

The Clyde, Britain's Great Ship-Building Center

A CORRESPONDENT'S VISIT TO THE YARDS WHERE THE BRITISH SHIP-BUILDERS ARE DOING THEIR UTMOST TO DEFEAT THE GERMAN SUBMARINES

By Howard C. Felton

IF a New Yorker will attempt to imagine Broadway about twice as wide as it is and converted into a canal forty feet deep; if then he will imagine it stretched out to a length of twenty miles; and finally, if he can conceive every structure along this Venetian avenue removed, and an army of workmen erecting steel buildings from end to end of the twenty-mile stretch—that will give a vague idea of what the ship-building area of the river Clyde, in Scotland, is like to-day.

There may be people with imaginations vigorous enough to picture the spectacle, but I don't believe so. I have seen pictures, some of them giving excellent representations of considerable sections of the Clyde and of the ship-building works that line its banks. I have heard the clangor of steel riveting-machines operated by hundreds of workers, filling the air with a perfectly deafening din. I could not quite imagine that there could be a bigger noise or a scene of more terrific animation.

To get an idea of the Clyde, the mere mathematics of this suggestion of twenty miles of continuous shipyards lining both sides of a narrow stream, with the steel frames of ships great and small rearing themselves just as close together as they can be packed in, is only a poor beginning.

In the first place, people who know a great ocean liner merely as they see it in the water cannot possibly conceive what a huge fabric it is. Even those who have seen an occasional deep-sea ship on the stocks can have no conception of what it means to see ships strung along by hundreds. As you see them, their steel ribs look for all the world like the skeletons of mighty mastodons. You get the impression that the work of building them is more like the construction of modern steel-frame sky-scrapers than anything else; but also that it is wholly unlike.

THE CLYDE FROM GLASGOW TO GREENOCK

I have been in a comparatively small foundry where the noise was equally painful to the ear, but the sensation was entirely different. When all the noise in the world is stretched over twenty miles of out-of-doors and turned loose together, there is a massive dignity about the effect which entirely differentiates it from the din to be found inside a building.

A Chicago man would feel at home on the Clyde. He would imagine that somebody had picked up the Chicago River by its two ends, straightened it out with a snap, and laid it down again. Then its bottom would have been paved from end

EDITORIAL NOTE—In a recent speech Mr. Lloyd George declared that England's hope of defeating the German submarine blockade lay largely in her effort to increase her output of new merchant vessels. He stated that the rate of production in July, 1917, was fourfold greater than in 1916, and that by the end of the year it would be sixfold greater. In another speech he alluded to the battle of the Marne as the turning-point of the earlier period of the war, and said that "the battle of the Clyde"—the race between the German submarines and the British shipyards—might be the deciding factor in the final chapter of the great struggle.

to end with cobblestones, and forty feet of water turned into it. That procedure, plus an operation in deodorization, would turn the Chicago River into the Clyde.

It is hard to imagine what the Clyde must have been as nature finished it. Really it is not a river at all, but a back-water creek or canal painstakingly dredged out. The land along its banks is low, only a few feet above high water, and in the occasional stretches where the shipyards haven't yet encroached upon it, it presents as pretty a picture of the pastoral Scottish Lowlands as may be found anywhere. Whenever it is discovered that the river isn't big enough to accommodate the traffic and receive the ships that are waiting to be launched into it, they dig a new channel off to one side, build concrete quays, and get more room. Thus the Clyde itself becomes merely the Grand Canal feeding a network of smaller ones, ramifying all through this industrial and commercial Venice.

But that is the only likeness to Venice. For the rest, the canals, major and minor, are simply lined with the huge, rust-colored skeletons of the marine monsters that are being hurried to completion in order to go out and run the gantlet of the submarines. As soon as a hulk can be launched, it slides down the ways into the water and is moored alongside, to be finished and to get its machinery, while in the vacated slip the keel of a new ship is laid without an hour's delay.

One gets benumbed with mere facts and figures in the presence of such an industrial miracle. I think they told me that the Clyde alone had capacity to turn out twice as much shipping as the whole German Empire could produce before the war. The Belfast ship-building district, in Ireland, has capacity for rather more than the pre-war capacity of Germany, if my recollection is right; and the Tyne district, in the north of England, can produce about half as much shipping per annum as all Germany.

I do not vouch for these comparisons. A day on the Clyde not only gives one a distaste for the pitiful utility of mere statistical facts, but it also fills one's head

with a big, dull ache that insists on an exclusive tenancy.

One doubts whether there is dockage-room enough in the world to take care of all these ships at once. There is even a temptation to inquire whether the ocean is big enough for them all to sail around in reasonable safety. The early impression presently becomes a firm conviction that the Germans cannot possibly build submarines and make torpedoes fast enough to keep up with the proceeding.

And then—I hope the censor will not take exception to this incident—one shivers a bit when the expert guide points to a huge half-finished liner that has just slid down the ways into the water, and observes that a little time after the war started another ship came down that same path, received her gear and engines, and one bright morning poked her nose out into the ocean. She hadn't been out more than an hour when a torpedo narrowly missed her, and then another. Just a little better aim would have meant the destruction, in the first hour of her life, of a brand-new steel ship.

We saw them building cruisers, submarines, trawlers, mine-sweepers, all manner and types of merchant ships, launches for naval use, coast patrols. A large part of the work goes on day and night, one ship succeeding another.

TO MAKE SHIPS UNSINKABLE

They tell you interesting stories and drop mysterious hints about new craft that are being produced.

"The submarines will have a hard time getting that old girl over there!" whispers the helmsman of our naval launch, as we swing past a big liner whose engines are just being hoisted aboard.

"Too fast for them?" is the natural inquiry.

"No, she isn't particularly fast, but"—here the officer grows suddenly and strangely reticent—"we have a feeling that she will not be sunk very easily!"

The ship-builders of the world are eagerly trying to produce the unsinkable steel ship. They remember what happened to the Titanic, at a time when a first-class

liner was popularly supposed to be practically unsinkable. They learned a good deal from the Titanic, from the Lusitania, and from many other vessels that have gone down since the war began. My understanding is that the new non-sinkables are of two types, with sundry variations, which relate to the use of numerous very strong water-tight compartments.*

That is about as definite an idea as I was permitted to get. If the reader gets even that much, he will have better luck with the censor than I expect to have.

Our Allies are not only building ships just as fast as they can, but they are combing over the whole world in the search for vessels that may be used in a pinch for ocean traffic. This search for ships has grown to be quite a sport. One constantly hears of cases in which some good old derelict has been dragged out from its moor-

ings of several decades, bought for a song, furbished up, and sent on a voyage that earned several hundred per cent profit.

There is another element in the situation which the Germans may or may not understand, but which the British public is beginning to realize. If England and France can get through the autumn and winter of 1917 and the spring of 1918, they will not only have a very large number of new ships ready for service, but they will have a considerably decreased demand for their services.

Next year England will have some millions of acres of new land under cultivation, with prospects of producing a greater share of her food requirements than she has grown in many decades. It is now or never with the submarines, and England is more and more hopeful as the weeks pass that it is going to be never.

* The writer here added certain particulars, which were deleted by the censor, who appended to the subsequent sentence predicting the suppression, the words: "Right you are!" This official humorist signs himself as "D. B., Chief Censor, Admiralty." We believe that his name is Sir Douglas Brownrigg.

War Leaders Whose Careers Are Ended

THE LONG LIST OF MEN WHOM THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF THE GREAT STRUGGLE HAVE DRIVEN FROM HIGH MILITARY OR POLITICAL PLACES

By Willis J. Abbot

EVERY war, every great national crisis, whether of politics, or of arms, has its record of unrequited martyrs—men who for the moment heard their names on every tongue, saw their deeds blazoned forth in every newspaper, listened to adulatory addresses before cheering audiences, stirred mighty gatherings with the magic of their eloquence, or with martial fire led devoted hosts to battle—only at last, through some error of judgment, some unforeseen disaster, to encounter defeat and see the fabric of their fame fade before

the angry blasts of a fickle public prone to criticise.

"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off," said the writer of the book of Kings many centuries ago, with a shrewdness to which the records of warfare have given approval.

"Where are the snows of yesteryear?" asked the glibbing poet. "Where are the reputations of the war's first year?" we may well ask, as we call the roll of those whose names were most on the tongues of men during that fatal twelvemonth.