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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

The Hector Memorial.

When Sir James Hector died the Dominion woke up to the greatness of the services he had performed during a long life of unusually industrious usefulness. But this outburst of memory was followed by a relapse into the ancient forgetfulness. Hence it is that the effort to found a memorial worthy of the man who was rightly described as the greatest scientific intellect that ever came south of the Line, is a comparative failure. This is by no means well. Vouched for by the eminent Sir Roderick Murchison, Sir James Hector made his first record, and so good was that record—in the Rocky Mountains of Canada and the Province of Otago—that one of the greatest of geologists (Sir Charles Lyell) selected him out of all the men of his time for the chair of geology which he founded in Edinburgh University. Preferring the Dominion of New Zealand, Sir James Hector accepted the position of Chief of the Geological Department of New Zealand. Presiding over the geological survey and taking strenuous part in the same, he found time to establish all the scientific departments of the country, the analytical, meteorological and the rest. In all these branches he collaborated and still he cared for the Museum, which he founded, arranged, catalogued, and brought to a high state of perfection. He moreover founded the

New Zealand Institute, presided over its meetings for many years, edited its "Transactions" and was personally liable for their scientific accuracy and regular publication. He was Chancellor of the New Zealand University for twenty years, and the eminent service he rendered to that institution is admitted by all who are qualified to judge. His advice on all scientific matters was ever at the disposal of the Government, and of the local bodies: in the sanitary department nothing was ever done without reference to Sir James: the things referred to him by the public were enough to keep ordinary men going all the time. His numerous writings testify to the wide range of his knowledge as well as the accurateness of his mind; and the honours he held showed the appreciation of the scientific world consistently extended to him. The work he did, so varied and so wide, represents a service to the country simply incalculable. He was withal modest with the modesty that is never absent from true greatness. Shall the memory of such a man not live for ever in the country which he preferred to all others, and for which he did so much? Six Committees are now appealing for a favourable answer to that question. The response should be not only favourable, but generous. It should be substantial enough to both perpetuate a memory which ought to be unfading and to encourage the generations that are coming to follow a great example.

The Forests Commission.

Many things are expected of the Royal Commission that is to consider the Forest question of this Dominion in all its many aspects. Two things, however, stand out of the ruck of them with special interest. The Commission is expected to say much of the proper manner of helping the timber industry, and to remember the question of the protection of that native industry. But these are matters subsidiary. The two main points of interest are the supply of the timber of all kinds in the Dominion, how fast it is being consumed, and how long it may be reasonably expected to last: and the conservation of forests in certain areas marked by nature as especially favourable for the growth of timber. With the first is associated the question of afforestation for climatic and other reasons; and with the second is allied the question of asserting the superiority of the forest to the settlement that seeks to uproot trees in places where nothing but trees will ever

grow. The neglect of these matters in the past has caused loss, and the continuation of that neglect will be the occasion of disaster. The Department of Lands has already broken ground about the timber supply, and estimated its endurance, making it no more than a century at the most, and probably less by twenty-five per cent. This point the Commission is expected by the Dominion to examine closely and report upon exhaustively. The other point, that of the destruction of forests where forests ought to be conserved, is being illustrated forcibly just now by the eruptions of the Mountain Ngaruhoe. These remind us that vast quantities of pumice are scattered over the forests round the feet of the volcanic regions of the centre of the North Island and make us suspect that when the timber gives way to the settler, the settler may be driven forth ruined by the barrenness of the soil. The point has been raised before. It is for the Commission to settle it once for all.

The Pearson Coupling.

In another column we give a description of the coupling invented and patented by Mr. Pearson of the Railway department, which absolutely guarantees the Westinghouse brake from all danger of the tampering which has caused some loss already on the railways of the Dominion. We beg to compliment the inventor on his ingenuity and skill. We hope soon also to be able to compliment the Government on having secured the invention which has been offered to them for use on the lines. We hope in addition, and all in good time, to compliment the inventor on the acceptance of his most brilliant, most useful, and most necessary invention by all railway systems of the world.

The Aeroplane in New Zealand.

An aeroplane known at present only to the inventors as the "Progress" aeroplane, but destined shortly for a wider circle of acquaintance, is being constructed in the workshops of Mr. Peter Ellis, Wellington. The work is so far advanced that trials of the machine may be expected in the open in the course of a few weeks. The inventors are Messrs. Forrester, Ellis, Baldwin, and Rayward, and many original ideas are, we understand, embodied, particularly in regard to starting from a standing position on the ground.