

early-day managers. The new operator received \$40 a month, a munificent salary for a boy whose only training had been bounded by the rail fences of an Illinois farm. It is said of him in those days:

"He learned to fiddle a little & drum a piano, & having a talent for drawing, he began to cultivate art. He once drew a caricature of Gen. McClellan on the brown painted side of his telegraph station on the Illinois Central, which came near costing him his place. The picture represented the General in full regimentals, but in a dangerously undignified attitude."

This was but the exuberance of the boy; he had not seen then the scope of the world, or realized what it had in store for him. The position of operator was the first step in a railway career destined to prove remarkable. It was the first round in a ladder of uninterrupted success, a ladder covering the gamut of railway positions, & ending in the absolute control of the C.P.R., the greatest railway system on earth, & in a British knighthood.

Mr. Van Horne's earlier years after his operator's experience were spent in & about Chicago. He filled scores of positions, each better than the other, until about 1879, when he was appointed General Superintendent of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul. His big brain, his intense personality, his tremendous energy, & his ready grasp of every railway problem, made him even then a conspicuous figure among railway men. It probably would have been better for the U.S. roads if Mr. Van Horne had remained on that side of the line. Certain it is that he could not but have added to the progress of any undertaking with which he might have been connected.

It was not to be, however. That same hand of fate which had lifted him from the farm to the telegraph office, & from the telegraph office through various stages to the general superintendency of an important road, was about to carry him into another country, & to a work destined to form one of the most conspicuous chapters in the world's railway history.

While Mr. Van Horne was overseeing the welfare of the St. Paul road, events of future importance to him were unfolding north of the boundary line between Canada & the U.S.

It is a common remark up there to-day that Sir Wm. Van Horne is the C.P.R., & the Canadian Pacific is Canada. Yet when the wonderful railway was first projected, Sir William had not been thought of in its connection.

A railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all the way on British soil, had been the subject of discussion & planning for almost half a century. In 1867, on the Confederation of the British North American Provinces, its realization was found to be a political necessity. With the newly-formed union came a renewed envy, if it might be so termed, of the prosperity of its southern neighbor, the U.S.; & there was an almost unanimous belief that a trans-continental railway was necessary to the well-being & the growth of the country.

In 1875 the Canadian Government set about

The early difficulties in connection with the construction of the line are well known. The C.P.R. Co. took hold of the project in the spring of 1881 & before the end of the year 163 miles had been built on the prairie westward from Winnipeg. It is needless to recapitulate the story of the opposition, secret & open, at home & abroad, which the undertaking encountered. It was declared that the formidable obstacle along the north shore of Lake Superior could not be overcome in twice the ten years stipulated as the time within which the line was to be completed. It was asserted that the north shore section

would never be built, because, they felt assured, other routes would in the meantime have come into being, rendering the construction around Lake Superior unnecessary. There was indecision & hesitancy, delay & bickering, & then a man stepped into the breach.

A month or two earlier a new incumbent had been secured for the position of General Manager of the road. The need for a practical railway man had caused the projectors of the Co. to look about them, & they finally offered the position to the then General Superintendent of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Ry.—W. C. Van Horne.

This was an important step, as it really meant failure or success to the Co. The compliment thus paid to the U.S. railway man, who, starting in life on a farm, had worked his way up to a position high in railway circles, cannot be overestimated. It practically meant saying to this son of Illinois, this foreigner, "Here, we have reached our last ditch. Our future depends upon you. Now, save us if you can."

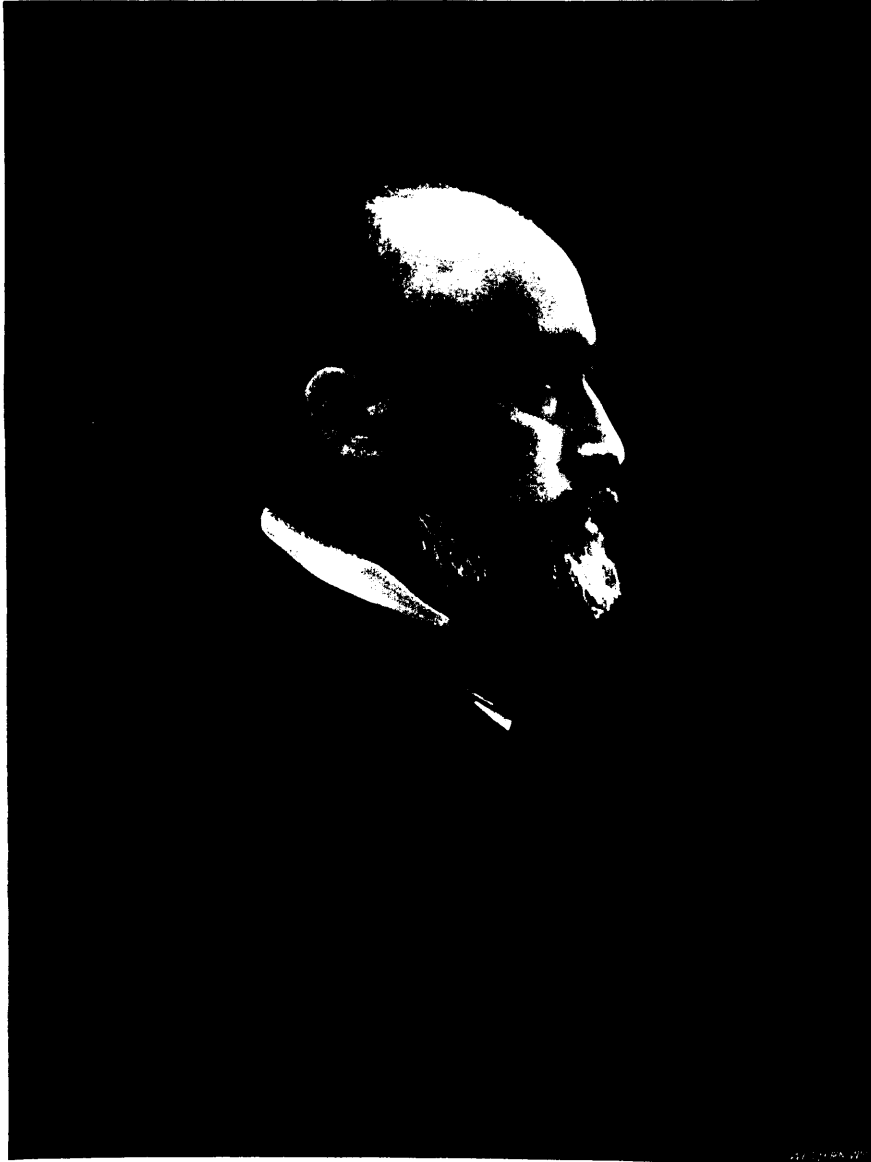
Students of latter-day Canadian history like to dwell upon this part of the C. P. R. story. To them it means an epic of individual prowess, the warfare of a strong man—strong mentally & physically—against almost insurmountable obstacles.

Within a few weeks of his appointment, Mr.

Van Horne made his

presence felt. When the enemies of the road began to decry the building of the north shore section—that along the upper end of Lake Superior—Van Horne promptly advocated the retention of the original plan, & insisted that an all-Canadian line was absolutely necessary. His opinions, backed by the extraordinary influence he had already commenced to exercise over his associates, were accepted & he plunged into the work with all the strength of his iron nature. His first task was to attack the wilderness on the north of Lake Superior.

Twelve thousand railroad navvies, & from



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

Chairman of the Board, Canadian Pacific Railway Co.

the building of the C.P. R., a task of such vast moment that the richest empire of Europe might well have hesitated before entering upon it. Previous railway construction had been child's play compared with this project which proposed venturing with bands of steel into regions hitherto unexplored, & lying in a country certain to offer formidable obstacles. Toward the east, all about Lake Superior & beyond to Red River, was a vast rocky region where nature in her younger days had run riot, & where deep lakes & mighty rivers in every direction opposed the progress of the engineers.