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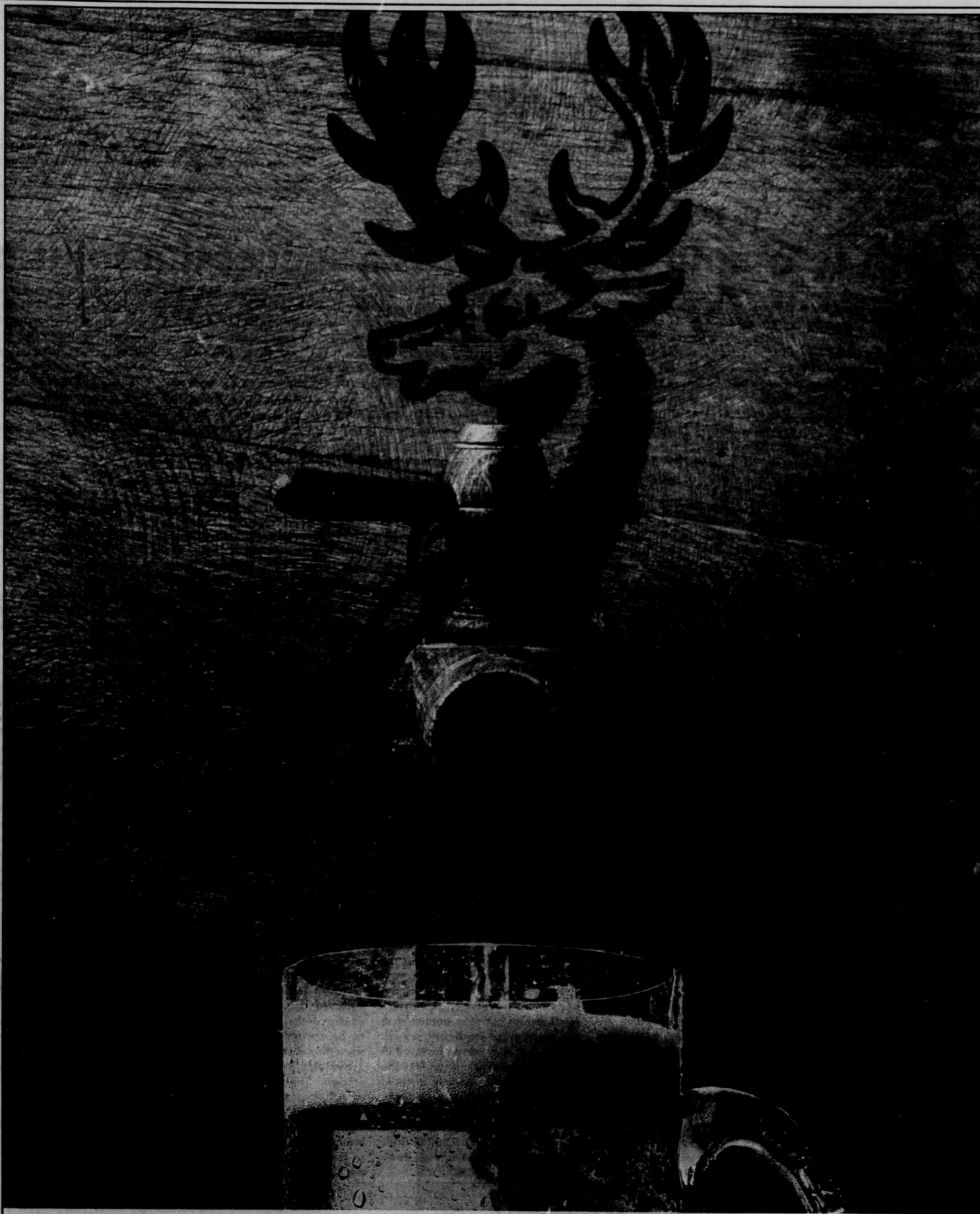
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Tap into tradition.

The year was 1817. Alexander Keith came to the Maritimes after making a reputation in England as a brewing perfectionist. Just three years later, he started his own brewery. Using only the finest pure barley malt and select hops, he crafted each batch with an unrivaled commitment to quality. Brewing slowly, carefully, taking the time to get it right. So it is today. Brewed with the same time-honoured methods and attention to detail that he gave over 175 years ago. Alexander Keith's India Pale Ale.

That's why those who like it, like it a lot.



Passion and Palms

Next week is Passion Week in the Christian liturgical calendar. It begins with Palm Sunday and ends the evening before Easter Sunday. It has to do with reflecting and soul-searching.

Passion for us connotes feelings and emotion: passionate love, devotion, and fervour. But the Latin root refers more specifically to suffering: pain, agony, and rejection. Passion Week is the painful journey of a suffering Jesus — a journey to crucifixion and death. Not a pretty story.

Passion Week began so well, with such promise and excitement — entry into Jerusalem, crowds, hope. But, alas, it did not end well, shattered on the rocks of religious and political reality — humiliation, death, burial. A week of disillusioned dreams and aspirations?

No few books have been written about the meaning of this week. Each of the religious traditions of the West — Christianity, Humanism, Judaism, Islam — has their own understanding of it. It is an event of extreme importance for some, but dismissed as irrelevant, misguided or of no consequence by others.

For Christians, Passion Week is relevant and of consequence. It is a historical narrative with meta-historical significance. It affords a glimpse into the nature of God.

But that glimpse is unsettling. It reveals a nature that goes against the grain, against a seemingly better way of doing things, against accomplishing our goals. Didn't Jesus do everything wrong? We hush to say such a thing, but our own actions betray it.

The very symbols depicted in the story jar our conscience. The contrasts are too riveting. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, a borrowed one. He is the impoverished "donkey-king." Royalty and wealth ride on groomed horses, in expensive limousines, adorned in extravagant clothing — influence and affluence, luxury and opportunity. Flaunted and squandered?

The "crowd" paved his way with garments and palm branches. They shouted: "Hosanna (save us) to the Son of David." Were they expecting victory, liberation, freedom from political oppressors?

By mid-week most had abandoned the hope. A fickle and frenzied lot? But who will blame them? Jesus' "triumphal" entry had not improved their situation. In fact, it might have become worse. Their Roman overlords were as anxious as they were trigger-happy. So Palm Sunday is about the inevitable; but not necessarily failure and abandonment. Perhaps more a "good die young" story.

After all, Jesus had good things to say, even if he reversed our notion of reality, our sense of success and power. He said that freedom from possessions and pomp is more liberating than material security. He said that sharing with others is more rewarding than basking in luxury and wealth. He said that service to others is more meaningful than self-service and self-assertion. He also spoke of real peace, security and rest. He said it comes not from what we do and have, but from a relationship with God.

Yet, we know this, even if we don't always practice it. Is this all Passion Week is about then? Was Jesus "pushing the (moral) envelop," and matters caught up with him? But that seems too simple. Isn't there something more, something deeper here?

Pushing the (moral) envelop is not what got Jesus killed. And that is why all of this is so unsettling. What got Jesus killed is his statement that we should believe in *him*; in Jesus as the *embodiment* of the Truth of life. *He* is the way to God: "the way, the truth and the light." There is no other — no other person, no other thing.

I don't much like the direction of this. I'm being confronted, and I don't like it. It bumps up against my superficial reality, against my here and now. I prefer to identify with the "crowd." It's easier that way. Best not to think. I can end the week, slump in my chair, watch the hockey game, have a beer. After all, Passion Week did end with Jesus' death and burial. Over and done with!

But then, I wake up the next morning. It's Easter Sunday. That too is on the calendar. I have to deal with the resurrection. Now I've got a whole new problem. I've got to spend some time *thinking* about all of this; *think* it through.

No! My *thinking* — my reasoning — will fail me. Instead I will do some reflecting, some soul-searching. Then I'll pray.

No! I think I'll pray first. And, I'll wave palm branches — branches of hope — on Easter Sunday!