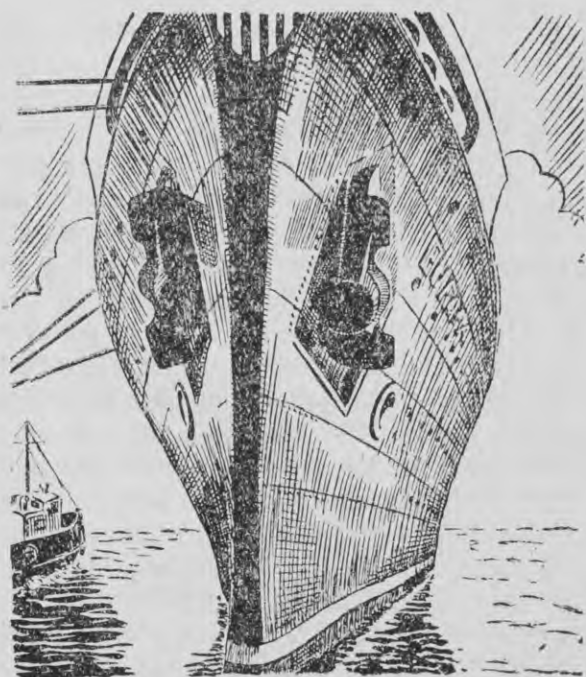


## Queens of the Blue Riband

water taking another 19,000 tons there remains only 4,000 tons for passengers and their accommodation and an insignificant amount of cargo.

If the speed of the ship were to be increased beyond 27 knots the remaining space would diminish rapidly, and at somewhere between 28 and 29 knots there would be none at all. The struggle for supremacy reached its peak in the pre-war years with the building of the *Normandie* and the *Queen Mary*, which had to be built 30,000 tons greater than any other ship then afloat to increase the speed record by two knots.

Although regular trans-Atlantic services have been in operation for more than a hundred years, the chief interest in the contest for the Blue Riband centres in the period since the turn of the century—the era which produced the mammoth liner. British lines, led by Cunard, had maintained a definite superiority for sixty years, starting off with 210ft. paddle-boats and always spending enormous amounts of money in their bid for supremacy in speed, and, although the Germans held the ascendancy for a decade from 1897 onwards, it was Cunard who again took up the challenge. Negotiations with the Admiralty resulted in the company's undertaking to build two ships calculated to do 24½ knots; they were to be 750ft. long, and not only the fastest ships in the world but also the largest that had ever been built. The first of the two sister-ships, called the *Mauretania*, was launched in 1905 and was followed soon afterwards by the *Lusitania*, which was to meet a tragic fate in 1915. The *Mauretania* at once showed her extraordinary power by reaching 27.36 knots and averaging 26 knots on a 48-hour trial trip—a foretaste of a record which was to make her the most famous ship in the history of the Blue Riband. She captured it in 1908 and retained it for 22 years. Even in 1929, when she



*A prize of war—the Europa*

was 23 years old and still had her original engines after they had driven the ship more than two million miles, she averaged only a tenth of a knot below 27 in a gallant losing battle with the new German entrant, the *Bremen*.

With ships of several nations participating in the Blue Riband contest there have been, of necessity, many starting points, although for ships sailing from the Channel ports the time is judged from Bishop Rock, off Land's End, Cornwall, to the Ambrose Lightship, outside New York, which has been universally accepted as the finishing point on the American side. As the purpose of the race is to establish which is the fastest trans-Atlantic liner, this is done by dividing the distance the ship has travelled between Europe and America, as shown in the log, by the time occupied on the passage, thus giving the vessel's average speed for the journey. The ship which, according to this method of calculation, reaches the highest average speed is the holder of the Blue Riband.