

PIPELINE TO VICTORY.

Petrol, A.I. priority of mechanised war. Now revealed by the government is the secret of how petrol was conveyed to the front in the enormous quantities required. Hidden and camouflaged in south east England were the pumping stations by which the oil was sent over the channel. The pumps were housed in buildings too innocent looking to attract notice from the air. Only the men engaged on this vital work knew what was concealed by those outwardly very ordinary buildings.

A lead cable, to all appearances like a submarine telegraph cable, was one form taken by the pipelines, ~~under the English Channel.~~ The exterior was tarred and otherwise thoroughly insulated from sea action, but the inside was not solid. It was a pipe ~~three inches in diameter~~ ^{8 a 3-inch interior diameter}. Nothing like it had ever been made before and when the idea of an under-sea pipeline was first mooted experts thought it impossible. British inventor genius proved ~~impossible~~ that it could ^{be done.}

Soon after D-Day, from the hold of a cable ship, the lead pipeline was ^{payed} ~~played~~ out, from the Isle of Wight to the Normandy beachhead. Months before, a test-laying across the Bristol Channel had been successful; now it was the real thing. It seems that the Germans never dreamt of any such idea. If their reconnaissance planes spotted the cable ships ~~their~~ curiosity was not aroused. In a matter of hours the end of the first cable came off the rollers and was dragged up onto a French beach. The whole operation had gone forward more smoothly than the greatest optimist ventured to hope.

Meanwhile a pipeline of steel had been prepared. It was an alternative ^{material} ~~method~~, some experts believing that welded lengths of flexible, high quality steel, would stand up to strong currents and the irregular sea-bed better than a ~~pipelike~~ pipeline of lead. The long lengths whipped like venomous snakes as they were got ready for loading, revealing to the lay-man the considerable elasticity of steel.

Experiment had proved that the piping could be wound onto drums of thirty feet minimum diameter. These gigantic reels of steel-piping were towed across the channel at six knots, and in that way the pipeline was *payed out* ~~played out~~.

The day came when pipelines could be taken into Bologne and Calais. The lightning British advance on the left flank last autumn made it necessary for the cross-Channel pipes to follow up.

Thus from English pumping stations, to the front on the lower Rhine, were conveyed the daily millions of gallons for the army. As each new pipeline was laid down the pumping station engineers started the machinery and the oil flowed.

Months ago ^{were released} ~~were released~~ pictures of the land continuation of the pipelines, from the coast to the front line. At the pipe terminal the petrol was taken off in jerry-cans to the tanks, lorries and planes. Thus, at a time when Germany was acutely short of petrol the British and American armies had as much as they wanted, always at the right place, at the right time. The channel pipeline was an enterprise ^{of} which government, experts and workmen have every reason to be proud.