

Early Ocean Grayhounds.

That sailing by ships of phenomenal speed must have a strong fascination is shown by the fact that millionaires, to the bulk of whom time has ceased to be money, still elect to travel by the quickest steamers. For the privilege of enjoying the exclusive use of a suite of rooms for himself and two friends and servants on the Deutschland, Mr Andrew Carnegie drew a cheque in favour of the Hamburg-America Company for £1600. Of course, the case of the Yankees who prolonged their stay in England over two trips of this vessel in order that they might secure berths on her third journey—the bookings for the two previous runs having been filled when they applied—was simply an illustration of folk eager to vaunt that they had travelled by the fastest steamer in the world. It is quite common to find an American "new rich" who will pay £500 for private rooms for himself and his wife on such a boat.

When proposals for the use of steam fell thick and fast there were the customary men of light and leading who proved to demonstration that the thing was impossible. There was the famous dictum, fathered upon Dr. Dionysius Lardner at a meeting of scientific folk, held in 1835, at the Royal Institute in Liverpool: "As to the project which is announced in the newspapers of making the voyage directly from New York to Liverpool, it is, I have no hesitation in saying, quite chimerical, and they may as well talk of making a voyage from New York or Liverpool to the moon!" Complete answer to such amusing dogmatism was given in 1838, when the Leith-built Sirius (of 703 tons) left Liverpool for New York via Queens-town on the 4th of April, and three days after the Great Western (1340 tons), designed by the illustrious Brunnel, left Bristol for the same port. Both were wooden paddle steamers, the latter the first steamer expressly built for the run. The Sir-

lus made New York in seventeen days, the Great Western in fifteen. This was the first of a long series of Atlantic races.

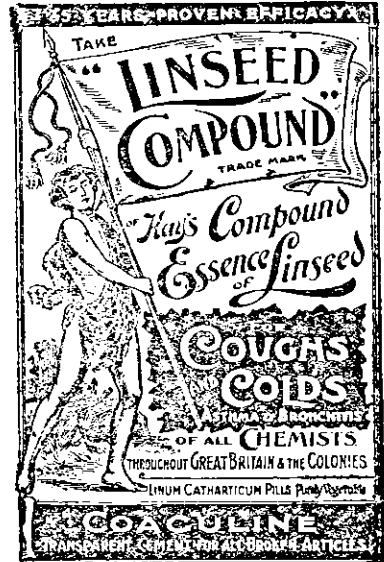
Even to Lords of the Admiralty it had meanwhile grown apparent that the new mode of communication had come to stay, and they invited tenders for an Atlantic Steam Mail Service. George Burns, of Glasgow, who had brought the coasting trade to a great pitch of perfection, thought the matter over, but considering that his hands were full at first decided to leave it alone. But a less canny-going man had secured a copy of the Admiralty circular. This was Samuel Cunard, of Halifax, Nova Scotia, a wealthy Quaker, whose family had emigrated from Wales to the States in the seventeenth century. Cunard had formed the fixed idea that there was no reason why a steamship service should not be established between the two continents, which should run with all the regularity and more than the safety of a railway train. So he came to London, got into touch with Robert Napier, already making his mark as an engineer, and was by him introduced to George Burns. The result of their talk was—their counsels having been joined by David Melver, of Liverpool—that a company was formed with a capital of £270,000, which obtained the contract for seven years for a fortnightly service between Liverpool, Halifax and Boston. This was founded the famous Cunard Line.

In 1840 they placed the first four boats of their fleet—all Clyde-built—upon the sea. According to a widely adopted practice to attain some recognised uniformity the names of their ships all ended in ia, these vessels being called the Britannia, Arcadia, Caledonia and Columbia. They were wooden paddle-wheel boats and the first mail steamers ever seen on the ocean. On the 4th of July, 1840—"Independence day"—The Britannia, 1154 tons, sailed from Liverpool for Boston, accomplishing the journey in fourteen days eight hours, or four hours sooner than had been expected. She carried

115 cabin passengers, but no steerage, and her speed averaged eight and a half knots an hour. As long as Boston remained the States headquarters the Bostonians were tremendously loyal Cunarders. When the Britannia in the very severe winter of 1840-41 became ice-bound in their harbour the people set to work, and within two days had cut a canal to the unfrozen sea, a distance of seven miles, which enabled her to set out for her journey only two days late. This, however, was a risk that the line could not afford to take, and in due course the Cunarders came south to New York, and dropped the call at Halifax on the run. The first serious assault on their supremacy proceeded from an

American firm, who set up a competing line between New York and Southampton. Their first ship, the Washington, started on the same day that the Britannia left Liverpool, and reached New York two days behind the latter. Thus the Cunarders won with consummate ease the first international race ever run between American and British steamers.

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