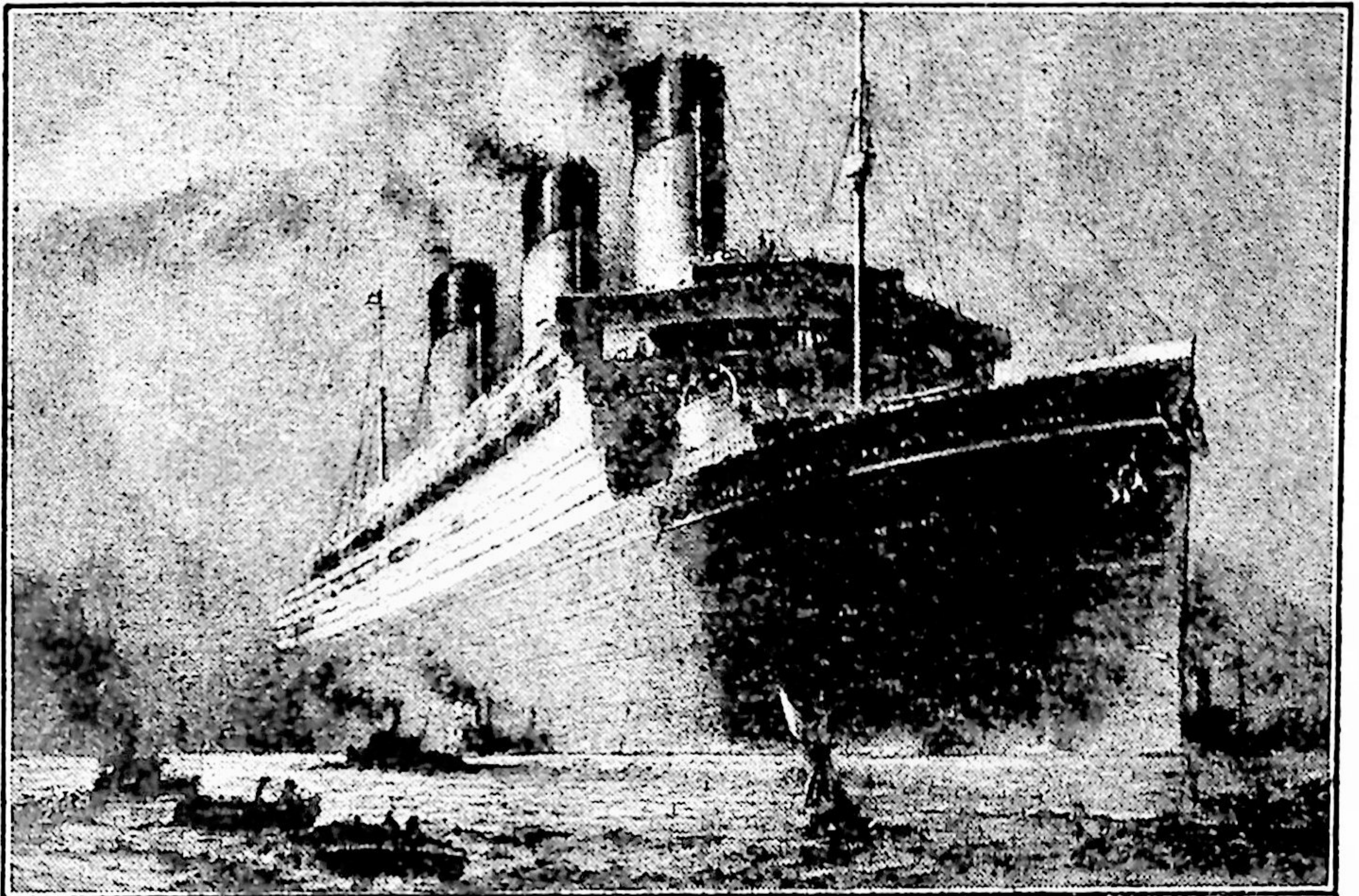


# From COMET to MAJESTIC!



The huge size of the 56,000-ton "Majestic," the world's largest liner, can easily be imagined from this picture. But she must look to her laurels, for already orders for two new 60,000 tonners have been placed.

**T**HE little Comet was not the first in our long line of steamships, for there had been one or two experiments before her. Her fame rests on the fact that she was the first British steamboat to do regular work successfully.

Up to her coming, in 1811, our great grandfathers had looked upon steamers as a wild dream of a cranky set of engineers. Just as they refused to believe that the steam locomotive could compete with the horse, so did they believe that the sailing ship represented the last word in water travel!

Rather more than a century ago, folks in Bonny Scotland saw this tiny fellow, with black smoke pouring out of its long funnel, churning its way along with paddles that reminded the onlookers of wooden malt shovels.

How the people on the banks stopped in

amazement to watch this strange vessel, the more thoughtful, perhaps, trying to guess what the future held for such strange craft as this! There were no newspapers then, as we now know them, so that the fact that steam vessels had already been tried in America, and, indeed, in another part of Scotland, was not generally known.

Of one of the earliest Canadian steamers a little story is told which well illustrates the awe with which the first steamboats were regarded. In books, the engineer on a steamer is always a Scotsman. It was the same on this first Canadian steamer, and he was the only man who knew anything about the machinery. One day the little vessel was making its way down the St. Lawrence to a port where she was to discharge her cargo. As she approached her destination, Sandy, the engineer, could not be found anywhere.



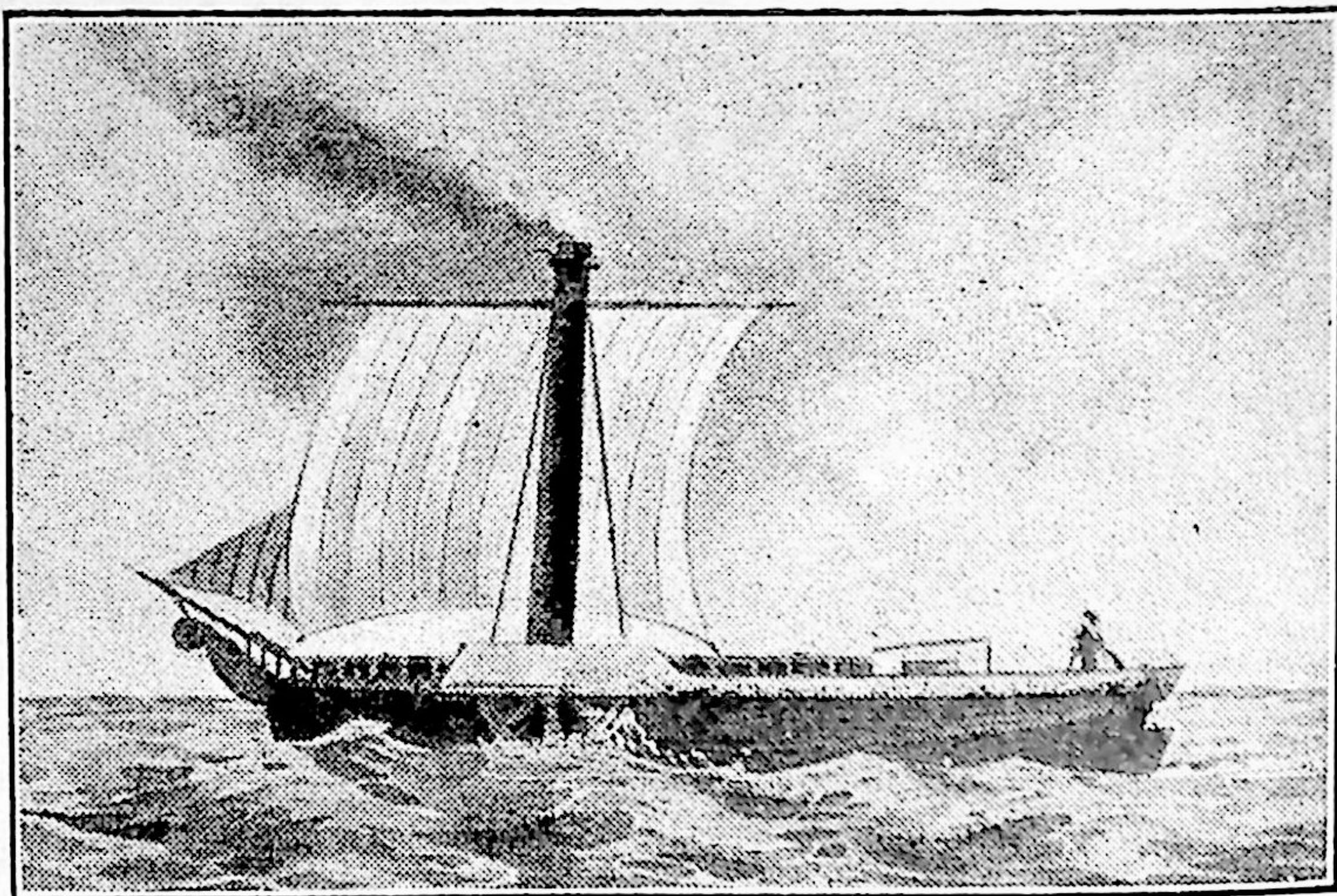
The crew searched for him high and low for two hours without success, meanwhile using the helm in such a way that the boat cruised up and down in front of the quay—this to the amazement of those who awaited her coming. At last Sandy was found asleep in a corner where no one had thought of looking. Of course, the captain grumbled at him a good deal, complaining of the serious delay, and that no one knew how to stop the engines.

"Why did ye no let the fire oot, then she'd a stoppit herself," retorted Sandy, rubbing sleep from his eyes as he just switched off the steam!

The Comet proved so successful that there were soon others, and within three years there was a regular service of steamboats on the Clyde.

A traveller of the period comments on the curious fact that either the mast was used for a funnel, or the funnel was used also as a mast; he could not make out which. It is a fact that the engines were so weak that sails were also used to help these little vessels along, and for a great number of years the steamship relied upon the aid of sails. Atlantic liners were found in service with masts and sails well into the present century; they were finally abandoned when building the famous Majestic and Teutonic of the White Star Line, in 1889.

THE first steamboat was in service on the Thames in Waterloo year. These early Thames steamers were not too popular at the start, and we read that the proprietors were prepared to carry ladies free if accom-



The "Comet," as this picture shows, was very ungainly as compared with the graceful clippers it was designed to replace. No wonder all who saw it stared in amazement.

panied by gentlemen, *except* on Sundays. Although refreshments were sold on board, if people liked to bring their own they could, and the steamboat advertisements promised that they would be "assisted with hot water for tea-making."

How far away all this seems now, when the steamer is part of our daily life! Then a man or woman was regarded as very brave indeed for having ventured on such an unsafe vessel. History repeats itself, and it is not so long ago that we regarded men who had travelled on an aeroplane in a similar light, and the same kind of people said there was no future for the air machine—echoing exactly what their great-grandparents had said of the first steamers!

The Channel was being regularly crossed by steam just about a century ago, and from the Channel to the Atlantic was a natural step.

The date of the first crossing of the Atlantic by steam is just a little uncertain, because the first vessels to claim the honour were really not steamers at all. They were, in fact, sailing ships which carried an engine aboard, and let down their paddles when the wind failed, hauling them up and



putting out the boiler fire directly the wind began to blow! Frankly, the captain did not trust the engine at all, and was only too glad of an excuse to dispense with its services.

The Savannah, an American ship, is usually allotted first place in the Atlantic crossing by steam. This she accomplished in 1819, but on only a small portion of the passage was steam used, and she did the return journey entirely without it. The second record was also obtained by the Western Continent. This time it was the Royal William, built by the Canadians.

Then followed, in 1838, the first ocean race between steamships. This was between the Sirius and the Great Western, the Sirius winning by a few hours, though it must be said that the Great Western sailed a day or two later! But the Sirius deserves all the honour we can give her, for she was not intended for ocean steaming.

Two years after the first ocean race, we find the Cunard Company being formed to establish what is often called the "Atlantic Ferry."

THE first Cunarder was the famous Britannia, a fine little paddle-wheeler, but so small that half a dozen like her could be carried on such a ship as the Aquitania!

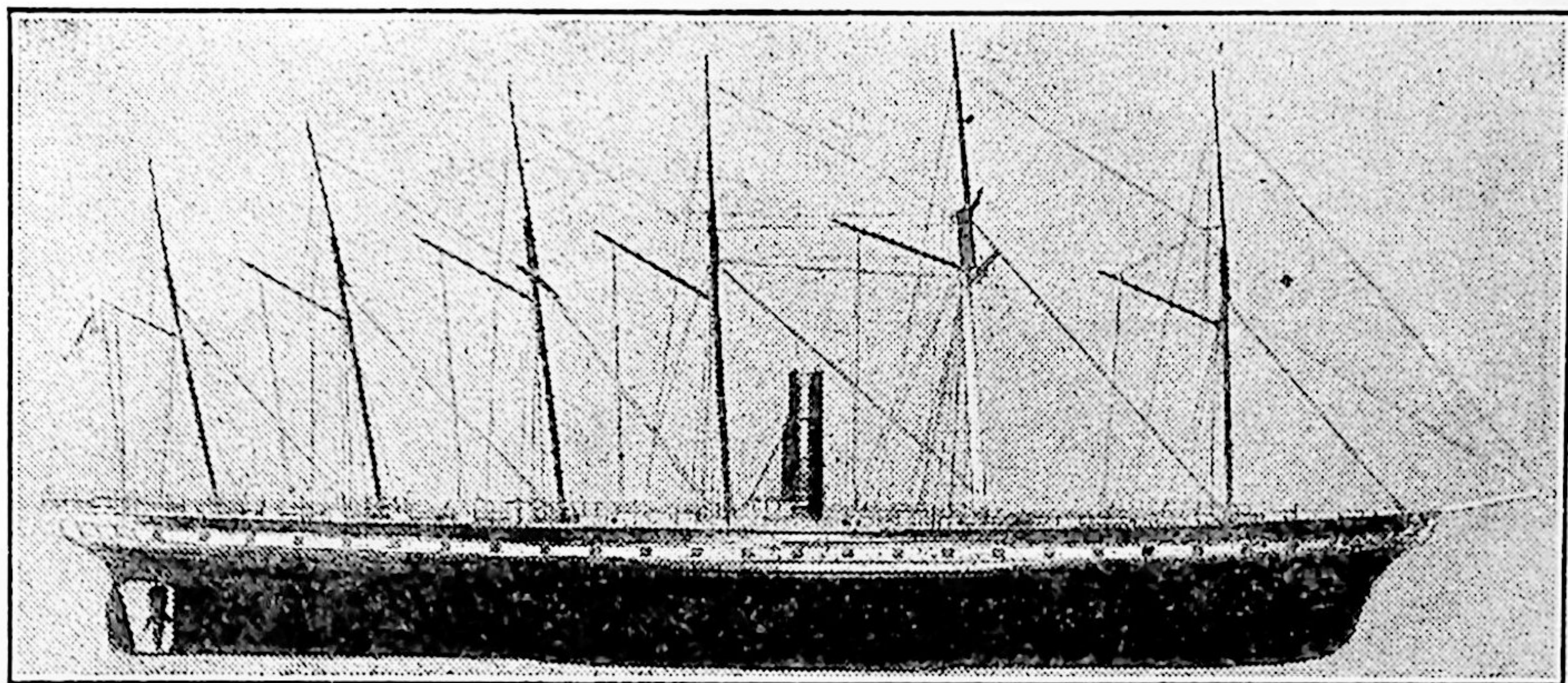
Charles Dickens crossed to America in the pioneer Cunarder; in "American Notes" he gives us a splendid word-picture of what the accommodation was like.

From 1840 steady progress was made in steam; there was now no question of going back to sails. Brunel had designed the Great Western, which was the first *real* Atlantic steam liner. Then he went on to build the Great Britain, the first iron liner, which was also screw-driven. There was quite a battle waged over the question as to whether a screw propeller was better than the well-tried paddle-wheels.

In the Navy, they settled it by tying a paddle-driven craft to the stern of a screw-propelled sloop, both vessels being of similar tonnage. The propeller won this queer tug-of-war, and so in the Navy, and in the mercantile marine, we find the favourite paddle-wheeler being displaced, until to-day it is used only for small steamers, performing short journeys.

In the 'fifties came the Inman Line, and all their vessels were screw-driven, even though the Cunard was still using paddles. The last of the paddle-wheelers of the Cunard service was the Scotia, which was still running in the 'sixties.

Soon the wooden steamer was discarded, and iron was used for all the large ships.



One of the earliest screw-driven steamers : the "Great Britain." She also enjoys the distinction of being the first all-iron liner.

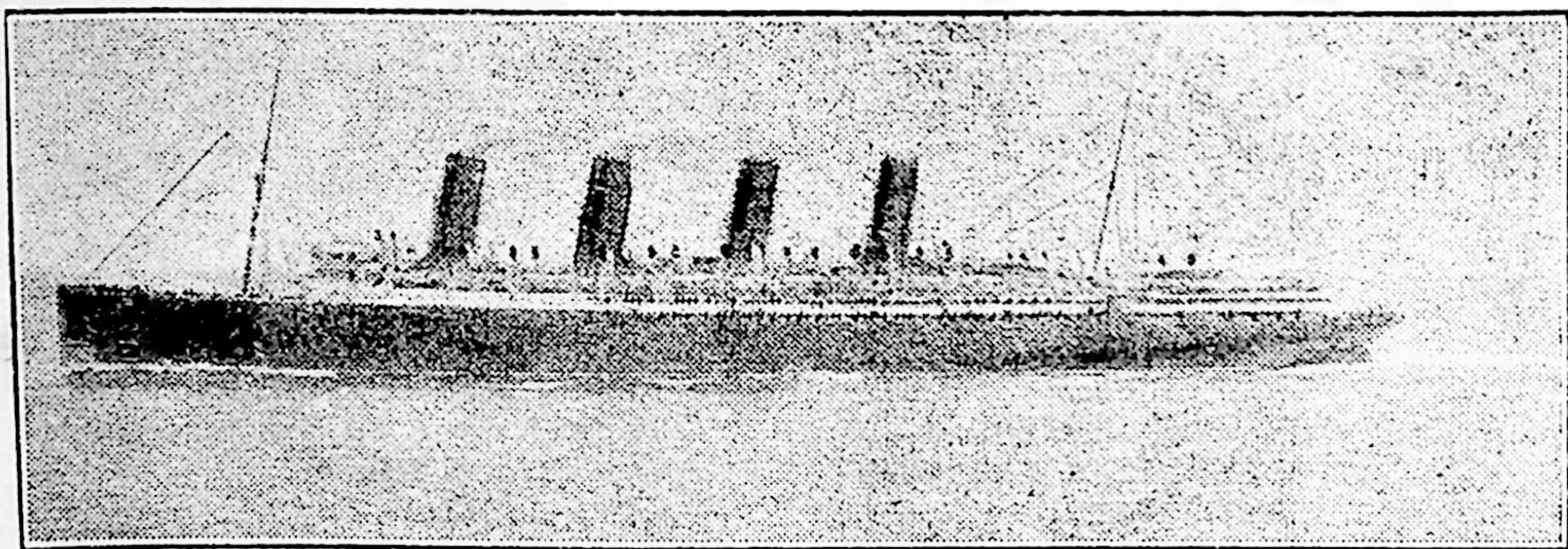


Presently, in 1870, came the White Star Line, and with its Oceanic it made all other liners out of date. Up to this period, the liner had what we might call closed-in decks; that is to say, the bulwarks were of steel or wood, carried up several feet. The result was, when a heavy sea came aboard, the water had great difficulty in getting away, and often it took the easiest course—to the cabins!

In the Oceanic the decks were flush, fitted with rails, like they are to-day, so that the sea got away as quickly as it came. The long, narrow wooden deckhouse disappeared in the 'seventies, and a few years later there came the steel ship. This innovation made possible a great increase in size.

stopped; not so the size of the liner. The Cunard built their famous Aquitania, the luxury ship, and the White Star their splendid trio, Olympic, Titanic, and Britannic. Alas! of these only the good old Olympic remains afloat.

The Germans, beaten in the race for speed, turned to the giant liner, and, whilst the four English ships last named were each about 46,000 tons, the Germans ranged from the 52,000-ton Imperator to the 56,000 Vaderland and Bismarck. You would look in vain for these names in a fleet list to-day. Write instead, and in the same order, the Berengaria of the Cunard, the Leviathan of the United States Line, and the Majestic of the White Star, and



The world's fastest liner at speed! Although she is now twenty-two years old, the "Mauretania" is doing better than when she was new!

The 10,000 tonner appeared in due course, and there were four most beautiful liners built round about 1888 of that tonnage. These were the Majestic and Teutonic of the White Star Line, and the City of Paris and City of New York of the Inman Line. These splendid liners were always breaking records, until the Cunarders, Campania and Lucania, took the "blue ribbon" from them. These, in turn, lost it to Germany in 1897, but ten years later the magnificent Lusitania, and the even more speedy Mauretania swept away all records. The Mauretania is to-day the fastest liner afloat, and doing better in her "twenties" than when she was new!

With these Cunard giants the speed race

there you have the three giants (or should it be giantesses?) of to-day, all in service, all popular.

There is a 60,000 tonner, now in course of construction, that will be known as the Britannic, of the White Star Line. Her engines will be oil-driven—a new departure in a liner of this size, and the experts who have designed her reckon that she will be the fastest liner afloat. The Britannic is reckoned to be completed, and ready for launching, by 1932, so the Mauretania will have to look to her laurels if she is to retain her title of "the fastest liner afloat."

So that is the story of steam—very briefly told, of course—from the tiny Comet to the huge Majestic, the biggest ship now running.