

ginning of the "new" campaign. The current British Board of Trade report shows that during the first six weeks of unrestricted Great Britain lost 78 ships from her total of 3,653, that is to say, just about two per cent. Twenty-nine ships were destroyed during the first two weeks in March, as against forty-eight during the first two weeks in February. At the beginning of the campaign there were many old and slow ships at sea, and these fell easy victims to the underwater craft. Comparatively few ships were armed, and these also were unable to defend themselves or to escape. Now, two per cent. is an almost insignificant loss. It becomes still more insignificant when we observe how rapidly the percentage has fallen, and when we remember that innumerable shipyards, working on standardized plans, are producing new ships to the utmost limit of their capacity, and that still other ships are being bought or built in foreign countries. Germany published vague reports of the achievements of individual submarines, but she gives us no detailed and comprehensive statements of such a nature that they can be verified.

She would certainly do so if such statements would serve her, and she now finds it necessary to issue warnings against impatience, and also to modify the aims that she professed to be easily within her reach. Even though we make the fullest allowance for neutral ships detained in their home ports by the submarine menace, and for such embarrassment as may have been produced in the coal and munition service to France, Italy and Russia, we must still recognize the impotence of the submarine to produce a blockade of Allied ports or anything that remotely resembles a blockade. We may also allow ourselves to wonder how long it will be before the German people awake to the failure of a weapon that, by their own admission, is the last in their armoury.

It has been an open secret that the Russian armies have been paralyzed for months past, not because they were short either of men or munitions, but because they were held back by German intrigue at Petrograd. Lord Milner and General Castelnau were both at the Russian capital recently, but so far from this being an evidence of a general weakening on

the part of the people, as was loudly acclaimed by the Germans, it was exactly the reverse. General Castelnau went to Russia in order to place his unusual strategical abilities at the service of the Russian commanders, while Lord Milner's duties were to aid in the munitions problem. Lord Milner, speaking recently at Petrograd, said that it was difficult to include Russia in the "one front" plan under one general command, as had been done with the English, French and Italian forces, because of her distance, however desirable it might be theoretically. The speech was significant as indicating the existence of concerted plans under one general direction in the case of England, France and Italy, plans that we shall certainly see in operation as soon as the weather permits. When Russia moves in the new campaign it seems likely that it will be in the far north around Riga, and in the far south against the Germans and Bulgarians in Roumania. But so far as the revolution is concerned, we are fairly safe to assume that Germany has received no such ill news as this since the beginning of the war.

WHAT'S BECOME of the BOOSTER?

By BRITTON B. COOKE

AT circuses and in the midways at country fairs, there is always a pace-maker, a "barker," perhaps several "barkers," whose duty it is to assault the ears of an otherwise docile public through the gentle medium of a megaphone. The average sight-seeing crowd, however wrought-up it may be individually and inwardly by the prospect of seeing snake charmers and asthmatic elephants, requires the shouts of the barker to break down the layers of reserve in which men and women usually wrap their enthusiasm. It enters the tank area slowly, cautiously and without joy. It moves sluggishly until it comes under the flow of the barker's eloquence. "Here you are, ladies and gentlemen! The greatest circus in all the world! . . . Buy your tickets here to see Mona! Mona! Mona! the bewtiful diving horse that shells peanuts with her front hooves and refuses to act till the boss has put talcum powder on her neck! Mona! Mon-a-a! put talcum powder on her neck! Mona! Mon-a-a! The bewt—" And the crowd snickers and smiles, and starts to jingle its loose change nervously, and to enjoy itself.

And I have always wondered, hearing one of these pacans through the magaphone, just what sort of man a "barker" must be; whether such a man made love as efficiently as he stirred crowds; whether he was able to use his gifts in the privacy of his boarding house to suppress his family; or whether he had a family; or—and this was the most serious question—how were his gifts made use of when winter laid the circus and the fair-ground midway to rest under a white counterpane. How then did he eat? How persuade the boarding house keeper to keep him roofed and warmed?

The answers to these questions have not been vouchsafed as yet, but in the meantime I have found some satisfaction in the study of an elder brother of the circus barker—the real estate boomster of our Canadian cities, the genius whose glib talk and confounded persistence made us buy lots we did not believe in, developed suburbs we thought we did not want—and some that we never will want anyway. He is the blood brother of the circus barker. He was the warmer-up, the pep-shooter, the bull-dispenser, the enthusiasm-sprinkler. He took bald-spots on the map of western Canada, and, as it were, made the hair grow in thirty days. He arrived with the town-site auctioneer and in three weeks was selling corner lots to the solemn banks of Montreal and Toronto for branch sites. He bought at three dollars an acre and sold at twenty dollars a foot, and he taught us to do likewise. He made us money and he lost us money. And now where is he? His gift was booming things that nobody believed in, and it was valuable so long as there were millions of easy-money in the country. But war snapped its fingers for attention and got it. The boomster dropped out of sight meekly and without protest as though he had been a story-teller ordered out of the nursery when it was time for the children to obey higher authority.

You have known many of these boosters person-

ally. There was a time when no fewer than eight hundred and twelve were listed in the classified section of the Vancouver telephone directory. They flourished in every village in the west—and in the big cities of the East as well. They were usually a healthy wholesome lot, except when driven to excesses by the sheer pressure of their easy-made wealth. They created a boom in the mahogany office-fitting business, and in the fine booklet-printing trade. They were easy spenders and good mixers, and to them it was a day's work just to drive around the sky-line in a seven-seated car and talk magnificently about the future to possible buyers. They were the apostles of cheerfulness and optimism—

The day when Vancouver—and all the other cities as well—could no longer afford to support such ornaments came like a bitter wind surprising the playful wood nymph before she has had time to take her winter vine-leaves out of camphor. She—he, the real estate boomster—shivered and was driven for shelter into most unheroic occupations. He tried to sell his automobile and couldn't. He closed his office and would have closed his expensive flat only he couldn't liquidate enough agreements of sale to pay his rent. One that I know—you must have known others—converted his handsome seven-seater into a jitney and lived for awhile by robbing the innocent electric railways. Another drew on the money his wife had laid away, another on his father-in-law. You recall the business as usual signs? What a sad and courageous lie so far as the real estate barkers in Canada were concerned. Some had been book-keepers and clerks before the war broke out. They sought out their old employers only to be turned down or to find the pen cramping their fat fingers and the ink staining their once immaculate nails. Far be it from me to deride their miseries. I am only recalling the process of their re-patriation in the land of practical affairs.

SOME of these men were mere foreign exploiters and dropped back into the United States as soon as the Canadian boom seemed at an end. For instance, the city of Detroit contains not a few of these ex-Canadians, though I suspect they were never Canadians at all, but only Americans under guise. Detroit, as you may recall, developed a real estate boom about the time the war broke out. Other American cities have since been "boomed" under the influence of the munitions trade, and the tricks learned in Canada have sufficed in these new boom areas to rope new converts into the fold of the property-blighted-rich. The old trick of looking up the assessment figures of ten years before and comparing them with those of to-day. The same trick with bank clearings and census returns—these have all been worked and are still being worked to make a living for SOME of our circus barkers.

On the other hand, not a few of these ex-boomsters have remained in this country and have rendered excellent service in the army. I met a general in the

Canadian army in France who wore on his magnificent chest the ribbons of the Legion of Honour of France. He had left—was at Vancouver or Victoria—a mere major in August, 1914, with no cash and little credit—so little indeed that he had had to close his pretty real estate office and live in semi-retirement until he was able to sell a bit of eastern property—at about half-price—and buy his new uniforms for overseas service. Here was a boomster turned into one of the finest soldiers Canada has developed, which is saying no small thing. His boost faculty made his men cheerful even under the worst of conditions. The spirit that made him see the bright side to a horizon lot in 1912, made him see the bright side of a bad mix-up at Langemarle. He was full of the "come-back." He sold destruction to the Germans as he would have sold rotten lots to an imbecile American tourist at Oak Bay. His men loved him and would go anywhere for him. His officers, like his staff of salesmen in other times, were filled with that confidence in him which made him once so successful in real estate and now so successful in war.

There are countless real estate boomsters at the front in France. A certain French "Count" who was once well-known in Regina is among them. A certain Montreal sub-division expert is now a flying man in Saloniki. A Halifax lad who married on the strength of paper-profits made in a real-estate boom, left for the front before his first son was born.

In a certain leading Ontario city one of the most effective recruiting officers was a man who bought a farm eighteen miles from the city's centre, erected gates, laid a few side-walks, and put in dummy hydrants to make his customers believe there were water-mains through the property. Of course this was one of the crooked boomsters and his crookedness came out in due time, manifesting itself in a constant desire to recruit safely in his home city or province. He resigned repeatedly from various units as they were ready to go overseas, and when finally that dodge seemed about played out, announced that his brother needed him in the making of ammunition in an Ontario factory—and resigned altogether. Thus is it made clear that a coward in peace is a coward in war, and vice versa.

Of course the underlying quality in the real estate boomster was salemanship, and there is generally a good demand for salesmen. If our real estate offices had taught the young men nothing else than the art of selling goods these young men might have been better able, when the boom broke, to sell their own services to men in other lines of trade. I am afraid, however, that it must be admitted that a certain element of flim-flam entered into the real estate business which is not present in the older and more conservative lines of trade. Plausibility was the great asset of the real estate salesman. Reliability was not so highly regarded. This contempt for being merely reliable, accurate and trustworthy was really fostered by the average client. For a client who was

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