

CHAPTER VII.

PART I.

Importance of railways.—Early history of railways.—First railways in England and other countries.—Fairbairn's advocacy of railways in Canada.—Legislative action in the several provinces.—The eventful year of 1851.—The battle of the gauges.—History of the Grand Trunk, the Intercolonial and the Canadian Pacific systems.—Railway financing in Canada.

RAILWAYS.

313. A good idea may be formed of the great relative importance of our railways in their bearing upon the financial and industrial interests of the Dominion from the fact that their annual receipts are more by over \$15,000,000 than the entire public revenue. Their expansion in recent years may be estimated from the fact that in 1870 the public revenue was over \$600,000 more than the railway receipts. The public revenue increased by nearly 146 per cent; the railway receipts by nearly 280 per cent. In 1893 the receipts from freight, traffic, mails and express alone, not including receipt from passenger traffic, were within \$1,213,500 of the total public revenue of the Federal Government.

314. Ruskin says "Railways are the loathsome form of devilry now extant; animated and deliberate earthquakes destructive of all nice social habits or possible natural beauty; carriages of damned souls on the ridges of their own graves," which view of the great writer corresponds with that of the unsophisticated Nova Scotian farmer who, when he saw for the first time a locomotive rushing along in the darkness of a moonless night and scattering sparks above and hot cinders below, declared it was "hell on trucks." Ruskin thinks of the victims who have been crushed and destroyed beneath the modern Car of Juggernaut. He thinks of the rounded contour of the hills, the beauty of the valleys, the glories of the landscape that have been marred by the cuttings and fillings, and the dynamite blasts of the railway navy and condemns the railways as "animated earthquakes."

315. But there is another side that has been well described by a recent author. "The railway interest is in its infancy; but it is even now one of the vastest extent and influence. Alike in respect to the expenditure that it has entailed, the profits that it yields, the numbers to whom it furnishes remunerative employment, the influence that it exercises upon the destinies of individuals, localities and nations, and the part it is likely to play in the future of the world's economy, there is perhaps no other single factor of human prosperity and progress that will not kick the beam when put into competition with it. There is perhaps no direction in which the railway system has exercised so potent an influence as in that of bringing modern nations into more harmony in matters of social concern." Railways are the great levellers of the world. Their tendency is always in the same direction—to level up the rate of wages or the cost of labour, and to level