

WILLIAM C. VAN HORNE.

*Montreal, Que.*

WILLIAM C. VAN HORNE, President of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, is a native of Will County, Illinois, where he was born in February, 1843. His career is one of the most remarkable set forth in the railway annals of the world. The history of Canada is the record of a struggle for a grand idea, the retention in the northern half of the American continent of those institutions which have made Britain the home of freedom and the mistress of the world. In that struggle no single element has played a greater part than has the railway. All through the changes in the history of the British North American Provinces, can be seen the belief on the part of the people that with cheap and ready means of transportation from one community to the other, there might be made a nation so strong, so homogeneous, that it could maintain its individuality even in competition with a country having the advantage of a century's start in the race. Before the era of the railway, this faith of the people manifested itself in the effort to make the great St. Lawrence a complete highway. Since the locomotive became the chief factor in commerce and one of the greatest factors in national development, there has proceeded such a building of railways from east to west and from west to east as no other four or five millions of people have ever carried on. The completion of the political work of confederation by the annexation of the North-West and British Columbia left the ground ready for the social and economic work of nation-building, and it was the universal feeling that the first great step was the construction of a through railway, national in its character and representative of the most advanced methods in every detail. Great as had been the works of former times, they were more or less of the nature of patch-work. The feeling that the union of two or three or four provinces was not the whole work to be done, prevented public works looking to union being undertaken with due regard for the great future. But when the Dominion had taken in all those who represented the British idea, when the mighty Atlantic on the one side and the still greater Pacific on the other left the people to feel that there were no more worlds for diplomacy to conquer, the work of constructing the fabric of nationhood was taken up, with due regard to its true scope and importance. The time called for a man such as was not then known to exist, a man possessed of resources beyond the knowledge of even those by whom the task was to be set, a man of many-sided character and complete on every side. It is only necessary to point to the Canadian Pacific Rail-

way of to-day, and to the work it has accomplished, to prove that the highest hopes of the most enthusiastic optimists have been realized in the choice of the man to whom principally the task was assigned. Mr. Van Horne is of Dutch stock. His ancestors were among the earliest of those who laid the foundations of the great metropolis of New York and started it upon its successful career as the commercial centre of the new world, and whose race is to-day one of the strongest, sanest and most influential elements in American life. William C. Van Horne chose his parentage well. Had he been of the Netherlands, pure and simple, however, he would have lacked the forceful energy, the electric quickness of nerve and brain, which makes the captain and leader of men in these days of keen competition and massing of forces in commercial affairs. His birth in the State which furnished to the Union such men as Ulysses S. Grant was in his favour, and assured him of never being left behind in any race of wit or enterprise in which he might engage. He had little advantage of education in the ordinary acceptation of that much-abused word, but he did not begin his real education until after he had left school. Like some others of the most original and venturesome geniuses of the world of to-day, he began his life work at the telegraph-key, being first employed by the Illinois Central Railway. It is related of him that he is thoroughly imbued with the idea that the surest and easiest way to preferment in railway work is through the despatcher's office, and his constant advice to young men ambitious to enter the service is, "learn telegraphing." He took his own advice of later years, and became one of the most expert and reliable men in the service of the company. In the railway service he found the natural field for the exercise of his many and notable talents. His promotion was rapid and steady. Leaving the Illinois Central, he joined the Michigan Central, receiving a good position in the telegraph department of the Joliet division. He remained with this company for six years, constantly improving his position. In 1864 he entered the service of the Chicago and Alton road as train despatcher. In a short time he was promoted to be superintendent of telegraphs, and, later, assistant superintendent of the road. In 1872 he was offered and accepted the position of general superintendent of the St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern Railway. Two years later the Southern Minnesota line was in need of a general manager, and chose Mr. Van Horne for the position. In 1877 he was elected President, combining the duties of that office with those of general manager. A year later he resigned the general managership and accepted