

Grain, fruit, and timber bulk most largely in the increased trade of Manchester. The appended table shows the amount of grain imported annually since the opening of the canal :—

| Year. |     | Tons.   | Year. |     | Tons.                 |
|-------|-----|---------|-------|-----|-----------------------|
| 1894  | ... | 14,879  | 1901  | ... | 214,528               |
| 1895  | ... | 35,688  | 1902  | ... | 285,594               |
| 1896  | ... | 75,170  | 1903  | ... | 377,944               |
| 1897  | ... | 86,926  | 1904  | ... | 329,941               |
| 1898  | ... | 130,741 | 1905  | ... | 278,087               |
| 1899  | ... | 146,345 | 1906  | ... | (approximate) 342,000 |
| 1900  | ... | 219,755 |       |     |                       |

Owing to superiority in methods of handling and distributing, Manchester has become easily the first among British ports in the banana trade, as the following comparison shows :—

| Imports to— |     | 1905.<br>Bunches. | 1906.<br>Bunches. |
|-------------|-----|-------------------|-------------------|
| Manchester  | ... | 1,929,000         | 2,583,000         |
| Bristol     | ... | 1,303,000         | 1,450,000         |
| Liverpool   | ... | 1,206,000         | 1,250,000         |
|             |     |                   | (Estimated).      |

The largest and finest fruit-steamers in the world maintain a regular weekly service between Limon (Costa Rica) and Manchester. In the Mediterranean fruit trade with Manchester eleven steamers were employed regularly last year, bringing supplies from Sicily, Italy, and Spain, in addition to which the regular service of the Prince line has been used by importers of Jaffa oranges and Egyptian onions. Fruit imported to Manchester is now distributed to all parts of the country, and many express fruit-trains laden with bananas are run from the Manchester docks to London, Birmingham, and other large centres of consumption.

In the matter of timber-imports Manchester has rapidly risen to the fifth position among the ports of the United Kingdom, and if the rate of increase is maintained she will soon pass Hull and Liverpool, though she cannot hope for many years to reach the volume of trade in timber done by London and Cardiff. The imports of hewn and sawn timber to Manchester (including Runcorn) for the six months ending 30th June, 1906, were 158,283 loads, which for the corresponding period in 1907 had risen to 174,081 loads. In the month of July, 1907, no fewer than twenty vessels with full cargoes of timber discharged at Manchester, and in addition large quantities of timber were carried by the regular lines from the Baltic, Canada, and United States.

#### FACILITIES FOR DISTRIBUTION.

Prominent among the advantages of the port of Manchester are the exceptional facilities enjoyed for distribution to all parts of the United Kingdom, and more especially to the special area comprising ten millions of population that can most speedily and economically be served from the Manchester docks. Six great railway-lines—the London and North-western, Lancashire and Yorkshire, Great Northern, Midland, Great Central, and Cheshire lines—have direct connection with the Manchester docks, and three lines are connected with the Ship Canal Railway that runs from Eastham, on the Mersey, to Manchester. Cheap and convenient water transit is also provided. In addition to the Bridgewater Canals, acquired by the Ship Canal Company at a cost of £1,268,089, the following canals enable direct communication by water to be maintained between the Ship Canal and all the inland navigations of the country: Leeds and Liverpool, Bolton and Bury, Rochdale, Ashton, Huddersfield, Stockport, Calder and Hebble, Peak Forest, Macclesfield, Aire and Calder, Trent and Mersey, Weaver Navigation, Shropshire Union.

Through rates of freight by rail or canal are quoted by the Ship Canal Company, and these are in most cases based upon special concessions made by the owners of the railways and canals.

#### POSITION OF THE CANAL COMPANY.

In the making of the Port of Manchester and securing all these facilities for handling, storage, and distribution much money and engineering skill have been expended. The Ship Canal Company's expenditure on capital account to the 31st December, 1906, reached the enormous total of £16,486,427. During the half-year to the end of June last an additional sum of £43,172 was expended on works and equipment, including the deepening of the Ship Canal throughout to a depth of 28 ft., this being considered advisable in order to keep pace with the growing dimensions of merchant steamers. At the forty-fourth half-yearly meeting of the shareholders, held on the 8th August last, it was reported that the weight of sea-borne merchandise imported and exported by means of the Ship Canal, and paying toll, amounted for the half-year ending 30th June last to 2,271,583 tons, an increase of 158,770 tons as compared with the corresponding half-year of 1906. During the same period the receipts from the Ship Canal Department amounted to £248,333, an increase of £15,157 as compared with the first six months of the preceding year. It is to be hoped that very soon the patriotic shareholders in the concern will reap some direct return for their capital invested.