

Canadian Shipbuilding—Past and Present.

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The commercial maritime supremacy of a nation depends, not altogether upon the ownership of a vast fleet, but to a greater extent upon her facilities for the construction and repair of the vessels constituting her mercantile marine. Great Britain, and her maritime rival, Germany, would scarce be in the position they hold today were it not for their ability to construct, in their home yards, the greater part of the vast flotilla which flies their flags.

Shipbuilding, to be a success, depends largely upon local conditions. The component parts which go into the construction of a ship must

the growth has been spasmodic. Beginning in North America upon the Atlantic coast during the latter years of the 16th century, shipbuilding made phenomenal progress until the days of the American Civil War and the early eighties, then it dwindled rapidly until within the last decade, when the industry began to revive again.

In the annals of marine construction, Canada has, in the past, played a most important role, and the history of her achievements in the shipbuilding line constituted a record in this particular branch of industrial endeavor which at one



View of Western Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Plant at Port Arthur, showing ships under construction

necessarily be readily accessible; cheap and abundant labor must be available, and climatic conditions favorable. In modern shipbuilding, the areas where coal and iron predominate, constitute the most favorable locations for a ship yard; in former days, a ready and easily procurable supply of wood and ship timber were the necessary assets. The essentials of material and labor must go together if the industry is to be successfully carried on; that of climate can be overcome to a certain extent as is the case in Canada, but countries which have the material and labor and great extremes of heat or cold are not regarded as promising centres for vessel construction.

In the Old World, shipbuilding, among maritime nations may be said to have had a gradual growth from the days when primeval man constructed the first coracle. In the New World,

time threatened to overshadow the Mother Country.

The Past.

Prior to the use of iron and steel in the construction of ships, wood of the hard and soft varieties was the material utilized, and the British North American settlements fringing the Atlantic coast, with their vast areas of timber located close to the water's edge offered every facility for shipbuilding. The settlers themselves were of a particularly versatile type—half farmer and half fisherman—and in order to reap the harvest of the great cod banks adjacent to their settlements it was necessary that they should have vessels in which to prosecute the fishery. Trade with the New England States, the West Indies and the Spanish American settlements to the south necessitated the use of fair sized craft to