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OFFERTS

# BRITISH ARTISTS AT THE FRONT



II.

SIR JOHN LAVERY

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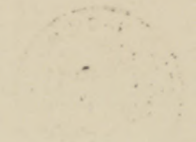
*With Introductions by*  
ROBERT ROSS  
*and*  
C. E. MONTAGUE

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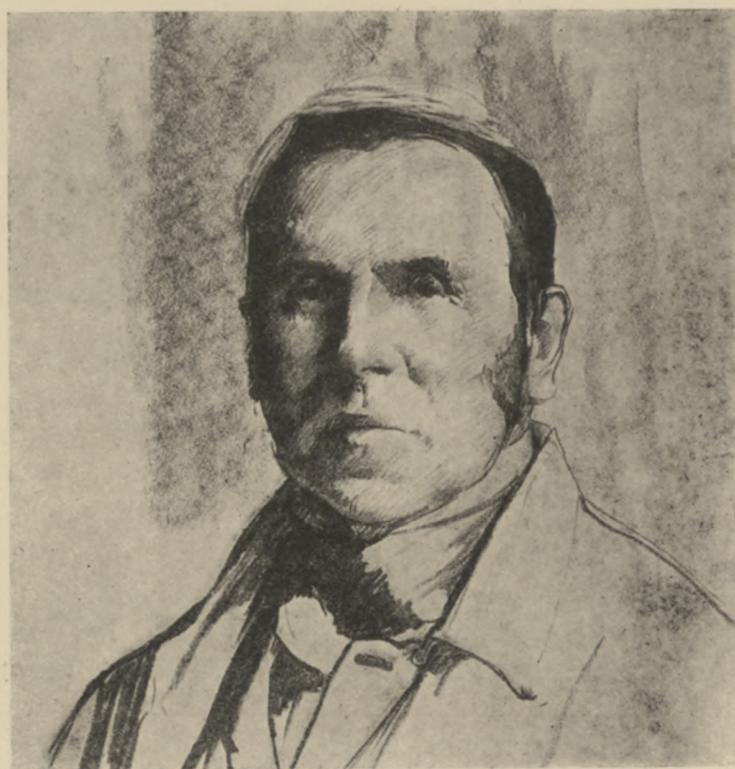
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*From a Lithograph by FLORA LION*

## THE ARTIST

**S**IR JOHN LAVERY, Chevalier of the Crown of Italy and of Leopold of Belgium, a member of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, and of the Society of Spanish Artists, Madrid, was born in Belfast in 1856. Though a member of the Royal Scottish and Royal Hibernian Academies, he is only an Associate of our English Royal Academy, always slow to recognise, if it recognises at all, the gifts of its more brilliant exhibitors. The acceptance by the artist of a knighthood in 1918 added lustre to that order, rather than to the recipient of the honour. Like the senior Ruskin, Sir John Lavery's father was a wine merchant; he was a Roman Catholic of Armagh origin. While a devout adherent to the paternal faith the artist has absorbed, at all events for the purposes of his art, certain sturdy Protestant qualities from his fellow-townsmen, who are all justly proud of so illustrious a citizen. For Belfast is not associated with intellectual or artistic activity, and knows little about the Celtic Renaissance or at least still waits for a George Moore to chronicle the sterner virtues and less political emotions. Few modern painters have experienced a more



romantic career, the details of which can only be briefly chronicled here. They are admirably set forth by Mr. Walter Shaw Sparrow in "John Lavery and His Work," embellished with excellent reproductions and a preface by Mr. Cunninghame Graham, entitled "His Life and Miracles." Some of the incidents, if not miracles, might tempt the librettist of cinema films, though I could not guarantee that they would pass the Censor; for it has to be confessed that on two definite occasions the young Lavery, or "Master John," as he would have been called, deviated from the truth without any permanent ill result to his career; and he evinced no taste whatever for discipline and betrayed no assiduity for study—those inevitable preludes to prosperity and virtue. When his father was drowned at sea under tragic circumstances, he was first adopted by an uncle and went to school at Soldierstown, and afterwards by a friendly cousin, who sent him to school at Saltcoats in Ayrshire; whence, at about the age of fifteen, he ran away. He obtained a post in a railway company at a salary of £20 a year, in Glasgow. All went well, as the journalists say in describing a railway accident or a raid, until he was asked, more out of compliment than anything else, to present a "monthly report" while his chief was on holiday. A distaste for arithmetic has always characterised the artistic temper, and the future artist fled the office to enlist in the 60th Rifles, anticipating the ethics of 1914, by falsifying his tender age in order to qualify as a recruit! On being discovered in this *magnanima menzogna* he returned to civilian life and his native Ireland. But for this revelation of his years he might be now General John Lavery, directing operations on the Western front and enjoying the favour or disapproval of our esteemed military critics! *Dis aliter visum*. For two years he worked on his uncle's farm, nearer to nature than the majority of artists ever get, until he was bored into simulating the visit of a friend who, he alleged, now offered him a berth in Glasgow. His humane relatives do not appear to have been deceived, but good naturedly allowed him to depart for Glasgow with a capital of £5. He answered an advertisement in the "Glasgow Herald," and was duly indentured as an apprentice to a photographer. His work consisted in touching up negatives and colouring photos.

Beyond copying woodcuts and engravings there is no evidence that he was a precocious draughtsman. The accident that his artistic training came relatively late may have been fortunate; for few of his contemporaries can claim such a sustained effort, covering an equal number of years. He is still in his maturity; his progress and success have been continuous, not intermittent. His admirers have been unable to suggest that boyish work showed more promise than his later pictures have fulfilled; nor can art critics classify his pictures into good or bad periods; nor can collectors regret the acquisition of a recent canvas because they desire



some early work seen for the first time. In 1874 he attended the evening classes at the Haldane Academy of Art, paying the fees from what he gained from the photographer. At the end of three years he was engaged by another studio at a salary of £150 a year, and was able to paint from nature on half-holidays. In 1878 he set up for himself, and in 1879, through the kindness of a patron, moved to London, where he attended Heatherley's School in Newman Street. In 1880 he sold a picture for ten guineas at the Glasgow Institute, and in 1881 "The Courtship of Julian Peverel," at the Royal Scottish Academy.

He was now enabled to go to Paris, where he enjoyed the benefit of sound training at Julian's famous school. Of hardly less importance was the genial atmosphere and the society in which he found himself; the friendships he formed among fellow-painters while living at the Hôtel de Saxe in the Rue Jacob; and the famous pictures of older contemporaries from which he learned or unlearned so much. Bastien Lepage and open-air principles were then dazzling the French capital. From Lepage and the Impressionists, Manet and Monet, Lavery undoubtedly derived not so much inspiration, as stimulation, and the spirit of emulation in solving problems of light and composition such as the French artists love to set themselves. To his great credit he retained his own accent in painting throughout. Later on, when he formed a friendship with Whistler in 1887, there was an obvious risk of his art and its individuality being overwhelmed by that engaging and insidious personality. I care less for that phase of his painting when he seems to be wearing sometimes, reluctantly, the dusky mask and domino of another's more precarious genius; but all young artists succumb at some time to an elder's influence. Whistler, no less than Paris, has been the shroud of many a British talent. But Lavery soon resumed his own ulster, so to speak, and when his pictures were first seen in London galleries they were like fresh sprays of apple-blossom, brought into the stuffy room of an invalid, breathing the health, air, scent, and even vivid green of a French spring (which sometimes really happens in England—a happy accident like Lavery himself). In 1883 his picture "Les Deux Pécheurs" was sent to the old Salon, and bought by a French purchaser. In 1888 he was commissioned to paint a large commemorative picture of Queen Victoria's visit to the International Exhibition at Glasgow, the first successful ceremonial composition painted during the late Queen's reign. In 1890 at the old Grosvenor Gallery, Sir Coutts Lindsay, who had quarrelled with the pre-Raphaelites and Academicians, exhibited a collection of the so-called Glasgow school of painting. The existence of the school has been repudiated as a journalistic invention. There were, however, undoubtedly common factors among the pictures shown on that occasion; a freedom and freshness in painting; obvious traces of



French influence ; and so far as England was concerned a novelty of treatment and visualisation. Lavery contributed " Mary, Queen of Scots, the morning after the Battle of Langside," an historical genre piece. In the same year he visited Morocco, an event which powerfully affected his rendering of landscape. Lavery is chiefly known perhaps as a portrait painter, and marks an important period in the transition of English traditions ; but as a landscape artist he is something of an innovator. He does not tell beautiful scenic fibs about picturesque places in the manner of the great Turner. He is no mere topographer after the tradition of too many English painters ; nor does he synthetise the configuration of natural form into a formula of his own ; nor does he ignore the forms altogether as Whistler did. He absorbs and conveys to the spectator the spirit and the colour of a place. Every landscape, as every portrait, is the result of a tussle between the subject and the artist ; sometimes the landscape wins, but truth ought to result whichever the victor may be, and I make that claim for Lavery's work. When he was chosen to record the Naval Bases during the War by the Admiralty, there could have been no happier choice, as the reproductions in this volume suggest. It says much for his character that his brilliant successes in portraiture, landscape, genre, and history have excited neither the envy nor resentment of his contemporaries, even that of Whistler, the most grudging critic and the most irritable of friends. His great achievement is to have reflected with singular felicity not so much nature as the existing circumstances of contemporary life. He is far more various too, than many of his great predecessors in the two branches of art, where the British school has excelled—landscape and portraiture. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that if all contemporary painting, except that of Lavery, was destroyed, posterity, historically speaking, would not have missed anything, however much we might lament our losses in an æsthetic sense. In almost every important gallery devoted to modern art throughout the world are to be found examples of his work. In 1911 he was finishing his portraits of King George V and Queen Mary for the National Portrait Gallery in London, and was invited to contribute his own to the Uffizi in Florence, when it occurred to our Royal Academy to make him an Associate. His portraits of fair women have of course endeared his work to many not primarily interested in painting for its own sake. I trust it is not too intimate to mention that a frequent sitter has been Lady Lavery, an American lady, whose beauty is justly famous in two continents, and now immortalised on several of his canvasses. Of particular interest just now is the recently finished likeness of the Right Honourable H. H. Asquith, a commission from the Reform Club.

ROBERT ROSS.





THE GREEN PARK, DECEMBER, 1914

## THE FRONT'S FOUNDATIONS

**T**HERE may be people at home whom the scenes painted here do not thrill. They may know the scenes, or some of them, so well that those have turned into every-day things, and the film of dulness has settled around them which keeps us from really seeing all that there is in an every-day thing. But to one sort of man these scenes of organisation for victory are fresh and stirring—the man who sees war mainly from its other end, where trenches, outposts and batteries are—the finger-tips of Britain's energy, where the pulse in the minor arteries is too small to make you feel at all times all the power of the muscles of the heart.

For the private soldier or junior officer the average day of war, at its outer rim, where a few men of ours feel out at a few men of the enemy's, is a day of many small things. A man there does not see his battalion or even his company. His life is that of his platoon, a little band of adventurers scraping along as they best can, everyone knowing everyone else, and his ways, to the last intimacy of affection or boredom, and know-



ing also every possession of the household as Robinson Crusoe knew his—how one of the Verey pistols hurts your thumb more than another, how one of the braziers has a plaguey short leg, how one of the ration sacks leaks and must not be used for ground sugar and tea. The life here is that of a family in a small tumble-down cottage, a life atomic or molecular and full of endearing or exasperating littlenesses and minute, familiar contrivances. The little world, too, is, in a sense, a world of second-hand things, with the gloss off them. On a front line everything wears fast, and nothing seems shiny and new except the men's morning chins and the action of rifles and guns; these alone still trail clouds of glory, like Wordsworth's infant, from that remote, almost pre-natal other world of glistening metal and lustrous leather on Salisbury Plain. In the new world a rest camp may have the hugger-mugger picturesqueness of Epsom Downs on Derby Day; a hut may be made of old ammunition boxes with strips of biscuit-tin for weather-boarding. Old things, disused or broken, are seldom far off—bits of smashed rifles, a foundered waggon, "dud" shells lying derelict, or the bones of a crashed aeroplane or wheels of a shelled limber. And almost everything is a makeshift; everyone is making something do, for want of better. No army in the field is equipped so well—unless it be the American, which I do not know—but this gypsy effect is of the nature of trench war, in which each little unit of the vastest army must become as a boat-load of castaways fending for themselves against nature and the attacks of wild beasts, on a tiny island littered with wreckage.

Hither come only the faintest reverberations from the beat of the huge engines which in remote England and on all the seas are making and remaking, driving and guarding the machinery of war. The rations and ammunition come up; one day a new note may be heard among the big guns in the rear, or a man may think he hears a slightly different whistle waft itself on, high overhead, in the right direction. Otherwise there is little in all this petty world of mud-boltered men and horses, plodding through the daily routine of their labour, watchfulness and contrivance, to spring in the imagination any rousing picture of a gigantic national power-house from which all the great and little wheels of war are made to go round. So it happens that a soldier coming to England on leave from the front sometimes feels rather insignificant and abashed, like a villager on his first day in a capital. All the way home he has been seeing things which seem to express the puissant strain of a great nation's will more eloquently than anything that he saw in his trench. A thronged base, the channel crossing, the sea policed with destroyers and lively with unalarmed shipping, the English countryside turned almost urban with camps, the warlike aspect of London with its infinite-looking reserves of fine personable figures in khaki, perhaps a munition factory



with its battalions of women intently turning more shells in a day than he could have believed to be used by both sides in a week, to judge by his own experiences of the respective needs of "harassing," "destructive" and "annihilating" fire—all these spectacles are apt to strike him as much more impressive than his own cramped and ramshackle corner of war. Others may think of him as having just come from the centre of things; he feels he has come from the last frayed fringe of it all; here, at last, is a great war's traditional hugeness of scale, the pomp and circumstance banished from trenches wherein there is not a flag or bugle or even a passing salute, where everyone's cap has been slept in and everyone's tunic has worked into permanent folds at the elbow. When you have ridden an elderly bicycle through rural mud for some years, and then see a great cycle factory, you feel as if you had never known before what wonders of engineering you have had to do with all this time.

To this side of war, so imposing and heartening to tired men from the front, Sir John Lavery has here applied the artist's power of making old things new, so that they move you as if you had seen the first day dawn on them. He has endeavoured to vivify, not the detail of a front, but the ground plan of the Western War, its base and structure—the Naval power, the intensity of mechanical production and the laborious acquisition of discipline which are the foundations of all the architecture of military strategy and tactics.

G. H. Q., France.

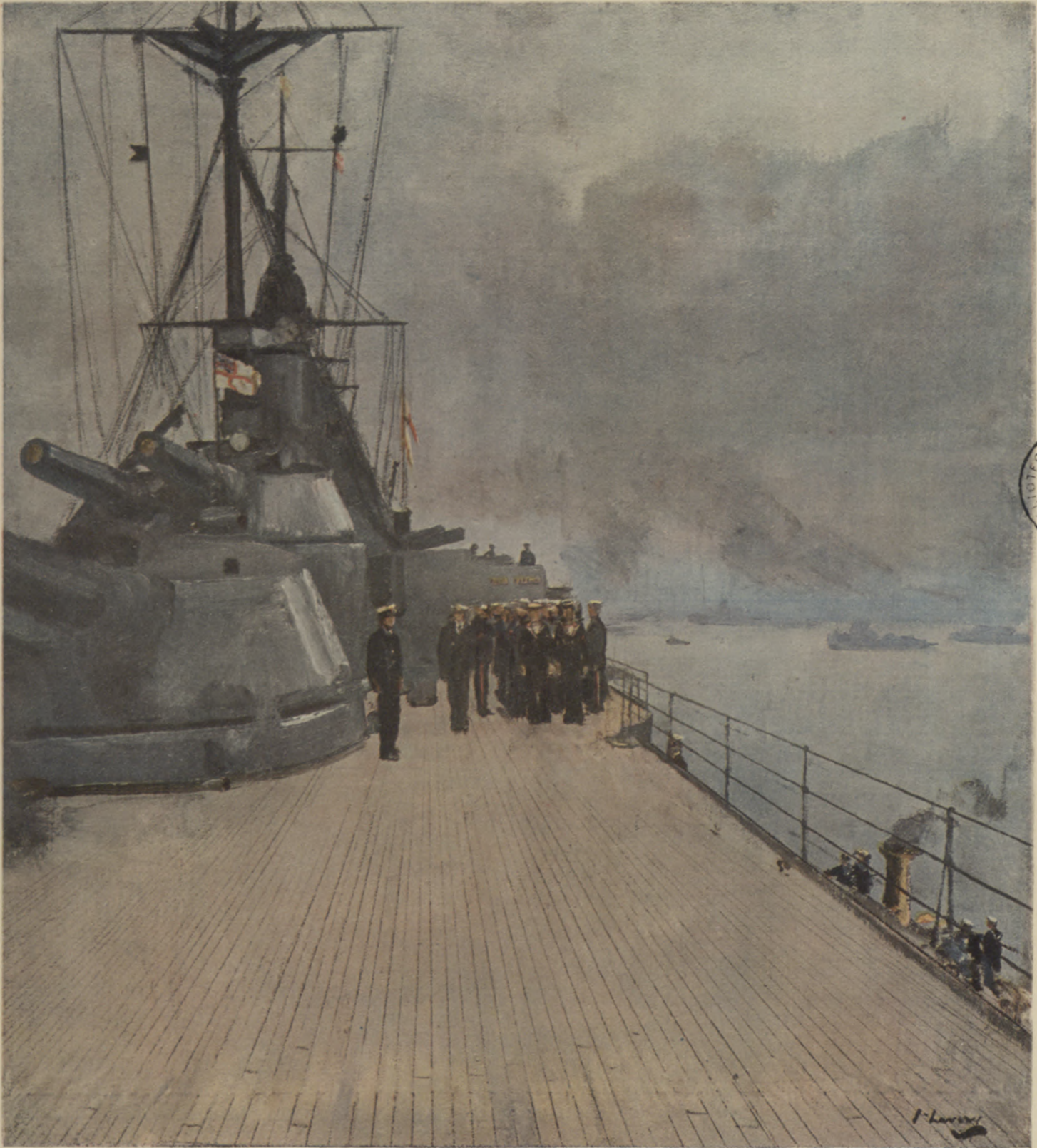
*April, 1918.*



THE QUARTER-DECK OF H.M.S.  
"QUEEN ELIZABETH"

H.M.S. "Queen Elizabeth" is the flagship of Admiral Sir David Beatty. This ship first gained notoriety by her operations at the Dardanelles, and since her return home has gained further distinction. In build she is a splendid example of the latest type of naval architecture. She was the first battleship to be commissioned after war was declared in 1914, and was armed with guns of a power and range unsurpassed in previous naval warfare.







## TANKS AT NEWCASTLE

“ Who invented Tanks ? ” is a good subject to keep clear of, though it may not give offence to say that the birthplace of the first of all Tanks—as also of that other powerful engine of war, Sir William Robertson—was in Lincolnshire. Women are seen in the picture. Women have travelled some way, from the mild water-colour and crochet of mid-Victorian maidenhood, on to the making of such

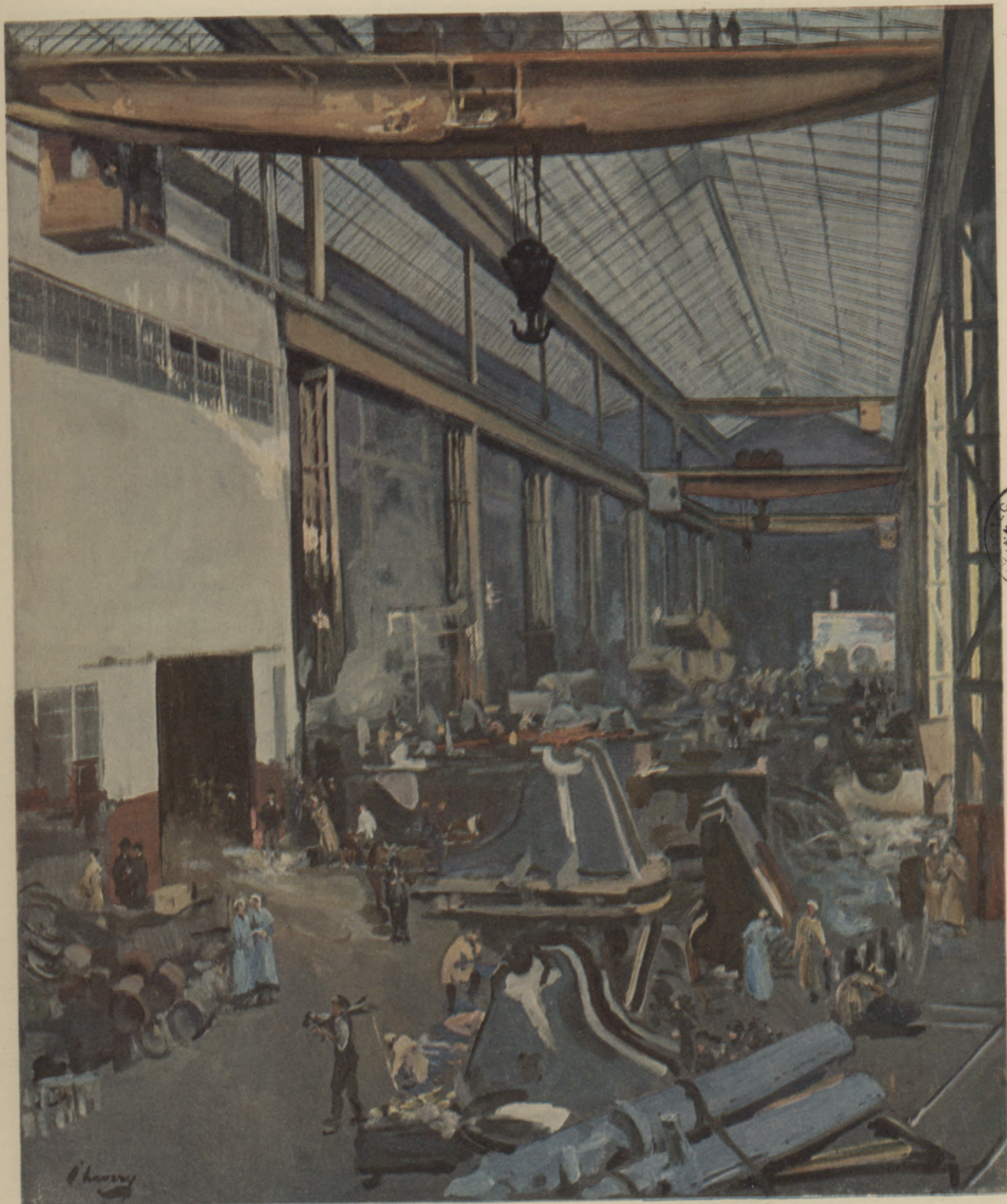
“ tremendous

Monstr = inform = ingens = horrendous ”

pieces of handiwork as a Tank.









## KITE BALLOONS

“ From his watch-tower in the skies ” a balloon observer scans all day each sector of the enemy’s front. From one point you can see a row of from six to fifteen balloons at a time ; if your eye could take in the whole front at once, it would see two parallel dotted lines in the air, about five miles apart, running from the North Sea to Switzerland—the Allies’ balloons and the enemy’s, with No Man’s Land an invisible third line running parallel to and midway between them. Moored balloons are of course very vulnerable and incapable of self-defence and, with luck, a single aeroplane may set a string of them on fire, one after the other. Each observer then takes to his parachute and has some uneasy instants of rapid descent before the parachute fills, but he nearly always alights safely, though sometimes in odd situations. The first use of an observation balloon in war is said to have been made by the French, against the Austrians, at the battle of Fleurus in 1794, but the science remained rudimentary until the XXth century. Even in the South African war it was possible for such a miscalculation of altitudes and atmospheric pressures to be made that a war balloon, when invited to ascend, once tried disappointingly to burrow into the earth.







#### IV

### WITH THE FLEET: A GREY DAY

There are many grey days, as well as worse, on the North-East coast of Great Britain, where the "haar" comes in, damp and dull, from the sea and assists the East wind to compose the formidable spring climate of Edinburgh. Here are seen dimly through the murk several different types of the constabulary which have fulfilled Lord Grey's promise to the French Ambassador in 1914—"The British Fleet will give all the protection in its power"—by closing to the enemy almost every corner of every sea in the world, so that the commander of any German ship which leaves harbour does so as a conscious trespasser, always ready to run for his life.





Manly





## MINESWEEPERS IN HARBOUR

It would be of no use to try to do justice in a short note to the patient hardihood of the masters and crews of the small craft which sweep the crossings of the seas when these are littered with enemy mines. Many of the men are fishermen. Every wise man always knew that the life of sea fishermen, with its hardness, hazards, simplicity, and closeness of contact with great natural forces, makes some of the best people in the world. Everybody knows it now, thanks to some accurate published reports of what the minesweepers have done in this war.









## THE FORTH BRIDGE

To feel the size of the Forth Bridge you should either see, from below, the little train crawling like a caterpillar across it, or see from the bridge the torpedo boats and destroyers scudding about below like water-beetles on the surface of a pond. But the strange hugeness of this human feat looks, perhaps, most astonishing when seen from the lower Forth, about Granton, with a late mid-summer sunset behind it in the Perthshire hills and no lesser trace of man's activity in sight. It seems, then, like the giant Roman arches in the deserted Campagna, a deposit that might still attest the daring of man's enterprise though not a man were left in the world.







## NEWCASTLE

The rhythm in the design of the picture helps to convey a sense of the puissant swing and measure of joint human effort in a great factory where each worker, if looked at alone, may seem to be doing something little, and yet the whole collective endeavour of the place has a pulse of its own, till you feel it beating to time like a great marine engine.










## R.N.D., CRYSTAL PALACE



The Crystal Palace, first set up in Hyde Park and then at Sydenham, is endeared to many of the middle-aged by youthful recollections of Blondin walking the tight rope ; of its really beautiful and true reproductions of fragments of exotic architecture ; and of the life-size plaster megalosauri, ichthyosauri and other dragons of the prime which pleasingly infested its gardens. In many ways it respected its public too highly to profit its shareholders, fell on evil days and was only saved by a public subscription in 1913. In 1914 it took to war work and, like many other "dug-outs," has found a new youth in the nation's service. It made fine home quarters for the Royal Naval Division which, without training, extricated itself with credit from a thorny place at Antwerp and, with training, did far finer things at Gallipoli, on the Ancre and in Flanders.






THE ROYAL NAVAL DIVISION.  
CRYSTAL PALACE, 1914.

*Shaw*



## A COAST DEFENCE



Many people must now have seen in England one of the familiar sights of the front—first the separate searching of several parts of the night sky by half a dozen search-lights, then their gradual or swift convergence on one spot, then the kindling of the many momentary sparks of anti-aircraft shell-bursts at and near the point of intersection of all these shafts of light. As a rule you can see, with the naked eye, the whole hunt except the quarry, though this may suddenly come into sight as a travelling black speck, like a microbe in a diagram, against a white cloud, or, if it be hit in a certain way, as a falling flame and pillar of illuminated smoke.







## AIRSHIPS

A couple of the smaller airships familiar to soldiers going home on leave. Soldiers never see an airship, British or German, over the front and are always interested in watching the handiness of these craft as they make little circles over the leave boat or go off on little excursions and return to it like a dog out for a walk with a man.









## A STORMY DAY ON THE FIRTH

The Firth, with its low stony shores, snag-like rock islands, and backgrounds of mountain and open sea, is a wild-looking place in rough weather, though equally safe from tempest and from enemy attack. From the cage of each of the two "sausage" balloons seen in the picture an observer scans the outer sea and the sky as if from the top of a mountain, though the rotary motion of the cage makes a disagreeable difference for the observer. In the foreground is a ship of the Colossus class, illustrating a middle stage in the evolution of Dreadnoughts. Of course it is often on duty in the open sea that war-ships must spend days and nights in the path of the imposing procession of winter cyclones which pass up the West of Ireland and Scotland to Norway and which have fretted the three coasts to rags.






*Harvey*





## SHELL-MAKING, SCOTLAND



The time has been when factory interiors were called drab ; in this birthplace of shells the artist has found more vivacity of colour than distinguishes most of the landscapes in which they finish their careers, especially if this be in Flanders. There war, like nightfall in Virgil, " has taken all colour away," but seems to have deposited some of it " for the duration," as soldiers say, in this engineers' shop. Women's share in the making of shells, when our need was the sorest, was worth many good divisions of troops—so far as you can compare the values of things which are both of infinite value—and they have never slackened since in arming and saving their men. What they have done in this war will surely be remembered for ever, not only helping to win it, but helping all men in future to a nobler idea of comradeship with women.





BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE LISBOA

Cherrey



## AN AERODROME

Not a good day for flying, but a beautiful one for painting. Even an airman—if he has had several days' hard work before—may take pleasure in the rain-washed air, the morbid visibility of the horizon, and the flying and jostling clouds. A visitor to the commander of a flying unit on just such a day during the battle of Cambrai was received with "Come in. I've got nothing to do. All my machines that went up have had to come down in a hurry." No German machine had even gone up. By practice flights on these days when the machines look like Tennyson's rooks "blown about the skies," the young pilot in England fits himself to help the guns and the infantry in action in weather approaching a gale.






*Almeida*

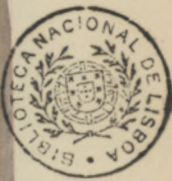


## SCENE AT A CLYDE SHIPYARD




It gives some measure of the national value of the work done in such a "shop" as this that some good soldiers may even be taken from the army to do it if they are known to be skilled in any of the three-score or so of separate trades which make up ship-building and marine engineering. Women also find work that they can do well at the lathes and planing machines, and many of the great cranes that lift boilers and guns are worked by women.







## PATROL BOATS



A few of the minor submarine-hunters of the Auxiliary Patrol Services. Their work is little known to the public; its results, like those of carbolic acid and other drastic cleansers, are mainly negative—the absence of long lists of deaths and sunken ships which, but for them, must have appeared. Now and then a brief report of the loss of one or more patrol boats shows the risks at which these unadvertised labours of protection are carried on.





*Henry*





