(*January 29, 1934*)

A Woodland Symphony

By Mr. Ellsworth Jaeger.

Chairman Arscott:—Gentlemen, we welcome to the Canadian Club, today, Ellsworth Jaeger, a director of the Museum of Science, Buffalo, and chairman of the Committee of Education, and for several years instructor on primitive art at the Museum. While many of us have not known him personally, we have known of him for some time through his articles and illustrations which appear in magazines and newspapers, the closest one to us being the daily illustrated article in *The Mail and Empire*. He is an ardent disciple of the outdoors and all things pertaining to nature to which he has given a great deal of study. His interpretations of the outdoors have been enthusiastically welcomed in both Canada and the United States.

His subject today is, "A Woodland Symphony." With the unusual background of the writer, lecturer and artist. he brings a very live presentation to this audience. I have now very much pleasure in asking him to address you

Mr. Jaeger:—Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Canadian Club, when I say it gives me great pleasure to address a group of this proportion in the City of Toronto, I really mean it, because I think you men can do more for the dissemination of knowledge about real outdoor and recreational things, which is sadly needed these days, than many other groups. So I can sincerely say I am very happy to be able to tell you something about the outdoors. This is not going to be a very learned talk, I assure you. I am trying to make the outdoors in my articles and talks as real and human as I can. What I am trying to do is to bring to my readers that the natural life we see about us is something that is really a part of us and not something to be viewed from a museum standpoint.

I hesitate to address you and tell you about the little people (citizens of Canada who so seldom are seen) because many of you are well acquainted with them. But there are a few who like Esau sold their birthright for a mess of industrialism or business that prevents them from getting into contact with these things, so consequently if I can introduce some of these people to you, I think I shall have accomplished something.

You are all familiar with the great symphony orchestras of the City, but how many of you have stopped to listen to that great symphony of the Woodlands with Mother Nature conducting—the greatest conductor in the world? Mingled with the rushing sound of water and rustling of leaves, the sound of music seems to come like the surfing swell of a tremendous organ in the distance. You can hear it everywhere, yet nowhere. It may come from the rushing, tinkling rapids; it may be the vibration of a thousand insect rhythms. It is one of the great mysteries of the outdoors. But if you have spent some time in the wilderness, sitting in the woods by night when this great harp of the great spirit is playing, you have heard a musical presentation that is far more soul-satisfying than any other musical presentation you have heard. Every bark and hoot contributes to this presentation yet if you move your position to hear better, it will melt away entirely.

Several of our friends have been dulled by artificial life. We do not make use of all the senses that have been given to us by the great spirit himself. Our life in cities of stone and steel has dulled these senses, consequently we do not get the fullest enjoyment out of life. But if you spend some time in the Woodlands you may again meet that personality — that interesting person, your natural self. You may again feel the joy of human senses awakened by things around you, so that you will be able to detect each musician as he enters the symphony to contribute to the entire program.

I am going to tell you about some of these musical people of nature today and I am going to try and give you some of their voices. I want to tell right now that the voices I present today are only approximate voices. No human being could ever imitate all the animals and birds that ever lived. You can only approximate their tones. Every animal has an individual touch in his message that he presents to the world, just the same as you and I have individual ways of talking, singing and hollering sometimes, so that when I give these calls this afternoon, I am only giving you an approximation of these calls. But they are close enough for you to get the spirit of the thing. You will get a fairly good idea how these wild folk talk to one another.

There is an interesting discussion going on between scientists about whether the wild folk receive their method of broadcasting by inheritance or by mingling with their particular kind. Frank Chapman, one of the great ornithologists of the American Museum, has tested some of the wild folk. He has taken two orioles before they had any contact with adult birds and brought them up alone, away from the oriole tribe, and he found that the two orioles developed an entirely different song from other orioles. He then secured two more young, who had no contact with the mother or father birds, and brought them up like the two he had previously secured. He found that these two birds developed the same kind of song that the first two birds had developed. One of his contentions is that bird life at least had not inherited their song but that they acquired it, which is interesting. It is a new idea of looking at things with regard to animal life, because education begins even there.

However, this afternoon I want to take you along a mossy trail to the North—the North that belongs to you. I think the Canadian woods are the most beautiful place in the world; and you who have never been up in this playground of yours have missed one of the finest experiences. I would like to give you a prescription for health—take in as much of the Canadian woods as you can. It will not only do you good physically, but it will do your spirit good because no one can go into the forest without deriving spiritual health from it. So let me be your doctor and prescribe a good, big dose of Canadian woods for health.

Let us put on our flannel shirts and slip on our shoe-

packs. Let us hit the trail to where beeches, like alabaster columns, stand against the blue-green background of fir and spruce, where tumbling rapids fall into lakes which reflect the sun and blue sky of the North — where the Indian Northland is scorched with color, tan, brown and dark purple, and where dead stumps are reflected in silent streams like totem poles. It is here we find what I like to call one of the first wood people of the trail, one that is symbolic of your Northland. He is the little brownie with his white cap and throat who sings with a flute-like note, "Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada," or "Old Man, Peabody, Peabody, Peabody." I think he has the pure joyousness of the woods in his soul. When you hear — (imitation of brownie) — you have heard the little wood brownie. (*Applause*). I think you have been formally introduced. Then as you travel along the trail, it approaches a lake shore, and you will see high above the shore, high in the sky, the greatest of all the fishermen in the country. You would get green with envy if you saw some of the big trout he catches when he swoops down. He can follow his catch from his high vantage point, and so you fishermen are greatly handicapped compared to this fellow. He is the osprey. As he swoops along you will hear—(imitation of osprey. (*Applause*).

Over by the shore, swimming close, you will see a black and white bird with brilliant red eyes. He will always greet you with a curious laugh which you will immediately recognize, (imitation of laugh)—That is the loon. (*Applause*). In the forest, as you trudge along with your pack, you will hear a clucking sound, something like an old hen in a barn yard. But because there are no old hens known in that proximity, you will know it is a partridge. When you hear (imitation of call), you will know a mother partridge is around some place and, if you have sharp eyes, you will see little chicks scurry away. The partridge belongs to the snowshoe fraternity. It grows its own snowshoes on its toes, which enables it to keep above the drift. I think it is one of the most unusual things in nature and makes the partridge a member of the fraternity, which the caribou and several others belong to.

As we get along a little further we find the woods are darkening and the sun is sinking behind the west and the greenish twilight descends upon the forest. It is the most beautiful scene you can find in the Northland. It is soul-satisfying and we know that nature is going to rest. There seems to be a silence which covers the entire world, and after a while we hear evidences of some life among the marshes and among little beds beside pools. We hear a woods-dweller who evidently plays the cello. I really want to recommend this fellow as an outstanding cellist. He is not a prohibitionist because he seems to say — (imitation of gargling sound). (*Laughter*). This is the bull frog. (*Applause*). He has a cousin who is particularly well-known to us, because you will find him in every back yard; and there is a suspicion that he gives warts to anyone who touches him. It is most ridiculous. By desseminating this idea we are doing a great deal of harm. The only reason he has so many warts is because it gives him a protective coloration so that he looks like beds of earth. Now the toad is a great economist for when he gets a new suit he eats the old one. (*Laughter*). The toad has usually four or five new suits a year, according to the temperature.

There is another little chap. He is a bagpiper. He is a great Scotsman. He has the St. Andrew's Cross on his back, adhessive toes and he plays the bagpipes. (*Laughter*). That is the little spring piper. You will hear him in the Springtime all over this part of Canada. You will see him clinging to the bark of a tree, with his little nostrils peeping out. You will find that his throat is filled up like a balloon. In spite of the fact that it looks as if it might burst any minute it never does. (Imitation of Spring-piper). All the time his bagpipes are blowing to capacity. The toad does the same thing. He is a member of the batrachian fraternity. He has trills that go away up and down. In Springtime when he is in love he sings these songs. (Imitation). You will hear that song in every mud-puddle close by. These I have mentioned belong to the puddle chorus.

It is evening now and the sun has gone to rest. Let

us get into a canoe and paddle up the silent river marshes to a place where we have discovered some evidences of a moose we knew had been frequenting that particular spot. In the ground were huge marks of cloven hoofs, implanted deeply. We found them along the forest trail, as if he had dragged his feet like a schoolboy. When the bull-moose is in love he drags his feet. (*Laughter*). We found the evidence where he had pawed the ground and knew it was the bull-moose. We thought we would try to come up sometime and see him. (*Laughter*). So tonight we will do that. We will take a canoe. I think it will have to be a war-canoe. (*Laughter*). It looks as if we were paddling between two worlds. So beautiful is the sky world, glistening with stars, reflected in the river; and the banks have become almost impenetrably black. Through the forest we can hear the hunting call of the great horned owl.

When it is twenty below zero, the great horned owl is nesting and raising a brood. Tonight when we hear the hunting call she is looking for something to eat, and when you hear the call you know it means the doom of many small people. It is a call that seems to stir your very soul. I mean the real call. (*Laughter*). When you hear (imitation of call) you will know you have heard the great horned owl. Now across the ridge, you will hear his cousin, the barred owl, who is very much interested in the culinary arrangements of the world because he seems to say, "Who Cooks, Who Cooks, Who Cooks for You All?"—because he says (imitation of call).

Far along the river bank as we paddle along, suddenly a musky odor comes to our nostrils. In the woods, you use your nose, ears, eyes and sense of taste. In the city you do not, except at the dinner table. In the woods, it is a very important asset to be able to smell things because, as you travel abroad when night descends, there is an indescribable perfume that comes from the earth, sky and water that cannot be duplicated by the finest Parisian perfumery in the world, It cannot be approached, this kind of perfume that makes you want to breathe deeply. It is the kind of perfume we should have in this world.

As we paddle along silently, we see a little bit of red fur in the brush and we hear a call that sounds like little toy dog's, the kind that ride in limousines on cushions and eat bon-bons. (Imitation of call). (*Laughter and applause*). The red Fox!

As we paddle along, we see a little, black arrow-head swimming and, suddenly, there is a tremendous splash and we know the maker of the splash is the beaver. I think the beaver is the most versatile and industrious of the animal world. He is first a lumber-jack, because he cuts down unbelievably-large trees; secondly, he is an engineer and must belong to the engineering society. He makes marvelous dams and canals with locks to raise and lower the water which he uses to float his food to his table. It is a most interesting thing. When in love, the beaver makes mud-pie valentines. He tells the lady beaver that there is a very handsome and eligible male beaver all ready for marriage. Judging from results, this particular love advertising is very successful. I think newspapers and magazines that have columns might well copy the tactics of the beaver if they want to make their columns successful because they certainly are effective bits of advertising.

At last we come to a place where the river widens out. Let us make ourselves comfortable and, if we are wise, we will do so without making a noise because, when the bull-moose's fancy turns to love, he is a difficult person to get along with. You want to be sure he is not close by, when you lure him with the call of the cow-moose. If we incur his wrath he is liable to make mincemeat of us.

We are going to wait very quietly when, suddenly, we hear the hunting call of the timber wolf. The members of the wolf fraternity are not as bad a lot as people are trying to make them out to be. Consequently when we hear a lot of bad things that are untrue about the wolf we, as naturalists, can give the lie to them. Because the wolf kills, that is no reason why we should kill the wolf. That is one of the main reasons why he is killed today, because he kills the deer supposed to be killed by us. If we can do anything to stop that, we shall have accomplished something. The wolf pack is led by the mother wolves just

as all other packs are led. (*Laughter*). We very, very seldom see a large pack. A pack usually consists if nine to eleven. When we hear the hunting call, we know it is made by the father wolf out looking for the bacon and telling the family to come and get it. (Imitation of call). We know we have heard the hunting call. (*Applause*). In a few minutes we hear the pack answer. A pack usually consists of this year's brood and a few young cubs from last year. Since the pack are young people, their voices have not matured sufficiently, so we hear what we might take for a fight in a back alley. (Imitation of pack). (*Laughter*). The deer can outrun the wolf, but it seems to have a bump of curiosity. It will run like a deer for a mile and then stop to find out what is chasing him. The deer's own folly leads to its death. One of the wolves will hamstring and down the deer before it knows it is caught. And what a pack will do to that deer is nobody's business. A wolf can carry seventy-five pounds in his jaws, so imagine what damage he can do. He literally makes mincemeat and other things of that deer, so that there is not much left when the pack gets through.

We have been waiting quite a few minutes, but we have not heard any sound of the bull-moose roaming. So it is about time to broadcast to see where he is and find out if he really is in love. I am taking poetic license today and am jumping from one season to another. We are now in the Fall. What we do is to use this megaphone. No human voice can approximate the cow-moose in love. What we usually do is to get a piece of birch-bark and roll it into a megaphone. Now the cow-moose is eccentric (just like most women in love) and never knows what she is going to say. (*Laughter*). I am going to give the call which seems to say "where are you?" When that call is broadcast, the bull-moose will say, "I am here, coming fast." (*Laughter*). When you hear this call you will know the cow-moose is in love. (Imitation of call). At times the first and last part of the call will be lost in the air and only the middle part heard. Usually there are three tones to it. We wait very quietly. There is not a sound. We think perhaps in order to enlarge upon this

call and make the love scene more effective we might put in a little competitive interest, and give the call of the bull which is more or less of a groan. (Imitation of call). Then we wait very quietly and, suddenly, away off on top of the ridge, we hear what sounds like a canoe falling while on portage. We know it is the bull answering, slashing his antlers against the brush up there. Then we are going to give a call that will certainly stir the soul of any bull for miles around when all the luring qualities you possess you put into this call. (Imitation of call). Then you wait. (*Applause*). Suddenly from the blackness of the background which you are watching there comes a blacker shape. It comes closer and closer and you can see the mighty antlers of the huge bull as he stops in a clump of alders. Though it sounds as if he were right on top of you, he is probably two hundred yards away. Then a little vagrant breeze touches your bodies and melts away and touches the nostrils of the bull and says, "you had better watch your step, old boy." The bull stops and snorts and stares at the thicket and grunting, he turns away and plunges through the brush and everything again belongs to the silences.

We have seen our bull; we have got all the thrill of hunting, yet we have left him for somebody else to see. This is one of the messages I hope every man will carry back. If we can only leave the wild life for others, we have accomplished something. Our tendency has been to destroy everything, but today our tendencies are the other way; we are trying to conserve the things that were once the traditions and heritage of our race. I am making this plea to this group—Go and see him, but let him be left for somebody else to see and you will find you will have a greater thrill. (*Applause*).

MR. ARSCOTT:—Mr. Jaeger, we have enjoyed very much your talk today. The character of your address is different from that to which we have been accustomed in the past several months of these trying times. I am sure all present have enjoyed very much the delightful change. I think sometimes it is a good plan to turn from the usual practical problems that employ our time from day to day

and direct our attention to the fact that there is much in life entirely different from practical things to which we devote ourselves daily. You have given us a most interesting and refreshing address and, on behalf of the Club, I extend to you our grateful appreciation.