

Vivid Thoughts

James J. Hill Papers
Minnesota Historical Society

Vivid Thoughts

Selected from
"HIGHWAYS OF PROGRESS"

Whose Author the Late
JAMES J. HILL
was
An Empire Builder



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FOREWORD

Those epigrams and thoughts taken from Mr. Hill's "Highways of Progress," although written in 1910 are peculiarly suited to our present conditions. Statistics have not been used, although in this line the author was great and enlightening. A world's war has changed the figures given, but the principles which they illustrated still apply. Our readers are strongly urged to weigh those words of wisdom.

THE UNION STOCK YARD &
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of CHICAGO

"Nations, like men, are travelers. Each one of them moves, through history, toward what we call progress and a new life or toward decay and death. As it is the first concern of every man to know that he is achieving something, advancing in material wealth, industrial power, intellectual strength and moral purpose, so it is vital to a nation to know that its years are milestones along the way of progress."

"The highest conception of a nation is that of a trustee for posterity."

"The average man is often more interested in speculative theories than in his plain duty toward himself and his neighbor. The average state is filled with visions of its place in the procession of the years, while it overlooks the running account of daily expenses."

"National security calls for a just accounting of the business affairs of this great nation."

"The country needs more workers on the soil. Not to turn the stranger away, but to direct him to the farm instead of the city; not to watch with fear a possible increase of the birth rate but to use every means to keep the boys on the farm and to send youth from the city to swell the depleted ranks of agricultural industry—this is the necessary task of a well-advised political economy and an intelligent patriotism."

"The United States has been able easily to take care of its great increase of population in the past because it had a vast area of unoccupied land. This was the main asset in its natural inheritance."

"Many thoughtful people, including some of these who should be instructors and leaders of the public, have fallen victims to the purely imaginative theories of socialism; theories which, if they could be literally applied, would destroy the vital-

ity of society as an organic thins and establish a tyranny so universal and so minute as to make both the industrial and the social life of man intolerable. There is great need of a broader understanding of the relation of one interest to another in the social life of man; of their interdependence as well as their separate values; of the community as an economic whole."

"The mighty wealth of this continent was adequate, with ordinarily provident handling, for an indefinite increase of the demands upon it. The inheritors of this wealth have already so far dissipated it that some prudent care of the residue cannot be postponed without certain disaster."

"Every people is thus reduced, in the final appraisal of its estate, to reliance upon the soil. This is the sole asset that does not perish, because it contains within itself, if not abused, the possibility of infinite renewal. All the life that exists upon this planet, all the development of man from his lowest to his highest qualities, rests firmly and as reservedly upon the capacities of the soil as do his feet upon the ground beneath him. The soil alone is capable of self-renewal, through the wasting of the rocks, through the agency of plant life, through its chemical reactions with the liquids and gases within and about it. A self-perpetuating race must rely upon some self-perpetuating means of support. Our one resource, therefore, looking at humanity as something more than the creature of a day, is the productivity of the soil. And since that, too, may be raised to a high power or lowered to the point of disappearing value, it is of first consequence to consider how the people of the United States have dealt with this, their greatest safeguard and their choicest dower."

"There is, except in isolated and individual cases, little approaching intensive agriculture in the United States. There is only the annual skimming of the rich cream; the exhaustion of virgin fertility; the extraction from the earth, by the most rapid process, of its productive powers; the

deterioration of life's sole maintenance. And all this with that army of another hundred million people marching in plain sight toward us, and expecting and demanding that they shall be fed."

"The treasury of our future is being despoiled to swell the rapidly growing riches of the day."

"Man may win, beyond Peradventure man will win, from the silent willingness of nature, from her sternness of her clemency, from her outpouring and her withholding, the utmost of his aspiration. But the highway to the perfect condition must be fashioned from the common clod under his feet. And for every error and omission he must pay the uttermost farthing. It is not so much, at this point, a question whether it is to be our people or another who win to higher ideals of life, of government and of conduct, as it is whether they are to escape the shock of an awakening that must leave them face to face with the old struggle for existence, with weakened moral fibre and submerged in profound discouragement. Certain it is that the time has come for setting our household in order, and creating a serious study of national activity and economy according to a truer insight and a more rational mood."

"Genius has shunned the firm and expended itself upon mechanical appliances and commerce and the manifold activities whose favorable reactions filter back but slowly to the plot of ground on which stands solidly the real master of himself and of his destiny."

"No nation that does not throw its intensest interest and expend the bulk of its force upon the cultivation of the soil can become or remain permanently great."

"To restore and maintain the fertility of the soil, to assure food and occupation for a greater population than may be expected in a long future, we have but to study the experience of older peo-

pies and to follow lessons written plainly in the history of the world's agriculture."

"The sight of the fields and their contrast with others, the knowledge of yields secured and profits possible would be worth more than all the pamphlets poured out from the government printing office in years."

"Land without population is a wilderness, and population without land is a mob."

"A prosperous agricultural interest is to a nation what good digestion is to a man."

"It is strange that almost all countries, including our own, should, until taught by approaching misfortune, fail to realize the primary and indispensable place of agriculture in sound national development."

"The fertile fields of this country are its real gold mines, from which it will gather a richer yield than the deposits of Alaska or South Africa or any other land can furnish. These are the true national inheritance. We must treasure what is left of them."

"The greater the number of prosperous farmers, the greater will be the prosperity of every business man."

"Including Alaska, this country has about the same area as Europe. It has a little more than one-fifth as much population. With a trifle over 5 per cent of the population of the world, we are producing 43 per cent of the world's supply of wheat, corn and oats. We raise over 70 per cent of the world's cotton. All political economy that is not mere empty theory rests upon the ratio of population to land area, the abundance and value of the products of the soil, and the proper balance and inter-relation of different industries. We have been busy as a nation helping the so-called indus-

trial interests of the country—in fact, everybody except the man on the farm."

"The man on the farm must be considered first In all our policies, because he is the keystone of the national arch."

"It is made clear by every process of logic and by the proof of historic fact that the wealth of a nation, the character of its people, the quality and permanence of its institutions are all dependent upon a sound and sufficient agricultural foundation. Not armies or navies or commerce or diversity of manufacture or anything other than the farm is the anchor which will hold through the storms of time that sweep all else away."

"Our real concern is not so much to save the home market from the inroads of the foreigner as to keep it from destruction by an enlarged city-life and a neglected country life, a crowded artisan population clamoring for food and a foreign demand for the product of their wages limited to fields where the competition of all the world must be met and overcome."

"We grew 504,185,470 bushels in 1882, when our population was a little over 52,000,000, and 634,087,000 bushels in 1907, twenty-five years later. The increase in wheat yield during these years, when much of the new land of the West was being brought under cultivation, was a little over 25 per cent, while population increased \$3,000,000, or over 63 per cent. Obviously, bread supply and demand will not keep pace through the working of any law of nature."

"Commerce is the exchange of commodities, and the term is generally understood to include the buying and selling between individuals and, in a wider sense, between communities and nations. Under its adventurous leadership civilization and Christianity have spread to the remotest parts of

the world. The commercial nations have, at all times, exorcised the strongest influence for good among the peoples of the earth."

"In the Orient, as elsewhere shown, we might find buyers for our surplus cotton and food staples, as long as we have any surplus to dispose of. and our steel manufactures, at least until its own resources are developed, nut restraints upon trade, not created by corporations hut forged by legislative fiction, have almost forced the discontinuance of successful and promising efforts to find an outlet there. With the increase of our population, this problem of markets is one of those that the future will have to solve."

We used to think of the travels of Mungo Park is something remarkable; but not now. Darkest Africa is almost a matter of daily information. And with this fusing of the world by commerce into virtually one community, the race will be to the intelligent, the enterprising, to those who can supply the best articles In the shortest time at the lowest prices That is the final word of the modern commercial system."

"The tendency toward combination of interests engaged in large industrial undertakings is simply a part of that co-operation in the production, the distribution and the exchange of wealth with which everybody has been familiar for centuries. When the pioneers in this country united to help build one another's houses, when they had a barn 'raising.' it was combination. When the owner of land or implements or capital in any other form first entered into partnership with labor to create more wealth, it was combination. When the corporation came into existence, through which many small amounts of capital could be massed, it marked a new era. Just as much as when two men first lifted by their united strength some stone or tree trunk too heavy for them singly. Exactly as society and the work of the community have become more complex, so have the means by which material ends are achieved, grown larger and more powerful. The union of numerous disconnected

and weak railroads in one orderly and efficient system, the substitution of one great establishment for many small plants are part of the natural and inevitable evolution of united action among men,"

"The common conception of the capitalist as a man who hoards money and of Wall Street as a place where the money supply or the country may be cornered and kept to be doled out to the people only as they submit to terms imposed by its owners, no more represents any existing reality than does the picture of a dragon. For few things are more worthless or uneasy than capital unemployed; and wealth locked up in vaults in a great city is just as useless to its possessor as heaps of gold to Robinson Crusoe. Idle capital may create a national problem, and has caused widespread national distress, as surely as idle labor."

"No combination in this country will ever rise superior to public opinion or be able long to defy it. Virtual monopolies that control through price agreements certain lines of manufactured articles would be smashed by the abolition of protective duties on these articles. An actual monopoly, controlling all production and squeezing the people, could and would be driven out of business by popular revolt."

"Fiercer than the controversy over the relative merits of competition and consolidation as applied to manufacture has been the discussion of them as applied to transportation. Originally the railroad property of the country consisted of a large number of small pieces of track, operated by companies unconnected with and often hostile to one another. This was natural. In a period when the main purpose of the railroad was still to serve local needs; to connect with the larger business centres of the country the territory immediately served by them.

"With the settlement of the West, and especially with the growth of through traffic, a new condition arose. The difficulty of sending commodities over half a dozen lines, operated by as many com-

panies, in one quick and continuous journey became too great for business to bear. What happened to the currency of the country happened to its railroad business. In the period before the war it was possible for the people to get along with notes issued by state banks because business was largely local, travel was limited and financial enterprises comparatively small. Such a system would be Intolerable today. And to handle the immense through railroad business of this country by a host of small and isolated lines would be just as impracticable as to carry on our commerce with forty-six different kinds of money. Consolidation appeared as naturally and as inevitably as the triple expansion engine displaces that of an earlier type.'

"The whole story can be compressed into a single statement. The last twenty-five years cover the period of active consolidation among the railroads of the United States, until the extent of the groups that will finally survive and the territory served by each can be roughly approximated. While this was going on, the average receipt per passenger per mile on all the railroads of the United States dropped from 2.42 cents in 1883 to 2.01 cents in 1906; and the average freight rate per ton per mile fell nearly 40 per cent, from 1.22 cents to .77." (Written in 1910.)

"The public, on its part, must understand that it cannot afford to build up a commercial system based on the supposition that the transportation business will be done at a loss. No such arrangement can possibly be permanent. Railroad rates and regulations, when prescribed by public authority, may easily be made such that no financial return for service re-mains after paying expenses. Somewhere before this point is reached the line must be drawn. Otherwise, if hope of a fair profit is cut off, private capital will no longer be put into railroads. Such conditions have been known in this country recently, and might easily become fixed. Then, since the traffic of the country must be carried, the only recourse would be to have

the Government do the work. We can know what this would certainly mean."

"The railroads depend for existence upon the products of the land they serve. The man out on the farm or in the forest or down in the mine must be able to sell his product at a profit, or he will cease to labor. When he has nothing to sell, there will be nothing for the railroad to carry. Individuals come and go, but the land of the country, its resources and the railroads will be here permanently; and they will either prosper or be poor together."

"The laws of trade are as certain in their operation as the laws of gravitation. The combination of forces to accomplish ends to which singly they are unequal is one of these natural laws. You might as well try to set a broken arm by statute as to change a commercial law by legislative enactment. We have been as a nation too ready to look to State and Federal legislation for remedies beyond their power to give. You may obstruct and delay for a time, but in the end the inexorable law of experience and the survival of the fittest will prevail. **That is a law of universal operation, and in its working it appears to be eternal.**"

"Such combinations as are evil, and some there are, will be found self-destroying. The large material view of things as well as the moral shows that the affairs of men are subject to a moral order. That which is wrong cannot continue indefinitely. Every mistake carries within it the seed of failure. Every device of man is tried by final facts; and not one which is not fitted to promote his progress and to assist in the betterment of human conditions and the advance of human societies will survive. All history shows this. Therefore, insofar as the principle of collective effort through great corporations is wholly self-seeking, aims at unjust ends or offends the law of national growth, it will perish."

"The principle of consolidation in business within proper limitations and safeguards is a peril

manent addition to the forward-moving forces of the world. We shall no more abandon It, we could no more live our lives now without it, than we could consent to' dissolve our governments, forget all our complex social relationships and return to the simple but barren life of isolation bought by hardship and a stunted existence supported by the chase."

"The embodiment in practice of this principle that railroading is a business enterprise and not a speculation; that its chief interest is in the field, the factory and the mine rather than upon the stock exchange; that the intelligent and just system of profit-sharing between carrier and shipper embodied in reasonable rates will best promote the prosperity of both and enlarge the common heritage, is not the least of the contributions made by the Northwest to¹ the development of the nation and the world within the last fifty years."

"The history of our trade with the Orient Is a tale of lost opportunity. Yet so much more popular are facts that tickle our pride than those hinting of neglect or mistake that comparatively few people today appreciate what this opportunity was, and to what extent and why we have lost it."

"So the application of domestic regulation to export rates amounts to just this: that one partner or the other must work at a continuing loss. Naturally, Oriental business does not expand."

"Then the American who has put his money into vessels to be sailed under the flag* of his country and wishes to help his enterprise by earning the small compensation provided for carrying the United States mails can qualify for this only by having his ships built by the high-priced labor and out of the high-priced materials of this country; officered by American citizens: and on each departure from the home port for the first two years he must prove that one-fourth of his crew are American citizens, for the next three years it must be one-third, and thereafter at least one-

half. His competitors may man their vessels with cheap Mongolian labor. He must make lower rates than they and pay higher wages.

"The sharpness of such competition is felt especially in the Asiatic trade. As it affects transportation, so it reacts upon the American merchant and the American producer. Not without comprehending the situation has a recent critic of our policies said: We may build the inter-ocean passage, but unless we turn our eyes to the West and reach out for what waits the trade seeker there, it will only aid in keeping the supremacy of the Pacific in the hands of the foreigners, and we will maintain it for the benefit of other nations'."

"The Chinese are one of the strongest races in the world; intelligent, industrious, frugal and brave. They have several thousand years of history behind them. Both China and Japan have inventive as well as imitative ability. Gunpowder and the mariner's compass were ancient in China when the white race thought it had discovered them. Such men, endowed with such resources as are still untouched in the Orient, working under a wage scale with which the Western world cannot possibly compete, not only do not promise to furnish us with a profitable future market for manufactures, but they will eventually become competitors such as we have never had to meet."

"The outlook is not hopeless, but it is not encouraging. The country needs to rid itself of the illusion that its Oriental trade is to be one of the big elements in its future prosperity—a conception still lingering grotesquely in many minds, along with the idea that we are powerful competitors of other nations in the world's markets for manufactured goods—and settle down to saving such of it as can be saved. There are still possibilities if all the transportation forces, all the people, the Federal Government and the laws should unite to protect, to encourage this traffic,

and to liberate it from the bondage against which it has almost ceased to struggle.

"The constructive and the destructive epochs in the life of this portion of our foreign commerce are as interesting and as instructive as many volumes of political history or political economy. If there should come a keener vision to our people and their leaders, out of mistake and failure there might yet, perhaps, he wrought something of moment to the future of our nation and its destiny on land and sea."

"It is important to realize from the outset how unique has been the service of the railroad in the United States. When the steam engine and the wheeled car traveling on iron rails were first utilized for the carriage of persons and goods, they were used in Europe as substitutes for already existing means of communication of inferior value. They took the place of the pack animal, the stage coach, the goods van, that crowded all the highways between populous centres. It was merely the substitution of a more efficient for an inferior agency, in a society already developed and a country comparatively occupied. In the United States, on the other hand, the railroad was a pathfinder and pioneer. When it appeared here, the only thickly settled territory lay along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and the rivers flowing to them. The first long line of railroad was built in this country to improve communication between the sea and the interior beyond the Alleghanies. From that day to this the railroad has outrun the settler and beckoned him on; has opened up new territory, brought in population, created new industries and new wealth. It has served not as a mere connecting link between communities, but as a creative energy to bring them into existence. From this characteristic of the railroad system of this country have arisen differences of function affecting almost every relation of the railroad to the people."

"The first railroads in the United States had to be built hastily and cheaply. The settler himself did

not go without a house until he could have one with frescoes on the walls and a gas plant in the basement; and the railroad provided just enough facilities to take the settler in and carry his products out at the smallest expense. In no other way would it have been possible to open so quickly the enormous interior spaces of this country and fill them with cities, towns and villages. While the railways of the United States may have mistakes to answer for, they have created the most effective, useful and by far the cheapest system of land transportation in the world. This has been accomplished with very little legislative aid, and against an immense volume of opposition and interference growing out of ignorance and misunderstanding. It is not an exaggeration to say that in the past history of this country the railway, next after the Christian religion and the public school, has been the largest single contributing factor to the welfare and happiness of the people."

"The final product must be a number of strong systems, each competent to give to the people of the territory served by it the best service, and all competing against one another for the better development of the areas served by them respectively and the sale of their products in the common market. Each railroad system can prosper only by increasing its traffic. It can do this only by increasing the number of its customers and the volume of their business. This urges it to consult the business interest, not only of the towns and manufacturing or commercial concerns along its lines, but also of those who occupy the land. The building up of industries requires the building up of markets for their products. Railroad and producer stand together for the prosperity of the interest they have in common. In thin competition between the producer and the railway in one locality, acting together, with the producer and the railway in another locality, acting together, resides the only effective final competition of railroads—that for markets. Public control of rates prevents

extortion by the carrier. Thus the outlines of a definite railway evolution begin to appear."

"But the country is still growing; under wise policies that growth will increase, and the railroad must meet the ensuing new demands. More miles of track, more equipment, above all more terminals, must be provided. It would be practically impossible to construct another trunk line from Chicago to the seaboard at any cost on which interest could be paid without charging the business more than it could bear. Since terminal areas are physically limited and in many places practically exhausted, it might be an impossibility to build such a line at any price. With all the assistance that waterways can give, the country will nevertheless soon be face to face with an emergency calling for energy and judgment as well as a public confidence so fully restored as to bring out the immense amount of capital required to make even a slight improvement upon the situation."

"Every hour that one of its cars is held costs a railroad company money. The tying up of its equipment costs the public as well as the company both money and service. If one man has the use of a car for a longer time than he is entitled, somebody else, in the busy season, must be deprived of it when he needs it. But many states have passed laws to intensify the difficulty and evil of the situation. In Connecticut, for instance, no railroad company is permitted to claim or collect any sum from any shipper or consignee for delay in loading or unloading, 'for any period of less than four consecutive days, Sundays and legal holidays excluded.' Legislation of this sort is equivalent to the destruction of a considerable percentage of the car equipment of the country; and until the country is educated beyond the possibility of it, the railroads can make little progress toward raising the beggarly car service of 25 miles per day that prevents existing facilities, even when ample, from doing the work required of them. No other business is limited in the use of its equipment to two or three hours out of the twenty-four."

"Suppose that there are 5,000 cars to be delivered daily in the state of Connecticut; a reasonable estimate, considering the number of its populous trade centers and the factories grouped in its towns. A four days' accumulation would gather 20,000 cars in the railroad yards. If each car averages 40 feet in length, it would require 151 miles of track merely to hold the standing cars. In many of the states new and more onerous demurrage regulations are continually being brought forward; the net effect of them all being to increase the cost of service and to shrink by just so much the possible daily average of car use and the working value of terminals that the country ought to expand by every means in its power."

"Railroad financing, with all that the term implies, is perhaps, next after the subject of a national currency, the most important in relation to public welfare and national growth, the least understood and the most frequently and passionately discussed of all matters of the day. The time has come when it ought to be possible to draw its outlines with intelligent precision."

"A railroad can increase its profits only, as a rule, by increasing its receipts. Since rates cannot rise above a certain point without becoming prohibitive, their proceeds must be increased by increasing the volume of business. Within limits, the multiplier is fixed; but the multiplicand may vary almost without limits. The volume of business grows only as acre after acre of the country served is occupied and made to yield its greatest contribution of wealth; and as manufacturing and other industries arise in answer to the new demands so created. To bring this about, such rates must be made as will permit every industry proper to the territory in question to be carried on at a profit. A higher rate defeats itself by checking industry. A rate too low to return a living profit would prevent the carrier from giving adequate service, would ultimately destroy it and thus injure the people just as surely as one too high."

"Rate wars and rates below the reasonable level simply run up bills for the people to pay. For all charges of every sort are, in the end, paid by the people. There was a time, perhaps, when railways overcharged the people at non-competitive points, but that time has now passed. The evil is prevented by both business prudence and by the law. Therefore the reasonableness of rates is promoted today by having the transportation work of the country performed by the smallest number of carriers that can handle it effectively. The cost to the public of getting this work done is thus reduced to the minimum.'

"The two impressive facts about freight rates in the United States are that they have declined steadily and rapidly, and that they are now the lowest in the world. In 1890, by the Government statistics, the revenue per ton mile was .927 of a cent for the whole country. In 1907 it had fallen to .759. During the very time when the prices of all kinds of commodities were rising from 10 to 60 per cent, and while the wages of labor were greatly increased, the amount charged by the railroads of the country for the important service they render suffered this great decline." (Written in 1910, but still holds good under changed conditions brought about by the war.)

"Of all the economic advantages realized by the people in the last fifty years, nothing can compare in Importance and in cash value with the progressive reductions in the cost of transportation by the railways."

"The American railway pays the highest wages in the world, out of the lowest ratios in the world, after having set down to capital account the lowest capitalization per mile of all the great countries of the world. No other occupation and no other employer of labor in the country can match this record."

"But continually increased pay and decreased working hours for the employe mean increased

cost to the employer. The people must expect to make good the deficit through an increase in rates. A railway can pay out only what it takes in. It takes in nothing except what the public pays to it for service. The logical conclusion, that every concession to employees must in time be reflected in a rise in rates and paid for by the people, is one which they too often shirk."

"It is not possible to curtail forever the income of any form of enterprise while increasing its burdens. A fair and reasonable profit is just as essential, in the long run, to the public's interest as a fair and reasonable freight rate. Unless this fact is realized practically in public opinion and in legislation, investment in railway enterprises will so diminish that the country must suffer seriously both in present convenience and in future growth."

"The years in which the largest number of miles of railroad were built have been the years of greatest general prosperity."

"No public question touches directly the interests of so large a number of people, especially those who work hard for a living, as the prosperity of the railroads and their subordination to proper and freedom from improper regulation. The railroad has been an emancipator of labor. A commodity brings the highest price when it can move quickly to any point where demand may arise. This is notably true of labor."

"The owner of every other form of property may enjoy without reproach its natural increase; but if a railroad's prosperity gains value, this is considered proper ground for legislative attack."

"Although the tendency to interfere unnecessarily and hurtfully with the management of railroad properties has by no means been killed, its virulence has been somewhat abated by recent disastrous experiences. There will always be railroad regulation. But railroad persecution shows

symptoms of ptomaine poisoning. Its excesses generated toxins which are destroying its power to harm; and the country may probably look forward presently to a period of constructive legislation, after the destructive period that ended Its reign of more than a quarter of a century in 1907."

"Regulative authority there must be. But it must be consistent, comprehensive and uniform. It must be governed by the rule of fair play to the shipper, the railroad and the consumer alike. Behind ruthless aggression by either corporation or state stands the menacing figure of public ownership. This has no power to affright the present owners of railroads, since their property could not be taken without fair compensation. But for the people it would be the beginning of the end. No sane man can believe that our institutions or free government in this country would long survive the change."

"Where so much public money is flowing down the gutter, many a man finds it easier to scoop up what he wants than to work for it."

"Perhaps the greatest factor of all in the price problem is the wage rate. Everybody knows that labor cost is the principal item in all forms of industry. The wage rate has been rising steadily in this country. Powerful forces are back of this movement. It has public sympathy. To resist it is difficult and may be dangerous. As the labor supply diminishes, for reasons just stated, wages rise still more. High wages and high prices work in a circle. Every rise of one is reflected in a rise of the other. But somebody has to pay these wages. They do not come out of the air. In the end labor suffers when the business no longer pays a profit and the payrolls cease entirely by the closing up of an industry no longer profitable."

"The effect of national waste of capital is felt immediately in the added weight of taxation. One of the last things men learn is that every dollar

paid out by a government must first have been paid in by the community."

"The modern theory that you can safely tax the wealthy is just as obnoxious as the mediaeval theory that you can safely oppress or kill the poor."

"Material resources are conserved by taking steps to stop their destruction. Just so the wealth of the country, its capital, its credit, must be saved from the predatory poor as well as the predatory rich, **but above all from the predatory politician.** Nothing less is worthy of honest men or of the people living under a government of their own fashioning and control."

"Individual and public economy; a just distinction between a high standard of comfort on one side and vulgar ostentation or criminal waste on the other; a check on income-wasting .debt creation and credit inflation—these are the essentials of the new and better conservation. The reform is so great, so indispensable, so linked to our moral as well as our material progress that it would seem to appeal to the heart and mind of every American and win his enthusiastic devotion until its last battle shall have been won. Patriotism and self-interest Strike hands hero for the protection of our homes and happiness from those moat dangerous of all enemies, the foes within our own borders."

"Every nation finds its hour of peril when there is no longer free access to the land, or when the land will no longer support the people. Disturbances within are more to be feared than attacks from without. Our government is built upon the assumption of a fairly contented, prosperous and happy people, capable of ruling their passions, with power to change their Institutions when such change is generally desired. It would not be strange if they should in their desire for change attempt to pull down the pillars of their national temple. Far may this day be from us. But since

the unnecessary destruction of our land will bring new conditions of danger, its conservation, its improvement to the highest point of productivity promised by scientific intelligence and practical experiment, appears to be a first command of any political economy worthy of the name."

An Appreciation

of

“The Late

JAMES J. HILL

As I Knew Him”

Written by

JOHN CLAY

THE BREEDER'S GAZETTE

June 3rd, 1920

It was about 1882 that I began to meet the late James J. Hill. One evening at Lake Minnetonka, near Minneapolis, a private train was ready to pull out. Into it went Sir George Stephen, R. B. Angus, Mr. Hill and a crowd of officials connected with the Canadian Pacific Railroad, then fairly under way. Out of the old St. Paul & Manitoba Road, which had sprung into new life and become a wonderful success some years earlier, three great master-minds had come into the limelight: Stephen Smith and Hill. Stephen is now Lord Mount Stephen, still alive, so far as I know, in England. Smith, eventually Sir Donald, and then Lord Strathcona, died some time ago at a ripe old age. Mr. Hill passed away all too soon at the zenith of his power.

Of these men Stephen was the brilliant financier, Strathcona the alert, Keen-witted genius who handled men like pawns on a chess board, in London, Ottawa or Winnipeg, a vivid character when the Hudson Bay Co. held sway in the Canadian northwest; latterly an empire builder, Hill was in many ways the equal of the two Scotchmen, with a greater insight into the possibilities of the virgin country that lay in great stretches of prairie, mountain and stream to the shores of the Pacific. God gifted him with a great brain and a wonderfully retentive memory. I knew little of his social habits, although my wife was his and Mrs. Hill's guest for a night. My association with him was on the Rialto in our daily business walk and conversation, and I never met a man who could talk better; in fact, he loved to draw upon his well of information and sprinkle it over you. He was fluent on nearly every subject. If he had not been a great railroad man he might have been a master-mind in divinity.

My first meeting with him was in the arena at the old Fat Stock Show on the Lake Front in Chicago. Bow Park was then showing Shorthorns, and as we hailed from Canada Mr. Hill was especially interested. In this way I got acquainted with him, only slightly at first, and the first time I called at his office in St. Paul I came off second best. In the fall of 1884 there had been a meeting of stock-

men which eventually organized the National Cattle Growers' Association of America. The meeting was held in Chicago. A week later we all attended the great mooring in St. Louis. The two associations become one; in fact, after the trail question was disposed of, the Texas, Colorado and Kansas men lost interest. The original idea of the Chicago meeting was averse to the southern idea of driving cattle northwards and spreading fever in healthy regions. The main idea of the men who guided the meeting was not so much to discuss this particular matter, but to move in the direction of the whole sanitary situation, so far as live stock was concerned. Other matters were discussed, especially the leasing of public lands, and general protection of the live stock industry.

In 1885, when the association met as one in Chicago, sentiment centered on the methods of fighting disease. The result was the present Bureau of Animal Industry. DeWitt W. Smith, then of Bates, Ill., now of Springfield, Ill., was president of the association. Alvin H. Saunders of The Gazette was secretary, and I held the somewhat thankless position of treasurer. Our wants were not excessive, financially, but we had to print reports, and do some educational work at Washington, also among packing and associate interests. The big packers were shy at first, but eventually they gave us hearty support. As the railroads were largely interested, we called on them for a subscription of \$250 each. The late Elmer Washburn went with me to the roads whose headquarters were in Chicago, and had excellent success. Washburn had a calm, convincing way of stating our case. We had to tackle the Northern Pacific and the St. Paul, Manitoba & Minneapolis roads in St. Paul. I got my quota, at the former headquarters. At the latter I was referred to Mr. Hill personally. I had no sooner stated my object than fire began to fly, and after a rather heated ten minutes I had to retire, defeated. I was as mad as a hen. In our judgment he was the last man to turn down an object of this kind. To this day I do not understand his attitude, for in things pertaining to agriculture he was always generous and open-handed.

Temporarily at least it confirmed the idea that he was an autocrat, but it was the last time I ever saw the wrong side of his face. No man in the after years could have treated any one better. All big men with a thousand and one things revolving in their brains must be more or less overbearing and aggressive, with varying moods. This was Mr. Hill's reputation, and this anecdote will illustrate it. He sent for a very able man, a strong personal friend of the writer's, with the object of hiring him. There was a good deal of talk back and forward. The man who had a leading position in a large system, with headquarters in Chicago, was not very anxious to -move. He consented, however, to go to St. Paul, influenced no doubt by a handsome salary. After the details had been settled, Mr. Hill turned sharply round in his chair and said: "Like the rest of the men I employ for the high-up Jobs in this railroad, you will want a contract." My friend, who in his way was a bit casual, with a touch of humor in his make-up, replied: "Not necessary, Mr. Hill. When you are done with me I'll be done with you." He remained five years in Mr. Hill's employment before moving on to an eastern road, of which he eventually became president, but he always admitted that he got a lot of drilling and training from "the old man," as he irreverently called Mr. Hill, who was just about his own age.

In the years following my unfortunate interview I only met Mr. Hill occasionally, as he was then a busy man. We merely passed the time of day, and passed on. In the spring of 1897 Mr. Hill, Franklin McVeagh, secretary of the treasury in after years, and I foregathered on an Atlantic liner. We were members of the same club in Chicago, fairly well acquainted with one another, and it was then that I got to know two of the best men I have ever met. Mr. McVeagh was a polished gentleman, in the best sense of the word, well-dressed, suave in speech, tactful yet firm, with a great fund of reminiscence and anecdote. Mr. Hill was the opposite. He was aggressive, going after his objective with hammer and tongs, an avalanche of

facts and figures, illustrating his arguments. Withal, he was a good listener.

This was an aspect of his character I had never seen. He was absorbing the best that Mr. McVeagh could give him. They had respect for each other. They had been young: fellows in St. Paul together; Hill in the steamboat business, and McVeagh in grocery lines, or something similar, when the river boats were tied up in winter, the redoubtable "Jim" devoted himself to study, educating himself. With his powerful memory it was easy, dead easy. We know the results: the regeneration of the bankrupt St. Paul & Manitoba, the construction of the Canadian Pacific, the fearless energy that pushed the Great Northern to the coast. This was empire-building, not the work of a puppet with a golden crown, or a flashing sword, but peaceful penetration of the wilderness, "Jim" Hill's life was constructive. There is a couplet In Locksley Hall that fits him:

"Men, my brothers, men the workers ever reaping
something new,
That which they have done but earnest of the
things that they shall do."

He felt the pulsation of the coming days and, with wondrous vision, forecast the future. What of the money he made? He had to leave it all behind him, but his heritage is the roads that opened up new regions, placed them in touch with civilization, brought brain and bone and muscle to a virgin country. Millions and millions of wealth and countless happy homes and better still a great population came to the desert. All this was done without government aid or "graft" or injustice. It was achievement. That was the motto of Mr. Hill's life. In this life of 75 years or thereabouts he accomplished much; probably more than any other man in the realms of transportation since Fulton invented the steamship, or George Stephenson the locomotive.

He was insane on the subject of low grades. Mountains meant nothing to him; a level track was everything. When at business, there were no fancy touches or grand play-work. Everything was

practical. He bored holes through the rock ruthlessly but as economically as possible, so that his cost of operation would be reduced to a minimum. On the other hand, he had his fads and his fancies. He was a judge of art; he loved to handle a salmon rod; he lived generously, not riotously. He had all the instincts of a full-blooded, virile man, with a deep attachment to his home; a Canadian by birth but a cosmopolitan in his manhood days.

One morning as we were walking up and down the decks of the big, comfortable boat, he said abruptly, "John Clay, do you know anything about diamonds. I confessed my ignorance. Therewith he dove his left hand into his pants' pocket and produced about a dozen unset stones, diamonds of rare value. He came to a full stop, leaned up against the taffrail of the boat, and gave me a dissertation of precious stones. I learned more about diamonds than I knew before or since. I thought he had finished; not a bit of it. He walked along the deck to where Mrs. Hill was sitting. He took a ring gently from one of her hands, brought it over to where we had been standing, and began to tell the history of the wonderful gem in the setting- In the afternoon he had to repeat the story of those rare stones to my wife.

This was just one side to a many-sided character. On board the boat it was vaudeville all the time. Next to his grasp on his and other people's railroads, his mind ran on economic questions. He was a walking encyclopedia of information. Many an hour since then I have pondered over the subject of Mr. Hill as President of the United States. It was not a practical issue, a waste of time to think of it, for men of his caliber, of overpowering business ability, can never, unfortunately, reach such a position. In the democracy we live under, the best men only rises to the surface when great events make men think. In revolution days George Washington came to the surface and in the Civil War Lincoln. Today we are at the parting of the ways. We need business men to guide us, to shake to its foundation the fabric of "graft,"

extravagance and shuttle-cock politics on the banks of the Potomac.

McVeagh went down to Washington some year afterwards. He tried to clean out that Augean Stable, the treasury, but It was hopeless. Politics, prunes and prisms were too much for him, and he sank into' the morass of Washington methods. Washington today Is the prototype of Dickens' "Dotheboys Hall." I went through it at school, so I know. What a rattling of bones there would be in our public life if a. man like Mr. Hill were turned loose in the White House and its surroundings! Vain, unprofitable thoughts, I fear, but the hour is here when economically and commercially we need a savior, some keen, honest, courageous man who will sweep away the undergrowth in our political forest—"a Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood."

My feelings have led me away into a by-path, so I return to the main road. One afternoon some ten or twelve years ago I met Mr. Hill on the Twentieth Century Limited, en route for New York. We spent a couple of hours together. His mind was running on the decline of our transportation facilities. His ships were being driven off the Pacific, the Interstate Commerce Commission was drawing in the lines drastically, and labor was making some unreasonable demands. Just at this time Mr. Hill was earnestly speaking and writing upon the economic questions of production, more especially as they affected agriculture. When you think that our wheat production is in round number 13 bushels per acre, against 28 bushels in Great Britain, we have problems ahead. One step on the ladder of improvement is cheap transportation. His propaganda resulting from long study and a broad view of the conditions, fell, I fear, on stony ground. The average man did not understand his sledge-hammer arguments, nor did they see ahead.

The vision of Mr. Hill peered far into the future. While he did not probably foresee a war, he was providing for contingencies that history tells us will inevitably arise in a nation's history. As a student, widening every year his survey of the world, past and present, with a keen eye for the

future, he foretold in a general way our present position. With an inflated currency we are further hampered with a depreciated railroad system. Our life-blood is sapped by those two grievous burdens. A slow movement of the essentials of life tends to high money and a steadily mounting cost of living. If you look back on Mr. Hill's masterly addresses, you will be surprised how closely his predictions are coming true. Possible he saw further ahead than any of our great railroad men. Vanderbilt was constructive. Gould more or less of a wrecker, Harriman a strategist, supreme in that line, while Hill was a builder, and a great builder. He may have had his faults, but they were dwarfed under the resistless energy of his forceful mind. He met difficulties in a heroic manner; he used labor but did not abuse it; he built up communities and industries. After he had done all this on American and Canadian soil, he was dreaming of the Orient, away across the Pacific, to the land of the "Jap" and the heathen "Chinee." He would wax eloquent on this subject but unfortunate shipping laws curbed his ambition.

That afternoon he told me a quaint story. One afternoon he and one of his sons had gone grouse shooting in North Dakota. After a successful day's sport, they had left themselves scant time to catch the train back to St. Paul, where he had an appointment next day. He told the driver to take the shortest road to the depot where his car was on the sidetrack. Unfortunately a farmer had wired the old road, and the driver told him they could not retrace their steps and catch the train. A wire fence was a small obstruction in those days to Mr. Hill. He had to get to St. Paul, so a pair of wire cutters was got out of the wagon and the road was clear. Unfortunately, just as they were getting into the wagon, the farmer came up, and a madder man Hill said he never saw. He had a fine command of language, but it fell on deaf ears, for the train smoke was in the distance. Mr. Hill told his agent to go and repair the fence. That was the amend honorable, but he went further. The next time he went out to his farm, he told his superintendent to send a Berkshire boar and two

SOWS to the station agent, and have them delivered to his farmer friend.

Half a dozen years or more afterward he had occasion to be in the same neighborhood. The sod hut was gone, a good house had taken its place, the improvements were up-to-date and the place was alive with hogs. "Yim," as the Swedes loved to call him, knocked at the door, which was answered by a prosperous looking woman. When he mentioned his name, she shook his hand warmly, saying. "We have prospered ever since you sent the black hogs, and my husband never forgets the day he blessed you in his peculiar way." Another instance of casting bread on the waters! He got the good-will of those simple folks, and the hogs paid tribute to him as they rolled to market.

The last time I saw Mr. Hill was a few months before his death in his office in St. Paul. The day's work was over, or at least it was the hour when most men quit, but "Jim" Hill never quit. His brain was too active. The machinery of his head was in continual motion; even in his sleep he must have dreamed of conquest. An eight-hour day meant nothing to him. He was in a talkative mood. He went away back to the fat stock shows. He remembered the cattle we exhibited. Then he plunged into the battle of the breeds. He had tried all kinds and sorts, experimenting not always successfully. He wound up by naming a lot of the cattle which he had imported, and to rub matters in, so far as I was concerned, he referred to cattle which I had had to do with, naming them and then describing them. He had a memory that would have matched Hugh Millers', the Scotch Stonemason who paved the world **Old Red Sandstone**. Dr. Guthrie, the founder of the Ragged schools, relates that Miller, who had just read Gault's story entitled "The Provost," repeated verbatim a chapter of fifteen pages or thereabouts. All through our conversation there was a steady fire of questions on live stock breeding, and eventually we got to his favorite of agriculture, and how we could stem the tide of decreasing production.

The charm of this great man was his simplicity. He was rugged, aggressive, sometimes intolerant,

with an avalanche of information that swept everything before it. This was his outward make-up. It had hardened a bit as cement sets, but in his social moments he was kindly human, sympathetic, for all I know religious. This is a subject I never heard him mention. Today, if he were alive, his master-mind would be of untold benefit to unravel the economic problems which we are facing. That is to say, if the lawyers, schoolmasters and men of that ilk in Washington would listen to his words of wisdom. It would be well for this country if our Government would stop sending out tons of printed matter that is promptly consigned to the waste-paper basket, and produce a few leaflets with Mr. Hill's epigrams and thoughts on production. "The footprints on the hands of time" fade away fast in these days. It is pathetic to think that the wise, prudent advice of men like Mr. Hill is soon forgotten. Every man and woman, more especially those who are leaving their 'teens," should read of his life, and find out how he grasped opportunity and opened up new paths.