

Personalities and Problems

16--David Blythe Hanna

Who in a Busy Life is Thankful for Two Native Endowments---Mirth and Music

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

THE man from the Canada Iron Corporation took himself off half of the waiting bench in the outer annex to the more or less inward office that leads by a series of labyrinthine manoeuvres to the room normally occupied by the third vice-president and general manager of the Canadian Northern Railway.

He smiled in a sarcastic way.

"Hope you don't want to see Mr. Hanna?"

"Well, I have an appointment at ten. It's ten now. What do you know about him?"

He rolled his cigar 'tother way on.

"Oh, not so very much. I've been on his trail for three days now. This morning I concluded the best thing I could do was to come and camp on his doorstep. He went through here a few minutes ago. Oh, I know where he is."

He clouded himself with smoke, and pointed mysteriously in seven different directions at once.

"Sir William's got him," he said, with the air of one who thinks the end of the world is in sight.

"Heaven knows when he'll get out. But I'm not going to budge from here till I see him if I have to send out for my lunch. Sorry, old chap."

"Oh, don't mention it. Perhaps you have an extra cigar?"

Which he had. We smoked silently a while. Then as time dragged he killed a little of it by discoursing on the comparative life of a steel rail and an iron car wheel—considering curves, grades, traffic and weather. He was selling car wheels. I wasn't.

Pretty soon two other Nimrods came blustering in.

"Haw-haw," sniggered the car-wheel expert. "You'll be a smart pair of Alecs if you tree Mr. Hanna before noon."

"But we had an appointment at ten-thirty."

"Yes, but railroad timetables weren't invented for general managers. They're for the general public. You see, any train has a right to pull in behind time if it wants to and the public can wait till it arrives. But if the public is behind time and the train isn't—well I guess that isn't the railway's funeral. Anyhow, the walking's good."

"Oh, we'll round him up somewhere," said the pair. "Come on, let's count ties a while."

They went. In ten minutes in came a huge personage with shoulders like a French-Canadian bushwhacker, along with a man about two sizes smaller but quite as lively.

"Hullo, Nat!" said the car-wheel man. "What are you doing in this neck of woods?"

"Rounding up—D. B. Hanna."

"Well, I guess you'll have to shoot squirrels awhile. He's in with Sir William."

"He is, eh? Well—I guess we'll go on a rampage through the premises. We'll head him off."

And they went. One was Nat Curry, head of the Rhodes-Curry Car Co., in Montreal. He had cars to sell—by the thousand.

"By George! if those two head him off it's all day with me," said the car-wheel man. "But there's no use budging from here."

After a while two other trailsmen shunted in. They were from Port Arthur; mainly concerned with quadruple tracks and traffic.

"Mr. Hanna anywhere round here?" they asked in a duet.

"Nope," said the car-wheel man. "He's elsewhere."

"When will he be back?"

"Hmh! Ask me something easy."

"Well, guess we'd better beat it."

And they also went.

Some time before noon the interviewer followed suit, leaving the car-wheel expert in the camp.

FOR business purposes—keeping ordinary appointments, and prospective appointees in good-humour—Mr. David Blythe Hanna should have a double. Though a duplicate or even a near resemblance of D. B. Hanna would be next thing to a miracle. The excitement of treeing Mr. Hanna is about equivalent to anything in the annals of backwoods sport. The Canadian Northern building in Toronto is as good as any piece of woods in Canada for an official to hide in. Which is part of the swift, almost sudden evolution of things that has produced Mr. Hanna in the system of the Canadian Northern. If he were to keep all his appointments as rigorously as C. N. R. trains are supposed to do, and if he could always be located when he

doesn't, he would not be D. B. Hanna, "Exhibit A of the Canadian Northern."

"Exhibit A" is his own definition of himself to the Dominion Railway Commission, at its recent inquiry into western freight rates at Ottawa. He was the first employee the C. N. R. ever had. That referred to the year 1896, which to the C. N. R. is ancient history. For when Messrs. Mackenzie and Mann corraled this prairie Scotchman, the year Sir Wilfrid Laurier became Premier of Canada, he was treasurer and lands commissioner on the old Manitoba and North-western, which was the road that Mackenzie and Mann took over when they decided to go into railroading on their own hook. The M. and N. ran from Portage la Prairie to Yorkton. The biggest feature of it was D. B. Hanna—six feet two and as lively as a bull moose. Previous to that capture of a road and a man he had been born in Thornliebank, Scotland; as Scotch as that other "Dauvid" McNicoll, of the C. P. R., from Arbroath, and for his years just as much of a railroad man; for, like Mr. McNicoll, he has been railroading all his life. In his house, near Castle Frank, is a series of friezes illustrating "The Lady of the Lake," done by a Canadian artist. At sixteen he was assistant agent in the Scottish railway service; chief clerk and cashier on the Caledonian; came to Canada in 1882—clerk auditor's office on the Grand Trunk and New York, West Shore and Buffalo Railway; from 1886 to 1892 chief accountant on the Manitoba and North-western; most of all this

time dealing with cash and accounts and first-hand economics.

At present Mr. Hanna is president and director of a whole category of more or less co-related companies dealing in power, lumber, transportation, milling, lands, insurance and finance.

But when D. B. Hanna became Exhibit A of the C. N. R. he was a very easy man to corral. All you had to do was to peer into a box-car or take a scoot over to a construction camp. For the entire system of the M. and N. that grew into the C. N. R. was epitomized in Mr. Hanna. And for most working purposes the system of the Canadian Northern, with its 7,000 miles of rails, its near-transcontinental corporation and its lines of steamships on ocean and lakes, is actively concentrated in the third vice-president and general manager. That's why he is hard to corral. But the reasons why it's worth while to trail him up, even if you have nothing to sell him, till you have him where he can't get out, are the qualities that make the character of D. B. Hanna; and that was never the product of any system or corporate evolution.

Six o'clock of the same day I met the car-wheel man coming out of the offices.

"Ho-ho!" he grinned. "No use. He's half an hour on the road to New York now. He'll be back day after to-morrow."

"Oh! Did you get him?"

"Yes, for about five minutes."

Ten o'clock of day after to-morrow the timetable was again set—barring accidents.

10.05—Mr. Hanna came bustling out; big, cheery and swinging along—going somewhere, as I could see, and moving with the aggressive celerity of a yard engine.

Jovially he shook hands.

"Look here," he said, with a fine Scotch burr, "I'm very sorry. But I find I've got a committee meeting and a board meeting both scheduled for this forenoon. But if you'll come in at 2.15 I'll promise you that nothing short of my own funeral will prevent me from seeing you."

WHEN at the appointed hour I managed to wriggle into the office of Mr. Hanna—a very cheery, roomful place with a desk in the middle, waterfall pictures on the walls and a chair-seat covered with about a dozen various sorts and sizes of drills—I began to breathe easier.

"Are we—alone, Mr. Hanna?"

He laughed like a June morning.

"Tell me—the heifer story," I said, reverting to his Exhibit A days on the C. N. R.

I am not sure that this yarn has ever been in print. It has been much told, especially among railroad men—much more freely than the broadaxe story concerning Sir Donald Mann. I daresay Mr. Hanna has told it forty times in various parts of the world. It's Scotch; and western—and Han-naesque.

Scene: Trip from Portage to Yorkton in the first year of the C. N. R. Train an accommodation, one passenger coach and a string of freights. On board, besides a construction camp crew—Mr. D. B. Hanna who had then been several years in the West and knew how to expect the unexpected.

Not far from Portage he was pointing out a bunch of fine young cattle.

There came a mild bump; which in those days was enough to stop the engine.

"Guess we struck a buffalo," said a joker.

The crew and the passengers got off. They all went ahead to the engine, which had struck a heifer and broken a leg.

"Bill of costs!" said D. B. Hanna, who at once began to wonder how the road could afford it.

The heifer was not dead—yet.

"Call the camp butcher."

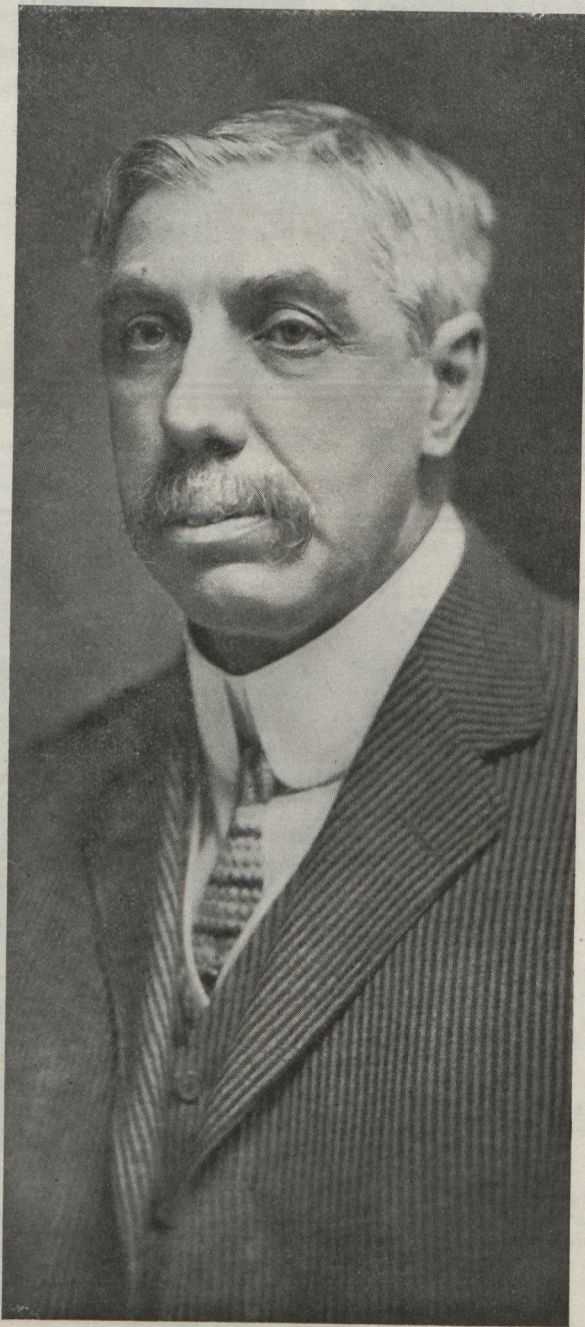
Confab. Also with the engineer—a retired meat purveyor.

Result: The two killed the heifer, dressed the carcass; and on the spot D. B. Hanna sold the meat and the hide to the construction camp commissariat at regular market price. As soon as possible he got the bill of costs from the farmer.

When it was all over he had four dollars to the good.

"If you could only operate all your railroads on that principle, Mr. Hanna?"

"There are reasons why—we can't," said he,



"With a hundred chances, a day to lose his temper he diffuses good humour among other people."