

A Fire of Destiny . . .

By W. J. FULTON

Ninety-eight years ago this 26th of April, in the year 1849, occurred one of the significant events of Canadian history. It was the burning of the Parliament building of the Province of Canada at Montreal. This spectacular fire was deliberately started by an organized mob, largely of the English speaking population, urged on by a group of partisan hot-heads in protest against the signing by the Governor-General, the Earl of Elgin, of the Rebellion Losses Bill. What led up to this extreme political outrage and what followed from it appears worth recalling.

The rebellion of 1837 and Lord Durham's report to the British Government on its significance brought about the passage of the Act of Union of 1840 uniting Upper Canada and Lower Canada into one political unit, the Province of Canada. British opinion on this act was not unanimous. The old but still politically powerful Duke of Wellington was strongly opposed. His policy would have been to unite Montreal to Upper Canada and let it go at that.

The new Province of Canada came into being in 1841, and its first Parliament was held at Kingston on June 14 of that year. Kingston's position as capital was brief, Montreal being selected in 1843, and a Parliament House provided in 1844.

The World . . .

A DRIP-PROOF TAP

U.K. Information Office

A drip-proof tap, the washer of which can be changed without turning the water off at the main, has recently appeared in Britain. Consisting of only six parts, it is based on a new principle resulting from wartime advances in hydraulic equipment in aircraft. Two washers, made of a new synthetic resilient material, replace the normal one. Sealing is effected by water pressure. After being turned on and off 1,000,000 times in laboratory tests, the equivalent of 40 years of household use—the tap was as good as new.

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MORE SCOTCH—PERHAPS

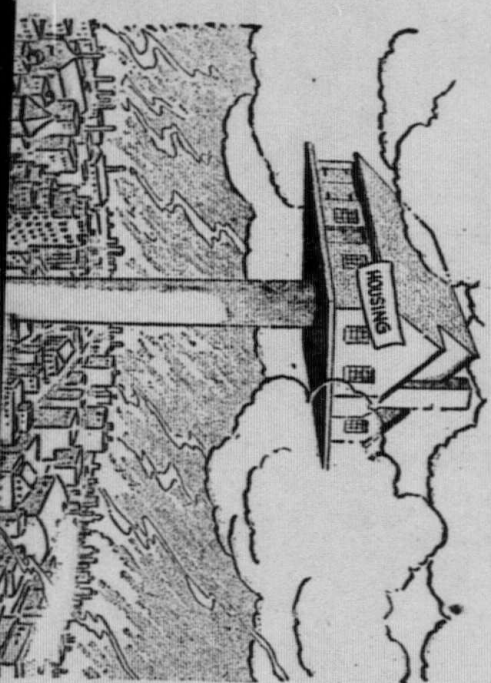
London Daily Mail

Whisky production in Scotland this year may reach half the normal pre-war yearly output. And next year it may be back at the 1939 level.

Distillers are confidently hoping for another 50,000-ton barley allocation for the next four-weekly period, and another "substantial" issue when that is finished.

Before the war, an average of 300,000 tons of grain a year was used in whisky making.

THE TALLEST SKYSCRAPER



This was a plain but imposing building, erected on Yorkville Square off McGill Street, built of limestone, two stories in height, and 352 feet long by 90 feet wide. It was well equipped according to the standards of the day, and included a gas lighting system.

Parliament met here in 1844 after an election in which, to quote an historian of the times, "bloodshed and rioting was a common occurrence and the most unwholesome bribery was practised." Among the new members elected, although in no way responsible for party mistakes, was Mr. John A. Macdonald of Kingston. To Montreal in 1847 came a new governor-general, the Earl of Elgin and Kincaidine, resolved to promote a greater harmony with the people and to pursue a constitutional course with his ministers.

The parliament that met in 1849 during his session, passed the Rebellion Losses Bill, to indemnify for damages to those sufferers who had not participated in the 1837 rebellion in Lower Canada. To this measure brought in by the Baldwin-Lafontaine Reform government, the opposition had directed a violent agitation both in and out of Parliament.

The bill was duly passed, and the Governor-General came down to the Parliament building on April 26 and gave it the royal assent. The news of this action brought about the riots that saw insults to Lord Elgin, attacks on the houses of ministers and finally the invasion and the setting on fire of the Parliament building.

The destruction was complete, and was greatly aided by the ripping out of the gas pipes and setting the gas alight. The property loss was heavy, and more important, the loss of records covering the many details that future historians would have valued so highly, was irreparable. To Montreal it meant the irrevocable punishment for the mad and unpardonable outrage committed by so many of its English speaking residents, of the permanent loss of the capital.

It was now resolved to make the cities of Toronto and Quebec alternately the capitals of Canada, and in the next fifteen years Toronto was the capital in 1850 and 1851, and 1856 to 1859, and Quebec for the other years. The expense and inconvenience of this arrangement soon became intolerable, with the result that in 1857 Queen Victoria was asked to select a permanent capital for the province. Bytown, renamed Ottawa, was the selection.

It was not at the time a popular one. Goldwin Smith dubbed it "the lumber village nearest the North Pole." However, the selection was accepted, and in 1859 a vote of \$800,000 for the erection of new Parliament buildings was enacted, the cornerstone being laid in 1861 by the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VII. The building was completed in time for the last session of Parliament of the Province of Can-

John Dick

ada to be opened on June 8, 1868. This tragic episode of Montreal has been termed a fire of destiny. Looking back over the century since then it appears evident that had it not occurred in the circumstances that provoked it, Montreal would have remained the capital of Canada. Confederation would have still taken place, as the forces that prompted it would not be affected. Canadian history would refer to the Montreal Conference of 1867, rather than that of Quebec. That historic meeting was held there due to the fact that Quebec was then the seat of government and the Province of Canada was host to it. Ottawa would be a city of moderate population interested principally in lumber and mining.

The destiny of a nation, as with man, is often shaped by a minor event.

Who Killed John Dick?

Hamilton Spectator

We do not feel it would be right to pass off a deep dissatisfaction, a general uneasiness, that gripped Hamilton's citizens as those long weeks of the Dick trial went on. But if there was dissatisfaction then, the climax, or anti-climax of the final judgments has created a much more serious sense of futility of law and law enforcement. Even some ridicule.

At a time when people know we can ill afford such an attitude. What does it come down to in the end as this trial closes its books—that is in the eyes of the average individual in this city? What does he feel—even if further hearing on evidence aspects are in the offing?

He is not concerned with intricacies or technicalities of law as such; not much interested in them. Justice is what he feels is justice. The law is his protection—his sole protection.

Just over a year ago a man in this city was murdered and his body mutilated. As far as the public knows the murderer has not been punished; may not have even been brought to justice.

In the last hours of the trial Donald Maclean was sentenced to five years for being an accessory after the fact—in enabling a guilty person to escape "knowing who the guilty person is." That is what the court stated. Only it has never been actually stated, or even indicated by the court, just who "the guilty person" is.

One jury decided it was Evelyn Dick. Later this decision was reversed by another jury.

Evelyn Dick was sentenced to life imprisonment. Donald Maclean has been sentenced to five years because, by judgment of the court, he helped the murderer of John Dick escape. Which still leaves the great question unanswered.

Who killed John Dick? After a year of costly and confusing court procedures there is no answer to this question. As far as the community is concerned the killer is still at large.

So They Say . . .

Man's ineradicable instinct for worship when not directed towards God through some agency becomes twisted and perverted into a worship of other men, as in the case of Hitler in Nazi Germany.

—Rev. Dr. George A. Buttrick of New York.

The veto power of the United Nations is a mistake. It will have to wear out slowly because it

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King, Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie (MG 26 J 7 volume 23) William Lyon Mackenzie - re: articles - Western newspapers n.d., 1909-1948

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