

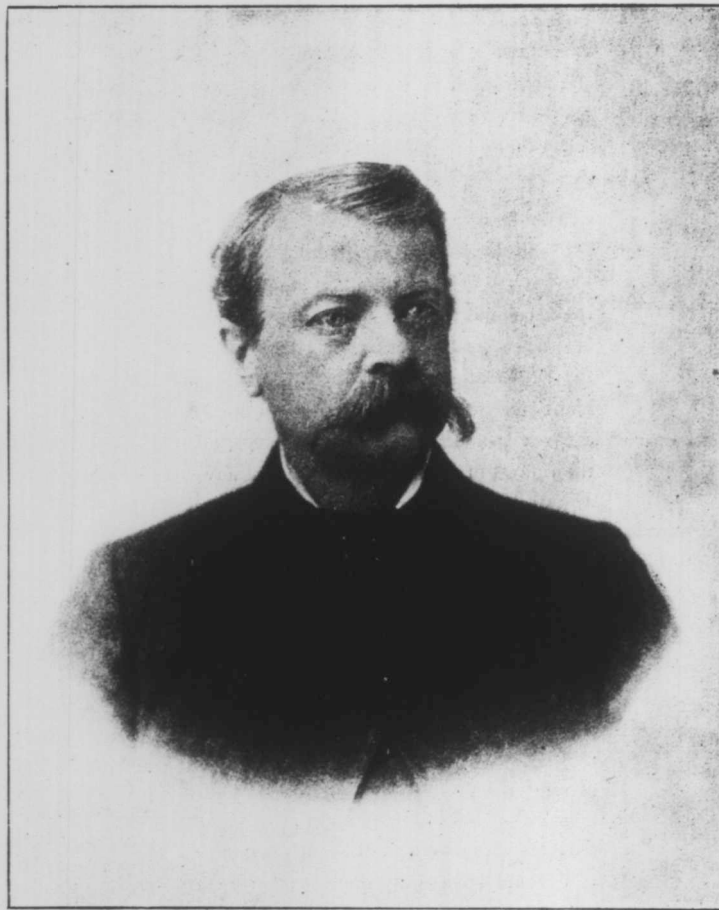
MR. W. A. FERGUSON.

A native of the land where I respire.

—BYRON.

Mr. W. A. Ferguson was born in the county of Prince Edward, Ont., in the year 1846, and is of Scottish descent. After having received a common school education, he commenced for himself at fourteen years of age, choosing to earn his own living rather than go to school, as many another Canadian boy has chosen, and from fourteen years of age to twenty-three worked at farming and lumbering. In his twenty-fourth year he took up fire insurance, and soon became connected with the leading fire and life companies doing business in Canada, and built up a large and remunerative business, which is still carried on by Ferguson Bros., who during all the period of their business career have never had a claim disputed or unpaid. In the spring of 1878 the Delhi Fruit and Vegetable Canning Co. was organized, with Jacob Sovereign, A. and R. Chrysler, and W. A. Ferguson equal partners. The out-put the first year was about 30,000 cans. This was the third factory of the kind in the Dominion. After two years of experimenting the company found their capital so badly impaired that it was one time decided to abandon the enterprise, which possibly would have been done had not Mr. Ferguson volunteered to give up his other business and devote his time wholly to the canning business. Forming a partnership with his brother, J. H. Ferguson, and handing the insurance business over to him, he threw his whole energy into the affairs of the cannery. The company re-subscribed their capital, and took in two additional partners—James McKnight and George Kent, both wealthy lumbermen. This gave the company a strong financial standing, Mr. Ferguson was given power to act as sole manager, and the company started with new life. But want of experience seemed to continue the great drawback. The canning business has more minute details to look after than most other branches of business. The cost is made of fractional parts, the raw material is perishable, water requires to be pure, steam must be just so hot, steam gauges must be kept in perfect order, and the whole business is of so complicated a nature, and the material is so per-

ishable that with all the business energy of Mr. Ferguson the financial part could not be called a success until he had mastered the whole business, could supervise every part, and judge himself as to its fitness. But when once he felt that he understood the business, the company commenced to push it, and soon introduced their goods into every part of the Dominion. In 1885 it became necessary to enlarge their works, and the company decided on building new premises, and they now occupy the largest and best equipped canning factory in the Dominion, having a capacity of 50,000 cans daily. In locating their new factory two essential points were kept in view—namely,



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pure spring water and perfect drainage. The factory is situated on the brow of a hill, with a ravine below and a running stream, and all refuse is shot down a chute into this ravine and carried away by the stream. This keeps the air pure and the factory sweet and clean, which is one of the greatest difficulties about a canning factory. After moving into their new premises they not only enlarged their output, but increased the varieties of goods manufactured, adding jams, jellies, mince meat, catsups and soups to their already large line, and now turn out the largest assortment of goods of any one firm in the Dominion. Their goods are scattered all

over the Dominion, and no first-class grocery stock is considered complete without an assortment of Delhi canned goods.

Mr. Ferguson's motto is "Excel," and the many first prizes and gold medals won by his brands bear testimony as to how well he has succeeded. In the fall of 1891 a branch was started in the town of Niagara for canning peaches and tomatoes. This is the only factory in the centre of the peach-growing district, and where the fruit can be picked every day and canned within a few hours after being picked, it is a great advantage, and the goods turned out from this branch last fall are most highly spoken of. The company last season introduced machines for threshing peas out of the straw, something entirely new. These machines have a capacity of 100 loads of peas a day, are run by steam power and enable the farmer to harvest a field of 5 or 10 acres in one day, that would require a week in the old way of hand picking. They also enable the company to can the peas much fresher than the old way of hand picking. These are the only two in use in Canada. During the busy season some 450 hands are employed, mostly boys, girls and women. The premises are run night and day, and Mr. Ferguson may be found on the scene of activity at all hours. To manage such a business requires a man of quick and cool judgment and iron constitution and a determination that knows no surrender.

Mr. Ferguson has the gift, which is not very generally divided up among men, of persistency in a set purpose. The history of the canning establishment his name is connected with amply illustrates this. It requires pluck to

take hold of an industrial project to make a success of it when it has once disappointed the hopes of its promoters. Mr. Ferguson was possessed of the necessary pluck and had in him the right metal to succeed. He acted upon what is a cardinal principle with all truly successful men, that before you can improve anything else you must improve yourself. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with the ins and outs of the business he had chosen, spared no pains in the application of this knowledge, and made personal supervision a prime necessity. It requires a strong mind to receive and steadily turn to practical account one idea. The one idea that Mr. Ferguson never deviated from may be deduced from the products of his cannery, and is this: It pays to maintain quality.