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VOL. 14. NUMBER 38

CANTON, SOUTH DAKOTA, FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 1904.

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THE TRANSPORTATION GENIUS OF THE AGE

James J. Hill's New Steamers, Minnesota and Dakota, Surpass All Rivals in Carrying Capacity.—What the Struggle for Supremacy in the Carrying Trade With the Orient Means.

Within three months James J. Hill will be in the thick of a fight which he admits will be a hard one, for the control of the exports from the North Pacific ports and of the carrying trade on the Pacific ocean.

The big steamship Minnesota, 22,000 tons gross, 630 feet in length and 76 feet beam, will then be ready to go into commission. Nine months later she will be followed by the Dakota and the greatest passenger-cargo craft ever placed in commission for Pacific service which will enter into competition with the powerful lines that now handle the huge volume of goods moving between the United States and Asia, Australia and the Philippines.

So much has been said and written on the achievements of the American shipbuilders who have turned out the best craft for passenger-cargo service ever built and the largest ever constructed on American ways, that there has been an inclination to think that all Mr. Hill will find it necessary to do will be to turn the big ships loose and then sit around and watch them get the business.

Mr. Hill doesn't think so. He thinks he will have to fight for whatever he gets, and in anticipation of a fight as keen as that which gave him control of land transportation in the Northwestern United States, he has figured and studied, investigated and unbrowed after the minutest facts relating to the Pacific trade until thousands upon thousands of dollars have been sunk merely in laying the foundation of information on which to proceed with definite plans for the right kinds of ships for the Puget sound right trade.

Mr. Hill outlines his task. When the Dakota was launched Mr. Hill made a very brief speech in which he outlined the task he has set himself. This is what he said:

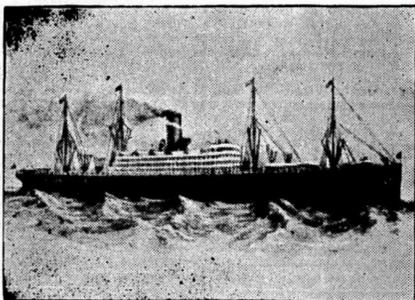
New York
"Did you ever think of it in that way? It means that we must carry a ton of four ten miles for one copper cent."

"I don't know whether any of you ever tried it, but I can tell you that its pretty hard work to carry a ton ten miles for a cent. But as I told you, I am willing to tackle the job. By and by I may call upon you for your prayers, but that's all I want in the way of subsidy."

Control of Pacific. Control of the Pacific, and the vast traffic that is growing up between the Western ports and the markets of Asia is no small matter. It means the vanquishing of tremendous competition, against companies possessing millions of dollars and some of the most powerful ships money can buy. Yet it is not a question of money, nor merely of powerful ships. It is a question of tonnage and cheap freights.

A clearer idea of what Mr. Hill himself admits a serious problem is gained from the fact that it will be necessary for him to compete with all the lines out of Seattle, Tacoma and the Golden Gate. These lines have many of them been years in the trade. They have vast fleets of ships and powerful land traffic allies. It is for this reason that Mr. Hill, in seeking the control of the growing Asiatic trade, made big ships his weapons in the contest. Big ships, carrying at proportionately smaller cost the traffic pouring out of the Pacific ports obtain the one advantage open against the established lines.

There were good reasons for making the Minnesota and Dakota 22,000-ton ships. Had they been smaller they would have been merely the equals and not the superiors of competing ships. What these competing ships are shown by the following table giving the tonnage of the largest ships in the trade Mr. Hill seeks, on the Pacific.



"Some of the people down in Wall street seem to be willing to furnish us with what they call a merchant marine. They have merchant marines and navies and such things to sell, apparently. But somehow or other the ships we can get that way are not laden with gold. They turn out to be worthless. If we want good ships we must build them ourselves. Every standard of life in our country is higher and better than it is anywhere else, except one thing, and that thing is transportation."

"Transportation is the problem which confronts the industrial people of this country. If we would gain and keep the markets of the world we must furnish cheap transportation. If we fail in this these great sister ships, Minnesota and Dakota, will soon be for sale—and I mean a sale and not a-a-i-l. I mean they will be under the hammer of the auctioneer."

"The problem of inland transportation was a hard one, but we have solved it. The problem of transporting goods across the Atlantic was difficult, but we have at last made a good start at solving it. The problem of conveying the products of our rich and fertile lands across the Pacific is most difficult of all. I am not afraid to tackle it. All I am afraid of is a fire in the rear."

"I hope and believe we shall soon have more ships on the Pacific. I hope and believe we in America will not adopt that malady which they call British 'physicality.' I hope that those who control the affairs of this nation will also realize that the conquests of commerce are a hundred times more to be desired than the conquests of war."

Cheap Freight Rates. "Do you know what we have to do in transportation in order to make the Oriental market available? Do you know just what the problem is?"

"I will tell you. In order to carry our business to the Orient we have got to carry a barrel of flour from St. Paul or Minneapolis to Hongkong for just 25 cents more than it costs us to send that barrel of flour to

Competitors of Big Ships.

Boston Steamship Company—
Tremont.....16,900 tons
Shawmut.....16,900 tons
(Each 508 feet long, 58 feet beam and 40 feet depth.)

Empress line (Canadian Pacific Ry.)—
Empress of India.....6,000 tons
Empress of Japan.....6,000 tons
Empress of China.....6,000 tons
(485 feet long, 51 feet beam.)

Northern Pacific Steamship Company (Out of Tacoma)—

Victoria.....3,167 tons
Olympia.....3,608 tons
Tacoma.....3,553 tons

"A. & A." Line (Spreckels Line).
Sonoma.....6,200 tons
Ventura.....6,200 tons
Sierra.....6,200 tons

Out of San Francisco:
Pacific Mail Steamship Company—
Toyo Kaisen Kaisha—
Occidental and Oriental Lines—
Korea.....12,000 tons

Hongkong Maru.....7,000 tons
American Maru.....7,000 tons
Nippon Maru.....7,000 tons
Gaelic, Doric, Coptic, each.....4,000 tons

These are the most powerful ships on the Pacific. The list includes all the large vessels at present in service. Contrasted with them are President Hill's ships:

Minnesota.....22,000 tons
Dakota.....22,000 tons
(630 feet long, 75 feet beam, 55 feet high, 88 feet to captain's bridge, 177 feet to top of masts, cargo capacity 30,000 tons of forty cubic feet each.)

Superior to All Others. So nicely have competitive conditions been weighed that both the huge ships will be at least equal in speed and in most cases superior to the best ships afloat on the Pacific.

They are neither passenger craft nor cargo craft, but an intermediate type, adapted to both classes of traffic and offering for passengers, although freight will furnish their principal revenue, as fine accommodations, as good speed, as safe and quick a trip across the big

blue pond as the famous Empress Line craft can give, a fact which is important when it is remembered that the Empress Line will be, in the hands of the Canadian Pacific, one of Mr. Hill's strongest competitors.

Officials who will manage the company that will control the big ships when afloat have a ready reply to the question, how will Mr. Hill get cargo to fill his enormous ships, when finally they are in commission and become a daily expense for maintenance and operation. They simply point to the fact that during last year the total west bound tonnage of but one of the lines that will contribute to the enormous bulk of goods that will fill the holds of the monsters was more than 5,700,000 tons. Not all of this was export business, but an immense part was.

The powerful transcontinental lines, contributing a total west bound tonnage of 15,000,000 tons a year, of which a large part is export business, will make cargoes for more than two such ships, and this takes no account of the tremendous volume of business that will be built up, from the wheat plains of the Northwest, from the mills of Minnesota, from the Pacific slope and from the ranges of the intermediate west, when, as Mr. Hill predicts, a ton will be hauled ten miles for one copper cent." Low rates, they say, always create business, and will create business to fill the ships, yet whether they do or not, there is already business in progress of delivery every day of the year at the Puget sound ports which will make cargoes.

COMPARATIVE FIGURES. If Mr. Hill's ships were to ply between ports on the Atlantic they would be less remarkable, because in recent years several huge ships have been floated for transatlantic traffic, the famous Cedric of the White Star line, with her 21,035 tons gross being the largest and most powerful. Yet even the Cedric is not so large as the Minnesota, nor the Dakota. But on the Pacific, where the fight for supremacy has not been so keenly waged, the Hill liners have immeasurable advantage. Graphically expressed, here are a few facts that show their relation to the competing craft:

Either ship is equal to the Tremont or Shawmut, the most powerful craft now in commission on the Pacific, with the Empress of India thrown in for good measure.

The Minnesota is equal in gross tonnage to all three of the crack Canadian Pacific ships with a fourth of equal size added.

All the Northern Pacific ships together are but a trifle more than a third the tonnage of the Minnesota or Dakota.

The Hongkong Maru, American Maru and Nippon Maru of the Toyo Kaisen Kaisha line consolidated, lack 1,000 ton of equalling either.

If the three great "A & A." ships were consolidated with the Gaelic or Doric, they would only equal the Dakota.

"The Minnesota," said a Great Northern official yesterday, "could stow away almost any one boat of the present Pacific service in her hold, and at that it would rattle around unless it were blocked in with cargo."

Down at New London the big Minnesota is lying in the slip, with hundreds of workmen putting the finishing touches to her.

Will go Into Commission.

In three months she will be ready to go into commission. Her deck works are being fitted and her huge funnels are in place, greatly accentuating her beautiful appearance. Although huge and tremendous in all her lines, as she nears completion she becomes more and more a graceful and harmonious whole. When her flag is raised she will present a handsome picture.

The big Dakota, launched early this month, will not be ready for service for a year. A tremendous amount of work is still to be completed and immense crews will be months in putting in her fittings.

Meantime the work of preparing for the big boats goes merrily on at Smith's Cove, on Puget sound, and \$1,000,000 is being spent in providing docks at which the two ships can load and unload. No expense is being spared to provide the very best facilities skill can devise for rapid handling of cargo, and the engineers assert that when the docks are ready, either craft will be able to take on or discharge a cargo as quickly as can any other craft in Puget sound waters.

One more honor awaits Mary Belle Flemington, the North Dakota girl who christened the Dakota. President Hill has decided that when the big ship goes into commission she will carry in her main saloon a full-length portrait of her sponsor. The compliment is indicative of the respect and friendship the Ellendale girl won not only from Mr. Hill, but from the Dakota's builders and all that are interested in the task of placing the ships on the high seas.

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