

statesmen, to make me recede from my former views, *i.e.*, that Canada's best contribution to the safety of the Empire is to look after the organization of the defence of her own frontiers, shores and seaports, which are still absolutely defenceless—that Canada by herself has no need of a navy—that the Laurier-Fielding policy of a navy, Canadian in time of peace and British in time of war, is unworkable from all points of view, breaks with every principle of government and strategy, and cannot meet the views of either the Imperialists or the Nationalists—that if we went along with the organization of our own territory, both in civil and military matters, from a purely Canadian point of view, narrow as it may look to the Imperialist

swelled heads, we would thereby fully accomplish our duty towards the Empire and remain within the sphere of our self-governing capacity and national dignity—that should every self-governing colony do likewise, and make its part of the Empire safe from attack, by works of defence, naval or territorial, in conformity with its peculiar position, then the problem of Imperial Defence would be solved in a most practical manner, without any infringement of the principle of local autonomy; and the threatening perils, the dangerous frictions and consequential enmities, likely to arise from the adoption of a centralized form of government, would be avoided.

But should the Canadian people, with their eyes

open, decide upon over-stepping the bounds so clearly and wisely defined by the framers of our Constitution and the builders of our body politic, then I would rather have full-fledged Imperial Federation, with all its dangers and snares, than the mean, equivocal, low-spirited expedients, heretofore propounded by timid, narrow-minded opportunists.

It would enormously increase the burden of our responsibilities and, to my mind, hasten rapidly the day of disruption of the Empire; but, at least, it would leave us in the full status of British citizenship and maintain unimpaired the basis of our self-respect and national dignity of which we are so proud.

# Personalities and Problems

8---David McNicoll, Railway Expert

*The Scotch Link in a System with American Presidents*

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

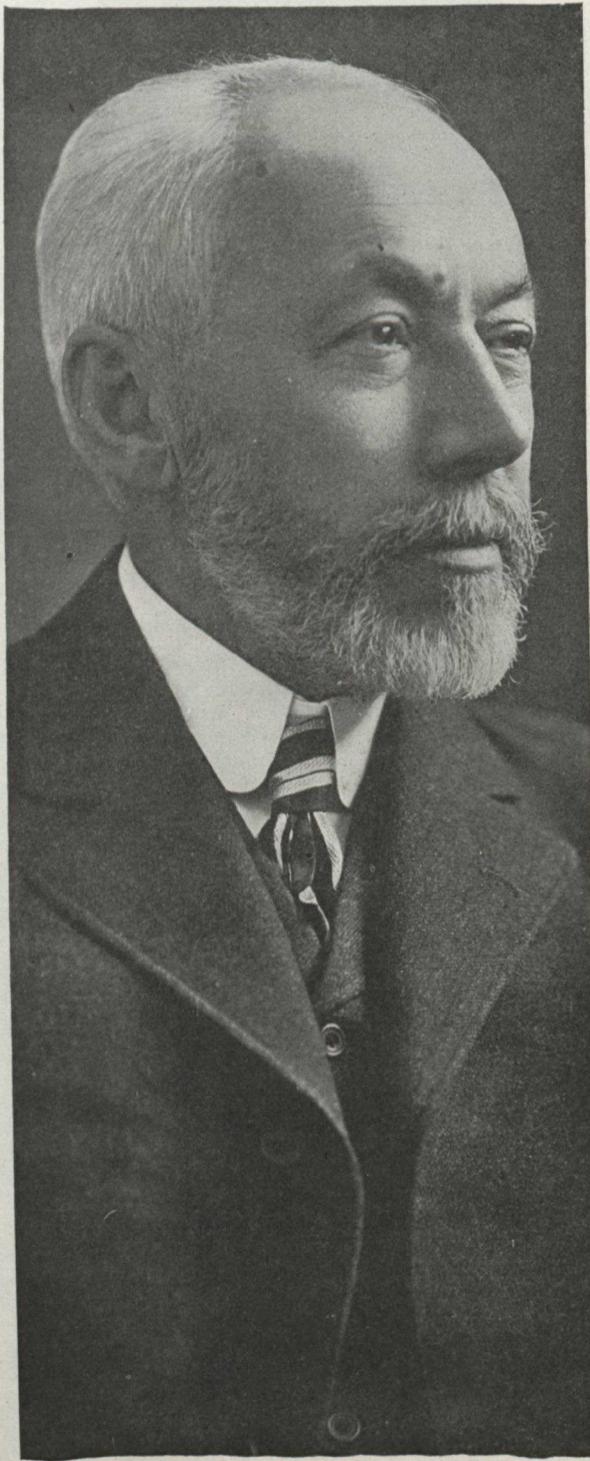
IT seems odd that the most easterly first inhabitants of this country on record should be the Micmacs of Nova Scotia. One always suspects that the Scotchman who first called that part of Canada "New Scotland" had something to do with naming the Micmacs. In all probability the original spelling was McMac. Anyway the Mc's and the Mac's have done as much as they knew how to make this land of uncertain origins a Nova Scotia clear from P. E. I. to Vancouver Island. And the "Mc" whose picture appears on this page is one of the most worthy to follow the trails blazed by other illustrious Mc's and Mac's, to say nothing of those who are his contemporaries.

David McNicoll, First Vice-President of the C. P. R., is one more proof that without the Scotchman, Canada would still be in the woods, and that the C. P. R., with its two American Presidents, might have been a somewhat different link in the chain of Empire without the Scotchman that grew up in the system. He is sixty years old; according to a Van Horne maxim, just the age when a man gets the subconscious faculty to be the head of a great railway system; and just at the time when the C. P. R. wants to increase its capital stock to almost \$400,000,000. Fourteen years of that time he put in around home and at school in Arbroath—some undefined little burg in Scotland, as mysterious as Craigenputtock, where Tommie Carlyle lived till he migrated to London. The remaining forty-six years Mr. McNicoll has been on five railroads.

AT fourteen he was clerk in the goods manager's office, North British Railway. That was in 1866. The Fenians invaded Canada that year; but the lad McNicoll had never heard of Fenians and probably knew next to nothing about Canada. Seven years later he was goods clerk on the North Midland Railway. He was then twenty-one. There's a bare possibility that by this time he had heard vague rumours of a fabulous new trans-Siberian railway that was to reach from Montreal to the Pacific. The men most responsible for starting such an unwarranted waste of good money were Scotchmen—two of them, Donald A. Smith and George Stephen, now Lords Strathcona and Mountstephen. Quite a few hard-headed Scots were getting into Canada; had been ever since the Hudson's Bay Co. began to broom the Orkneys for furpost lords. Anyway it was the year the Scotch youth with the big, slow voice, and the canny twinkle in his een went on the North Midland road, that another Scotchman was beaten by still another Scotchman in the Canadian general elections. That was 1873, when John A. Macdonald became a private member of Parliament because of Alexander Mackenzie and what was known as the Pacific Scandal. Maybe David had heard some rumours of the P. S. without knowing at all what it meant. But in 1873 there was no C. P. R. except the scandal; not a tie nor a rail was laid; and for aught D. McNicoll the goods clerk knew, there might never be such a colossal chimera in the British Empire.

However, it was just a year later when McNicoll, at the age of twenty-two, gathered together what Scotch togs he had—I don't think he fetched any kilts or a set of bagpipes—and struck out to the country that intended to build the C. P. R. across what most of the Orkneymen in the furposts of the Hudson's Bay Co. agreed for policy's sake was an American Siberia, "fit for nothing but Indians and mosquitoes." The youth had no intention to become a C. P. R. man. He probably had no idea

that in his time at least there ever would be any other railroad in Canada except the Grand Trunk and the Intercolonial. Most of the east part of Canada was far enough in the woods. Young David took a humble but useful post on the Northern Railway from Toronto to Collingwood, in which almost undiscovered town he became billing clerk. Collingwood lasted him only a year. It was as



"If he ever lost his temper, it never was in open meeting."

bleak as most any part of Scotland. The general manager of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce wanted a chief clerk in his office at Toronto. McNicoll went. Four years afterwards the N. P. and the C. P. R. together became the two great issues in Canadian politics; and actual construction work on the new transcontinental was just being pushed in the vicinity of Winnipeg when McNicoll, in 1881, became the general passenger agent for the T. G. and B. In 1883, when the C. P. R. was within two years of completion, he decided to link up with the new venture. He became general freight and passenger agent for the eastern division of the new road. Two years after that the new main line proved its transcontinental value by transporting eastern troops to the scene of the Northwest Rebellion. November of the same year the last spike was driven at Craigellachie, B.C. Four years later Mr. McNicoll was made general passenger agent for all the lines, both railroad and steamship.

And all this while the canny Scotsman was climbing the railroad ladder rung by rung; never letting go one till he had the next well within reach; never shifting a hand till he had room one up for the next foot; left and right, rung by rung and year by year, beginning to prove once again the homely truth of the adage—that it's always the bottom of the ladder that's crowded.

DAVID McNICOLL never knew the moment on this ladder of making himself part of a huge system when he got dizzy or specks before his eyes. So far the system, still an experimental thing with its vague hooks across an undeveloped continent, had continued to let McNicoll pull himself up through the more or less clerical ranks, worrying up through the system with the persistent, patient progress of the proverbial toad in a well; but everlastingly hooking his personality on to the system and feeling the system that made more and more use of his personality. Mainly it amounted to devilish, unremitting hard work, all through the days when C. P. R. facilities gave a man little but elbow-room and C. P. R. stock was bumping away below par; when sceptics still quoted the adage about the "axle-grease and the two streaks of rust across the prairies."

But in 1896, the year that the government that had built the C. P. R., were swept out by the Liberals whose late leader had damned it in Parliament, David McNicoll squirmed himself loose from the clerical and the timetable end of the business. He became passenger traffic manager for the entire system. Three years of that and when the Saskatchewan valley was just being rediscovered by another railway, he became assistant general manager.

Now, as he got near to the top where the walls didn't bother him, the Scotchman in Canada put on more speed. Instead of crawling up the ladder he just walked. In 1900 he became Second Vice-President and General Manager.

And it would have been a fine illumination on any biography of this diligent and constructive Scotchman to have read any of the epistles from Arbroath that came to him when he became the executive head of a system which in fifteen years from the time of driving the last spike in the main line had become one of the greatest transportation systems in the world.

In 1903 he was made First Vice-President. In 1906 he became a director. To-day David McNicoll knows intimately more about how the C. P. R.