

BALFOUR NEPEAN MOLESWORTH

By H. L. Esten

Balfour Nepean Molesworth was born in Goderich, Ontario, on December 6th, 1853. He was the second son of Thomas Nepean Molesworth, C.E., and Sarah Georgina Kertland, who came to Canada from Dublin, Ireland, in 1848.

In 1861—at the time of the visit of the then Prince of Wales—afterwards King Edward the Seventh—Thomas Nepean Molesworth and his family resided in Brantford, Mr. Molesworth having a position with the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroad. The subject of this sketch was then a small scholar at the Public School in Brantford and, with the other school children, was in the front ranks of the spectators who welcomed the heir to the throne of England.

The family moved to Fort Erie in 1865, when Balfour Nepean Molesworth was eleven years old; the Fenian raid occurring the following year, when the Fenians raided the Molesworth home, it being the largest house in the vicinity of their landing on the Canadian side, on crossing from Buffalo.

In 1869, Thomas Nepean Molesworth (See report of 1920 for sketch) was appointed Chief Engineer of Public Works and Inspector of Railways in the Provincial Government, which brought his family to Toronto. His first work was to make a survey of the swamp lands in Kent and Essex and to make a preliminary examination of other portions of the Province and report on the best means of draining the same. In addition to his drainage work he was instructed to prepare plans and specifications for the construction of locks at



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Young's Point, near Peterborough and at Port Carling on Rosseau River between Muskoka and Rosseau Lakes and for improving the navigation between Balsam and Cameron Lakes in Victoria County. He was also instructed to make an instrumental survey for a road from Washago to Gravenhurst. At this time the travel North from Toronto was by railway to Bell Ewart thence by boat to Orillia or Washago thence by road to Gravenhurst at the southerly end of Lake Muskoka, where the three lakes, Muskoka, Rousseau and Lake Joseph opened up a large area for settlement around the shores of the lakes. The British North America Act placed the Inland Navigation under the Province of Ontario. This work came under Mr. Molesworth as Chief Engineer of the Department of Public Works.

The mileage of railways completed before Confederation in Ontario was 1,464 miles; owing to the Government aid given for the construction of railways 1,946.96 miles were constructed and 470.6 miles were under construction from Confederation until the year 1879 a large percentage of this mileage was inspected by Mr. Molesworth and payments made by the Government on his reports.

The Hon. C. F. Fraser in his Annual Report in 1879 concluded as follows:

"I cannot refrain from expressing my great regret at the sudden and unexpected death in April last of Mr. Thomas N. Molesworth, the Chief Engineer of the Department. I do but scant justice when I say that he had proved himself an able, efficient and trustworthy officer and had always performed his departmental duties to my complete satisfaction and with a single regard to the public interests.

Balfour Nepean Molesworth started his railway career by accompanying his father on his trips, particularly to Muskoka. He was on different roads in Ontario after obtaining his P.L.S. 8th July in 1876. He studied Surveying with his father, Thomas N. Molesworth. In 1878, after obtaining his degree of Civil Engineer, he was in charge of the construction of the Northern Railway from Allandale to Penetanguishene. He afterwards went to the United States, where he worked for some years, in 1882 being in charge of a portion of the construction of the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railway, at which time he was stationed in Bellevue, Ohio, after which he worked for several years on the construction of the "Three Cs"

Railway. His last work was on the construction of a railway in Jamaica.

Mr. Molesworth married, in 1882, Louisa Agnes Thompson, daughter of the late H. H. Thompson, Esquire, of Penetanguishene, and had five children. He died in November, 1896, at the early age of fifty-two.

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