

ANTWERP.

ANTWERP is an agreeable surprise to the stranger. It is no sleepy, mediæval cathedral town, living on the traditions of the past and the dollars of sightseers, but a live, nineteenth century city. It has felt the electric touch of modern life, and has commenced to vibrate in harmony with the march of progress. It is a busy city—everybody hard at work in store or mart or street. New streets, new wharves, new public buildings, are in progress or recently completed, and the remains of the past are, as in London or Paris, almost buried and completely surrounded by the evidences of a prosperous present.

To understand the cause of this change all that is necessary is to glance awhile at the map of the Netherlands, or rather, what constituted the Netherlands during the reign of William the first, but is now divided into the two small countries of Belgium and Holland. By this division, effected in 1830, by the rebellion of Catholic Belgium, the former country gained its independence, but lost all seaports save Antwerp. The coast of Holland is extensive and bristles with ports at every part, while Belgium has but a few miles of sea-coast, unprovided with a single harbor. Antwerp, the ancient port of Flanders, is four hours' steaming up the Scheldt, or as the French call it, the Escaut, and is only accessible by passing for a considerable distance through the territory of Holland. In spite of all this, Antwerp, as a port, has been made to be worth all the Dutch ports put together. The right to free navigation of the Escaut was secured, the river was improved, extensive quays were built and covered with warehouses, and at the present time, ocean steamers of the largest size yet built can steam straight up the river at high tide and land their passengers and discharge their cargo as they lie alongside the wharves. When it is remembered that at Liverpool passengers have to be conveyed on board by small steamers, and that it is only on favorable occasions that the largest vessels can enter the docks, the advantages of Antwerp are evident.

The quays were commenced about 1874 and are now completed. They cover a length of two and a quarter miles, and a width of about three hundred and thirty feet, are in great part roofed in by continuous rows of open iron sheds, and are supplied with lines of railway from end to end. There is no fear of want of water for any ship which has passed the river's bar, for the river walls frame in a depth of forty-nine feet at low tide. Besides the long line of wharf there are six large basins (including the two old ones) and several smaller ones; also two large basins not yet finished, the whole covering an area of three hundred and sixty thousand square yards. Nor is this all, as additional basins for the storage of petroleum, removed from the city, are in process of construction. The basins are, for the most part, at the northern end of the city, and between them is situated an extensive depot, containing a network of sixty-five kilometers of railway, provided with hydraulic

cranes and lighted by electricity. Behind the wharves lies a large area of ground recovered from the river, and on this many new buildings have been erected, while much is yet a waste.

As might be expected, the march of improvement has played havoc with the picturesque, but unhealthy, ancient portion of the city. Only two relics of former times can be found along the river front. These are the Porte de l'Escaut and the Steere. The latter is a ruinous castellated structure with a grim history, for it was the seat of the horrible Spanish inquisition—the scene of the worst enormities perpetrated under the bloody rule of the Duke of Alva and other Spanish governors. The Porte de l'Escaut is the only one of the ancient gates now existing, and was built in 1624.

There is not a square block, scarcely a right angle, in the whole city of Antwerp. If a dozen barrel hoops, broken into short lengths, were placed miscellaneously on the ground, along with a number of very rough pieces of fire-wood, they would make up a plan not unlike that of the old part of Antwerp—that included between the boulevards and the quays. The streets curve, branch out at all sorts of angles, widen into open places, contract into narrow lanes, and generally conduct themselves in a most unstreet-like manner. Outside the boulevards, in the far larger space comprehended between them and the existing ramparts, the streets do not curve and are of considerable width, but they still preserve their angularity, radiating in all directions from the irregular semi-circle of the boulevards, and enclosing triangles and trapeziums of varying dimensions.

All the streets are well paved. Vainly may a Philadelphian look for his beloved cobblestones, his cherished brick or sand, his familiar slops and gutters. The narrow roadways and sidewalks of the old part of the city are all paved with what are called in the United States "Belgian blocks," and the broader streets of the newer portions are for the most part similar, though flags are occasional on sidewalks. The streets are much cleaner than those of Philadelphia, for the municipality does its duty, and in no part is the dirt compelled to accumulate. The householders, or at least the women, sweep the dirt into heaps every morning, and the wagons of the city are on hand at the same time to remove it.

Many of the streets of the older portion of the city still preserve their ancient appearance. The characteristic stepped-gable, topping a narrow and high house of five or more stories is common, though paint and stucco do not permit of the picturesqueness obtainable in brick. The new buildings are, for the most part, Renaissance in their style, with occasionally a touch of Gothic. Let it be understood that when "Renaissance" is here spoken of, "Queen Anne" is not meant. Shingle-sided, bristly-roofed, Dolly Varden painted monstrosities in the American manner, which have in the United States of America gained the name of "Queen Anne," are absent. The better class of modern houses, both here and at Brussels, are of brick with stone dressing, of substantial appearance. There is seldom a