

CHAPTER II

DAWN OF THE RAILROAD ERA

THE years 1853-4 marked an era in Canada's material development and prosperity. Several different causes contributed to this result. Prominent among them was the dawn of the railroad era. A few years before, George Stephenson, the eminent engineer, had demonstrated to a committee of the British House of Commons that railways were practicable, and silenced one of the principal objectors by his famous *bon-mot*: "So much the worse for the coo."

The whole world was thrown into ecstasies by the success of Stephenson's great invention. It revolutionized the old modes of land transportation, and the honour has been claimed for Canada of being the first to introduce the railroad into America, the short line connecting Laprairie and St. John's, near Montreal, having been completed as early as 1836. This was followed by the opening of the Northern Railway from Toronto to Bradford in 1853, and by the rapid work of construction on the Great Western Railway, to connect Niagara Falls with the town of Windsor on the Detroit River, a distance of 229 miles. The main line of this road was completed and opened for