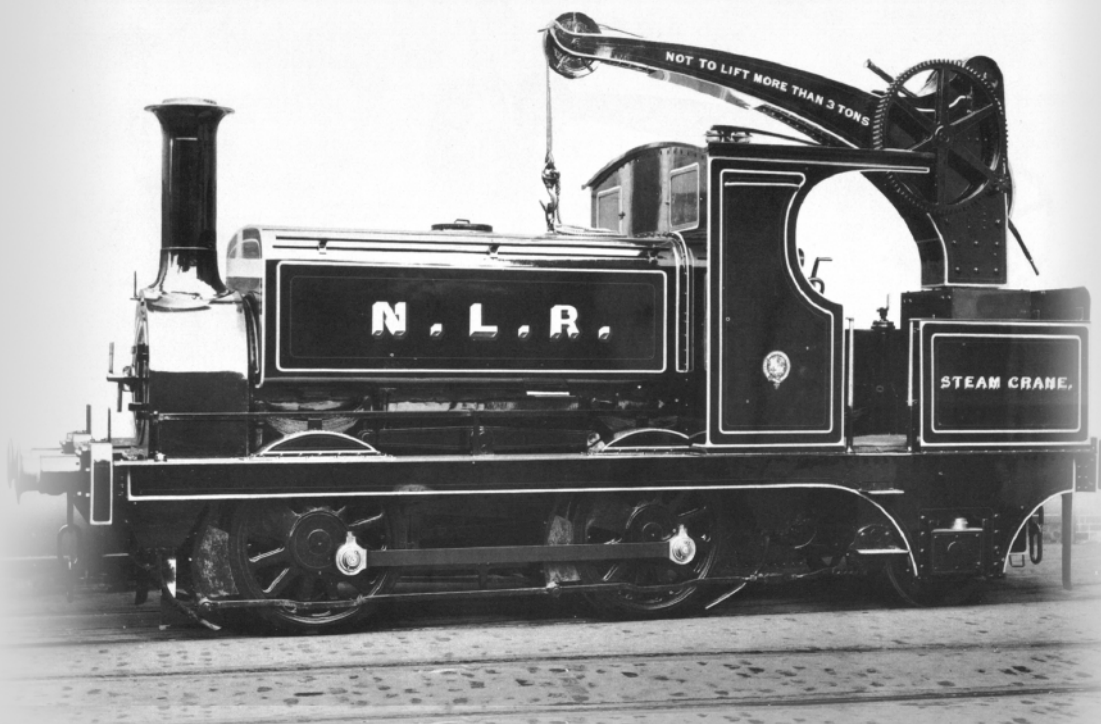


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EAST LONDON INDUSTRIES

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This extract has been taken from pages 208 to 211 of the book published by Longmans, Green & Co of London in 1876, and held by the Guildhall Library, London. The contents of the book were originally published in the columns of the East London Observer between January 1875 and January 1876.

Chapter XXIV Locomotion Section 1 North London Railway; Locomotive, Carriage and Waggon Dept.

In noticing these industries, it is necessary to say a word about the importance of railways in respect to the carrying and passenger traffic in East London. The first mentioned of these has, apart from the employment of labour and the impetus given to the other Industries, afforded facilities for trading in London of which the East has taken as large an advantage as any other part. It would doubtless be as difficult to estimate either in a lump sum, or by annual income, how much Old Ford, Bow, Poplar, and other parts of this locality have gained by the existence of the North London Railway, as it would be to say how much every brick in every building in Canonbury, Highbury, Camden Town, Hampstead and other places, owe to the fact that this railway has become even more a cause than a consequence of local progress. Besides this, the neighbourhood of Bow has the special advantage of the influence on the labour market of the Works above mentioned, and which, by the kind permission of J. Park Esq., the locomotive superintendent, I was shown over by Mr Chapman. In noticing the importance of this branch of the Company's operations, I by no means overlook the employment given in the passenger service. I rather wish it to be remembered that as it is spread all over the line, extending as far as the Company has indirect relations it is therefore not a local Industry in that strict sense in which the term is generally used in these

chapters. I find the Works at Bow have been in operation about 12 years, and cover about five acres, employing seven hundred and fifty hands in their present juvenile condition. The labour given is chiefly skilled, but even when it is not it is well remunerated, and never too hard. In the entrance to the Works there is a "nursery", where young men already instructed technically are on their trial, as it were, as to whether all, or some, or a few, will come out able engineers, and men who in their day will take leading places in the railway rolling-stock-making profession. These are probably articulated apprentices, and have had their time in the drawing department as well as at the vice, the lathe, and the anvil. But it is most likely to be in the future, as it has been in the past, that the greatest men of coming generations will be recruited from the ranks, not of the apprentices who are mostly natty in dress and the greatest dandies, but those who are least afraid to touch iron, hot or cold, or to do such work, rough or smooth, as comes in their way. Passing from this department, by far the most interesting prospectively, one comes to the erecting shop, where not the small machines on which youth work, but the large ones on which men work, are in operation. An engine is made on the same principle as a ship, and in its early stages is treated just as if it were to be a clipper, or a man-of-war, except in mere details. The frame of an engine and the keel of a ship are probably in every mechanical sense similar, and to the eye of an unpractised observer seems much the same sort of thing. In constructing these engines every appliance is in operation by which they can be made strong, safe on the rails, and by which labour can be saved or elevated. The carriage building is also a very important Industry. Here the same principles of economy are observed, and while every year the carriages turned out are more and more elegantly fitted up, and more strongly built, their construction is so much improved that they

must and do last longer, the public getting the benefit. Brass and iron castings are also made on the premises. All the work necessary for engines, carriages, and wagons is done here, including the upholstering of those carriages which are cushioned. The sewing machine is at work and does great execution. But one of the most important matters is that the Works are well ventilated, whether it be where the steam hammer is, or the one worked by hand, or any other class of tool. The motive power in use is created by an engine made at the Works, and, taking them altogether, they are amongst the most hope-suggesting of our local Industries.

Besides, in that department in which T.S. Mansell Esq., is the leading spirit spreads its wings, so will the one over which I have been so courteously shown increase its powers of employing labour. The line has already many ramifications outside London, by no matter how many more may be added the rolling stock for all is manufactured at Bow, a fact of no small interest to shop-keepers and trades-people, as well as workmen, but most of all to the rising generation. These Works have proved and are proving of great value to the neighbourhood.