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HENRY C. FRICK.

HENRY C. FRICK, President of the H. C. Frick Coke Co., of Pittsburgh, was born at West Overton, Westmoreland County, Pa., Dec. 19, 1849. He came of German ancestry on his mother's side, his maternal grandfather being Abraham Overholt, a man well-known in Westmoreland County, where he occupied a position of considerable prominence. Mr. Frick's father was a farmer in West Overton, sufficiently well-to-do to enable his son to pass the first twenty years of his life in acquiring an education, and in following the customary American round of duties and pleasures appropriate to that period of a man's life. A portion of this time was occupied in the position of clerk in a dry goods store at Mount Pleasant. In 1869 young Frick became bookkeeper in his grandfather's flour mill and distillery at Broad Ford, Fayette County, but neither of these employments afforded any indication of what was to be the young man's eventual destiny in life. The removal to Fayette County, however, brought to the knowledge of young Frick the vast business of the Connellsville coal country. At this time the business of making coke from the bituminous coal found in this district in enormous quantities was beginning to exhibit some signs of the wonderful commercial and financial future which was before it. A little railroad operation into which Mr. Frick entered enabled him to gather a small capital, and casting about him for an investment, his shrewd foresight gave him the cue to place it in the line of the advancing coke industry. He accordingly purchased a small interest in some

coal property near Broad Ford which seemed to be adapted to his purpose, and uniting with him some other young men as partners, the company built fifty ovens. The further he considered and investigated this business the more satisfied was Mr. Frick with its promise for the future, and what was measurably, in the beginning, speculative on his part, grew into a determination to prosecute the industry with all his available capital, faith and energy to its fullest possible development. As soon as it was practicable the plant in use was doubled, by the erection of fifty more ovens, and soon after more land was purchased and still one hundred more ovens were added. By this time it was 1878, when the great financial panic fell upon the country, and Mr. Frick's partners, on account of endorsements, got into difficulties, and their interests in the coke ovens were sold. Mr. Frick took advantage of this opportunity by inducing certain of his friends, among whom the chief was Hon. Thomas Mellon, of Pittsburgh, to purchase these interests, and thus gained entire control of the plant. Meanwhile the panic had disturbed a good many firms engaged in the coke business and had enfeebled speculation, so that many chances of adding to his works were thrown in the way of Mr. Frick and eagerly snapped up by him. Where he could, he built or bought ovens, and when this was impracticable he leased from owners, who had been scared out by the panic. His enterprise and confidence met, naturally enough, with a good many obstacles in the way of adverse judgment on the part of many, who expressed pity for the young man who had been already so fortunate and now did not know when he was well off; but he had his own views, paid little attention to the gloomy representations of those about him, and when the boom in coke came shortly after, the yearly profit on his leased works amounted to more than the value of the works themselves. Mr. Frick continued to conduct his business in his own name until 1878, when he sold an interest in it to E. M. Ferguson, of New York, the firm continuing under the name of H. C. Frick & Co., the brother of the gentleman above named being shortly after added to the concern. In 1882 the establishment was merged in the H. C. Frick Coke Co., a large interest therein being sold to Carnegie Bros., of Pittsburgh. This is the largest coke company in the world, owning and controlling over four thousand ovens, all located in the Connellsville region, and over twelve thousand acres of coal land, and employing over five thousand men. Its total daily product is estimated at about four hundred car loads, or seven thousand tons of coke. To accomplish this vast result more

than three million tons of coal are used annually. This coke goes into every part of the country, being used by manufacturers of iron, steel, brass, copper and silver, and by those using cupola furnaces, for iron castings and smelting ores. The article is admitted to be the best made, and towards this result no expense has been spared. In order that the purest water, free from sulphur and all other impurities, might be obtained, the company has erected, at a cost of \$250,000, a system of water works at the beginning of the line of its ovens on the Youghiogheny River, from which all the ovens are supplied with water of the best possible quality, with the result desired. So much money has been invested in this direction because the result of the production of the best coke known largely depends upon it. The company owns eleven stores, and is probably, in all respects, one of the very largest, busiest, most useful and most important industrial establishments in the United States. The Connellsville region is one of the most remarkable sections of this country, in its industrial extent and capacity, and the vastness of its relations to the manufacturing and commercial world. It is a black country about forty miles long by three wide, lying northeast and southwest across parts of Westmoreland and Fayette Counties, Pennsylvania. The tremendous capacity of this region has been picturesquely set forth by a recent writer in the following graphic language:

"Suppose we fork together the coke made during the last twelve months in the Connellsville region, load it on cars and hitch them together in a continuous train; start the train going at the rate of twelve miles an hour, which is about a fair average for freight trains, and run it day and night, without a moment's stop to cool hot boxes or the slightest slacking upon stiff grades. Stand beside the track and watch the train roll by, day after day, hour after hour. Night after night listen to the clank, clank of the wheels over the jointed rails, as every hour sees eighteen thousand tons of coke whirled past you. Toward morning of the ninth day the signal lamps on the last car will mark the end of the train, and you will begin to have a dreamy sort of notion of the magnitude of the coke industry which is blazing and smoking within an hour's ride of the city. The headlight of the train will be about twenty-four hundred miles away."

The object of making this quotation is to give, as far as possible, an impression of the nature and extent of the gigantic industry which Mr. Frick was one of the very first to set in motion. It is an extraordinary fact in business history to be able to record such an instance of foresight, determination and nerve as this incident presents. It is to be remembered that at the time when Mr. Frick determined to change his plan of life and launch himself

in a new direction, whose conclusion it was impossible to foresee, he was a young man but just of age, and with only the limited experience of a customary clerkship. It certainly argued natural gifts of a most remarkable quality that he should have had the daring and the judgment at once which propelled him in this new direction. It is not on record that any other man living saw so far into the future of the great Connellsville industry as he did. The men who were engaged in the coke business never thought of conducting it on the scale upon which he entered at once, and perhaps the great secret of his success, or at least a great portion of it, was the fact that after he had once made up his mind with regard to the possibilities of the coke business Mr. Frick burned his ships, and threw himself into it with all the ardor and force of his ardent and energetic nature. Having discovered what could be done with the crushed coke manufacture, which is now one of the special features of the great corporation of which Mr. Frick is the head, he proceeded to add improvement after improvement in order to sustain it at its best quality and meet the constantly growing demand, until now this article is used by manufacturers for household purposes, for carriage making, for machinery-forging, furnaces for brass melting, stoves and ranges in hotels and boarding-houses, on railroad cars, and in many other places where its peculiar advantages as fuel are many and apparent. Notwithstanding the enormous work which Mr. Frick has accomplished in his own special department during the past ten years, he has not the less devoted himself to financial and commercial duties of an entirely different character, and which have largely aided the prosperity of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. Thus he is a director in the Pittsburgh National Bank of Commerce, and is interested in many other important enterprises. The future of a man who has accomplished so much in a life not yet forty years in extent, could hardly be predicted. Indeed, it would seem almost impossible to over-rate or over-estimate the probabilities of his future career, judging from the past. "Bright, active and brainy," this young man has shown already the possession of the highest qualities of financial generalship and business management, and the fact that he is universally recognized as one of the most prominent men of Pittsburgh is sufficient to give promise of an exceptionally brilliant and useful future. Mr. Frick married Ada Howard Childs, daughter of Asa P. Childs, who was one of the prominent business men of Pittsburgh, of which union two children were born, a boy and a girl.