

THE Railway and Shipping World

With which is incorporated The Western World. Established 1890.

Devoted to Steam & Electric Railway, Shipping, Express, Telegraph & Telephone Interests.

OLD SERIES, NO. 114.
NEW SERIES, NO. 32.

TORONTO, CANADA, OCTOBER, 1900.

10 CENTS A COPY.
\$1 A YEAR.

The President of the G.N.W.T. Co.

Harvey Prentice Dwight, whose portrait appears on this page, was born of New England parents at Belleville, Jefferson County, N.Y., Dec. 23, 1828. He came to Canada in 1847, & secured a position as an operator for the Montreal Telegraph Co. As business increased in Canada West he was appointed Western Superintendent of the Co. In 1881, when the Montreal & Dominion Telegraph Companies were leased to the G.N.T.W. Co., he was appointed General Manager, & in 1892 was elected President of the G.N.W.T. Co. Three years ago, at a banquet tendered him at the Toronto Club, on his completing 50 years of continuous telegraph service, he made a most interesting speech, from which the following extracts in regard to his career are taken:—

I was brought up on a little stumpy, stony, newly-cleared farm a few miles south of Oswego, where my father, with such assistance as I could render him, occupied his spare time in making flour barrels for the mills at Oswego. When about 18 years of age it dawned upon my mind very forcibly that I had better get out & find some way of making a better living, if possible, than I seemed likely to ever make at home. The erection of a telegraph line had just been completed between Oswego & Syracuse, & I made application & obtained permission to enter the Oswego office in order to learn the business of an operator. I had heard about this time that a telegraph line was being built by the Montreal Telegraph Co. in Canada, where I thought I might get employment. After ascertaining the name of the Superintendent, O. S. Wood, I wrote to him applying for employment, & received a prompt reply, in which he asked, as soon as I was able to manage a small office, to report myself, which in due course I did. I came over from Oswego to Kingston on Aug. 27, 1847, where I met Mr. Wood by appointment, & proceeded with him on the same day to Belleville for the purpose of opening an office there on the line which had been erected during that season between Quebec & Toronto, a distance of 500 miles, on which some 12 or 15 offices were being opened. Mr. Wood, I may mention, was the first pupil of Professor Morse, & one of his most intimate friends. We took instruments along with us, & opened the office in Belleville the following day, where I was left in charge, & where I remained for a couple of months. At the end of that time I was ordered to Montreal, to take my place in that office as an operator. In these early days I might say that a telegraph operator was looked upon as of some importance, & the telegraph office a decided curiosity.

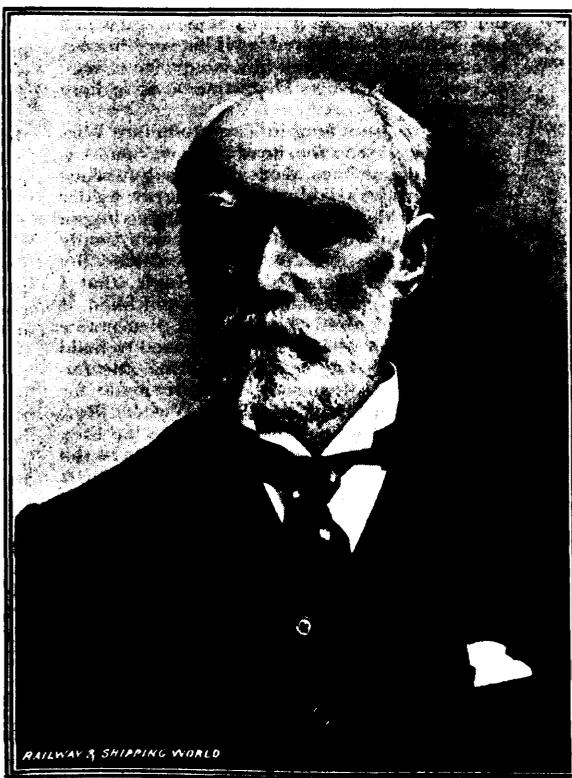
During my stay in Belleville I became ac-

quainted with John Ross, a young lawyer, who afterwards became the Hon. John Ross, who was the first President of the Grand Trunk Ry., & one of the foremost men in Canada. I also became acquainted with Andrew Darling, known then, & for a long time afterwards, as the first & only commercial traveller in Canada, & Mackenzie Bowell, the young editor of the Belleville Intelligencer, now Sir Mackenzie Bowell. A few months ago I received a letter from Sir Mackenzie, in which he wrote as follows:—"Seeing your name reminds me of the time, about 50 years ago,

Holton; Mr. McPherson, afterwards Sir David McPherson; Hon. John Young, & many other men of the day in Montreal, whose names became very familiar to me, & have remained so ever since. Our staff consisted of four or five persons—our Superintendent, myself as Chief Operator (& sometimes the only one), one or two clerks, & one messenger, a faithful old soldier, who delivered messages with a good deal more reliability than speed.

I remember well being terrified & almost paralyzed one day by the clerk from the outer office, who came rushing into the operating room in an excited manner to tell me that Lord & Lady Elgin had called to see the working of the telegraph, & almost before I knew it they were both beside me as I was sending a message over the line. They were accompanied by Lady Alice Lampton & Lord Mark Kerr. Mr. Wood, our Superintendent, soon came in, however, & relieved me from the duty of explaining to the distinguished party the working of the instruments. Lord Elgin made such an impression upon my mind that I have ever since remembered him as one of the handsomest men I ever saw. I heard him speak upon one or two occasions in Montreal, & made up my mind, & have always thought so since, that he was a very great man. Not long after this visit of Lord Elgin to the office I saw his carriage being pelted by a shower of stones thrown by an excited mob as he was leaving the Parliament House, where he had been to sanction some bills which had been passed by Parliament, & which included what was called the Rebellion Losses Bill, about which there had been great excitement throughout the country. After Lord Elgin's carriage, with its broken windows, had escaped, the mob rushed down the street towards the Parliament House, arming themselves on the way with paving stones picked up on the street, & surrounding the building, stoned the windows—the members still present making their escape in the most disorderly manner— & set fire to the building. I stood in a safe doorway on the opposite side of the street & witnessed the whole scene, of which I retain the most vivid recollection.

The Post Office Department at the time I was in Montreal was in charge of the English Government, & the Postmaster-General, Mr. Stayner, was stationed in Montreal, as I have special occasion to remember. A mail steamer was reported from below in a message addressed to Mr. Stayner, & knowing that this news was being anxiously looked for, on discovering that our only messenger was out, I put on my hat & ran to the Post Office, a short distance up St. James Street, without waiting to put the message in an envelope, & delivered it in breathless haste to the great



HARVEY PRENTICE DWIGHT,
President & General Manager, Great Northwestern Telegraph Co.
of Canada.

when you were a telegraph operator in Belleville, when you one day read off from the instrument while I copied down the first telegraph news despatch ever sent over the wires, & which I printed in my little paper."

I took my place as an operator in the Montreal office, & remained there until the spring of 1850. While acting as operator, I also did something as messenger, batteryman, line repairer, & in fact everything that was necessary to be done in connection with the working of the office. During the time I was in Montreal I had occasion to know, as a young man, Mr. Holton, afterwards the Hon. L. H.