

"The strongest memory is weaker than the weakest link."

Another 600 Million Years

Until recently it was supposed that the oldest form of life on the earth was a fungus which lies beneath the iron ore beds of Lake Superior; geologists have estimated its age as approximately two billion years. Now comes word from a professor of geology at the University of Edinburgh that analysis of radioactive content of minerals deeply buried in Northern Rhodesia shows an age of not less than 2 billion, 600 million years. This report, which a British science journal calls "indubitably accurate", indicates that certain forms of vegetable and plant life existed for long and uncountable ages before the most primitive forms of animal life appeared.

Fish life goes back about 350 million years, while the huge dinosaurs, reputed to be among the first land animals, came on the scene about 200 million years later. Man himself made his appearance only about one million years ago.

To most of us, computations like these are incomprehensible, but they do tell a wondrous story of the movements of life and growth. In these days, however, popular concern is centered not so much in the past history of life on the earth as in the possibility of its survival if man, the newcomer, persists in experimenting with newly discovered powers of destruction.

O Tempora!

A little behind the times to get legislative action, Island municipalities are again showing an interest in Daylight Time which will come into effect in many places this week-end. The intention, apparently, is to try to convince the Government that a very substantial proportion of our population want the Government to proclaim Daylight Time in force, as it may under the Time Act passed in 1947.

This is, of course, a decidedly better approach than that toyed with some years ago when the City Council very briefly decided to adopt Daylight Time illegally. Then the folly of the scheme became apparent. The moral side was emphasized by churchmen and others but practical difficulties were also in the way. The courts, summoning defendants to appear had to specify a legal time; the statutory times for the service of writs had to be observed; Provincial offices and institutions could only go by Provincial time; and payment of bills of exchange had to be accepted when offered at a legal time.

In addition there are the less common but still important matters of birth certificates. An hour's difference around midnight means a day's difference on the record. Any deadline for taking advantage of a contract or for giving notice would be according to the legal time.

All these and other difficulties are avoided by taking the lawful measures now proposed. The Provincial Government will have to determine the popular will and practical advantages and govern itself and all of us accordingly.

London's Bombed Sites

A brochure published by the Corporation of London and reviewed in the current monthly magazine of the Port of London Authority, tells how natural life has taken possession of bombed sites in the British capital, and softened the destruction which took place during the war. The brochure, entitled "The Natural History of the City," carries a frontispiece picture of St. Paul's surrounded by wild plants in flower, as though it stood in some enchanted garden. And it records, for the sake of history, how one plant after another encroached on the rubble-strewn areas of what was once a closely built-up region, and how they have made such uncharitable surroundings their own.

Before the war there were few flowering plants in London, because, as the brochure explains, there were few places where they could grow. The London pigeons, the house sparrows, the starlings at night, together with a few rodents, and occasional butterflies and moths constituted most of the animal life. Since 1939, however, at least 269 species of wild plants, 3 mammals, 31 birds, 56 insects, and 27 other kinds of invertebrates have all been observed within the city. The plants and animals are listed, each given its Latin name, with the dates when observed, and information regarding its persistence and frequency. It is amazing that many of them are not native to Britain, or have arisen from cultivated parents. Some of the seeds were

brought to the City in wartime defense sandbags, others by the wind. Like paratroopers who have leapt to take possession of key points, the wind-borne seeds with tiny parachutes of silky pappus descended on the sites in great numbers.

Clematis is growing there along with the buttercup, the poppy and the humble horse radish. Ragwort and charlock jostle with wild mignonette and blue flowered flax for a place in the sun. Vetches, clovers and trefoils give honey to the bees which visit them in summer, and the willow herbs scatter their silky seeds far and wide. Parsley and parsnips struggle to grow beside the evening primrose; sycamores, silver birches and willows are sturdy seedlings pushing through the brambles, and elderberries which try to rob them of light. There are Michaelmas daisies and sunflowers among stinking mayweed, ox-eyed daisies and fever-few; thistles and groundsel among chicory and dandelions. The Oxford Ragwort and Viscid Groundsel have even crossed and produced a hybrid progeny within the City, which is proudly called the "London Ragwort."

How valuable will be this booklet in years to come, when these open spaces have all been built up again, and the transient flora has been destroyed! At present they afford a happy hunting ground for the entomologist, and one that is constantly changing in its evolutionary process.

But, concludes the review, "How can our authorities allow the very heart of our trade and finance to become first a waste where every weed and pest has found a footing, and secondly a beautiful tangle of things which may distract our minds from the urgency with which the war damage should be made good. Presently there may be a jungle forest in London if rebuilding is hampered by too much planning, too few licenses and delays in provision of materials." This may be an extreme statement, but at least the present situation helps one to understand how abandoned cities of older civilizations have been buried.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Premier A. W. Matheson has shown fine appreciation of the importance of education to the Province by assuming the chairmanship of the new Board of Trustees of Prince of Wales College. P. W. C. is the cornerstone of our entire educational system.

Canada's tuberculosis death rate in 1942 was 51.4 for every 100,000 of our population, according to Health Minister Martin. It dropped in ten years from 17.1 and last year was down to 13. Satisfactory as this trend undoubtedly is, it means that even greater efforts are necessary because more families naturally susceptible will be in our midst.

Canadians ate an average of 140.1 pounds of meat in 1953, as compared with 132.9 pounds in 1952. Consumption of beef, veal, mutton and lamb increased, but pork decreased. Beef consumption increased from 44.7 pounds to 59.1 pounds per capita; veal from 6.7 to 9.1 pounds; mutton and lamb from 1.9 to 2.0; while pork decreased from 65.9 to 57 pounds.

Mass suggestion seems the most acceptable explanation of the epidemic of pock-marked windshields that has swept the continent. There is something attractive, however, about the idea of space mice. Perhaps the most logical approach would be to look at the cars which are not marked, and at the same time consider the average age of those showing signs of pitting.

A pioneer British automobile designer is not satisfied with the progress made in his own field. "What I want," Lord Brabazon is reported to have said, "is a very simple car—with a turbine engine, automatic gear change, power steering and disc brakes." Another sport wants a car weighing about as much as a couple of bicycles and driven by an electric motor, powered by a storage battery.

Immanuel Kant, Prussian philosopher of Scottish extraction, was born this date 1724. His "Critique of Pure Reason" appeared in 1781 and is his best known work. Within a few years Konigsberg had become the centre of philosophical activity and Kant's method had been adopted by nearly all German universities, not only for philosophy but also in some instances for combination with Christian ethics.

Corporations are legal persons, having the capacities with which the law endows them, but it is surprising to say the least that the city of Winnipeg should have decided that they should have the capacity to vote. It is up to the Manitoba Legislature to rule on the proposal. At present property holders in the city are entitled to vote and it is interesting to speculate on what would be the situation if all property were held by companies. Under the proposed amendment they would not merely be voters but the only voters.



Possible Unforeseen Developments

Old Charlottetown and P. E. I.

From The Examiner, Dec. 7, 1888: A meeting of subscribers and all others interested in the proposed Coles-Whelan Monument will be held in the office of Warburton and Smallwood on Monday evening next.

Mr. Earle has been engaged by the Y. M. C. A. to give two grand concerts during the series—the first a secular concert early in January, the other a grand oratorio concert to be given in March. The choruses will consist of thirty picked voices, and the instrumental music promises to be of unusual excellence.

Mr. James Keegan, of Augusta, Me., shipped twenty-four fine Island horses for the American market this afternoon. At a meeting in MacEachern's building last evening, Councillor Morris in the chair, Mr. James Eden was selected to contest Ward One, in opposition to Councillor Small, in the approaching civic election.

A larger and more suitable steamer is needed to ply between Charlottetown and Southport. The Elfin is a good little boat; but the accommodation she affords is altogether inadequate. At times, the crush and rush on the wharf is such that a lady considers it almost as much as her life is worth to get on board; and when she is on board she is either forced into a corner on the open deck, or has to go into a little coop of six-by-twelve cabin, in company with a lot of strange, not over-polite, and (very often) drunken or half-drunken men.

The Age Old Story

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

The Old Warspite

(Hamilton Spectator) The old Warspite did not yield easily at the last. She lay, in a gallantly awkward defiance of doom in a scrap yard, near great rocks by Land's End, with the thunder of sea and wind sounding over her hull. Seven years ago, when she was being towed from Portsmouth to the Clyde for breaking up, a low-rope parted in a gale, and the proudest of all veterans of Britain's Navy cast off man's shackles and gave herself to a grave in the sea. You could never have called her, even then, a hulk. She was part of a saga, and when morning edged over the grey Atlantic rollers, or when evening gave the benediction of a sinking sun, the Warspite could feel secure in her glory. Those who know that a ship can never really die would hear again the big guns of Jutland, or see the flashes of her epic at Narvik, or remember the fire at Crete, or the convoys, edging with pitiful slowness across oceans under her shepherding eye. For even in her advanced age, with rust smearing her patched-up armour and her decks scarred with battle, she had lived with danger and triumphed, and she had the immortality of courage.

Now the clatter of salvage beats around the bones of Warspite as they struggle to get metal from her to turn to the arts of peace. On the next spring tide they hope to bring closer into shore the forward section of the hull, thrusting

NOTES BY THE WAY

With radioactive fish swimming about the Pacific, it is for once a case of the fisherman dodging the fish. —T. W. Jones in Toronto Star.

A lumberjack we read, consumes 6,000 calories a day, in comparison with the 2,500 needed by most desk workers. We wonder if these human box-constructors ever experience a slight sleepiness while at the end of a saw? —Peterborough Examiner.

The present threat to nature has its origins in the increase of human population and the spread of civilization. Even the Arctic is now invaded by both government and private enterprises. The effect upon the fauna cannot yet be assessed, though it is being said that a man cannot come back from the Arctic without having shot a polar bear. In order to protect nature from ill-considered at-

tacks and so ensure that some part at least of the human heritage shall remain unspoiled, many nations have established nature conservancy or wild life departments. Perhaps the most encouraging sign of the awakening to the need for nature protection is the development of national parks, where not only is wild life protected but visitors are encouraged. Nature protection should thus gain the public support without which it cannot prosper. —London Times.

What's on the other side of the hill... It may be the same as what's in your own little valley but always there is another hill beyond, and, in the end, behind the second or the third or fourth ridge, there's something new — a different way of life, different methods of felling a different kind of tree, new crops, new implements—and perhaps new ideas. —Hamilton Spectator.

ancient shore, and the dreams of ships are more real than metal itself. Warspite will still be seen with her guns-defiant in the element she knew as her own—facing the eternal sea. (Hamilton Spectator).

CONSPIRACY CHARGED

TORONTO (CP)—A two-week investigation by Toronto and Windsor police ended Tuesday night with the arrest here of two men on charges of conspiracy to steal \$5,600 from a Toronto branch of the Royal Bank of Canada. Charged are John Claire Misner, 28-year-old assistant accountant employed at the Toronto bank, and Clifford L. Hanna, 26, also of Toronto.

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The Passing Scene

By Observer

A LOOK BACK

Was there ever a time when the public schools were not subjected to much fault-finding? Probably not. And, although criticism is bothersome to those who have to take it, it may be the strongest single force in bringing about improvements. Complacency is a bad thing wherever it is found.

In the May 1903 issue of the magazine to which I referred previously there are three lengthy articles dealing with the "impractical" school curriculum then in use. The chief complaint was that the country schools especially were not preparing youngsters for the business of living. Too much theory, not enough practice. The writer of one of the articles (an American) tells about a visit he had made to a one-room school of twenty-three boys and girls of all ages in a little village called Cloverdale, forty miles from Montreal.

It was eight below zero outside but the school was well heated by a "box stove" crammed with maple. The teacher passes from the ABC to a problem in the rule of three with versatility worthy of admiration. Besides the three R's there is a little instruction in grammar, geography, history, and hygiene. Here the writer states his complaint: "The fathers of these children are farmers. Some raise barley, oats, and hay; some have herds of cattle; one man has done well with an apple orchard. Yet, the fact that these children come from homes where the livelihood is earned out of the ground is totally ignored in the lessons. Of sewing, mending, planting and tending of trees, the production of milk, butter and cheese, there is not a word. Nor is there anything about building, drainage, the composition of foods, or the chemistry of fuel."

Having exhausted the list of all the things that should be taught in the schools, but are not, the writer asks this question: "Should not the children of the farm be led to see somewhat of the inexhaustible scope for brains which offers itself to the farmer?" Then comes the summing up: "The fact is that rural instruction has been devised in cities with a view to city conditions. And the courses in city schools are faulty enough, hidden as they are by clerical traditions which permit the word to usurp the place of the act, instead of being merely its symbol and aid. The chief evil in rural education is the stress laid upon verbal studies, the blinking of the actual world of duty and joy for which country children should be informed and trained." Fifty-one years have passed since this criticism was expressed and it still is a common subject for discussion.

The second great evil in the schools of 1903, as this critic saw it, was the multiplicity of schools in the country areas. There were far too many of them. In all America, North and South of the Canadian border, the average enrollment in rural schools was twenty-seven. (Without any figures to go by I should imagine that our Island schools now would have about the same number on an average.) Of this enrollment the average actual attendance, taking one month with another, varied from 57% in Wisconsin to a little less than 50% in Nova Scotia. In a number of schools on both sides of the border the actual attendance was less than ten for the school year. "The plain remedy and the only one," the writer goes on to say, "is the consolidation of small into large schools, with the transportation of pupils in vans (horse-

The Poet's Corner

ON GROWING OLD

Beauty, have pity, for the strong have power.
The rich their wealth, the beautiful their grace,
Summer of man its sunlight and its flower.
Spring-time of man all April in a face.
Only, as in the jostling in the Strand,
Where the mob thrusts or loiters 'or is loud,
The beggar with the saucer in his hand
Asks only a penny from the passing crowd.
So, from this glittering world with all its fashion,
Its fire and play of men, its stir, its march,
Beauty, wisdom and passion,
Bread to the soul, rain where the summers parch,
Give me but these, and though the darkness close
Even the night will blossom as the rose.

—John Masfield.

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