

The World Metropolis: New York or London?

Twin Wonder Cities Will Tie in Population in 1932, British Journalist Believes, and Wall Street Will Become the Partner, Not the Rival, of Lombard Street



View of London.

Central News Photo Service.

By F. A. McKENZIE.

FIVE years ago there were two world capitals, Paris, the artistic, and London, the commercial and financial headquarters. Paris, despite the stress of war, retains her ancient place. There is none to dispute it. But London must look to her laurels. New York has grown to her stature. Today New York is nearing London in population; the two cities are running a neck-and-neck race for supremacy in world shipping; and New York has ousted London from her place as the centre of world wealth.

The war strengthened New York and drained the resources of London. The North Sea, the gateway of the Thames, was closed by mine, submarine, and raiding destroyers, while Ambrose Channel remained open. London, long the richest city in the world, pawned her securities, which for centuries had brought tribute from the ends of the earth, by the billion, to pay for gold and goods for England and her allies; most of these securities were absorbed by New York.

All the world had to come to America for manufactured goods. In other words, all the world had to come to New York, for nearly one-half of America's foreign trade goes through this port. The elaborate machinery for world commerce which London merchants had built up by centuries of enterprise, from the days when Elizabethan venturers sent their expeditions to Barbary, the Caribbean and around the Cape to the Indies, rusted. There was no time to manufacture goods, and no ships to spare to carry

even what there were. A man cannot lend the counter when the burglar has his hand on his throat. The young Englishmen who held watch and ward for London in the outlands of the world took the first boats back home to don khaki when war was declared in August, 1914. Napoleon sneered at the Britisher as a shopkeeper; but shopkeeping counted very small then.

London emerged from the war not ruined—not by any manner of means—but impoverished. Over a hundred thousand young Londoners had lost their lives; at least an equal number were permanently stricken. Everything had been sacrificed for victory. There had been no time to mend the streets, to paint the houses, to build needed homes. Men were wearied, caught up in the inevitable reaction that follows a tremendous and long-continued strain. The gold had gone from the bank coffers; the securities had been depleted; happily credit remained, and character strengthened by war. New York emerged scarce showing a scratch, stronger, richer, more populous, and more powerful than ever in her history.

Today we are witnessing the slow, steady revival of London, and the efforts of New York to employ her new strength and power to best advantage. In these first months of peace New York finds her position as advantageous as in the days of war. For many months to come the world at large must turn to her for aid. But soon we will see a renewed London stretching itself forth again.

And if war cost London much, it gave

it much also. It proved that generations of commerce had not robbed a people of their soul, and it gave the British people a new incentive for social reform more drastic than once seemed possible. New York and London are both concerned with the prosperity of each other. If by some strange freak of nature New York were wiped off the map tomorrow, London would go bankrupt, and vice versa. The two are partners rather than rivals, but partners conducting different branches, and each determined to show the other what he can do.

No two cities could well present a greater contrast. Manhattan is an island of rock, bordering on a bay opening into the Atlantic; London is an inland valley of sand and clay. New York proclaims its majesty and wealth to every visitor by its titanic sky line, that seems as though it would storm the very heavens. London conceals its wealth behind shabby exteriors of low elevation. London is scattered over a wide area, covering 669 square miles; the majority of the population of New York is crowded on three dozen square miles. New York overwhelms one with its evidences of power and of human accomplishment; London at first often disappoints, but its charm grows the more one knows it.

New York loves the immense. Its foremost building—one which generations to come will count among the great monuments of all ages—is 792 feet 1 inch high. Please do not overlook the one inch. London will not permit private houses or offices to be more than a hundred feet high. New York's main rail-

road depots are palaces of marble, titanic in size, and more splendid than the palaces of ancient Kings. Charing Cross, London, the gateway of the world, is a modest, unassuming, and comparatively small building. New York, having completed a hotel of 2,200 rooms, now contemplates another with 2,500. The costliest hotel in London, in which five Kings and ruling Princes once lived apart from each other at the same time, boasts less than 300 rooms.

Each capital has its own special problems. That of London is inherited destitution, the existence of a large class born in poverty, bred with the aid of charity, marrying on nothing, living in stums and with little hope, save in exceptional cases, of emerging. The war has done more to galvanize the very poor of London into new life and give them new hope than have five hundred years of charity. The large areas of very poor in London have for generations repelled the friendly stranger, appalled the sympathetic, overwhelmed the social reformer. If war has brought them betterment the war will in the end be London's gain, not London's loss.

New York presents no such spectacle. I have walked through miles of east side streets in the Summer of 1919, and have not yet seen a really ragged or hungry child. I do not say that they do not exist, but I have not yet found them, and I am accustomed to hunt out poverty in its lair. You can, if you will, find one picturesque beggar woman on the stone

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Lower New York.

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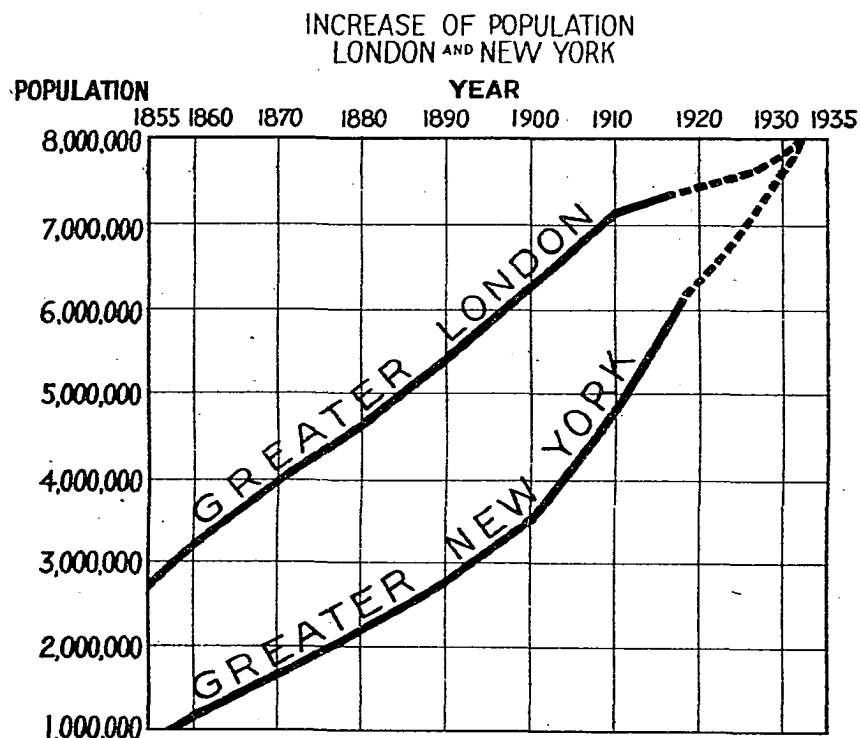
steps of a Fifth Avenue church. She is an artist in her line. There are one or two other beggars scattered about. A few old men are to be found around the one-cent coffee stand outside the Tombs, or lounging on the seats in City Hall Park. But poverty is not the problem of New York. The problem here rather is to secure stability in local administration, to suppress concealed corruption in public affairs, and to assimilate the enormous number of foreigners who have made New York their home.

Italians and Syrians, Greeks and Poles, Slovenes, Galicians, Ruthenians, Russians, and Czechs, with the Jews from all these nations, form communities of their own here. Many of them never learn the American tongue. They have their own methods, their own churches, community houses, and revolutionary groups, they read their own newspapers, and cling to their own ideals. If ever New York City is caught in the new world revolt, it will be the unassimilated foreigners who will do it. In addition to this there is the problem of an older race, now taking more insistent form. New York has great and growing negro colonies. The old negro colonies, in Fifty-ninth Street and in Sixty-second-Sixty-sixth Streets, have a still bigger offshoot away up town, between 126th and 140th Streets, East, where there is a real negro city within a city. The war came to the negro as the message of a new era. He is awakening, as never before; whether for good or ill the next three years will show.

London still leads in population, but the difference is diminishing every year. Some statisticians, comparing Greater London with an imaginary area called metropolitan New York, assert that New York is now ahead. Metropolitan New York embraces all urban districts within ten miles of Greater New York. To make this comparison fair we would have to add the population for ten miles around Greater London to the British capital. Let us confine ourselves to the real areas of both places.

Sixty years ago, what is now Greater London numbered 3,000,000 people; the area of Greater New York numbered 1,000,000. The proportion was three to one. In the forty years that followed London doubled and New York trebled its population, making the proportion two to one. Fifteen years ago there were ten persons in New York for every seventeen in London. In 1911 there were eleven in New York to sixteen in London. Today there are four in New York to five in London.

I estimate that New York and London will tie in population in the year 1932, when each will have about 8,000,000 inhabitants, the twin wonder cities of the world. It is fair to assume that New York will continue to grow at her present rate. The growth of London will not



The dotted continuation lines after 1918 show the estimated increase up to 1932.

Chart Showing Growth of New York and London

be quite so fast as before the war, because of the heavy losses of population there. The only thing that is likely to put any check on the growth of New York is the congestion now prevailing. More trade is seeking to come to New York than New York can take. Waiting ships cannot find dock room, and there is no spare warehouse accommodation for cargoes. Houses are so scarce that landlords are in many cases raising rents 50 per cent. as leases come to an end. If the present tenants grumble, there are plenty more waiting. Men search for weeks for offices downtown without finding what they want. The value of land has reached an almost incredible figure, and this figure has been reflected in rents. Land around Wall Street has sold at the rate of \$20,000,000 an acre.

So long as people are resolved to come in, they somehow make room for themselves, and with readjustments New York can accommodate many more. The time is coming when hotels in the region of Times Square and Forty-second Street will be turned into office buildings, and when the real social centre of New York will start at the Plaza and Columbus Avenue and go upward.

London has an advantage over New York as a shipping centre. It is a free port, where the goods of the world can be received to await their ultimate market.

Take, for example, the case of a merchant who wishes to dispatch a shipload

of goods to Buenos Aires. There must be an assembling point for these goods. If he tries to assemble them in New York, he at once comes up against the stringent requirements of the customs. London encourages this trade. One ship from Kobe will bring silks, a ship from Cadiz wines, another from Philadelphia shoes or cottons. These loads can wait in the London docks until the ship from Buenos Aires is ready, with a minimum of trouble.

London as a free port has become the warehouse of the world. The merchants of Manhattan want New York to be the same. Great organizations are at work to induce Congress to establish a free zone. A prominent advocate of the plan admitted gloomily to me not long ago that one of the main obstacles was the difficulty of convincing politicians that no attack on protection was intended. They would think that a free port was in some ways connected with free trade!

Despite all drawbacks, New York is running a neck-and-neck race with London for shipping pre-eminence. Immediately before the war there was only a difference of 5 per cent. in the favor of London in the value of cargoes handled in the two ports, while the net registered tonnage of shipping entering and leaving New York much exceeded London. The British capital, unlike New York, only handles a small proportion of British export trade, not more than about 12 per cent.

New York will soon have to share her world trade more and more with other ports. Her proportion is now declining all the time. Philadelphia today has all the freight she can handle. Boston will become a more and more powerful rival. The ports of the South will, in the near future, take much that comes to New York today. But American foreign trade is growing so fast that New York Port must grow with it. The only question is how far the authorities will make it possible for the growing trade to continue to centre here.

When the Secretary of the Treasury recently spoke of New York as the financial centre of the world, some people expressed astonishment. Before the war that was London's undisputed claim. London had the money, London had the credit, and London held the hidden wires that control world finance.

Today, while London still retains her machinery, she has to some extent lost the solid foundations of financial control. Gold currency still nominally exists in England. The man who presents a Treasury note for a pound at the counter of the Bank of England can demand a golden sovereign for it. But London's reserve of gold was largely dissipated during the war. London the debtor has today to pay heavy interest to New York, in place of receiving tribute. America, and in this connection America means New York, has added thirty billions to her capital since 1914, and will add much more in the year ahead.

London finance has been badly hit, but is recovering. London still has credit. Britain is one of the premier gold-producing nations of the world. London has still many creditors, despite her debts, allies, and dominions on whom she squandered money during the war.

Will New York be able to alter the current of world habit and change the financial centre from London to herself? Wall Street and the Treasury answer confidently, Yes. Lombard Street says little, but is stretching out afresh, is amalgamating rival interests, and is on the road to recovery.

It may be that the great fight for supremacy will be fought by New York and London in the world of higher finance. As New York centralizes the financial control of America, so London centres the financial interests of the British Empire and her dependents. But what I have seen of the financiers makes me believe that they never fight when they can amalgamate, and the future will see, even more than the past, the union and fusion of Wall Street and Lombard Street.

London and New York will reign as twin Queens, the one dominating in the East and the other in the West. They will find their ultimate ambitions in co-operation. Each has much to learn from the other. Each can aid the other. Between both there runs a feeling of friendship and alliance. They are in a sense rivals; they are in a fuller sense, allies.