

## American Ships and the Way to Get Them

In the Atlantic Monthly "A British Marine Officer," writing under the heading "Wanted: An American Merchant Marine," narrated the following as an actual experience:

Four months ago, while passing along the Liverpool docks on an electric train, I saw the Stars and Stripes flying at the peak of a sailing ship. This so tickled me that I broke my journey and walked back half a mile to get a closer look at the curiosity. Arriving at the dock I found the ship to be the Home-ward Bound, of San Francisco. On questioning the dockmaster as to the number of American ships he had berthed he replied: "This is the first American ship I have berthed in my twelve years' experience on the docks."

This writer held that the American merchant marine had "ceased to exist."

In the October number of the same magazine is published a reply to the British officer, by Winthrop L. Marvin, which, an editorial note says, "represents so ably the views of those who believe in the stimulus of ship subsidies as an essential remedy that it is printed without regard to views upon tariff reform which have been repeatedly expressed in the columns of the Atlantic."

Mr. Marvin, while admitting that "it is good sometimes to see ourselves as others see us," and that "the sharp words of the friendly British officer are certain to intensify the determination so manifestly rising in our country to recreate an American merchant marine worthy of the present wealth and strength and the glorious traditions of the Republic," points out that the author of "this really notable article" falls into error in suggesting that a "free-ship" policy—a wholesale purchase of American ships from British builders,—would have averted the loss of our ocean-carrying. The decline of the ocean trade of the American merchant marine is due, he says, to "a situation which could have been only partially and slightly modified by 'free-ships.'"

"This loss of our shipping is due to, and yet could have been prevented by, the modern Republican system of protection. When, in 1861 and the years afterward, the statesmen of the new Republican party, not merely to meet the exigencies of the Civil War, but with deliberate, far-seeing purpose, set themselves to force the development, through national aid of great national industries, they left out of the protective system what for three-quarters of a century had been one of the greatest of those industries, undeniably the most successful, and in the manner of its growth the most distinctly and characteristically American."

The fact is generally forgotten that in 1789 our merchant marine was almost as shrunken as it is now, "a mere skeleton of 123,000 tons," and that then, as now, our commerce was carried by British shipping. But our statesmen, in their very first tariff act of that year, "embodied stalwart protection for American ships and sailors through the form of discriminating tonnage and customs taxes, which compelled American merchants to employ the ocean-carriers of their own country—and the law required that these ocean-carriers should be built in the United States." This measure was eminently successful. By 1800 our merchant fleet had expanded to a "tonnage of 667,000, carrying 89 per cent of our imports and exports," and ten years later to "981,000 tons, carrying 91 per cent." These policies of ship protection "were not entirely withdrawn against Great Britain, our chief competitor, until 1849; and by that time they were reinforced by a generous system of mail subsidies which gave to our ocean steam fleet a growth in quantity and quality far superior to that of the United Kingdom." Our merchant marine reached its zenith in 1855, with 583,000 tons of shipping launched that year in the United States; and this was the direct result of the protection initiated in 1789.

In 1860 our shipbuilding dropped to 214,000 tons, one cause of the shrinkage being the withdrawal of the ocean-mail subsidies, "in retaliation on the part of the leaders of the South against the abolition ports of the North." "Not all the pluck and resource of Vanderbilt and Collins, the ablest shipmanagers of their time, could sustain the American steam lines, unsubsidized, against the treasuries of Europe; and all but a few of the splendid Yankee steamships had vanished with the clipper ships from the great trade route of the North Atlantic when the first shots of the war were fired at Sumter. The Civil War did not begin the destruction of our shipping, as is often but incorrectly stated; the destruction had begun before. American ships, without their mail pay, though larger and faster ships, could not compete with the British Canard line and its subsidy of \$900,000 a year."

Mr. Marvin claims that "it is the Solid South, aided by a portion of the Middle West, that is directly responsible for the failure of the American Government to take some step to include the merchant marine within the fortunate circle of protected industries." But the opposition of "nearly all of the Southern Democrats and a faction of Middle Western Republicans" is becoming weaker year after year. The propaganda for the American ship, which has been successfully carried on by the Merchant Marine League of the United States, is combated "in most of the Western States by the resident agents of the European steamship combinations, which derive an income of about \$200,000,000 a year from their control of our ocean-carrying." This is a prize which Europe will not relinquish without a mighty battle.

Replying to the question, "Has not

the shipbuilder been protected by our exclusive navigation laws?" Mr. Marvin admits that he has been, but that "the prohibitory protection of the shipbuilder is of no avail because the use of the ship itself is not protected."

On the general desirability of subsidies for ships Mr. Marvin cites the experiences of other nations—Germany, France, Sweden, Austria, Japan, and preeminently Great Britain—each of which is reaping the benefits of such a system. China and the United States are "the only important governments which have held aloof from the modern policy of direct and liberal national aid to the merchant marine."

Mr. Marvin corrects the impression of the British marine officer that, "with the exception of 'Cramps', America has hardly a private shipbuilding yard of any consequence." At Boston, Bath, (Me.), Sparrows Point near Baltimore, Newport News, Seattle, and San Francisco are yards "fit of course, to undertake any class of construction." To throw away these mighty shipyards would be "an unconscionable folly." The development of an American merchant marine and of American ocean shipbuilding "must proceed together."

### MOTOR CAR TO BLAZE PATH FOR MIGHTY LOCOMOTIVES

Australian Premier Designates Cadillac for Terrific Task of Exploring Transcontinental Railroad.

The premier of Australia has designated a Cadillac "Thirty" for one of the most difficult tasks ever assigned to a motor car—the exploration of the proposed route of the Australian transcontinental railway.

The proposed route, for hundreds of miles, lies through trackless wildernesses, including some of the wildest country on a continent which abounds in wild country. It will be necessary, to complete the stupendous undertaking, for the car to carry all the essentials for living in the desert. Tents, water, food, etc., will form the most important part of the equipment.

The idea of exploring the route of the railway was promulgated by the Australian newspapers, which secured the government sanction and support of a project which undoubtedly will save thousands of pounds when construction work actually begins.

Doubtless the premier's selection of the Cadillac for this work was impelled by the car's recent feat in crossing the continent from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria. At the time that trip was undertaken, no motor had ever attempted the terrible journey, and none has yet essayed to duplicate it. On this occasion the route followed was practically identical with that proposed for the railroad. At one period of the pilgrimage, no white man was seen for five days by those in the car; and the blacks fled from the motor's approach. They had never before seen an automobile.

It was necessary for a great part of the distance to travel by the compass alone, keeping to the general direction as closely as topographical conditions would permit. Again it was impossible to make progress until the undergrowth and hush had been subdued with axes and knives. There were rocks and boulders innumerable, and deep sand for miles, but the Cadillac emerged triumphant, with the distinction of having blazed the first motor trail across an almost unexplored continent.



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