

## VISIT TO THE PORT OF LONDON.

### LONDON DOCK.

In order to learn something of the examination of imported food, and to gain some estimate of the vast organisation necessary for the feeding of the people of this country, Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses Administration Class were, by the kind consent of the authorities, privileged to visit the Port of London on Tuesday, October 16th.

Every arrangement had most kindly been made for a most instructive afternoon by Dr. Charles Francis White, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H. Vict., Medical Officer of Health for the Port of London Authority.

On arrival at Mark Lane Station, Mr. A. Moore, Administration Officer, and Mr. R. Clifford, Food Inspector, met and conducted our class to the smallest of the Authority's Docks—The London Dock—where, once through the gateway, we passed into a labyrinth of warehouses, sheds and offices built some hundred and thirty years ago. The transit shed brought us by large consignments of wine casks awaiting the customs' officer, cases of grapes, and cork from Spain.

Then came the principal house in London for sardines, olives principally imported from Spain and Portugal and tinned fruits from all over the World.

The building where very large cargoes of Christmas fare had just arrived was of great interest; spices of all kinds, canned goods, dried fruits from Australia, California and Mediterranean ports, Jordan almonds, and raisins of which eighty thousand boxes had just been received.

Here the officer responsible explained that these were imported by merchants from abroad to wholesale merchants, who sold to the retail grocer.

For testing purposes samples are opened, and here we were shown boxes of most beautiful raisins from Spain, and Jordan almonds, and which were stated to be free from preservatives. A splendid demonstration was here given to the class of how defective tinned goods may be detected.

In another department the labelling machine was seen, by means of which tins are stamped at the rate of 48 per minute.

### Dock Cats.

On passing through the buildings one of the famous Dock Cats was observed, feigning sleep.

This brings us to the very great care and attention expended by the Port of London Authority in its ceaseless effort to exterminate rats, which are well known to be carriers of Plague and other diseases, and generally destructive of many thousands of pounds of goods. Many methods are employed to exterminate this pest, one very efficacious method being the maintenance of a fierce army of Dock Cats—some hundreds (a very different creature from the docile domestic cat) costing £800 per year to feed. We were informed that each cat has its own hunting ground, and brooks no interlopers. As a rule, they are not allowed to eat the rats they catch. The recorded number of rats destroyed by the authorities by various means—traps, poison, cats, etc.—was, for the year ending 1933, 8,819.

On our tour we came out to the edge of the Dock, where cargoes were in process of being laden and unladen; here was seen the largest floating crane in the world, which can lift easily the Royal Scot engine—a significant contrast to the old windlass we had just seen, by which some hundred and thirty years ago men walked a treadmill to wind the cargoes up to the sheds.

On this mild autumn day, the view down the Dock, alive with the ships of many nations, was an inspiring sight. Here we learned that the Port of London comprises no fewer than twelve docks, stretching some 69 miles, from high

water mark Teddington Lock in Surrey, to the Nore Light ship in Thames estuary.

In this varied tour, many things other than the wonders of food inspection were seen, rubber in its white liquid form as it comes from the tree, and cargoes of it ready for commercial use.

By the way, we were introduced to the Ivory Department, the greatest Ivory market in the world, and we were fortunate that one of the great quarterly sales had taken place that day. The keeper of the Ivory warehouse invited the class to walk through line upon line of elephant tusks from all parts of Africa, as it had been arranged for sale. The ivory is sorted by the Port Authority according to its various uses—for the making of brushes, studs, piano keys, images, billiard balls, etc.; what we saw was valued at some £60,000.

Our eloquent informant hoped it was not imagined that there was a wholesale slaughter of elephants four times a year, which is not the case, as the cost of a licence to shoot only two elephants is £50; if more than that number is killed, the ivory goes to the Crown. A great number of tusks come from elephants that are shot because they have become a nuisance; leaving their herds, they destroy crops and gardens, and become a danger. It is said that in this state they are frequently suffering from toothache; tusks were shown indented with many deep lines caused by the animals rubbing against trees or any hard substance. If we bear in mind that an elephant has four teeth, each weighing 14½ lb., it can be easily imagined that elephant toothache could hardly be classed as a minor ailment. Elephants' teeth, however, are of no commercial value.

### Mammoth Tusks.

Some years ago, one such mammoth was discovered buried in the ice in Siberia. When opened up its stomach was found to contain its last meal of grass, palm shoots, etc., of tropical growth, in a perfect state of preservation; this showed that it must have died instantaneously, possibly by earthquake, thousands of years ago, and that Siberia was then a tropical country.

### Quicksilver.

Before leaving the Ivory Market, our attention was drawn to a large vessel containing Quicksilver; on this we saw a two pound weight float, and we were humorously informed we could learn to swim in it. Quicksilver, extracted from Cinnabar Ore, of which England has the monopoly, is very costly and mined in Spain by convicts who are doing penal servitude for life.

### Wine Vaults.

Then came the descent to the Wine Vaults; we had been walking over acres of them, some being as large as seven acres in extent.

Equipped with candles, we entered a wine vault of 3½ acres; here the temperature is kept at 59 to 60 degrees all the year round. We passed through lanes of casks of sherry, port, brandy, etc., belonging to the various owners, in all some hundreds of thousands of casks. A short time ago these vaults were visited by Her Majesty The Queen and H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, and also by Mrs. Virginia Woolf.

An unexpected surprise was the very kind invitation to have tea; during this much appreciated refreshment, Mr. Clifford gave most interesting information on the testing of imported goods; in this department, very expert skill is required, and a staff of highly qualified chemists is employed. Regulations concerning some of the preservatives permitted were explained; samples were shown demonstrating the various vegetables and fruits most prone to act on tin and the result, and how to detect blown tins by their external appearance.

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