FETHERSTON TELLS ABOUT DIGGING OUT BURIED NEW YORK

The Little Street Commissioner, Who Has Been Too Busy Breaking Snow Removal Records to Bother with His Critics, Gives Some Striking Facts and Figures.

He Is Planning to Perfect a System of Getting Rid of the Unwelcome Gifts of Winter Storms by Means of Sewers—His Loyal Force Eager to See Him "Make Good."

WHO'S Fetherston?

Why Fetherston is the little man from Staten Island who for two weeks has been digging New York out of snowdrifts, digging it out so hard and diligently that not until now, when the end of the job is in sight, would he pause to talk about himself and his snow-shovelling work, which up to yesterday had cost the taxpayers $600,000.

Short, thin and wiry, John Turney Fetherston—to give his full name—wouldn't make a mouthful for "Big Bill" Edwards, the man he succeeded as Street Cleaning Commissioner. Soft spoken, mild-mannered, diffident and unobtrusive but a hustler setting the pace for his men, and a thinker with a mind as quick as a steel trap—that's Fetherston.

He slipped into his commissionership with the city reading the full details of the exit of the jolly, ex-football hero, "Big Bill." He held the reins, high up in his office in the Municipal Building, for six weeks with the public knowing only he was there by the snappy paragraphs telling of the clean-up "Big Bill" was making of the streets in Newark.

Then the snow came down, and at all once the town began asking, "Who's Fetherston, and what's he doing?"

Well, Fetherston has been too busy to answer any inquiry, or pay heed to any criticism. He has been straining on a job that would make a Hercules, fresh from his shovelling feat in the Augean stables, sit up and take notice.

ANXIETY GONE, THE COMMISSIONER TALKS.

But now, as Fetherston himself says, the worst is over, and New York can ride or walk without a chance to grumble or go to sleep without undue fire risk, and our busy little Street Commissioner has got a minute or two on his hands and is not only willing but anxious to talk.

"I didn't care what criticism was levelled at me when we were in the first rush of the snow removal," said Fetherston in his office yesterday. "I was working with all my men at top speed twenty-four hours a day, and I had faith in the fair play spirit of New York, and was willing to wait until the rush was over for any answer that might be necessary. Well, we see daylight, or, rather, clear streets ahead of us again, and now I want to say that I, for one, feel proud of the work the men under me have done.

"This has been a record-breaking snowstorm and we've broken all records in snow removal. We've been nearing a lot for the last ten years or so about the job they've been tackling down at Panama. Well, this snowstorm that tried to make New York shut up shop wasn't picayune in any sort of way. It was built on the scale of the Panama Canal in a certain sense, and the figures are here to show it.

"In 1910 the biggest month's work was done on the canal, and a trifle more than 2,000,000 cubic yards of earth were removed. That's for thirty days' work with the trained army and the perfect mechanical equipment they've got down there. In nine days my department removed 1,150,000 cubic yards of snow, besides the hundreds of thousands of cubic yards we goth rid of by shovelling into sewers. I believe those figures in themselves answer our critics. In 1912 324,879 cubic yards were removed in eight days, so that it may be easily seen to what degree we speeded up in removal during the last two weeks.

SITUATIONS AND FIGURES—BOTH ALARMING.

"The records of the Street Cleaning Department do not show another snowfall comparing in any way with the one we have just come through. Now that it is almost behind us and normal conditions have been practically resumed, I don't hesitate to say that for a time the fire situation was extremely grave. That was one problem that demanded immediate action, and which, until it was solved, kept me on an anxious seat.

"I got a telephone message from Fire Commissioner Adamson that it was impossible for any of the fire companies to move their apparatus. This was Sunday morning two weeks ago. If a big fire then had broken out it might have spread practically unchecked. I immediately ordered that all the removal of garbage and ashes be dropped and that the entire force regularly employed for this work be detailed to clear the fire streets. There was no other alternative, for the emergency had to be met. Before twelve hours had passed we had shovelled out lanes for the fire engines and other apparatus, and the danger was past.

"This snowstorm in the end will cost the city $1,000,000 or thereabouts. The fall in Manhattan amounted to more than 5,000,000 cubic yards—enough to keep the Panama Canal army of laborers working at top speed for nearly two months. That was the job we had to tackle, and I don't wonder some persons got the impression at the start we were doing slow work. It took us more than two days to make any decided impression on the snow banked in the main streets. This, too, although we had nearly 34,000 laborers shovelling in Manhattan alone. From the start the work moved like clockwork, but the immensity of the job itself made it appear at first as if little was being done.

UNPREPAREDNESS OF THE GREAT AMERICAN CITY.

"New York does not expect snowfalls almost sixteen inches in depth, and the fact that must be faced is that at present the city is not prepared for tackling the task of removing such a fall. I have ideas for the future; the first day I came into this office I began preparing for the possibility of just such a storm as came down on us. But the work of getting the department equipped and altogether in readiness for any snowstorm that may come along is not a thing that can be accomplished in a day nor in the few weeks of this administration. And furthermore the methods of snow handling here are hardly what could be called scientific or thorough. There has been too much dependence in the past on the chances of a speedy thaw clearing the streets. Another plan must be devised, and it will mean a saving to the taxpayers to take steps in this direction without delay.

"At present New York is in a position to handle a snow fall of about five inches—that is, to handle it expeditiously and without congestion of traffic and general obstruction of the streets and sidewalks. It seems to me from the brief time I have been here that there never was any thought taken of the possibility of the snow coming down to the depth of a foot, or even more, as in this last storm.

"All through January, however, I had been thinking and planning against a foot or more of snow. We must always be on the lookout for just such a heavy fall at any time during the five severe winter months. I had planned also not to wait until the storm was over; the time to tackle snow is as soon as it begins falling.

THE COMMISSIONER PREPARING FOR WHAT CAME.

"I had listed 675 owners of horses and wagons in Manhattan, and every one of these truck owners was called on the telephone and requested to supply teams. We got 2,500 wagons on the first call, barely half of what we wanted. We went after the owners again, and we hunted wagons in every possible quarter. We did the same in Brooklyn and The Bronx. Some owners flatly refused to turn out their horses in such severe weather and with the streets in such heavy condition. In scores of instances we prevailed upon these owners to turn out for snow removal as something of a public duty apart from the money involved.

"For this problem of snow removal, particularly under circumstances such as those attending the last storm, is of the gravest public concern. I have seen no figures on the loss the storm entailed on the public, but there is no doubt it runs into millions. As soon as I have this snow removal job finally off my hands I intend to compile figures showing what the public lost through traffic congestion, delays of every kind, etc., and use them as an argument for appropriations for snow purposes before the Board of Estimate and Apportionment.

"Also I am going to try to perfect some system of getting rid of snow. At present we are restricted to certain dumps along the waterfront. We are not given free access to private docks; I believe this could be satisfactorily arranged in the majority of instances.

THE HUMAN FACTOR INVOLVED ACTS BADLY.

"The human factor involved cannot be lost sight of. We had thousands volunteer for shovellers. But these men, from the lodging houses in the main, came to us poorly clothed and poorly fed and not hardened to work. As a result, hundreds of the men failed physically under the strain. And the vast majority were willing to work only when the weather was fair. A couple of days after the work started a rain set in, and within an hour half of our emergency force had thrown down their shovels and run for shelter. It was impossible to persuade them to return to work until the rain had stopped, and it is the same with them when the temperature falls near zero.

"The storm has convinced me of one thing: The real relief for New York in case of snow is through the sewers. The Sewer Bureau had designated certain sewers for use in snow removal. I succeeded in having the bureau release many other sewers in all parts of Manhattan, and the results were exceptionally good in every case.

"Sewers and scoop shovels—that's the combination for New York against the next snow fall. I have tried out the scoop shovels which are drawn by a single horse, and they work satisfactorily in every way. They do away largely with shovelling by laborers; one man and one horse, and the scoop fills itself and drops its load in a minute or so into the sewer opening perhaps in the same block. When the next snowstorm comes along I hope to have enough scoops to make a quick dent in it. Our experience in this storm has shown that there is nothing at hand at present quite so effective or speedy as the scoop, loading and emptying itself.

CRITICS CRITICISE AND CRANKS IMPORTUNE.

"I shut my ears against my critics and kept on working, trusting finally in New York's good sense. I found it harder, however, to dodge the crank with every conceivable sort of device, or idea, for disposing of Manhattan's five million cubic yards of snow in, perhaps, an hour or two. One man came to my office with a plan for melting the snow by patting it with the backs of red hot shovels. Others kept calling up by telephone with schemes equally ridiculous. Tests have shown that to melt a cubic yard of snow by electricity costs about 40 cents. This is for power or heat alone, and does not include the hauling of the snow to the melting machine. We pay the contractors 58 cents a cubic yard for removal. The average wagon takes four cubic yards, so to remove the snow that fell in Manhattan means 1,250,000 wagonloads. But, of course, removal of the snow from every side street is a manifest impossibility. The need for such complete removal is not great, at least not great enough to warrant the expenditure. When the chief streets and others have been cleaned, permitting free travel in all directions, I think it is safe to wait for a thaw and thereby save hundreds of thousands of dollars for the taxpayers.

"Sleighs have been suggested as probably better than carts, but they are useful only under certain conditions. They require easy travelling, and they are difficult to empty. No, the more I think it over, in the light of this experience, the more I am convinced that the ideal snow removal device is the scoop shovel, running to the sewer."

HE VISITS THE DEPARTMENTAL STABLES.

Fetherston is proud of the fact that every man in his regular force has stood by him valiantly in the snow emergency. Men under him say this is due to the spirit he already has instilled in the department. In illustration they tell a story of Fetherston's first visit to the various departmental stables and yards scattered over Manhattan, Brooklyn and The Bronx, the three boroughs under his charge. In each stable or yard he called the men together, and in a short personal talk told them that he was for them, one and all, as long as they were for him and the good of the department. Then Fetherston went down the line, shaking each man, irrespective of position, by the hand. In one uptown yard a hostler expressed the general feeling of all the men everywhere Fetherston went:

"I've been rubbing down horses for the city of New York for thirty years," said the hostler, "and this is the first time any Street Cleaning Commissioner has shaken my hand. He's good enough for me."

There is another feeling among city employes, and this is not confined to the Street Cleaning Department. They want to see Fetherston make good; they are highly gratified by the showing he has made in this snow removal. Why? Because Fetherston is a city worker risen from the ranks; he is one of the few commissioners who have come up step by step from a lowly position in the city service, and the city employes as a body have caught the idea that it is a sign of hope for them all.

Fetherston is an expert trained in city work. As a young engineer in Staten Island he designed and built sewers, and nine years ago became superintendent of the Bureau of Street Cleaning in that borough. Since then he has gained an international reputation as an expert on street cleaning work in all its branches. He has been called to Canada as an expert witness on street cleaning matters. He has studied garbage disposal in a score of American cities, and in the principal cities in Europe. With the snow removal problem disposed of he will face a still bigger job in bettering the ash and garbage disposal facilities of the greater city. It was especially for his expert knowledge in these matters that Mayor Mitchel brought him up from Staten Island and set him down in the Municipal Building.

A fifteen-inch snowfall to Fetherston, much as it may worry and perplex us as citizens, is no more than an incident of routine to him—a big incident, of course, but, after all, street cleaning is his life's work. And he's the first of his kind New York has had at the head of its Street Cleaning Department. And he's only thirty-nine.

WORK WHILE THEY SLEEP—IN MEXICO.

"They call the Mexican Indians lazy," said Alfred Y. Sundstrom, the well known engineer, "but the Mexican Indian is the only man I've ever seen who works while he sleeps.

"In the interior of Mexico, one balmy January afternoon, I came upon an Indian hut romantically situated beside a stream. A hammock of native grass was swung across a narrow branch of the stream, an Indian slept in the hammock, and a string tied to his foot dangled in the water.

"As I approached the string tightened with a jerk. The Indian awoke. He seized the string and hauled it in. There was a fish of three pounds' weight on the end of it.

"'Here you are, Mercedes!' shouted the Indian.

"His brown wife came and removed the fish. She rebaited the hook. Then the Indian, lying back in the hammock again, resumed his sleep-angling act.

"'Work while you sleep—I've never seen it done except in Mexico among the supposedly lazy Indians.'"

Throwing a kiss is something like dining in imagination on the rich bill of fare you see printed in the papers.

Some women think themselves artistic because they pencil their eyebrows and paint their cheeks.

BEHIND THE VEIL AT THE RUSSIAN COURT

Continued from third page.

sored it and seized about thirty thousand copies, but at least one of them found its way to the Emperor's writing table in the palace. To discover who had placed it there was found to be impossible, and it showed that even in his own stronghold and among his own private retainers the anarchists had their agents.

At the time of the little Czarevitch's illness—about the source of which much sensational and fictitious matter has been circulated—there was a scandal concerning the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, who after an early love affair with a lady-in-waiting to his sister, married the wife of an officer in the Gatschina Cuirassiers, who had already been divorced once and who secured a second divorce in order to marry the grand duke.

THE MANIFESTO OF NICHOLAS AGAINST MICHAEL.

The scandal was particularly far-reaching, as the Czarevitch's illness caused much discussion about the probable succession to the throne. But then came the astonishing act of Nicholas, that dismayed the entire land, for he "issued a manifesto to the nation in which he deprived his only brother of the functions of regent in the event of the future sovereign being a minor at the time of his succession. In addition, he sent a ukase to the Senate by which he made himself guardian of his brother, thus reducing Michael . . . to the position of a madman or a baby six years old."

The grand duke retired to Cannes with his wife and leads a private life in the South of France under the name of M. Brassov. Fortunately for him, he had taken a large part of his property abroad before the storm came.

The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, the present Czarina, says Count Vassili, soon became unpopular, and finally even her virtues were turned against her. One day she sent a badly spelled letter to an ambassadress, and her unpopularity was such that even this trivial incident was made much of.

"She was not amiable or conciliating among her immediate entourage, and her ladies-in-waiting had to put up with a lot from her imperious temper and her cold and disdainful manner. She did not forgive them the slightest failing in their duties, and treated them with high disdain. She never allowed them to sit down in her presence, even expecting them to stand while reading aloud to her. They were always obliged also to be in full dress to await her commands, no matter whether she required their services or not."

"A lot of rubbish has been written about the illness of the Czarevitch," says the count, "and the most stupid tales have been circulated. The reality is sad enough without exaggeration making it worse. The child, who has been very delicate ever since his birth, suffers from an organic disease of the arteries, which are liable to rupture upon the slightest provocation and even without cause. Already, three years ago, he had to undergo an operation, which was performed by Professor Fedoroff, one of the doctors who treated him in the autumn of 1912. The fact was kept secret from the public."

The Czarevitch himself, says the count, is a spoiled child. "He is constantly impressed with his own importance, and already knows very well his rights, though he entirely ignores his duties. Arrogant by nature, this arrogance is fostered instead of being corrected. No one is allowed to rebuke him, or even to contradict him. The Czarevitch beats his sisters, tyrannizes over his servants, and whenever any one attempts to correct him he instantly threatens the unfortunate person with all kinds of punishments."

March 6, 1913, was, according to the writer, a final disappointment from Nicholas to his subjects. It was the 300th anniversary of the dynasty, and the people hoped that their sovereign would make it forever memorable through his own initiative, but the manifesto that he issued was dispiriting to all.

WEAK NATURE FOND OF SELF-ASSERTION.

"Nicholas the Second," says Count Vassili, "is one of those timid, weak natures who nevertheless like to assert themselves at certain moments in matters utterly without importance, but which, to their eyes, appear to be the vital ones. His mind is as small as his person; he sees the biggest events go by without being touched or being even aware of their great and tragic sides.

"As Grand Duke he was always timid, almost painfully so, and when, by a strong effort of will he conquered that timidity, he came out with what he wanted to say in an almost brutal manner, which made him many enemies, often quite unjustly. He never had any opinions of his own except in purely personal matters, and he has none to this day. His want of mind makes him always indorse the judgment of the last person he speaks to. Like every spoilt child, he has no heart, not because his is a bad nature, but because he is unable to feel any woes except his own. He is jealous of his authority simply because he is selfish; he tries to uphold it in a brutal manner. Nevertheless, he does nothing abroad to make his authority respected.

The Emperor is an exceedingly rancorous man. Instead of practising the principle which made Louis XII of France so famous, that of not remembering as King the injuries he received as Duke of Orleans, he thinks it his duty to chastise when he can every slight to which he considers he has been subjected, either as sovereign or as heir to the throne.

"He likes to be feared, but unfortunately he cannot inspire respect, much less awe. He feels this, and not knowing how to fight against the lack of consideration for his person, he becomes savage in his wrath, and though in appearance a quiet, inoffensive little man, is capable of the utmost cruelty and hardiness. He has no generous impulses, none of that enthusiasm of youth which induces one to do generous actions, even when they are not quite in accordance with prudence. He lives a mechanical life, devoid of interest and indifferent to everything that does not concern his immediate person.

"People have asked themselves whether the indifference he has shown in grave moments of his life has been affected or real. When the news was brought to him of that terrible disaster of Tsushima, which cost Russia the whole of her fleet and the loss of so many precious lives, the Emperor was playing tennis in the park of Tsarskoye-Selo. He read the telegram that sounded the knell of so many hopes, and then quietly resumed his game, not a muscle of his face moving. Was it stoicism, indifference or a strength of mind almost supernatural? The world tried to guess, but was afraid to think that it arose from inability to understand the greatness of the catastrophe. It is certain that no one has practised with greater success than he has done the famous maxim of La Rochefoucauld, that 'we bear with the greatest composure the misfortunes that do not concern us.' Nicholas II probably thought that the misfortune which had befallen Russia on the day of Tsushima did not concern him personally, just as he did not realize that the catastrophe of Khodinska, which made his coronation so memorable and cost the lives of nearly 2,000 people, concerned him, too.

"When he found himself confronted with revolution, it never occurred to him that if he put his own person forward he might avert it. On that dreadful day in January, which ended in such bloodshed, he never for one moment remembered the proud attitude of his ancestor, that other Nicholas who, on an almost similar occasion, came out of his palace and confronted the angry crowds, forcing the multitude by the courage of his attitude to fall upon their knees and submit. The only thought of Nicholas II was to flee from danger and to leave to others the task of drowning in blood these first symptoms of rebellion.

"Never in the whole history of Russia," declares the count, "did a sovereign more need the protection of the Almighty than his majesty Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, in this nineteenth year of his sad and unfortunate reign."

GOOD REASON.

Chairman William F. McCombs of the Democratic National Committee listened the other day in Washington with a faint smile to the loud praises of an exposed political grafter.

"And he always kept his word," the exposed grafter's advocate said anxiously. "He always kept his word, Mr. McCombs."

"Yes, I know. He has to," Chairman McCombs answered. "Nobody will take it."

ELECTRIC HEART OF PANAMA CANAL

Continued from fourth page.

or more supervising engineers, about fifty draftsmen and between four hundred and five hundred workmen in the factories at Schenectady.

GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS WHO TESTED APPARATUS.

From two to four government inspectors were constantly on the spot to see that each new part was tested and proved before going into the completed whole. The specifications for the entire control system, including all parts of the electric service throughout the Canal Zone, were prepared under the supervision of Edward Schildhauer, an electrical and mechanical engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission.

A detailed description of the three lock control boards alone would fill a small volume. All that can be said here is that they fulfil in every way the requirements of the Panama Commission. For example, the Gatun control board is 32 inches high, has a flat top 54 inches wide and is 64 feet long. The other two boards are of the same dimensions except as to length, the Pedro Miguel board being 56 feet long and the Miraflores board being 52 feet long. In each case the board is in large measure a miniature reproduction of the locks which it controls. Thus, down the whole length of the top of the board run two flat strips of light marble to represent the water in the double flight of locks. In the same relative positions as in the locks themselves there appear miniature fender chains and swinging arms that present the same view as would be had by one looking from above at the swinging lock gates. As the man at the control boards moves the levers that set in motion the machinery which operates the gates and fender chains, these miniature reproductions move in unison with their prototypes.

GATE VALVE INDEX ON THE CONTROL BOARD.

Another little machine on the control board, called a gate valve index, is a reproduction of the great gates, measuring 16 by 18 feet, which control the flow of water in the main culverts of the locks, and this index shows at all times the exact aperture at which the gate stands. Still another type of index on the board is the "floatwell index," which shows to within one-twentieth of an inch the height of the water in any lock, the maximum height being fifty feet.

By all these and many more mechanical parts of the control boards the operator at Gatun, or at either of the other flights of locks, can at any time by merely glancing at the apparatus in front of him see the exact position, rate of motion, etc., of any one of the hundreds of distinct items of mechanism that are included in the locks under his control. Moreover the various levers and switches on the board are so interlocked that no step in the operation of ushering a vessel through the locks can be taken out of its proper order—if the operator moves a lever or switch at the wrong time the apparatus automatically stalls and the operator must simply go back and begin over again at the point where he made the mistake. When the reader of his article is informed also that there entered into the switchboard construction in various quantities more than 22,000 individual parts he will have received a strong hint—but not much more than a hint—of how extraordinarily intricate and marvellous are the systems of lock control at the Panama Canal.