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THE PORT OF LONDON.

(A French View.)

By RALPH RICHARDSON.

It is not often that that enterprising Paris journal, *Questions Diplomatiques et Coloniales*, devotes a long article to an English local question, but in its issue of 15th February 1904 we find such a communication by M. René Moreux upon "The Port of London."

M. Moreux sets out by stating that the popular idea that something was wrong with the Port led Government, on 21st June 1900, to appoint a Commission of seven members to inquire into the administration of the Port of London and all questions connected with it. The activity of this Commission was, in M. Moreux's opinion, extraordinary. Its investigations were not confined to England, but embraced the ports of the Continent. British consuls were requested to furnish detailed reports regarding Antwerp and Rotterdam, Bremen and Hamburg, Dunkirk and Havre. Similarly detailed monographs were furnished by the authorities of Belfast, Bristol, Dublin, Glasgow, Greenock, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, and Newcastle. Shipowners and builders, representatives of great steamship lines, and members of the London Chamber of Commerce and the City Corporation, were examined, and their evidence will be found appended to the Report of the Commission, which extends to three volumes, a Report which has been admirably abstracted by Dr. Lenschau in the German *Marine Rundschau*. M. Moreux's article is based on the Report of the Commission, and all his figures are taken from it.

The author points out that the increasing size of ships has militated against ports situated so far up a river as London. Ships are always demanding now a greater and greater depth of water, while rivers often become shallower owing to being silted up. Recognising this, both the German and French authorities have accepted the conclusion arrived at by the International Congress of Navigation in 1900, viz. "The ports to be in future selected for Transatlantic sailings ought to be able to receive at all times vessels drawing more than 9 metres of water, and consequently ought to have a depth of from 10 to 10½ metres at the lowest tides."

In 1857 the Thames Conservancy Board was formed to take the place of the City Corporation and numerous small companies charged at that time with the control and upkeep of the Port of London. In 1887 a petition by 36 marine companies and insurance agencies was presented to the Board praying that the channel of the Thames might be deepened to at least the depth of the Suez Canal. The Board replied to this petition by making the channel from Yantlet to Crayford Ness 183 metres wide and 7 metres 30 deep at the lowest tides, with a channel from this point to the Port of London 61 metres wide and 5½ metres deep!

ESTUARY OF THE THAMES.

The lower part of the Thames remains very much as it always has been, with 9 metres 20 at low water from the Nore Light to Broadness, but above that an altogether insufficient depth. At low water the depth between Broadness and Greenhithe is scarcely 6 metres 10, with 7 metres 30 to Crawford Ness, 5½ metres to Jenningtree, 5 metres 20 to Crossness, 5 metres to the Albert Dock, and 3 metres 60 above it.

And yet ships are always increasing in size, and only those ports which are thoroughly equipped and can accommodate large vessels can hope to retain Ocean commerce in future. As a matter of fact, Britain has allowed other nations to surpass her in regard to the average tonnage of steamers, and now occupies only the fourth rank, coming after Austria, Belgium, and Germany. Her position is even worse as regards sailing vessels, for, in respect to the average tonnage of such ships, Britain holds only the seventh place, coming after Germany, Chili, Norway, the United States, Italy, and France.

A serious effort is now being made in Britain to regain lost ground in this respect, steamers of 3000 tons drawing 6 metres 90 of water, 9000 tons drawing 8 metres 55, and 12,000 tons drawing 9 metres 90 having been gradually introduced. Consequently, all the Companies have demanded the improvement of the channel from London to the sea so as to permit of large vessels sailing up to the Albert Dock at low water. It is no longer considered satisfactory that large vessels should be able to ascend the river only at high water, for we must not forget that about four hours are required for the passage from the Nore Light to London Bridge, and that fogs are so common that ships can only proceed at the slowest rate. Ships loaded with provisions and early vegetables, etc., suffer great injury in this way, and are handicapped in competition with the railways.

The Commission took exception also to the Docks, and found that for trade on a large scale their equipment and organisation were faulty. These docks are ten in number, and we shall consider them in their order in ascending the river from Gravesend. To the north-west of that town, and on the left bank, are the Tilbury Docks, much the largest and, generally speaking, the best equipped on the Thames. They can take in ships of the *Oceanic* class, measuring roughly 209 metres long and 21 metres wide. Unfortunately, their out-of-the-way situation is much against them. To convey goods from Tilbury Docks to the City requires a transit of 42 kilometres by water, or 35 by land.

Further up stream, opposite Woolwich, is the Albert Dock, which, like the Tilbury Docks, possesses no warehouse, but simply large halls where the goods are discharged; still this dock's proximity to the City makes it a favourite. Higher up is the Victoria Dock, with its large warehouses, grain stores, and refrigerating chambers for frozen meat. Further up are the East India and Millwall Docks, the latter specially used for timber and grain. To the north are the West India Docks, whose locks have a depth of 7 metres 90, and the Limehouse and Surrey Commercial Docks. Further west are the St. Katharine and London Docks, which are used only by ships of small tonnage.

With the exception of the Surrey Commercial and Millwall Docks

LOWER COURSE OF THE TEAKES.

1. St. Katharine Docks; 2. London Docks; 3. Limehouse Docks; 4. Surrey Commercial Docks; 5. West India Docks; 6. Millwall Docks; 7. East India Docks; 8. Victoria Dock; 9. Albert Dock; 10. Tilbury Docks are on the left bank, about fifteen miles below the Albert Dock. The Nore Light is about ten miles east of Thorney Creek.
N.B. The figures indicate the least depths at low water. Up to Broadness Point the depths stated have been increased because, by means of easily executed dredgings, the depth of the channel could be maintained at 9 metres 20 at ebbtide.

all the rest have, since 1st January 1901, been amalgamated under one company—the London and India Dock Company. It is upon this Company that the various companies of navigation have laid most of the blame for shortcomings in the past. Yet, in reality, the history of the formation of the various docks can alone explain the cause of their financial disorder, incoherent regulations, and lightermen's privileges, which have neutralised the proper administration of the docks.

Sir Alfred Jones furnished to the Commission the following table showing the length of sojourn and the expenses of each ship at the following ports :—

For a ship of 9041 tons (5146 net registered)—

PORTS.	Total Charges, Dues and handling of Cargo.	Days required for the Operation.
Avonmouth (Bristol),	24·080 francs	3
Liverpool, . . .	23·130 „	3
Hamburg, . . .	21·337 „	14
Rotterdam, . . .	11·135 „	14
Antwerp, . . .	15·794 „	14
Bremerhaven, . .	18·291 „	14
London, . . .	24·020 „	14

Thus, ships in London pay twice more than in Rotterdam, and do not enjoy the same quick handling as at Avonmouth and Liverpool. It is this delay in handling goods in the Thames which shipowners chiefly complain of. As soon as a steamer arrives a crowd of lighters surrounds it, encumbering the waterway, and occasioning sometimes endless confusion. In 1904, as in the days of Pitt, the lighters can enter the docks when they like. The London and India Dock Company loses in this way $1\frac{1}{4}$ million francs (£50,000) annually. Out of 6,359,564 tons discharged in this Company's docks in 1899, only 1,539,251 were landed on the quays and paid dues to the Company, which lost thereby 76 per cent. of the whole.

The first thing requiring to be done seems to be to stop the privileges accorded to the lighters, which would afford the Dock Company new resources for enlarging and completing the equipment of their docks, besides enabling the docks to be more rapidly cleared and reforming the present unnecessary detention of ships.

The Government Commission has not, however, recommended the abolition of the traditional privileges enjoyed by the lighters, but has simply advised the amalgamation of the Thames Conservancy, London and India Docks Company, and the Surrey Commercial and Millwall Dock Companies.¹

M. Moreux does not believe that this recommendation can be carried into effect, although adopted in principle on 26th October 1902 at the

¹ The position of these three Dock Companies on the London Stock Exchange (1 March 1904) is as follows :—*London and India Docks Company*. The stock issued amounts to £18,750,487. Dividends range from 3% to 4%. *Millwall Dock Company*. The stock issued amounts to £1,584,157. Dividend 5% on Perpl. Deb., and 50s. on Perpl. 5% Pref. *Surrey Commercial Dock Company*. The stock issued amounts to £1,900,814. Dividends range from $4\frac{1}{2}$ % to 5%. The three Companies thus represent £22,235,458 of stock issued.—R. R.

Mansion House Conference, over which Lord Rothschild presided. He considers that it will meet with unsurmountable financial obstacles. He points out that the docks have been valued at 444 millions of francs, and that 175 millions of francs will be required for absolutely urgent works, such as deepening the Thames and enlarging the docks. That makes nearly 620 million francs or about 25 million pounds. All schemes projected to obtain this sum seem to him bad, including that for a huge loan. What is really wanted is the complete reorganisation of existing agencies, and by this means only can a programme of immediate improvements be rendered possible.¹

The main purpose of M. Moreux's interesting and valuable review is to show that the Port of London has no longer the equipment necessary for the great Ocean commerce. Thanks to the Commission and Dr. Lenschau, he is able to give the following table:—

MOVEMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL EUROPEAN PORTS.

PORTS.	1890. Gross tonnage.	1899. Gross tonnage.	Increase per cent.	Increases per cent., including figures for 1900 and 1901.
London,	13,141,455	15,388,288	17	21·4
Liverpool,	8,408,378	9,468,115	13	15·4
Glasgow,	2,874,555	3,550,146	23	30·7
Hull,	2,530,435	3,115,748	23	22·2
Southampton,	1,668,943	2,784,013	67	...
Bristol,	1,231,047	1,556,089	26	...
Hamburg,	5,202,825	7,765,950	49	61·1
Antwerp,	4,517,698	6,842,163	51	65·7
Rotterdam,	2,918,425	6,323,072	116	118·7
Marseilles,	4,669,441	6,166,298	32	39·9
Genoa,	3,393,612	4,557,430	34	...
Havre,	2,816,277	2,868,381	2	...
Trieste,	1,471,464	2,181,746	48	...

We observe from these statistics that Liverpool and Havre are the only ports showing a smaller increase than London, and we must remember that, since the opening of the Manchester Canal in 1894, the port of Liverpool has had a restricted classification. Nor can it be argued that the rivals of London are ports of shipment, whereas London is a port of arrival, a sort of terminus; for Hamburg, Antwerp, and Rotterdam, which have advanced three or six times more than London, are exactly in the same position.

Besides, the goods passing through England avoid the Thames. Out

¹ Mr. T. W. Barber, C.E., has recently proposed a Barrage of the Thames at Gravesend which would furnish a vast inland lake, always at high-water, from Gravesend to Richmond. He estimates the cost at £3,658,000, whereas he says £30,000,000 would have to be spent in purchasing the existing Docks, and £7,000,000 in improving them and dredging the river. Plans of this Barrage are given in *The Graphic* of 19th March 1904.—R. R.

of a total of 1630 millions of francs of re-exportations in 1882, 997 millions went through London, while, in 1899, out of 1626 millions of francs, only 861 millions passed through London, showing that her percentage fell from 61.2 to 53 in seventeen years.

M. Moreux concludes with a word of advice remarkably like that which we have heard on several platforms of late. "These facts," he says, "render lengthy commentaries unnecessary. They prove, once again, that, in the ceaseless movement of the world, progress must be vigorously maintained or others will gain the race."

CENTRAL ASIA AND TIBET.¹

It will be in the recollection of many of our readers that in December 1902 Dr. Sven Hedin read before our Society a paper in which he gave an account of his explorations in Central Asia during 1899-1902.² Dr. Hedin is a Central Asian traveller not unknown to fame. His account of his explorations in 1893-97, entitled *Through Asia*, has been widely read. The interest therefore gathering round his address on his later journeys was great, and none of the crowded assembly present on the occasion is likely to forget it. The striking and engaging personality of the speaker made itself felt by all who saw and heard him. He told the story of his travels in fluent and picturesque English, and illustrated it by a large number of photographic pictures which more vividly than words brought before his audience the scenes and circumstances described.

As in the case of the expedition of 1893-97, Dr. Hedin has now given to the world what he calls in the preface to the English edition a digested and ordered diary of his latest travels in Asia, together with a description of the regions he has crossed and re-crossed to an added total of some six thousand English miles. The purely scientific results of his explorations have been reserved for another work meant chiefly for scientists. The present book may be called the popular presentation of the author's latest harvest of facts and experiences. In its English form the book consists of two thick quarto volumes, containing nearly 1300 pages and amply furnished with maps and with reproductions of the author's paintings, sketches, and photographs. Of these reproductions there are no fewer than 428, many of them pictures of great beauty and point, as will be seen by the examples we are permitted to reproduce here. The book is excellently printed. The single material objection to it is its size and weight, which make it a somewhat uncomfortable burden to the ease-loving or invalid reader. As to contents and style, there is not an uninteresting page in the book from

¹ *Central Asia and Tibet, towards the Holy City of Lassa*, by Sven Hedin. With 420 illustrations from drawings and photographs, 8 full-page coloured illustrations from paintings, and 5 maps mostly by the author. 2 vols. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1903.

² *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. xix. pp. 113-141. Cf. also vol. xix. pp. 1-4.