

Fraser River—to which he gave his name—and followed its wild course to the sea. That was in the distant forties. It was a deed of great daring; for the Fraser, like the Columbia and the Thompson, and nearly all the rivers of this rugged region, rush at headlong speed in wild and turbulent career through the rocky gorges of the coastal ranges. How Fraser navigated his craft through the steep and stormy rush of Hell-gate canon, is a mystery which I cannot pretend to fathom. The discovery of gold in British Columbia brought long wagon-teams over the Rockies, past camps of hostile Indians, up steep mountain slopes, and down deadly inclines with locked wheels and logs serving as brakes, and dragging astern. Those were the days when only intermittent Indian trails—traces of which you still see along the Thompson and the Fraser—pointed the way across the mountains, and before the sappers cut the track for pack-animals and the

Old Wagon Road

which you see in the various stages of ruin as you tread the gorges in the vestibule car of the Canadian-Pacific Railway. But these were comparatively recent developments. And, at best, they were passing makeshifts, and, for commercial purposes, of little practical value. And so the rich western land remained cut off from the east as though it were in remote Kamschatka, the only way to it around Cape Horn, and its nascent commercial and political and geographical 'affinities' being all with the adjoining land of Uncle Sam. And thus, political as well as commercial reasons made it every year more urgent to bring Canada's Pacific seaboard nearer to the centre of its life in the eastern provinces. McTaggart was one of those who long ago spoke of a railway line that would link ocean to ocean. People

Voted him a Madman

for his pains. I find the scheme dimly outlined in a corpulent volume published two generations ago by Montgomery Martin on the resources of Canada, and more clearly and decisively in some speeches delivered half a century ago by Judge Haliburton (better known by his literary name 'Sam Slick'), and in a printed volume of addresses given in 1858 by Hon. Alexander Morris, who had been Governor of Manitoba, the North-western Territories and Keewatin. It was voted a pleasant dream and its advocates visionaries. But the impossible of to-day is often the matter-of-course of to-morrow. When the first Napoleon thought of re-opening the sand-encumbered Suez ship-canal made by old Rameses II. somewhere about the days of Moses, the engineer Lepere, who was deputed to report upon the matter, declared it impracticable. Napoleon dropped the project like a red-hot poker. But Ferdinand de Lesseps brought it to a successful issue, and on a vastly greater scale than the work of the Egyptian monarch of the misty past. History repeated itself in the case of the projected Canadian transcontinental railway. In proportion as political, military, and commercial considerations pressed for its construction, mountains of impossibilities shrank to the dimensions of ant-hills. Objections finally vanished, and the dream of the forties and fifties became the hope of the sixties and the resolve of the seventies. The confederation of the British North American Provinces in 1867 brought

The Realisation

of the undertaking nearer, just as the federation of the Australian States has already brought the project of a great transcontinental railway from Port Augusta to Port Darwin within the scope of practical politics. A sparsely peopled nation, as Canada was 30 years ago, might well pause, hesitant and trembling, on the brink of so vast an enterprise. For, as a history of this great project says, it was 'a work of such vast proportions that the richest empire of Europe might well have hesitated before entering upon it.' West from the Red River, in Manitoba, there lay 800 miles of rolling plains known only to the Indian and the fur-trader. Behind those far-extending prairies rose, tier above tier, the massive and unexplored barrier of the Rockies, the Selkirks, and the Cascades, soaring to an elevation as great as 15,000 feet, and extending in unbroken succession for 600 miles to the Pacific. The survey alone of the line was a long and arduous and costly work. The construction would represent the ransom of a kingdom. Patience is power. But it takes strength to sit still and wait. And many in Canada lacked that strength. They lost patience. It was only a short step from that to loss of faith in the work. There were hints of national bankruptcy. The great railway question formed the line of cleavage between political parties in Canada. There were bickerings and delays, and

The Construction

of the transcontinental line did not begin till 1875. It began in political fears and party jealousies. These continued to pursue it. Administrations changed, fresh delays occurred, and in 1880—five years after the work had been inaugurated—the Dominion Parliament decided to surrender the work to a private company.

'The explorations and surveys for the railway,' says the story of this great enterprise, 'had made known the character of the country it was to traverse. In the wilderness east, north, and west of Lake Superior, forests of pine and other timber, and mineral deposits of incalculable value, were found, and millions of acres of agricultural land as well. The vast prairie district between Winnipeg and the Rocky Mountains proved to be wonderfully rich in its agricultural resources. Towards the mountains great coal-fields were discovered, and British Columbia beyond was known to contain almost every element of traffic and wealth. Thousands of people had settled on the prairies of the North-west, and their success had brought tens of thousands more. The political reasons for building the railway were lost sight of and commercial reasons took their place, and there was no difficulty in finding a party of capitalists ready and willing to relieve the Government of the work and carry it on as a commercial enterprise. The

Canadian-Pacific Railway Company

was organised early in 1881, and immediately entered into a contract to complete the line within ten years.

'The railway system of Eastern Canada had already advanced far up the Ottawa Valley, attracted mainly by the rapidly growing traffic from the pine forests, and it was from a point in connection with this system that the Canadian-Pacific Railway had to be carried through to the Pacific coast, a distance of 2550 miles. Of this, the Government had under construction one section of 425 miles between Lake Superior and Winnipeg, and another of 213 miles from Burrard Inlet, on the Pacific coast, eastward to Kamloops Lake in British Columbia. The Company undertook the building of the remaining 1920 miles, and for this it was to receive from the Government 25,000,000 dollars in money and 25,000,000 acres of agricultural land. The two sections of railway under construction were to be finished by the Government, and together with a branch line of 65 miles already in operation from Winnipeg southward to the boundary of the United States, were to be given to the Company, in addition to its subsidies in money and lands; and the entire railway, when completed, was to remain the property of the Company.'

A somewhat similar land-grant system is being proposed in connection with the projected transcontinental railway across the interior of the Australian continent. As things stood, it is clear that the political fears and jealousies of the time threw a rare bargain into the hands of the Canadian-Pacific Company. Without taking into account the well-filled national purse and the completed railway lines presented to them, the broad kingdom of 25,000,000 acres with which they were endowed was only a seventh less in area than the North Island of New Zealand, and almost exactly equal in extent to Ireland and Wales, and comprised magnificent farm-lands, the like of which is only to be found in the favored United States of Ohio and Illinois. With flowing coffers, the Canadian-Pacific Company threw off their coats to the task. Armies of men were engaged upon the work. Everywhere the track was so perfectly constructed that trains were able to pass safely over it at high speed as soon as the rails were spiked and bolted. On the rolling prairies west of Winnipeg the rails were laid at a rate that varied from three to six miles a day. Eastward, along the northern shore of Lake Superior, there was

Terrific Work.

When the Russian railroad engineers consulted the Czar as to the direction to be followed by the iron road from St. Petersburg to Moscow, he drew a straight line on the map, and it was followed as closely as circumstances would permit. But the road that skirts the upper shores of the world's greatest fresh-water lake is as sinuous as the path of a mountain brook. It 'winds about and in and out' through piled up hills and jagged promontories and tall cliffs and massive boulders of Laurentian and Huron rock that is almost as hard and refractory as flint. That rugged region is an affliction of spirit for the railway builder, as it is a happy hunting ground for the sportsman and a paradise for the lover of the picturesque. According to Livy's storied legend, when Hannibal was leading his seasoned Carthaginian cohorts across the Alps to the conquest of Italy, he split the impassable rock-walls and intrusive mountain-peaks with fire and then softened and crumbled them to pieces with heavy doses of vinegar. The Cana-