



Greater Gloucester.



GREATER GLOUCESTER.

A Brief Reference to Recent and Prospective Building Improvements.

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IT will be generally agreed by those who have taken an interest in Gloucester's development that the City has for a number of years been making the most gratifying progress, and that, despite occasional lulls, the improvement has been fairly continuous. If, as the Metropolis of Gloucestershire, the City accurately reflects the changes that have taken place in the county at large, one cannot help feeling that material conditions have, on the whole, been very greatly improved during the past two decades.

In the past fifteen years, indeed, the appearance of the City has been almost entirely changed. During that period nearly all of our more notable public buildings—including the Guildhall (with its fine Concert Room), Free Library, the Baths (with Turkish, Swimming, and Private Baths and Gymnasium), Lloyds Bank, and the National Provincial and Wilts and Dorset Banks, all first-class buildings, have been erected, and the Capital and Counties Bank re-modelled, and many fine shops have been built in the principal streets. At the same time the suburbs and residential sections have been correspondingly extended and improved. In this connection it is interesting to note that, according to the last published census, the dwellings of the masses have shown a particularly gratifying improvement, as in the ten years from 1890 to 1900 the proportion of tenements having fewer than five rooms declined from 45 per cent. to 36.1 per cent. of the whole number of tenements, while those having more than five rooms increased from 55 per cent. to 63.9 per cent. Further, the number of separate tenements has shown an increase of 9.9 per cent., while the population shows an increase of but 8.2 per cent. Thus both the number of new dwellings and their character have more than kept pace with the growth in population.

Many will, no doubt, be astonished to learn how large a sum has been expended during this time by local concerns—both companies and private firms—in the establishment of entirely new, or in the extension of old, businesses. The exact amount is, of course, very difficult to ascertain, but from particulars which have been gathered, and at a conservative estimate, it is certain that in that period not less than £800,000 have been so invested. Nearly all of the new undertakings which have been established are being successfully carried on. For a City of but 50,000 the above is a very creditable record.

Among the new industries established in the City within the past few years are Toy and Game Works, Pin Works, Shirt and Collar Works, Patent Stone Works, Works for making Cement Slab buildings, Cycle Works, Ice and Cold Storage Plant, etc. Among the older established industries for which entirely new works or considerable extensions have been

made are saw mills, cabinet works, railway carriage and wagon works, engineering works, slate and marble works, match works, flour mills, chemical works, dye works, and brewers' maltings.

That this progress is being maintained is shown by the fact that several firms are now about to invest additional capital in enlarged or new premises. A manufacturing company have arranged to add to their already huge premises; a firm at the docks are extending their works because of increasing business; and a firm of engineers manufacturing high speed engines for electric light works, launches, etc., have arranged to build entirely new works outside the City, their present premises being too small and inconvenient for their constantly extending business. Co-incident with the enlargement of factory buildings has been a commensurate improvement in mechanical equipment, and in the conditions under which operatives labour. Improved lighting and ventilation, the provision of suitable mess-rooms and proper sanitary arrangements, and greater attention to all the details that in any way affect the health and comfort of workpeople, are noticeable in almost all of our factories and workshops.

Both the Midland and Great Western Railways have in recent years expended large sums of money in Gloucester and the district. The Midland Railway has laid down a new branch at the Docks, and sidings at Bristol Road, and has erected a new, and greatly needed, passenger station. The Great Western has erected large sheds and shops, removing to this City their sheet works at the Docks, and repair shops at the Horton Road crossing.

The latter Company, to accommodate the sugar trade, which has grown to such large proportions, have built transit sheds and provided steam cranes at the Docks, and have taken over and are occupying two of the large grain warehouses near Llanthony Bridge, these warehouses usually being filled on all floors.

By the way, Gloucester's trade with Antwerp and Rotterdam was commenced in 1886, one steamer arriving about each fortnight. There are now several steamers—each larger than the original one—trading principally to Hamburg, and they are now discharging at intervals of not more than seven days, it very frequently happening that two are in port at the same time.

The City Authorities established a very complete electricity supply works in 1900, and the number of consumers for trade, business or private use is large and continually increasing, and a considerable extension of street lighting is now being carried out.

Gloucester has just expended a large sum in the laying down of an up-to-date system of electric traction, comprising 15 miles of track in 9 miles of route. This undertaking which was carried out and will be controlled by the municipality, will unquestionably be fully justified by the event, as it not only adds greatly to the convenience of the population—enabling them to get about the City quickly and cheaply, and out into the country—but favourably advertises the progressive character of the Corporation and the

citizens. In connection with the new Light Railway the Corporation maintain a splendid electric power station, which, in addition to running the cars, furnishes cheap, efficient and convenient power for manufacturers in any part of the City.

No "Garden City" has as yet been arranged for Gloucester or the County, but already several firms have gone—and other firms are preparing to follow their example—in the direction marked out by the Garden City Association, viz., from the crowded centres to rural districts. Some of the largest and most prosperous manufacturing concerns in the County have been removed here from congested centres, and in every case they have immeasurably benefited by the change.

It is difficult, indeed, to overestimate the advantages derived from the establishment of manufacturing concerns in a County such as Gloucestershire, where land is cheap, and where a sufficient area may be obtained for further requirements as well as present needs. At the same time manufacturers are enabled to lay out their premises to the best advantage.

Another, and a very important, advantage following their removals into less crowded districts is the greater personal comfort of the workpeople. In these days of cycles and rapid transit it is possible in districts such as Gloucester and the surrounding country, for employees to live near their work under greatly improved conditions. They may, in short, move back to the land, for while they may not become agricultural labourers, it is possible that some of their boys may do so. They will themselves be able to possess a good garden, the cultivation of which will provide their families with a considerable proportion of their food, and the time now spent in the public-house or the street will be passed in healthful employment in the fresh air. This change cannot but act favourably upon the physique of the workpeople.

Gloucester and the neighbourhood offer many attractions to manufacturers and merchants who may be carrying on business in crowded towns with no adequate means of providing for necessary extensions as business increases. In addition to a very large area of suitable building land with excellent road and water facilities, the City is a capital railway centre, lines radiating in six directions. Works requiring considerable quantities of water in or for their manufactures—such as for boilers, condensers, testing purposes, etc.—can obtain a practically unlimited supply at a comparatively small cost from the Canal or the River Severn, or from streams tributary to the latter. There is a large artisan population, including those who are skilled in almost every form of production, providing a supply of labour for the requirements of all classes of work, and wages and the local rates are lower than in towns in the North or Midlands. Supplies of raw material—timber, coal, iron, etc.—can be brought at low cost practically to the door by water, either over sea, from other English ports, or by inland navigation, and exports of the manufactured goods can be despatched cheaply by the same means.



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