

# The Spotlight

SIR HENRY THORNTON.

FIFTEEN thousand a year more than the thirty-five thousand Hanna has been getting, and the same amount that Kelly was understood to have received from the Grand Trunk—that's the market value of the services of the new head of the to-be-consolidated railways which we all own, and the deficits on which have been regarded as westerners are fabled to regard fifty below zero—you don't feel it. In inches, anyway, Sir Henry is a bigger man than D. B.—as six feet four is to six feet one and a half when D. B. stands on his dignity. Maybe he will turn out to be a bigger executive, though it will be years before he can know the road which Hanna knows the way a mother knows her baby. At least, it can't be said of the new man, as extra-particular critics have said of Mr. Hanna, that he is one of the Mackenzie-Mann crowd, and therefore to be distrusted. As anybody who knows him knows, there never was any substance to the yarn that though Sir William Mackenzie was off the board he was on the job of telling an obedient Hanna what to do.

Gerard Ruel is one of the new directors—and he was an understudy of Z. A. Lash, and a right hand to Judge Phippen while those two were drafting agreements, avoiding snags, and getting their principals out of holes. Of him, respectful things may be said another day. He is on the board entirely because of his present

value and not because of his past affiliations. His present value couldn't be what it is if it were not for his past affiliations, and, anyway, there's no more reason, at this date, for refusing to allow an able man to serve the National Railways because he was once an aide to the two quiet knights of Victoria street, than there is for refusing to allow a mogul to pull a freight train because it once enjoyed a kindred distinction.

IS the new boss an Englishman nowadays, or is he a Yankee who has been at the court of King George? Certain of his former fellow countrymen mourn because he became a British subject. They think it's all right for incoming persons of European nationality not only to swear by their Uncle Samuel, but to forswear everything to which they were politically native, but the idea of an American citizen finding a patriotic home in the land of his forefathers—ugh. Still, it hath been observed that whenever a son or daughter of Stars and Stripes has been honored by any descendant of the horrid George the Third, there has been vast rejoicing throughout the Union. Sir Henry Thornton is a case in point. His knighthood was a special glory to Logansport, Indiana, a city now about the size of Stratford, but quite a small place when he was kicking up its dust with bare feet forty years ago.

As to dates and major movements, Sir Henry Worth Thornton's career has been well summarized already; but what is not yet available is his own account of what it felt like to be heralded as the chief Buttinski of modern times, when Lord Claud Hamilton, chairman of the Great Eastern, brought him to England, with a remark that there wasn't a man in the British Isles competent to run that railway, whose lines are confined to an area less than a quar-

ter the size of Nova Scotia. Lord Claud, brother of the Duke of Abercorn, and therefore one of the "hungry Hamiltons," was as tactless as some other members of his family. All he meant was that, to make the changes necessary to a speedy readjustment to modern conditions of the busiest passenger service into London, somebody who was not tied down to use and wont was needed. Portions of the peerage had been rejuvenated by American importations, so why not the cult of railway management.

MR. THORNTON had the wit not to insist on the superiority with which everything that runs on steel rails is done on the Atlantic's western side. He knew very well that no large city in this continent has as many and as frequent steam passenger trains running into it as British cities of corresponding size have. He knew that

traffic managers like George Shaw of the old Canadian Northern had to go to England before they could believe—that train running in England is on a basis of punctuality with which North America is sadly unfamiliar. He knew, also, that though you might laugh at the dinky little engines with their screeaming whistle, and the tiny little goods trucks that nobody would dignify with the name of freight cars, the dinky little engines made wonderful

speed, and the tiny little trucks were not inappropriate in a country where it is impossible to get eighty miles from a tidal port. So he kept down a tendency to talk about how much better they did things on the Pennsylvania, and confined himself to suggesting improvements that would be beneficent for English purposes and carried out in what seems a perfectly natural, perfectly English way.

It wasn't easy, and when the war broke out, a few months after his arrival at Liverpool street, and he wasn't put on the committee of railway managers which co-ordinated steam transportation for the government, he said nothing, but co-operated heartily—and he was soon called in; and on both sides of the channel became the railway conductor for the empire. Lots of things that were not done in France till 1918 would have been done years before if Thornton had been in the saddle, and the War Office had been in the mood. To many the marvel of the war was not that the English learned so little, but that they changed so much.

Sir Henry Thornton, when he visited North America after becoming a British subject, discussed with supreme tact some of the defects of American railroading, and gave a few illuminating facts as to what was being done in so-supposed sleepy old London even before his time. Seventy-eight trains into Liverpool street before nine-thirty six mornings a week. Five hundred trains a day in and out—that sort of thing makes what some of us like to loiter over as the horrible congestion on Front Street look like Sweet Auburn. Sir Henry Thornton was brought to England to teach. He taught much. Before he has been a year in Canada, and if D. B. Hanna has a chance to look him over with the eye of an expert who sold tickets in the village where Bunty pulled the strings, we shall probably understand that, over there he learnt more than he taught.

