

The Romance of the Rail

WITH a fluency that was perhaps not inappropriate in dealing with fast-moving railway traffic, Mr. J. W. Fergie, on Monday evening last, gave listeners 20 minutes compact with solid information in regard to the railways. Methought he was perhaps a trifle too fluent: that he would have been well advised to apply the brake and carry his listeners with him at less pace. Nevertheless, he spoke well and vigorously.

Beyond question, the railways have played a major part in the development of the Dominion. Those ribbons of steel have backed up the pioneer's axe and added value in uncounted millions to their lands. Good and fit, therefore, that this service shall be pointed out to the people, so that they may understand how they are served, individually and collectively, by the steady, unceasing service of the railway man.

Perhaps, if a suggestion is in order, the romantic side of the service might be developed more. Figures are such dry things, effective though they be. On the other hand, there is illimitable romance about the railway—romance which still lingers, even in these days of motors. What youngster does not still thrill at the sight of the majestic engine roaring down the grade or piercing the night with its long shaft of light; he sees himself the engineer supreme on the footplate, pulsing with power. Now I think there have been one or two famous speed runs in the Dominion: did not Rous Marten, many years ago, describe a thrilling speed test in the Wellington Province? Would not that make a story? Then what about the ins and outs of safety devices: the tablet system, the Westinghouse brake, the electric impulse and automatic signal, and so on? I am always curious about the things the public does not easily see or hear anything about.

Mr. Fergie is obviously a keen and intelligent officer of the department, and I would venture to suggest that he would be rendering a distinct service to the public and the department if he could, on some future occasion, seek out the romantic side of a great service and place that before listeners. For instance, what are the actions and thoughts of the signal-man controlling the switches in a railway terminal; of

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Bird Month

I FOUND Mr. Eric Lawson very easy to listen to, and his manner quite excellent. Although condemned to city interests, I have always hankered after the country. To be free of commercial trammels and wander in the bush and study Fauna and Flora—attractive young ladies that they are—what an appeal that is! So Mr. Lawson found an immediately appreciative listener when he talked of our feathered friends.

On behalf of the Native Bird Protection Society a short series of talks is being given, to inform us of that society's aims and objects. August has been adopted as "Bird Month." Why? Because then is the help of man most urgently needed. It is the most severe and critical of all the months: the weather is the coldest, food is the most scarce, and the nesting season looms ahead. So there is bespoken for the birds a little extra care from humanity: a little extra food, such as luscious beef suet placed—and this is most important—high out of the reach of the felonious feline. Nature always knows best, and inevitably will endeavour to counteract man's vandalism and destructiveness, declared Mr. Lawson. Obviously the converse must be true that man will achieve his happiest results by co-operating with Nature. He will raise his crops easier and preserve his farm lands better by maintaining suitable forests, habited with the birds that feed upon insect pests, than by destroying that vegetation in an endeavour to "bring in," as it is termed, land that should not be "brought in," but should most decidedly be left "out" in a state of wildness and beauty.

France learned her lesson by bitter experience. She destroyed bird life ruthlessly, and Nature took her toll by unchecked crawling insects and plant disease. Now France is wiser, and her children are taught the duty they owe to birds and how to protect them. We should learn in time. Fortunately this society has undertaken the task, and is



WALTER BROUGH,
a fine baritone scheduled to sing from
2YA on August 1.
—S. P. Andrew, photo.

endeavouring to protect the birds and preserve their beneficial action and reaction upon ourselves. Our birds require forests to live in and the right insects to live on. They require imported pests to be eliminated as well as imported diseases. Research is necessary for the

discovery of harmful facts and tendencies, and to preserve justice and right determination of policies. These objects are most worthy, and I shall rise myself speedily to become a life member, for I opine that finance is always necessary for such work.

And on that point the society is so alive to the need that it is promoting an art union with which to woo the public. No cause is more worthy, and I shall abandon my vows, inspired by past disappointments, and buy tickets to my capacity for the sake of those feathered songsters that please me so when I have a chance to wander our pretty countryside. Mr. Lawson spoke well, with cultivated voice, and I shall await his further talks with pleasurable anticipation.

The International Mind

SOME interesting thoughts on the interdependence of men and nations were expressed by Mr. Frank Leonard, speaking from 1YA on Tuesday. In an arresting talk, which must have held the interest of all listeners, the speaker outlined the fallacy of countries or nations attempting to exist independently of each other.

What exactly is meant by inter-trading of nations? It must surely mean inter-trading of individuals. So that, in theory anyway, a fostering of international trading should bring about a greater knowledge of other countries and a closer international sympathy and understanding. As a direct consequence, again in theory anyway, the chances of wars and international conflicts should be largely obviated. When one stops to consider this treatment of nations by the consideration of individuals one is amazed that wars can be possible. When one firm of contractors, having tendered for a large contract, is beaten by a rival firm, does it send an ultimatum and forthwith mobilise its staff and invade the opposing camps across the street? It does not. What it does is to examine closely its estimates, attempt to ascertain in what department it is weak, and wish itself better luck next time.

Quite possibly the respective heads of the respective firms will lunch together—amicably, well, and, we hope, wisely. Why should not the same principles be carried into effect between nations?

Geographically and territorially the world is so divided as to make it possible for one group of countries to produce foodstuffs, another group timber, minerals and ore; and, a last group is better fitted to make up the raw materials into manufactured articles. The groups themselves are naturally

(Concluded on page 32.)

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