THE NEW SOUTH.

The Development of Our Gulf Ports—In-Rush of Northern Men and Capital.

By ROBERT WICKLIFFE WOOLLEY,

In the American Monthly Review of Reviews.

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New Orleans now ranks second only to New York among America's exporting ports, and Galveston is third. Gulfport, Miss., leads all domestic ports in its shipments of lumber, Pensacola in sawed timber, and Mobile in cross-ties. Consider that, besides New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and San Francisco, of the seacoast cities, surpass New Orleans in population; that Galveston, which has about one-ninth as many inhabitants as New Orleans, ranked eighth as an exporting port at the time it was nearly demolished by a flood and a West Indian hurricane in September, 1900, when more than 8,000 persons and millions of dollars' worth of property were destroyed; that Gulfport was founded only seven years ago and was opened to commerce in 1902, and you will get a fair idea of the recent industrial development along our Gulf Coast.

The natural wealth and physical condition of the surrounding country, and of the country adjacent to the streams which flow into the Gulf of Mexico, are responsible for the major portion of this prosperity. Some persons who put much faith in figures and know little of causes attribute it to the Panama Canal's prospective completion. Refill the Culebra cut and abandon the ditch, and the present export business of our Gulf ports would not diminish one iota. The steamboats of the Mississippi, the Alabama, the Tombigbee, and the Red Rivers would continue to go heavily laden to tidewater, and the great railroads of the South and West still would haul cotton, wheat, rice, sugar, oil, lumber, turpentine and iron to the Gulf Coast for reshipment to all parts of the world. It is an economic fact so well established that men learned in commercial affairs everywhere admit it.

"Kick a barrel of flour at Minneapolis and it will roll to New Orleans," James J. Hill once said in explaining why it was less expensive to send Western consignments for foreign ports to the Gulf Coast than over the steep grades of the Alleghanies to the Atlantic.

That is part of the story, but New York and her sister cities of the Atlantic Coast have no cause for undue alarm now, nor will they have in the future. They are to remain great ports of the East, middle North and part of the Northwest, while the cities of the Gulf, especially New Orleans and Galveston, will hold the same relation to the Western and Southern States. The lines of demarcation have simply been more clearly drawn, and the rapid development of Dixie and the newer West gives a phenomenal aspect to what is really a natural consequence.

The financial distress of the entire South at the close of the civil war is an old story. A few Southerners told me, on my recent trip along the Gulf Coast, of golden opportunities which they failed to grasp, of the numerous successes of Northern and Eastern men, and lamenting the passing of the old school of gentlemen, the midday mint juleps and easy-going business methods. Others looked prosperous, and were working shoulder to shoulder with the "Yankees." There is a difference between the recuperative powers of the Cavalier and those of the Hollander or Scandinavian.

Pensacola's Important Exports.

Pensacola, the easternmost of important Gulf ports having a considerable foreign trade, is an old Spanish town that is just waking up. She claims 25,000 inhabitants—a substantial increase over the 1900 census figures—and probably has them, in spite of the recent ravages of yellow fever. Her harbor is the finest on the coast, and one of the finest in the world. She is the natural outlet and port of entry of western Florida, eastern Alabama, western Georgia and the country to their immediate north, and yet she has only one railroad, and is not on the main line of that. But Pensacola has pluck. She is to expend $1,500,000 in the next few years on paving her streets and making other public improvements, her business men have quietly arranged for the building of a railroad to Memphis, and for the extension of another's lines to her gates. This will create competition and attract the attention which she so much desires and is in need of. The turpentine and resin industry has gradually worked south from the Carolinas to Florida, Alabama and Mississippi, and Pensacola now exports more "naval stores," as turpentine and resin are known in the commercial world, than any other Gulf port. During the year 1904 she shipped 209,269 barrels of resin, worth $671,051, and 364,150 gallons of turpentine, valued at $216,371. During the same period Pensacola also exported 149,650 bales of cotton, value $7,539,761; 129,096,000 superficial feet of sawed timber, value $1,586,982; 179,493,000 superficial feet of lumber, value $2,884,673; 124,322 tons of phosphate, value $732,091, and other staples in goodly quantities. And yet her harbor looks almost deserted. The Louisville & Nashville Railroad has a great pier and grain elevator, representing an outlay of more than $250,000. At this pier the lion's share of the business of the port is done, and it presents an interesting scene every business day in the year. The elevator, however, is an ornament around which weeds and scrub oaks grow without molestation. It is interesting to note that whereas Pensacola's exports for 1904 were valued at $14,993,657—$5,042,209 worth went to England—imports through the port amounted to only $779,246.

Mobile as a Lumber and Coal Port.

There is about Mobile a certain air of ease and indolence, handed down from the grandees of France and Spain who ruled there a century and more ago, which many of her aristocratic sons would not dispel if they could. The old town is growing, tall buildings are being erected, and the business of her port is increasing, but native Mobilians may claim only a small share of the credit. Enterprising men from North Carolina have tapped the stately pines in Alabama's virgin forests, which only a few years ago were to be had for 50 cents an acre, lumbermen from the North and East have sawed these trees and shipped the products to every country in the world—there are 30 sawmills operating in the Mobile district, with an aggregate daily cutting capacity of 4,150,000 feet, and representing an investment of more than $12,000,000—and the owners of the land, most of them residents of Mobile, have cheated themselves out of millions of dollars by failing to see the opportunities within their grasp, and by not being sufficiently well-informed as to intrinsic values to charge a fair price for the turpentining and lumbering rights. But that is their own "funeral." They have at least reaped some benefits from the industry of others, and their pride in the appearance and welfare of their city is unmistakable. Government street is one of the most beautiful residence streets in America. It is very broad; the homes, old and new, are spacious and elegant; the yards abound with palms and flowers of the tropics, and along both sides are stately live-oaks whose widespreading boughs give a wealth of shade. A native Mobilian, Dr. Henry Goldthwaite, quarantine officer of the port, directed the fight which kept the city free of yellow fever in 1905.

Alabama is the fifth largest coal-producing State in the Union, and her pig iron makes the price of pig iron for the world. Warrior River, which penetrates the State's great mineral region, is being locked and dammed by the Government, and in a few years Mobile Bay will teem with barges heavily laden with iron and coal and with tramp vessels, come to carry these staples to foreign ports. Even now Mobile is the cheapest bunker-coal port in America. Fifteen steamship lines to all parts of the world make more or less frequent sailings to and from Mobile, and five railroads enter the city. Her exports to Cuba exceed the combined exports of all the ports in the United States, except New York; in imports of tropical fruits she ranks third, and she handles almost the entire sisal crop of Yucatan. Mobile has the only land-locked harbor on the Gulf of Mexico, and history does not record a vessel lost in either the harbor or the bay. But the channel from the Gulf to the city, a distance of about 30 miles, is not yet deep enough for many of the big freighters of the transatlantic lines which are to knock for entrance to Mobile's gates within the next few years. In 1870 the depth of the channel was only 13 feet. This the Government has increased to 23 feet and when improvements now under way and contemplated have been finished Mobile's channel will be more than 30 feet deep and 200 feet wide. A fair idea of the importance of dredging this channel is to be found in a comparison of the business of the port in 1894 with that of 1904. In the former year the depth was 17 feet and the total value of the imports and exports was $3,475,830; in 1904, with 23 feet of water, the exports and imports were valued at $21,195,860, an increase of $17,720,057, or over 500 per cent.

Some day in the near future, when capitalists of other sections of the country realize more fully than they do now that it is good business to erect factories where the raw materials are and save freight, Mobile will be a manufacturing center. It is inevitable. It has been often asked why the wealthy men of this and certain other Southern cities do not organize companies and erect factories independently of Northerners and Easterners. The scarcity of skilled labor does not fully explain. One reason seems to me to be that the balmy climate acts as an antidote for industry, and another is that the ante-bellum prejudice against certain forms of "trade" is still pronounced among the upper classes.

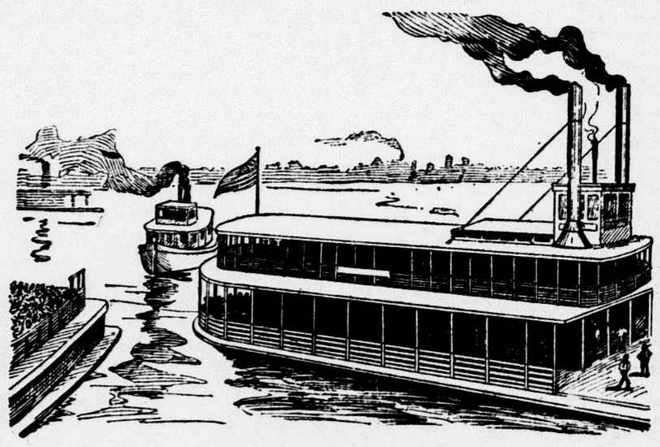
The Growing Commerce of New Orleans.

The commercial importance of New Orleans can hardly be overestimated, and predicting what her size will be 10 or 20 years hence is hazardous business. In all of her hotels, exchanges and leading cafes are posted signs announcing that all manufacturing enterprises will be exempted from taxation until 1910, and that, with a certain amount of "circularizing," seems to have been about the most serious effort made to attract outside capital until the present year. Within the last few months men of wealth have inaugurated a movement to organize and launch certain big industrial enterprises, and in this way it is hoped to demonstrate to outsiders that New Orleans people have faith in the future of their city. Of course, the one great difficulty to be overcome at the present time is the fear of yellow fever. That this plague should again have broken through quarantine and become epidemic has put a serious aspect on what seemed to be a glorious prospect. Italians or other Mediterranean peoples will probably not be frightened away, but they are not the skilled laborers who are needed to work in the mills. As a matter of fact, the sugar planters, who are mainly responsible for the recent influx of Italians to New Orleans and southern Louisiana, are heartily disgusted with this class of labor. Long before yellow fever was laid at his door, the Italian was found to be unskilled and far inferior to the negro as a handler of cane and the mule. Between the latter and the colored man there is a perfect understanding. The mule likes neither the Italian's ways nor his language. The result is that efforts are now being made to stem the exodus of negroes from the plantations of Iberia and other sugar-growing Parishes, and to induce the good ones who have gone to return.

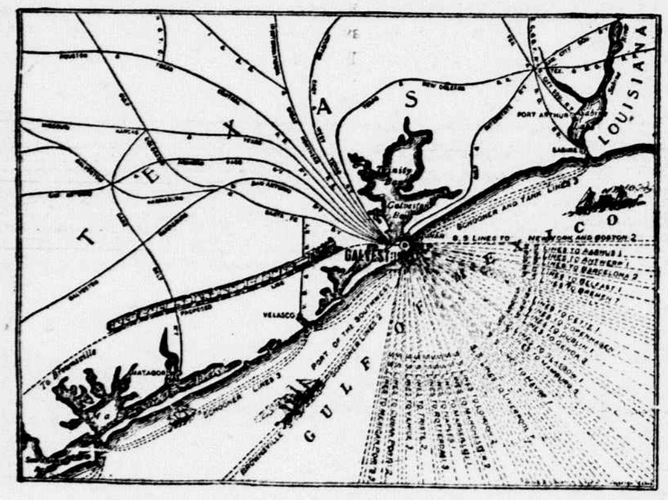
The population of New Orleans in 1900 was 287,104, and her most optimistic citizens now only claim 325,000, which is rank conservatism when compared with the claims made for other progressive cities of the South. Actually, New Orleans is growing in importance as a port out of all proportion to her increase in size. She has a number of large sugar refineries and cotton-mills, but few other manufactories to boast of. When she gets these laboring men and their families will go there, and those who revel in figures will marvel at her growth.

New Orleans has reaped no tangible benefits from the assured fact that there is to be a Panama Canal, unless it be from increased activity in the real-estate market. But she hopes for much from it. She expects the Mississippi River and its tributaries, and the great railroads from the North, East and West which focus there, to be like so many endless chains of buckets bearing all manner of foodstuffs, raw materials, and articles of manufacture to her wharves, there to be transferred to mighty ocean liners for reshipment to the western coast of South America, Australia and the Orient. It is then that she hopes to be able to throw the gauntlet to New York, challenging her to maintain her supremacy among American seaports if she can! Of course, Mobile, Pensacola and Galveston have great expectations in this direction, but the place of more or less crystallized ambition is in New Orleans. Her great financial institutions, like the Hibernia Bank & Trust Company and the Whitney National Bank, two of the strongest south of the Ohio and Potomac Rivers; the 14 and 18-story buildings; the new Belt Railroad; the increasing docking facilities and other improvements along the water front, are vanes that indicate extraordinary confidence in the future as well as present prosperity.

New Orleans is a hive of industry, and the recent visitation of yellow fever will not deter her. It will force her officials to keep the more densely populated portions of the city clean, to give the mosquito no quarter and to adopt everywhere the latest sanitary improvements, in order that the disease may be battled with the better should it ever appear again. New Orleans has at all times water deep enough to float comfortably the biggest vessels afloat or yet to be built. She has an abundance of raw materials, and she is the natural and responsible outlet for hundreds of thousands of miles of rich and thickly-populated territory. Cotton, the annual output of which is more valuable than that of any other crop grown in America, is the principal article exported. The value of the shipments of this staple (raw) alone through New Orleans in 1904 was $368,839,188. Of unmanufactured tobacco, $31,540,723 worth was shipped. There was a decline in the value of both corn and wheat which passed through the port. The former diminished from $49,135,000 in 1903 to $25,257,143 in 1904, and the latter from $59,329,791 to $10,821,350 in the same period. There were 256 kinds of articles of commerce exported last year, and their total valuation foots up nearly a billion dollars. The total value of New Orleans imports for 1904 was only $34,894,809.



A RIVER PACKET AND FERRY-BOAT LANDING AT NEW ORLEANS.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PORT ARTHUR
SABINE
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