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THE PENGUIN OSBERT LANCASTER

Osbert Lancaster was born in 1908 and educated at Charterhouse and Lincoln College, Oxford. He has been cartoonist for the *Daily Express* since 1939. He was with the Foreign Office News Department in 1940, was attached to the British Embassy in Athens from 1944 to 1946, and has been a lecturer in Art at Liverpool University. He has designed the sets for opera at Sadlers Wells, Covent Garden, and Glyndebourne, as well as for ballet and theatre. He has published many books, among them *Façades and Faces*, *Private Views*, *Signs of the Times*, and *All Done from Memory*, an autobiography.

The Penguin Osbert Lancaster

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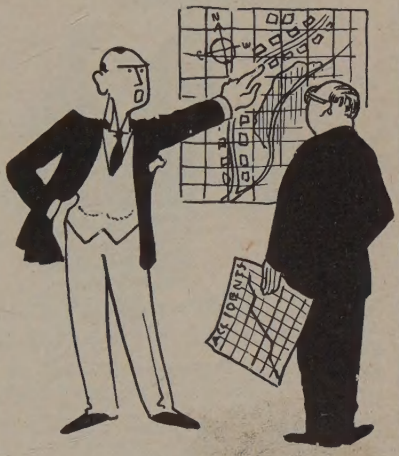
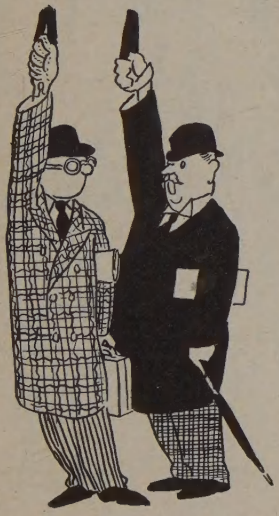


'There's only one solution: we must by-pass the by-pass.'

19.i.39



'This year we're taking our holiday between the late spring and early autumn crises.'

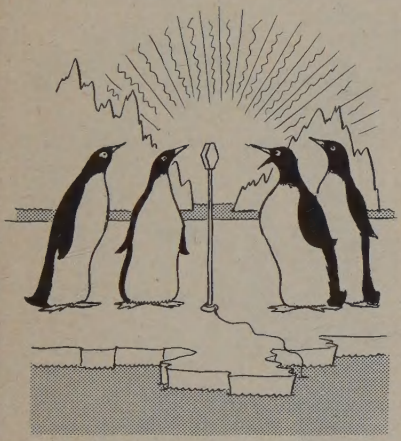
9.ii.39

'Shareholders will readily appreciate the enormous advantage it is for a railway company to have on its board two directors who were personally acquainted with the late Robert Stephenson.'

24.iii.39

'I tell you frankly – if this session is prolonged over Goodwood it'll only give Hitler an undue sense of his own importance.'

25.vii.39

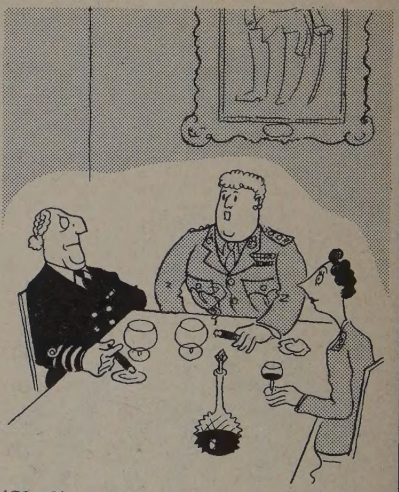


'We shall remain strictly neutral and defend our territorial integrity at all costs.'

16.iv.40

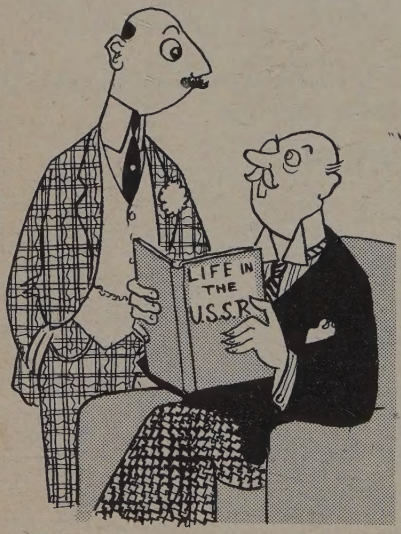
'Of course at the moment it's still just a suspicion.'

31.iii.41



'Shall we join the gentlemen?'

26.vi.40

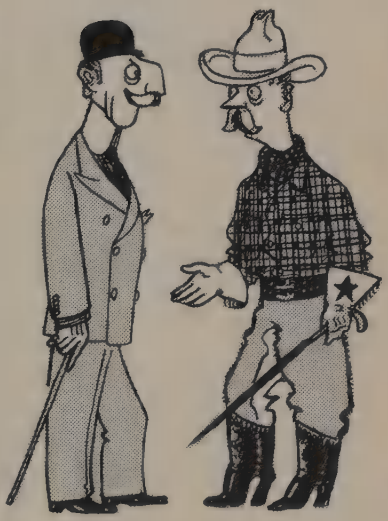


'Which are we, Carruthers – workers, peasants, or intellectuals?'

18.vii.41

'Frankly, Meadows, can you see me in a utility suit?'

24.iii.42



'If it weren't for the "Bundles for Britain", I should be stark naked.'

7.vi.41

'If you're waiting for a No. 73, and I'm waiting for my catsmeat ration, and she's waiting to see *Gone with the Wind*, what sort of queue is this anyway?'

3.x.42

'Sometimes, Ulrich, I get so depressed that even thinking about the next war doesn't cheer me up.'

20.iii.44

'I hope, Wainscote, you'll be a little more careful than you were in 1918. Next time we don't want to find them full of moth again.'

13.ix.44

'Brightly shone the moon that night,
Tho' the frost was cruel,
Extra brightly just to spite
The Minister of Fue-oo-el.'

24.xii.46

'Once and for all, Martha, will you kindly stop asking what I would have done had my flagship sprung a leak in mid-Atlantic?'

4.ii.47

'One can't even put one's head in a gas-oven with the smallest prospect of success.'

31.i.47

'If you ask me, Maudie Littlehampton is wearing one of her husband's old parachutes.'

18.vi.47

'Archdeacon or no Archdeacon, a Doctor of Divinity still ain't a doctor within the meaning of the Act.'

14.i.48

'Willy Littlehampton says that if taxation increases any further he's decided to present himself to the National Trust as a monument of historic importance.'

15.viii.47

'I've just made the intewesting discovewy that Mr Bevan's national teeth aren't weally up to coping with Mr Stwachey's national beef.'

6.vii.48

'Now, by courtesy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Muriel herself is coming to the microphone to confess to you that she is quite unable to distinguish between Government-controlled, prefabricated National cattle-cake and the finest grass.'

24.i.49

'It's a fine state of ecclesiastical affairs when the Dean of Canterbury believes everything he reads in *Pravda*, and the Bishop of Birmingham doesn't believe half he reads in the Bible.'

1.iii.49

'I may be underestimating slightly, but on my reckoning this makes the seventeenth "most important mission in history" since 1945.'

1.ix.49

'I assure you, miss, that no one's more eager than I am to "hold the scales evenly balanced", but, try as I may, I can just never remember what Mr Attlee looks like.'

12.i.50

'Oh, we're enjoying every minute of it – he's bitten the Tory, been sick over the Socialist, and now I can hardly wait to see what he's going to do to the Liberal!'

20.ii.50

'Darling, doesn't it strike you as rather sinister that so far nobody seems to be making any effort to attract the Upper-Class vote?'

30.i.50

'Allow me to remind you, Miss Maltravers, that if Michelangelo had knocked off work every time there was a trifling power-cut the Sistine Chapel would never have been finished!'

23.xi.51

'Well, and how's little Miss Mossadeg this morning – still determined to get along without foreign technicians?'

14.ix.51

'Darling Sir George, do tell me just what makes you think we've got a foreign policy for the missing diplomats to tell the Russians the secrets of about!'

13.vi.51

'But Willy darling, if it's bad form to make jokes about Americans, and tactless to ask diplomats where they're going for their holidays, and breach of privilege to criticize the Government, what on earth is one going to talk about?!'

20.vi.51

'I suppose if I'd told you it was by Sartre you'd have thought it wonderful!'

20.xii.51

'Well, it's certainly a great comfort to know that fares still aren't high enough to make them worth the conductresses' while coming upstairs for!'

6.iii.52

'and here is Leonardo's supreme masterpiece – the Mona Lisa!! Are you, too, afraid to open your mouth when you smile?'

20.vi.53

' – and one final word of advice to you, officer – remember Beria!'

5.i.54

'It's not that I'm defeatist, Achmet, it's just that I can't get rid of an uneasy feeling that this has been tried before.'

18.v.51

'There you go, never giving a thought to listener reaction – now I ask you, is this the time or place for "In a Persian Market"?!'

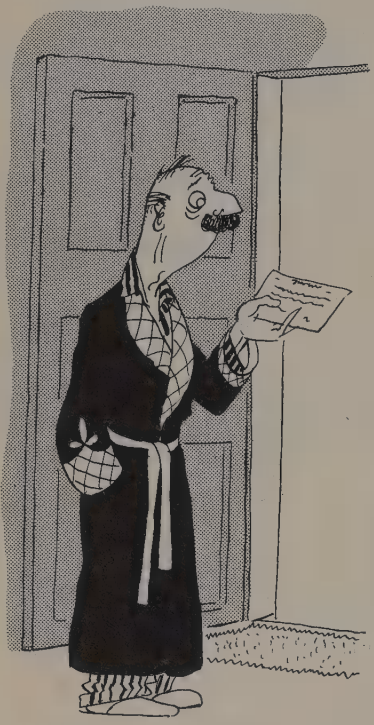
27.vi.51

'Policy? But, Mr Chairman, do we really have to have a policy? After all, no one else has got one.'

11.x.51

'O Willy darling, please don't be cross, but such a pathetic little man came to the door and asked me to stand as a Liberal candidate that I said "Yes".'

22.ix.51



'SEND ONE HUNDRED FIFTY POUNDS IMMEDIATEST STOP DEPOSIT LOST LABOUR CANDIDATE PONTOON STOP MAUDIE'

13.x.51

'I suppose it's all really a desperate effort to try to attract a better class of Member!'

17.ii.54

' – and so her two repressed and emotionally unfulfilled elder sisters forced poor little Cinderella to conform to the behaviour pattern of a socially under-privileged domestic worker.'

25.xi.52

'Look, Maudie! The poor fella's broken his cast!!'

24.vii.55

'Didn't I tell you we'd rather die than appear on television wearing our bifocals!!'

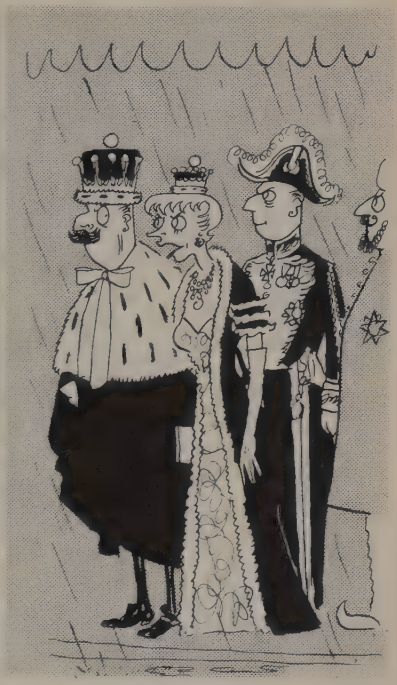
7.vi.52

'In any case it's certain to work out a whole lot cheaper than going to the Abbey by bus!'

6.i.53

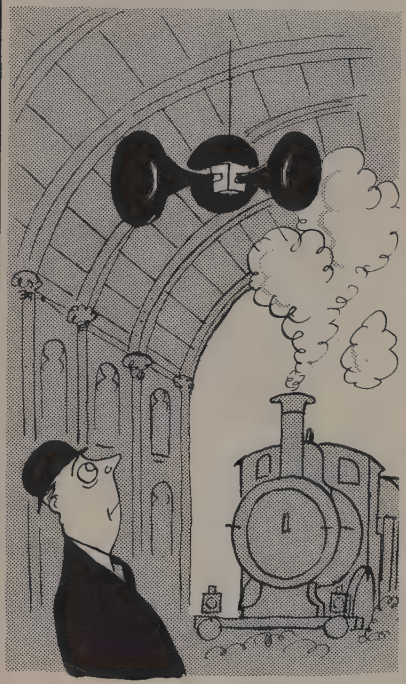
'You know – the size which fits into an earl's coronet and still leaves room for a packet of biscuits and an apple!'

29.v.53



'How on earth *can* I pick up my skirt when that ghastly little Viscountess in the row behind kicked my shoes out of reach!!'

3.vi.53



'In 1962 the train now standing at Platform 6 will be air-conditioned, radar-equipped, and faster than sound, but tonight it will be running a leetle behind time!'

29.i.55

'– And you might like to suggest to the Transport Commission that after reconsidering your wages they should toy with the idea of buying some engines which work in the winter!'

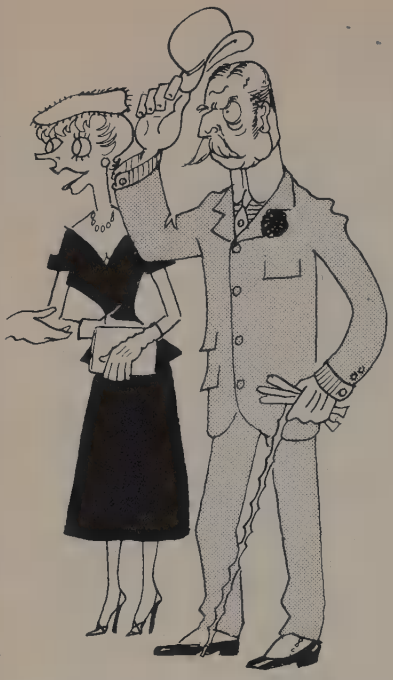
6.i.55

'– and don't forget what I said about not getting plastered before the Season's properly started!'

8.iii.55

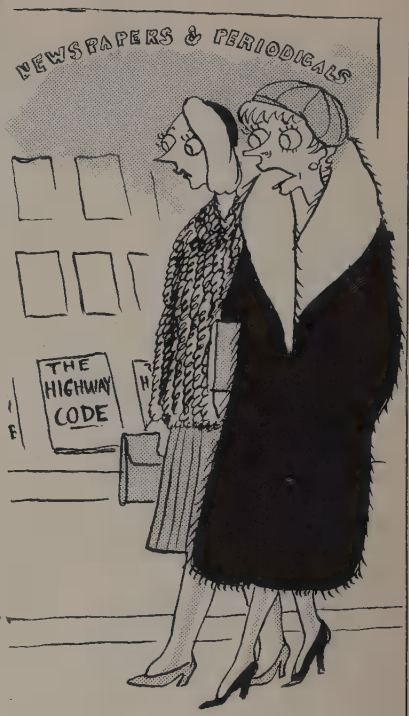
'Ernesto's not a penniless ice-creamer! He comes of a very ancient Roman family and owns half the Espressos in Knightsbridge!'

22.iii.55



'Darling, you must meet my Uncle Bertie – he's a genuine Teddy boy!'

20.vii.54



'Well, darling, I've not actually read it, but it's been a "must" on my library list for almost as long as *Paradise Lost* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.'

25.iii.55

'For Heaven's sake, child, do at least try and look as though you're enjoying yourself!'

29.iv.55

You know, darling, I'm just a teeny bit worried about Jennifer these days – she seems to get so easily overtired.'

29.vi.55

'A fat lot of good a classical education seems to have done you!'

10.vi.55

'Let me recall the warning I gave when your lordships decided to abolish the rack. "This", I said, "is the thin end of the wedge"!'

11.vii.56

'I do wish the P.M. would make up his mind about the Cabinet re-shuffle.– the strain of not knowing whom to drop and whom to take up is almost killing me!'

14.x.55

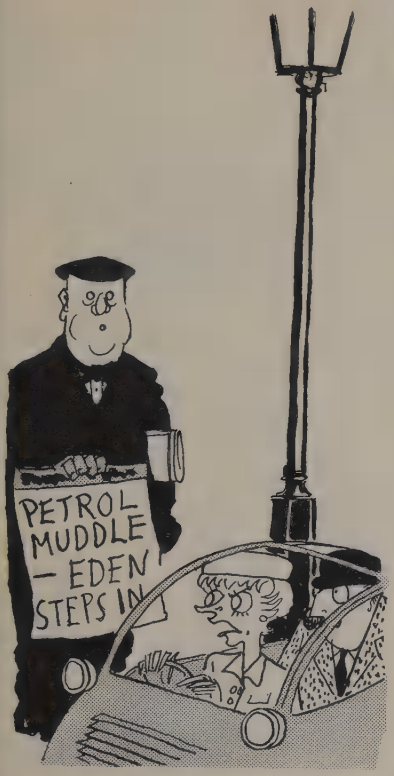
31.x.55

'Oh, to hell with Nancy Mitford! What I always say is – if it's me it's U!'

1.v.56

'I wonder, could you possibly spare a foolish virgin half a gallon?'

4.xii.56



'Unfortunately, that's not the only thing he's stepped in!'

3.i.57

'Of course, I know there weren't petrol coupons in Alexander the Great's time – all I said was if there had been he wouldn't have forgotten them!!'

1.i.57

'Daddy darling, who's your favourite character in history?'
'Herod.'

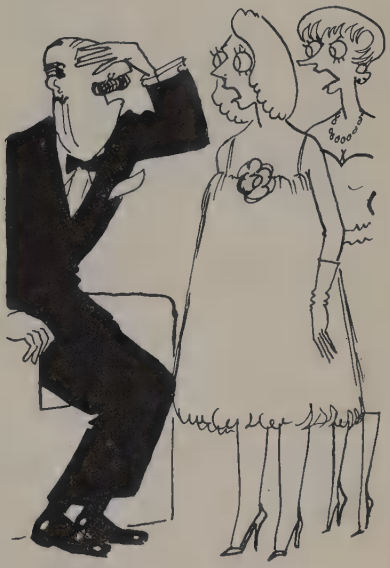
15.xi.57

'I wouldn't worry, darling – she's probably radar-controlled.'

4.ii.59

'No matter what happens in Paris, Miss Windrush – you will always be the Dior of Nuneaton.'

14.i.58



'My dear Willy, if only you weren't so hopelessly out of touch you wouldn't go leaping to ridiculous conclusions!'

29.v.58

'And why would poor ould Ireland not be having an H-bomb of her own?'

11.xii.57

'Well, right now that may mean either half an inch on the hemline or barricades on the boulevards!'

28.i.60

'One does not wish to sound unecumenical, but really, do they have to wear those ridiculous hats?!'

21.ii.59

'Darling, did you realize that the Common Market constitutes a major threat to British cooking?'

24.vi.61

'Remember the old days, before we started worrying about those fifteen million viewers, when we did this run in ten minutes flat?'

7.v.60

'1, Vatican City; 2 . . . '

30.viii.60

'Don't say I said so, but I have it on excellent authority that that fellow Tshombe's been whiteballed for Black's!'

10.viii.60

'Do me a favour will you, lady? Let's leave Mr Lumumba right out of this.'

31.viii.60

'What I particularly admired about the debate was the way that every speaker managed to give the impression that he personally had never met a homosexual in his life.'

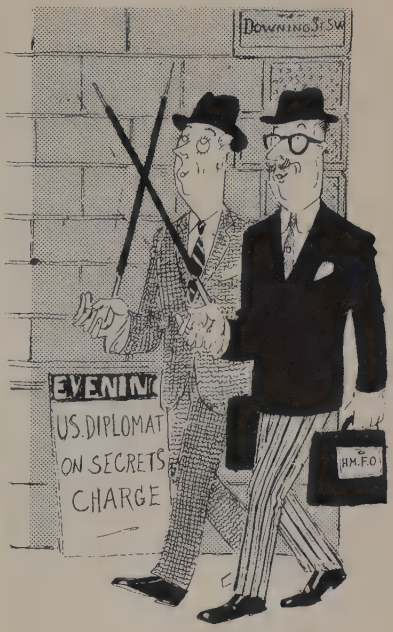
1.vii.60

'It's the Foreign Office – they want to know whether you can possibly remember that frightfully funny story you told them at the time of Burgess and Maclean.'

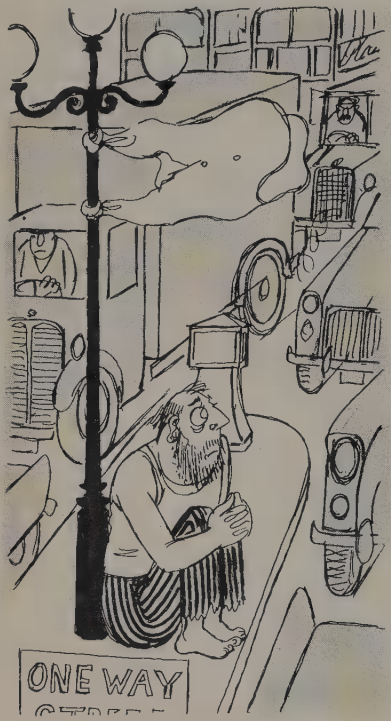
23.iii.61

'Pomfret, when I gave you that American file and told you what you could do with it, just what did you do with it?'

31.v.61



14.vi.61



'Am I correct in assuming that membership of the Common Market will entitle this country to the free and unrestricted use of the guillotine?'

10.x.61

'It's positively uncanny how every major mess our statesmen get us into always turns out in the end to be, morally speaking, our fault.'

12.x.61

'Maud dear, pray explain to me exactly what it is out of which dear Prince Philip is so eager that we should all take our fingers.'

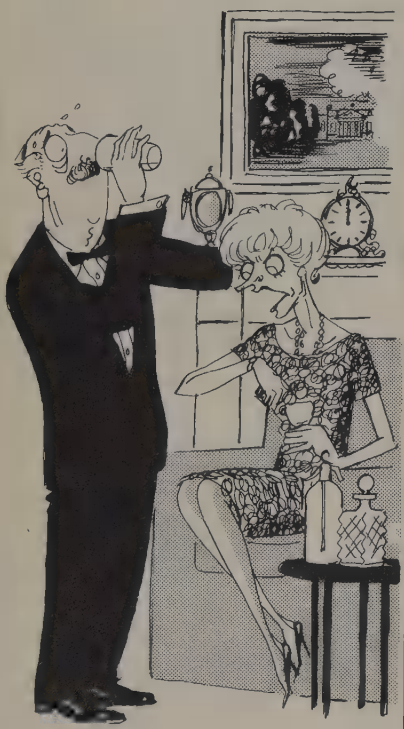
19.x.61

'If you ask me it would serve 'em both right if we handed the Congo straight back to gallant little Belgium.'

1.xii.61

'And another thing, Leofric – we should all be grateful if you would kindly stop referring to your fellow Magi as the Afro-Asian bloc!'

22.xii.61



'Five-four-three-two-one-LENT!'

8.iii.62

What a comfort to think, Whortleberry, that all the splendid enthusiasms of our youth are still undimmed – Disarmament, the Reform of the Lords, the Liberal Revival!'

15.iii.62

'Of course, without a saliva test one can't be absolutely sure, but I think I've been doped!'

19.vi.62

'Ah'll gie you an example of what constitutes "racial incitement" – makin' dirty cracks aboot Glasgow Rangers!'

15.viii.62

'Honestly, I daren't! My husband works for Lord Beaverbrook!'

13.ix.62

''Pon my word, Barnstaple, it must have been worse than the Athenaeum on Boat-race night!'

13.x.62

'We must all hope for all our sakes that the voice which breathed o'er Eden doesn't start breathing o'er the White House.'

23.x.62

'You wouldn't by any chance be working in a highly confidential job at the Admiralty, would you?'

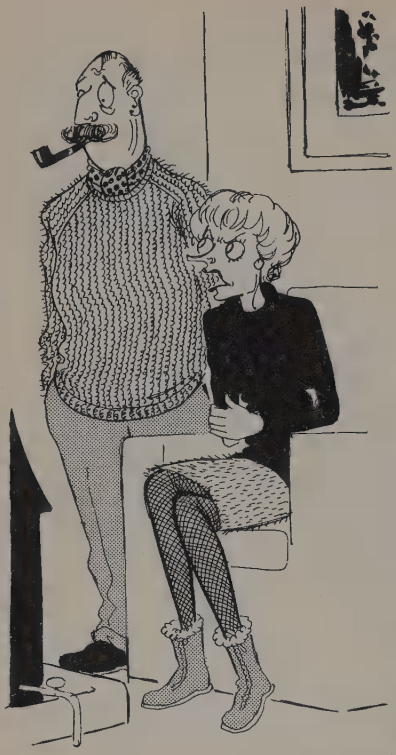
6.xi.62

'For some of us, m'lady, every year is national productivity year.'

23.xi.62

'British scientists, madam, are second to none, and if only the Government would produce adequate funds for research we could produce a weapon that would be just as obsolete as the Americans' in half the time!'

19.xii.62

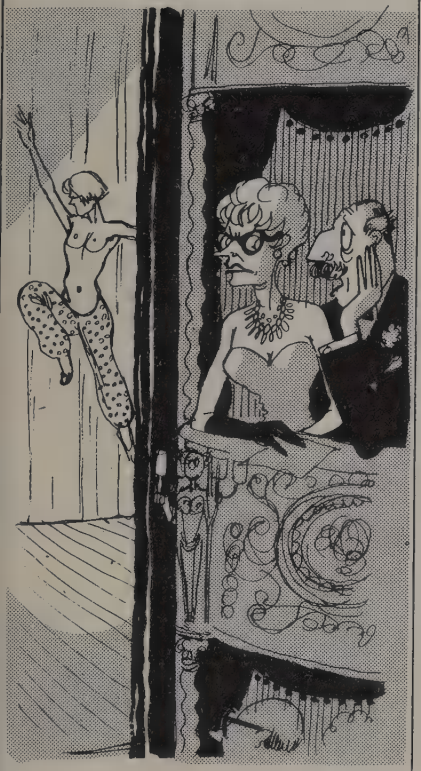


'Well, if the power's not off, you might turn on the news and let us hear how our self-indulgence and lack of fibre are wrecking the Gas Board's carefully worked out winter schedule.'

24.i.63

'Tell me, Canon, are you as bored with Premarital Intercourse as I am?'

23.ii.63



Is that the one we swopped for Burgess?'

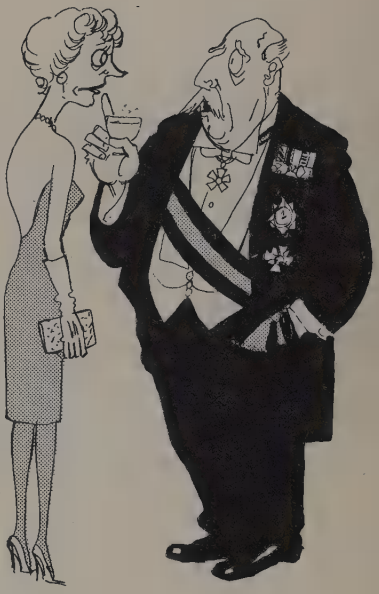
19.iii.63

'If the Civil Service goes on increasing at the present rate it looks as though the unemployment problem will be solved well before the election!'

20.iii.63

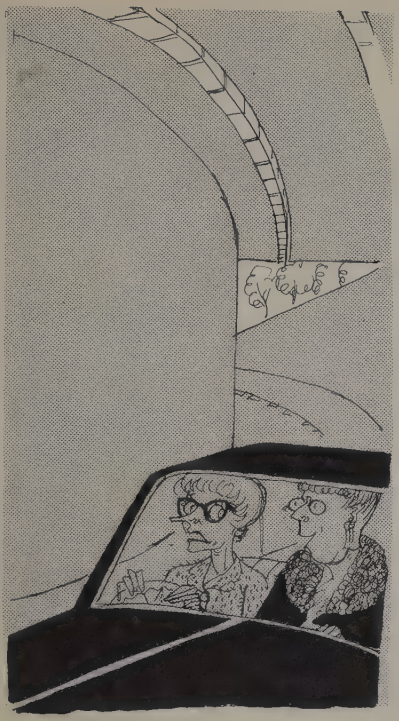
'Restraint! Restraint! It's not one of ours!'

3.iv.63



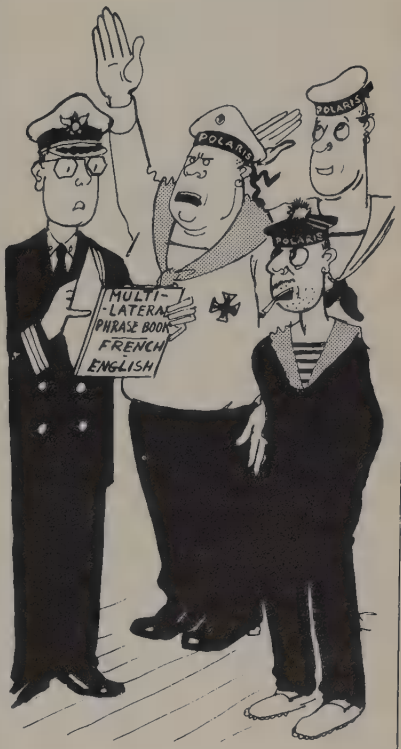
'Every now and again I'm overwhelmed by a terrible feeling that life has passed me by – forty years in the Foreign Service and not a single indecent proposal!'

26.iv.63



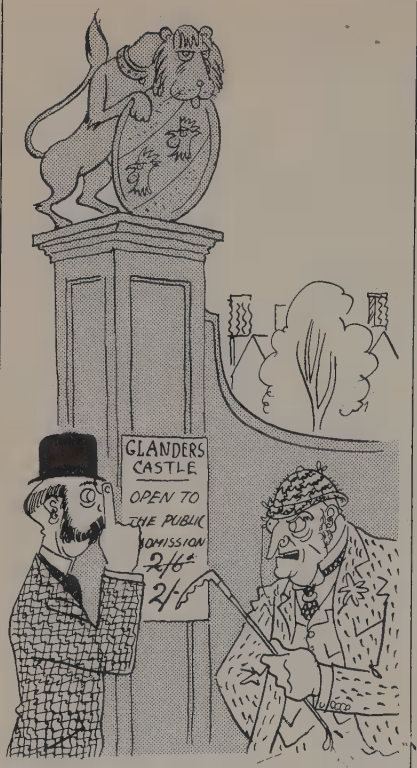
'Tell me, dear, is this the underpass up which Mr Marples was so warmly recommended to stuff his speech?'

2.v.63



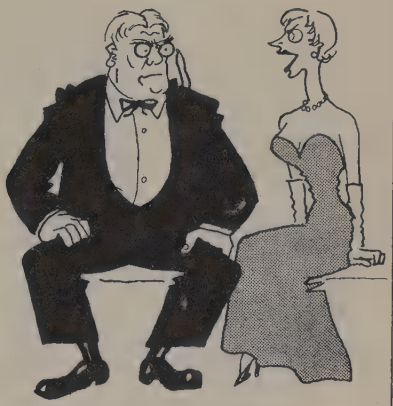
'Jawohl, Herr Kapitän!'
'Aye, aye, Sir!'
'Merde!'

21.v.63



'Knock off another sixpence, Venables! If Willy Littlehampton's determined on a price-war, he shall have it!'

'What I can't get straight about your civil war, Colonel, is whether George Washington was on Abraham Lincoln's side or Vivien Leigh's.'



'Aristocratic, uncontemporary, and effete I *may* be, Senator, but *privileged* – NO!!!'


GOD IS LOVE


THE NEW STATESMAN

Visiting the Nursery *circa* 1900

Visiting the Nursery *circa* 1950

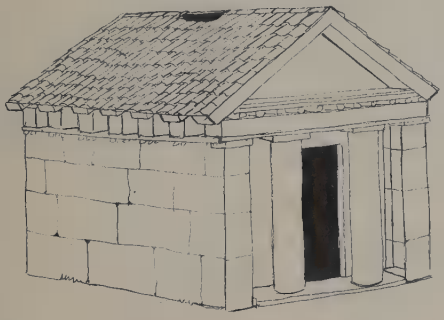
The Wedding

Earliest, Earlier, Early

When the rude forefathers of Western Civilization, towards the end of the second millennium B.C., first came sweeping down into the Mediterranean world they were still, to all intents and purposes, in the wigwam stage. The average family occupied, admittedly for short periods, a circular hole in the ground surrounded by a low dry-stone wall on top of which was erected a tent-type roof of pine branches. (Similar shelters are today inhabited during the summer by Vlach nomads in many parts of Greece.) But the Minoan householders whom they displaced were living in highly developed, split-level residences complete with the best plumbing which Europe was to know for more than three thousand years, of which the plans can be reconstructed with a certain degree of accuracy but of which the elevations remain a matter for speculation. (This has not, of course, deterred numerous archaeologists from producing any number of the most detailed restorations.)

From the residents the newcomers borrowed little save the flat lintel supported by wooden pillars. The art of thatching having developed fairly naturally from the old pine-branch roof they were able before long to evolve a simple formula for larger buildings by combining an open porch, supported on pillars over the entrance, with the semi-circular end derived from the original pit-dwellings. This was known as the *megaron* and is the direct ancestor of all subsequent places of assembly from the Parthenon to Coventry Cathedral.

In the course of time the original dry-stone walls were replaced by walls of brick or dressed stone, still unmortared until very late in classical times, and the roof was covered in tiles which involved an abandonment of the apsidal end as the technical difficulties of covering a semi-circular roof with tiles remained insurmountable for several centuries to come. Gradually timber, always at a premium in the Hellenic world, was abandoned in favour of stone, but various traces of the technique involved in wooden construction, such as the projecting beam-ends with their securing pegs, were retained as decorative adjuncts carried out in stone for as long as the Doric style continued to flourish. Thus early, heedless of what Messrs Corbusier and Gropius were going to say, did the first, though not perhaps the least accomplished, of European architects light-heartedly compromise with the strict principles of structural truth.



Very Early English

The earliest mode of building employed in England was one in which everything, including shelter, was sacrificed to obtain an effect of rugged grandeur. Simple in design, the principal buildings in this style nevertheless presented a series of exceedingly tricky problems of construction, and the labour and ingenuity required to manoeuvre the vast monoliths into position must have been considerable. The successful achievement of such feats (without the assistance of any cranes and machinery) indicates the existence, even in that remote age, of that spirit of dogged perseverance and tenacity which has done so much to make British architecture what it is today. Incidentally it is interesting to note that even then British architects were actuated by a profound faith, which has never subsequently wavered, in the doctrine that the best architecture is that which involves the most trouble.

The actual date of such erections as that represented on the opposite page has never been accurately determined; the building in the left foreground, however, can with some degree of confidence be assigned to the second or third decade of the twentieth century A.D.


ICES

Norman

It used once to be the fashion, when discussing the domestic architecture of the Normans, to stress, with a certain degree of high-minded relish, the considerable sacrifice of comfort in the interests of security. 'Those vast walls, three foot thick, those slits of windows, that damp unhealthy moat, what a fearful testimony they provide,' a previous generation of social historians were wont to exclaim, 'of the unappeasable bellicosity of our rude forefathers!' Today, while still agreeing wholeheartedly with these conclusions, those whose memories of life in England during 1940–1 are still vivid find it less easy to maintain that happy note of cultured superiority.

Nevertheless it remains perfectly true that the Normans were forced by the prevailing insecurity to live in small isolated communities protected, from the irredentist tendencies of the Anglo-Saxon peasantry and the too easily aroused enmity of their fellow barons, by outworks and bastions the size and thickness of which inevitably reduced the living space. Thus in the majority of castles there was one communal living-room and one only, the Great Hall, in which the lord and his higher retainers lived, ate, and slept. In a few of the more elaborate examples there were one or two sleeping apartments hollowed out of the thickness of the wall for the ladies of the household. In all cases, however, the lower servants slept in the stables.

However intolerable such a state of affairs may seem to us, given the conditions of the eleventh century, this architecture was purely functional. And, moreover, in at least one case it retains its function in the twentieth, for the presence of a large castle in the centre of one of the principal cities of Wales, retained and treasured for antiquarian reasons, was acknowledged during the late war to have saved the town council large sums in the provision of air raid shelters.

Gothic

During the Middle Ages the original Spartan simplicity of the Norman home suffered progressive modification, and if no very high degree of comfort was finally attained, at the end of the period the houses of the rich compared very favourably with, say, the average first-class waiting-room in a modern provincial railway station.

In the course of time increasing security from internal disturbance led to the gradual abandonment of all but the most modest fortifications – a carp-stocked moat and a few token battlements – so that it was possible to increase both the number and size of the rooms. Nevertheless the hall retained its old importance and the majority of the household continued to spend most of their time beneath its now rather more elaborate and considerably larger roof.

A taste for privacy, however, was beginning to emerge, and in the wealthier homes the master and mistress, and occasionally their children, had small bedrooms of their own and there was frequently a parlour, called a solar, in which the ladies of the house were accustomed to occupy themselves between meals. At the same time the upper classes began to interest themselves in the question of decoration and the plain whitewashed walls of their Norman ancestors were hidden behind tapestries, painted canvas or frescoes according to the financial resources of the householder. In most houses the hall was still heated by means of a brazier in the middle of the room, the smoke from which was optimistically assumed to disappear through a hole in the ceiling, and it was not until the very end of the Middle Ages that the fireplace and chimney became anything like general, even among the well-to-do. Needless to say when this novelty-first appeared it was roundly attacked by the conservative on moral grounds; the comparative absence of smoke secured by this new device was bitterly regretted by all those, and they were as numerous then as now, who clung to the old English belief that if a thing is unpleasant it is automatically good for you. An immediate and shameful weakening in the moral fibre of the nation was confidently predicted.

Apart from these few improvements the home life of the period was much the same as it had been in Norman times. Glass was still very rare and the wooden lattices, which appeared at this date, let in considerably more wind than light and the floor was covered with rushes which were changed at the most infrequent intervals – an unhappy arrangement since, as in all English country houses at every period, there were far too many dogs.

Tudor

The coming of the Tudors coincided with the beginnings of the Renaissance, but not for a long time was visible in England anything more than the first faint flicker of the dawn that in Italy had already ended the long nightmare of the Middle Ages. Thus the Tudor home in its fittings and furniture was only a rather more elaborate version of that inhabited by the previous three generations. The timber-work supporting the roof became ever more complex but the construction remained the same in principle; tapestry shared the honour of being the most fashionable wall-covering with carved panelling; and although carpets were imported from the East in larger numbers, they were still used as table coverings and wall decorations and never as carpets. However, the number of rooms increased rapidiy, and although the Great Hall still retained its importance, it tended to be reserved for meals and ceremonial occasions instead of being used as the general living-room for the whole household day in and day out. But towards the end of the period political events were the indirect cause of a considerable alteration in the generally accepted plan of a gentleman's mansion.

When Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries he presented their buildings to those whom he considered the most deserving of his friends and who thereupon set about converting them into country seats. Now throughout the Middle Ages the standard of comfort and convenience in the religious establishments, with the exception perhaps of such strict orders as the Carthusians who had never abandoned their original austerity, had been far higher than that prevailing in even the most palatial private house; moreover, the number and size of the principal rooms was, of course, far greater. The result was that the English nobility and gentry suddenly acquired a taste for size and grandeur in their residences that they never subsequently lost.

However, it must be admitted that in the process of conversion the average monastery lost much of its original comfort and practically all its convenience, but the desire for such things remained and flourished, and enlightened persons such as Erasmus started bitterly to complain about the general untidiness, beastliness, and smelliness of the average English home.

Elizabethan

Queen Elizabeth's grandfather was Lord Mayor of London and the immediate ancestry of the majority of her nobility was, from the point of view of the College of Heralds, even less memorable. In fact the Elizabethans were, almost to a man, *nouveaux riches*; and in the decoration of their homes they employed all those symbols of recently acquired culture with a heartiness and an abandon which, when displayed by more recent generations, have seldom failed to provoke the polite merriment of the cultured readers of *Punch*. The typical figure of that golden age was not, it is sobering to reflect, the dashing cloak-flinging figure of historical fiction, but none other than our old friend Sir Georgeous Midas.

In the home the immediate effect of this changeover in the seats of the mighty was to produce an atmosphere of oppressive and overwhelming richness. The comparatively simple linen-fold panelling of Tudor times gave way to acres of woodwork carved and chiselled with patterns of quite staggering complication and hideousness; no sooner had a more plentiful supply of glass led to the installation of larger and more numerous windows than a rich gloom was at once brought back by the practice of filling every window-pane with dubious heraldry; and although new methods of construction rendered unnecessary the presence of those pendant nodules so beloved of the builders of fan-vaults and hammer-beam roofs, their place was promptly taken by clusters of disturbing and quite unnecessary plaster stalactites. Decoration for decoration's sake was the motto of the Elizabethans and every available inch of wall, ceiling and furniture was covered with lozenges, strap-work, heraldry and all the as yet completely undigested classical bric-à-brac of the Italian Renaissance.

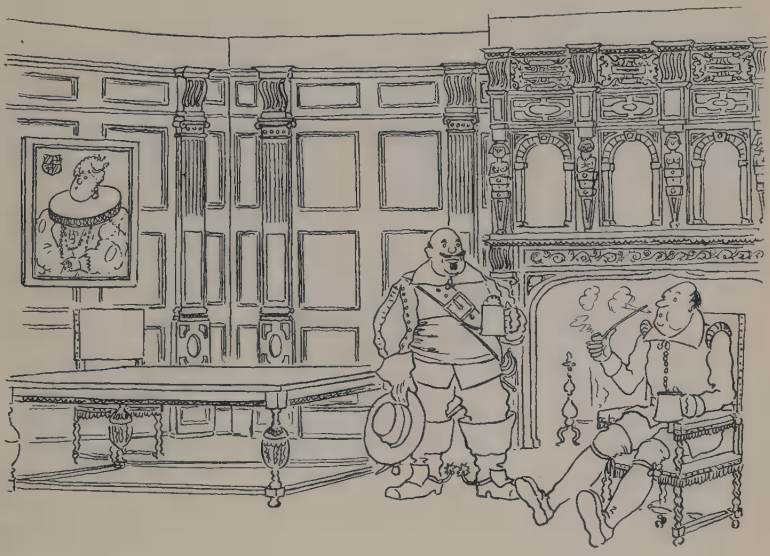
However, in one respect at least the period marked an advance. Although the decoration of the Elizabethan house was in no way an improvement on that of the previous generation, the plan was markedly superior. The Great Hall while retaining its central position loses much of its former importance and at meal-times the family now abandon its draughty wastes to the steward and upper servants in favour of the cosier if less impressive winter-parlour. Moreover, the appearance of a grand staircase in addition to one or two of the old circular variety renders the first floor both more accessible and more popular, and it is at once further enriched by the presence of a long gallery, an impressive apartment used for exercise on wet days and the display of numerous paintings of well-dressed but frequently mythical ancestors.

Jacobean

No great change of style marks the division between the reigns of Elizabeth and her cousin James, and in the realm of interior decoration the passage of time is only indicated by a progressive and welcome simplification. The new nobility were slowly becoming accustomed to their role and were no longer so conscious of the need to mark their transition into the ranks of the upper classes by an overwhelming display of real wealth and bogus heraldry. As a result the average Jacobean interior is not, save in the region of the fireplace, quite so oppressively a background against which the contemporary woodcarver and plasterer can display unhindered their grisly talents. Moreover, although the average local builder's understanding of the four orders and other elements of classical architecture, which he acquired from cheap textbooks translated from the Italian, remained shaky in the extreme, there is evidence of a growing mastery. The proportions are still almost invariably wrong but they are not quite so wrong as they had been formerly.

However, if no very drastic change is to be detected in the decoration of the house itself in the matter of furniture, the Jacobeans displayed a praiseworthy spirit of invention. Hitherto the well-dressed man had always worn well-padded breeches attaining, in the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, quite staggering dimensions; now suddenly these went out of fashion and for the first time he was in a position to appreciate the painful disadvantages of the plain wooden chair. As a result the stuffing was now transferred from the sitter's backside to the chair he sat on, and upholstered furniture was introduced for the first time to a grateful public. Needless to say such luxuries were confined to the very rich, and for many years to come the less sensitive bottoms of the lower orders continued to rest on hard wood.

The style loosely described as Jacobean remained popular, with slight modifications, until the Restoration, but nevertheless as early as the reign of James the direction in which English domestic architecture was logically to develop had been firmly indicated. When Inigo Jones built the Queen's house at Greenwich the Middle Ages were brought to an end and the English Renaissance, which was to find its highest expression in the architecture, decoration, and furnishing of the home, had begun.

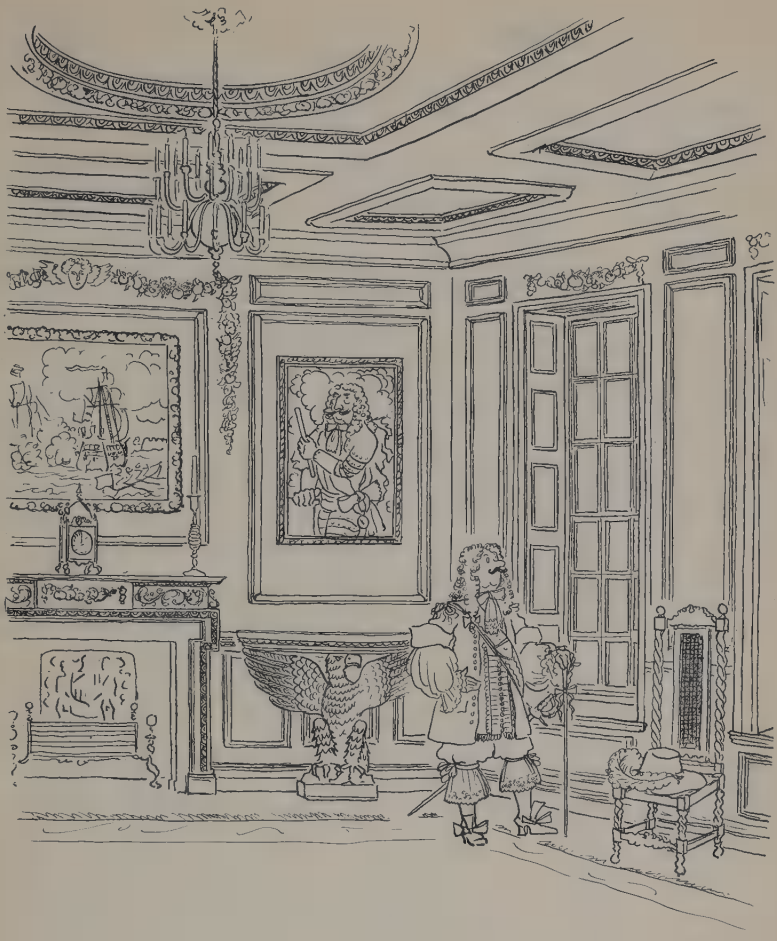


Restoration

With the return of Charles II to his kingdom there opened a period which, decoratively speaking, lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century. A period in which continuous changes and improvements took place, but changes and improvements that developed naturally and progressively one from another and were the result of no sudden break with tradition. During the Commonwealth, England had enjoyed a state of almost complete artistic stagnation, but in the person of Sir Christopher Wren there arose an architect whose interior design was no less ingenious and satisfying than the steeples of his city churches. Moreover, the long exile abroad of the King and court led to the introduction of foreign, particularly French, modes, and fashion becomes of almost equal importance with convenience in the arrangement of the home. Now for the first time there appears upon the scene the smart and mondaine figure of the interior decorator.

The Great Fire of London made possible the speedy development of the town house proper; hitherto it had been for the rich merely a country mansion which chanced to be in a town and for the middle classes a conglomeration of rooms over a shop jutting ever farther into the street. Now the genius of Wren devised a plan for London houses which, in essentials, remained unchanged until the coming of the flat. At street level a small entrance hall, a dining-room and a parlour; on the first floor a large state room and principal bedroom; above more bedrooms and closets and below ground that rather unfortunate device, the basement kitchen, that had been introduced from Italy at the end of the sixteenth century. The beauty of this plan lay in the fact that it could be modified or enlarged to suit almost all pockets and every variety of site.

The interior walls are still covered with panelling but the panels themselves are of good proportions and fewer in number; moreover the exasperating gap between the ceiling and the woodwork is now banished and the cornice appears in the proper place. Monotony is avoided by the employment of richly carved mouldings and all that jungle of inefficient woodcarving is replaced by a few festoons of very naturalistic fruit, confined usually to the fireplace and the panels immediately above it. The whole effect is, perhaps, rather heavy but at least it is a well-proportioned heaviness.

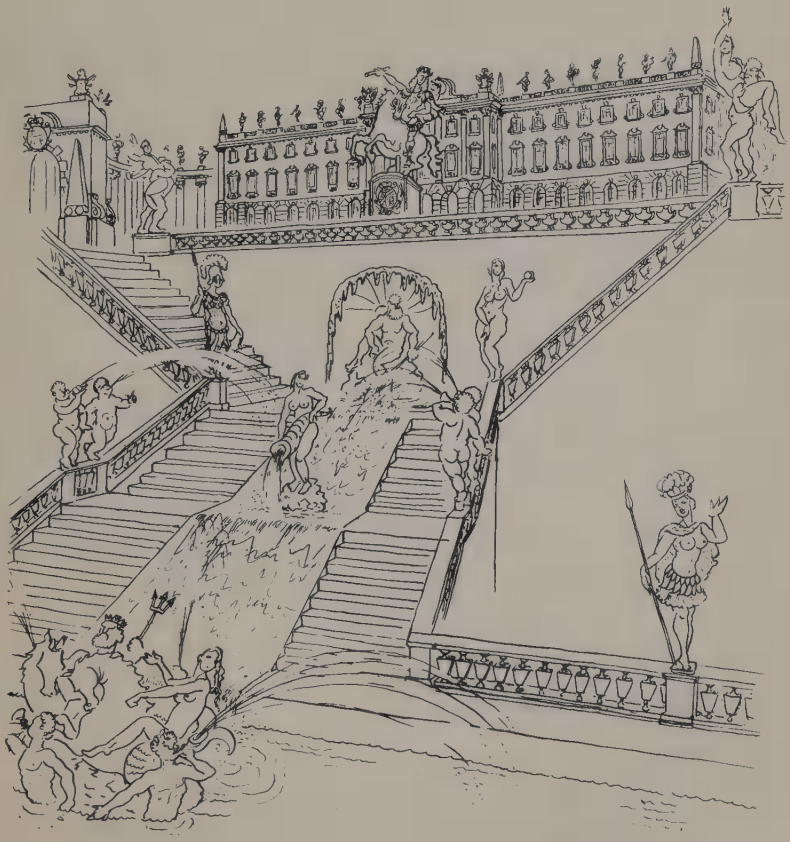


Baroque

The characteristic that distinguished the Renaissance from all other revivalist movements, both architectural and religious, was its almost inexhaustible vitality. After the first rush of enthusiasm it did not peter out and die; the vital creative force behind it continued to function for close on four hundred years, constantly discovering new forms of expression while still employing the same classical idiom. It was as though an ingenious small boy was bent on discovering how many different buildings he could put up with the same box of bricks. Half-way through the seventeenth century, however, it appeared as though every possible combination had been exhausted, whereupon the small boy, not in the least deterred, proceeded to use his bricks as counters in a dazzling display of juggling.

This ability to employ architectural forms for purposes for which they had never been intended – in order to express movement or obtain an effect of drama – and get away with it, was the whole secret of Baroque. Vast flights of steps, innumerable statues, elaborate fountains were all pressed into service for the sake of a truly impressive effect, to obtain which the Baroque architect did not hesitate to twist columns until they looked like sticks of barley sugar, cover cornices in rich folds of imitation drapery, extend façades until they were twice the height of the buildings they masked, and finally, if time or money ran out, to paint whole vistas of staircases and colonnades he was unable to achieve three-dimensionally. That it was a highly dangerous proceeding, which could be justified only by complete success and called for an almost incredible degree of virtuosity on the part of the architect, was proved by the unhappy efforts to revive it made in England at the beginning of the present century (see Edwardian Baroque).

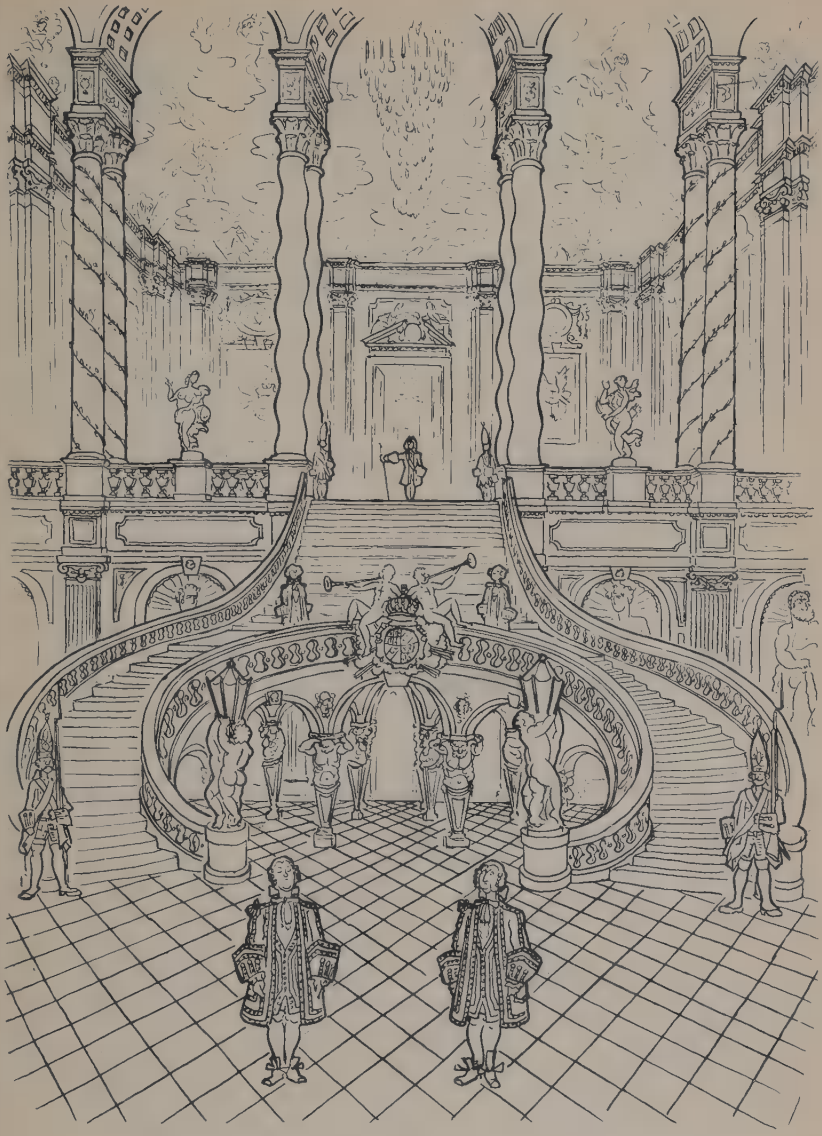
It is not therefore surprising that, with the exception of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, no English architect of that period was encouraged to try his hand at the Baroque, for cleverness is a quality that, in architecture no less than in life, we have always been notorious for regarding with ill-concealed dislike.



Baroque

A taste for the grandiose, like a taste for morphia, is, once it has been fully acquired, difficult to keep within limits, and all the various potentates who during the first decades of the eighteenth century so eagerly followed where Louis XIV had led soon found themselves provided with residences which, while being undoubtedly of an extreme impressiveness, fulfilled just about as many of the ordinary requirements of a home as do the Pyramids. Seldom have architects achieved dwellings further removed from the definition of a house as *une machine à habiter* than such masterpieces as Wurzburg, the Winter Palace, Zabern, and Blenheim. Ceilings only incidentally fulfilled their usual role of covering a room; their primary purpose was now to provide a background for the athletic amours of Jupiter and other inhabitants of Olympus cleverly and lovingly depicted by Tiepolo, Lebrun, or Verrio. Pillars and columns might possibly support an arch or cornice but were just as likely to be employed for their decorative value alone. Staircases no longer took the shortest route from one floor to another but writhed and curled in every direction – vast processional ways designed for the passage of half the Almanach de Gotha in full war-paint – and every inch of available wall-space was covered with trophies, busts, caryatids and escutcheons in marble, malachite, gilt, plaster, and shell-work.

This state of affairs could not, of course, last for long. Few of his fellow-sovereigns enjoyed the robust health of the Sun King and the enormous discomfort of living in these glittering barracks, which not all the ingenuity of science nor all the wealth of the Indies could warm, and in which the dining-room might be anything from a hundred yards to a quarter of a mile from the kitchens, soon drove them to build smaller, though scarcely less luxurious, residences in the parks attached to their main palaces. But nevertheless this passing passion for pomp and glory at all costs was not without its effect on the art of decoration. The main staircase then acquired an importance which it never subsequently lost, and the taste for long vanishing vistas of columns and arches led to the introduction of the *trompe l'œil* whereby the desired effect could be obtained at a quarter the cost and which retained its popularity as a method of wall decoration for many years to come. Above all, the decorative artist then acquired a freedom and an increased power of invention without which the rococo style of the next generation could never have been devised.



Georgian: Town

In England comparatively few homes, and those only of the very rich and smart, reflected even faintly the glitter of the baroque and rococo fireworks sent up by the contemporary continental designers. The average English room during the first half of the century was simply a logical development of the Restoration apartment evolved by Wren and his followers. As time went on the mouldings and cornices became lighter and the introduction of new woods, such as mahogany, produced a greater variety of panelling, but the chief advance was displayed not so much in the decoration of the room itself but in the furniture it contained. Formerly this had been very restricted in quantity and almost standardized in design, but now an innumerable supply of objects began to accumulate in various corners, owing their introduction not to their utility but solely to their decorative value. An ever-increasing supply of porcelain, coming at first from the Far East and later from the factories at Bow and Chelsea, invaded the mantelpiece and eventually demanded special glass-fronted cupboards for its accommodation and display. Niches had to be made to shelter the busts of Roman worthies which the antiquarian enthusiasm of Lord Burlington and the Dilettanti unearthed from the soil of Italy in suspiciously large quantities. And the tireless industry of Augustan poets and High Church divines rendered the presence of numerous large bookcases essential for the proper equipment of a gentleman's home.

These innovations were for the most part the reflection of the master's taste and sensibility, but along with them others that indicated feminine influence were now introduced into the decorative field. While panelling, painted or plain, remained the most popular form of wall covering in such masculine apartments as the library and dining-room, in the bedrooms and boudoir its place was being taken by wall-papers, usually imported from China, and silk and satin hangings.

Moreover, there was one field in which the rococo spirit proved as fertile in invention in this country as in France or Germany – that of Chinoiserie. The china and paper coming in large quantities from the East proved a powerful source of inspiration to our designers and from now until almost the end of the century there flowed a constant stream of furniture, plasterwork and painted panelling all of which embodied Chinese motifs, and in the treatment of which contemporary craftsmen, above all Chippendale, displayed a taste and invention in no way inferior to those which found expression in the pavilions of Potsdam and Nymphenburg.

Classic Revival

The main, in fact the only, influence in English architecture from the seventeenth century onwards had been classic: Italian classic with Inigo Jones, French and Dutch classic with Wren and his followers, Italian once more with Lord Burlington and Kent. Now another foreign fashion arises, still classic, but totally different from the foregoing modes. This time it is the decorative art of antiquity itself, as revealed by the excavations at Herculaneum and later Pompeii, that brightens the walls and ceilings of Mayfair. This development might quite easily have ended in disaster, for the whole movement was surrounded with a vast amount of donnish pedantry and expertise; moreover, the taste of ancient Rome as displayed at Pompeii is strongly suggestive of Tottenham Court Road; but fortunately at that moment there arose a new generation of architects and designers, headed by the brothers Adam, whose genius enabled them to take this unpromising material and evolve from it a style which remains one of the greatest glories of the applied arts in this country.

With enormous skill the urns, sphinxes, vine leaves and all the rest of the boring bric-à-brac of the first century of our era are now moulded in plaster, ormolu and other materials, painted, gilded and rearranged on candelabra and mirrors, on friezes and cornices in such a way as to achieve the most varied yet homogeneous scheme of decoration. At the same time panelling disappears from the walls, which are painted in plain flat colours with narrow bands of moulding outlining plain areas of varying shapes but invariably excellent proportions. Great attention is lavished on the ceiling, on which ovals and lunettes painted with antique scenes by the talented Miss Kauffman are surrounded by an elaborate geometrical tracery of gilded plaster. On the floor, as like as not, is a specially woven carpet reproducing the pattern overhead. Over the doors entablatures and cornices of an impeccable correctness support busts and urns while the blank spaces on the walls are enlivened by medallions.

It is at this time that the supremacy of the interior decorator is finally asserted. Hitherto this profession, developed if not invented by Kent, had, while not being altogether unlucrative, scarcely attained the dimensions of a full-time job. Now the brothers Adam (incidentally far better decorators than architects) established it firmly on that smart and fashionable plane on which today so many bright young men and shrewd old women so profitably operate.

Regency

The artistic enthusiasm of the polite world having once been directed towards antiquity showed no signs of abating. Rather did it become more intense with time and tended to concentrate on ever earlier phases of civilization. Thus the Pompeian was soon superseded in the popular favour by the Etruscan, which in its turn was swept aside by the Greek, which last maintained its sway unchallenged save by the Egyptian, for a brief period immediately following Napoleon's eastern campaign, for close on half a century.

This new passion for antiquity reached its highest pitch in France where it became indissolubly connected first with the French Revolution and secondly with Napoleon. It is therefore the first example which history affords us of an ideological style; that is to say a style adopted not so much for its own beauty or convenience but rather for the sake of the political qualities of the civilization that first evolved it. Certainly no style had ever proved so all-embracing. Architecture, furniture, painting, women's dress, military uniforms all approximated as closely as possible to what were piously hoped to be antique models. Luckily, however, very little Greek furniture had survived the centuries so that designers were forced to use their own imagination and that soulless mechanical copying which is the bane of all revivals was very largely avoided.

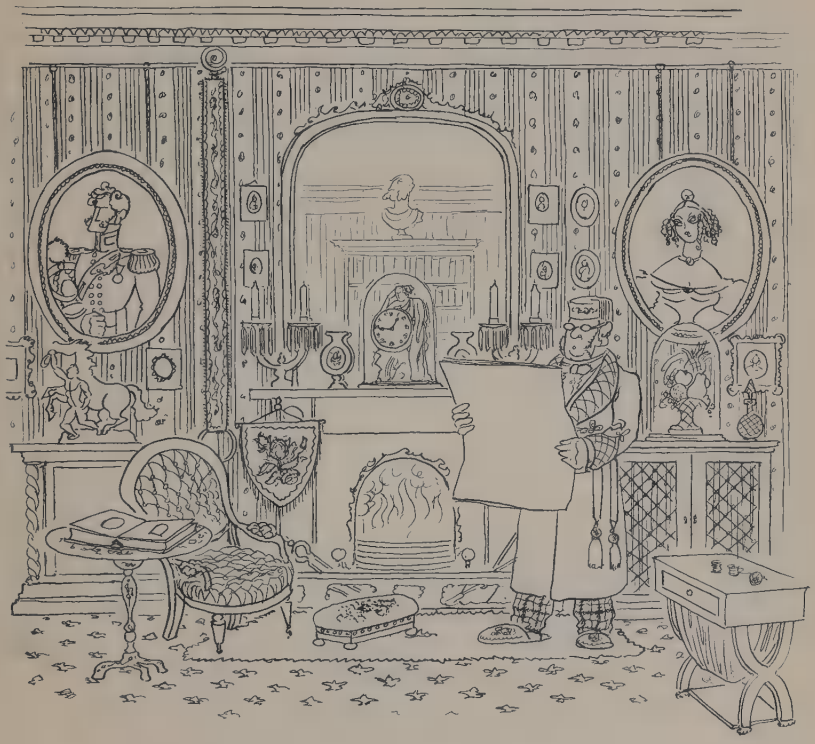
In England that robust national common sense, which had not yet been sapped by the Romantic movement, saved us from the more ridiculous excesses of *le style Empire* and a very pleasant and serviceable style of decoration was evolved in which these new neo-Greek fantasies were skilfully grafted on to the old, trustworthy eighteenth-century stem. At the same time the exuberant and artistically dominating character of the Regent himself led to a more lavish display of gilding and more dashing use of colour. Formerly blues and greens in pastel shades were most commonly employed but now such assertive tints as terra-cotta and maroon spread themselves over the walls, while for curtains and upholstery sulphur yellow, royal blue and crimson generously sown with wreaths, stars, cornucopias, lyres and sphinxes were used with the most resolute self-confidence. Full-blooded yet intellectual, aristocratic and at the same time slightly vulgar, the Regency style was sufficiently paradoxical to be perfectly in tune with the age which gave it birth and to lend some shred of justification to its popularity today.

Early Victorian

The early Victorian or, as some purists prefer to call it, the Adelaide style, while it undoubtedly marks a decline (the elegance of the Georgian and the vitality of the Regency have both departed), nevertheless represents not unworthily the last phase of a great tradition. The lines are heavier, the decoration coarser, yet the proportions are still good and there is a general atmosphere of solidity and comfort. Painted walls now vanish, not to reappear for nearly a century, beneath a variety of patterned papers, striped, spotted and flowered. Mahogany reigns almost supreme as the popular wood for furniture, though both birch and rosewood maintain a certain vogue. Carpets are either elaborately floral in pink and white or severely patterned in billiard-cloth green or scarlet. Fireplaces are comparatively plain in marble.

However, it is not so much the quality of the individual furnishings that has altered but the quantity. Now for the first time the part tends to become more important than the whole and the room assumes the function of a museum of *objets d'art*. The mantelpiece is transformed into a parade ground for the perpetual marshalling of rows of Bristol glass candlesticks, Sèvres vases, Bohemian lustres around the glass-protected focal point of a massively allegorical clock. For the better display of whole cavalry divisions of plunging bronze equestrians, Covent Gardens of wax fruit, bales of Berlin woolwork, the drawing-room, the library and the boudoir are forced to accommodate innumerable cupboards, consoles and occasional tables. The large family portrait loses none of its popularity but the fashion for miniatures and silhouettes enables the range of visible reminders of the importance of family ties to be extended to the third and fourth generation of uncles, aunts and cousins of every degree.

Futile as such generalizations invariably are, one may perhaps hazard a suggestion that nothing so markedly distinguished the average Victorian from other generations as this passion for tangible evidence of past emotions; a longing to recapture in some concrete form the pleasure of a visit to Carlsbad or Margate, the unbearable poignancy of Aunt Sophia's death-bed. Hence the unbounded popularity of the memento, the *Reiseandenken*, and the keepsake. Harmless and rather touching as such a fashion may be, the intrusion of this aggressively personal note into decoration led to future trouble when it became necessary to find without fail a prominent place for such a surrealist variety of objects as a sand-filled paper-weight from Alum Bay, a lock of little Willy's hair and dear Fido, stuffed and mounted.



Salubrious dwellings for the Industrious Artisan

On earth the God of Wealth was made
Sole patron of the building Trade.
Swift

While the Victorian architects were busy erecting tasteful reproductions of Chartres cathedral and the belfry of Bruges (so useful for factory chimneys) and covering the rather inefficiently drained marshes on the outskirts of Westminster with the stucco palaces of the nobility and gentry, it must not be imagined that the needs of the humbler classes of the community were in any way overlooked. In all the great new towns of the Midlands and the Industrial North large housing estates sprang up on which, by the exercise of remarkable forethought and ingenuity, so great was the anxiety lest the worker should be too far removed from the sights and sounds of the factory or mine which was the scene of his cheerful labour, a quite fantastic number of working families were accommodated. In order that the inhabitants might have the privilege of contemplating, almost ceaselessly, the visible tokens of nineteenth-century man's final triumph over nature, many of these estates were carefully built alongside the permanent way, or even, if there was a viaduct handy, actually underneath it. That the humble householders might recall the country villages from which so many of them had come, the streets were considerately left unpaved and the drainage system was made to conform to the primitive rustic models to which they were accustomed. It is true that it was found impossible to avoid a certain monotony but this was counteracted by carefully refraining from doing anything to interfere with the effects of the elements, and allowing the weather full opportunity to produce a fascinating variety of surface texture.


BETHESDA CHAPEL
MASS MEETING
CORN

Public-House Classic

In the earlier part of the nineteenth century it was assumed, and rightly, that a little healthy vulgarity and full-blooded ostentation were not out of place in the architecture and decoration of a public-house, and it was during this period that the tradition governing the appearance of the English pub was evolved. While the main body of the building conformed to the rules governing South Kensington Italianate, it was always enlivened by the addition of a number of decorative adjuncts which, though similar in general form, displayed an endless and fascinating variety of treatment. Of these the most important was the plate-glass window which took up a large section of the façade, and was invariably made the excuse for a virtuoso display of decorative engraving in which may frequently be detected the ingenuous working of a native taste for the Baroque that nowadays can only find expression in the decoration of merry-go-rounds and cigar-boxes. Hardly less important were the enormous lantern which was suspended from an equally imposing and lavishly decorated curlicue at the corner of the building, the whole forming a triumph of nineteenth-century ironwork, and the splendid and elaborate examples of the sign-writer's art with which the façade was always generously enlivened.

But, alas, with the spread of popular education even the brewers became cultured and the typical pub, such as the one illustrated here, gave way to every variety of Gothic hostelry and its homely façade was soon hidden behind a copious enrichment of coloured brickwork and encaustic tiles. Says Ruskin sadly, writing in 1872, 'there is scarcely a public-house near the Crystal Palace but sells its gin-and-bitters under pseudo-Venetian capitals copied from the church of the Madonna of Health or of Miracles'.

But worse was still to come. Half-baked culture was succeeded by a poisonous refinement which found expression in olde worlde half-timbering and a general atmosphere of cottagey cheeriness. Fortunately a number of the old-fashioned pubs still survive in the less fashionable quarters, but the majority of them are doubtless doomed and will shortly be replaced by tasteful erections in the By-Pass Elizabethan or Brewers' Georgian styles.

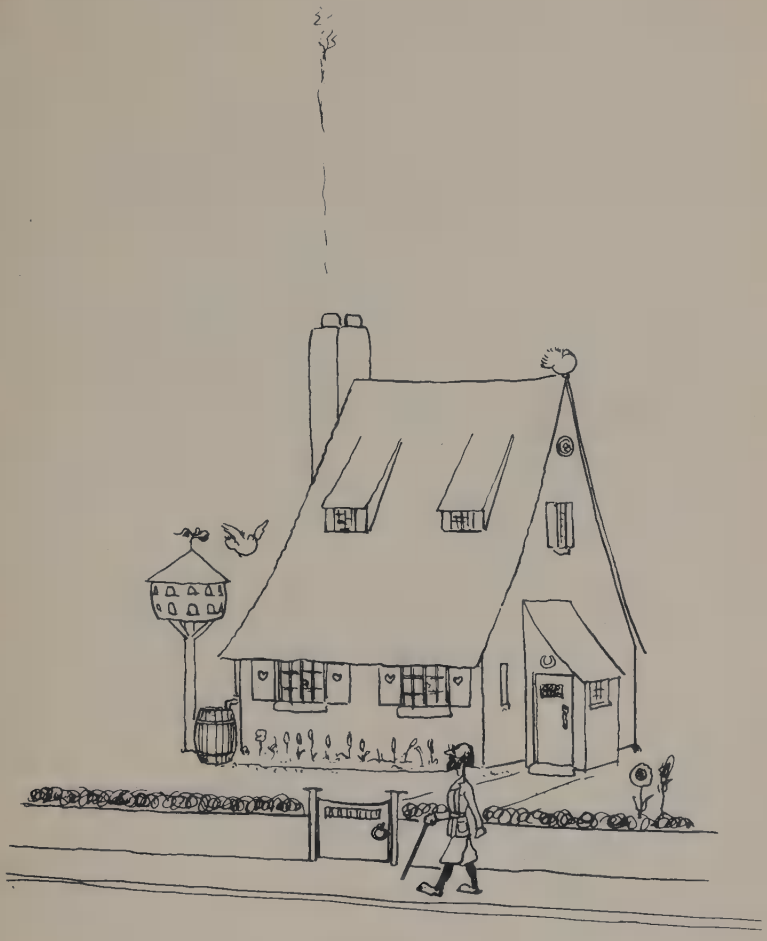

THE DUKE OF SUSSEX
ALES, BEERS &c
BEER
ALES
BEERS
STOUT
WINES
FROM
THE
WOOD
THE DUKE OF SUSSEX
BAR
THE DUKE OF SUSSEX
BLOGG'S
BOOTS
AND
SHOES

Art Nouveau

At the end of the nineteenth century a certain malaise was discernible in the artistic world: which was not perhaps surprising, for after a prolonged surfeit of Municipal Gothic, Pont Street Dutch, Jubilee Renaissance and other exotic styles it is remarkable that the 'O-God-I'm-so-tired-of-it-all' attitude had not been adopted years before. However, until the late eighties William Morris, the celebrated inventor of the Simple Life, remained a voice calling in the willow-shrouded wilderness of Kelmscott. Now, however, his teaching bore a sudden crop of exceedingly odd fruit which in course of time came to be christened *Art Nouveau*.

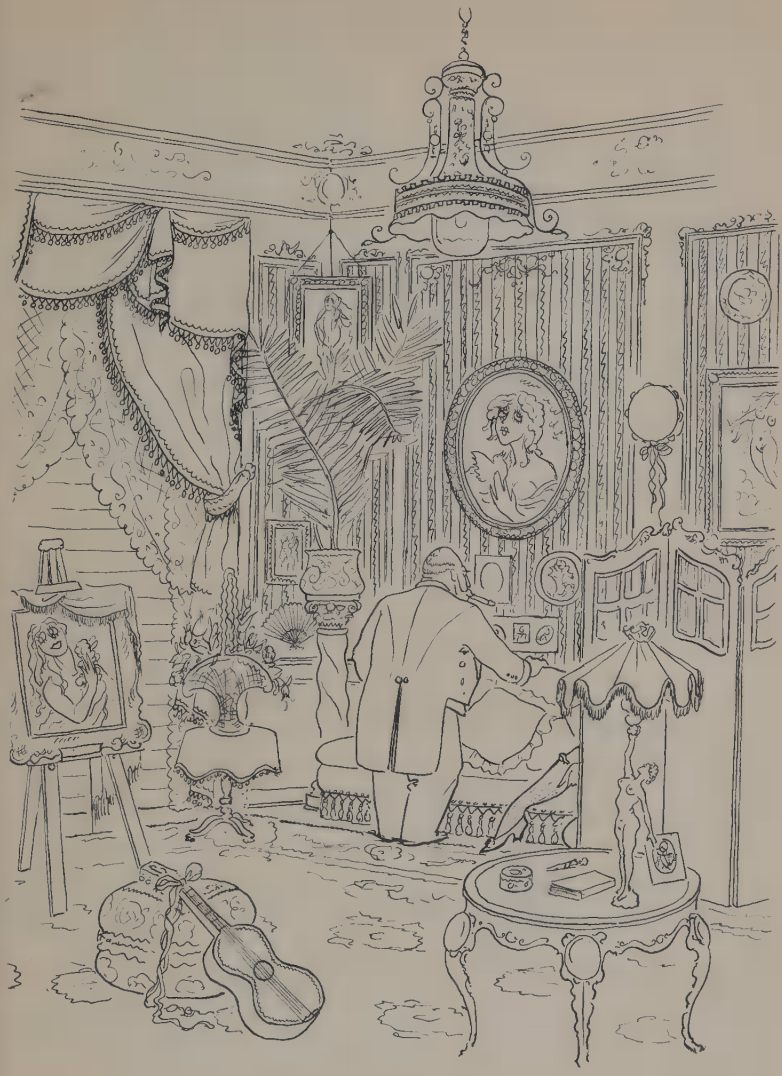
While the hall-mark of this new style was proudly claimed by its supporters to be extreme simplicity coupled with purity of line, honesty compels one to admit that, as one of its spiritual begetters said of truth, it was seldom pure and never simple. Asymmetry, which we noticed as being so popular in the later development of Pont Street Dutch, now became an absolute fetish. Walls staggered inwards from the base, gables shot up at the dizziest angles and doors and windows never by any chance appeared at the points where one was accustomed to find them. While it was originally conceived as a rural style, efforts were soon made to adapt it to urban requirements and rows of quaint and whimsy little cottages, all pebbledash and green shutters, appeared in the northern suburbs of London in clusters which their builders considered themselves justified (by the presence of two sunflowers and a box hedge) in calling Garden Cities. Another interesting fact is that a row of such houses was never called a street but always a Way.

From surroundings such as these did the New Woman emerge to bicycle off to an interesting meeting of the Fabian Society.



Troisième République

Apart from *Art Nouveau*, of which the vogue was mercifully but not unnaturally limited, the main decorative influence in Edwardian period was French. And just as the dining-room was the key apartment of the Victorian era, and the studio of the immediately post-war decade, so the boudoir, significantly enough, was the characteristic region of the house in this silver age of European culture. This French influence took the familiar mid-eighteenth-century form, but with a wholeheartedness that produced what almost amounted to a full-dress Rococo revival. Walls were once more divided into damask-filled panels; ceilings and cornices came out in a rash of plasterwork; gilt easels groaned beneath the burden of untrustworthy Greuzes and dubious Bouchers; and the floor was always covered with what was piously hoped to be an Aubusson. A legion of little ornaments still required a quantity of occasional tables for their accommodation but now tended to fall into two categories – the admittedly precious and the supposedly functional. In the former were included all the usual knick-knacks, with the addition of as many specimens of the ingenious Monsieur Fabergé's costly handiwork as the owner could afford, while the latter embraced a large variety of musical instruments, which might or might not be played, and such happy symbols of the alliance of art and industry as lamp-supporting bronze nudes and voluptuous nereids twined round ink-pots. At the same time the stream of silver-framed photographs attained the dimensions of a flood engulfing every piece of furniture in the room. A particularly happy idea for the display of these tokens of family affection or social grandeur was to scatter them wholesale among the palms and other potted plants of a suitable robustness, which still retained all their old popularity. Thus one could frequently espy many a tiara'd dowager or bemedalled hussar peeping, jaguar like, from beneath the tropical undergrowth, while in all the best houses from the most prominent branch a pouchy and familiar eye, separated by a well-kept beard from a glossy expanse of waistcoat across which a condescending hand had scrawled 'Edward R.', surveyed the world with a glance of slightly baleful *bonhomie*.



First Russian Ballet Period

The post-war era, from the social historian's point of view, started some time previous to that fatal afternoon at Serajevo. The truth of this tiresomely paradoxical statement is borne out by the number of phenomena that we have come to regard as particularly characteristic of the roaring twenties which were, in fact, flourishing in the first two years of His late Majesty's reign. Female emancipation, jazz, bright young people, large-scale labour disputes, cubism, the gowns of Monsieur Poiret, Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, all made their first appearance in a world in which any existing war-weariness dated from the Boer War.

Of all these startling and varied developments by far the most important in the realm of interior decoration was undoubtedly the last. So far-reaching were the changes that this remarkable theatrical venture brought about in the drawing-rooms of the great world that Napoleon's conquest of Egypt (which also littered the *salons* of London and Paris with boat-loads of exotic bric-à-brac) provides the only possible, although inadequate, parallel. Before one could say Nijinsky the pale pastel shades which had reigned supreme on the walls of Mayfair for almost two decades were replaced by a riot of barbaric hues – jade green, purple, every variety of crimson and scarlet, and, above all, orange. Gone were the Hubert Roberts and the Conder fans and their place was taken by the costume designs of Bakst and the theatre scenes of Benois. The Orient came once more into its own and the piano was draped with Chinese shawls, the divan replaced the chaise-longue and no mantelpiece was complete without its Buddha.

Not the least of the Russian Ballet's achievements was the social kudos it acquired for art. Throughout the nineteenth century the aristocracy had displayed an ever-increasing dislike of culture (such aesthetic movements as those of the seventies and eighties flourished far more abundantly in the neighbourhood of the Cromwell Road than round about Park Lane), but now Art came once more to roost among the duchesses, where it was at length productive of a wave of modified Bohemianism. This produced a tendency to regard a room not so much as a place to live in, but as a setting for a party, with the result that the studio (so easy to run in a time of acute servant shortage) was suddenly much in demand for purely residential purposes.

Significantly enough, that happy acceptance of the wonders of science, which had been such a feature of the Edwardian age, vanished along with the flowered chintzes and the overmantel, and the electric light now took refuge

in an old Chinese temple lantern and the telephone lurked coyly beneath the capacious skirts of a Russian peasant doll, dressed after a design by Goncharova.

Ordinary Cottage

While the drawing-rooms of the upper and middle classes underwent a variety of changes in the years between the Great Exhibition and the General Strike, the decoration of the average cottage remained very much the same, and even now, in the age of cheap furniture on the instalment plan and functional flats for the proletariat, there still exist in remote districts a few specimens, as yet untenanted by intellectuals, in which the old style is still worthily displayed.

Against a waxed wall-paper, dark in hue and boldly floral in design, are ranged innumerable ornaments and pictures, for the true cottager still retains that passion for objects which the cultured have so signally abandoned. Oleographs of deceased sovereigns and the late Lord Roberts, comic cats with the arms of Weston-super-Mare lavishly emblazoned on their buttocks, photographic mementoes of long-forgotten bean-feasts jostle one another on the bobble-fringed mantelpiece, while among the numerous trophies of rod and gun, artistically mounted, and hand-tinted camera studies of the dear deceased, the flower entwined Gothic lettering of some pithy saying from the scriptures strikes a welcome note of lettered piety. And on the round central table and the window-sill a striking collection of potted ferns testifies to a natural interest in horticulture.

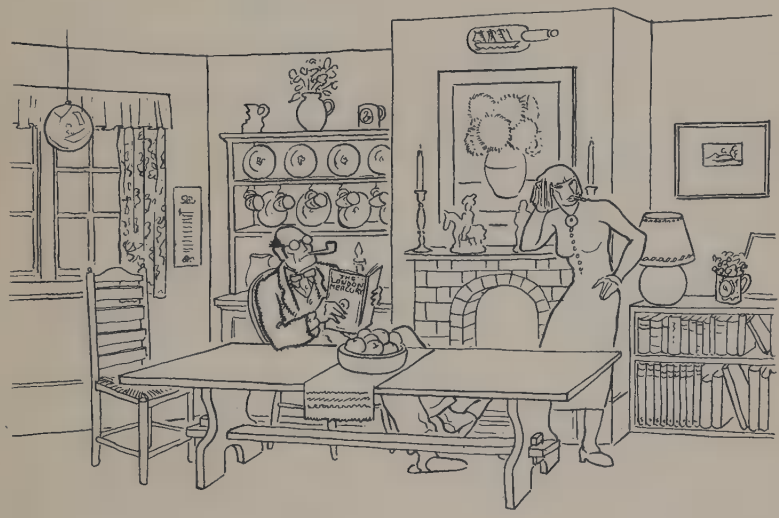

TORSO FOUND IN BATH

Cultured Cottage

In earlier and less enlightened times the majority of cottages were inhabited by landworkers and a sprinkling of retired retainers spending the evening of their days in the modest rural comfort provided by the large-hearted nobility and gentry whom they had served. In the period between the wars this simple pattern was increasingly modified. Nine out of ten country cottages (that is, the more sanitary and comfortable nine) came to be occupied by writers, film stars, barristers, artists, and B.B.C. announcers, and as a result the interior decoration of the average cottage underwent considerable modification.

The flowered wall-paper, shiny with wax, was replaced by hygienic distemper of an artistic pastel shade; the plastic souvenirs of famous seaside resorts banished in favour of genuine examples of peasant handicrafts coming from Czecho-Slovakia by way of an interesting little shop, run by gentlefolk, in the Brompton Road. The oleographs and tinted camera studies disappeared and their place was taken by hand-printed rhyme sheets, clever little woodcuts and expansive reproductions of those ubiquitous sunflowers. No longer was the Family Bible visible on a richly covered centre table; instead *A Shropshire Lad* (hand-printed edition on rag paper, signed by the author and limited to two hundred copies) occupied an 'accidentally' conspicuous position on an 'artist designed' table of unstained oak.

However, so extraordinary are the workings of taste and fashion that in recent years there has been a return among the ultra-sophisticated to the genuine cottage interior; but needless to say the aspidistra is worn with a difference. Photographs of late-Victorian wedding-groups return to the walls, but they owe their position not to any sudden excess of family feeling but to their allegedly humorous qualities. Similarly steel-engravings and wax fruit enjoy a come-back on an 'amusing' basis. At first sight an extremely simple observer might imagine that the Victorians were back, but it would not be long before he realized that all these symbols are firmly displayed between inverted commas.

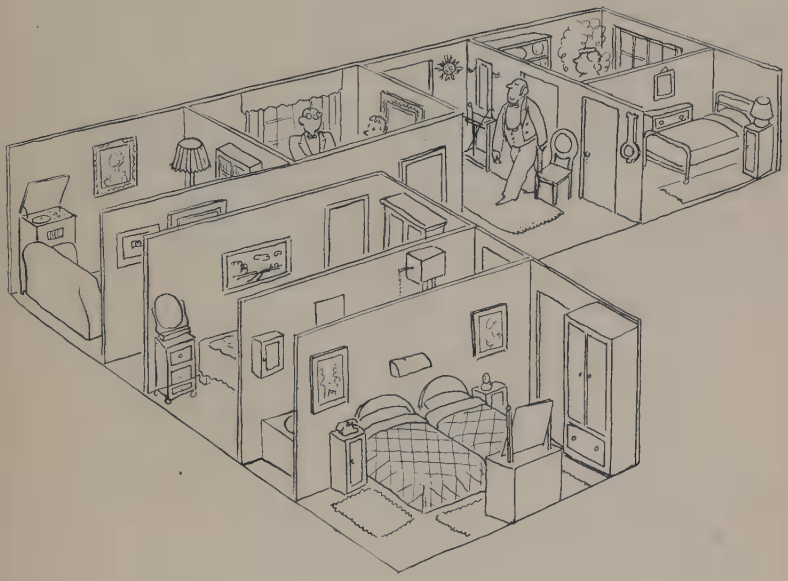


Luxury Flat

The most remarkable development in urban domestic architecture during the inter-war period was undoubtedly the rapid popularization of the large block of flats. Hitherto the English, almost alone among European nations, had resolutely refused to become flat-minded, but during the twenties and thirties of the present century the acute shortage of domestic servants, the sedulous aping among all classes of everything American, the appalling rise in the rates and an increased familiarity with the works of Dr Marie Stopes led to a wholesale abandonment of the capacious and dignified mansions which had been the pride of the upper and middle classes in Victorian times in favour of these labour-saving cliff dwellings which between the wars sprang up in all the residential districts of the capital to the total ruination of the skyline.

The modern flat falls into one or other of two categories; either it is 'self-contained' or it is 'luxury'. The first class (so called because it contains the owner's self and nothing else) is usually divided into a bed-sitting-room, a kitchenette (a word which reveals with sad clarity the state of modern culture), and a bathroom. It usually fulfils its claim of saving labour by being so abominably ill-planned that no respectable domestic can be induced to work in it. The luxury flat, on the other hand, with little or no more floor space than the self-contained variety, is divided up with fiendish ingenuity into a dining-room, drawing-room, lounge-hall, three bed, two bath, a kitchen, and all the usual offices.

Apart from their planning both varieties have much in common. In each case the bathroom is by far the largest room in the flat, the walls are so thin that a radio on the ground floor is clearly audible at the top of the block, and such rooms as do not look out on to an interior well faced with glazed lavatory bricks invariably face the largest and busiest traffic thoroughfare in the immediate neighbourhood.



Stockbrokers' Tudor

Four posts round my bed,
Oake beames overhead,
Olde rugges on ye floor,
No stockbroker could aske for more.

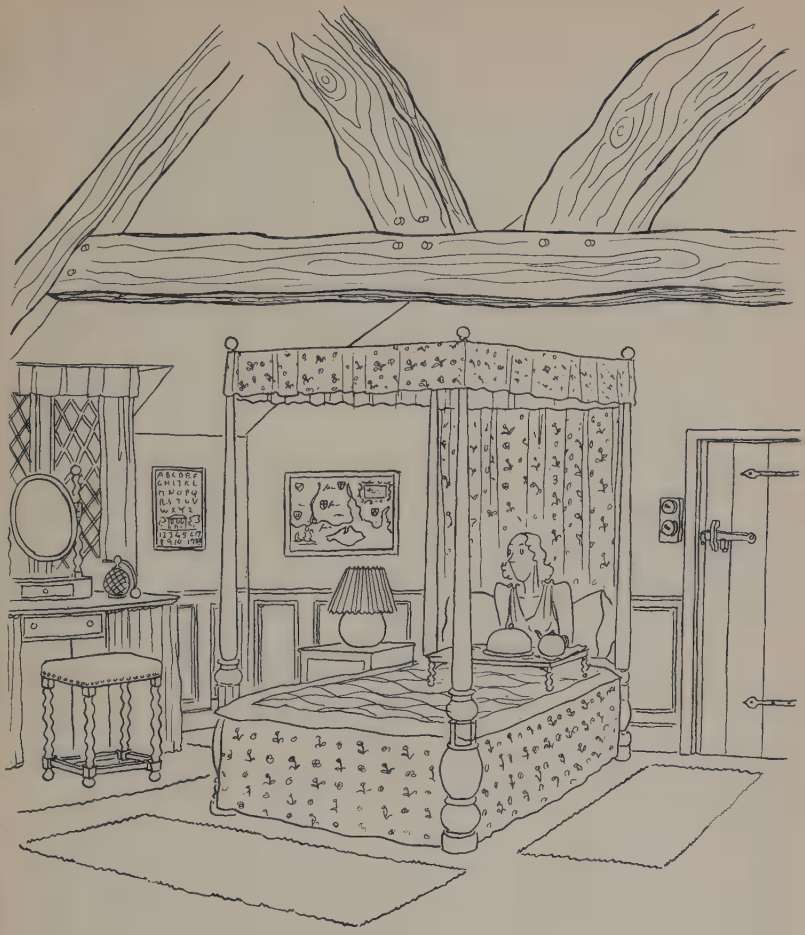
Sussex house-agent's song
(Traditional, early twentieth century)

In interior decoration the antiquarian enthusiast's cherished ideal, relentlessly and all too successfully pursued, was a glorified version of Anne Hathaway's cottage, with such mass-produced modifications as were necessary to conform to transatlantic standards of plumbing. In construction the Tudor note was truly sounded: in the furnishing considerable deviations from strict period accuracy were permissible. Thus eighteenth-century four-posters, Regency samplers, and Victorian chintzes all soon came to be regarded as Tudor by adoption – at least in estate agency circles.

Soon certain classes of the community were in a position to pass their whole lives in one long Elizabethan daydream; spending their nights under high-pitched roofs and ancient eaves, their days in trekking from Tudor golf clubs to half-timbered cocktail bars, and their evenings in contemplating Mr Laughton's robust interpretation of Henry VIII amid the Jacobean plasterwork of the Gloriana Palace.

It was foolishly supposed at the time that the height of absurdity had finally been reached shortly before the Second World War when it was seriously proposed to build an exact reproduction – only naturally three times the size – of the original Globe Theatre in Southwark to which patrons were to be ferried across the river in Elizabethan skiffs rowed by Elizabethan seamen.

However, this fortunately never-achieved triumph of misplaced ingenuity paled beside the actuality of the half-timbered buffet cars with which soon after the war British Railways equipped certain of their more widely publicized express trains.



Pseudish

This style, which attained great popularity between the wars, is actually our old friend Pont Street Dutch with a few Stockholm trimmings and a more daring use of colour. In the most typical examples the walls are whitewashed, the roof is covered with Roman tiles in a peculiarly vehement shade of green, and the windows have been enriched with a great deal of fancy leading of a tortuous ingenuity. It was the upper-class style *par excellence* of the pre-slump years, but latterly has sunk a little in the social scale and occasional examples are now to be found alongside some of our more exclusive by-passes.

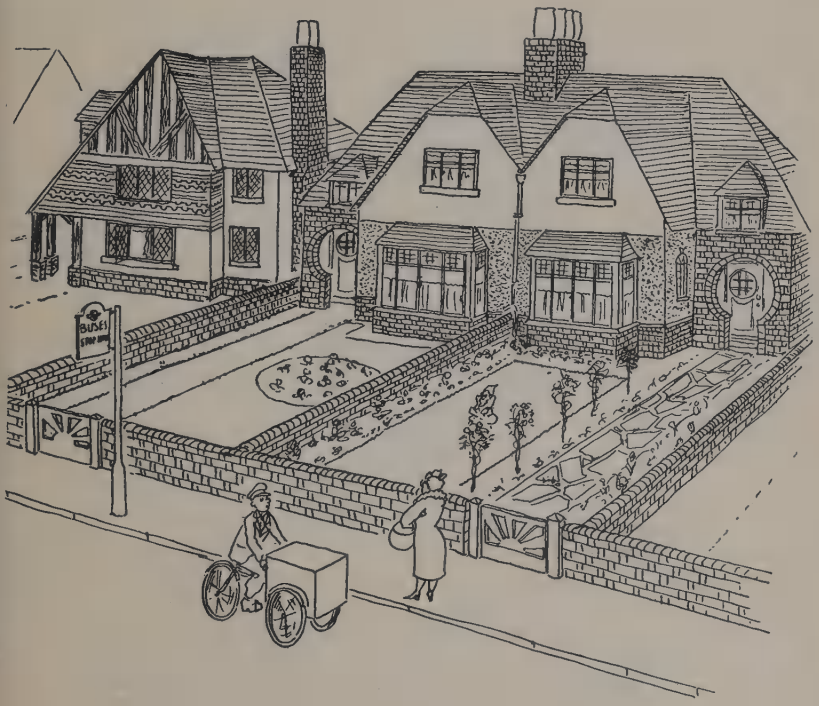
Within, the decoration was almost always carried out in Curzon Street ecclesiastical-Spanish with a plentiful supply of Knole sofas, large baroque candlesticks fitted with lampshades made out of old sheets of music or maps, and an occasional wrought-iron grille. The walls were usually stippled in peach or sea-green hues and sometimes ingenious tricks of shading were employed. It provided the invariable background against which the characters in Messrs Lonsdale's and Coward's earlier plays cracked their epigrams and its presence may always be assumed in the novels of Mr Arlen.

While it was essentially a country-house style and many of its greatest masterpieces are located on the sea-coast, a few examples are to be found in the more expensive suburbs of the capital and it can be studied in all its diversity in the neighbourhood of Hampstead.

By-pass Variegated

If an architect of enormous energy, painstaking ingenuity and great structural knowledge had devoted years of his life to the study of the problem of how best to achieve the maximum of inconvenience, in the shape and arrangement under one roof of a stated number of rooms, and had had the assistance of a corps of research workers ransacking architectural history for the least attractive materials and building devices known in the past, it is just possible, although highly unlikely, that he might have evolved a style as crazy as that with which the speculative builder, at no expenditure of mental energy at all, has enriched the landscape on either side of our great arterial roads. As one passes by one can amuse one's self by classifying the various contributions which past styles have made to this infernal amalgam; here are some quaint gables culled from *Art Nouveau* surmounting a façade that is plainly Modernistic in inspiration; there the twisted beams and leaded panes of Stockbrokers' Tudor are happily contrasted with bright green tiles of obviously Pseudish origin; next door some terra-cotta plaques, Pont Street Dutch in character, enliven a white wood Wimbledon Transitional porch, making it a splendid foil to a red-brick garage that is vaguely Romanesque in feeling. But while he is heavily indebted to history for the majority of his decorative and structural details (in almost every case the worst features of the style from which they were filched), in the planning and disposition of his erections the speculative builder displays a genius that is all his own. Notice the skill with which the houses are disposed, that insures that the largest possible area of countryside is ruined with the minimum of expense; see how carefully each householder is provided with a clear view into the most private offices of his next-door neighbour and with what studied disregard of the sun's aspect the principal rooms are planned.

It is sad to reflect that so much ingenuity should have been wasted on streets and estates which will inevitably become the slums of the future. That is, if a fearful and more sudden fate does not obliterate them prematurely.



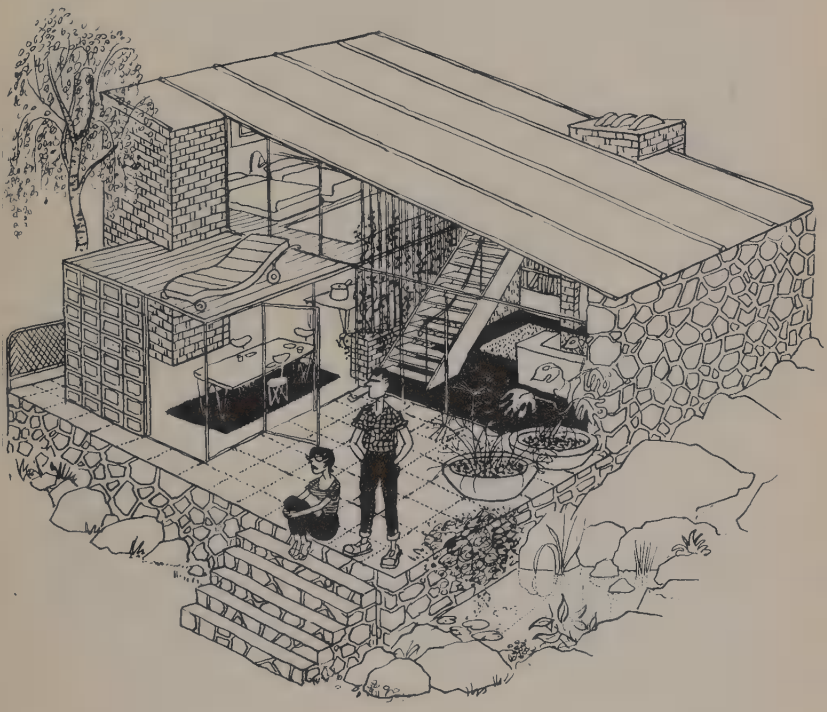
The Wide Open Plan

Few of the many architectural innovations introduced towards the end of the late century were so long and widely welcomed as the 'open plan' of which the late Sir Edwin Lutyens was, perhaps, the most distinguished exponent. Freed from the conventional lay-out imposed by the classical façade, the architect was at liberty, anyhow on an open site, to concentrate on convenience and allow the outward appearance of the house to be largely determined by the internal arrangement. He could, as it were, start on the inside and work out.

Stimulating and advantageous as was the freedom conferred by the new doctrine, when it is pushed to extremes as, in recent years, particularly in Scandinavia and the U.S.A., it has been, the results tend to be immediately remarkable rather than permanently satisfying. Cantilever construction, which relieves the walls of any supporting function, the informal style of modern garden lay-out, first introduced by Miss Jekyll, and the rapid development of central-heating and air-conditioning all combined to render possible the complete abolition of any old-fashioned distinction between indoors and out. To make the total confusion of his client doubly sure the architect did not hesitate to face the inside of his walls with rough-cast and ashlar, and vigorously encouraged the cultivation of ivy, philodendra, and other climbing plants upstairs, downstairs and in my lady's parlour.

Any out-of-date concern for privacy was firmly disregarded and every householder was looked on as a potential exhibitionist ready to perform even the most intimate acts beneath the interested scrutiny of any neighbour with a good pair of field-glasses, happy in the knowledge that at long last he was really at one with the surrounding landscape.

The compensating advantages that went with this condition of permanent exposure were held chiefly to reside in the ability always to enjoy the ever-changing pageant of nature as revealed through the acres of vitaglass which had replaced the all too solid walls that had enclosed less privileged generations. Unfortunately, of course, this remained in practice relatively unexploited owing to the necessity for drawing all the curtains in order fully to enjoy the ever-changing pageant of television.



Jungle-Jungle

'We needs must love the simplest when we see it.' This happy fallacy from which the propagandists for pure-functionalism had, during the late thirties, derived so much comfort and justification was not, as a slogan, calculated to maintain its power in a period of enforced austerity. When individual choice was limited over a long period to the severely restricted 'utility' field, the longing for frills became naturally irresistible. It was gratified in two ways.

The rigid and puritanical functionalism of the Modern Movement was modified in the immediate post-war period by a movement, called for reasons which it would be too tedious, and unprofitable, exhaustively to investigate, the 'New Empiricism'. In effect this meant, first an inside-out tendency whereby interior walls were treated as though they were called upon to withstand the icy buffetings of Connecticut gales; second by a desperate attempt to modify the machine-turned efficiency of the 'planned' interior by the introduction of innumerable exotics from jungle and swamp. This botanical enthusiasm in due course succeeded in modifying not only the decoration but even the structure of the Modern Home. Curious wooden grilles appeared, inexplicably jutting out at right angles into the logical living-rooms of Gothenburg and New Canaan, up which ivy and philodendron were lovingly trained. The cacti of the Middle European thirties were now outclassed by extraordinary growths, conceived on the Amazon and nurtured in the hothouses of Copenhagen. The Paul Klee water-colours, the Henry Moore drawings, the *objets trouvés* (picked up at Shanklin but reminiscent, it was hoped, of the vision of Paul Nash) were but dimly discernible through the tangled undergrowth; and faint traces of liquid manure, too generously applied, rendered tacky the pages of *Encounter*.

Hunting

Racing

A Fête

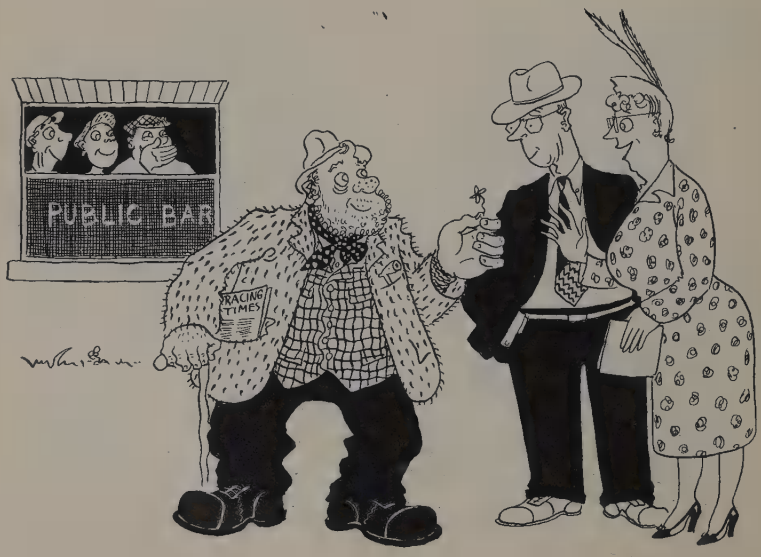
The Dance


IRAGE

A Cocktail Party

'Qu est-ce que c'est, ce toad-in-the-hole?'

'This is for you, Ma'am!'



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Cover picture by Osbert Lancaster