The Birmingham Eccentric

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1936

NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish stories of events which have news value and which are written in a manner fit for connection with the editorial staff of the paper. All copy must be presented before noon on Wednesdays. The right is reserved, however, to make such superficial changes in the work submitted as are necessary to the style of the paper and as are required by laws of the state. Brevity of a mechanical situation in the composing room, headlines written by those other than members of the staff cannot be used. Any erroneous reflection upon the character, standing or reputation of any person, firm or corporation which may appear in the columns of The Eccentric will be gladly corrected upon being brought to the attention of the publisher.

The Christmas Spirit

Beloved Henry Van Dyke, pondering the spirit of Christmas, years ago wrote some beautiful lines descriptive of the occasion. He titled them "Are You Willing?" We are presenting them here as proof that the good thoughts of one live on long after he has passed to his eternal reward—for it is the same perpetuity of thought and action that has endeared the Bethlehem Babe to the world through twenty centuries, and annually occasions Christmas Day. Here are Dr. Van Dyke's thoughts:

To stoop down and consider the needs and desires of little children;

To remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old;

To stop asking how many of your friends love you; and ask yourself if you love them enough;

To bear in mind the things that other people have to bear in their hearts;

To try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you;

To trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you;

To make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open—

Are you willing to do these things even for a day?

Then you can keep Christmas.

Speaking Of Slayers—

A 23-year-old Lansing girl, college graduate shoots her best girl friend who is about to be married; a week later the murderess hangs herself in her jail cell. Michigan is astounded—but also somewhat sympathetic, simply because the slayer and suicide is revealed as "emotionally insane." Of course, the whole affair is anti-social, and a thing that one doesn't like to dwell upon. But the facts are that Michigan admits the slayer and suicide was not responsible for her actions, and so there was little evidence during her week-in jail for her summary execution—and we doubt that such a demand would have been seen if Michigan's statute books contained capital punishment clauses. Which only suggests that people who kill others are sub-normal, emotionally insane, and so we believe capital punishment never can be justified—not even when nations engage in war for economic supremacy.

Bells Of Canterbury Ring Late

If the charges hurled against former King Edward by the Archbishop of Canterbury are true, and Edward was guilty of "associating with a younger set whose morals are a disgrace," then why didn't England's Church have something tactful to say about it before the abdication? It seems to us that the Archbishop of Canterbury, by his pre-abdication silence, was equally a party to any evils that "the younger set" have kept going.

Our New County Prosecutor

Oakland County's new prosecuting attorney, Franklin E. Morris, of Ferndale, will take over his new duties January 1. He, a Democrat, succeeds David C. Pence, Republican. Prosecutor Morris has assumed tremendous responsibilities; we bespeak for him the support of everybody, and hope that he will be able to keep Oakland County decent and wholesome, within the limits of his powers. We suggest that he look into the evils of beer gardens, as a starter.

Some Will Lose Money—

A dispatch from Washington says that the Federal Treasury will probably receive around $100,000,000 as a result of the failure of some states to enact Unemployment Compensation laws.

The Federal Social Security Act levies a tax on the payrolls of employers of eight or more persons, which is one percent for the year 1936 and which increases to three percent by 1938.

The Federal law also provides that employers who have to pay this tax may credit any contributions made by them to State Employment Compensation plans up to ninety percent of the Federal tax. If a state, however, passes no such law then the employers in that particular state have to pay the entire tax into the Federal Treasury.

Hardly To Be Expected

The indiscriminate sale of machine guns and sawed-off shotguns to criminals aroused the public some months ago and a law was passed, requiring the registration of such sales.

This, however, didn't settle the problem. For the twelve months ending June 30th, last, only one weapon was registered. After all, you can hardly expect a gangster, buying a machine gun, to come in, be fingerprinted and pay a $200 tax on his purchase, can you?

Freedom Of Thought Necessary To Maintain Our Liberty

Thoughtful men and women would oppose any tendency in this country to create limitations upon the individual's right to think and express his thoughts, regardless of the topic considered. Any effort to curb intellectual freedom in an attempt to perpetuate the present status is an obstacle to progress and freedom.

Even in educational circles, sometimes, the course of inquiry and conclusion is restricted, usually to placate financial, economic or religious groups whose patronage the intelligence-dictators would either have continue or begin. The future welfare of humanity is sacrificed for such current favors.

In many countries of the world mental freedom is fast disappearing. Russia enthusiastically prefers communism, Italy and Germany similarly regard it treasonable to suspect the benevolence of the particular authoritarian rule in each nation, and in such countries thinking must be in mass proportions, organized and regimented as detentels and as irresistable as military maneuvers. No intellectual freedom or progress can be permanently expected in such nations.

Tolerance of discussion, fixed upon sincerity of belief, is the foundation alike of both democratic government and the maintenance of human liberty. Without freedom for criticism of both doctrines and deeds, no error can be corrected, and no improvement may be looked for when human beings have been totally subjected to mental control and censorship.

A particular disagreeable fact in every case where some dictatorship decrees beliefs and opinions for everybody is the savagery with which opposition is attacked and physically obliterated. Those who proclaim the unquestionable certainty and superiority of their own viewpoint fear to let it stay in free competition with other ideas and examples, a terror which entirely refutes the confidently expressed conviction of certainty.

Liberals everywhere should oppose restrictions upon human thinking and experimenting, unless we prefer to route the human race back to the Middle Ages with controlled dogmas and interdictions upon further questioning by the intelligency of mankind. If so unhappy a state should arise the world will sleep again for a couple of centuries, during which brave and fearless thinkers will die as in ancient days.

"Amazing" Says Gen. Pershing

General John J. Pershing thinks it "amazing that civilized nations should adhere to war as an element of national policy." There are millions of others who agree with the leader of the American Army in France.

However, it is useless to stand off and gape in a state of amazement at what nations do. What are the facts? Well, to begin with, most everybody agrees that peace cannot be secured by wishes or by the disarmament of all nations except one or two. Nobody expects certain nations to disarm as matters stand today. So what—?

Just as General Pershing says, when confronted by "conditions so threatening to world peace, it is obvious that unless some definite understanding among the leading nations can be brought about we may well look to the future with dismay, lest our civilization reach a point where it will destroy itself."

Can the leading nations of the world reach a "definite understanding." The answer, apparently, is a loud, "No!" The United States, probably the strongest nation, and one with the greatest possessions of peace, is not willing to go into any association of nations to keep the peace of the world and, it seems, is unwilling to assume any obligations whatever in policing the world.

Accepting the verdict of our people to keep out of European quarrels we wonder why it is not possible for us to seek some understanding with Great Britain as to sea rights. Maybe it would be possible for the two largest navies of the world to have a voice to speak effectively for peace and justice.

To cultivate the art of being grateful in small things, as well as in large, is to build a firm foundation for happiness. Have you lately inventoried the things for which you should be grateful?

Practical Paragraphs

By John Edwin Price

THE MAJESTY OF CALMNESS

"I am a prince of peace, rated in a tempestuous world." Napoleon Bonaparte, contending the world, taught by parable to repeat that sentence daily night and morning and whenever incited to irritancy.

What we hold a person to be, is the master of himself is good. The Bible tells us that he that taketh his own soul is greater than he that taketh a city.

And surely if we would dominate situations, control people on bend circumstances, we must first be masters of our own thoughts and feelings.

Napoleon said, "He who would command must first learn to obey." We might change it a bit to read "Obey the dictates of his better judgment."

One of the first steps in developing a strong, dominant personality is the elimination of stubbornness. The offensive personality, while pressing under certain circumstances, is not able to command respect. The Majesty of Calmness is not only the title of a good book but it is a fine example to emulate and contemplate.

In developing the majesty of calmness when others get flustered or downright frantic and useless, you are centralizing and distilling your essential personal powers. Many can testify that by practicing the art of keeping very still when minor situations made others excited, they have found themselves easily falling into the attitude when a real emergency called for calm thinking and steady nerves.

Here again we say as we said in an editorial teaching a million traders, sometimes ago, "Act the part until you acquire the art." It was the writer's privilege some years ago to hold a high strung thoroughbred mare overhome his fears of an automobile. At first she reared up on her hind legs when we hear the chug-chugger. After a while her skin would tremble but she would stay by, not prancing but sidways with her back feet. Finally a middle aged horse was led up to and past the machine while the mare looked on. She was then patted on the back and led quietly and led up to the noisy, vibrating hunk of iron. Inwardly, she was evidently still very frightened—as could be seen in her glaring eyes and delicately quivering nostrils—but she walked by like a lady, like a thoroughbred lady. No mere draft horse was to outdo her. Note that the closest observer could tell that she was anything but calmness itself. There is a great lesson here but you can see it out.

Practiced patience with people and things in everyday contacts is a step in the climb to the throne of poise where one may calmly sit as a prince and someday reign as absolutely over the domain of his difficulties as a king of an elder day.

SHOES TO FILL

'My Country, 'Tis of Thee'...

By T. H. MILLINGTON

Japanese Expansion

Struggle Inevitable

Who Are The Japanese?

Is Japan Big Enough?

Does History Repeat Itself?

Masquerade

Fishing in Troubled Waters

WASHINGTON LETTER

Government's Victory in Utility Case Held Blow to Lawyers

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON.—Action of the U. S. Supreme Court in the utility holding company cases saddened many corporation lawyers who have made a tidy sum fighting New Deal laws for big business. The government asked for a delay in these cases pending decision on a single case, and the court upheld the government position.

Heretofore the government legal staff has been harassed by a mass onslaught of suits brought by the best lawyers in private practice.

Cummings

If the next Congress passes another Guffey coal act, and a hundred suits are brought against it, the attorney general, with the weapon the supreme court has given him, can ignore all but one or two of the cases and concentrate on finding up the test case for the government.

Eight justices have said in effect that the attorney general can take on America's biggest corporations and their lawyers one at a time.

* * *

BACK of this decision is a pact begun by Attorney General Homer S. Cummings and his aides when about 50 widely scattered suits were filed against the act by holding companies and operating utility companies, with a promise of as many more to come.

Cummings went personally into federal district court in Washington and asked a stay of several suits filed there until the government could get a supreme court decision on its main case—the suit against the huge Electric Bond and Share Company.

The appearance of Cummings on such errand was greatly deplored by many shining lights of the legal profession—it wasn't cricket.

Opposing counsel, including members of the big New York corporation law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell, became so exercised as to assert that the court had no power to grant such stay.

* * *

THE supreme court now has remanded the issue to the district court. It affirmed the government position that the district court had power to issue the stay and that it was not necessary for the supreme court to decide whether the lower court should have done so in this case.

The possible total of legal expenses incurred in contesting federal legislation of the last four years has been estimated—rather hazhazardously, since no one knows—at more than $100,000,000, assuming all the cases were to be fought up to the supreme court.

RANDOM REMARKS

George Creel,

Fred Ludwig,

Charles V. Crasier,

James Norman Hall,

Igor I. Sikorsky,

Fulvio Suvich,

James F. Freeman,

Jesse H. Jones,

Harry M. Gowan,

Nancy Astor,

J. Fred Johnson,

Herbert Hoover,

CHRISTMAS TIME

Jots 'n Jest

FEBRUARY is usually the least rainy month of the year in London, but this year "Ain't Going to Begin No More" seems to be the theme for December.

* * *

Dr. Erik Ljunger, Swedish economist, believes that South America once was buried under an ice—probably the greatest hangover on record.

* * *

Thief entered a Troy, N. Y., apartment and stole rope from a clothes washer and a clothes-wringer. Probably he wanted to hang a nickel cigar factory.

* * *

In Canberra, the capital of the Australian Commonwealth, no one has ever committed a serious crime. The newspapers there must give exciting weather reports.

* * *

That Atlantic City lighthouse offered for sale ought to be a bargain at any price for harassed Prince Edward of England.

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