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THE INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY  
1832 - 1876

by

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Part II  
Provincial Railway  
Construction  
1852-1866

The refusal of the Imperial Government in 1852 to sanction and guarantee an Intercolonial Railway according to the proposals of the British North American Provinces effectively killed all hopes for an early commencement of such a railway enterprise, but it definitely did not annihilate the colonial desires to authorize, construct, and operate railways. Colonial statesmen, as Joseph Howe, Francis Hincks, Georges Cartier, were well aware of the advantages of this most modern method of transportation, and felt that their provinces could not compete in the world of industry, trade, and commerce without railways. Closely connected with the United States and Great Britain, two countries now constructing railways at an enormous rate, the Canadian provinces must have been considerably influenced by the spirit of the current railway-building era. Accordingly, the Provinces of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, almost immediately, on their own initiative, commenced individual policies of railway construction. Under the impetus of this enthusiasm there occurred the first great era in Canadian railway building, roughly from 1850 to 1860.

An attempt will be made in this Part merely to deal with those parts of this movement which directly concern the future Intercolonial railway, namely - the Grand Trunk Railway in Canada (incidentally) the New Brunswick Railway, and the Nova Scotia Railway. The latter will be treated at the greatest length, owing to the fact that its main line was to be incorporated into the main line of the Intercolonial Railway, and the fact that more materials are available pertaining to the details of its construction and operation. Mention will also be made of the subsequent negotiations with the Imperial Government up to 1867, as well as a general survey of the economic activities of the provinces in the early 1860's, to prepare a background for the final completion of the Intercolonial Railway, and to complete the story to 1867.

Canada began immediately to authorize the greater part of her portion of the main trunk line through the provinces. Sir Francis Hincks had met a Mr. Jackson of the Brassey firm of railway constructors while in England, with the result that Messrs. Peto, Betts, Jackson and Brassey were given a charter to construct the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada from Sarnia to Trois Pistoles, east of Quebec city (1).

The necessary legislation was enacted in 1852. After many financial

difficulties, and after many loans from the Government of Canada, the railway was completed, in 1860, to Riviere du Loup, 120 miles east of Quebec, which became the eastern terminus of the Grand Trunk Railway.

The same firm of English contractors had also impressed the Government of New Brunswick with its resources and ability, and, accordingly in 1852, entered into a contract to build the New Brunswick portion of the old European & North American Railway from the Maine Boundary to the Nova Scotia Boundary (2).

Surveys were completed in 1853, and in the same year, Lady Head turned the first sod on September 14, amidst much local enthusiasm at St. John, N.B. (2). Construction immediately proceeded, but in the next year the financial crisis, universally attributed to the Crimean War, obliged the contractors to cease their operations. Of the work accomplished, the greater part lay between Moncton, on the Petitcodiac River and Shediac, on Northumberland Strait, while a small amount of grading had been performed at the St. John end.

In 1856 the contractors definitely retired from the contract, and the Government of New Brunswick purchased what road there was for the sum of \$450,000 from the said contractors, and commenced operations under its own supervision (2). Three commissioners were appointed in 1857, and in that year the section between Moncton and Shediac was completed under a contract which had been let on August 1, 1856. A further piece of three miles out of St. John eastward was opened on March 17, 1857. In the following May, the three first appointed commissioners were replaced by Messrs. R. Jardine, R. C. Scovill, and George Thomas, who retained their positions until June, 1865.

The remaining part of the road which was to be built at that time was completed in the following sections: (2)

St. John - Rothesay: 9 mi. June 1, '58  
Rothesay - Hampton: 13 mi. June 8, '59  
Hampton - Sussex: 22 mi. Nov. 12, '59  
Sussex - Moncton: 45 mi. Aug. 1, '60

This completed the line from St. John to Shediac, amounting in all to 108 miles. In 1861, the total amount expended on construction and other capital investments was \$4,548,564.59, which works out at a rate of \$42,116.34 per mile. A short account of the New Brunswick Railway in 1862 states that it was "of superior quality, well-built, well-drained, well-ballasted, with wider cuttings and embankments than the Nova Scotia and Canadian lines, and, therefore, not costing so much for yearly up-holdence and improvements". (3)

It will be noticed that the railway construction policy of New Brunswick, as thus carried out, did not coincide with the Imperial Government's desire for an Intercolonial Railway, based on military considerations, but rather seemed to be directed towards the fulfilment of the European & North American scheme initiated at the Portland Convention. New Brunswick could not possibly have sunk over four million dollars in a line up her east coast, for which the former alternative would have called. The great majority of her population, mostly agriculturists, were centred in the west, in the St. John Valley, as were likewise her principal towns, St. John and Fredericton. St. John was the premier port, and any railway constructed in the province, for the province, must have connected with that city. New Brunswick was never very partial to the north-east shore route, for her principal interests lay in the south and in the St. John Valley, which was ideal for agriculture, the province's foremost occupation. In the meantime nothing was done about the portions between St. John and Maine, and Moncton and Nova Scotia, until 1864, when surveys were authorized for those stretches. (2). Companies were formed to construct them, but prac-

tically nothing was constructed prior to Confederation. At this date, the New Brunswick Railway proper was under the General Superintendency of Lewis Carvell.

Nova Scotia likewise early formulated her own policy of railway building, and she had very definite ideas as to what she required and what she intended to construct. The policy was to construct just so much of the contemplated main line of the Intercolonial Railway as coincided with her own interests and as lay within her resources. Halifax, the capital and foremost port, from which any provincial railway enterprise was bound to commence, was to be connected eventually with Truro and thence to the valuable mining area of Pictou County, and also with the settled farming district of Windsor and Annapolis on the Bay of Fundy side of the province.

Legislation authorizing co-operation with the other provinces for an Intercolonial Railway was withdrawn, and in 1853 an act was passed in the provincial Legislature creating the Nova Scotia Railway (4). Supplementary legislation the following year authorized the construction of railways in the province and the raising of a loan for such construction. Royal assent was given to this on March 31, 1854. The railway was to be placed in the charge of a board of commissioners, of whom the chief, Mr. Joseph Howe, was a member of the government. In order to take up this position, Mr. Howe resigned the office of Provincial Secretary. His colleagues were Messrs. J. McCully, Wm. Pryor, P. N. Cunningham, J. H. Anderson, and T. S. Tobin (6). According to their first report, they met for the first time on April 5, of the same year.

They had much work to do. There was an engineering staff to organize, and there were contractors and skilled workmen to be found before actual construction operations

could be commenced. To make matters worse, "no member of the board had any practical knowledge of railway-making" (2). - yet they were expected to supervise the efficient construction of a railway! It has been a continuous story throughout Canadian history that those who know least about practical matters have the vital and most important say, and railways have been subjected to much mismanagement and many unwise policies on this account.

On May 4, the first contract for grading was advertised, and on June 13, 1854, the first sod was turned at Richmond, just outside of Halifax (7), which was to remain the Atlantic terminus for some time to come. The Commissioners first Report, dated February 6, 1855, addressed to the Provincial Secretary, summarizes the amount of work accomplished in the nine months previous, and states that contracts have been let for three sections, extending over ten miles, and that eighty miles beyond have been surveyed. Four miles have been completed, and "cars run daily from the depot to the four-mile house." (14).

Much difficulty was experienced during the initial stages of construction owing to the fact that heavy embankments had to be formed across the numerous arms and coves of the harbour basin, and that much rock and gravel had to be removed, owing to the rocky nature of the country. To add to the expense, the cost of labour, as was reported, was one-third higher than at any time during the previous 20 years. The cost was estimated to be about \$7840 per mile for grading and permanent way. A temporary station and engine houses were being erected at the Halifax terminus, and two locomotives had been ordered from Scotland. Already, one locomotive was in operation, together with several other miscellaneous items of rolling stock, such as snow plow, passenger coaches, and trucks and waggons.

By the end of 1855, eight miles had been completed to Bedford, opened during July of that year, and over 60 miles had been located and placed under contract (8). Over the completed portion trains were now passing daily, to the number of four each way during the summer months, and three during the winter season. Passengers during the year numbered 30,563. Freight carried included horses and waggons, single horses, mail coaches, barrels, boxes, bags, baskets, iron bars, fish, lumber, tea, tubs, cows, pigs, sheep, calves, stoves, and iron rails, so evidently a very extensive and varied freight traffic was developing. It appears also from contemporary statistics that the item, "horses and waggons", was a very important one.

Grading was by now not only proceeding on the main line in the direction of Truro, but likewise on the Windsor Branch. The Engineer reported that during the year, 1855, the average daily number of men employed was 630, the maximum on any one day being 1242. Such portion of the line as was completed was declared to be in good order and to be withstanding the elements. Several new items had been added to the motive power and rolling stock.

According to the Commissioners' Report for 1855, the revenue derived from passenger traffic was overwhelmingly greater than that from freight, roughly £1659 as against £133, for the last six months. Total revenue amounted to £1898 as against running expenses of £996. At December 31, 1855, however, over £202,482 had been paid out on contracts.

During 1856, the freight traffic steadily increased, but the railway was described by the Commissioners as being yet too short to command the conveyance of the staples of the country. Amongst the revenue items for the year there is an interesting one of £25 for the conveyance of troops. Passenger traffic, of course continued to gain, and some 50,844 persons were carried during the year (9).

The complaint was being made that labour and other commodities were costly, owing to a general rise throughout the markets of the world. Labourers were seldom paid any less than 5 sh. per day, and 6 sh. per day was a frequent wage. Masons usually made 10 to 12 sh. per day. The average number of men daily employed was 1622 (9).

There was no attempt at false economy in construction, and the work was reported to be of a durable nature and in excellent condition. There were no manifest signs of any want of solidarity. Bridge piers were being constructed of the best stone, including granite, and the bridges were being constructed of iron girders. A work shop was provided for at Richmond, where platform and other trucks were being turned out. From the "Repairs of Stock Account" for 1856 is obtained the interesting information that the three locomotives were named respectively the "Mayflower", the "Sir Gaspard", and the "Joseph Howe". A high standard of safety was evidently maintained to date on the road, for both passengers and horses had been carried without the slightest injury, it was reported.

During the next two years, 1857-58, main line and Windsor Branch were completed (10). Early in 1858 the line as far as Grand Lake, 22.5 mi. was completed, by February 3, it reached the Truro Road 31.5 miles from Richmond, in November it arrived at Schubenadio 39 miles out, and on December 15, the complete road to Truro 61.2 miles was brought into use. In the meantime, on the Windsor Branch, a locomotive and car went over the line on December 31, 1857, and on June 3, 1858, the line was opened for public travel. To accommo-

date the increased services necessary, the number of engines had been increased to 16 (10), of which six were of Scottish construction, and five were from Portland. A machine shop, a substantial brick building, had been erected at Richmond, but engine-house accommodation was still wanting, the house at Richmond only holding twelve engines at most. The passenger and freight cars were likewise augmented in number.

The railway was by now beginning to influence the development of the province and to stimulate new industries. New branches of business were developed, such as the supply of cordwood, timber, plaster, bricks, etc., and to the coming of the railway was due the erection of brick-making establishments in the interior. Considerable quantities of these products were carried by rail to Halifax, and augmented the freight revenue of the railway.

About the end of 1858, a new tariff which had recently been prepared came into operation. It was designed, according to the new Commissioners, Messrs. James McNab, A. Scott, and L.L. Shannon, to secure that which the traffic would bear, and also to secure a fair return to the revenue on the services performed. It was decided to put the rates on trial for a time, and to make modifications if experience should deem it necessary.

The engineer at the time (10), James Laurie, did not believe that the railway had a fair chance to develop the passenger traffic of the country. Railways induce the public to travel by offering speedy transit at a lower cost than that of other means of conveyance. On the Nova Scotia railway, however, the trains were all mixed, and no separate passenger trains were provided, with the result that the saving of time was invariably neutralized by detentions at stations to load and unload freight. It was only recently that sufficient locomotives were

available for a double service, and it would probably not pay all the year around. It was suggested, however, that separate passenger trains might be run during the summer at least. The railway having no intersecting connections, could not depend on traffic from feeder or competing lines, and accordingly was obliged to wait the slow development of the country. Service now included two trains per day each way on both the main line and the Windsor branch. It is of interest to note that, during the period July 1-Dec. 31, 1858, the total receipts of the main line aggregated over £4624, while those of the Windsor Branch over £6977. It is obvious from these figures where the wealth and industry of the province lay.

The remaining years up to Confederation were mainly concerned with the improvement of the railway and the development of traffic, and, accordingly, this period will be dealt with in brief. The only additional piece of rail construction, that between Truro and Pictou occurs at the end of this period, so it will be neglected for the moment.

During 1859, there occurred a deficit in the operation of the road, which was possibly due to the new tariff recently placed in operation, (11), as it was now considered as fixed upon the lowest scale compatible with a due regard for the revenue. Passenger revenue still exceeded that of freight, bearing a ratio to it of three to two. The supply of such articles as cordwood, timber, plaster, bricks, carried over the road was increasing, however.

Some difficulty was experienced in the perfecting and completing of the permanent way. Clay cuttings constantly slipped in, and spring freshets washed away embankments, while the road-bed itself was still settling. Constant attention was thus required by these matters, as well as by the breaking of rails, chairs, and plates. Damage was likewise done to bridge structures by

ice and streams, and protection had to be afforded them. The action of frost upon embankments was particularly damaging. Much work was done during the year in widening the cuttings, and reducing the steepness of embankments. Some consideration was now being given to a branch to Picton, and surveys were being made. During the same year, four large engines were received from Neilson and Co., Glasgow, Scotland, making a total locomotive stock of 20 engines (11) of which four, however, were now considered unfit for the traffic on the road. Of all the engines, 14 were built in Scotland, 5 at Portland, and one, No. 1, at Bridgewater, Mass.

On February 10, 1860, Mr. J. McCully was appointed Commissioner of Railways, (12), replacing the old Board of Commissioners, which had brought the railway through the construction stage. This gentleman, realizing that economies were necessary, felt obliged to reduce the salaries of employees, on account of the deficit of the previous year. He followed this up by reorganizing the working department, and made the following appointments: - Alexander Moir, continued as Superintendent of the Locomotive Department; George Taylor, Superintendent of the Traffic Department; William Marshall, General Inspector of Upholence and Construction.

In 1859, an express train for mails and passengers had been introduced, but in order to maintain a speedier schedule, it had been necessary to pass the smaller stations without stopping. McCully found that this had many disadvantages in a sparsely settled country, as it was too expensive to add local passenger trains, and accordingly he directed that a nearly uniform speed should be adopted by all trains, and that they should call at every station. During the year 1860, the number of passengers carried on the Main Line exceeded that on the Windsor Branch (12),

the figures being 50,570 and 37,454. The quantities of freight were now likewise greater, as well as the respective revenues derived from all sources.

In the meantime many new stations had been constructed on the line and terminal facilities were being provided, including the engine-shed at Richmond which, according to the Railway Report of January 25, 1862, (13) compared favourably with the best constructed engine sheds in Canada and the Western States.

During 1861, passenger traffic took a decided drop, while freight traffic made a healthy advance, with increased revenues. This was accomplished despite the advent of depression in the United States, occasioned by the Civil War. The drop in passenger traffic was believed due to the fact that 1860 was an abnormal year due to the presence in the province of the Prince of Wales, and the consequent increase in public travelling. Hence, by comparison, 1861 seemed a poor year.

The Report for 1862 states: "The telegraph connections which have already been made at several of the important stations on the line, will enable operations to be conducted more satisfactorily, particularly during snow-storms, or in case of accident". This was an improvement which had been recommended for several years now in various reports by the railway officials.

In January, 1864, (14) Mr. James McDonald, the Succeeding Railway Commissioner made his first report. At the same time, H. F. Perley, Civil Engineer, appointed by the Government to ascertain the condition of the road, made a report (16), in which he found many deficiencies, especially with regard to the permanent way and buildings. In his report of October, 1864, Mr. McDonald reported that the constant and heavy work was beginning to tell very heavily upon the rolling stock, especially the freight and flat cars.

Let us now turn to the one remain-

big railway line constructed by the Nova Scotia Railway, that from Truro to Pictou, to serve the great coal-fields area. In 1864, Sandford Fleming had been appointed Chief Engineer of the Nova Scotia Railway, and, accordingly, one of his duties was to oversee the construction of this line. The line was let in small contracts, but the system did not succeed, and some of the original contractors abandoned their contracts (16). By the end of 1865, the Government, in desperation offered Fleming a free hand to complete the work in any manner he desired (17). According to statute law, the work had to be performed by contract, so the Government took the work out of the hands of the contractors and re-let the whole to Fleming, who naturally had to resign as Chief Engineer. The road had to be completed by May, 1867, yet Fleming completed his organization and finished the road on May 31, 1867 (17) despite the prevalence of most unfavourable weather, and difficulties caused by a hostile press in Nova Scotia. The road was severely condemned by these critics who knew nothing, yet engineers described it as "the finest half hundred miles of railway in British North America". His contract price, incidentally was \$100,000 below his own original estimate. Thus this honest and scrupulous Scotsman set a worthy example for future public servants to adopt, but there were few to come who could emulate his conscientious attention to his duties. Fleming still had the greater work of the Intercolonial Railway ahead of him at that time, however.

With the completion of this stretch of 52 miles, the Nova Scotia Railway was brought to a total length of 145 miles. These were built at a cost of \$6,791,012.46, or \$48,834 per mile. (16) The financing of the railway was accomplished by the issue of debentures, which were sold in England for the most part, with interest at 6%. The greater part of

this interest was paid out of the general revenue of the country. Cost of travel in 1862 was 3¢ per mile, first class, and 2¢ per mile, second class. The gauge throughout was 5 feet, 6-1/2 inches, or Broad gauge. (16). The average speed maintained was 20 M.P.H., including stops. With this general description of the Nova Scotia Railway, its separate history may now, perhaps, be conveniently brought to an end.

There still remains, in this part to include a brief survey of further Intercolonial Railway negotiations, which took place during this period. Both in 1857 and 1858 (7), the Provinces sent deputations, and in 1858, addresses, to London, in the hope of winning the support of Her Majesty's Government, but in each case it was obliged to decline, stating that the resources of the Empire were already being severely taxed, and that national expenditure must be maintained within the limits of national resources. Colonial observers at this time believed that the only way in which to fulfil the hope of Confederation was to construct an Intercolonial Railway. In other words, the provinces must be united materially before they could be united politically. The Railway must develop trade and commerce between the colonies, and union would follow.

In 1861, Civil War commenced in the United States, and the proximity of an aggressive and warlike neighbour caused much alarm in the colonies. At that time there had been nothing approaching the "one hundred years of peace", and the United States had been engaged upon a none too scrupulous policy of expansion. Accordingly, the time was deemed ripe for a further suggestion of the necessity for the railway between Halifax and Quebec, as a measure for military protection. (7). A further address to the Queen met with the same negative reply.



Representatives of the provinces met (7) at Quebec on September 30, 1861, and in October a despatch conveying the resulting Resolutions was sent to London. The Provinces were to renew their offers of 1858, and that a delegation should proceed to England to deliver the colonial arguments.

A delegation composed of Messrs. P.N. Vankonghnet, Joseph Howe, and S.L. Tilley (7), proceeded to England, where news of the "Trent Affair" reached them. War between Great Britain and the United States was imminent, and public opinion was decidedly in favour of the railway. The difficult position of Canada during the winter when ice closed the St. Lawrence was emphasized, as well as the exposed condition of the long frontier. The Provinces proposed to raise one-half of the interest on the £3,000,000, estimated to complete the railway, if Great Britain would raise a like amount, namely - £60,000. The Imperial Government declined (18), but repeated Earl Grey's offer of March 10, 1861. This was dated April 12, 1862.

Delegates of the three Provinces met again (19) in Quebec in March and in September. An agreement being reached that Canada should contribute 5/12 of the necessary expenditure for constructing and working the railway, and that the Maritime Provinces should divide the remainder,

another delegation proceeded to England composed of Messrs. Howland, Sicotte, Howe, and Tilley. In London, an agreement was reached, and it seemed as though the Railway was about to be realized at last, when the necessity of a sinking fund, to be established by the Provinces, was put forward by Mr. Gladstone. The Canadian delegation was indisposed to accept this condition, and, as the Imperial Government was prepared to accept only on these terms, the issue was squarely placed upon the shoulders of Canada; seeing that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had assented, and had even passed, by 1863, the necessary facilitating legislation. As a preliminary survey by three engineers had been made a necessity by the Imperial Government, the Canadian Government at this time felt it could do nothing beyond agreeing to the survey (7, 20). In August, therefore, it nominated Sandford Fleming as its chief representative. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia likewise accepted him as their representative, and the Imperial Government, recognizing his character and qualifications, and desiring to expedite the arrangements made the selection unanimous, by accepting him as its representative also. Accordingly, Sandford Fleming was given a free hand to organize and execute the required survey.

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Fleming: The Intercolonial, 1832-76, p. 55.
2. Trout: p. 121.
3. Perley, M.H.: The Progress of New Brunswick in "Eighty Years of Progress", p. 605.
4. Nova Scotia: Journals of the Assembly, 1853, March 28 and 31.
5. Ibid., 1854, March 31.
6. Ibid., 1855, (App. 17), p. 142.
7. Fleming: pp. 56 to 59.
8. Nova Scotia: Journals of the Assembly, 1855 (App. 17), Engineer's Report.
9. Ibid., 1857, (App. 3), p. 12.
10. Ibid., 1859, (App. 13), pp. 179 to 180.
11. Ibid., 1860, Appendices, p. 405.
12. Ibid., 1861, (App. 4), p. 1.
13. Ibid., 1862, (App. 20), p. 1.
14. Ibid., 1864, (App. 1, Part II), p. 1.
15. Ibid., (Part I), p. 1.

16. Trout: pp. 103 to 104.
17. Burpee, L.J.: Sandford Fleming, pp. 99 to 100.
18. Fleming: p. 59 (See also N.S. Journals of the Assembly, 1863 (App. 5)
19. Ibid., pp. 59 to 60.
20. Ibid., pp. 65 to 66.

Part I appeared in the August, 1940, Bulletin;  
Part III will appear in the May, 1941, Bulletin.

### RESUME OF THE MINUTES

#### Parent Society

##### Meeting of September 11th:

Held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Ferroux at St. Lambert. Mr. Ferroux recommended that the Association should renew its attempt to secure the smokestack of a Carillon & Grenville locomotive, and Mr. Nicholls that the Association should advocate the preservation of the locomotive, "Duchess", now in the Yukon. Members informally described, and illustrated with photographs, trips taken by them during the summer; narrow gauge lines in New England, the Erie and Ontario in the Niagara Peninsula, last run (Sept. 5) of C.N.R. Hawkesbury - St. Jerome train.

##### Meeting of October 9th:

Held at Queen's Hotel, New method for the election of new members put into force. Discussion of plans to acquire a projector for locomotive photographs and for monthly "exhibitions". Mr. Cole described in an amusing and informative way his experiences on the old Canada Atlantic and illustrated his talk with photographs from his superb collection.

##### Meeting of November 13th:

Held in Queen's Hotel. Informal discussion. Election of Messrs. Fred Sankoff and C.G. Hamilton to membership.

#### Sixteen Island Lake Excursion of September 29th:

Several members and friends of the Association journeyed from the Tunnel Terminal, Montreal, to Sixteen Island Lake, the Laurentians, travelling over the old Canadian Northern, Great Northern, and Montfort-Gatineau Colonization Railways. Opportunity was given to inspect the new Montreal Terminal and the Mount Royal Tunnel. A "voyage" on the Lake completed the day.

#### Toronto Chapter

##### Meeting of October 4th:

Held at the Secretary's residence. Members shared reminiscences of their summer experiences. Election of an Assistant Secretary and a Program Director.

##### Meeting of October 25th:

An informal meeting at the home of the President. Mr. Maurice Winston delivered an illustrated lecture on "Electric Traction".

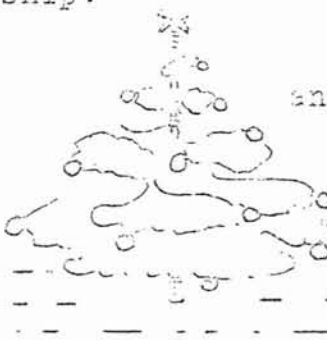
##### Meeting of November 15th:

Annual Meeting of the Chapter held at the home of the Treasurer. Election of directors, as follows: Messrs. Albert Olver, John Griffin, Fred Arnold Browne, Maurice Winston, and D. W. Knowles.

The Executive of the Association  
and The Editorial Committee of the Bulletin

Wish All the Members and Their Friends

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.



EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

R.V.V. Nicholls, Chairman  
John Loye  
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