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Great Scott! Are We Victorian?

By LOUIS LA BEAUME

THE other day Sir Esme Howard spoke tenderly of the vanished Victorian epoch, which we flippant ones are wont glibly to malign. The first forty years of Sir Esme's life coincided with the last forty years of Victoria's reign; and the glamor of those forty years is softened to a soothing mellowness by contrast with the fierce incandescence of this age.

Her Most Respectable Highness, Queen Victoria, died the twenty-second of January, 1901. "When, two days previously," says Strachey, "the news of the approaching end had been made public, astonished grief had swept over the country. It appeared as if some monstrous reversal of the course of nature was about to take place. The vast majority of her subjects had never known a time when Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them. She had become an indissoluble part of their whole scheme of things."

The close of her life marked the end of a long chapter which had profoundly affected, not only her own people, but the entire world. The page was turned, and the next chapter was destined never to be finished. It broke off abruptly in the summer of 1914, when the world went into a delirium from which it has not yet quite recovered.

Recollection and forgetfulness are two sovereign methods of relief from the inflammation of the present. Indulgence in both is almost universal; but forgetfulness implies surrender, and the negation of individuality, whereas recollection involves protest, and a certain noble defiance of painful change. Thus man's habit of fond remembrance is

his surest solace in a world of bewildering mutability. It affords his most comforting escape from the tension and pressure of contemporaneous phenomena. Only the very young can, with Margaret Fuller, "accept the universe."

And that, perhaps alas (but only perhaps), is what they seem to be doing. Driven forward, stumbling under the lash of necessity, the rest of us, like Sir Esme, are apt to look back longingly (if furtively) toward the green pastures we have left behind us.

Doubtless, the Victorians, themselves, looked back, at least the elder of them like Sir Esme's father, and grandfather, and yours and mine. No doubt, they longed for the spacious days of the Eighteenth Century, before the locomotive with its hoarse whistle had come to disturb the countryside; before Manchester and Birmingham had become huddles of chimneys belching forth black smoke; before the velvety hills and lush valleys had been pitted and scarred in searching for coal to feed the furnaces. The good old days, before the shuttles started whirling, and steam-driven monsters indicted the dignity of hand labor; when they journeyed leisurely down to Bath by coach to foregather with Beau Nash and other dandies, and dandy ladies, in the Pump Room or at the Assemblies, must have seemed halcyon days indeed.

To us, these must be but vicarious recollections, partaking more of the nature of sweet dreams, like our other sweet dreams of the so-called Middle Ages, when Troubadours sang under milady's casement, when life went on blithely in the high-

perched castle, and the serfs, dwelling in its shadow, enjoyed periodic interludes of security. Or like our happy dreams of the Golden Age when, under the blue skies of Hellas, men "rowing home to haven from sunny Palestine," saw their brethren shaping huge blocks of Pentelic marble, rounding the shafts of their lovely columns, perfecting the proportions of stylobate and entablature, and filling their pediments with God-like effigies.

Surely we may share the regret of Victoria's (now King George's) gentle Ambassador for the leisurely times that are gone. Some of us may recall with him the closing days of the Great Epoch. At any rate we can conjure back from our school days the great names of Victorian letters and politics, and with somewhat more effort, the great names of Victorian Art. Dizzy's pallid face; his black curls, his yellow waistcoat; Gladstone's hawk-like features, his fiery, moral eye; pictures of him felling trees at Hawarden. Salisbury's round, bald head, fringed scantily, depending on his beard for hirsute sufficiency; Roseberry, clean-shaven and mild; Chamberlain more than clean shaven, immaculate, with his orchid and monocle; these visions are as real to us as General Dawes and his pipe, or President Coolidge in his ten-gallon hat. Likewise we can see the sombre Lord Tennyson as clearly as though he stood before us with his staff and his great cloak; and the sheep-like face of Swinburne, and the ruddy one of Browning all framed in white. The painters, our (half) own Whistler, and the bulky Leighton, Burne-Jones, Watts, Rosetti, and Sir John Millais, we may recall as we turn over pages of old engravings. Wordsworth and Thackeray, and Dickens, George Eliot, Macaulay, Carlisle, Ruskin, and at the end Meredith, and Hardy, Stevenson and Wilde, and again, our (half) own Henry James, still reproach us for our modern, more frivolous taste.

The names of playwrights we recall with less ease; Bulwer Lytton, of course, for Richelieu is still played occasionally, and Gilbert and Sullivan, and Pinero and Jones, just dead. Most of them, however, have vanished into limbo, along with the great actors like Macready and Keene, Forest, Irving and Beerbohm Tree, and Ellen Terry, and Lydia Thompson of Black Crook glory, and her English Blondes.

In the field of sculpture, we are even more flustered, for we feel that Thorwaldsen and Canova were not English by birth, however Victorian they were in spirit.

But truly, this is already a formidable array of high-sounding names, and to it must be added the masters of science, Darwin, Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, Bessemer, and Kelvin, for these are the ones that will be remembered longest. Never perhaps since Elizabeth's time have so many brilliant

reputations lighted up a long half century; and yet we are, to Sir Esme Howard's great sorrow, a little supercilious in our references to the era he would recall. There is no doubt of it.

In all history no monarch, however cruel, however monstrous, however depraved, has been so stigmatized as the Widow of Windsor, by that descriptive adjective, which conjures before our eyes the hideosities of architecture, furniture, bric-a-brac and costume, to which we refer as Victorian. But chivalry, common decency, demands that the good Queen should be absolved of at least part of the blame for the artistic infamy associated with her name. She was, in strict justice, no more culpable than any of our Presidents who reigned coincidentally with her; than Van Buren or Lincoln or Grant or Rutherford B. Hayes, or Chester A. Arthur, if you know who I mean.

James Watt, 1736-1819, was the real culprit; he was the guilty party. From the day he watched the steam escaping from his mother's teakettle, Art was in for a terrible wallop.

James Watt had been gathered to his fathers some years before Victoria came to her throne—but the mighty force which he had harnessed was transforming the old civilization. The steam engine set men's minds spinning; and the world, especially the English-speaking world, suddenly became one vast factory. Englishmen and Americans, being practically-minded, that is to say, a little stupid as to the value of beauty, and by temperament inclined to a greater interest in Morals, Machinery and Money than in any of the Muses, quickly assumed leadership in the industrialization of society. All thought of Art, and particularly of the arts allied to architecture, was eclipsed in the universal preoccupation with machinery.

Though the period seems leisurely and tranquil enough to us now, it was, in fact, one of intense activity. It was an era of construction, physically as well as politically. Building went on at a terrific rate, both in England and America; but the building that absorbed men's interest was the building of the engineer—railroad building, steamboat building, canal building, factory building.

Gwilt's, once famous, but now infrequently consulted encyclopedia, lists many august exponents of the Art of architecture—from Sir Charles Barry to Norman Shaw and Ernest George, including Eastlake, Gilbert Scott, Bodley, Garner, and a host of others; but their works do not thrill us today as they once thrilled their contemporaries. Of these, "Mr. Gilbert Scott, whose industry, conscientiousness and genuine piety, had brought him to the head of his profession," was the shining star in the Victorian firmament. His lifelong zeal for the Gothic style had given him a special prominence; his handiwork was strikingly visible, not only in a multitude

of original buildings, but in most of the cathedrals of England. Protests, indeed, were occasionally raised against his innovations, but Mr. Scott replied with such vigor and uncton, in articles and pamphlets, that not a dean was unconvinced. On one occasion, however, his devotion to Gothic had placed him in an unpleasant situation. The Government offices at Whitehall were to be rebuilt; Mr. Scott competed, and his designs were successful. Naturally they were in the Gothic style, combining "a certain squareness and horizontality of outline," with pillar mullions, gables, high pitched roofs and dormers; and the drawings, as Mr. Scott, himself, observed, "were perhaps the best ever sent into a competition, or nearly so." After the usual difficulties and delays, the work was at last to be put in hand, when there was a change of Government, and Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister. Lord Palmerston at once sent for Mr. Scott. "Well, Mr. Scott," he said in his jaunty way, "I can't have anything to do with this Gothic style. I must insist on your making a design in the Italian manner, which I am sure you can do very cleverly." Mr. Scott was appalled; the style of the Italian Renaissance was not only unsightly, it was positively immoral, and he sternly refused to have anything to do with it. Thereupon Lord Palmerston assumed a fatherly tone. "Quite true; a Gothic architect can't be expected to put up a classical building; I must find some one else." This was intolerable, and Mr. Scott returning home, addressed to the Prime Minister a strongly-worded letter, in which he dwelt upon his position as an Architect, upon his having won two European competitions, his being an A. R. A., a gold medalist of the Institute, and a lecturer at the Royal Academy. Lord Palmerston did not deign to reply. It then occurred to Mr. Scott that, by a judicious mixture, he might, while preserving the essential character of the Gothic, produce a design which would give a superficial impression of the Classic style. He did so; but the Prime Minister declared the new design, "a regular mongrel affair—neither one thing nor t'other", and would have nothing to do with it, either. After

that Mr. Scott found it necessary to recruit for two months to Scarborough "with a course of quinine." He recovered his tone at last, but only at the cost of his convictions. For the sake of his family he felt that it was his unfortunate duty to obey the Prime Minister; and shuddering with horror, he constructed the Government offices in a strictly Renaissance style.*

But the good Queen adored Mr. Scott and chose him to design the Great Memorial to the lamented Albert, and this tour de force epitomizes the taste (or lack of it) of our grandfathers. When the memorial was finished in 1872, the artistic consciousness of the English-speaking world was at its feeblest. For fifty years everything had conspired to smother it. Man had lapsed into a state of innocence, which perhaps he may never know again. Millions and billions had been spent in England and America on bastard Gothic palaces, bastard Renaissance villas, timber tourelles, turrets, orioles and cupolas; plush upholstery, anti macassars, beaded portieres, tortured furniture, fantastic gasoliers, and God knows what what-nots. But millions and billions had been saved, for steam had begun to make us rich. Two generations immune to beauty had laid the foundations of our fortune. Doubtless, our grandfathers died in peace, and looked forward to an eternity of bliss in a Mid-Victorian Heaven.

But children have a way of sneering at the ideals of their parents, and rich children, particularly, are prone to affect superior tastes. In the late nineties, irreverence began to show its face, and the "fin de siecle" young men indulged a propensity for guying that made even the naturally stodgy self-conscious. By the turn of the century, Victorian had become a word of bitter reproach. And now Sir Esme's is almost the only voice to be lifted in its defense. Let us be humble, however, as we remember that James Watt started something that is far from finished. We may even shudder a little ourselves as we anticipate the jibes of our sophisticated posterity.

*Queen Victoria—Lytton Strachey.

Architectural Exhibition—International Hospital Congress

The American Hospital Association requested the Institute to cooperate with it in preparing an architectural exhibition of hospital plans, to be shown in connection with the First International Hospital Congress in Atlantic City, June, 1929.

President Hammond appointed a special committee on Hospital Exhibition with Charles Butler of New York, chairman, and Will G. Corlett, L. M.

Franklin, H. Eldridge Hannaford, Myron Hunt, Albert Kahn, H. Bartol Register, Richard E. Schmidt, and Edward F. Stevens, members.

The Congress and the Exhibition were successful from every point of view. At the request of the Secretary's Office, Mr. Butler prepared a brief report, which follows:

"The Exhibition of hospital plans and photo-

graphs which was assembled by the Institute at the request of the Committee in charge of the First International Hospital Congress was held in the new Convention Hall at Atlantic City during the third week in June. The Institute Committee consisted of nine members scattered throughout the country and through their efforts a fine representative group of drawings, photographs and models was placed before the public and the physicians, about forty architects in all taking part in the exhibition.

"The American Hospital Association set aside for our use a large section of the so-called Educational Exhibit and provided us with very handsome backgrounds on which to hang the drawings. Incidentally, the new Convention Hall, of which Messrs. Cook and Blount are the architects, is a most interesting and beautiful building. Notwithstanding the immense size of the Convention Hall it formed an excellent setting for the relatively small scale exhibits with which it was filled.

"Five of the members of the Committee, Messrs. Schmidt, Hannaford, Franklin, Stevens and the Chairman, made the trip to Atlantic City and unpacked, arranged, supervised the hanging of the drawings and actually refrained from taking all the best places for their own drawings. Incidentally, we were able to extend our hospitality to an architect

from Paris, Paul Nelson, and to a representative of the Department of Public Health of Egypt.

"From the enthusiastic remarks made by those in attendance at the Convention it would appear that the effort was well worth while. The American Hospital Association has expressed officially its thanks to the Institute and states that it believes that this exhibition will have great influence in the future development of hospital work in this country and abroad."

The letter from the American Hospital Association, to which Mr. Butler refers, follows:

"President Louis H. Burlingham, the Secretary of the American Hospital Association, and its Board of Trustees desire to convey to your Committee and to the American Institute of Architects their grateful appreciation for the fine exhibit which you installed at the Atlantic City Convention of the American Hospital Association.

"We feel that this contribution was a very valuable one and that our delegates and guests, particularly the representatives from abroad, received a great deal of value from this exhibit. It was a distinct contribution to the work of hospitals, not only in the United States but abroad, and the influence of your exhibit over present and prospective hospital construction will be of decided benefit."

The American Artists Professional League

A letter, addressed to the Secretary of the Institute, by H. Van Buren Magonigle, gives information concerning the organization of the American Artists Professional League. Mr. Magonigle's letter is quoted in full, and those members who wish to take part in this movement are invited to address the Secretary of the League, Wilfred S. Conrow, 154 West 57th Street, New York, N. Y. Mr. Magonigle's letter follows:

"As a member of the Advisory Council of The American Artists Professional League, I have written a letter to all members of the Institute urging them to become members and identify themselves with the aims of the League.

"The dues are nominal; the movement worthy; our aims are high.

"I quote from the official statement:

"AIMS AND PURPOSES

"For Professional Members, the League aims: To promote a better cooperative spirit between American Artists.

"To foster a high standard of relationship between artists, dealers, clients and the public at large.

"To build up the deserved prestige of American

artists and to encourage the American people to acquire American art.

"For both Professional and Lay Members, the League proposes: The organization of Regional Chapters where artist and layman can meet on common ground, thus helping to promote a better cooperative spirit between American artists and the American public.

"To make American art better known by various means, such as a series of lectures with lantern slides and movie films suitable for the use of Art Associations, Women's Clubs, Colleges and Schools.

"The publication of a periodic Bulletin showing dates of coming exhibitions throughout the country, and topics of interest to both artists and lay members.

"To establish a Library of dated Photographs of American artists' work, biographical data, etc., and the development of such other movements as may from time to time seem wise, and for which funds become available. Exhibitions by the League are not contemplated."

"The interests of the League are not confined to painters only, but embrace the entire field of the arts—laymen also are eligible.

"I hope that every member of the Institute will join the League and strengthen its hands."

As of Interest

Executive Committee Meeting: The summer meeting of the Executive Committee has been postponed from August to September 13 and 14. The place will be the Octagon, Washington, D. C., Communications intended for the Executive Committee should be addressed to the Secretary, to reach The Octagon on or before September 12.

The members of the Executive Committee are the President, C. Herrick Hammond, and the Secretary, Frank C. Baldwin, *ex officio*; also, J. Monroe Hewlett, of New York; William J. Sayward, of Atlanta; and Edwin Bergstrom, of Los Angeles.

The Octagon—Publication Date—Other Details: The Octagon is intended to be a bulletin of Institute affairs. In no sense is it intended to be an architectural magazine, or a substitute for The Journal. The publication goes to press about the 25th day of the month, and is mailed shortly thereafter to each Member, Associate, Junior, Honorary Member, and Honorary Corresponding Member. To serve its purposes the printing of The Octagon is held until the date mentioned, and therefore does not reach distant members until after the first of the ensuing month. As may be noted the publication varies in quantity—and in quality—from month to month, depending upon various factors, among which are the activities of the Institute, the Chapters, and the Committees, and upon seasonal changes. The first six numbers, January to June, of this year, contained from twelve to twenty pages each. It is probable that the next three numbers will contain but eight pages. The appropriation carried on the Budget of the Institute to cover the cost of producing The Octagon during the year 1929 is \$4,900.00. Against this amount are charged all manufacturing and distributing costs, and a full share of all overhead expenses at the Octagon.

There are two regular contributors to The Octagon; Louis La Beume of St. Louis, and Hubert G. Ripley of Boston. They need no introduction, as both conducted columns in The Journal during 1928. Their articles appear in The Octagon on alternate months and have brought words of appreciation and interest from many members.

It is suggested to Chapter Secretaries that they read The Octagon; in fact, every member should read it or glance through it each month, to verify the success—or failure—of the ambition of the Secretary's Office to have at least one valuable idea in each number.

Communications from Chapter Officers and individual members are invited, and will be published if of broad interest—but not too long.

The Annuary and The Proceedings: As noted in the June number, last page, the Annuary and Proceedings will be sent to those members who requested copies.

The Annuary will contain, as usual, the complete personnels of all the Standing and Special Committees. There was a total of 483 Committee appointments made this year by President Hammond. This large number is accounted for in part by the fact that various Committees have a representative in each Chapter. The willingness of so many members to take part in Committee work, to give of their time and ability to the activities of the Institute, is good cause for confidence in the future.

Communications to Committees—To the Institute: Communications may be addressed direct to Committee Chairmen by Chapters or Members having problems or questions coming under the jurisdiction of an Institute Committee. In addition, there should be great freedom in addressing inquiries, or comments, or suggestions, or complaints direct to the Secretary of the Institute at the Octagon.

The Institute does not always move rapidly, but it has been moving steadily—forward—since 1857. No communication addressed to the Institute is ever disregarded, and a definite reply can be depended upon in every instance, though it may not say, in every case, that which is hoped for.

The Henry Adams Prize: Design placed first: Mr. W. W. Beisheim of Columbia University was the winner and thereby received a check for \$100.00 from the Henry Adams fund.

Design placed second: Mr. E. I. Love of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design, 304 East 44th St., New York City, won second prize and thereby received a check for \$50.00 from the Henry Adams fund.

Study of Rights in Art and Invention Urged: An investigation by the Senate Committee on Patents to determine whether adequate legal protection now exists for the proprietary rights of artists and inventors in their artistic creations or inventions, has been proposed by Senator King, of Utah.

Senator King has introduced a resolution (S. Res. 101), which has been referred to the Committee on Patents, in which it is stated that such rights are not now protected satisfactorily, and that they should be.

Southern Architectural and Industrial Arts Exposition: In a letter from William H. Lord, Regional Director of the South Atlantic Division, to Chapter Presidents, he says:

"The Southern Architectural and Industrial Arts Exposition to be held in Memphis, Tenn., Nov. 9-16th, and the full meeting of the Board of Directors

of the Institute to be held during the Exposition week in Memphis offer an unusual chance for a joint Regional meeting of the South Atlantic and Gulf Divisions.

"This Exposition presents an opportunity to the Southern Architects that they have never before

had, and the small outlay to the individual Chapters (\$2.00 per member from Chapter funds) to help defray preliminary and incidental expenses should be gladly granted by each Chapter."

Further information on this subject will appear in a future number.

With The Chapters

Publicity: At the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the New Jersey Chapter, discussion took place as to the possibility of conducting an Educational program in the Newark Ledger and the Newark Call similar in nature to the page which is being published by the New York Tribune under the guidance of William Harmon Beers, Chairman of the Institute Committee on Public Information. The matter was put in the hands of the Chapter Publicity Committee.

Committee of Honor Awards: At the May meeting of the Kansas City Chapter, Samuel W. Bihr, as chairman of the Chapter's Committee of Honor Awards, reported on a proposed system of Awards to be made by the Chapter to architects designing outstanding work in different classes of buildings. In order not to conflict with the recommendations of the Institute Committee on Honor Awards (David J. Witmer, chairman) and its report to the Institute convention, President Tanner appointed a special committee of which Mr. Bihr will be chairman. This committee will make a full investigation during the summer and report to the Chapter at the first meeting in the fall.

The Architect and the Draftsman: The Wisconsin Chapter has an annual dinner for the architects and their draftsmen. A report of the last one follows: "On Friday evening, June 14th, architects and their draftsmen guests, totaling 84, gathered at a typical father and son affair at the City Club. It was the third annual attempt of the Chapter along these lines and it is needless to say that these affairs are improving each year.

"President Hengels enlightened the boys on the history and mysteries of Washington, and from his

knowledge of the subject, they were almost ready to believe that he was not only making a life study of Napoleon, but of Washington as well.

"Finally the group adjourned to the large dining room where films were shown of the most beautiful city in the country, one that architects can be particularly proud of because of the fact that their profession has played so large a part in its making. The evening was one well spent, thanks to Roger Kirchoff and his committee."

On the Competence of Architects: The Nebraska Chapter Bulletin, for June, says, in editorial style: "The man about to build is apt to be ignorant of the really important qualifications of Architects. He is likely to select one known to him socially, or one who has been recommended by a business acquaintance, without taking into account his talents, ability, and preparation for the work he is to perform.

"Architects are neither licensed nor registered in Nebraska, although this practice is common in other states. Under present conditions any person is privileged to use the title Architect, regardless of his fitness.

"Membership in the American Institute of Architects is in some measure a badge of capability, although in all fairness many competent men are not yet members. Careful scrutiny of an architect's school and office training, and examination of work which he has performed are perhaps the best gauge of his ability.

"Do not choose an architect any less carefully than you do your lawyer or your doctor. Find out what the architect has done. His record is an open book. He cannot conceal his failures."

Members Elected From May 15, 1929, to June 30, 1929

<i>Boston Chapter</i>	- - - -	ERIC T. HUDDLESTON, WILLIAM J. MOONEY
<i>Cincinnati Chapter</i>	- - - -	RUSSELL S. POTTER
<i>Georgia Chapter</i>	- - - -	RICHARD W. ALGER
<i>New York Chapter</i>	- - - -	FRANCIS LORNE, CHARLES AUGUST SUSSDORFF
<i>Oklahoma Chapter</i>	- - - -	PHILIP ARMOUR WILBER
<i>Rhode Island Chapter</i>	- - - -	SAMUEL W. CHURCH

