

SIR H. W. THORNTON LOSS TO BRITAIN

English Railway Journal's Ap-
preciation of His Worth
and Work

IDEAL PUBLICITY AGENT

Attitude Toward Labor and
Leaders Made Men of Old-
er School Shake Their
Heads

The London Railway Gazette, of
October 13 contains the following in
reference to the new president of the
Canadian National Railway Board:

A few weeks ago a leading rail-
way officer remarked to us that in
his opinion it would be little short of
a calamity if the services of Sir
Henry Thornton were lost to British
railways. That "calamity" is about
to take place, for, as was intimated
in a portion of our issue last week,
Sir Henry Thornton has accepted the
position offered to him of president
of the newly-formed Canadian National
Railways System.

Lord Claud Hamilton's speech at
the annual meeting of the Great
Eastern Railway in February, 1914,
announcing the appointment of an
American general manager, and the
reasons which led the directors of
that company to make the appoint-
ment, raised much controversy.
Starting with such a "wet sail,"
many smaller personalities would
have accomplished little. Considered
at first as an intrusion, Sir Henry
Thornton has come to be regarded
as an institution in the British rail-
way world. Everyone now quite
understands why the general super-
intendent of the Long Island Divi-
sion of the Pennsylvania Railroad
made such an impression on Lord
Claud Hamilton. If he had not done
anything else in his thirty years'
chairmanship of the Great Eastern
Company, this one act would always
be a striking example of his perspi-
cacity.

WAS POWERFUL FORCE.

Within a few months of Sir Henry
Thornton's Great Western appoint-
ment came the outbreak of the Great
War in August, 1914. His services
during the war are recorded else-
where in this issue. He became a
naturalized British subject and so
to speak, "burnt his bridges" behind
him, and most of us thought that
his genial personality, always sug-
gestive of fresh breezes from the
West, would long continue to be a
powerful force in the counsels of
those responsible for British rail-
way management and operation.
What he has already accomplished
on the Great Eastern Railway, even
in the difficult period subsequent to
the war, has been the subject of many
articles in our columns. He had no
abhorrence of anything new because
it happened to be new. His attitude
towards labor and labor leaders
sometimes made those of the older
school shake their heads.

In his conception, one of the most
important functions of a railway
general manager, president, manag-
ing director, or whatever may be his
title, is to make his line popular with
the public, and never to let sup-
posed grievances rankle. In fact,
we have heard him described as an
ideal publicity agent. Those who
made this criticism, if criticism it
was intended to be, overlooked that
it was quite in their power to do the
same, but it was the fact that he
was at the top, and yet always ac-
cessible, and not afraid to speak, that
gave him his public.

Though instinctively a diplomat,
Sir Henry Thornton is by no means
superficial. A student of labor
problems, a good engineer and a
trained operating officer, he can "talk
in the vernacular" on any of these
subjects. Evidently an admirer of
Napoleon, he would sometimes speak
of that great Frenchman's wonder-
ful sense of leadership and how he
would inspire thousands who had
never seen him face to face, and how
that same spirit must dominate both
the officers and the rank and file of
the four great railway groups, unless

they are to be conducted on the sloth-
ful, lethargic and "promotion-by-
seniority" principles, which char-
acterize so many Government de-
partments. Undoubtedly Sir Henry
Thornton's personality has dominat-
ed the Great Eastern these last few
years, and the officers and rank and
file regard his impending departure
as a personal loss.

TWO GREAT EXPERIMENTS.

There is no point in ignoring the
fact that although such speculations
are in railway parlance "quite pre-
mature," Sir Henry Thornton had
been freely mentioned as a possible
general manager or joint general-
manager of the great railway com-
pany into which the "Eastern Group"
of railways are to be amalgamated
and absorbed. But evidently the
potentialities of the newly-formed
Canadian National Railways system
have appealed to his imagination. He
has remembered the old adage about
a bird in the hand being worth two
in the bush, and has accepted the
presidency of the new system, which
is a combination of the old Grand
Trunk, the Grand Trunk Pacific, the
Canadian Northern, the Intercolonial
and other Canadian Government
Railways. The total mileage of the
system is something over 32,000, and
its annual gross earnings over £25,-
500,000. It owns 3,217 locomotives,
3,302 passenger vehicles, and 129,
121 freight and service cars. It is
interesting to compare these figures
with the totals of the railways which
will shortly comprise the Eastern
Company. The total mileage will
be 6,700; and the annual gross earn-
ings are about £90,000,000. It will
own 7,500 locomotives, 20,500 pas-
senger vehicles, and 302,000 freight
waggons.

Thus, two great experiments are
being entered on; judging from its
present position, the Canadian pro-
position is the more difficult of the
two. Sir Henry Thornton's tempera-
ment and qualifications will make
him an excellent president of the
Canadian National Railways. This
country's loss is Canada's gain, but
all here will wish him the best of
good fortune.