

The Daily News

The Leading Newspaper and the Largest Circulation in Northern B. C.
Published by the Prince Rupert Publishing Company, Limited

DAILY AND WEEKLY

TRANSIENT DISPLAY ADVERTISING—50 cents per inch. Contract rates on application.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES—To Canada, United States and Mexico—DAILY, 50c per month, or \$5.00 per year, in advance. WEEKLY, \$2.00 per year. All Other Countries—Daily, \$8.00 per year; Weekly, \$2.50 per year, strictly in advance.

HEAD OFFICE

Daily News Building, Third Ave., Prince Rupert, B. C. Telephone 98.

BRANCH OFFICES AND AGENCIES

NEW YORK—National Newspaper Bureau, 219 East 23rd St., New York City.
SEATTLE—Puget Sound News Co.

LONDON, ENGLAND—The Clougher Syndicate, Grand Trunk Building, Trafalgar Square.

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DAILY EDITION.  SATURDAY, NOV. 4

COMMISSION GOVERNMENT FOR PRINCE RUPERT

The fiasco which the city council have brought about over the hydro-electric by-law, and the near approach to election time, again turns the thoughts of many citizens to a consideration of government by commission. Mistakes which are common to the butcher and baker and candlestick maker type of city council would not present themselves to a small commission of experts.

The troubles of Prince Rupert have arisen from the Provincial Government's policy of working through the municipalities. That is why the McBride Government has set its face against any departures from the easily manipulated mayor and alderman type of civic rule. Victoria presses the button or pulls the wire, and the party alderman does the rest.

The brightest word on the subject this week comes to hand from Mr. Joshua F. Elder, Mayor of Keokuk, Iowa, in a personal letter to the editor of the News, answering a request as to how commission government had worked out in Keokuk to rescue that city from the grip of party politics. Keokuk was selected because it is a small city, more nearly approaching our own in size. Its population at the 1910 census was 14,008.

The following is Mayor Elder's reply:

"The commission form of government has been established with us for about eighteen months and has proven an unqualified success. As with other cities, it was necessary to have a campaign of education. The citizens were not satisfied with the results of the city government as it had been and the result of our first year of commission form of government proved conclusively the inefficiency of former administrations.

"With us, it has eliminated politics from city affairs; it has given us a much more efficient executive body; it has given us a municipal government that the people feel represents the whole city, and a body of men absolutely independent of any political influence. We are not paying state or county political debts with city offices. It has established civil service rules for the employment of our city force. It has made it possible for the administration to employ whom they please; pay them what they are worth, and discharge them when they please.

"Each of the three commissioners elected by the people have one or more departments for which they are responsible, and the people know who is at fault. As you will notice, under our law, the citizens have the right of recall initiative and referendum.

"When we took office, there was a floating debt of \$22,000; no money in the treasury, in fact, a shortage of the former city clerk, which we collected; no taxes were due for five months. We paid off the floating debt; have reduced our bonded debt \$43,000, with the aid of a sinking fund of \$27,000; have improved the efficiency of all departments, and have done more work on our streets than has been done before in the same length of time. All of this has resulted simply from the fact that the commission form of government readily furnishes an executive body that can apply business principles, if they see fit.

"The number of cities using this form of government has more than doubled since we adopted it, and I have yet to hear of a single city that has made a failure of it."

TWIGS AND TREES

(Toronto Star)

In an address to Varsity students Mr. George Tate Blackstock told, in terms of regret, how he had seen a graduate of the Toronto University at a recent public banquet throwing bread crusts across the hall while a speech was being delivered.

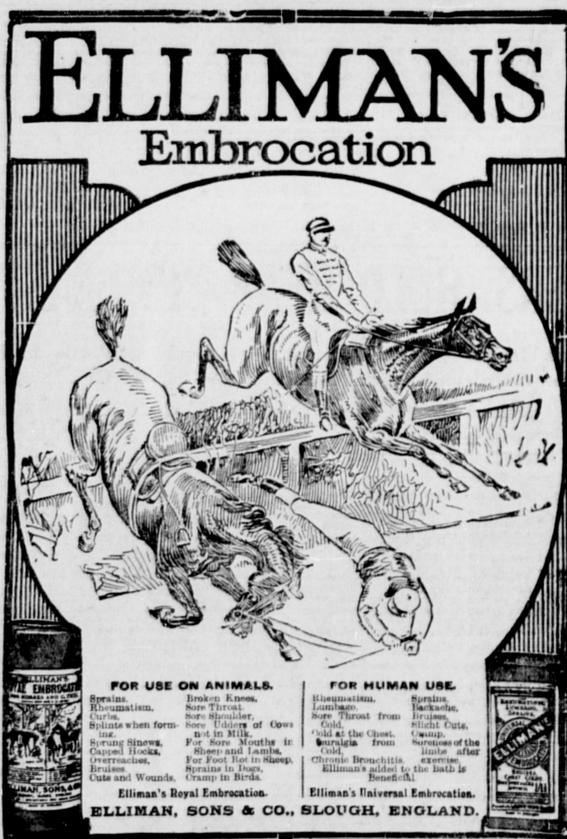
If it be true that as the twig is bent so will the tree incline, we have no doubt that if we traced this bread throwing graduate back to his Varsity days we should find that he was one of the students who used to pour flour from the gallery of a theatre on the heads of

those below. The flour of his youth has been baked into crusts for his middle age.

No doubt Mr. Blackstock is quite right on the point of etiquette which he has raised. A gentleman, when dining out, should not throw crusts at other guests or at his host and hostess. But if anything could be said in extenuation of the offence it would, perhaps, be where the culprit could plead that he was a graduate of Varsity, for what is a man to do with accomplishments he has acquired at that great seat of learning? Suppose a student has for four years excelled every other man at college in the accuracy with which he can shy a crust the whole length of a banquet hall, or suppose that in a downtown restaurant he can summon a waiter from any part of the room by hitting him on his glistening chest with a raspberry tart, can it be expected of him that when he graduates he will abandon forever an accomplishment to perfecting which he devoted four of the best years of his life and which won him distinction and the unstinted admiration of men of his year? It cannot be expected of him that he shall graduate and forever after conceal his proficiency. Give him time and place and a suitable crust and his training will manifest itself.

There is too much that a man learns in University life, which he can never turn to account in later years. No matter how skillful he may become in polishing his fellow beings with shoe blacking until they have not the countenance to deny that they are Senegambians, he graduates into a world where he can get nothing of this kind to do, as people seek shine only for their shoes, and Greeks from Athens monopolize the art of applying it. A student spends four years learning to riot without cause, and gets his degree. If a city needed to be looted, burnt, and the people massacred, he stands qualified for the job, but there is nothing doing, so he enlists in a store to sell ribbon.

There is something wrong somewhere. It looks as if the world will have to change in order to utilize the proficiencies which college life develops. Or the nature of some of these proficiencies may be capable of alteration. For a graduate to throw crusts across a banquet table while Mr. Blackstock is speaking is bad enough, but just what may happen some day when the students of this year, who show marked skill in tearing the street clothes off each other in the street, get into polite society, we decline to contemplate until compelled to do so by the event.



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THE Pillar of Light

By Louis Tracy

They voted this an admirable notion. The girls envied the meal by which to him the doling and sayings of current interest ashore during the past two months. By a queer coincidence, which he did not mention, his relief was again due within a week, just as on the occasion of Enid's first appearance on the rock. The fact struck him as singular. In all probability he would not return to duty. He had completed twenty-one years of active service. Now he would retire, and when the commercial arrangements for the auriscope were completed, he would take his daughters on a long-promised Continental tour, unless, indeed, matters progressed between Stanhope and Enid to the point of an early marriage.

He had foreseen that Stanhope would probably ask Enid to be his wife. He knew the youngster well, and liked him. For the opposition that Lady Margaret might offer he cared not a jot. He smiled inwardly at the convenient phrase he had used when he reviewed the certain outcome of any dispute between himself and her ladyship. He would surprise her.

Brand, the lighthouse-keeper, and Brand urging the claims of his adopted daughter, would be two very different persons. Of course, all Penzance knew that he was a gentleman, a scientist in a small way, and a man of means; otherwise Constance and Enid would not have occupied the position they held in local society. Those unacquainted with English ways oftentimes make the mistake of rating a man's social status by the means he possesses or the manner of his life in London. No greater error could be committed. The small, exclusive county town, the community which registers the family connections of many generations, is the only reliable index. Here, to be of gentle birth and breeding—not bad credentials even in the court of King Demos—confers Brahminical rank, no matter what the personal fortunes of the individual.

Brand it is true, did not belong to a Cornish county family, but there were those who conned him shrewdly. They regarded him as a well-meaning crank, yet the edict went forth that his daughters were to be "received," and received they were, with pleasure and admiration by all save such startled elderly mammas as Lady Margaret Stanhope, who expected her good-looking son to contract a marriage which would restore the falling fortunes of the house.

All unconscious of the thoughts fitting through his brain, for Brand was busy trimming a spare lamp, the two girls amused themselves by learning the semaphore alphabet from a little hand-book which he found for them.

When the night fell, dark and low, the lamp was lighted. They had never before seen an eight-wicked concentric burner in use. The shore lighthouses with which they were better acquainted were illuminated by electricity or on the catoptric principle, wherein a large number of small Argand lamps, with reflectors, are grouped together.

To interest them, to keep their eyes and ears away from the low-water ebb of the reef, he explained to them the capillary action of the oil. Although they had learnt these things in school they had not realized the exactness of the statement that oil does not burn, but must first be converted into gas by the application of heat. On the Gulf Rock there were nearly 3,000 gallons of colza oil stored in the tanks beneath, colza being used in preference to paraffin because it was safer, and there was no storage accommodation apart from the light-house.

Requiring much greater heat than mineral oil to produce inflammable gas, the colza had to be forced by heavy pressure in the cistern right up to the edge of the wicks, and made to flow evenly over the rims of the burner, else the fierce flame would eat the metal discs as well.

"You must go to bed early. Sleep in my room. You will soon forget where you are; each of the bunks is comfortable. Now I will leave you in charge of the lamp whilst I go and lock up."

They laughed. It sounded so homelike. "Any fear of burglars?" cried Enid. "Yes, most expert cracksmen, wind and rain, and—sleet," he added, quietly. "I must fasten all the storm-shutters and make everything snug. Don't stir until I wake you in the morning."

"Poor old dad!" sighed Constance. "What a vigil!" He was making new entries in the weather report when she remarked, thoughtfully: "It is high-water about half past one, I think."

He nodded, pretending to treat the question as of no special import. "From an appearance there will be a heavy sea," she went on. "Just an ordinary bad night," he said coolly. "Do the waves reach far up the lighthouse in a gale?" she persisted. Then Brand grasped the situation firmly.

"So that your slumbers may be peaceful," he said, "I will call your kind attention to the fact that the Gulf Rock light has appeared every night during the past twenty-five years or since a date some forty years before you were born. Constance! It contains 4,000 tons of granite and is practically monolithic, as if it were carved out of a quarry. Indeed, I think its builder went one better than nature. Here are no cracks or fissures or undetected flaws. The lowest course is bolted to the rock with wrought-iron clamps. Every stone is dovetailed to its neighbors, and clasped to them with iron, above, below and at the sides. If you understood comic sections I could make clearer the scientific aspect of the structure, but you can take it from me you are far safer here than on a natural rock many times the dimensions of this column."

"That sounds very satisfactory," murmured Enid, sleepily. "I am overwhelmed," said Constance, who grasped the essential fact, but he had not answered her question. Soon after nine o'clock he kissed them good-night. They promised not to sit up talking. As a guarantee of their good behavior, Enid said she would ring the electric bell just before she climbed into her bunk.

The signal came soon, and he was glad. He trusted to the fatigue, the fresh air, the confidence of the knowledge that he was on guard, to lull them into the security of unconsciousness. The behavior of the mercury puzzled him. In the barometer it fell, in the thermometer it rose. Increasing temperature combined with low pressure was not a healthy combination in January. Looking back through the records of several years, he discovered a similar set of conditions one day March 1891. He was stationed then on the Northeast coast and failed to remember any remarkable circumstances connected with the date, so he consulted the lighthouse diary for that year. Ah! Here was a possible explanation. The chief-keeper, a stranger to him, was something of a meteorologist.

He had written: "At 4.15 p.m. the barometer stood at 27.16 degrees and there was a heavy sea and a No. 7 gale blowing from the S. E. W. About five o'clock the wind increased to a hurricane and the sea became more violent than I have seen it during five years' experience of this station. Judging solely by the clouds and the flight of birds, I should imagine that the cyclonic centre passed over the Scilly Isles and the Land's End."

"The next day," he read on. "A steady northeast wind stilled the sea most effectually. Within twenty-four hours of the first signs of the hurricane the Channel was practicable for small craft. A fisherman reports that the coast is strewn with wreck-ages."

Brand mused over the entries for a while. With his night glasses he peered long into the teeth of the growing storm to see if he could find the double flash of the magnificent light on the Bishop Rock, one of the Atlantic breakwaters of the Scilly Isles. It was fully thirty-five miles distant, but it flung its radiance over the waters from a height of 143 feet, and the Gulf Rock lamp stood 150 feet above high-water mark. A landsman would not have distinguished even the near revolutions of the St. Agnes light, especially in the prevalent gloom, and wisps of spindrift were already striking the lantern and blurring the glass.

Now—he looked at the clock after midnight—there was a sustained screech in the voice of the tempest which he did not remember having heard before. At last the explanation dawned on him. The hurricane was there, a few feet away, shut off from him by mere sheets of glass. The lighthouse thrust its tall shaft into this merciless turmoil with grim steadfastness, and around its smooth contours poured a volume of unearthly melody which, some and surge up from the broad base and was flung on into the darkness by the outer sweep of the cornice.

The wind was travelling seventy, eighty, maybe a hundred miles an hour. Not during all his service, nor in earlier travels through distant lands, had he ever witnessed a storm of such fury. He thought he heard something crack overhead. He looked aloft, but all seemed well. Not until next day did he discover that the wind-vane had been carried away, and wrought-iron shank nearly two inches thick having snapped like a piece of wood at the place where the tempest had found a fault.

He tried to look out into the heart of the gale. The air was full of flying foam, but the sea was beaten flat. If a glowing monster beneath tried to fling a defiant wave, the tornado, the whole mass of water, torn from its surface and flung into whirling masses. Some of these adventurers, forced up by the reef, hit the lighthouse with greater force than many a cannon-ball fired in battles which have made history. Time after time the splendid structure winced beneath the blow.

If Stephen Brand were ever fated to know fear he was face to face with the ugly phantom then. The granite column would not yield, but it was quite within the bounds of possibility that the entire lantern might be carried away, and he with it. He thought, with a catching of his breath, of the two girls in the tiny room beneath. For one fleeting instant his mortal eyes gazed into the unseen. But the call of duty restored him. The excessive draught affected the lamp. Its flame had to be checked. With a steady hand he readjusted the little brass screws, and he was so perfectly indifferent to all this paraphernalia. Just little brass screws, doing their work, and heeding naught beside. Suddenly there came to him the triumphant knowledge that the pure white beam of the light was bearing its path through the savage assault as calmly and fearlessly as if it lit up the ocean winds on a summer night of moonlight and soft zephyrs.

"Thank God for that!" he murmured aloud. "How can a man die better than at his post?" The ring of iron beneath caught his ears. He turned from the lamp. Constance appeared, pale, with shining eyes. She carried the lantern. Behind her crept Enid, who had been crying; she strove now to check her tears.

"Is this sort of thing normal, or a special performance arranged for our benefit?" said his daughter, with a fine attempt at a smile. "Oh, dad, I am so frightened," cried Enid. "Why does it howl so?"

CHAPTER VI
THE MIDDLE WATCH
It says a good deal for Stephen Brand's courage that he was able to laugh just then, but it is a fine thing for a man, in a moment of supreme danger, to be called on to comfort a weeping woman.

The next minute might be their last. Enid was fully conscious. Even before the girls reached his side he felt a curious lifting movement of the whole frame of the lantern. Steel and glass alike were yielding to the sustained violence of the wind-pressure. Well were they molded, by men whose conscience need harbor no reproach of dishonest craftsmanship; they were being tested now almost beyond endurance.

Some natures would have found relief in prayer. Gladly would Constance and Enid have sunk on their knees and besought the Master of the Winds to spare them and those at sea. But Brand, believing that a catastrophe was imminent decided that in order to save the girls' lives he must put their alarm then or lose an unnecessary instant. The light—that was impossible personally. If given the least warning, he would spring towards the iron rail that curved by the side of the stairs to the service-room, and take his chance. Otherwise he would go with the lamp. There was no other alternative. The girls must leave him at once.

The laugh with which he greeted their appearance gave him time to scheme. "I ought to scold you, but I won't," he cried. "Are you plucky enough to descend to the kitchen and make three nice cups of cocoa?" Just think what it cost him to speak in this bantering way, careless of words, though each to all three. His request had the exact effect he calculated. For once, Constance was deceived, and looked her surprise. Enid, more volatile, smiled through her tears. So it was not quite as bad as they imagined, this gale. Their father could never be so matter-of-fact in the face of real peril to all of them. Cocoa! Fancy a man giving his thoughts to cocoa whilst they were expecting the lighthouse to be hurled into the English Channel.

He turned again to manipulate the brass screws. "Now, do not stand there shivering," he said, "but harden your hearts and go. Use the oil stove. By the time it is ready—"

"Shivering, indeed!" cried Enid. Constance, of that he had no doubt let him see the family motto: "A monopoly of the family motto." "A monopoly of the family motto," she cried. "Down you go, Enid," she cried. "He shall have his cocoa, poor man!" He looked over his shoulder and caught his daughter glancing at him from the well of the stairs. "Bad night," he shouted cheerfully, and he cheated her quick intelligence a second time. They were gone. Perchance it was his last sight of them in this life. His last sight of the stalwart frame-work creaked. Once it moved so restlessly that the curtain rings jingled. Then he remembered the words of Isaiah: "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the heat, when a shadow from the terrible ones is as a blast against the wall."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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