

MEN OF TO-DAY

A Man and a Paper

THE story of a newspaper reflects even better than the history of a government the life and spirit of the times. It is given to few public journals to remain the same yesterday, to-day and forever; especially in a country that of late has begun to change its clothes every little while. And sometimes a paper keeps so intimately in touch with the evolution of things that it becomes necessary to transform its entire character—effecting a revolution.

Such a change has come to one of the best-known weeklies in America; Toronto *Saturday Night*, which three weeks ago buried the last vestige of resemblance it bore to the *Saturday Night* of last century. Ordinarily such an event would be left to be explained by the publication whose proper business and funeral it is. But there is much more than the story of a paper in the revolution of *Saturday Night*; which for twenty years was the story of its founder, editor and owner, Edmund E. Sheppard, better known to his associates as "Shepp." So that in those days no man mentioned *Saturday Night* without thinking of Sheppard, the half-weird, usually inexplicable, and always interesting man that wrote the "Front Page."

"Shepp." is now out in California, where for several winters he has escaped the rigours of the Canadian climate. Every summer he gets back to Canada. But for three years he has not written a line for *Saturday Night*; and so far as is known has not yet given vent to his opinions concerning that paper's Protean change from a five-cent exponent of personal journalism to a ten-cent, double-decker symposium on "things in general" covering thirty-two pages and published in the interest of thousands who may never have read a line from the pen of Edmund E. Sheppard.

The enigma of Canadian journalism was born in Elgin County, Ontario, fifty-five years ago; son of a Disciple minister; and on the side-roads of Elgin Co. he got his intimate knowledge of barn-raising and cornfields and line-fence squabbles that cropped out so often in his writings. He had a college education, and while still a melancholy, humorous youth of a restless turn he drifted down to Virginia; whereby if any of the farmers driving to St. Thomas market inquired, "Say, where's Ed. Sheppard now?" the answer was, "Oh, teaching literature down in a Virginia college!" And it's quite likely that he taught a brand of English quite new to Virginia, besides getting a first-hand acquaintance with coloured folk and picking up a lot of knowledge about the Civil War just a few years past. However, indoor text-book English didn't agree with his health; so that he went west and became a "cow-puncher." Shepp. loved to sit in his twilight sanctum in *Saturday Night* and talk of his cow-punching days. He looked the part—that sombrero hat, long black hair and eagle eye; you fancied him on a bucking bronco and apprehended somewhat why he himself was so good at bucking governments and social usages; also where he got the condensed phraseology that made him the last word in a newspaper controversy. For "Shepp." was able to write red-hot from the saddle, lariat coiled in one hand, ready for a throw.

Sunburned off the ranges, he left the trail and went to Toledo; afterwards to Cleveland, where he did his first newspaper work, most of it important assignments and much of it in the form of interviews with big men, even to Presidents.

Some hankering drove him back to Canada; and he suddenly appeared on the streets of his old market town, St. Thomas, where the farmers of Elgin Co. understood that he was the editor of the *St. Thomas Journal*, which for a while became an exceedingly readable sheet. Afterwards he got some experience in London, Ont., on the *Advertiser*.

While still under thirty years of age Sheppard went to Toronto, where he was to set a new pace in journalism. The *Mail* had started a pink sheet in the basement—called *The Evening News* and it looked to Sheppard like a bronco he could ride. He got hold of it and took it over to Yonge St., where he transformed it into a morning and evening paper. Now of all the unusual, uncomfortable sheets in Canada, before or since, the *News* was the most peculiar. This new editor man, from the cowpuncher ranges, who signed himself "Don," had some novel ideas; and heaven only knows how he yanked at the wet blanket of hidebound partyism that gave him the nightmare—advocating republican ideas, even to the election of judges; though it is not known that he ever preached annexation. Then came the Knights of Labour movement and for the sake of getting away from the old party trails, Sheppard took up the cause of labour. The very first Federal election that came along he ran as a Labour candidate in To-

ronto, but was defeated by Col. Fred. Denison.

This however was but an episode in the career of Sheppardism—which soon became a tournament at which the whole of Canada was a spectator. The black knight had entered the lists. The Rebellion of 1885 was just over—Riel captured and the insurrection squelched without Sheppard taking to horse and gun, except in the *News*, which during the little war in a big land printed a despatch reflecting on the morale of the 65th Regiment of Montreal; which was the regiment that ran down from Edmonton on scows to Fort Pitt. A hornets' nest of libel suits swarmed into the *News* office. Sheppard was haled away to Montreal for trial and he plunged the metropolis into such a ferment that it seemed as though Buffalo Bill had suddenly swung in. Whatever the accusation and the evidence, Sheppard got the worst of it. He himself addressed the French jury before the French judge;

a burst of sombre, Ezekiel-like eloquence that should have been preserved as an English classic. From high-class melodrama with a tinge of tragedy the affair passed to *opera bouffe* with the 65th Colonel and Sheppard playing tag and hide-and-go-seek in the border towns; when the cowpuncher editor baffled all the high constabulary of Quebec, till at last he voluntarily surrendered and made his last masterly appeal to the French-Canadian court.

This was in November, 1887. Out of that spectacular turmoil arose *Saturday Night*, which was the first great permanent weekly in Canada. The story of *Saturday Night* was no more and no less than the story of the unusual, untrammelled editor who put into it the genius of a strange life. "Things in General" on the front page became the vehicle for the most outspoken, discursive and unconventional criticism ever indulged in by a Canadian editor. Church and state and society, popular fads, education and people, came in for the most searching analytical treatment. The front page was the last court of appeal for many a reader. When the daily editors had a thing threshed out, as they thought to the last grain of wheat, Sheppard came along with a three-tined fork and dug up a bushel. If once in a while he raked up a little dirt along with the chaff it was because he got down under the surface and ripped up all there was. Incidentally "Don" made money out of *Saturday Night*; but in 1906 he sold the paper. "Joe" Clark, formerly associated with him on the paper as "Mack" became the editor. A year ago Mr. Clark went back to the *Daily Star* and *Saturday Night* got a new corps of editors. Three weeks ago the character of the paper was changed still further by expansion with a paper twice the size at double the price. The last vestige of Sheppard has gone from the paper, which is no longer a personal organ.

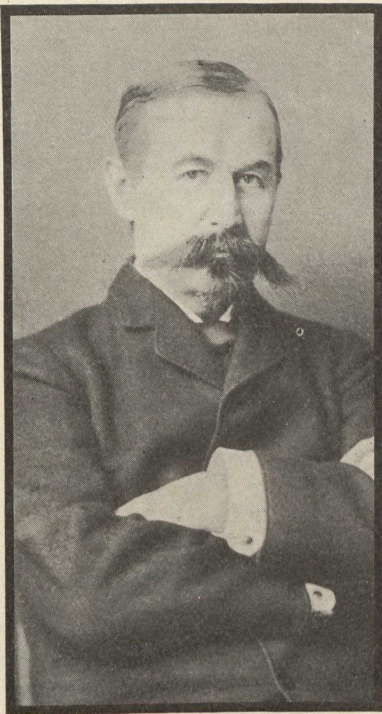
Such is the revolution of *Saturday Night* and the passing of Edmund E. Sheppard.

Expectations

MR. HUGH GUTHRIE, M.P. from South Wellington, may well be regarded as a younger man in politics who now and then gives promise of a brilliant constructive career. His resolution in the House of Commons last week to appoint a Government Commission to inquire into the needs of technical education throughout the Dominion is perhaps the most important deliverance he has yet made in the House, where he has been for three terms. The debate on the resolution lasted five hours and was opposed by the Government of which Mr. Guthrie is a member, not because the principle was wrong, but on the ground that such a commission might interfere with the rights of respective provinces who are supposed to deal with all matters of education. Mr. Guthrie's main contention was that technical instruction is not so much a matter of pure education as of increasing the efficiency of industry and therefore of trade and commerce in the country. The member for South Wellington appeared to good advantage in the

debate and left an impression that he is capable of clear, constructive thinking, as well as of convincing address. In this he has followed well the footsteps of his father, the late Donald Guthrie, who for many years sat for South Wellington in the Ontario Legislature and distinguished that constituency by good oratory and sound statesmanship. When Hugh Guthrie entered the Federal House he built up strong hopes in the minds of his constituents that he would become a star in the government constellation. So far he has not quite fulfilled the expectation. Last session he was chairman of the Railway Committee, which is one of the most important committees of the House. If he develops as much strength in the House as seems to have been foreshadowed in the debate on technical education he must yet be ranked as one of the coming men in the Liberal party.

Mr. Guthrie has many of the gifts of the orator. He has a consecutive, logical mind and is not averse to detail. He has a capacity for hard work and a large fund of physical strength. His ideals are sound and he has been closely in touch with public life for ten years.



Mr. E. E. Sheppard,
An Epoch-Making Journalist.



Mr. Hugh Guthrie, M.P.,
Who Discussed Technical Education.