



## PRICE, WALKER & CO., LTD., GLOUCESTER.

One of the largest Timber Importing Firms  
in the United Kingdom.

**I**N the business carried on by Messrs. Price, Walker and Company, Limited, of Gloucester and Sharpness Docks, for the importation of foreign timber, the City of Gloucester possesses an industry that has been in existence for nearly 200 years, it having been established by Mr. Morgan Price in the year 1736. It is interesting to note that the founder of the business and his direct descendants have for a long period of years held the leading

Among other partners in the Firm at various times we would refer to the late Mr. Richard Potter, a legally educated gentleman of far more than ordinary ability. He was at one time chairman of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, and was also a chairman of the Gloucester Wagon Company, and was, at the time of his death, (twelve years since), described by a writer of that day as "a king of men." The writer has entered somewhat into details as to the proprietorship of the Firm, but his object in so doing is to illustrate the long time with which the same families have been connected with such a successful industrial undertaking.

the lighterage, from Sharpness Docks to Gloucester and elsewhere, of wood and other imports, this contracting forming a very valuable adjunct to the timber importing business of Price, Walker and Company, Limited.

Mr. William Tupsley Washbourne was also a partner in the Firm for some few years previous to his death in 1844, and the late Colonel P. K. Seddon was chairman of the Company from 1893 to 1897.

The offices for the clerical work and board meetings of the Company, erected in the year 1894, with a symmetrical wing subsequently added, are situated in Price Street, facing the main Gloucester to Bristol Road. They consist of a very handsome two-storey brick structure, with stone facings. The chief rooms are lofty and of spacious measurements; the doors and panelling are of exceptionally fine figured pitch pine; and the whole of the interior is most conveniently fitted and arranged to meet the many and varied requirements of the advanced and progressing business of the day. The offices, as well as the mill and other buildings, are lighted with electricity, which is generated by a special engine and plant erected upon the premises. A considerable number are engaged upon the clerical staff, and it is of more than passing interest to note that amongst them are those who have been with the firm for 51, 41, 38, 36, 28, 19, 17, and 14 years respectively.

The Company are important employers of labour, having a large number of hands regularly engaged all the year round, and during the importing season frequently aggregating as many as 700, in addition to those indirectly employed by them in the unloading of the cargoes at Sharpness Docks and Gloucester, and the lightermen engaged in the conveyance of the wood from the steamers at Sharpness up to the wharves at Gloucester.

At the present moment the Company occupy over twenty acres of their own freehold property for the storage of their imports, their saw mills and buildings in connection therewith, having a long frontage to deep water on the Sharpness and Gloucester Canal, extending for fully a quarter of a mile, and affording excellent landing and shipping accommodation; and the grounds are methodically laid out for the piling and storing of timber of all descriptions, and have metals running through them and also through the sheds. The latter structures, which form a very important part of the buildings, are for the requisite

In the year 1889 the business was converted into a private limited liability company, of which the managing director to-day is Mr. John Henry Croxford. The Company at the present time is not less fortunate with respect to its directorate than it has been in the past, and it unquestionably owes its advanced and still progressing position to the indomitable energy and capable administration of its present managing director, Mr. Croxford, who became associated with the Firm in 1875, and who has devoted the greater portion of a busy life to the in-

terests of this concern. It is mainly owing to his untiring work and able management that this industry has of late years so largely developed, and is still carrying on the extensive trade it enjoys at the present day, it being one of the largest timber importing houses in Great Britain, its imports for the last few years averaging some 100,000 tons per annum. Mr. Croxford, however, finds time for the fulfilment of his duties as chairman of directors of Messrs. Mousell, Chadborn and Company, Limited, the firm of contractors for



Offices and Principal Entry to the Works (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)

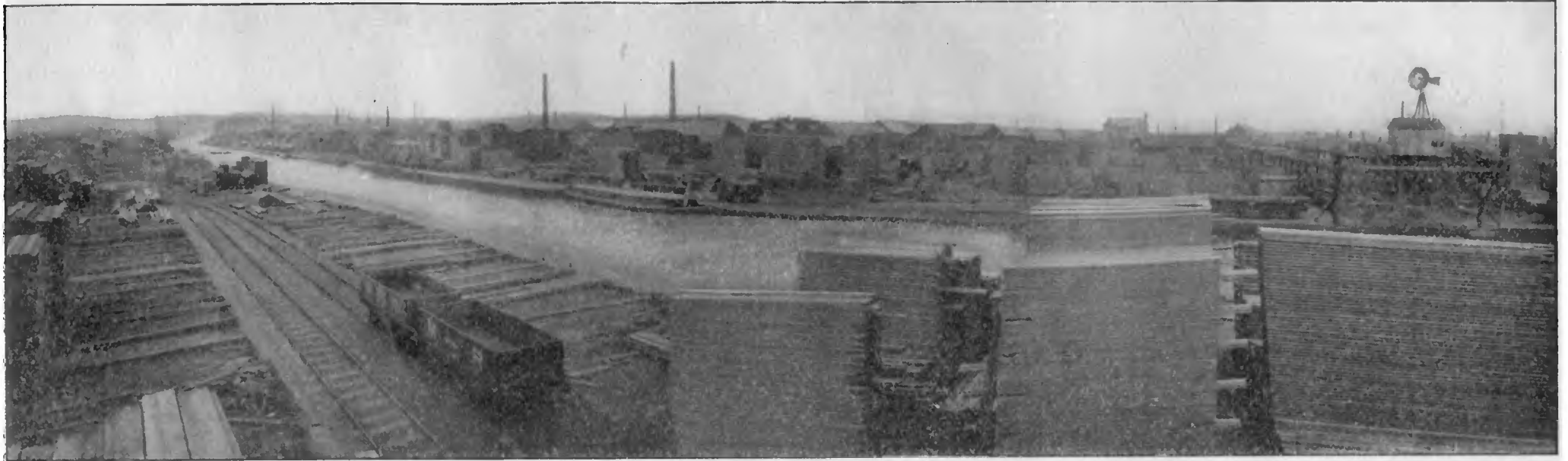
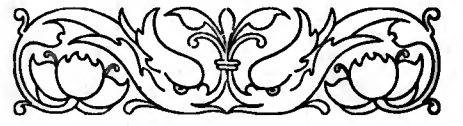
position and direction of the Firm, passing from father to son from its inception in the year 1736 until the death (in 1891) of the late Mr. William Philip Price (the only son of whom had predeceased him); and in this connection it may not be out of place to mention here that it is hoped and intended that the continuity of this family leadership will be resuscitated by his grandson, who will, we understand, join the directorate of the Company in the somewhat near future.

The business thus inaugurated so many years ago was then naturally of very small dimensions, but the opening of the Sharpness to Gloucester Canal in the year 1827 provided an excellent and much improved water-way from the Bristol Channel, the River Severn between those two points being subject to a very strong ebb and flow of tide and other obstacles detrimental to an efficient service for traffic. The encouragement thus given for increased trading was quickly taken advantage of, and speedily acted upon, as a favourable opportunity, by this Firm. In the year 1840 the late Mr. Charles Walker, of Matson House (a residence of historic repute just outside the City) was taken into the Firm, and the exceptional capabilities of that gentleman added in a very large degree to the ever-increasing industry. Mr. Charles Walker retired in 1876, and was succeeded in the direct management by his son (the late Mr. Charles Bettridge Walker), and whose son (Mr. George Norton Walker) is the chairman of directors of the present Company.

Referring, in thus passing, to the Price family, we should not omit to mention the exceptional business abilities of the late Mr. William Philip Price, who was for many years chairman of the Gloucestershire Banking Company, and M.P. for the City of Gloucester for some fifteen years prior to 1873, in which year he was appointed one of H.M. Railway Commissioners, and which office he held until the time of his death.



Mill Exterior, Showing Principal Timber Cutting Bay. (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)



CANAL FRONTAGE. (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)

seasoning and desirable preservation of the better qualities of wood, and are among the finest drying sheds to be seen in the trade.

The imports of this Firm are chiefly confined to what are technically known in the trade as the soft or fir woods. These are exported mainly from Russia, Norway, Sweden and Canada, although the Company also do a very extensive trade in the pitch pine timbers

the woodworking industry, consisting of some twenty-four cutting, planing, moulding, beading and similar saws and machines, all driven at a high tension, besides other machines for grinding and sharpening the saws and the various planing irons.

It is particularly interesting to note that every single machine used is of English make, and all are of the most modern style and type, manufactured by Messrs. Robinsons, of Rochdale, and Messrs. Ransome, of Chelsea. In these days it is something of a discovery to find an industry that is not indebted in this respect to either Germany or America. Indeed, anyone who has visited the great American and Canadian mills, as the writer of this article has, can truthfully say that the rougher and temporary structures of those countries cannot in any way compare with the mills under notice.

The basement of this main saw mill extends under the entire building, permitting of free access to all parts of the shafting. All of the sawdust and chippings from the machines overhead are drawn by powerful fans into large receptacles in the basement, and thence to the boiler-house, where they are consumed as fuel. Nearly all the workmen in the mill and almost all the other departments work by the piece; a system which yields the best results for both employer and employee.

Next in interest to the main mills is the engine-room, a recently erected and very handsome building, with tiled walls and flooring,

measuring 50 feet by 26 feet, with a connecting fitting shop of 60 feet by 19 feet. The engine, of which the engraving on the following page can only give a very inadequate idea, is a splendid piece of work, being a horizontal double crank compound condensing engine of 450 indicated horse-power, designed and constructed by one of the best known firms of English engineers, Messrs. J. and E. Wood, of Bolton, Lancashire. The wheel, a fly pulley of 20 feet in diameter, and grooved for fifteen 1½-inch ropes, weighs, with the shaft, some 18 tons, and gives 70 revolutions per minute. The engine is almost noiseless in operation, and this, with the beautifully polished brass and copper work, makes it one of the most impressive pieces of mechanism in the City or County.

In the same block of buildings is the special engine for generating the electricity for the lighting of the entire premises, designed and erected by Messrs. Summers and Scott, of Gloucester, a firm of engineers of high repute. For the driving power of the smaller wood block flooring mill a Lister motor, in conjunction with a dynamo of 100 brake horse power, both of Gloucestershire manufacture, is employed. The boiler-house is a huge structure, and contains one Lancashire double-flued, and two (twin) steel Cornish boilers, all of the most modern and approved type, and working at 100 lbs. pressure.

Indeed, with regard to all of the buildings, it may be said that they are of the best possible design and construction, and we find it a

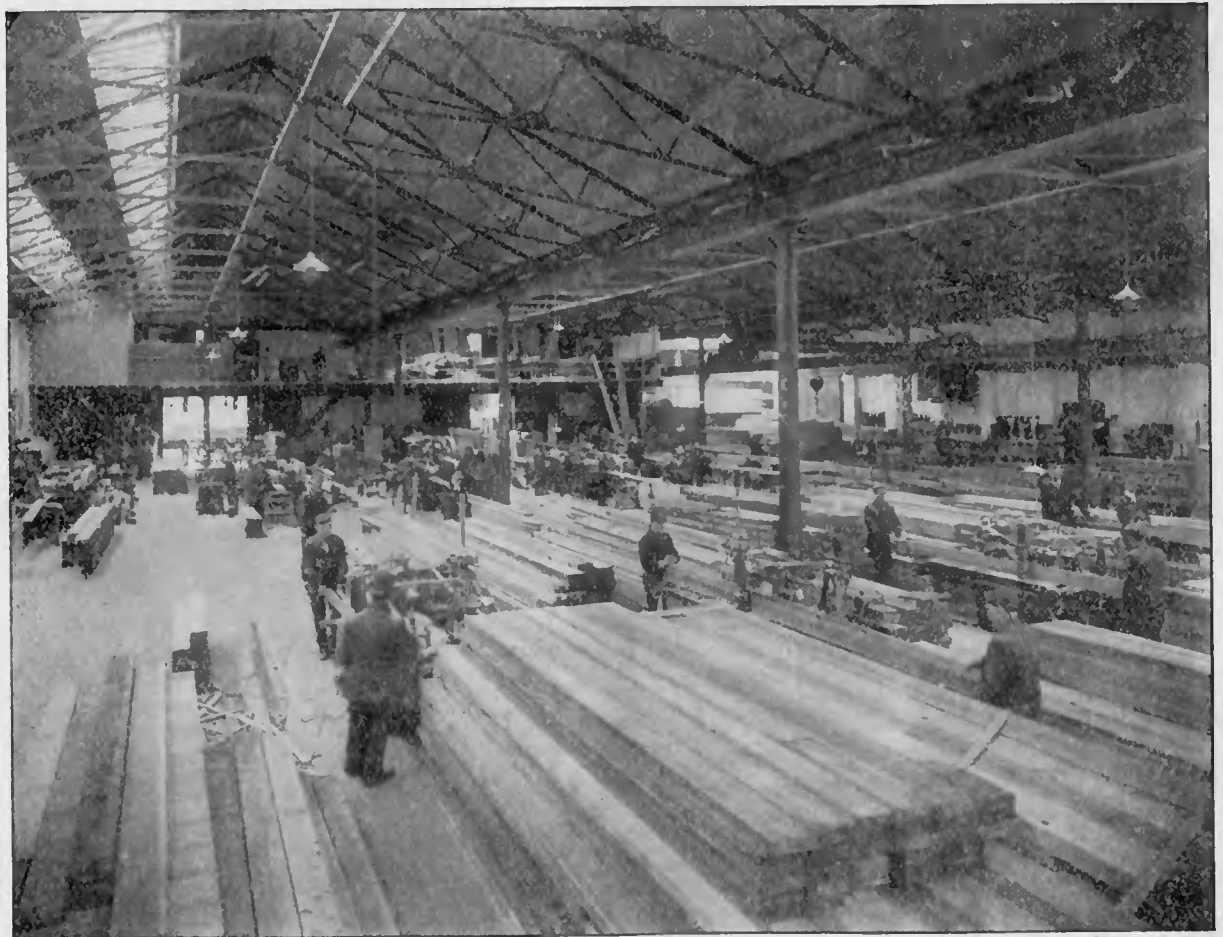


Drying Kilns and Wood-Block Flooring Mill. (Price Walker & Co., Ltd.)

from the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent ports in North America, and in the oak timbers from Germany, particularly from Prussia. We should also mention Austrian oak for wainscoting and staves, Norwegian round poles, and Russian lathwood billets. A somewhat smaller trade is also conducted with some of the ports on the Danube and those of the Black Sea, and occasionally with those of British Columbia. It is freely acknowledged by the trade in general that this Firm invariably holds one of the very finest and most extensively assorted stocks of wood for building, joinery, and all other manufacturing purposes of any in Great Britain.

The present saw mills, which are built of stone, brick, and iron, forming a single open room without partition of any kind, and covering an area of 160 feet by 120 feet, with an octagonally shaped chimney stack 122 feet high, were erected in the year 1894. They constitute one of the very finest buildings for such work in the United Kingdom. Two of the large sections are reserved for the conversion of deals, planks, and boards into every imaginable size, and the third bay, with an overhead travelling crane running the whole length of the building, contains the frame and bench saws for cutting and converting the larger timbers in the log. The roof is supported by heavy iron columns and girders, and glass skylights act as ventilators. The subjoined illustration shows a portion of the interior, and will give the reader a fair idea of the immensity of this building.

The mechanical equipment embodies the latest inventions and improvements known to



SAWING AND PLANING MILL. (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)



PRICE, WALKER & COMPANY, LIMITED.—*Concluded.*



DEAL YARDS ON CANAL, LOOKING N.N.W. (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)

pleasant task to enter much more fully into details than would be necessary were we commenting on premises of an ordinary character.

Mr. E. J. Cullis, A.M.I.C.E., of Gloucester, the consulting engineer to Messrs. Price, Walker and Company, designed the mill and other buildings, and also laid out the roads and railway sidings, the excellence of the work reflecting the greatest credit upon his engineering and constructive ability. The completeness with which even the smallest details have been thought out and provided for have gained the warmest unsolicited comment from eminent practical engineers, and we find that the well-known technical journal, "Engineering," has paid the honour of publishing descriptive articles and engravings showing plans of these yards and buildings.

The small illustration on page 33 shows a three-chambered drying stove for the quicker process of artificially bringing some sorts of wood into a condition fit for immediate consumption. This process is an absolute necessity of the present time, consequent upon the more rapid movements of to-day frequently demanding timber in a state which the natural means of drying would take much too long a period to secure. A wood block flooring mill has also been erected adjacent thereto, this kind of flooring having recently come into great favour. The operations conducted in these two departments sufficiently testify to the ability of this Company to properly and expeditiously execute any orders for this latter class of work, and within a very limited space of time.

For the better and more expeditious manner of dealing with large baulks of timber, the Firm own a large overhead steam-travelling gantry, which reaches the whole length of their timber yard from a jetty stretching out into the canal, down to the Bristol Road. By this means of conveyance the immense steamer cargoes, consisting of some thousands of logs which the Firm import, can be promptly piled and stored away, the same purpose being effected by these economical means in the prompt execution of orders for this heavy class of timber.

In convenient locations the Firm also have separate buildings for lath rending by hand, smithing, repairing, and fitters' work in general; a roomy set of stables for their fine team of jet black horses; and a commodious room of 80 feet by 30 feet, comfortably fitted with heating and cooking stoves, in which the employees dine and take their meals. One of the engravings on this page affords an interesting glimpse of the mess room, which is as

conspicuous for its order and cleanliness as for its imposing size.

For the transference and dispatch of the timber in the rough state and the finished product, upwards of 100 railway trucks are frequently in daily use, besides other means of conveyance in the shape of trollies, road carriages, and canal boats. The grounds are laid out with private sidings, and these are connected with the metals of both the Midland and Great Western Railway Companies, with which the wharves alongside the timber yards are netted. The excellent facilities thus afforded by these railways, in conjunction with the water-ways *via* the Gloucester, Worcester, and Birmingham District Canal to the North, and the Stroud and Reading Canal eastwards, enhance the natural geographical advantages of the location, and ensure the command of a very large and valuable connection of customers over a wide area in all directions. Messrs. Price, Walker and Company have long made, and are still making, the fullest use of this decidedly unique position.

At the present time, when the differences in the Far East are occupying such a prominent

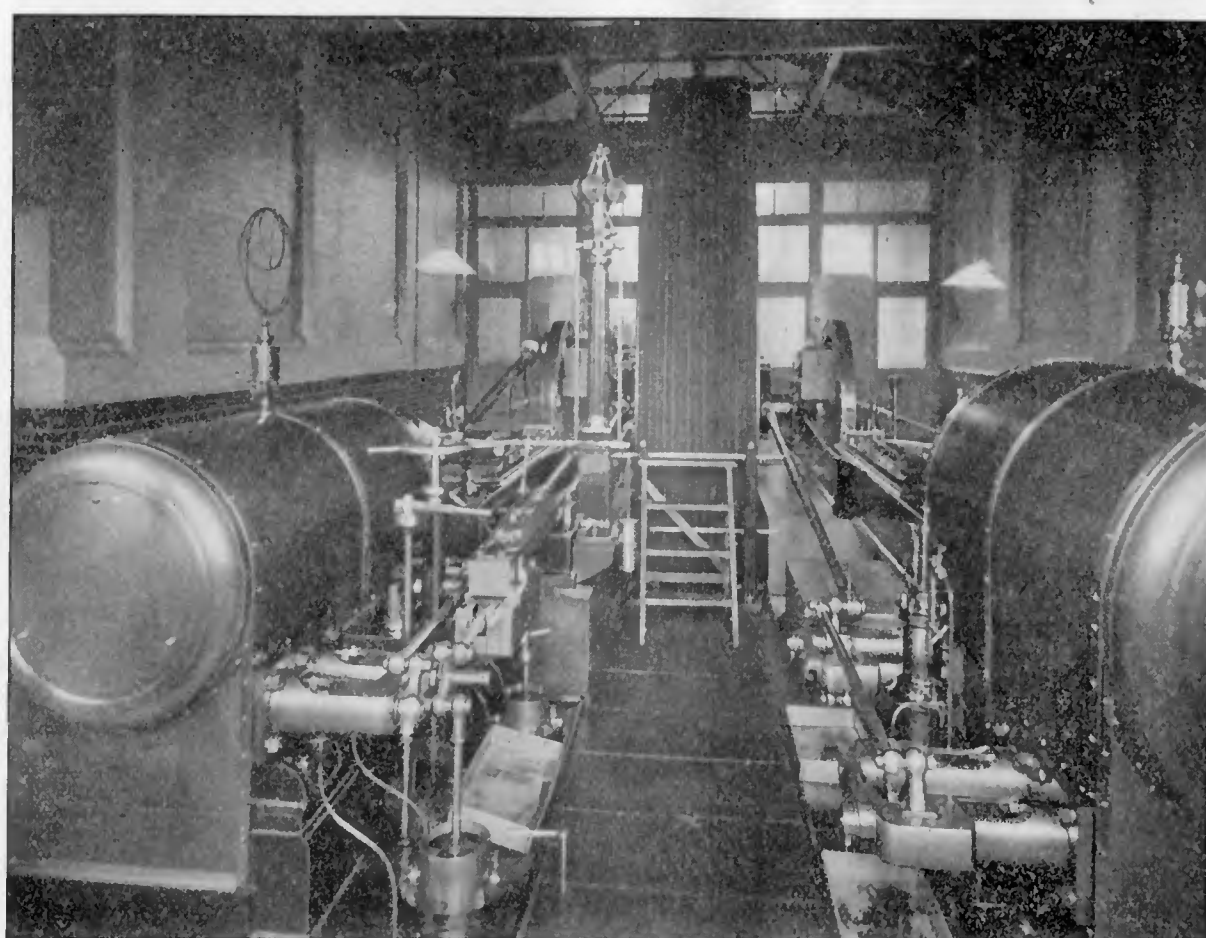
place in the public mind, it will interest our readers to know that this Firm, away back in the Crimean War, through the instrumentality of the late Mr. Richard Potter, supplied the wooden huts and barracks that were then used by the French army; so that we can well understand a Firm with such a long and successful past not only being well-known throughout the trade, but also by reason of their high and well-deserved reputation, commanding respect and support both at home and abroad.

But, obviously, it would be impossible to fully describe in a brief article such as this, an industry requiring some twenty-five acres of ground, employing so many hands, and equipped with machinery which could only be fully appreciated by expert critics. It is hoped, however, that enough has been said to indicate the important part this business forms in the industrial life of Gloucestershire, as well as the advantages accruing to patrons from the economy which comes from production on so large and complete a scale.

It is but just to conclude the foregoing sketch with an acknowledgment of its inadequacy. It has been a privilege to include in this work a reference to the Company's industrial achievements, which have done not a little to promote the prosperity of Gloucester and Gloucestershire.



EMPLOYEES' DINING ROOM. (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)



ENGINE ROOM. (Price, Walker & Co., Ltd.)