

Features of London's Municipal Administration



MANSION HOUSE AT THE LEFT, WHERE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON LIVES.



CRACK OFFICIALS OF LONDON'S FIRE BRIGADE.

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LONDON, England, Aug. 28.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—London is rapidly changing. The old city is putting off its old clothes and buying new. Its streets are being widened, many of the old buildings have been torn down, and there is a fair possibility that the day of the American skyscraper may come, for flats are going up in the fashionable section.

An army of workmen is now busy on the Strand. As I saw the street ten years ago it was so narrow that two omnibuses could hardly pass. Today it is being changed into a wide avenue, which shall run from Trafalgar Square to Holborn, not far from St. Paul's. Where the two streets come together about three acres of buildings are to be torn away, and this space will be leased out by the city for new business houses.

In tearing down the Strand the owners of the various properties have had to be bought out. In many places the buildings have been replaced. The Gaiety theater, for instance, had a new structure erected for it below and back of where the old theater stood, and the same is true of other institutions. This work is going on in the very heart of London on some of the most costly ground of the world. The city fathers have had to plate the soil with gold to get it, and when the improvement is completed it will, it is estimated, cost at least \$25,000,000.

American Invasion Above and Below.

I have already written something about the American invasion of underground London. I have told you of the Tuppenny Tube line, which is now carrying millions from one part of the city to another at 4 cents per trip. It is a mighty iron tube with railroad tracks in it, running far below the city under the streets. It cost more than \$3,000,000 a mile to construct, and the electrical equipment was put in by the General Electric company of New York. I have spoken of Mr. Yerkes' great schemes which are now fast approaching completion. These will honeycomb the soil under the city with similar tubes, and the Westinghouse company will build the machinery.

Other schemes are now proposed for American enterprise above ground. American goods are already sold in all parts of the Strand. The American flag and the Union Jack are painted on many of the shop windows and American drugs, American notions, American shoes and American tobacco are to be had everywhere. The Westinghouse building on the corner of Norfolk street and the Strand is one of the finest of this part of London, and there is now talk of an enormous American department store on the crescent-shaped area which is to be vacated by the joining of the Strand and Holborn.

Big American Department Store.

I understand that an application has already been made to the London county council for this space. The parties have asked to lease it for 999 years, and the council is considering the advisability of giving them a lease for ninety-nine years. If it does so the Americans will have one of the most valuable locations in London and will erect a store which will be a surprise to the London shopkeepers.

At present there is no such thing as a great department store in London. There is a man named Whiteley at Bayswater who calls himself "a universal provider." He started business in a small way and added to his establishment until he has what the London people consider something great. Peter Robinson has a smaller establishment on Oxford street, but neither of these can compare with the mammoth department stores of New York and Chicago. So far London has had no good rapid transit system, and it may be that that has retarded the day of such stores. By the new underground electric routes one will be able to go to any part of the



A LONDON POSTMAN.

city within a few moments at 4 cents per trip, and the shopping possibilities will be greatly increased. I understand that both John Wanamaker and Siegel, Cooper & Co. have been considering such an enterprise, but as yet nothing has come to a material head.

From what I have said about London's city improvements you will see that the government here is something of an institution. This is, you know, the capital of the united kingdom, the seat of Parliament and the residence of the king and royal family. It has all the chief officials of the government, but its own administration is separate and apart from these. It is difficult to understand it, for the town has now a dozen or so mayors and a maze of other authorities, each exercising some sort of control, but most of these were swallowed up in the London county council. At present there is a county government, a city government and a borough government. The borough government might be called a ward government, for the city is divided into twenty-seven boroughs, or wards, each of which has its own mayor, its own council and a certain class of officials.

London County Council.

The general government, however, is the London county council, comprising 137 members, of whom nineteen are aldermen. The council practically governs London. It fixes the taxes and spends the money, and that right royally, too. Last year its expenses amounted to \$30,000,000, or to more

than the revenues of many a state government. The council arranges for the debt of the city, which now amounts to more than \$239,000,000. It steps little deeper into debt every year, and it enters upon all sorts of public improvements, granting franchises and permits for all kinds of undertakings.

It is hard for an American to realize the powers of such a council. That of London county controls the music halls, the tramways, the bridges, the waterworks and all public improvements. I have told you how it has already spent millions in erecting houses to rent to the poor, and how it is building several little municipal cities on the outskirts of London for that purpose. It does, in fact, a wholesale and retail real estate business. The tenement buildings will all bring in moderate rents and the city officials will collect them. The county council will probably hold the fee simple title to the ground along the Strand, and it will lease it at ground rents to builders. It is estimated that the city will eventually receive something like \$20,000,000 in rents from this source, and if it does as Birmingham is doing, that is, provides that at the end of the lease the buildings revert to the city, London will become the richest corporation on earth.

High Official Salaries.

I have looked somewhat into the matter of salaries here in London. The county council spends about \$32,000,000 a year, and much of this goes out for labor. The off-

icers of the council receive from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year. The clerk, engineer and architect each get \$10,000; the assessor, \$7,500, and the head of the street car department, \$5,000.

The officers of the city corporation are still better paid. The recorder has \$20,000 per annum, the town clerk \$17,500, or just as much as we pay Minister Choate, and the controller and remembrancer \$10,000 each. In addition there are other salaries ranging from \$11,000 down.

Perhaps the best paid mayor of the whole world is the lord mayor of London. He has a salary of \$50,000 a year and his house rent is free. He lives in the Mansion House across the way from the bank of London, within a short distance of the Tower and London bridge. I have met him at his palace during my stay, and he has room and to spare.

The lord mayor does not control, however, any part of the metropolis except that known as the city or the part that forms the chief commercial and money-making center. It lies east of the temple and embraces the port, the docks, the custom house, the bank, the exchange and the hundreds of great wholesale establishments, banks and other corporations which make London the financial center of the world. This is the city proper, and it is a city of the day. It has a population of 200,000 and through it every day more than a million go in and out while it is light, but at night it is almost as deserted as a city of the dead. Its thousands of capitalists and clerks then leave it and it is handed over to the watchmen and policemen, the lord mayor, in fact, being about the only prominent citizen to remain all night through.

London's Big Docks.

I have spent much time about the docks watching the great steamers load and unload goods for and from America and all parts of the world. I don't know where one can get a better idea of the immensity of this city. You might live about Hyde Park for years and hardly know London was a port. Still London is the greatest port of the world. It surpasses Liverpool and all the others. The whole river Thames from here to the sea is its harbor, so that the port is really sixty-nine miles long, and it ranges in width with the width of the river.

Standing on London bridge you see a forest of masts, not only in the river itself, but rising high above the great wholesale structures bordering it. The docks are mighty basins cut out of the lands along the bank, enormous vats of water covering acres surrounded by warehouses. St. Catherine's docks have an area of twenty-three acres, the London docks and Millwall docks each cover 100 acres, while the Surrey docks and the West Indian docks have each 350 acres.

Even larger than these are the Royal Victoria and Albert docks, which are almost three miles in length, and have an area of 500 acres, and those of Tilbury, further down the Thames, which are quite as large. If you could put a big farm under water, and allow mighty warehouses to rise up along the borders and through the fields and add hundreds of steamers loading and unloading at them, you might have some idea of these docks. They are profitable institutions, and the London county council is planning to bring them under the control of the city. They now belong to private companies, but the city proposes to buy out the present owners and to manage the docks by a public board, under the direction of Parliament. This will probably be done at some time in the future.

Water from Wales.

Another thing which the county council is planning is the bringing of water for London clear across England from the Welsh lakes. At present London is sup-

plied by the Thames and Lea rivers, but it already uses 205,000,000 gallons a day, and it is estimated that the demand will soon be such as to impair the navigation of the Thames. Birmingham is getting its water from Wales and so are other cities, and London will in all probability have to do likewise. The water works are now in the hands of private companies whose gross income last year amounted to something like \$10,000,000, and whose profits were over \$5,000,000. The London county council proposes to buy out these parties and run the water works as a city institution.

This would undoubtedly be better for London in a sanitary way and also for its fire department. This city has ten fires every day the year through. It has more than 3,600 fires a year, and the fire brigade is a very important part of the metropolis. This now consists of 1,200 men, and it is equipped with seventy steam engines, of which eight are river engines to protect the shipping of the Thames. In most of the towns of England the fire departments are not as well organized as in our own, and the machinery here is far behind the times.

They Have Better Mails.

There is one thing, however, which I find much better here than in the United States. I refer to the postal and telegraph services. These are under the general government, and are excellently well managed. If I remember correctly our postal service is run at a loss. The English postal service makes a profit of about \$18,000,000 a year, and gives better mails at lower rates. You can send a letter weighing four ounces to any part of the united kingdom for a penny or 2 cents, and overweight costs a half penny, or 1 cent for two ounces. You can send parcels which weigh as much as eleven pounds for 6 cents for the first pound and 2 cents for each additional pound, and the book post is about the same as ours.

The telegraphic service is lower than in America. The cost of a dispatch to any part of Great Britain and Ireland is 1 cent a word the lowest charge being 12 cents, and both address and signature being paid for. In the general postoffice in East London there is a telegraph room where 500 men are employed receiving and sending dispatches, while in the basement there are four steam engines which supply the pneumatic tubes by which the telegrams are forwarded for delivery to the various parts of the city.

I like the postal savings bank system which is in use all over Great Britain, so that every little village has its savings bank. You can deposit money wherever there is a postoffice and the savings banks are so well patronized that they now have more than \$600,000,000 on deposit. Such an institution would be of the greatest good to the United States, and if properly organized would result in our holding every cent of our own national debt.

American-London Exposition.

During my stay in London I have been to America's exposition at the Crystal Palace. It is not a success either in the number of its exhibitors nor the number of its visitors. Indeed, you can see more American goods in a walk along Piccadilly or the Strand than you can at the Crystal Palace. Many of the exhibitors complain that they have been brought here under false pretenses, and it would have been much better for them and for the reputation of the United States if there had been no exposition at all. As far as I can see, the whole show consists of a fair display of American typewriters, a few machinery exhibits, an American soda water fountain, a carpet sweeper or so from Grand Rapids, a lawn mower from New York, a patent beer bottle washer from Philadelphia, a kodak or so and a half dozen spectacle sellers. The spectacle sellers have boxes of spectacles

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