

## TEA TIME TALK

(BY WILMA J. MARCH)

Yes it is a far cry in the history of navigation from the Atlantic crossings of Columbus and the Pilgrim Fathers to that of the Queen Mary. Instead of three months, the trip has been cut down to four days. In place of the frail craft of the adventurer there is now a staunch liner built with every conceivable scientific device to make it sea-worthy. As we compare the boats of the past with the beauties of to-day we marvel that they were able at all to battle with the mountainous waves. We wonder with awe how those fearless folks ventured so bravely, knowing full well that they ran many chances of finding a watery grave. But too great a contentment does not feed the fire of progress. It takes the fearless heart to dare to achieve. Thus through the last few centuries to-day's safe, luxurious and powerful ships ride the waves like the birds of the air.

Nationally and internationally speaking a country's status is measured according to its commercial rating with other nations. No country can wholly live unto itself alone. Nature provided that it shouldn't; this is proven by the fact that national supplies are regional throughout the world. Man cannot live unto himself alone, neither can individual nations and still maintain a balance, even in food stuffs. Then we may agree that in applying the solution of national balance, perhaps no factor has been so important as that of transportation. Without question navigation has been the chain of commerce linking the Old World with the New. Here Britain has been influential and the White Star and Cunard Lines have served the world. But a decade ago it was evident that Britain for the first time was being pushed into the background in regard to her ability to handle the trade and commerce of the high seas. In the true British manner this problem received attention, the outcome of which has placed her foremost of all nations of the world. Nor was the reason back of that outcome a desire to outdo other nations but a determination to handle the situation in the most modern and efficient manner possible. But Britain had that inborn patriotism and universal status to live up to that Britannia rules the waves. Of the notable ocean liners of the past Great Britain has owned twice that of any other nation. France, Germany and Italy hold the ownership

of four each and United States three. Those of Britain have been the Mauretania, Homeric, Empress of Britain, Aquitania, Olympic, Berengaria and the Majestic. From the other three nations, the world was hearing, especially France, who was even then planning the Normandie. The three chief Cunarders, all built before the World War, were getting out of date and the company decided to build a giant ship which would serve humanity for many years to come. It would give back to Britain the supremacy of the seas. Increasing power and speed in the world's shipping brought the possibility of a weekly Atlantic service, with two sister ships instead of three slower ones. The new ship was to be the first of the pair to fulfil this dream. The new ship was not built to break past records but to serve the public. There were two primary reasons for the construction of the Queen Mary. Firstly it was profit; secondly a weekly Atlantic schedule. The colossal size of the ship was a necessity, not because of passenger space, but because a heavy power plant must have a heavy hull to support it. The Queen Mary had to be an 80,000 ton boat to average 30 knots per hour and she had to make that speed to cross the ocean in four days. And she had to be able to cross in four days to make a complete round trip in two weeks with time out for cleaning and refueling. She has to make the return trip in two weeks so that when her sister ship is built the two can maintain a weekly service. The company believes it is cheaper to operate two large ships than three smaller, slower ones, such as those which have been operating a weekly service in the past.

When the decision was made to construct the new Cunarder, the contract was given to the John Brown Company because this firm was able to produce specifications which satisfied all the requirements needed for the gigantic liner. Thousands of blueprints and scores of models were made during the next four years. First and foremost she must have stability, sea-worthiness, safety and strength. After these considerations were given to equipment for comfort and luxury. The 534 was to be proof of what mankind can accomplish by working peacefully and harmoniously. She was to be the complete realization of the dream conceived. As all great achievements were once imaginary forms, so this one was no

exception. To-day it is the living form, the animated dream.

Model after model had been made and tried out in a tank equipped with measuring and recording instruments. In all 7000 experiments on calm water were made before the engineers were satisfied with results. Then machinery was set in motion to produce waves to a scale in proportion to the size of the 17-foot model. Then from the information secured one more model was perfected; this time it was not a towing model but one with power of its own. At last the time had come to begin work on the ship itself. That day went down in British history. The slipway had been prepared and the first pieces of steel were laid for the keel of the great liner. A double bottom, in which huge quantities of water is stored, made her less liable to ground and more safe in case of collision.

As the ribs of the great structure rose it became the topic of the day in one phase or another. The shipbuilders were a happy throng after several lean years when little work had come their way. It not only gave labor to the men on the shipbody but to thousands of others working in factories where the mammoth parts were taking form. The huge gear wheels alone took two months a piece to cut. The four-bladed propellers were the largest single-pieced ones ever cast.

For one year this work was pushed ahead at full speed. The keel was laid, the girders rose, section after section was laid side by side, and ten million rivets in all held the great steel hull to the inner frame work. Two thousand port-holes and windows were cut; twelve decks were laid; machinery moved from the factories and was placed in position. The removal of the eight castings from Darlington was one of the most remarkable feats of transportation ever achieved. A special train was used, an entire rail track was commandeered for one day and a coastal trip of 75 miles by specially chartered steamer was necessary before these castings, weighing 500 tons, reached their destination.

The work was well ahead of schedule when out of a clear sky the hand of fate fell. World conditions and especially those of Commerce and Finance made it necessary to suspend work on the ship for economic reasons. At the close of 1931 conditions in the North Atlantic were the worst that had ever been known in the history of regular Atlantic sailings. The existing ships were not paying their way. Then how was a monster of the sea to make money? The Cunard Com-

pany tried from many quarters to obtain secure financial backing but it seemed impossible to do so. Even the national treasury was approached for a substantial loan but this too met with failure. There remained but one alternative: the suspension of work till the clouds broke and the sunshine of prosperity once again smiled upon the world. The late King George at that time regretted deeply the need of such a drastic step, knowing full well what it meant to thousands of his subjects. He said: "What misery a silent dockyard may spread among the people."

Within a stone's throw of the shipyard lay some of the worst slum districts in Britain. During the humming of work on the ship the inhabitants of these places found living almost bearable but when the work ended the squalid conditions seemed worse than ever. Hope seemed to have vanished in the night. Misery replaced the faint gleam of light. At first the workers could scarcely believe what proved only too true. Thirteen thousand were thrown out of work and a stupendous task, which had already cost close to ten million, lay unfinished and no one knew when the hammers would again resound.

These conditions remained for two and a half years after the suspension of work. Only what had been compulsory to protect the already steep investment was done. The skeleton of a mammoth sea monster lay weathering on the slip. But underneath things were brewing nationally. As in all great achievements, only one determined person is necessary to start the wheels moving. So it proved to be in this case. The energetic demands of David Kirkwood, M.P., before the House of Commons caused the nation to rouse itself sufficiently to start a campaign for the resumption of work on the liner. He told Parliament in vibrant tones that the ship's skeleton lying in the Clyde-side yard shouted "Failure" before the world. He stated that just so long as the ship lay unfinished would the depression be with them. He won his point and it was not long before the government took steps to provide the necessary funds for its completion. The government made its support conditional on the fusing of the Cunard and the White Star Lines into a single company. By taking this step they were more assured of the security which joint profit would give. A bill was passed in the House of Commons authorizing the Treasury to advance sufficient funds to complete the number 534 and possibly a sister ship. The

nation once again breathed the air of optimism.

On April 3rd, 1934, the first contingent of men went to work; it was not long before several thousand smiled as they toiled on the ship which was their pride and joy. The whole of England was changed by this turn of the tide. The factories throughout the island hummed with the orders they had to fill. Ten thousand were the needs of the ship to make it the palace of the waves.

The most important task, or perhaps one should say the hugest task before the launching, was fitting the rudder, which weighs 163 tons and measures 30 feet by 15 feet. It is the largest of its kind ever made in England. It is sufficiently large enough to allow workmen to enter it for repairs. Nearly three months were spent in painting the 40,000 ton hull, measuring 1018 feet in length, before the launching took place. This was a tremendous task which took 70,000 gallons of paint. Four coats of anti-corrosive paint was applied and this will keep the ship from rusting for a period of forty years.

On Sept. 26th, 1934, exactly six months after the work had been resumed, the launching took place. Number 534 officially became the "Queen Mary". Until that moment when the Queen of England gave her name to the ship, its name had been kept a secret. This was the first time in history that a British Queen had ever performed a naming ceremony. As the Queen pressed the electric button the great hull glided down the slip with every possible precaution. She lay afloat in the River Clyde just 67 seconds later. The construction company had estimated it would travel 1194 feet and it went but two feet farther.

"I am happy to name this ship the 'Queen Mary'. I wish 'Good Luck' to all who sail her." With those words the reigning Queen sent the glistening hull on its first trip, while thousands of thrilled spectators watched the happy occurrence. The slipway had been carefully prepared so that the launching would be as gentle as possible. Four coats of preparation in which 150 tons of tallow and 50 tons of black soap were used, made a slippery roadway. Heavy chains and cables held the ship from gathering too great a speed for its own safety. The late King George stood at salute as the huge vessel passed down the slipway in a teeming rainstorm.

After all, the thing that counts is not what a man says but what he does. Opinions die but records live on.

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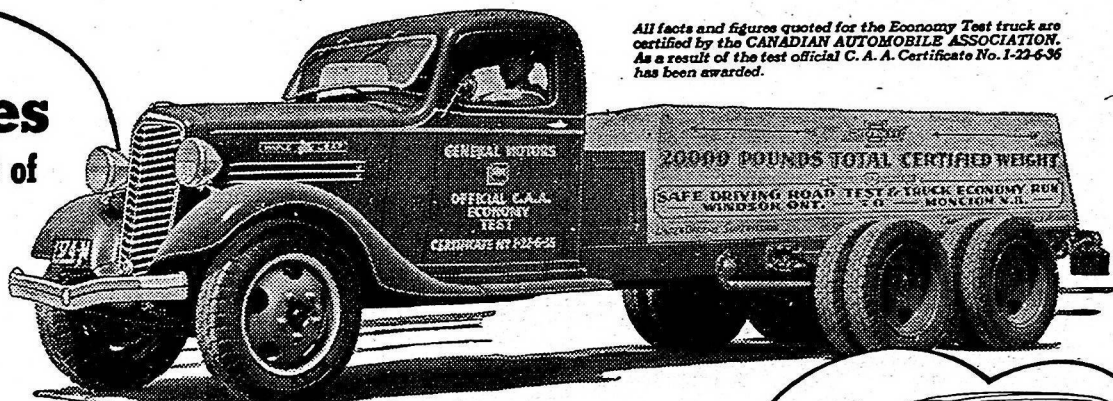
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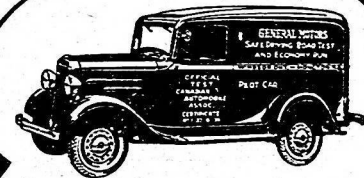
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