

CHAPTER XI

SHIPBUILDING AND MARINE ENGINEERING ON THE NORTH-EAST COAST

SHIPBUILDING is a trade barometer. Busy shipyards and engine works are generally a sign of all-round prosperity. Our national strength, besides, is largely dependent on our maritime supremacy, and it is by supplying British shipowners with cheap tonnage of the latest type, specially adapted to the trades in which the vessels are to compete, and which can be run at a low cost, that our shipbuilders enable the nation to maintain its supremacy in the ocean-carrying trade of the world.

The prosperity of our steel and iron works, too, is largely dependent on the demand for the steel plates and sections required for shipbuilding. Quite a third of the steel turned out by our mills has been used in normal times in the construction of ships, a proportion which is sufficient either in its maintenance or its fall to make all the difference between good and bad trade to our iron and steel works, as well as to our collieries. Shipbuilding, too, is associated with other industries, which, whilst apparently separate, are in reality a part of it. Among these are branches of general engineering such as the production of electrical gear, winches, refrigerating plant and other auxiliary machinery, wire rope, chain cables and so forth. Not merely marine engineering, therefore, but other departments of engineering as well, must rise or sink with shipbuilding activity or depression. The connection between shipbuilding and its ancillary trades is, indeed, so close that it