

CHAPTER XVI

SHIPBUILDING AND ENGINEERING ON THE CLYDE

PART I

IT would be difficult to say whether the River Clyde has made Glasgow, or whether Glasgow—the metropolis of the coal- and iron-fields of central Scotland—has made the Clyde; but the 20 miles of river between the Tail of the Bank off Greenock and the Broomielaw Bridge have during the last fifty years built more ships than any other river in the world, except perhaps the Tyne, whilst the demands on the shipyards of the Clyde have made Glasgow the great engineering centre of the world. No fewer than forty shipbuilding firms occupy the banks of the Clyde; of these twenty include in their business the making of engines and boilers, while twenty firms are makers of marine engines and boilers and do not build ships.

It is more than 120 years since the Glasgow district became famous for its "Millwright Engineers." Henry Bell had successfully applied Watt's steam engine to marine propulsion, and the *Comet*—the first steamship—opened the way to Robert Napier, the pioneer of the Clyde, who founded his famous firm in 1823. The shipyards, which have since made the river famous, undoubtedly owe their origin to the enterprise of the engine-builders of that day, and were more or less associated in early times with the Napiers. All the old firms still exist, though many now carry on business under other names. The Clydebank firm of James and George Thomson is now, under Sir Thomas Bell, K.B.E., as Managing Director, part of the undertaking