To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Red Star Line and the entering into its service of the new steamer Belgenland
The
Red Star Line's
Antwerp offices
in 1870
On January 19th, 1873, a small three-masted barquentine rigged steamer, the first “Vaderland” of 2773 tons gross, steamed out of Antwerp and down the River
Scheldt, inaugurating the Red Star Line service, which for fifty years has served as the link connecting Belgium and the United States. The master of the ship was Capt. Theo Van Der Heyden, one of the most able navigators that the port has known. This "Vaderland" was built as a tanker to carry bulk and barrelled oil, and appears to have been the pioneer of the tanker trade which has become such an important feature in international transport.

The progenitors of this commercial development were the well-known Antwerp Firm of Von der Becke and Marsily, importers and shipbrokers, who on September 5th 1872 constituted at Antwerp the Société Anonyme de Navigation Belge-Améri-
caine to transport petroleum from the wells in Pennsylvania to Antwerp. The Belgian Société was associated with an American Society trading under the title of the International Navigation Company and the Philadelphia Firm of Peter Wright and Sons, who contributed a large share of the Capital for this venture in the business world, and actively cooperated in developing the enterprise.

The first directors of the Société were:

Mr. J. P. Von der Beeke
President.

Mr. W. E. Marsily
Administrator.

Messrs. Peter Wright & Sons
Administrator.

Mr. H. Houston
Administrator.

Mr. Thomas A. Scott
Administrator.

International Navigation Company Administrator.
As a result of the difficulties attending the establishment of storage facilities on the Polders of Austrwelle, just below Antwerp, for bulk oil and its transfer from the ship to the tanks, the organizers abandoned this traffic, and the first "Vaderland" was altered from an oil tanker to a passenger and a general cargo carrier, and a second steamer, the "Nederland" was completed before the end of the year and placed in the same trade, and these vessels carried a total of 2900 passengers in the first year of the Company's history.

In 1874 the "Switzerland" was added to the fleet and the Company increased its passenger carryings to 5500 souls. This year also saw the American activities of the...
Company, which up to that time had been centred at Philadelphia, as the American terminus of the service, extended to New York, but the Company has always retained its traditional association with the "city of brotherly love" as the American delights in calling the great sea-port on the Delaware, and the Company's cargo steamers as well as certain passenger
steamers continue to make Philadelphia a regular port of call.

In 1877 the Belgian Government entered into a
mail contract with the Société
for a period of ten years at
an annual subsidy of Francs
500,000, and important ex-
tensions to the fleet were
immediately decided upon,
commencing with the first
"Belgenland", completed in
1879, and the “Rhynland”, also added in the same year. These ships won instant popularity with trans-Atlantic passengers and the fame of the Line for the comfort and cleanliness of its ships and the excellence of its cuisine, brought an important increase in passenger carrying, which the year following totalled 23,997 souls.

During the decade that followed i.e. from 1881 to 1890, six new ships were completed and placed in commission, and the progressive spirit of the founders of the Company is illustrated in this steady development of the best type of tonnage to keep pace with the growing traffic and the demands of an exacting public, which gave generous support to the Red Star Line now that it was well
In 1898 the Red Star Line was highly honored by the Crown Prince, now His Majesty King Albert of Belgium, selecting the "Friesland" for his return voyage after a visit to the United States, and His Majesty sailed from New York on June 28th, the steamer making a special call at Southampton to land the Prince and permit him to visit the Queen of England. Capt. Nichols, the master of the ship, was subsequently decorated by the King.

In 1899 the Red Star Line entered on a new era with the construction of its second "Yaderland", followed in rapid succession by the "Zee-land", "Kroonland" and "Finland", the last two built at Philadelphia in the yards.
of Wm. Cramp and Sons, and the first vessels of the Red Star fleet under the American flag, all their predecessors flying the Belgian flag, although the capital employed was supplied mainly by the American partners in this Belgian enterprise. The famous four are so well known on both sides of the Atlantic that we may pass over them with the brief statement that they were twin screw steamers of over 12,000 tons, with two funnels and four masts, and among the largest steamers of their period. They provided for passengers in three classes, and offered every luxury and convenience introduced into the trans-Atlantic liners of their day, including suites with private bath, which were yet a novelty in Ocean travel.
They were also large cargo carriers, which enhanced their value to the ports they served, as facilities for the exchange of a nation’s products rival in importance the transport of passengers, and the resulting stability of large cargo carriers is a great advantage to passengers who seek comfort rather than speed.

The year 1902 witnessed a new development in the

Quai du Rhin, Antwerp, where the Company's liners are berthed
history of the Red Star Line as the result of the enterprise of the late J. P. Morgan, the great international banker and friend of the late King Leopold II, who turned his talents to the organization of the International Mercantile Marine Company, to-day the largest shipping company in the world, and the Red Star Line was one of the first and most valuable assets acqui-
red in the foundation of this international company. It was not the purpose of Mr. Morgan, however, to disturb the traditional associations of the Red Star Line, and while the Antwerp firm of Von der Beke & Marsily which had been so intimately identified with the Belgian Société disposed of their interests, Antwerp was retained as the home port of the Company and the seat of its management, and this policy has been rigidly adhered to ever since.

During the first decade of the present century, there was a steady trend to ships of larger tonnage and more elaborate fittings, and as a result of this tendency the Red Star Line determined to resume its building programme, and construct the
The largest steamer considered practicable as a result of long experience in navigating the river Scheldt, and in 1909 the famous “Lapland”, then and now one of the most popular steamers in the trans-Atlantic trade, was added to the fleet and greatly enhanced the prestige of the port and the popularity of the Line. The passenger traffic of the Line was steadily increasing and three years later approximated 121,000 souls, a notable increase from the 2900 passengers carried during the first year of its history. Until the advent of the second “Belgenland”, the “Lapland” was the largest steamer to come to the port, but experience again proved that still larger vessels were practicable and in 1914 the order was given for the second
"Belgenland", and after interruption of nearly five years brought about by the Great War, the Red Star Line has completed and placed in commission this mighty steamer of 27,200 tons gross, and is maturing plans for additional tonnage of the same type. This new "Belgenland" is replete with every device for safety and comfort at sea, and while it is not the intention to describe the steamer in detail here, as the Company has profusely illustrated publications in preparation that give all this information, a few outstanding features are appropriate to this brief historical summary.

The new "Belgenland" has a most elaborate series of public rooms, including as special features a reception room for the dansants.
and the after dinner cordial
and cigar, a series of private
dining rooms, Turkish bath
and swimming pool, gymnasium, children's play-room,
staff, lifts in both first and second
class and about 40 suites
with bath and many private
sitting rooms. The dining
saloon is an entirely new
departure with an exclusive
restaurant service in charge of
most experienced continental
chefs. In the second class the public rooms include, in addition to the familiar library and smoke room, a verandah fitted for dancing, gymnasium and children’s play-room. In the third class there are two dining rooms, a lounge, a smoke room, a room for women and a verandah. Throughout the first and second class accommoda-
tian the ship has running hot
and cold water.

To illustrate the progress
in the development of
shipping, a few comparisons
between the first "Vader-
land" and the first and
second "Belgenland" are
interesting:

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<th>Vaderland</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length</td>
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<td>Breadth</td>
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<td>Depth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gross tonnage</td>
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First "Vaderland" 11 697 78 49'6".

First "Belgenland" 11 402'9" 40'2" 36'92 27'200 35'400 450 3 Oil.
The Red Star Line has carried 2,312,791 passengers to December 31st 1922 without the loss of a life, and its cargo tonnage carryings cannot be computed as the records are not available but it runs into many millions of freight tons.

The annual distribution in the port of Antwerp for wages, repairs and supplies in 1873 are estimated at Frs. 830,000; in 1922, this reached the important total of Frs. 44,500,000, and in years when the shipping has been prosperous the total disbursements have exceeded this figure by as much as Frs. 15,000,000.

During its long history the company has occupied berths at the Quai du Rhin, except for the interruption in the early eighties
when the present quays and hangars were in the course of construction.

The Red Star Line was the first company to resume its trans-Atlantic service after the Great War, and in this as in all its developments it takes a just and pardonable pride on this, its fiftieth anniversary, as an international institution with a Belgian birthright and an uninterrupted record of development and achievement.
Fifteen copies of the present Historical Summary have been especially printed on Japanese paper from the Imperial Tokyo Manufacturers; they have been numbered by hand, and bear the Printer's initials. The type composing the text is of the Ancient Gothic kind and styled in Christopher Plantinus' (†1580) Index Characterum as “Flemish Canon.”
This copy bears
Nr 105

The Printer,

J.-E. Buschmann

Antwerp