

to ships and barges going up the canals.

That Earnest Consideration.

Although the Stephens-Cowle report was made in 1908, it does not seem to have met with much earnest consideration by anybody outside the Harbor Board, from that day to this. The press and the politicians have equally ignored it. Meanwhile the subject is not regarded as negligible in some other countries which have not nearly so much to gain from free ports as Canada. I speak of free ports in the plural number because I think Canada is big enough to have several Free Trade areas laid off. France is setting a magnificent example in this as in other things. When the new route from London to the Mediterranean via Havre, Lyons, Arles, and Marseilles, is complete, the Free Port of Marseilles will become one of the greatest ports in the world as Montreal may yet be. The "London Economist" says: "In two years' time, or three at the utmost, the two greatest seaports of the North and South of France respectively will be connected by a continuous inland waterway, upon which the cost of carriage of goods will be reduced to less than half the railway rates. At present, barges can reach Lyons from Havre by the Seine, a canal, and the Saone, but from Lyons onward the Rhone, which in the earlier part of its course is a mountain torrent, becomes a river of strong currents, with constantly shifting shoals and sandbanks, and very variable in its depth at different places and seasons. Since 1878, however, the river between Lyons and Arles has been cleared and deepened,

so that barges of 350 tons capacity and about 3½ feet draught can traverse it for 362 days a year on the average, while for 11 years continuously there was no interruption. The annual traffic had risen from 120,000 tons in 1879 to 400,000 tons in 1910, but there is no satisfactory port at the mouth. Since 1906, however, a canal, 50 miles long, partly on the lines of an older one, has been under construction from Arles by port de Boue and Martingues to L'Estaque, near Marseilles. There is only one lock—at Arles; and the final section, a tunnel some 4½ miles long, through a ridge of rock, was inaugurated by a distinguished company, including the Minister of Public Works. The tunnel will be approximately 72 feet wide and 50 feet high, and the depth of water in it will be nearly 8 feet. Before entering the tunnel the canal passes through a desert on the border of a salt lake, the shore of which is now covered with chemical works, manufactories of explosives, and other establishments called into existence by the war. Probably the canal will make it a great industrial district, and much traffic is expected, notably in phosphates from Tunis and agricultural produce from North Africa and Provence, in exchange for the manufactures of central and Northern France."

Enterprise has done a great deal for the Port of Montreal, but Nature has done more. To-day it is a National Port. With a Free Port Annex it will be an International Port to which much more than half the continent of North America will be contributory.