A PROPOSED PLAN FOR AN INVARIABLE CALENDAR

Prof. L. A. Grosclaude Offers an Interesting Suggestion to Solve the Troubles of the Present Division of Days.

"WHAT day does the Fourth fall on this year?"

Is that not a question that most of us have to ask from year to year? To find the day on which the Fourth, or any other recurring date, falls, we have to make hurried examinations of our calendars to discover whether the day will fit in conveniently with our other family or social arrangements.

The chief cause of the trouble that has become so constitutional as to seem impossible of rectification is the fact of the year possessing an odd-number day as well as the necessity of adding an extra day every fourth year for Leap Year.

The various inconveniences, anomalies, and annoyances thus continually arising in our daily reckonings have been borne patiently, but patience becomes exhausted, and in these days of reform people are demanding some change. So the whole subject of the possibility of securing a simplified calendar has been under consideration at the meeting in London this week of the International Chambers of Commerce.

Delegates to this "congress" were sent by the United States Government and many of the Chambers of Commerce and business organizations of the country; the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce of the City of New York being Samuel W. Fairchild and William J. Schieffelin.

The idea of having months actually of equal length is, of course, as the calendar is presently constituted, an impossibility; but the proposition discussed at the London congress will just about accomplish that very thing, and in a most practical manner, which, it is believed, will "change but very little our actual habits," a point of considerable importance.

The proposed plan, indeed, seems so simple that one is surprised that it was never thought out before. But the idea is not entirely new. In April, 1900, Prof. L. A. Grosclaude, at a meeting of the Section d'Horlorgerie, *Société des Arts* in Geneva, held a conference on the great necessity of reforming the Gregorian calendar. His proposition received wide publicity in the press in Switzerland, France, Belgium, and Germany, for it was found to dispose of the whole problem in a satisfactory manner as well as reaching a solution that had so long been sought.

The great publicity thus given to Prof. Grosclaude's project had the good effect of bringing it to the attention of M. G. S. de Clercq, who, inspired by the Genevan's plan, proposed it to the Industrial and Commercial Society of Holland, in Harlem.

Soon thereafter M. de Clercq published a report which stated that the society would propose to the meeting of the International Chambers of Commerce in London the adoption of the following resolutions:

(1) That the first day of Easter should fall on the first Sunday after the 4th of April, this being in harmony with the wish of the Deutscher Handelstag.

(2) That in the interest of commerce and industry the Gregorian calendar should be simplified in the spirit of the one described by Prof. Grosclaude of Geneva.

(3) That the introduction of the calendar modified in this manner may be generalized as much as possible.

M. de Clercq's report having been sent to all the Chambers of Commerce in Europe it at once received much enthusiastic support. An active propaganda for the revised calendar, which was designated the "Normal Calendar," began, and many articles on the subject were published, and it secured the approval of a meeting held in Berlin to consider it.

Prof. Grosclaude, whose original proposition is thus favored, was for fifteen years a resident of New York City—from 1843 to 1857—where his parents resided.

Prof. Grosclaude proposed that the quarters should be composed of ninety-one days each, as this number is divisible by seven, each quarter being thus composed of thirteen weeks exactly. The two first months of each quarter would have each thirty days and the third one thirty-one. This gives us in all for the year 364 days.

Prof. Grosclaude, however, proposed to intercalate between Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 a day to be called New Year's Day, and for leap years he would place another day between June 31 and July 1, which he would call "Leap Day."

Concerning the subdivision of the year into smaller unities various views had been put forward, according to the manner in which the number 364 could be decomposed.

Some had proposed thirteen months of four weeks; others would have preferred fifty-two weeks without reference to months. Prof. Grosclaude proposed, as indicated, four quarters of thirteen weeks each, as he believed that the other suggestions would cause even more inconvenience than those of the old calendar, introducing a "complete disarray of our habits," and in the former case would necessitate new names for the months and would bring many complications into commercial calculations.

Merchants and bankers, who have been accustomed to calculate interest as if all the months had thirty days, would find that with the new calendar this arrangement of reckoning would become a reality, because the four thirty-ones of the new calendar are actually Sundays.

The number of days from one date to another would also be easily counted. Drafts payable at the end of the month would be always paid on the 30th, and settlements could be made invariably at regular intervals, twice, four, or twelve times a year. All these points appear at a glance in Prof. Grosclaude's graphic diagram of his "Invariable Calendar."

Possibly the greatest reform contemplated by Prof. Grosclaude is the absolute fixing of the date of Easter.

There seems really no reason, he says, why this religious festival should still be controlled by the moon. The flexibility, or variability, of Easter has been the cardinal sin of our venerable calendar.

When it is extended beyond its earliest date, the lengthening of the school term to five weeks becomes possible, much to the disgust of the school boy when it occurs. It it comes too early havoc may be wrought on the Spring bonnet, and it may bring woe to our current appointments. If it is too late equally dire consequences may follow.

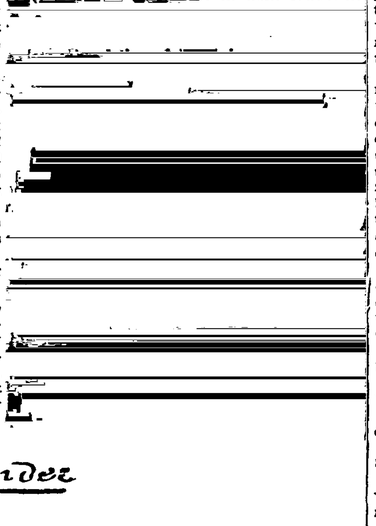
Huge financial losses have resulted from this uncertain nature of Easter. In certain localities, where business contracts, such as leases, run from Easter to Easter, one can see how peculiarly it will work. Many attempts have been made to reform this defect, the most notable effort having been made at Leipsic, to accommodate its famous fair, but it proved a failure. Now comes Prof. Grosclaude's plan to have it fall on the 7th of April, an invariable date which would also always be a Sunday, and which has received general approval.

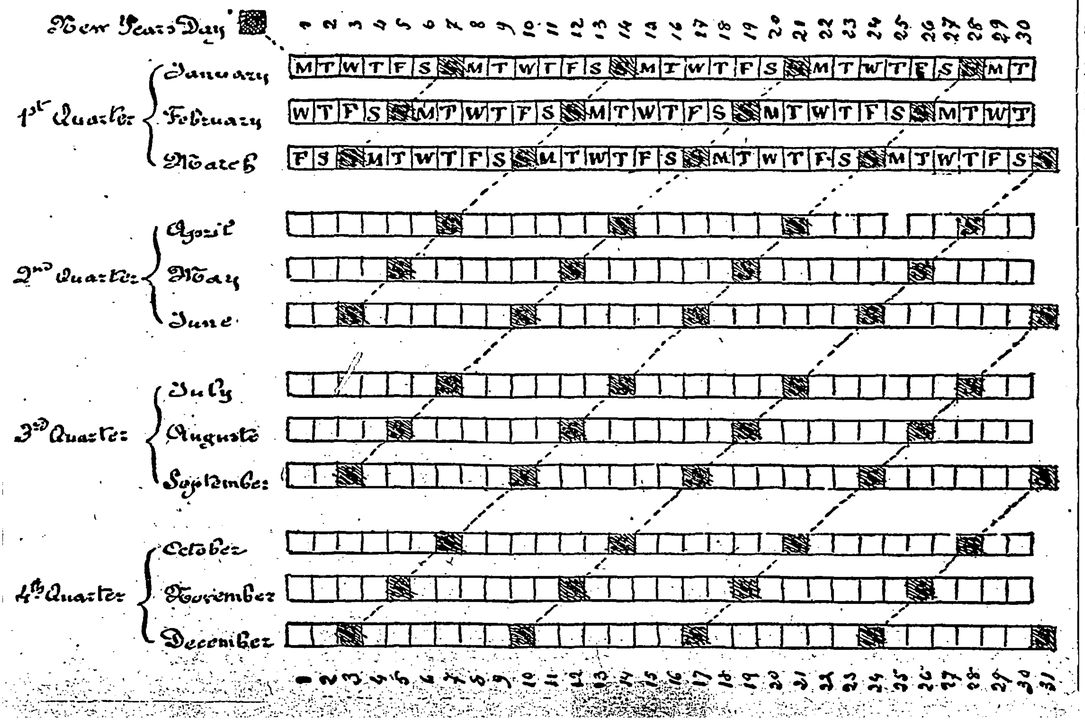
The great advantage of the new calendar, as proposed by Prof. Grosclaude, would be that the same days of the week would correspond with the same date of the month every year in succession—all decisions or events fixed from time to time being available for the following years.

No longer would it be necessary to have to await the decisions of high authorities concerning the opening of law courts, schools, universities, as well as the fixing of National festivals.

At the commencement of the year there would, apparently, be one week comprising eight days. But the supplementary day, being New Year's Day, which is generally appropriated to holiday occupations, and not to works of labor, would not introduce a week without "the usual day of rest."

New Year's Day would become a sort of extra-calendar day, being sandwiched in between the last calendar day of the old and the first of the new year. It would be a festal day, marking time, as it were; the same festal idea being proposed for the extra day of leap years to





ment of the year, and put it, for instance, on the Winter solstice or the Spring equinox? I think not, for two reasons. We have now an abundant stock of precious results in statistics concerning exports, imports, births, deaths, prices, &c. These would be then of little value, all comparisons being rendered very difficult. It would not be possible *for meteorologists to change the place of* the year.

"And if the first half year would commence on the Spring equinox, the second would not coincide with the Autumn equinox because the seasons are not of equal length. If we see in an almanac that the seasons commence (new style) the 19th of March, the 21st of June, the 23d of September, the 22d of December, it is not very difficult to conclude that the seasons have 93, 93, 90, and 89 days, leaving aside the fraction of a day."

A study of the diagram of the new calendar is interesting. "To keep this calendar in mind," says the professor, "it will be sufficient to remember a single quarter by one of the following methods:

"First Sundays of the three months—7, 5, 3.

"First days of these months: Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

"The 30th of these months, settlement day: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday.

"All the dates of 31 (four in all) are Sundays.

"The 15th of the month, settlement day very often used, just as the first of the month, Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

"If the 16th is preferred, just as the 30th, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday."

In the calendar he has proposed all dates would become fixed, and it would be very easy to find all the Sundays of the year. It would suffice to take all the multiples of 7 diminished by 30 and 60, respectively, for the second and third months of the quarter. As an example we will take 42, which is 6 times 7. We have 42, which minus 30 equal 12. That means that the 12th of February, May, August, and November, would be Sundays. Again 77 minus 60 equals seventeen. The 17th of March, June, September, and December would also be Sundays.

"Another very simple method consists in remembering the numbers 7, 5, and 3, which correspond to the first Sundays of the three months of the quarter.

"Another particularity is that the last day of each quarter would be a Sunday. Commercially speaking, therefore, we may say that each month would be composed of thirty days. This would greatly simplify the reckoning of interests and countcurrents."

Commercially, too, "it seems very handy to have in the year twelve months of thirty days plus one day (Sunday) at the end of each quarter. The reckoning of interest may be made with a great number of fixed divisors. When this reckoning is made with fractioning the month, as this is the case with savings banks and other establishments, there are a great number of fixed divisors with twelve months and very few with thirteen, only 3¼ and 6½ per cent. The proposition for a year of thirteen months, therefore, would certainly not be accepted by bankers, merchants, and other business men." HEDLEY P. SOMNER.

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