

118
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STEEL - A NATIONAL BUILDER AND DEFENSE

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119

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Standing on the edge of a great gash in the earth's surface in northern Minnesota, you behold elements that appear nothing but a dirty brown inert mass, yet nothing is further from the truth, for you are beholding material that is the very basis of a nation's growth and development.

This mass, when cleansed and purified, can be made the servant of the human race. All that this iron oxide (for such it is) requires is proper treatment.

Discovery

In the middle of the last century, a group of men, all of one family, known as the Merritt Brothers were pioneers breaking through new frontiers of rugged land, strewn with great rock, muskeg swamps and forests. There was little to encourage them to go on with their search beyond the fact that in a northerly direction, on the Vermillion Range, iron ore had been discovered. Being of indomitable spirit that knew no defeat, amid discouraging factors that would turn back less hardy men, this group proceeded with this search, and at last at Biwabik, Minnesota, discovered iron ore and incidentally one of the richest iron ore mines in the world. In later years, the Mesabi Range was opened up and this great deposit of ore has not only enriched a nation, but proved of inestimable value in its development.

Times change and it is always our hope of progressing upward.

Briefly tracing the progress of iron for the service of man, first we find castings being made in a crude way from ores gathered from sparsely scattered spots; later on when America became a living nation, continental practices were employed in this land but it was not long however before the days of wrought iron appeared, laboriously produced, and in its production, the burden was on the backs of men.

Then came steel, and as produced today, every mechanical means is embodied in its manufacture and the burden has been transferred to the minds of men.

Steel - that vibrating mass, that, when properly handled, will receive the impact of violent explosions in the breech of modern guns, producing a dynamic force that vomits black death and destruction, setting up a defense to an invading hoard or blasting a way for an advancing army.

Steel - as two ribbons across a glorious continent receiving the accumulated forces of gigantic locomotives driven at a speed never dreamed by men but a few years ago.

Steel - fashioned into cars and ships that transport mere humans to and from distant lands with a comfort and safety that that metal alone can give.

Steel - that material piled end on end, piercing the heavens, giving beauty and forms to the dreams of master minds, bearing the burden of monolithic mass with na're a failure.

Steel - that composite mass of elements cunningly wrought and framed into shapes that permit mere humans to construct magnificent bridges over great chasms and water courses.

Steel - the one great mass that embodies all and every engineering science and permits the servants of art to realize ambitions and dreams.

Steel - that material that must be continuously improved if its greater usefulness is to be realized.

Steel - the production of which demands huge investments of capital funds, then:

As surely as the day follows the night, if it is to be made available for all needs of the human race and to act as a defense of our nation, then the facilities of production must be maintained. To the end that this may be true, all factors must be recognized by those who use it and a just price be paid therefor.

Philosophically at least everyone of us is interested in one great idealism and that is the defense of our nation. Each of us believes that there is no other equal to it. If this be true and the factors already mentioned be true, then there is a responsibility on each one of us to conserve and preserve all of the elements entering into our national life.

I hesitate somewhat to advance an idea that has been prevalent in my mind for a long time and it may be with temerity I am giving it to you, nevertheless I will take the risk of advancing the thought at this time. You men have for a year and many of you for a longer period, been intensely studying the facilities of our nation to determine the availability of all materials for national defense. Scattered throughout our land are plants of all kinds; there are manufacturing concerns of all kinds and types, everyone of which has some place in your plans, everyone of which can only be kept as a going concern if the materials produced are sold at an adequate price that gives a

return to cover all of the costs entering into that material, whether it be for raw materials, labor or capital investment.

There is an old saying of the sea that is ever true: "Cut your rope with length to spare, and never shorten". Imagine if you will, any rope cut for given work; each time it is used, a piece is severed; it would not be long before it would be useless, so it is if materials are sold below all the factors of costs, it will not be long before the source of supply of that material is dried up and thus a unit or units will not be available to you when you most need them.

You may have a feeling that it is not your responsibility to check ruthless cutting of prices, having a feeling if any man is fool enough to throw away his plant and materials, that is his business, but I cannot see it in that light. True it is that you have laws that you must follow in purchasing material, but there are many, many cases where your finer judgment can lead you to so place your business as to conserve, rather than to destroy the very units that you depend upon. The present-time America is being taught that the laborer is worthy of his hire, so it is that industry is worthy of being conserved for the continuation of our national life. In the conservation of industry, if we will project our thought a little bit, we will see back of it all are mere human beings; by their collected action, they are capable of providing the necessary materials that you are so patiently searching for in the fullness of your plans, whether it be in machines or man-power. Thus must producers be taught they cannot waste or destroy, if by so doing they weaken our national life in any manner.

There is of course obsolescence, continuously going on, due to better ways and methods of doing things, and this is proper, but to practice willful waste, woeful want is sure to follow, and that we must resist and battle as we would any active enemy.