



THE HUNDRED SHIPS

(Editorial)

ONE thought is likely to rise like a triumphant shout in the minds of many Americans at the knowledge that more than a hundred ships will be launched at the yards of the country tomorrow to join our swiftly expanding war fleets.

"Tell it to the Germans!"

Our new way of celebrating Independence Day is impressive. It is stupendous. We might tell it to the Germans with the assurance that they would not be any happier in consequence. And yet that notion seems hardly appropriate in a nation that already holds the German somewhere midway between contempt and pity. The Germans are doomed and they are in agony, and the guns in Europe are talking to them plainly enough. In the matter of the Hundred Ships it might be as well if we told it to some of the Americans at home.

IT WOULD be a fine thing if all the profiteering packers, all the capitalists who have not yet found their souls, all the workers who are no better than profiteers who employ them, all who are selfish, all who still try secretly to wring indecent profits out of these terrible years, all who stand apart from the world of brave men and women now fighting to keep the lights of civilization steady, could be summoned for the celebration of this Fourth of July. It would be a fine thing to herd them in groups to see the Hundred Ships go down to the water.

For these new ships are a challenge to every mean and ungracious instinct that still persists in America. They are, for the most part, worker ships, toilers of the war.

Few of them will ever unfurl battle flags. They are destined to the service that is performed silently and in obscurity. Whatever their valor or their sacrifice they will have no witnesses but the unguarded seas. They make no pretensions to grandeur and yet they will go out to uphold the hands of civilization at the

common task. The great majority of us, rich and poor, try to be like them—without pretension, without fear, without selfishness in a cause that is too great for hatred and too noble for passions of any sort.

Millions of men have turned from their plans and their ambitions to endure and to suffer on the other side of the world without hope of great glory or unusual rewards. Women have given up their sons. And most of the Americans who are participating in the sorrow of this war are still at home. They will never even have the consolation of a flag above the long adventure. In times like these there is great glory in the renunciation of glory and great profit for those who will turn away from profit. Time and the years to come hold singular blessings for such as these. And the Hundred Ships that go out to serve rather than to fight must be the symbols of devotion such as theirs.

"TELL it to the Germans!"

There are things about the Hundred Ships that we might properly tell the Germans for the good of their distracted souls. We might say that these ships and the myriads that are to follow them will go about the service of this war without even the stimulus of cheers. Some will be lost. Others multiplying will take their places till the sea is blackened with them. We might say to the Germans that these ships in their fidelity of purpose, in their steadfastness, in their fearlessness before any adventure fittingly represent the great quiet spirit of the larger America which is, in the final analysis, the force behind our warfare.

The glittering fleets and the army upon the other side of the world are the cutting edge of our national will and purpose. Most of the unexampled number of ships that are to be launched tomorrow will serve them. Without the littler adventuring ships the battle fleets would find life doubly hard.

Europe could not continue to exist. The war might be even lost altogether. And so it is fitting to regard these transports and cargo vessels as something more than a triumph of American skill and determination.

The Hundred Ships are the embodiment of the will and the purpose, the hearts and the minds and the strength of the multitudes that made them possible and brought them into being—of the millions whose names you will never know—of the North and the South, the West and the East and all the regions that contributed to their creation. We might tell that to the unhappy Germans. And we might say that these new fleets represent the larger nation of America because they are unpretentious and patient, valorous and assured—and content to labor to the end without glory or reward.

They embody our high faith.

IN MORE ways than one the Hundred Ships tell of our silent might. Their number alone is an amazing thing. They represent an achievement greater than anything of the sort ever done since man first ventured on the deep waters. But it is because of the nature of their appointed duties that they are appealing. The fighting ships in the Fourth of July launching list are relatively few. Most of the vessels are transports and cargo carriers that will go to labor in a sort of splendid obscurity after the farewell cheers at the ways. These latter ships have a part in the war much like that which falls to most Americans. They will toil unseen and without applause. And yet the work they do will be felt everywhere in the world. They are the final impassable barrier thrown up against the advance of savagery.

HAPPY will be that American who, after the war, will be able to feel that he was not shamed by the service of the littler ships and those who manned them.