around the house at all hours of the night, no jumping up on the china cabinets. She has eaten her porridge without complaining, drunk her cod liver oil without making faces, and behaved generally as if she were a young lady just out of finishing school. In fact she has been so wonderful that more than once I have been a little worried about her. However, she assured me the other day that she never felt better in her life. "But," she added as an afterthought, "I wish Christmas would hurry up and come!" Just what she meant by that I don't know and she wouldn't elaborate on it. One thing I have learned about cats since Babette came is that they don't elaborate on anything. They like to keep you guessing and, if you guess wrongly, as I often do, they laugh with glee. Let no one imagine that a cat is incapable of laughter. That is one of the gravest libels ever published. The other night, for instance, I was telling Babette about something I read in a magazine to the effect that, speaking generally, dogs are more intelligent than cats. "Whoever wrote that," she said, "was either a fool or a knave." Then she laughed so heartily that I wondered if she had broken into the catnip which we had put away for her Christmas present. Speaking of Christmas presents we asked her a week or so ago what she wanted this year. "Two things especially," she told us, "a mechanical mouse and a dollar's worth of catnip all tied up in a pretty ribbon." I had been secretly hoping that she would have a mechanical mouse on her list for she got one last year and we all had a lot of fun with it. Perhaps I shouldn't say this, but I sampled the catnip, much to Babette's delight; somehow it didn't seem to agree with me very well and this year she can have it all. Lest any reader should assume that Babette's life is all fun, mischief, and catnip, I hasten to say that she has many serious moments. She will sit for as long as a half-hour at a time, pondering the weighty questions of her world. Her formal education has been by no means neglected, and I am glad to report that she shows great promise. When she came here she appeared to have a predilection for Existentialism as pronounced by Sartre. This troubled me a bit for I couldn't quite see how any such abstruse philosophy could be of the slightest benefit to a cat, or to anybody else for that matter. Then there was the possibility that some day she might ask me questions about it and I was afraid—in fact I was certain—that I wouldn't know the answers. That would have been very bad indeed, for when a cat really likes you she gets the silly notion that you know everything. In the last few months, much to my relief, she has been concentrating on less provocative matters: right now she is wading through Plato's Dialogues. She must be enjoying them, for just before her pre-Christmas sobriety began, I came upon her in the act of tearing a leaf out of Republic, Book 6. It is quite a while since she gave up the idea of attaining proficiency in typing. I don't blame her for that; I have been using a typewriter, man and boy, for upwards of forty years and I haven't got beyond the pecking stage. I am a little disturbed about her un-democratic manner. Her own noble ancestry is unquestioned but I can't see that that entitles her to treat cats of different background with disdain. That is exactly what she does. She won't even exchange meows with any creature whose parents were not listed in Who's Who. We are hoping that this anti-social trait will wear off in due course, but Babette is now almost two years old and it is time she adopted herself to the social fashion. TORONTO, (CP)—Toronto police swooped down on an office party in an auto-wrecking firm early Wednesday, arresting the owner on a charge of permitting drunkenness and 13 other persons as found-ins. Officers said it was the start of a stiff police crackdown on entertainment warnings by the Ontario liquor control board that drinking parties in offices are illegal, even at Christmas.

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