GLoucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company, Ltd.

A Brief Description of Gloucester's Largest Industry

The fact that the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Works are the largest single industry in Gloucester, employing a greater number of hands and paying out a larger sum in wages than any other one concern, should at once explain the necessity for including at least a brief reference to it in a History of Gloucester. At the same time the great extent and importance of the industry preclude anything like an adequate description, and we can merely indicate a few of the more interesting features connected with its establishment and subsequent remarkable development.

The industry was established in 1880, when 42,000£ was subscribed and the erection of suitable buildings in Bristol Road was begun. The original workshops were designed and erected especially for the construction of railway carriages, the new company having secured contracts for the London, Chatham and Dover, and the South Eastern Railway Companies. At that date there were not more than five Companies engaged in similar work. Though provision was at first made for the employment of less than one hundred workmen, the industry at once gave a decided stimulus to the industrial life of the city, and with each succeeding year it has been increasing in importance and with its prosperity. It may be of interest to state, in passing, that this was the first limited liability Company in the Island established for manufacturing purposes.

In 1860-7 the first addition was made to the buildings, a paint shop on the north side being erected for the finishing of carriages under construction for the Midland and the Great Eastern Railway Companies. A year later, in consequence of not being able to obtain more ground in the Bristol-road district, it was decided to erect the works near the "T" Station of the Great Western Railway, the Company having taken a succession of large contracts for Russia which extended over five years for their execution. The contract for the Russian Government was the first foreign contract the Company secured, though they have since constructed a great number of carriages for all the British Colonies, Brazil, and other South American States, Turkey, and other countries. Their railway carriages, indeed, are known all over the world, and they have received gold medal awards at many of the principal Exhibitions both at home and abroad.

In 1876 the works of Messrs. Easie and Co., Ltd., sawmill owners and joiners manufacturers, were taken over, as the Company required additional means of dealing with their timber converting, and these works being adjacent to the then existing boundary were found to be most convenient for the purpose. Those who are familiar with Gloucester's industrial history will remember that Meares, Easie and Company were noted for their general joinery and portable buildings, and it was this firm that constructed the huts used by the British troops in the Crimean War. When the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Co., Ltd., took over the business they continued it with great success, their joiner work having since become a very important department. At about the same time, the principal Railway Companies having erected works for the construction of their own coaches the Company, to fully utilize their large plant and to retain

found necessary to erect additional buildings for that purpose at the South end of the Works. During 1890-4 the Company were working all machinery by electric power was adopted, and a central electric power station was erected about half a mile away.

The offices of the Company becoming unsafe, owing to continual alterations necessitated by their being found to be inconvenient and quite inadequate for future requirements, and it was decided to erect a new block, together with more conveniently situated time and pay offices, stores, etc. A large building having been erected capable of seating 800 men to meals, or 1,000 when it is used for a concert.

Building works having been less than a hundred hands, the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Works have thus grown, in the short space of four decades, into an industry requiring the services of 1,100 employees, with premises covering an area of 12 acres. Besides the works in Gloucester, the Company have over 40 head depots in other cities and towns throughout the country, while their repairers attend hundreds of stations on the different lines of railways.

Co-Gildon, the largest constant addition to the buildings and equipment, the Company have improved upon the methods of manufacture, every device and appliance being used which could in any way promote economy or efficiency. The shops and offices of the various departments have so elaborated their system that not the minutest detail is overlooked. Every piece of work is under constant supervision and each machine does and ought to be defined, known, and every precaution is taken against the use of faulty material or workmanship. No superintendents or foremen are appointed to his responsible position without having demonstrated his peculiar fitness for it, and nearly all those who stand in their relations with the headquarters of the Company have served in the works for many years, advancing through subordinate positions to posts of responsibility. The provision that has been made for the workpeople, as regards recreation as well as the conditions under which they perform their work, is also deserving of special mention. All workmen who are in receipt of the works may be fairly said to be an excellent illustration of Gloucester's best industries. From the foregoing inadequate reference to the work the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company have performed, one may realize the importance of their products in railway construction throughout the world. It is not too much to say that they have materially assisted in the development of the most distant countries by providing apparatus which facilitates the construction and the safe and economical management of railways. Upon the satisfactory performance of the work for which their manufactures are designed human life itself is frequently dependent, and it is gratifying to know that the product of existence their work has uniformly been of the highest standard. The Company publish several descriptive and attractive illustrated catalogues, and many of those versed in the technical features of the work are very interesting and instructive.

It is to be regretted that the limited space allowed here has permitted us to give only a bare outline of the continuous growth of the industry. This mere record, however, is probably as impressive a more detailed description would be; it is certainly a strong evidence that Gloucestershire's still presents unlimited opportunities to those manufacturers who have the ability to adapt themselves to changing industrial conditions.

SINGLE LANDAUETTE. (Electric Motor.)
Built by the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Co., Gloucester.

SINGLE CORRIDOR CARRIAGE. (South African Type.)
Built by the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Co., Gloucester.

RIOBIC "CAB."
Built by the Gloucester Railway Carriage & Wagon Co., Gloucester.