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A CHARACTER SKETCH.

The President of the C. P. R.

Sir William Van Horne, President of the C. P. R. Co., is one of those men who make history. It had been the custom of historians (until Knight & then Greenbroke away from it) to tell the story of kings & queens, countries & statesmen, to chronicle wars & battles, treaties & treacherous evasions of them, & then in a supplementary way, as if it were a matter of secondary importance, a chapter that might be skipped, to relate the much more important progress of science, commerce & art.

Sir Wm. Van Horne is not yet known in the politics of Canada: that is to say officially known. The railway of which he is President has at times evoked the eloquence, either in denunciation or commendation, of reasoners & of talkers, & is credited with having at times conduced to the victory of one parliamentary candidate over another, but Sir William has never stepped upon the quarter deck of any ship of state as an accredited pilot. He has not made history in that way. There is always a sufficiency of great minds for this purpose. Van Horne has confined himself to the more practical work of developing the machinery of travel, & as in the nineteenth century the prosperity of a country depends upon its facility of transport, & as its stagnation is usually the result of bad roads & high prices, his services to the Dominion of Canada & indirectly to the British Empire have now passed beyond question.

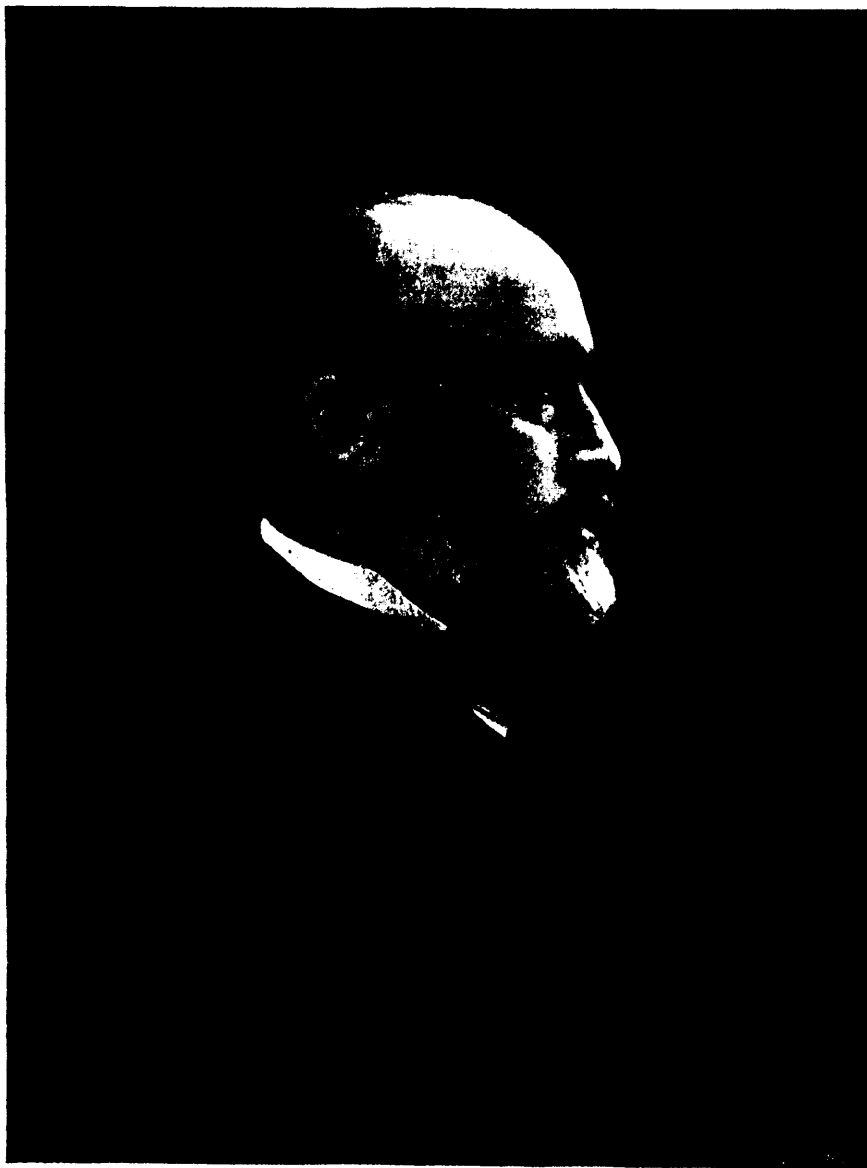
When the famous Syndicate of 1881 had undertaken to build the C. P. R. through the wilderness on the shore of Lake Superior & through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific shore, the gigantic nature of their

undertaking may well have appalled them. Railway Frankensteins were they, with the monster their signatures had created before them, & the certainty that unless handled with exceptional skill it would prove as baneful as the creature of Mrs. Shelley's im-

to the roll of Knights Commanders of St. Michael & St. George is a big jump when the gulf has been bridged by personal ability, & the achievement of success in the face of enormous difficulties. Of the smiling incredulity with which mention of the through route of the C. P. R. from ocean to ocean in 10 years was received, it is not necessary to speak at length. Aladdin's lamp was out of reach, so that the time mentioned was regarded as a pleasant-ry; when the road was opened through to the Pacific in half the stipulated time people elsewhere than in Canada began to ask, who is this Van Horne? Those who knew him in 1881, when he went to Winnipeg to tackle his work, were already satisfied on this point.

But the construction of this via Canadiensis is not the feature of its existence that most astonishes reflecting persons. A happy understanding and perfect confidence between bankers & engineers can make light of startling physical difficulties; even the Panama Canal may be built if the bankers hold out; it is the business success of the C. P. R. that supplies the food for wonder to live on. To build a railway is one thing; to create the traffic for it is another. On this point the world requires to be told very little. The annual reports of the C. P. R. speak for themselves, & for the work that has been done. It all looks easy when done, but the number of railways in financial difficulties are silent witnesses to the existence of something more than ordinary capacity in the management of the C. P. R.

"Canada is doing business on a back street," said Van Horne, "she ought to be on a thoroughfare," and he set to work to make one. The "Great Highway to the Orient" is the result. The majority of European & American travellers had a hazy idea that Japan was "out there, somewhere," that China was



SIR WILLIAM C. VAN HORNE, K. C. M. G.

agination. They sought a guiding hand & found Van Horne, of whom even the railway world then knew comparatively little, but who can now felicitate himself on the fact that he is sworn at in many vernaculars. From the pay roll of a Western States railway office