

1904-3-24 Fairplay

THE French scheme for making a ship canal from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, although discountenanced by the Government, is still on the *tapis*. The interest in this colossal enterprise has just been revived by the presentation to the Chamber of Deputies of the report of M. Honoré Leygues, who had been entrusted by the Commission de la Marine to study and report upon a Bill introduced into the Chamber some time ago authorising the prosecution of surveys and other preliminary measures with a view to making the canal in question: M. Leygues, in his report, calls attention to the fact that after he had entered upon his labours the Commission de la Marine received a communication from the Minister of Public Works stating that the Government, after considering the question at a Ministerial Council, had pronounced against the prosecution of the preliminary matters with reference to the canal scheme. The Minister said that the proposed canal would involve an outlay of at least three milliards of francs and an annual deficit of at least seventy-five millions. Under these circumstances, it was added, the Government, without engaging its responsibility, could not countenance a measure that, in its opinion, would have the serious inconvenience of encouraging hopes which it considers to be incapable of realisation. This communication, however, did not daunt the Commission, the members of which held it to be their duty to proceed with their investigations. The "reporter" states that the Commission de la Marine estimates that the making of a ship canal between the two seas would not cost more than one milliard, or one-and-a-half at the very outside, and even that if the cost were extended to two milliards such a waterway would still be remunerative. The Commission was further of opinion that from a military point of view the canal would be an important factor in French policy, and would tend to preserve the peace. M. Leygues concludes that far from being an unrealisable scheme, it might and ought to be carried out without delay. Accordingly the Commission asks the Chamber of Deputies to pass a law providing that the preliminary steps for executing the plan for constructing the proposed canal shall be when immediately.

1904-4-14 Liverpool Mercury

CANAL HIGHWAYS.

It is announced that the Prussian Government has laid before the Diet a programme of internal canalisation which will involve an outlay of about £20,000,000. One of the proposed waterways is to connect Berlin with the sea by way of Stettin, the great seat of shipbuilding, which is stated to have lost ground materially through the advantage Hamburg derived from the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. But the principal scheme, a connection between the Rhine and Hanover, is part of a contemplated ultimate junction of the Rhine and Elbe. Until this programme has been considered by the Diet its prospects need not be discussed; but the action of the Government, and, indeed, the general policy of other countries besides Germany, serves to indicate the high place internal water communication occupies in the minds of foreign traders and statesmen. In the United Kingdom most of our canals have been largely neglected. They were virtually indispensable before the railway era: and, though they were constructed without any regard to general uniformity in depth and size of locks, they served a useful purpose. The railways acquired many of them, however, apparently for the purpose of strangling competition on their part. Yet in Germany, where the railways belong to the State, the value of canals is evidently very keenly appreciated.

1904-4-16 Journal of Commerce

CANALS AND CHEAP TRANSPORT

Belgium's Wonderful System.

A Consular report issued by the Foreign Office yesterday, states that among the countries of Europe in which navigation plays an active part in the commercial and industrial enterprise of the nation, Belgium occupies a foremost place, the total length of its navigable waterway amounting, to 1,360 miles. As the total area of the country is only 11,373 square miles, there is the high proportion of

one mile of waterway to every 8½ square miles of territory. The gradual but steady growth of a uniform canal system intended for serving as an auxiliary to the railways, which are also for the most part under State control, has rendered transport as cheap as possible, and by this means the Belgian manufacturer has been enabled to compete on most advantageous terms with his foreign rivals,

During the last 25 year, no less a sum than £16,000,000 has been spent on the ports and canals alone. The result of this policy is that goods can be sent in many instances in barges of 300 tons carrying capacity direct from the factory to the seaport or other place of destination without transshipment. The producer thus saved the expense incurred by such transshipments finds himself in the position of being able to make a profit greater by this amount or to underbid those of his foreign rivals who may not enjoy such peculiar advantages. This remark applies in a double sense, for a gain is made on the transport of the raw material as well as on that of the finished article.