

More Impressions of Britain

III.—THE PORTS

(By W. Dalton)

The ports of the Old Country have spent hundreds of millions of pounds, their engineers have had to perform marvelous structural feats and the optimism of their citizens has braved adversity—all in order to carve out facilities with which the port of Vancouver has been naturally endowed. For development schemes which can be built very cheaply in Vancouver they have had to make tremendous initial sacrifices and overcome huge physical odds.

This is what struck members of the Vancouver Board of Trade mission most strongly in regard to Old Country harbor development as they inspected, one after the other, the great works at Manchester, Bristol (Avonmouth), Liverpool, Newcastle and Hull this summer. Everywhere one was struck by the stupendous task which Great Britain had undertaken and accomplished to make her ports. All the harbors mentioned had had to be dug out, while we in Vancouver have merely built into the water.

Probably the most magnificent modern development is that of the Port of Manchester and the Manchester Ship Canal. Some of the members of the delegation remembered the great area now covered with docks, wharves, and warehouses as Trafford Park, the residence of Sir Humphrey de Trafford.

The Port authorities were most kind and considerate to the delegation. They showed us the immense works erected contiguous to the Canal, such as the Ford Motor Works, General Electric plant, Swift & Co., Kilverts Laird and many others of the more than 100 giant industries built on the old estate. The docks and canal are a magnificent testimony to the business ability and optimism of the great city of Manchester which overcame the most trying and almost overwhelming difficulties to effect their construction. When the Canal Company was very hard up, the Corporation of the City of Manchester lent it five million pounds at a low rate of interest to help it. Eighteen years ago, the shares could be bought for a song, but today they are at or over par and pay a dividend. It is a culmination of the "never-say-die" spirit of the City of Manchester.

Constructed at a cost of 15,000,000 pounds, the Manchester Ship Canal Docks are the most efficiently equipped of any we saw in our travels. Every possible labor-saving device was there. One which much impressed the delegation was an instrument for working the cranes on the docks. The engineer, instead of being in an engine house, stands on the dockside or on the ship itself with an electrical contrivance slung around his neck for all the world like a time clock. By merely pushing one or other of an array of buttons he can either raise or lower the cargo rope and send the machine backwards or forwards. The operator has a full view of everything going on around him and is thus able to be in very efficient control.

The dock authorities present this as only one of their "safety first" inventions.

An interesting sight to those so far away from home was a machine labelling B. C. salmon stacked on one of the sheds.

Manchester has apparently captured the wool trade from London because of its contiguity to the great Yorkshire manufacturing centres, and we saw there enormous quantities of baled wool, all from British possessions, with the exception of a little from Egypt.

The Canal is 35½ miles long and ships are lifted 60 feet on their way from tidewater to Manchester. Since 1894, the opening year, the traffic has grown from over 900,000 tons to nearly 6,000,000 tons.

We found Newcastle-on-Tyne a very busy port. Although there was no new dock work going on there, the river has in a decade been dredged and a great amount of coal is exported

and an immense amount of provisions imported from the continent of Europe.

At Liverpool we saw further evidence of the optimism of the port authorities. Some big works were under construction, docks of enormous size having to be dug and blasted out. Far from being depressed about the future prosperity of Britain, the harbor officials were preparing for **bigger and better** things, by increasing their facilities. The elevated dock railway, several miles in length, enables one to get to any of the docks very rapidly indeed.

It was my privilege to be shown around Liverpool in company with a member of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. We found we had certain mutual tastes and we were therefore very happy together. I may say that the gentleman boasted a monocle. After some conversation I asked him what his particular line of business was, and, hoisting his monocle farther in, he stated in an almost apologetic tone—"I run the Furness-Withy show." I mention this because this huge company has just established a new line of steamships from Manchester direct to Vancouver.

The City of Bristol is justly proud of the fact that Giovanni Cabot and his two sons, one of them Sebastian, a greater navigator than he himself, made that the starting point of their most important voyages of discovery. Leaving Bristol, they landed in Labrador on June 24, 1497, and were therefore the real discoverers of Canada. And our hosts were by no means reluctant to point this out to the delegation.

The Lord Mayor of Bristol has the unique possession for the period of his office of a mayor's chapel in which his chaplain preaches every Sunday.

Bristol, through the Avonmouth docks, is making almost superhuman efforts to capture part of the Atlantic trade on the grounds that a vessel steaming up the Bristol channel into Avonmouth can reach an English dock sooner than through any other port. While the chairman of the Bristol harbor board was speaking to us, a ship from this port was in course of being unloaded. Bristol has very fine facilities for unloading wheat by means of beautiful automatic machinery which weighs the grain as it is being sacked.

Although personally I did not visit Hull, I am given to understand that that port is also increasing her facilities in order to cope with increasing business.

Before we left Canada, the Montreal Harbor Board took us all around the harbor, and told us all about it, and especially of how much money they were going to spend. We asked them the secret of how they got the money, but they would not divulge it.

I think I may speak for the delegation in saying that nowhere in our travels did we see any Harbor that has the natural advantages of Vancouver, and no place where a small amount of money will do so much.

Should we not take a lesson from the splendid optimism shown at home under so much greater obstacles and build bigger and better for the great development which is surely coming to this port?

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