

# THE GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY

In retrospect the names of the great men who projected railway enterprise in Canada, and whose farsightedness, keen business sense and indomitable pluck placed it on a recognized firm footing, stand out in relief among those whose eminent political abilities contributed in the advancement of the country to its proud position of to-day.

## POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

Increase in the population of a country and development of its transportation facilities are generally coincident, and examples of such coincidences are plainly to be seen in Canada and the United States, where it has been evident that material progress in every branch of industry and in the higher ideals of social economics has been furthered more by means of general transportation than by any of the other projects of the arts and sciences. For over a century the tide of immigration from congested portions of Europe flowed to the North American continent, but the direction of the stream of population was more to those latitudes which tradition or such literature as existed at the time proclaimed as the only livable regions for white races. As a result the United States during the nineteenth century grew from small beginnings to be one of the greatest nations of the world. During the first half of that century, Canada remained somewhat dormant in the matter of population and consequently in commercial progress, a result of the then existing ignorance of her resources and possibilities. The sequel was inertness in the provision of means of transportation commensurate with the wealth of the country in natural resources. Such a state of affairs was not surprising when it is considered that in that period, if information was wanted about Canada, the inquirer had generally to strike a mean between stories quivering with the light of a fairyland Eldorado and those dealing with snow and blizzards and freezings-to-death. He had to choose between too highly colored literature on the one hand, and on the other, the crudely expressed contempt of people who had perhaps visited the country but took neither time nor pains to discover the truth about it.

In Great Britain, the first real railway, the Stockton and Darlington, was constructed and opened for traffic in 1825, but generally speaking, not only in Britain but in parts of Continental Europe, the period from 1840 to 1845 showed the most marked activity in railway construction. Soon afterwards similar projects were mooted for Canada.

## FIRST CHARTER IN 1832.

In connection with the earlier period, however, it may be recorded that as far back as the year 1832 a charter was granted in Canada for the construction of a line from Laprairie to St. Johns (now part of the Grand Trunk system) and this line was opened for traffic in 1836. This particular line was then known as the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad, but ultimately, through a series of transfers and amalgamations, it became in control and ownership part of the Grand Trunk.

The Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad was built with the object of making it an important link in the chain of communication then partly existing between Montreal and New York by means of the water route of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. It was one of the earliest, if not the very earliest, of the experiments in railway construction in Canada. It should be taken into account that in 1836, when this line was put in service, there were only 1,100 miles of railroad in the whole of the United States. Part of this line, from Laprairie southwards for a distance of about five miles, was disused after the extension of the railway from the latter point to St. Lambert in 1852.