1925. Class A – I 2nd Prize

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Class A (3)

The British Empire Exhibition by "Nil Desperandum."

In the old days, the Grand Tour was the prize of a fortunate few. People of wealth and position devoted two or three years to travel, often in circumstances of acute discomfort, and came back having caught no more than a glimpse of Europe The British Empire as we know it now did not then exist Even the beginnings were small and far away But in 1924 the whole British Empire was contained within the walls of Wembley Park Countries that represent the work of nations were reproduced in one year in this "Imperial City". In all probability not one in a hundred of those who came to Wembley had grasped the extent of Great Britain's achievement or felt the resultant pride of citizenship, and it is safe to say that all, without exception, were astonished to find how adequately within the bounds of a single park, large though it was, the Empires, Colonies, Dominions, Dependencies and Protectorates were presented, each with its own distinctive features as they are today.

It would be very difficult to say which of the pavilions was the finest, for each colony was shown at the very height of its art and industry and each attained perfection in its own particular way but, it is safe to say, that, that of the British Government stood out in its simplicity, no name was written thereon, but there was no mistaking its identity Guarded by four lions it stood (stood) like a stately matron who has dimmed her own brilliancy so that her children may be seen in the full light of their glory, but in spite of this one felt that this was the centre and life of the entire Exhibition What attracted one most in this pavilion was an immense map of the world, in which actual water formed the sea round the land. This map was lighted from underneath, all countries being of a neutral tint, except England, which was red. Then, one by one, the different colonies in order of their acquisition to the Crown, appeared in the same colour, until the British Empire seemed to illumine the whole world Meanwhile small ships, by some mysterious mechanism, pursued their course from port to port.

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Beyond the world map in the Court of Honour lay the theatre. Here on a great stage that was either land or water at the will of the controlling engineers, some wonderful naval, military and aerial displays were presented The Navy was seen in action, carrying out the manœuvres actually designed by admirals. The storming of Zeebrugge was shown in complete detail, one watched the shelling of the Mole by our Monitors, the epic of the Vindictive and submarine C.3, and, in short all the moving incidents of that wonderful and heroic effort

The Military Authorities displayed various models of the Western Front, including the Battle of Ypres, and some of the fighting on the Somme, while the Military and Air Force Authorities in combination presented an attack on London by night, a spectacle sufficiently vivid to send every visitor away with the determination that the Air Force shall lack nothing that it may need for the country's defence.

It may be seen that the British Government Pavilion stood aside from other pavilions not only in its actual position at Wembley, but in the purpose it served It might have been regarded as a centre in which the matters that concern a modern government most nearly were set out attractively in sufficient detail to attract interest and to satisfy curiosity. Everything was displayed in that quiet unobtrusive and impersonal fashion that one associates with Whitehall, but sufficient imagination and sensational effects were employed to make the Pavilion one of the most popular in the Exhibition

Not only to the business man, but to the casual visitor as well, the Palace of Industry was one of the most attractive of the splendid series of buildings at Wembley. In the first place, it housed a produce of all the leading British industries, with the exception of Engineering, which demanded a palace for itself alone What struck one most in this pavilion was the exquisite taste which each exhibitor shewed on presenting the fruit of his labour.

Of great interest to every one were the big terrestial globes in the Educational

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Section. They showed by a special mechanism, the double movement of rotation and revolution.

Without doubt one of the most popular exhibits at Wembley was the Queen's Doll's House, which, pending its departure to a permament home in Windsor Castle was established in a special gallery in the Palace of Arts. To attempt to describe this superb little house would be impossible within the small space given here. But though the scale of thes most unique house was only one inch to the foot, it would be very difficult to think of anything that a modern and finely appointed house might contain, without discovering the best of its kind within this miniature palace.

On entering Australia one was struck by the wonderful effect of intense sunlight, which proved a strong contrast to the dullness of the London sky, and seemed to transport one to another world - a world in which were gigantic palms, cycas, arborescent ferns, and wonderful exotic fruits. The agricultural and pastoral life was shown in a series of panoramic scenes. One particularly attractive scene depicted a herd of cattle on their way to market or pasture. The stockmen had finished their work for the day and were sitting round great bonfires that served not only to warm them but to keep the beasts from stampeding. The whole of the men's equipment was gathered from one of the big cattle stations in the interior of Queensland. The entire range of the Dominion's harvesting operations was splendidly suggested in a scene that presented first, a wheat field, then the manufacture of flour from the wheat, and finally, the conversion of flour into bread, pastry and cake. But perhaps the picture that appealed most to the people whose lives are spent within the crowded, dusty, manufacturing cities, was that of a charming dairy-farm. Another remarkable feature was the "bush" showing a dozen different kinds of kangaroo, the scrub-turkey, the gorgeous lyre-bird, and the laughing Kookaburra, which caused great amusement."

Leaving Australia, one could not pass "Brighter Britain," as New Zealand is called, without paying it a

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visit A collection of New Zealand shrubs and foliage plants was tastefully laid out in the large garden fronting the pavilion. While under a row of stately elms was a fine collection of beautiful, native fern trees At the entrance to the pavilion, which stood on a rise, one could obtain a fine view of the artificial lakes The exterior of the building was handsomely decorated in fibrous plaster with typical New Zealand tableaux, while in the imposing entrance leading into the main hall was displayed a fine group of natural history exhibits, sporting trophies, and a frieze of mural decorations painted by New Zealand artists, depicting many phases of New Zealand life

Every one who has been into a butcher's shop must have been familiar with the term "New Zealand lamb and mutton" but people did not realise how much of this frozen meat was exported from this country, year by year, until they paid a visit to Wembley. There was also to be seen an attractive display of butter and cheese, which today forms the largest item of the Dominion's export trade. The sporting possibilities of this "Britain of the Pacific" were well illustrated in the Fisheries Section where specimens of sword fish, king fish and others were seen exhibited in a very novel form in blocks of ice. One great source of attraction in this pavilion was a display of the Colony's fruits and fruit products, and an interesting exhibit of honey with bees carrying on their work in full view of visitors There were also exhibits of hides, wool, skins, tallow, rabbit and opposum skins, minerals, seeds, kauri gum poultry, flax, timber and other secondary industries Visitors were able to spend a quiet time in the Cinema, seeing displays of pictures representing all phases of life and industry, and also the wonderful scenic attractions of this "Britain of the South"

Canada reached the sublime in its simple grandeur. On entering a vast gallery one was awed by the beauty of its mural decorations, and by its wonderful lighting system This latter was achieved by means of circular discs which were in the ceiling and were veiled by a kind of velarium, thus giving a mysterious and solemn aspect to the crimson and gold canopies which were placed round this gallery. Here and there were seen the arms of important Canadian towns surrounded by sheaves of corn; the

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colouring of which harmonized perfectly with the gold of the fringes and galons Below this were panoramic pictures representing the forestry of the colony Each scene had its own particular atmosphere produced by artificial light of which the source was hidden. Below that again were photographic slides of Canadian life Still lower were stage like effects of such marvels as the Niagara Falls, to which a realistic aspect was given by the addition of a natural waterfall, and of the National Parks in which Art has worked so well with Nature as to preserve the appearance of a virgin forest

Naturally agriculture was the outstanding feature here but Canada's vast mineral wealth of gold, silver, nickel, copper, asbestos, and manganese was also admirably represented. From the display of manufactured goods visitors were able to see for themselves what vast strides Canada is making along industrial lines and her products showed a variety and finish comparable to any to be found in the "Home Country". There was machinery of all kinds, motor cars, iron and steel products, pulp, paper and rubber products In furniture and office equipment Canada excelled, and four rooms furnished entirely with Canadian-made articles offered an excellent example of quality and taste. Tinned fish, meat and other food of course occupied a prominent place

Canada told her story admirably and without exaggeration and one left the Dominion with regret but it was to pass to another magnificent scene; the land of India The architecture was of the seventeenth century Mogul type, and twenty seven provinces were represented There was a Bombay court in teak, the famous tree of the East Indies which is used in the building of ships The central hall was panelled in laurel wood, and contained a model of the monument erected at Calcutta to the memory of Queen Victoria. In four large glass cases were models representing the life and industry of this colony and various shaped huts which formed the natives' dwellings In another section was shown the development of India, through the medium of models which gave one an idea of the minerals of the country, as well as its admirable

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sculpture. Models again gave the history of the nine Railway Companies, and showed the progress of transport, from the coolie and bullock waggon to the latest thing in carriages, exemplified by those used by the Prince of Wales in his late tour. A person reading this description might say that the view was taken through rose-coloured glasses but if they were to visit this pavilion they would realise something of the spell of the "Brightest Jewel in the Imperial Crown"

There was nothing more fascinating at Wembley than the attractive little Burmese Pavilion, with its little golden bells, which, shaken by the wind, gave a silvery tinkle calling the visitors to the little corner from whence this music comes. The Bridge House was a reproduction of the Eastern gate of the Astrakhan Pagoda at Mandalay, and the Pavilion itself, surrounded by a charming garden was modelled on the Burmese Royal House Directly one entered the graceful pagoda the atmosphere of the East closed round, and one saw beautiful carving like that in India, wonderful rubies, jade and amber, and silks that only the Eastern people know how to produce. There could be no doubt about the extraordinary popularity of the Burmese Pavilion nor could there be any doubt but that this popularity had been well deserved.

A most bewildering display of beauty was that shown in the Cingalese Pavilion. The glittering of jewels and the brilliance of the fabrics and works of art for which the natives are famous, completely dazzled the visitor For centuries Ceylon has been famous for her wealth in precious stones and pearls, and probably, in proportion to her size, is in this respect the richest country in the world. Many of these gems were seen in these wonderful settings, the work of Cingalese craftsmen The staple products of Ceylon, are, as every one knows, rice and sugar and these were represented in a fashion not only instructive but also attractive. Another industry worthy of mention is rubber and this was shown in all the stages of its manufacture.

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It is truly impossible to exaggerate the beauty of this "Pearl of the Eastern Seas" over which the spicy breeze blows soft".

The Pavilion of Newfoundland was well worthy of her position as "Britain's Oldest Daughter". Fishing has long been the principal industry of the Dominion and this with the manufacture of cod liver oil was exhibited here with great skill There were models showing the types of fishing villages on the coast and on the walls of the Pavilion were series of pictures illustrating the islands resources The mineral wealth of the country was magnificently displayed Fine specimens of lead, copper and gold quartz, of chrome and manganese ores and of the iron and coal, which are to be found in huge quantities were also shown Large tracts of very good timber are found in the valleys and on the west coast of the island, and the paper on which some of our daily papers are printed, is made in great bulk in the mills of Newfoundland There were models of these mills to be seen here and both pulp and paper were shown in the various stages of their manufacture from the time the giants of the forest are cut until the moment when the pulp is ready for the printing-press Today the paper industry is one of the largest of all the industries of Newfoundland

Leaving this Dominion we found ourselves in another continent, that of "Darkest Africa" as it was formerly called. The pavilion dedicated to South Africa was a building erected in the old Dutch style. Here were demonstrations showing exactly how diamonds are taken from the earth and how they are cut and polished The soil containing the diamonds was brought all the way from a South African mine in Kimberley, and the stones that were found might be worth a king's ransom Outside the pavilion there was a paddock with ostriches in full plumage strutting about. The South African exhibits included admirable models of Port Elizabeth and Durban with their thriving harbours and

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great liners Another very interesting feature of the display in this pavilion was the collection of stuffed animals in natural positions

The importance of the dried and fresh fruit industries could well be gathered from a study of the exhibits here; there was nothing more inviting anywhere. The other prosperous industries shown were wool and mohair which have founded and maintained many great fortunes Specimens of leather manufactures, rope and cordage, together with a house constructed of South African tiles and bricks, and fine examples of furniture, bore eminent testimony to the fact that as a manufacturing country, South Africa is rapidly coming to the front

Hitherto the average Britisher has known very little of the fascinating country of West Africa but at Wembley a splendid opportunity presented itself for the special study of this all-important British possession. It was represented by a walled city which was a faithful representation of the red clay walls of the city of Kano, the largest city in the northern province of Nigeria

In this compound were exhibits of ground-nuts, palm-oils, timber, skins, hides, rubber, cocoa and tin, and native workers, both men and women, were seen weaving, making pottery and working in leather or metals. The supply of cocoa used by nearly half the world comes from West Africa, and this industry was very clearly shown

To describe the Exhibition in full detail would fill volumes

The wonders of this Empire City have never been equalled. There was something to please every class of person, and though as is justly acknowledged, the Authorities have lost heavily with regard to money, one must take into consideration the extremely bad weather which prevented hundreds from visiting this "Imperial City". When one thinks

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of the enormous amount of knowledge of the greatest Empire the world has ever known, that must have been gained by visitors, those who inaugurated this great work must surely feel repaid

The main object of the British Exhibition was to strengthen the bonds between the mother country and her sons and daughters in every part of the world, to add an impetus to trade and to bring all those who owe a life-long devotion to the British Flag into closer union with each other

If this enormous structure was one which would last only for a time and then pass away into decay and oblivion it might well be asked "To what use is all this labour and expenditure?"

This may be answered in the words of Mr Samuel M P in the House of Commons on February 25th of this year —

"It was impossible" said Mr. Samuel, "to over-estimate the value of the Exhibition from an Empire advertising point of view. It was an impressive example of the resources of Empire and of its extraordinary recovery after a devastating war"

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