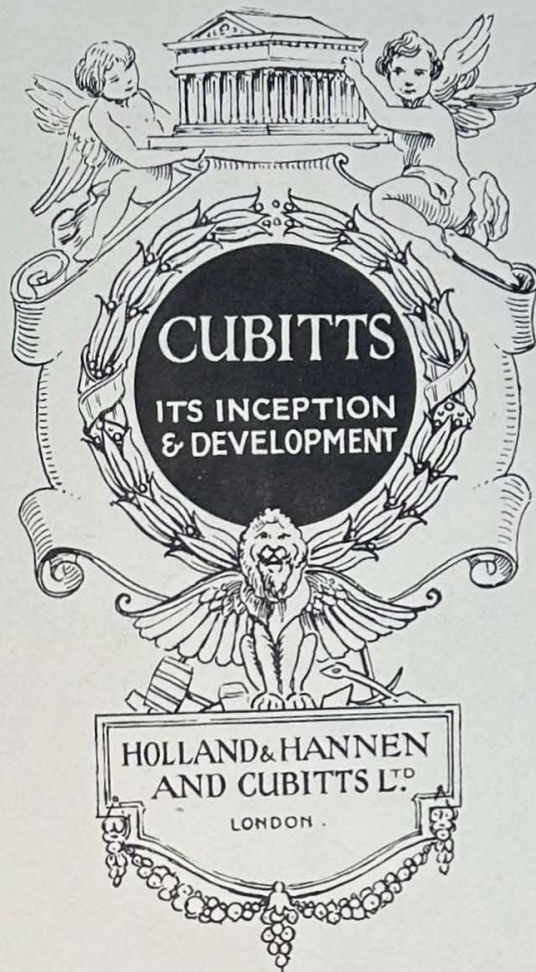


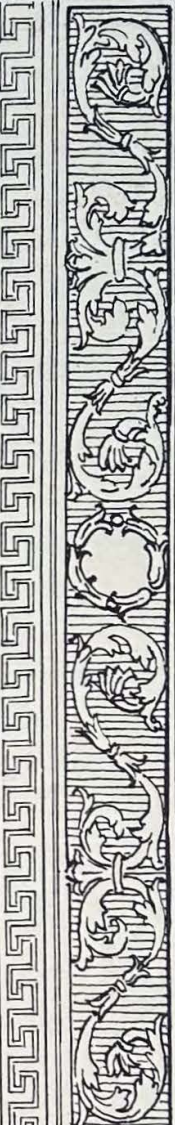
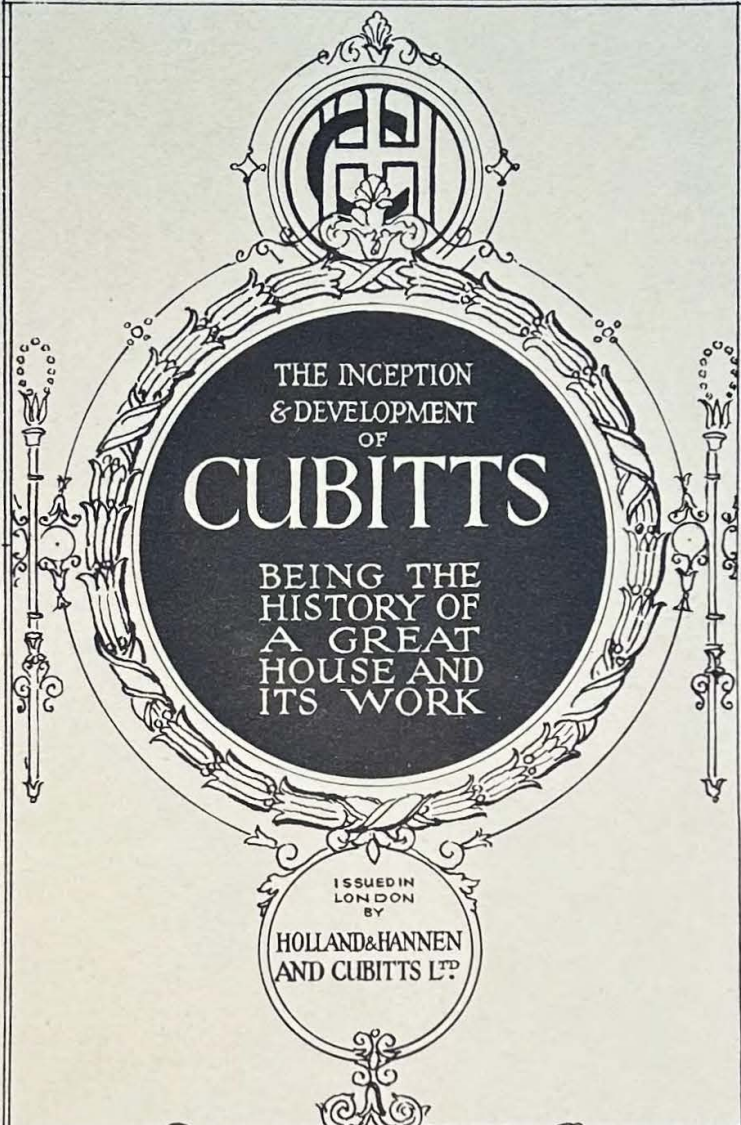
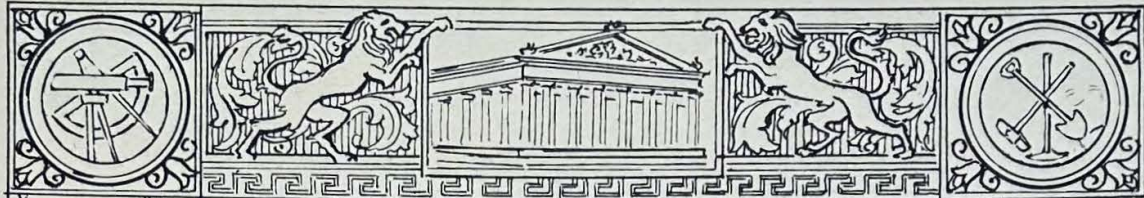
HOLLAND & HANNEN
AND
CUBITTS LTD.

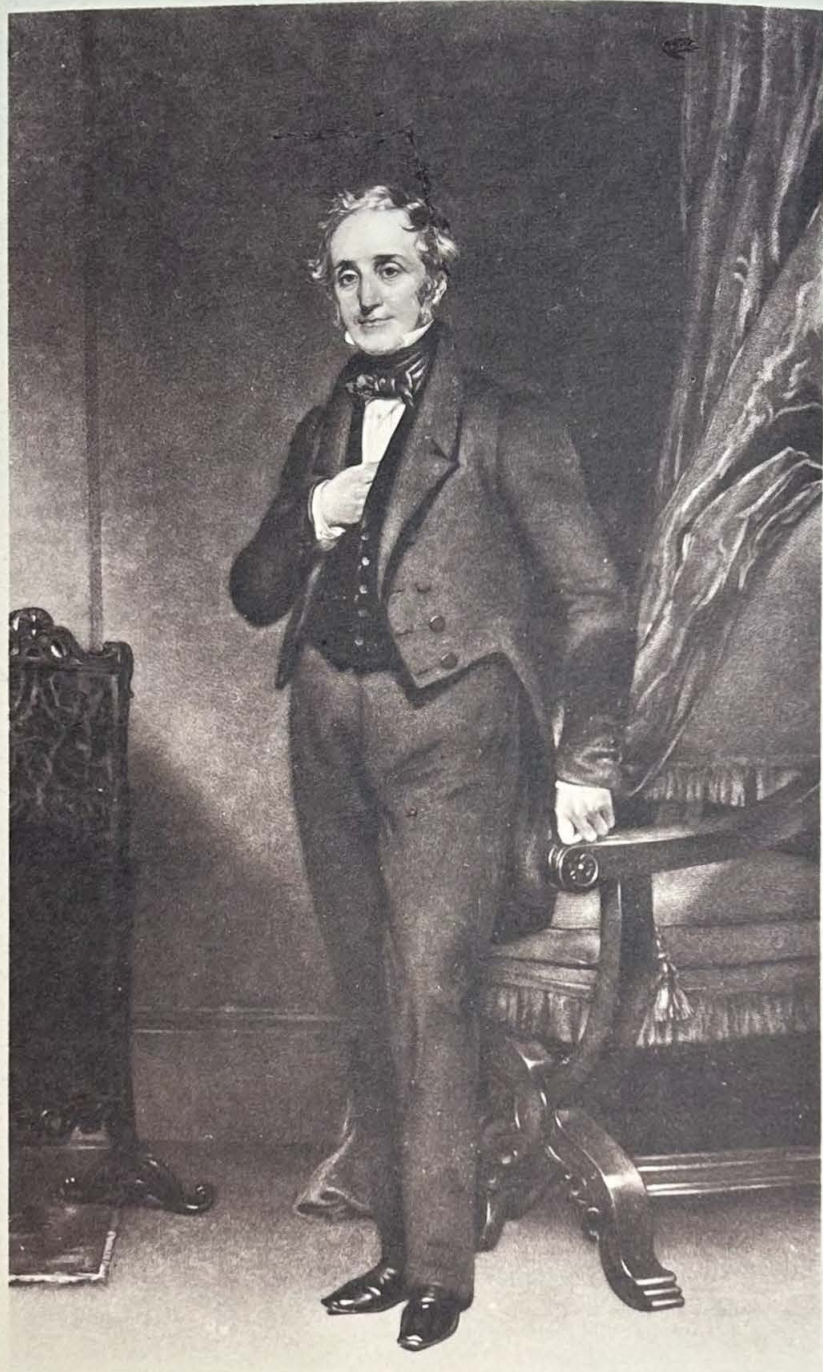
THE INCEPTION AND
DEVELOPMENT OF A
GREAT BUILDING FIRM



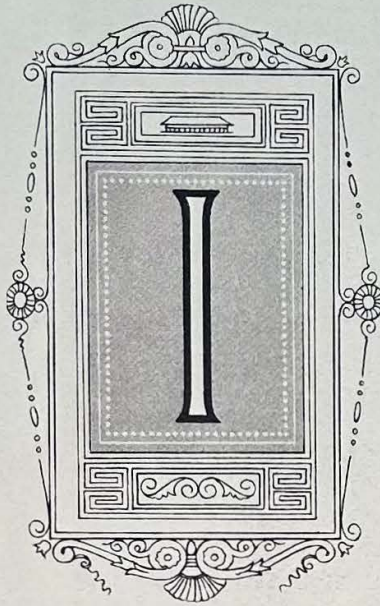


GRAY'S INN ROAD IN 1750.





THOMAS CUBITT.



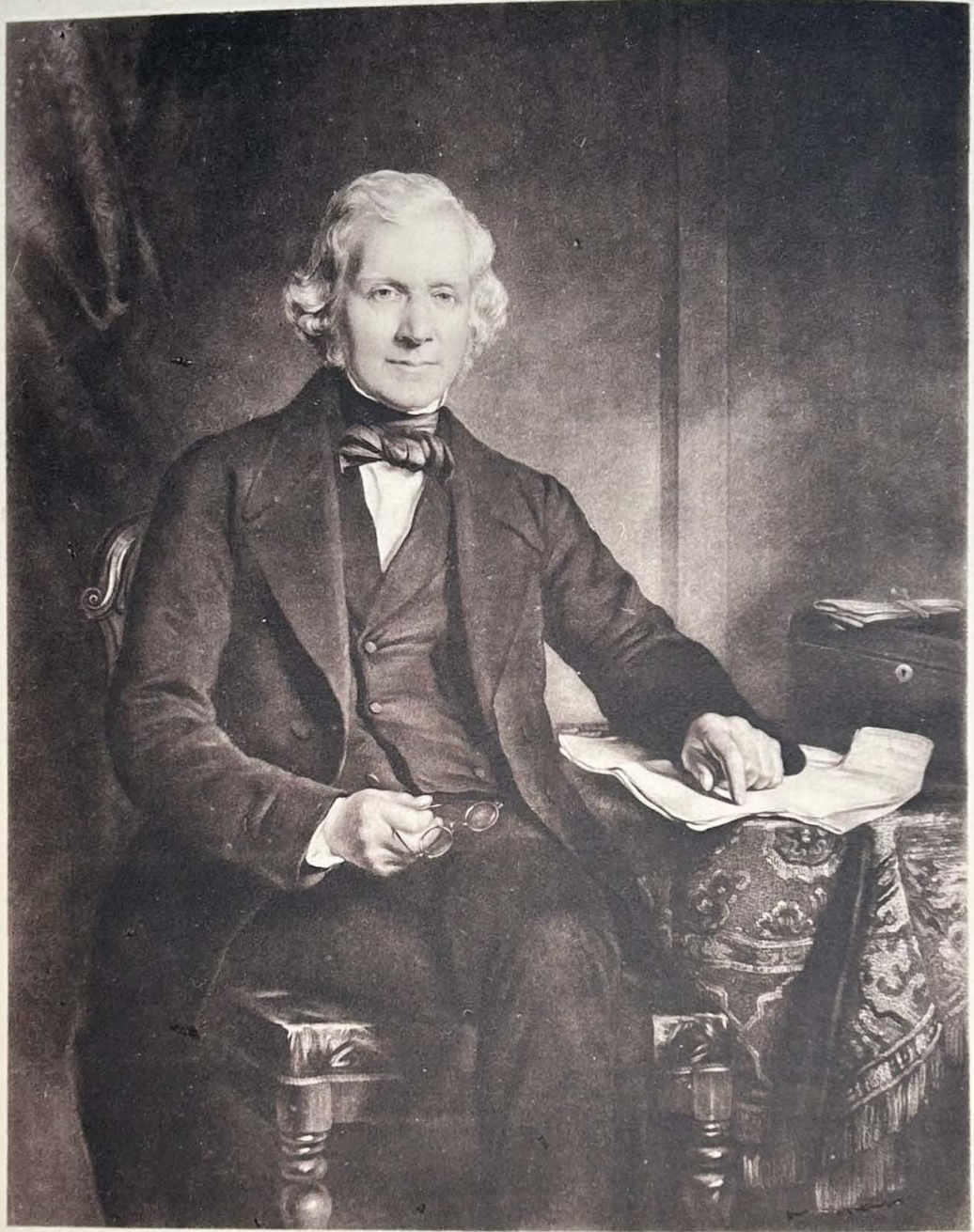
It has been said of the British race that it is a nation of materialists which expects miracles. It is equally true, perhaps more true, that it is a nation which accepts miracles.

We do indeed accept the wonders of modern science without turning a hair. We accept the miracle of the wireless and the aeroplane as the inevitable sequence to the telegraph and the motor-car. In particular do we accept and class amongst the common-places of life, the miraculous achievements of the dead and gone geniuses who evolved the systems under which we live in such comfort.

The miracle of London is only dimly understood and appreciated even by those who love her best. We know we move in a town, in the very heart of which are a few acres of historic ground which are known as "The City of London." But very few of us take the trouble to wonder just how that town came into being, just who was responsible for the magnificent buildings we see on every side, and what genius designed the type of modern building, whether it be office or house, which we know best.

Yet, despite our apparent carelessness, there are very few of us who have not, at one time or another, looked upon an old wall or some half-demolished building which is being pulled down to make room for one more modern, without speculating upon the changed conditions between the day that building was erected and the day it fell into the hands of the housebreaker. Who were the men who set that row of bricks? Into what limbo have they vanished? What were their amusements, their spare-time occupations? Where did they live? What were their names?

We know, if we think a little, that these workmen trudged to their labours in the days when London was lighted by oil lamps and when railways and tramways were undreamt of, when great patches of what is now called the West End were desolate fields and swamps. In their days, Waterloo was an affair of the future, and Nelson was still a midshipman learning his great business. The man



WILLIAM CUBITT.

who laid that brick and spread that crumbling mortar might have seen Garrick, might have heard Fox or Pitt, or seen the heads of traitors decaying upon Temple Bar.

This kind of speculation is one which comes to us all. The little historical retrospect inspired by ancient buildings is one of the few spiritual exercises which modern life holds for the modern man.

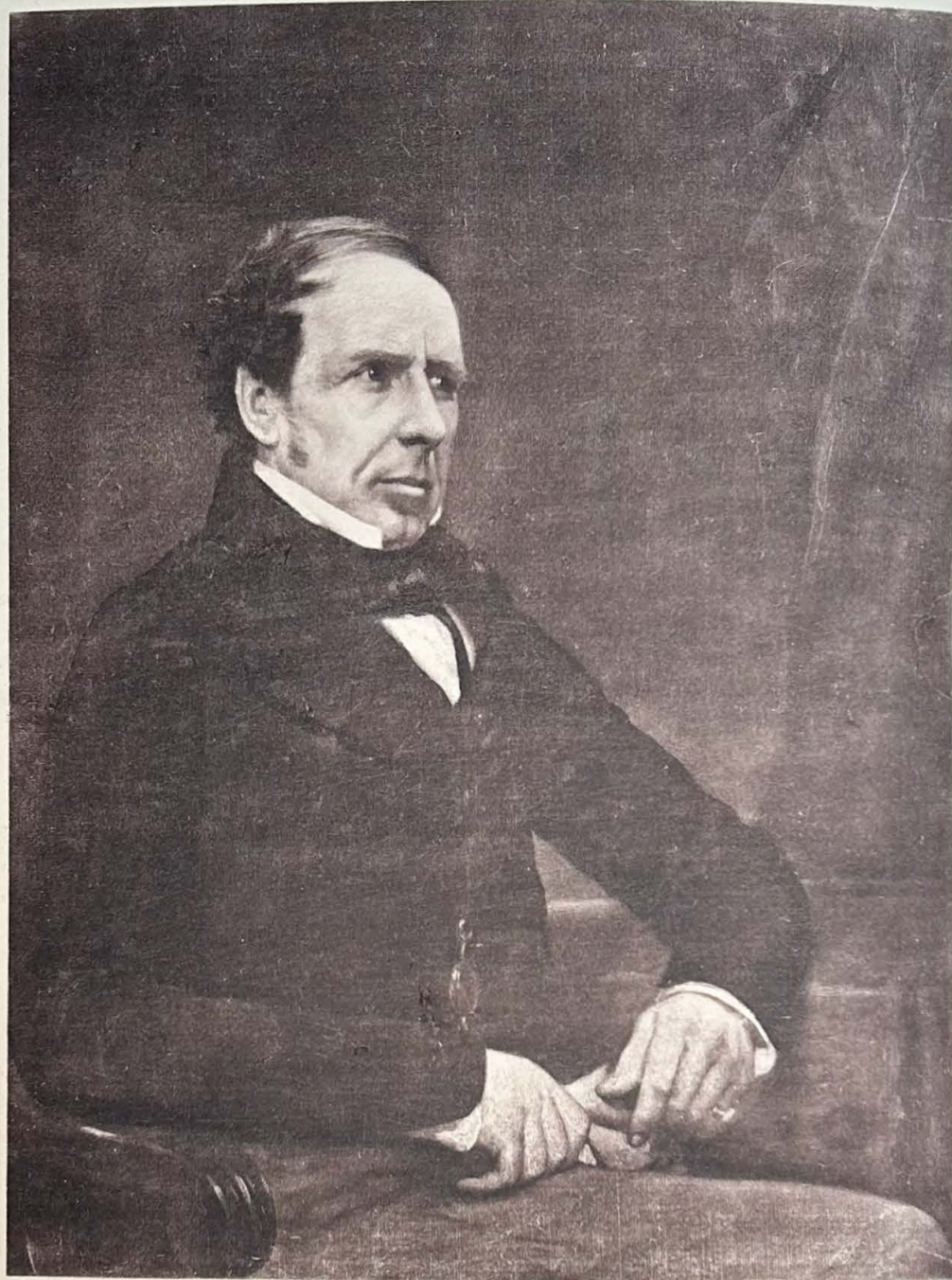
There is however little which leads our thoughts to the genesis of modern London. Of the hundreds of thousands of people who go up and down Gray's Inn Road, that somewhat drab thoroughfare, in the course of a year, and pass the sober-looking offices of Cubitts, not more than half a dozen, perhaps, realise that Cubitt is a name imperishably associated with the creation of modern London. This firm did not, of course, build every modern house, but it set its patterns for other builders to copy, and indeed created in itself the very profession of building contractors.

And it did something more than all this. Cubitts is associated with the building of the first railways, and certainly with the first railway stations; with the introduction of electric telegraphs; with the exploitation of modern ferro-concrete; and even with bringing to perfection that indispensable element in the practice of modern building, Portland Cement.

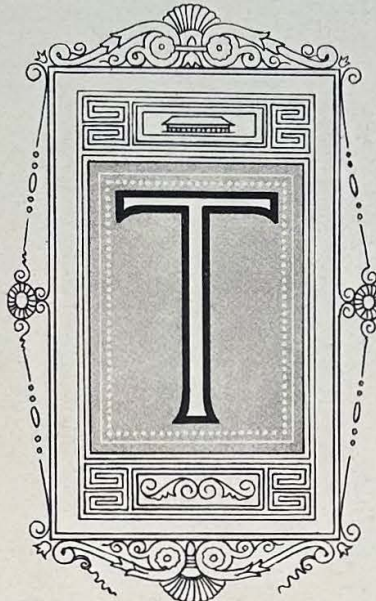
Up and down the country have Cubitts stamped their identity. Up and down the country is their name associated with solid comfort, permanent structure, and almost indestructible building.



FIREPLACE PANEL :
MESSRS. THOS. COOK & SON, LTD., BERKELEY STREET.



NICHOLAS WINSLAND.



HE story of Cubitts is a romance as is indeed any story which tells the beginnings of great ventures. Smiles created a book and initiated a literature devoted to great accomplishments which had humble origins, and if he omitted the Cubitts it was because he lived too close to them to see them in perspective.

Thomas Cubitt, the founder, was the friend and confidant of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. His son, after being for some years a member of Parliament, was created a Peer of the Realm. William Cubitt, the second son, was twice Lord Mayor of London, and the third brother, Lewis Cubitt, carried on the profession of an Architect.

There is, then, what one may justifiably describe as the element of romance in the beginning of this business, which has for so many years been less of a business than a national institution. It has been and still is a house with its own peculiar traditions, its own peculiar methods, invented by the founder, and has, moreover, to its credit achievements of such a vast and far-reaching character that they can only be described as national.

To-day the firm is known as Holland & Hannen and Cubitts, but "Cubitts" is the short title which is still applied to the firm, and which will probably be its short title until the end of time—or, and this is analogous, until the very decay of the many Cubitt buildings which fill the country.

The writer and his Cubitt's history suffers from exactly the same kind of handicap as would be his if he were asked by the Bank of England or some other institution of that kind, to prepare a brief story of its beginnings and development. He is dealing with something which had its beginning in private enterprise, and which is still one of the biggest businesses engaged in the practice for which it was designed, but nevertheless partakes of the character of a national industry.

Necessarily he takes for his text the two remarkable personalities who founded the business. It would require a Dickens to convey adequately the



THE CENOTAPH.

sense of reverence in which the name of Cubitt is held by all who were associated with the two men who made the firm famous.

They were great philanthropists, great and generous givers, large-hearted employers, who studied the interests of their men and initiated educational systems by which their employees might improve their minds.

They were big public-spirited creatures, far-seeing and Napoleonic in the magnificence of their ideas and schemes.

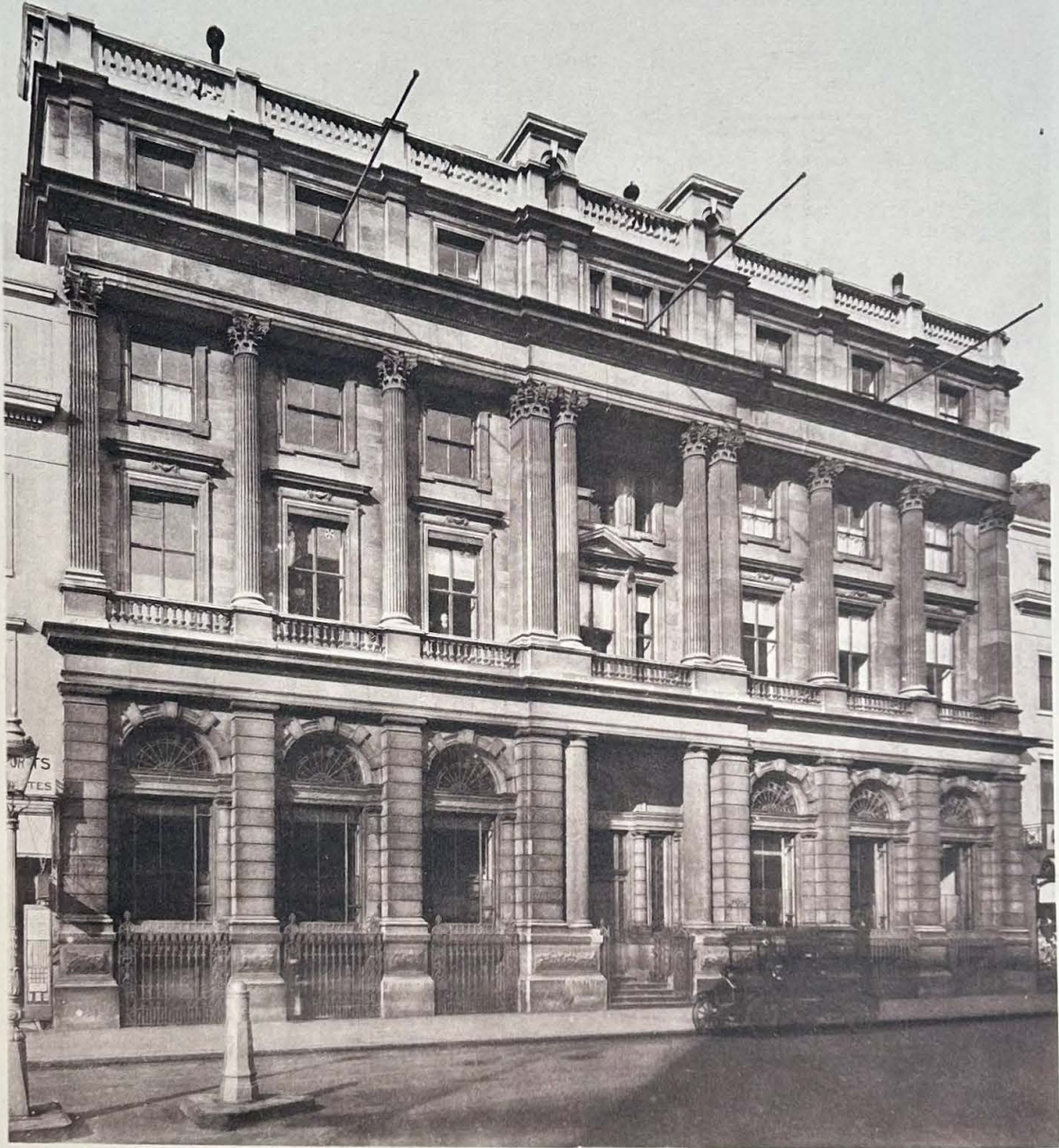
Indeed, there is ample scope for a much larger book than this on the Cubitts as sociologists.

Their undertakings were vast ; in the limited days when they began their operations, they seemed incredibly vast, and beyond the power of man to carry into effect.

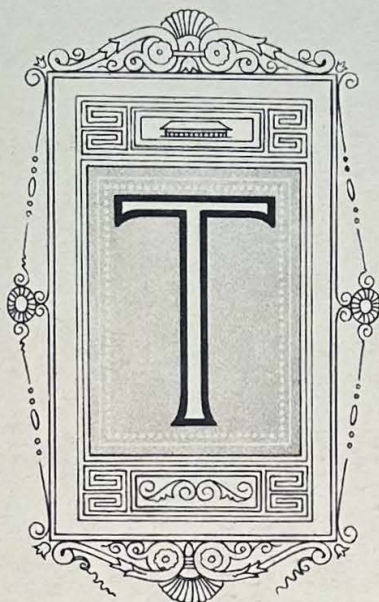
In those days there were plumbers and bricklayers, masons, carpenters, plasterers, etc., and each contracted with the owner of the property to be erected for his separate contribution to the building. So that, when an architect decided on putting up an office or a house, it was necessary for him to give out contracts and to arrange with a little syndicate which would undertake the excavation and the putting in of the foundations, with a master bricklayer, a master mason, a master carpenter, a master plumber, a master painter, and so on.

Builders, as we know them to-day, did not exist. It was impossible for a man or a corporation which required a country house or a set of offices to go to any firm and say: "Build me this house according to this plan," because there was no firm which would undertake so simple an instruction. Cubitts were, too, the first firm to buy up or lease tracts of land and cover them with fine houses and noble roads. Cubitts was the first firm to march boldly towards the unstable land which fringed the River Thames, particularly in the region of Pimlico.

Though they built houses in large numbers, they built no bad houses, and thus the name of Cubitt has come to be associated with solidity and comfort. "They built quickly, but they built well," and to-day in the advertisement columns of the Press which announce the sale of properties, the fact that a house is "Cubitt built" is never allowed to be overlooked by the advertiser. It is a splendid testimonial to a firm when its century-old work is still worth advertising.



COUTTS BANK—STRAND.



THE Cubitts were natives of Buxton, a village in Norfolk. Their father was undoubtedly a remarkable man, nor can it be doubted that the mother of these boys was as remarkable a woman. It is very certain that, if the family could be traced back for a cycle, we should discover that the forbears of the Cubitts had to their credit a history of achievements; since genius, even isolated genius—and in this case there were two brothers who were equally gifted—is not an accident, but is the product of breeding.

Thomas, the elder, was born on the 25th February, 1788. It was an eventful year in British history.

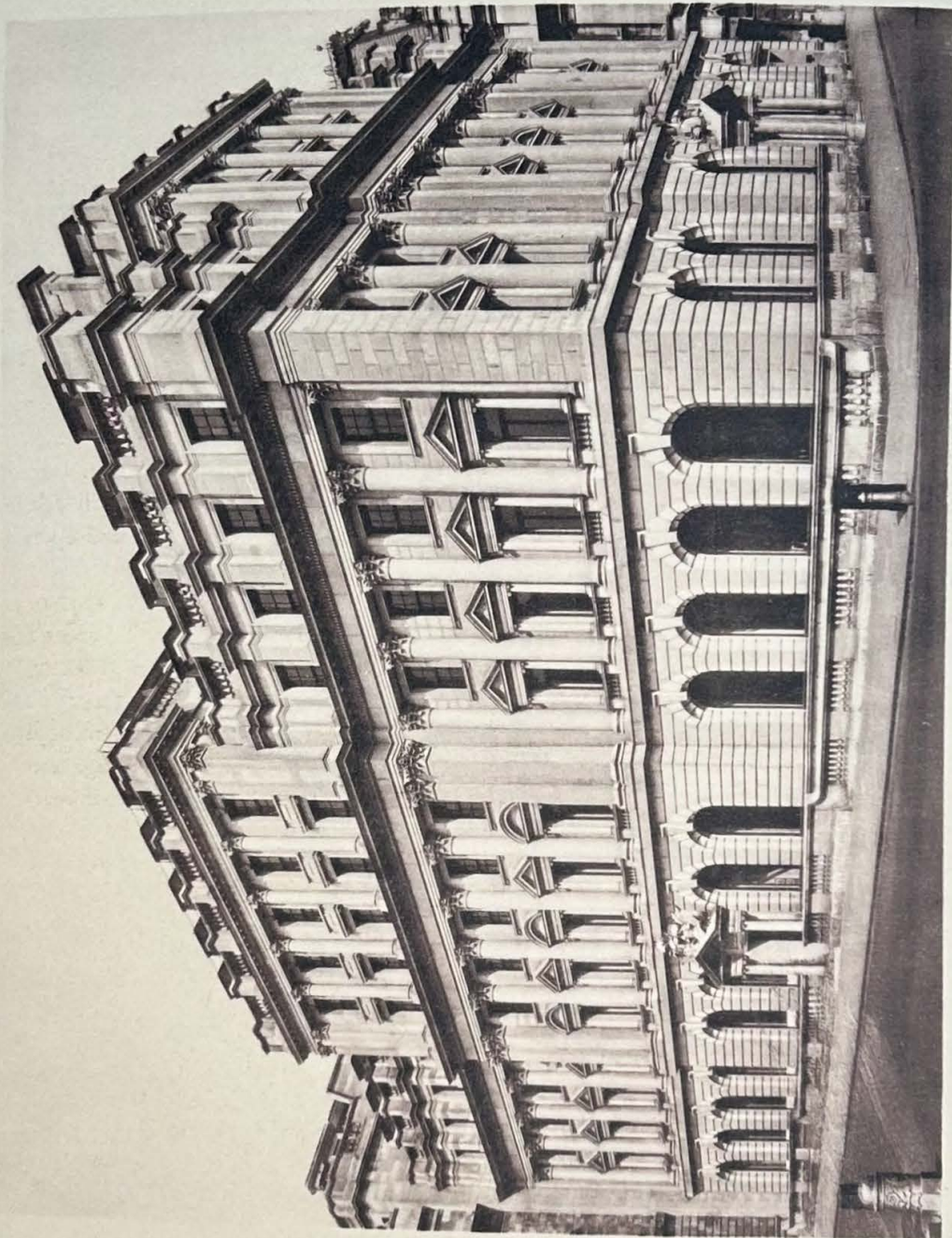
The Times, that great newspaper, began its publication in the year of Thomas Cubitt's birth, and fifteen days before he was born Warren

Hastings was brought to trial. In the new world, Washington was not yet President (he was elected the following year); the old *Bounty* had begun its voyage, which ended so dramatically in the Mutiny; and Louis XV was struggling with the financial difficulties of his kingdom, which were to lead the following year to the French Revolution.

The effect of that revolution was felt throughout the length and breadth of rural England. It stirred the minds of the young, despite the horrors which accompanied its executions, and leavened the ambition of every capable man.

The battle cry of the revolution, "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," found its echo in many a sleepy hamlet; and if the great revolution which followed in England was less picturesque, less tangible and less definite, and was, in fact, a revolution of the soul rather than of society, it certainly had its effect in the impetus it lent to education.

What stirring news that old village of Buxton received during the eighteen years which Thomas spent in its midst! The Bastille went up in smoke; three men as widely apart in temperament and purpose as John Wesley, Louis XVI, and Gustavus III, passed from life; the British took the Cape of Good Hope; Napoleon rose and fought his great chain of battles; the first Parliament of the United Kingdom was opened; Emmett led the Irish insurrectionists; Nelson



LLOYDS (COX'S) BANK—PALL MALL.

fought the Battle of Copenhagen ; and Napoleon was crowned in Notre Dame.

It is a curious fact that, when Thomas Cubitt came up to London to take a position as a journeyman carpenter, Britain was at war with Prussia—about the only time she had ever been in that position until the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

He came to a London which was nervous and a little excited by the knowledge that, in conjunction with Napoleon, the Germans had declared a blockade of the British Isles—a curious rehearsal for the more serious blockade which marked the closing days of the war.

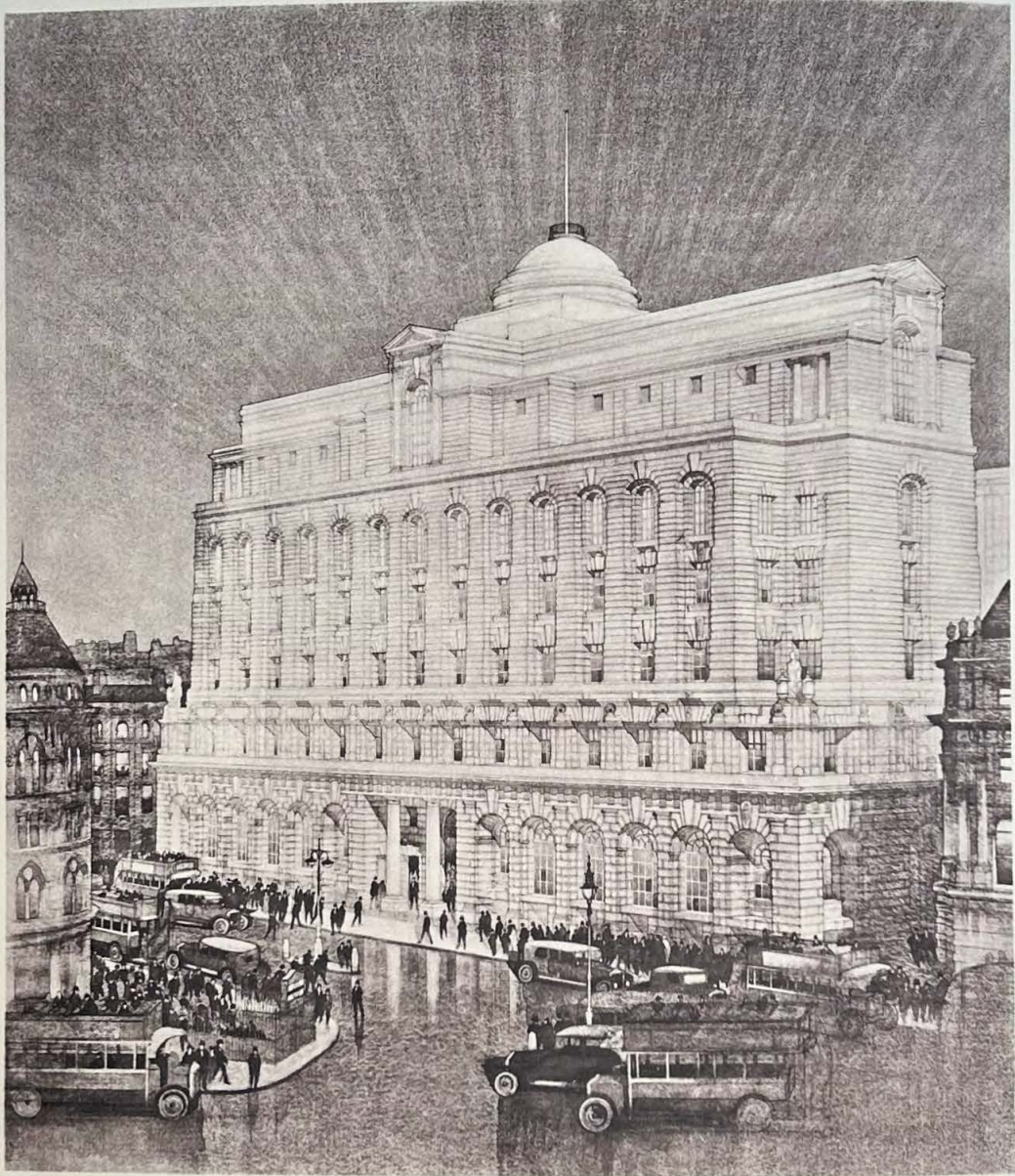
The work in London did not wholly satisfy his ambition. He was conscious, as so many men of genius are, that he had possibilities within him which his circumstances offered no opportunity for developing. Working in London as he did, he saw no chance of getting out of the rut into which he was slowly drifting. His father had died a year after his arrival in London, and his family ties were sufficiently elastic to allow him to become master of his own actions. He felt that the only possible way in which he could both broaden his mind and open up new opportunities was to see the world.

To see the world in the old days meant “going to sea”; and in 1807 or in the winter of 1806, he signed on as ship’s carpenter on board a frigate, and set sail for the Indies, influenced by the fact that his younger brother, William, the future Lord Mayor of London, was at that time serving in the Navy.

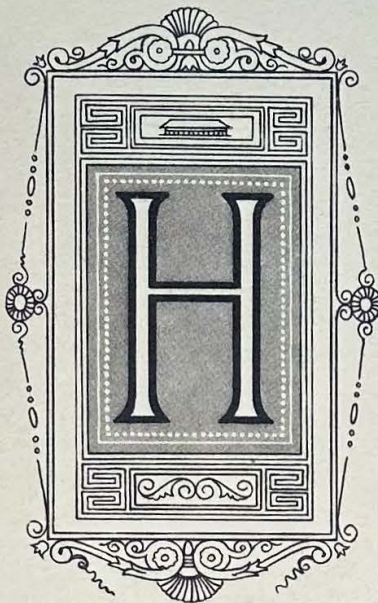
It was a voyage not unattended with danger. Napoleon’s fleet, supplemented by innumerable privateers, scoured the seas. But, apparently the voyage was made without mishap, though it was not until 1809, nearly two and a half years after he sailed, that Thomas returned to London.



SUPERSTRUCTURE : LONDON COUNTY HALL.



MIDLAND BANK (HEAD OFFICE)—POULTRY.



He had learned many things on that voyage. He had seen novel houses and novel buildings in many strange lands. He had noted and digested ; and had used the long periods of inaction which are common on board a sailing ship, to read from the small library he had taken on board, particularly such works on architecture as he had been able to procure. Thomas, holding a rather superior position in the ship's company, had earned a little more than the average sailor, and had carefully saved every penny which came his way.

It is probable that by reason of his position he made extra sums ; but at any rate, on his arrival in London, he had saved sufficient money to start business as a master carpenter in Eagle Street, Holborn.

As a master carpenter he could, of course, accept contracts under the old system ; could tender for work and employ other men to carry it out, though he himself did three men's work on every job he took.

Just previous to the death of his father, his brother William, who was three years his junior, had, as I have said, entered the Royal Navy, and it is possible that some correspondence between the brothers had been responsible for Thomas taking his voyage as a method of enlarging his experience. William left the Navy in 1806 and joined his brother in London as a pupil, the brothers afterwards entering into a partnership.

All this time Thomas was preparing for the amalgamation of the various trades under one management. He was not satisfied to confine his tendering for the mere carpentry of a house, but had persuaded other master men—plumbers, bricklayers and the like—to accept contracts with him.

Eventually he was to amalgamate the several trades in one yard ; and in view of the jealousies which existed between the various guilds and societies (if there were no trade unions, the " guilds " and " companies " were as strong at the beginning of the nineteenth century as some of the trade unions of to-day) his success in this amalgamation may rank with the most remarkable of his triumphs.



WESTMINSTER "FOREIGN" BANK—ANTWERP.

It was a characteristic of the firm, even in those early days, and it has been no less a characteristic of the business as it is to-day, that it was remarkably elastic.

Even in its humble beginnings it was so organised as to allow of an expansion of its activities to cover projects which seemed beyond its daring. At first the jobs were small, but later, as the reputation of his work grew, he was entrusted, or rather, the brothers were entrusted, with much more important contracts.

Possibly nothing which the firm has undertaken since that date has caused its leaders so much anxiety and care as the first big task which was entrusted to it, namely, the placing of a new roof on the Russell Institution in Great Coram Street. For a young contractor this work was in the nature of a supreme trial. Had he failed in this, he must have been relegated to the ranks of the little builders, with the added disadvantage that he would be regarded as eccentric. But the new roof went on without a hitch.

The work was so expeditiously carried out, and the charges were so reasonable, that the name of Thomas Cubitt became so well known that, when it was decided to build the London Institution in Finsbury Circus, Thomas Cubitt was sent for and commissioned to carry out the work.

The foundations were laid in 1815, and the work was carried to a successful conclusion.

Orders were now pouring in on all sides, and Thomas Cubitt, who had taken the most optimistic view of his prospects and had been looking round for more convenient premises than his little place in Eagle Street, decided upon taking a tract of land by the side of the Gray's Inn Road, extending to the Fleet River, on which the present premises stand. It was a curious fact that in order to secure this land from Lord Calthorpe, it was necessary to pass an Act of Parliament.



STAIRWAY :
EGYPTIAN EMBASSY, BUTE HOUSE.



PRINCES STREET CORNER—E.C.



WITH the order for the London Institution in hand, and other contracts looming ahead, Thomas began to launch forth. He constructed large workshops upon the new property, purchased horses and carts and material, and for the first time directly engaged carpenters, smiths, plumbers, glaziers, painters, bricklayers, etc., to serve under him directly and to be responsible to nobody but himself—a revolutionary change of procedure.

Those autocrats the master plumber, bricklayer, etc., disappeared, and were replaced by "foremen," who exercised very much the same sort of authority as the foremen of to-day, but were in turn responsible to the General of this strange (exceedingly strange it must have seemed to the tradesmen of the day) army.

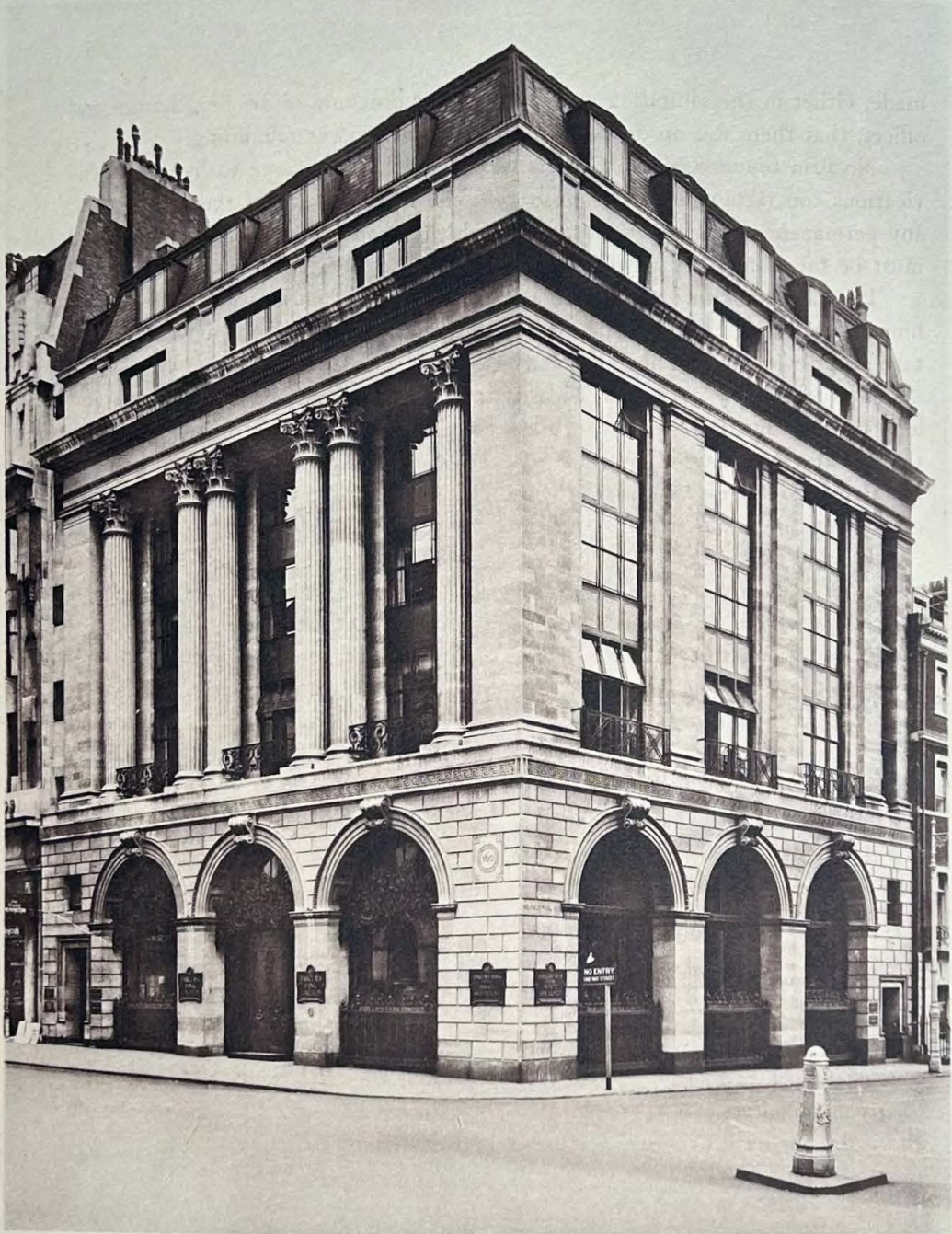
Every penny that the brothers made was turned back into the business. Every profit was converted into material—wagons, horses, new workshops.

There were some cautious souls who expostulated against this feverish system of expansion; they proved by statistics that there was not enough work to occupy the big staff of builders whom the brothers had engaged.

It was perfectly true that the builders' profession was a precarious one. There were weeks and months of continuous work, and months of slackness. It was no unusual thing for tradesmen of this character to be out of work for three months at a time. Thomas Cubitt had taken what seemed the exceedingly rash and hazardous step of promising his employees permanent work, and this disturbed contemporary employers to no small extent.

Thomas had his plans cut and dried. He knew as well as any other that the normal activities in the building trade would not offer him sufficient scope. He knew that, at the rate houses and offices were building, he could not hope to run a permanent staff, and that, if he undertook the payment of their wages, there would be times when he would be facing a huge wage bill without anything coming in to compensate or to set off against his outlay.

After all, in those days the building profession was not a flourishing business. People had a passion for their old houses, and there had been so few improvements



BARCLAYS BANK (FORMERLY WOLSELEY BUILDINGS)—PICCADILLY

made, either in the sanitation or in the interior economy of dwelling houses and offices, that there was no demand either for renovation or rebuilding.

No firm founded as the Cubitts was founded, could hope to live upon the vicarious contracts which were likely to come its way; and if there was to be any permanence to the new industry which they had started, some new method must be found for keeping these men employed in their spare time.

He was very loth to discharge a man, especially when he had rough-trained him into his system; and this desire to keep his old hands with him led him to take a step which made him the pioneer of speculative building.

Though a very busy man, he used to find time to drive about London and look over vacant and, from the builder's view point, desirable sites, of which there were very many. Though it was then London's pride that it was the most populous and largest city in the world, he realised that the population of the great Metropolis was nothing to what it would eventually become.

He had that Imperial imagination which Rhodes possessed in so marked a degree; and even as that empire-builder populated the waste spaces across which only the half savage natives roamed, with British homes and pedigree cattle, so did Thomas Cubitt sit in his high trap, and, looking across the wastes of the place we now call Pimlico imagine a populous suburb to the growing city.

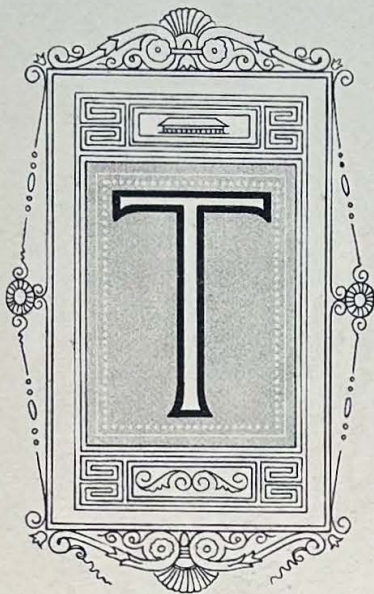
Even he may not have dreamed that the town would extend so far beyond these sites, but he certainly saw the time coming when the gentleman's mansion would stand where the occasional hovel rotted.

Sometimes he found it impossible to secure the land by purchase, and then arrangements had to be made with a landowner. In every case Cubitt started off by laying out the wilderness in broad streets and instituting his own system of drainage. Having marked out the site and chosen the moment when contracts were slack, and his men would otherwise be idle, he began the building of houses.

The character of his design was everything. He made provision for drainage, for the width of the pavements, for the provision of gardens and the very shrubs which should flourish there. He saw these wide squares, these geranium covered flower beds, the spreading trees—with nurse girls knitting beneath and their young charges playing on the green sward he would lay down—and eventually all his dreams were to come true.



BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO Co.'s OFFICES—MILLBANK.



HE first of these undertakings was begun at Highbury in 1820. He took his site in the Parish of Islington, a commanding position which allowed him the fullest scope for the realisation of his plans, and began to build.

Just about then he purchased six acres of land where is now Barnsbury Park. Highbury might reasonably be called "Cubitt Town" were it not that another district, less pretentious than that in which Thomas Cubitt began his initial experiment, already bears that name.

The plans were begun in the year that Queen Victoria was born, but the actual building operations did not begin until a year later. There was, of course, a great deal of head-shaking amongst the clever ones, who

predicted ruin for the builder and talked earnestly of the "new desolation" which the Cubitts were adding to London.

They imagined rows and rows of empty houses, for apparently the housing problem following the conclusion of the war that saw Napoleon sent to exile was not as acute as that which followed the greater war of a hundred years later.

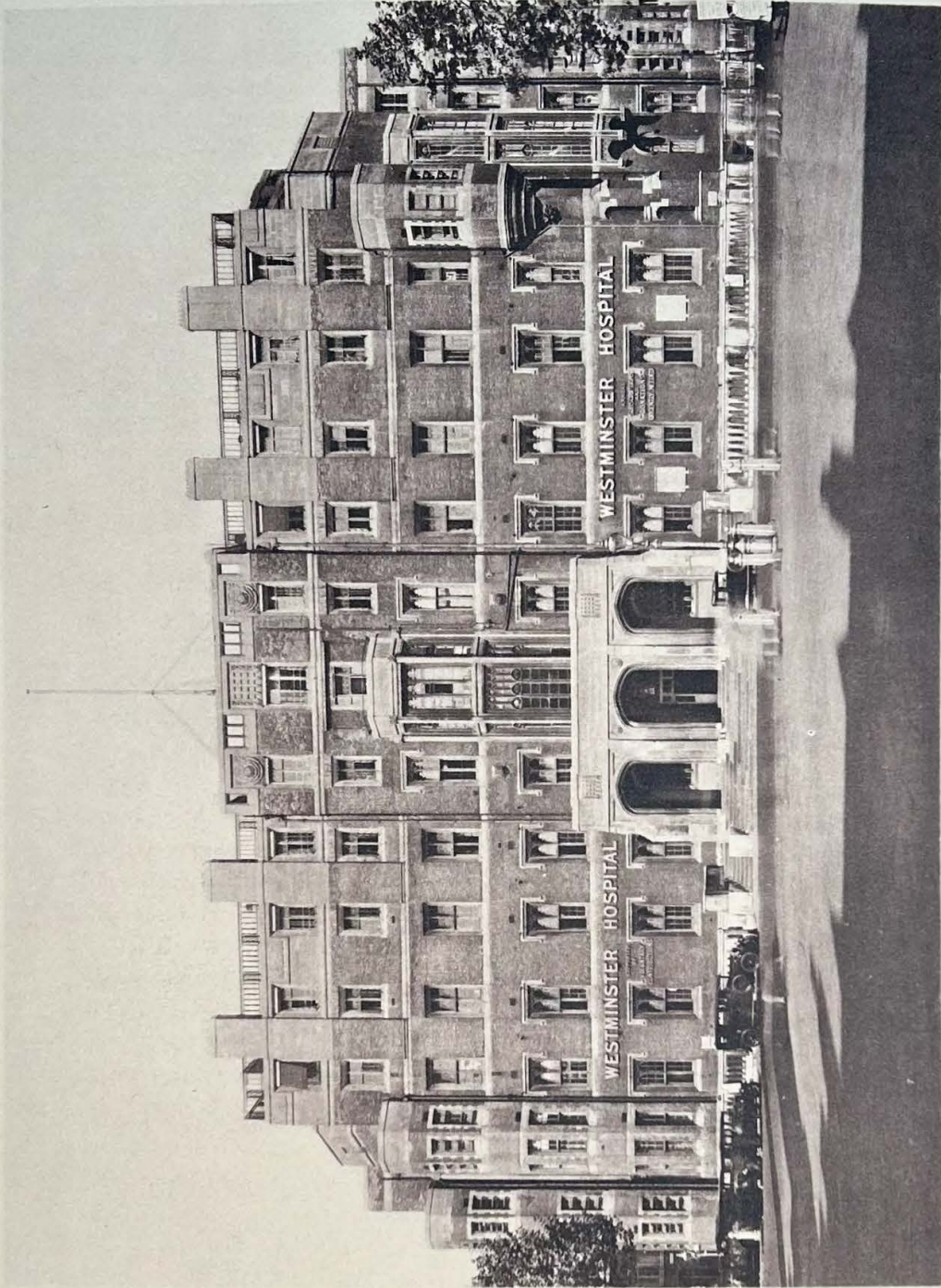
The arrival of Cubitts' army of labourers and artisans was duly chronicled.

Both Thomas and William Cubitt were on the spot most of the time, watching their dreams take shape. Slowly but surely there arose from the fields new little mansions, solid and, by our latter-day standards, not too beautiful of appearance.

Happily, the Cubitt design and the Cubitt house have lived down both the prejudice of those who think them ugly, and those older critics who thought them flighty.

It was in this construction, where Cubitt had to please nobody but himself, and where he could apply his method and his system unrestrained by any carping criticism, that we saw the Cubitt method of building at its best. It was economical; it was so well organised that "not a load of bricks was wasted."

The work of carpenter and bricklayer, plasterer and plumber, were so



WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL.

synchronised under the Cubitt organisation that the houses grew like magic ; and before London realised what was happening a new residential district had come into being in their very midst.

There were two words which never occurred in the Cubitt vocabulary. The one was "waste" and the other "scamp"—I use the word within the meaning of hasty and bad work.

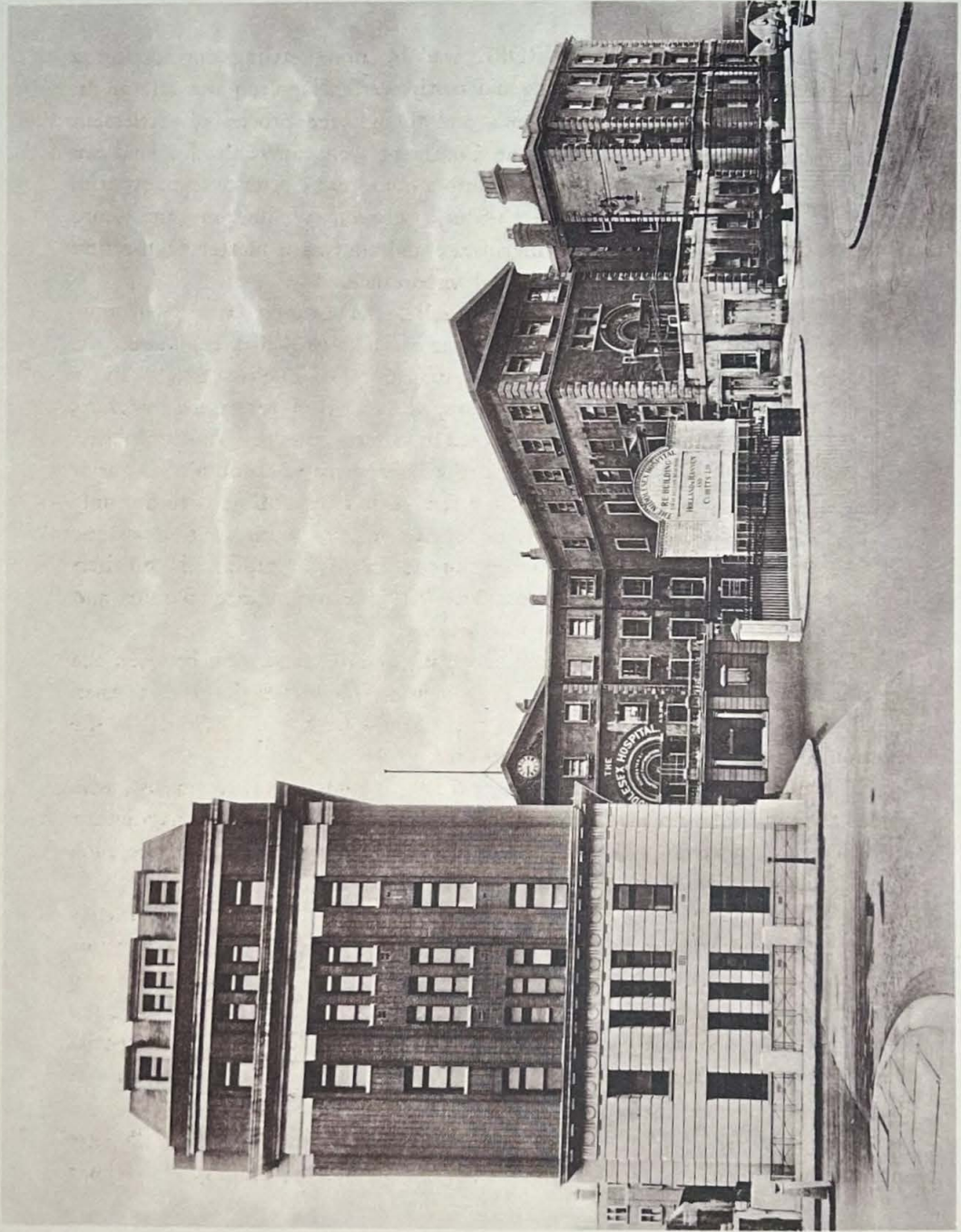
They built quickly but they built truly. The material they put in was of the best. One of the greatest difficulties that the modern housebreaker finds is to tear down an old Cubitt house ; and the fact that it is a Cubitt building will invariably influence him in the preparation of his estimate.

To-day the old oak beam which Thomas and William put in is as good as it was on the day that it was laid in place. And it may be mentioned in passing that Thomas Cubitt was one of the pioneers of the iron-framed house. Wherever he could use iron—steel was not employed in constructional work until quite recently—iron was used. You find iron mentioned in a very large number of the specifications which he himself prepared.

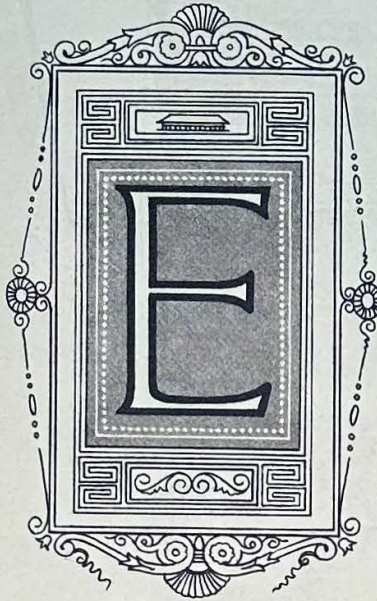
From the first he copied nobody. He originated methods of building which are still employed ; he founded new systems of book-keeping. He took in hand material which had certainly been used before in the construction of buildings, but experimented with that material, and improved upon it, until he was constructing on lines which were wholly different from those followed by any other builder in London.

The Highbury property was an instant success. His venture paid a profit from the very start, and he began to cast his eye over what were literally new fields. His next attempt to create the new London was to build Upper Woburn Place and Woburn Buildings. It does not to-day seem possible that there could have been waste spaces where Woburn Place now stands, or that these remained unbuilt upon. Still less does it seem possible that Gordon Square and Tavistock Street, Gordon Street and Endsleigh Street, and even the sides of Euston Square, were waste spaces until the hand of Cubitt, following the mind of Cubitt, erected comfortable dwelling houses where no dwelling houses had been.

It was always to be noted in Cubitts' plans that, wherever he had a large space to fill, he left a considerable portion unbuilt upon. The building laws were lax ; he might, had he wished, have deprived London of many of the "lungs" which it now enjoys. But Thomas Cubitt especially had a veritable mania for open spaces.



MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL.



UROPE was by now settling down, after a long and costly war. Napoleon was safe at St. Helena, and though the process of settlement on the Continent went unevenly, England was passing into a humdrum existence so uneventful that a duel between Wellington and Lord Winchelsea stands out as a matter of the first historical importance.

Financially, the country was recovering. The opening of India to British commerce, the increased demand for English goods by a Europe ravaged by years of remorseless warfare, contributed toward the growth of our prosperity. Though the prosperity was not obvious as it became a few years later, full of faith not only in the future of the country, but in the growing importance of the capital, the brothers

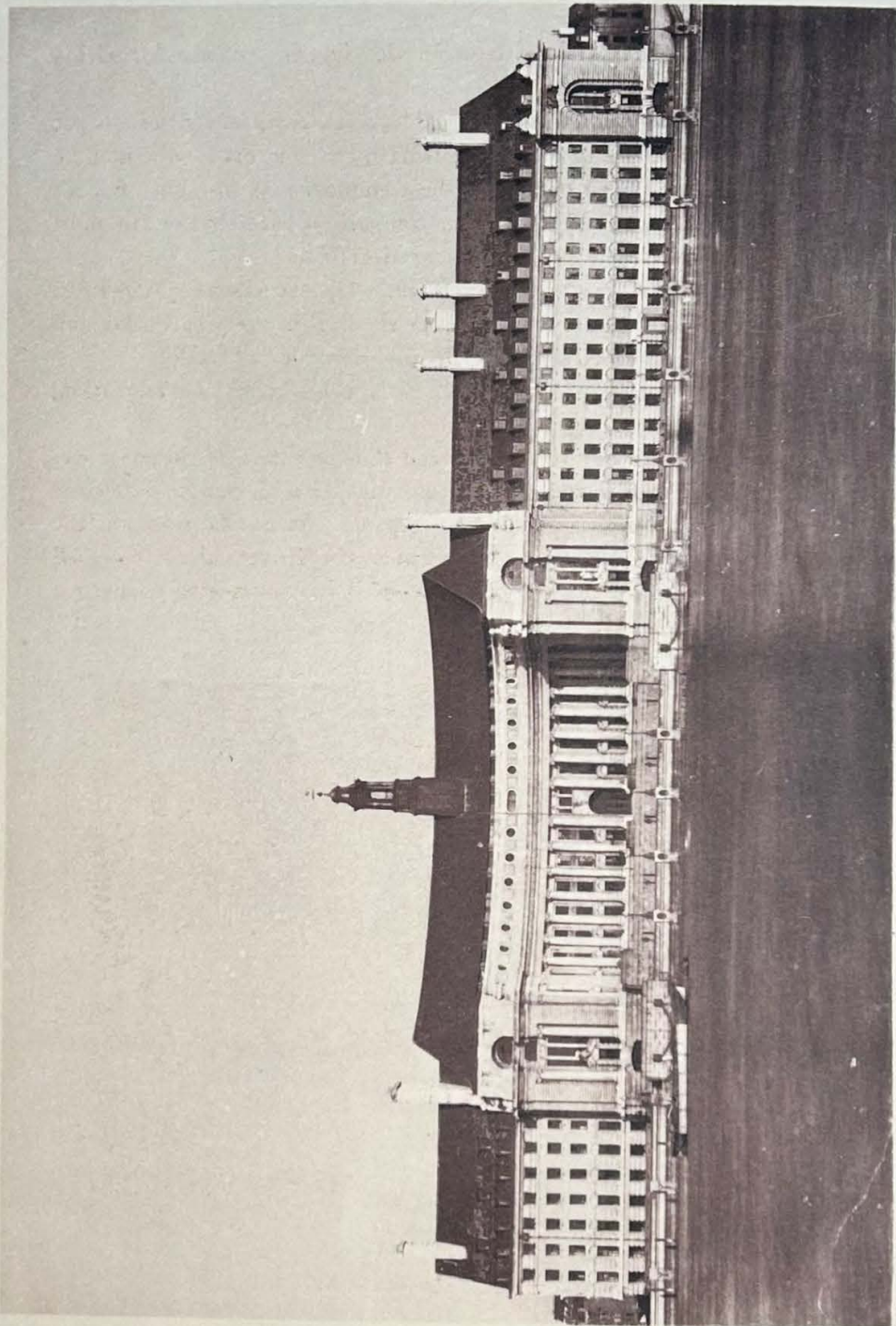
Cubitt but more especially Thomas, continued their search for desirable sites and went forward with their work of construction.

There was in 1825 a tract of land consisting of 140 acres, lying between the river at Vauxhall and Westminster. It seemed to Thomas to be a more than usually favourable site, and he opened negotiations with the landlord for the erection of a brand-new West End district.

It is amusing to remember that a well-known mid-Victorian novelist, who placed the time of his novel in 1780, describes in great detail his hero's magnificent residence in Belgrave Square. The truth, of course, is that there was no such thing as Belgrave Square until the Cubitts created it.

It was in 1825 when they began their work, planned out, as usual, stately streets, laid down excellent roads and drains, plotted out gardens and built those eminently solid houses which make up Belgrave Square, Lowndes Square and Chesham Place, a scheme of construction so great that it was not really completed until 1855. At about the same time they began to build over a vast district lying between Eaton Square and the Thames, which is known as Pimlico.

Though we speak of the two brothers as having an equal part in all these enterprises, William had very little to do with the town planning, and it was



LONDON COUNTY HALL.

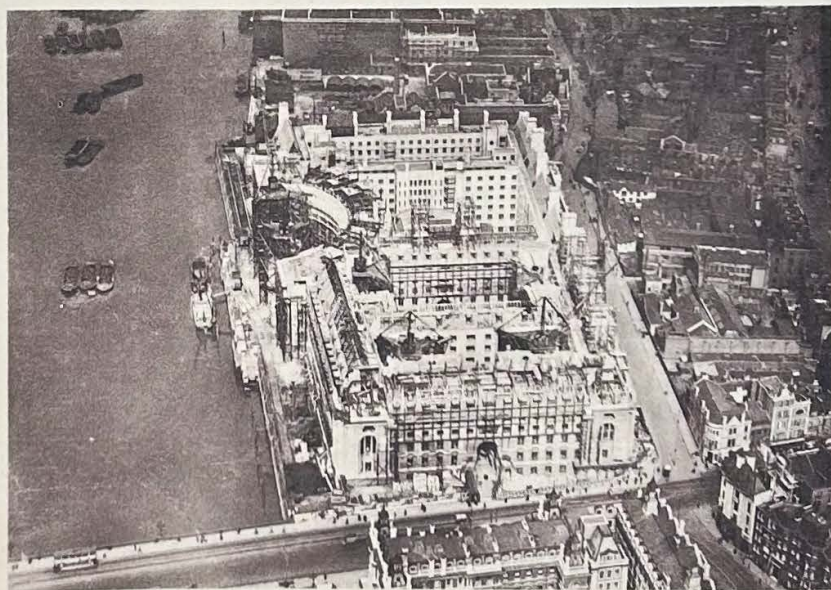
Thomas who was the leader and initiator in this feverish scheme for giving good houses to London.

The man was a human dynamo, indefatigable, restless, yet never losing sight of the human factor, or failing to provide recreation and comfort for the men he employed. He must have been one of the best employers of his time, and his treatment of those who served him will bear comparison with that of the most philanthropic of employers who lived before or after him.

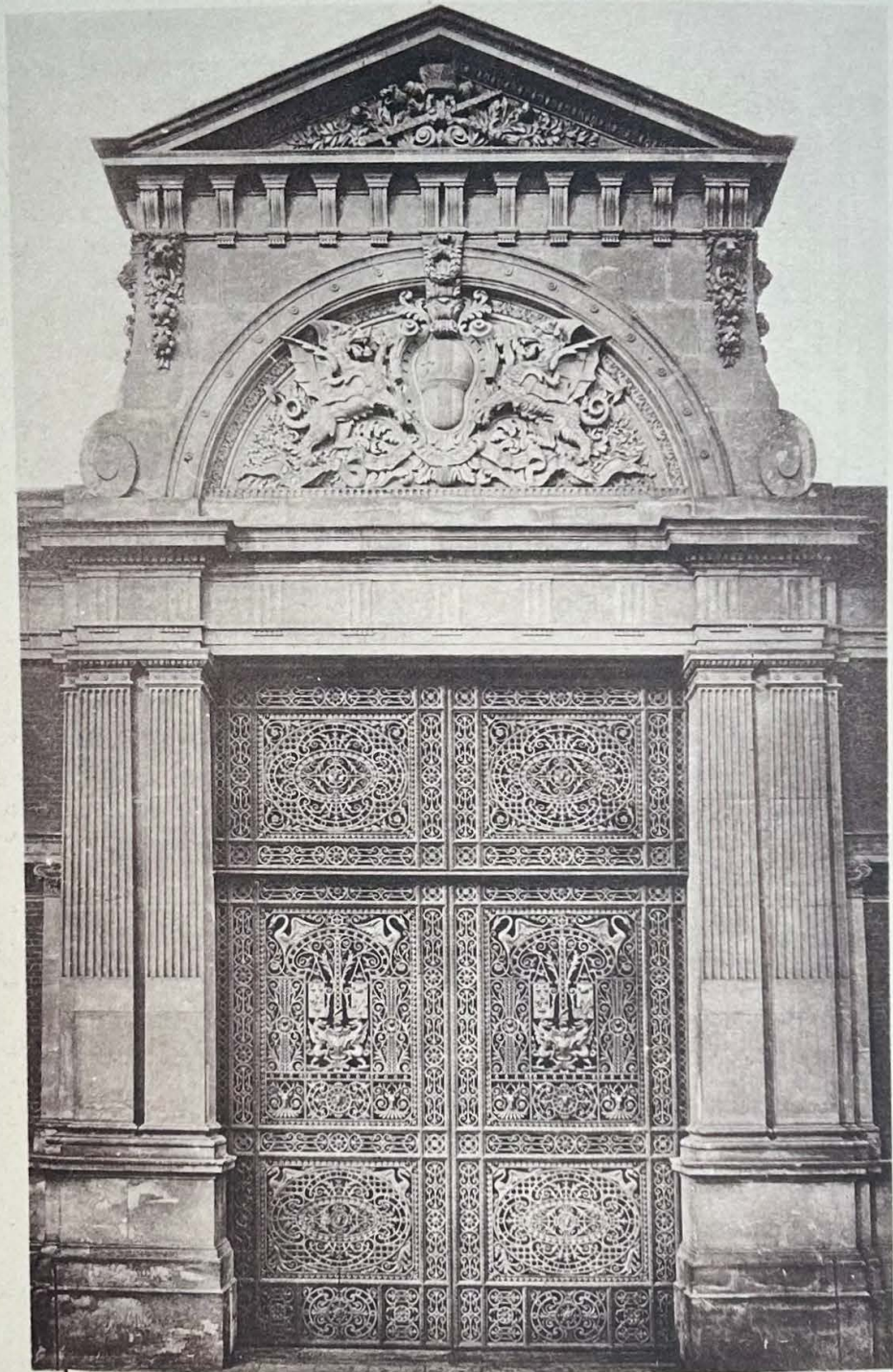
He was a personal friend to all who served him. His encyclopædic knowledge of his trade enabled him at all times to discover the flaw in every execution and to rectify the mistakes which either he or his subordinates had made.

He lived for his work and with his work. It was his hobby, his recreation, his very life.

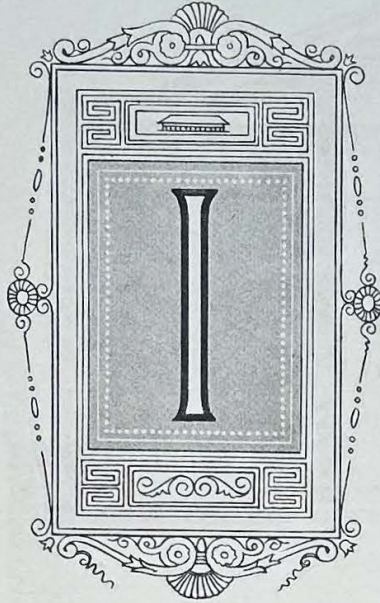
He was not content to build Belgravia and Pimlico ; but as circumstances drove him nearer and nearer to the river he combined with his private enterprise a little unauthorised public work at his own expense. It was he who was the prime mover in the scheme for the Embankment of the Thames above Vauxhall Bridge, and he set a splendid example of public-spirit in constructing over three thousand feet of the Embankment out of his own pocket.



LONDON COUNTY HALL : FROM THE AIR.



CITY CORPORATION POULTRY MARKET (SMITHFIELD) DOORWAY.



IN the earlier days of his building enterprise Thomas Cubitt confined himself to the sites on the north side of the river. He was soon to turn his eyes to likely places on the Surrey side; and it may be said that it was he who, in the residential sense, discovered Clapham. He built here and, as everywhere else, built well, and to-day the Cubitt houses rank with the best. His third brother, Lewis, who had come to London to blossom forth as an architect, assisted him in some degree, but it would appear that after a while he followed his profession independently of his two successful brothers, and it is pleasant to record that he too attained his measure of success.

No site, however promising and likely, was wholly satisfactory to Thomas unless it gave him opportunities for leaving, in the centre of his operations, a big open space. He was a lifelong advocate for recreation grounds for the people. In his mind's eye, seeing the outward growth of London—he lived to watch the realisation of his prophecies—he worked incessantly to preserve, amidst the wilderness of bricks and laths and mortar, clear spots where the grass could grow green and the trees could afford shade and pleasure to the eye; and many were the tussles which he had with authority to bring about this desirable state of affairs.

It was mainly due to Thomas Cubitt that Battersea Park became a national possession. Again and again he urged upon the Government of the day the vital necessity for securing every patch of unoccupied ground that could be found within the area of London for the use of the people.

We know that that advice was not always followed, and that procrastination in Government departments cost the taxpayers very heavily, since a piece of ground rejected at a ridiculous figure was often bought at a later period for twenty times the amount which had been originally asked.

Battersea Park was planned by Cubitt. It was one of his projects. It is a little remarkable that his name is not associated with that very pleasant "lung."

He had long since attained to something more than local fame. His name



WOOLLANDS—KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

was known throughout the world; and when Queen Victoria decided to build Osborne House it was for Thomas Cubitt she sent. She and the Prince Consort remained friends with him all his life, and he was employed to build the east front of Buckingham Palace.

During the time this speculative building had been going on, orders had been pouring into the firm, and its business was steadily growing greater.

Thomas, however, was so absorbed in his schemes for building London that he could spare little time for the general business of the firm; and on the 23rd June, 1827, he severed his connection with the establishment in Gray's Inn Road, the partnership with his brother being dissolved by mutual consent.

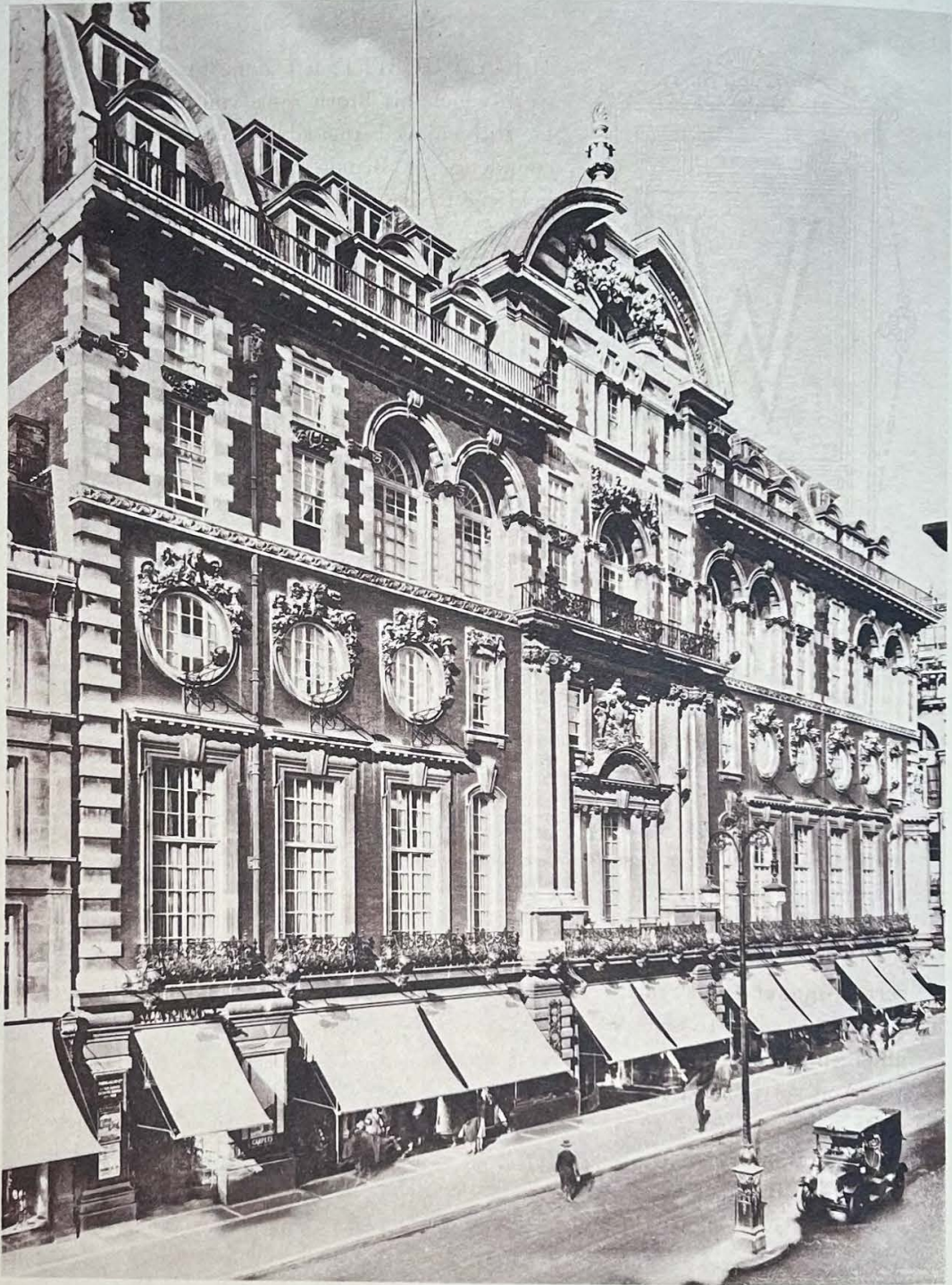
As a matter of fact, it is very doubtful whether the partnership had any existence on paper. No record of such a document is discoverable; probably all that existed was an oral agreement between the two men, who completely trusted one another, and the dissolution of the partnership, though it is recorded in black and white, was the first legal instrument that the two men ever signed acknowledging such a partnership to have existed. The friendliest relationships were maintained between the two brothers. The firm of Cubitts still carried out the work of Thomas Cubitt, though the dissolution robbed neither of the partners of the credit of their work.

Thomas continued to work, incidentally amassing an enormous fortune, more and more devoting his labours to the service of the public. He died on 26th December, 1855, leaving more monuments to his name, though they did not bear his name, than any other man of the Victorian era.

His son, George Cubitt, sat in the House of Commons from 1860 to 1892, when he was raised to the peerage as Baron Ashcombe, two of whose grandsons being of those who laid down their lives in the Great War.



MESSRS. W. VERNON & SONS' FLOUR MILLS: ALBERT DOCK.



WARING & GILLOWS—OXFORD STREET.



WILLIAM CUBITT, left alone to carry on the work which his brother had initiated (though he still enjoyed the advice and retained the confidence of Britain's greatest home-maker), held the business in his own hands for twenty-four years—from 1827 to 1851.

Since he was now the veritable head of Cubitts, we must associate him, rather than Thomas, with all the triumphs that followed during the long years of his management. Their operations went on simultaneously; the independent operations of Thomas changing waste spaces into residential districts, while William carried out the ordinary business of contractor and builder. The premises in Gray's Inn Road were inadequate to deal with the volume of business which accumulated.

New wharves and yards were built or taken in various parts of London, and the manifold activities of the firm found yet new outlets.

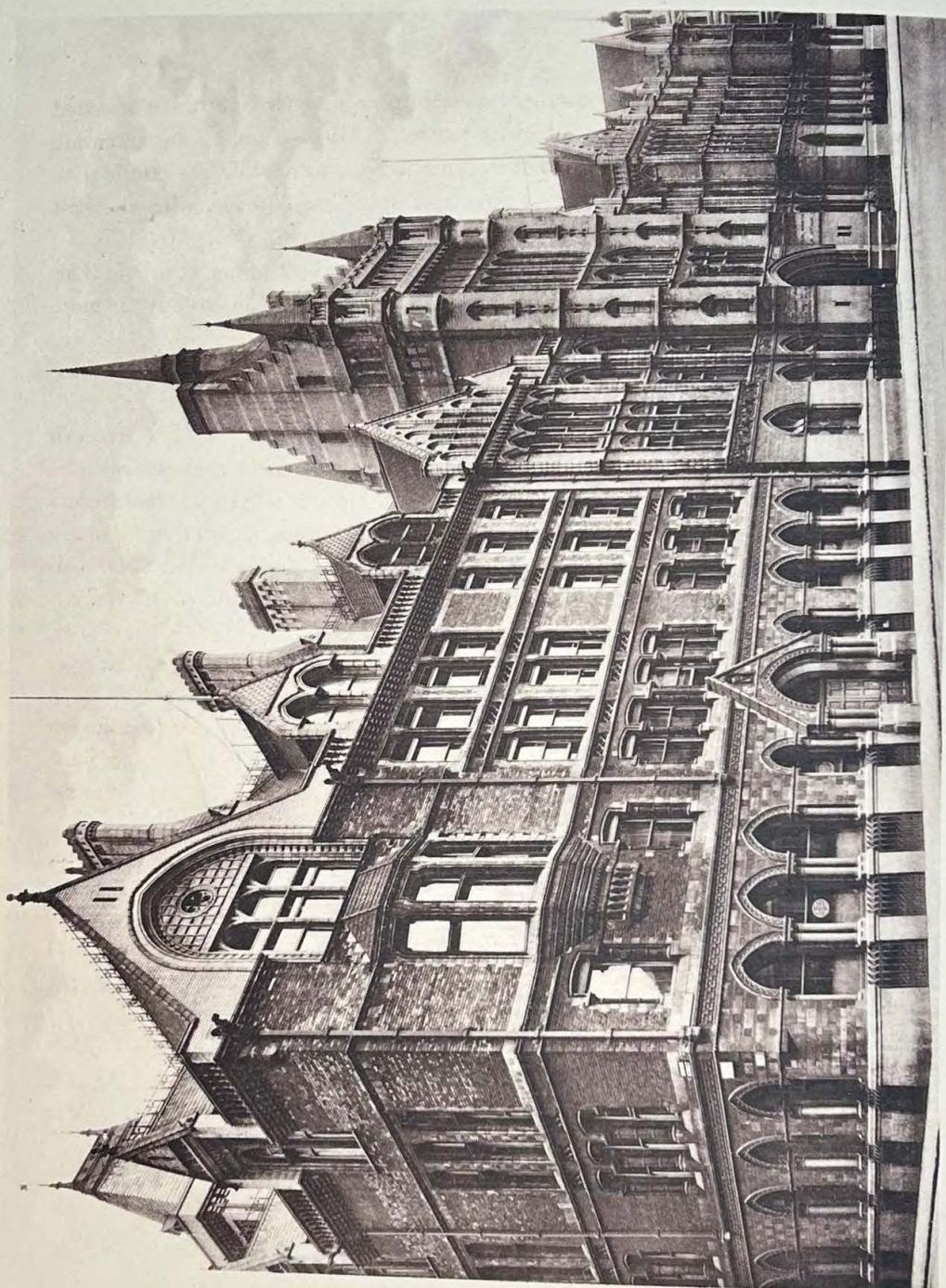
Before we take farewell of Thomas, let us say that justice has never been done either to him or to his brother.

If one were asked "Who built London?" it would not be far from the truth to answer "Cubitts."

But the average Londoner, as he looks upon the massive and comfortable mansions of Belgravia and the better part of Pimlico, covering what less than a hundred years ago were lonely snipe-haunted fields; or visits his doctor or his dentist in those dignified streets north of Oxford Street, where perhaps in his grandfather's time were country lanes; or takes his ticket in a certain monumental railway station; has not the slightest idea of the romance connected with those apparently prosaic productions of the matter-of-fact nineteenth century.

And yet the districts indicated do not suggest a tithe of the part which the great firm in Gray's Inn Road has had in shaping the Metropolis we know, to say nothing of the huge undertakings it has carried out in provincial towns and cities abroad.

Nowadays Speculative Building is synonymous with jerry-building and



THE PRUDENTIAL ASSURANCE COMPANY'S BUILDINGS—HIGH HOLBORN.

often shoddy. In embarking upon these enterprises Thomas Cubitt was actuated by the most philanthropic and altruistic motives. His first object was to ensure regular employment for all his workmen; his second, to provide the public with solid and roomy houses, spacious squares and good broad roads, with the best workmanship and a thoroughly sanitary system of drainage.

It was typical of Thomas Cubitt's thoroughness that, rather than allow his conceptions to be cramped or curtailed in any way, he was wont to buy far more land than was needed for the actual project of the moment.

Londoners have reason to be thankful for the honesty and wisdom of those two brothers.

Both brothers were unassuming and benevolent men of remarkable strength of character. They were as much the friends as the masters of their workpeople, whose welfare was always their first concern. The story is told of Thomas Cubitt that when his premises at Thames Bank were burned down in 1851 and damage done to the extent of £30,000, his first words were, "Tell the men they shall be at work within a week and I will subscribe £600 towards buying them new tools.

They established a school and library for their employees and their children; and that the instruction provided was of a high order, especially at a period when even rudimentary education among the lower classes was rare, is evident from the fact that at the Gray's Inn Road establishment there recently came to light certain astronomical instruments which had been at the service of those manual workers in the first half of the nineteenth century.

They also supplied their workmen with soup and other goods at cost price, and by this means did much to counteract the drunkenness which was then very prevalent.

Their generosity and consideration for those under them was amply repaid by efficiency, and the Utopianism they practised was justified by the fact that they both died very wealthy men.

Thus the Cubitts became the pioneers of the building trade as we know it to-day, though the word "building" does not adequately describe the labours of two men who were Civil Engineers of repute and contractors on so vast a scale.



HEDGES & BUTLER—REGENT STREET.



WILLIAM CUBITT survived his brother by eight years, dying on the 28th October, 1863. The latter years of his life were devoted to public affairs. He was elected M.P. for Andover in 1847, and he was twice Lord Mayor of London. Among other philanthropic acts he inaugurated the fund of £500,000 to relieve the distress in the cotton districts, where on his death, at the request of the operatives, funeral sermons in his honour were preached in almost every town, and muffled peals were rung in more than fifty churches. Incidentally—and yet there is a grim humour in this after-thought—it was William Cubitt who invented the treadmill.

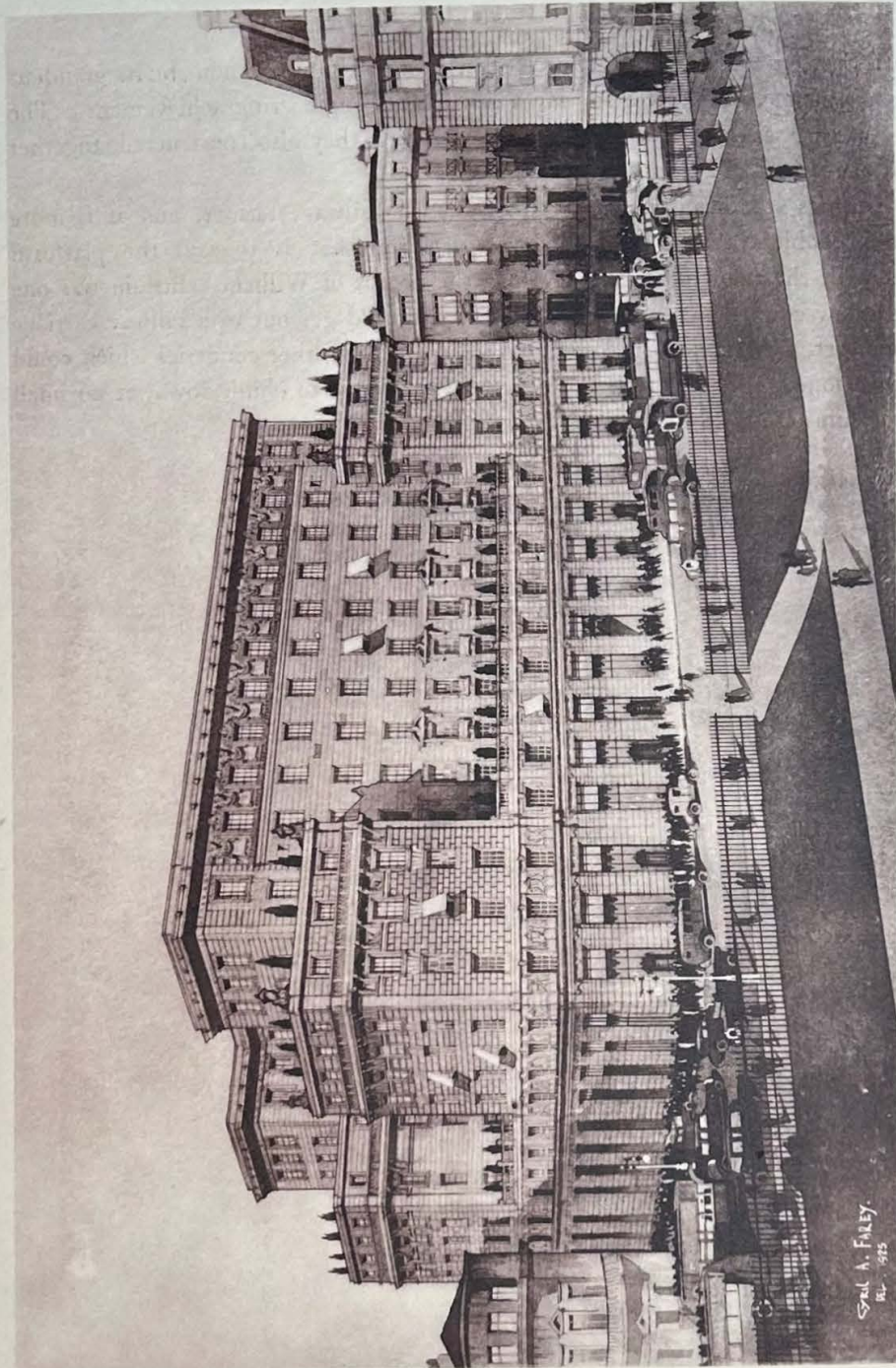
The record of William Cubitt's operations is almost, if not quite, as remarkable as those of his gifted brother. It was William who built

Euston and the other stations on the London and North-Western Railway. There was exhibited at the Glasgow Exhibition, held in the Kelvin Rooms, a frame containing the original invoices for the first practical telegraph which was laid from Euston by Cubitts in 1837. There is about Euston and its approaches a certain gloomy majesty which is not to be found in any other public building in London. The architecture is distinctive and imposing. The influence of the Gothic school was never allowed to penetrate into the drawing office of either William or Thomas.

There is a certain sobriety about these buildings of Cubitts, but they avoid the drab ugliness which characterised the buildings of a later date. As a matter of fact, the Cubitts were escaping from an even more dolorous time than is represented by the late mid-Victorian period.

They were emerging from the influence of the Regency, the best examples of which are to be found in some of the sad, drab squares of Bath.

It is only natural, since the Cubitts were flourishing and were the leading builders of the age that when railway construction began in Britain, they should have had their fair share in laying down the roads which to-day form our principal communications. Their work in the main consisted of constructing the actual stations, though they were the chief contractors in the construction of the



DEVONSHIRE HOUSE—PICCADILLY.

S. A. FALEY.
1895

South Eastern Railway. Fenchurch Street Station impresses none by its grandeur or convenience, yet was in its day a remarkable engineering achievement. The same can be said of Broad Street Station, which they also constructed, together with the principal stations on that line.

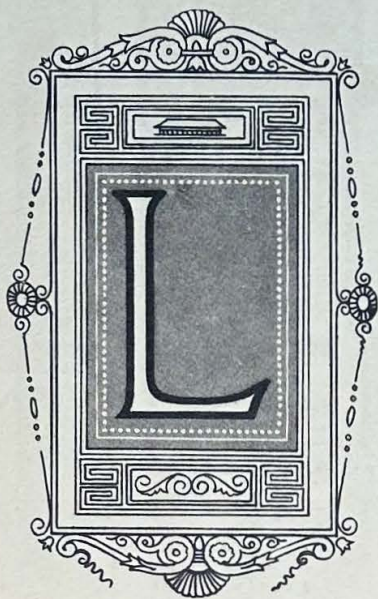
Cubitts standardised the type of British railway stations, and it is more than probable that we owe the level platform (that is to say, the platform level with the floor of the carriage) to the genius of William. Britain was one of the few countries in the world where you could get out of a railway carriage in comfort. In France, in America, and in a dozen other countries which could be mentioned, the unfortunate passenger was obliged to climb down, at no small risk to himself, on to the level of the railway line.



THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF IRONMONGERS : BANQUETING HALL.



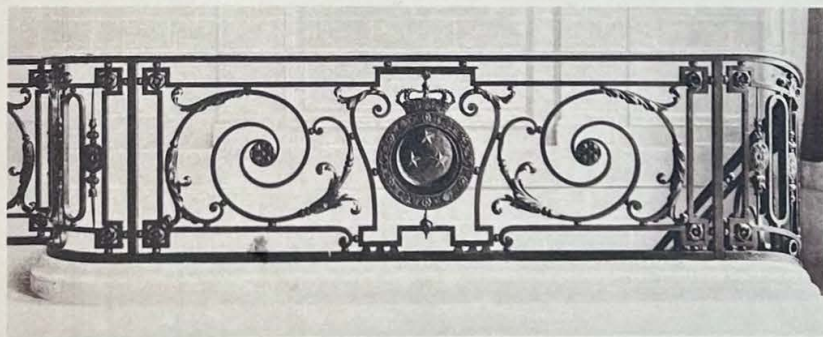
DORCHESTER HOUSE—PARK LANE.



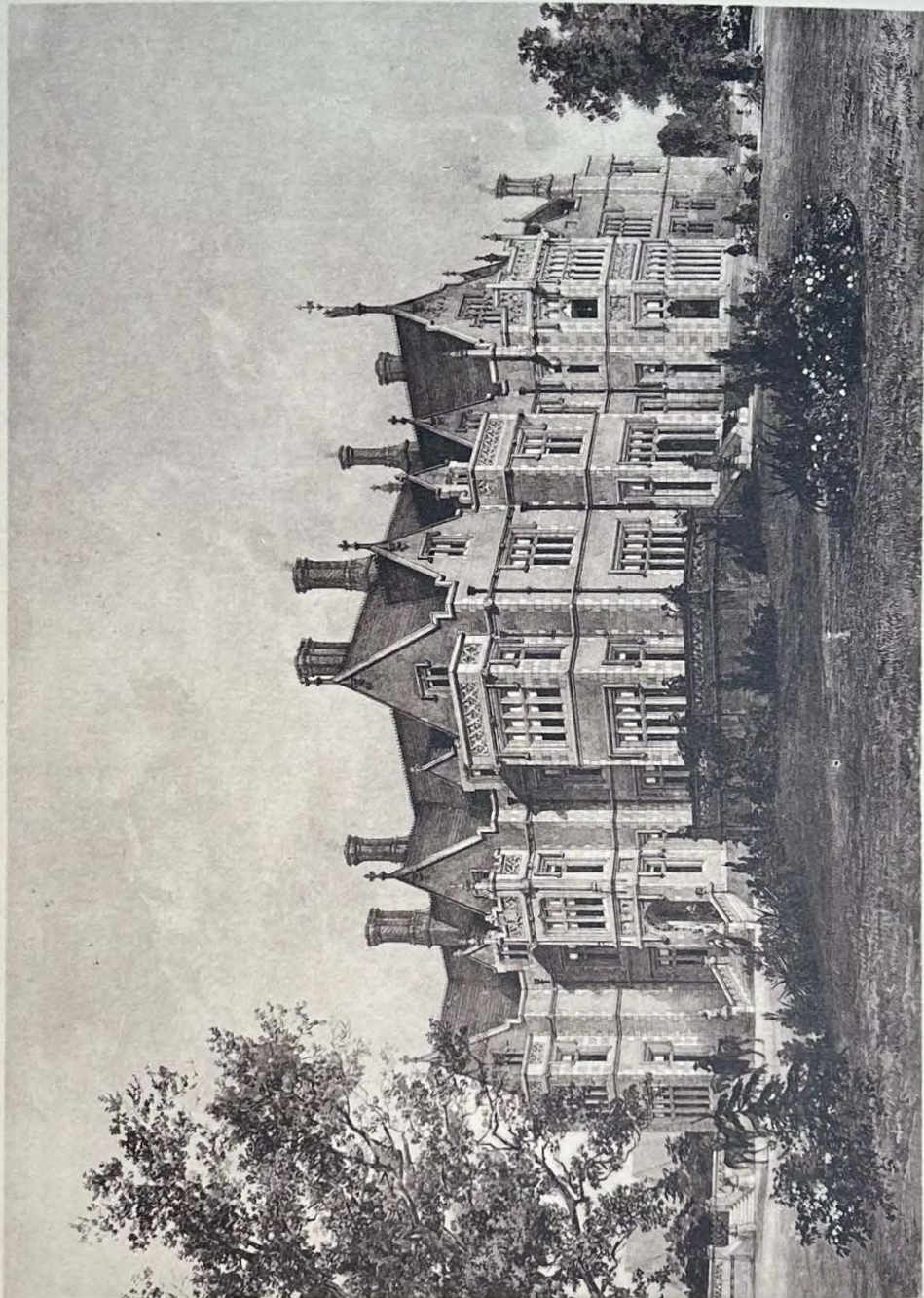
LOOKING over the record of their multifarious enterprises, one is struck by the extraordinary diversity of the jobs they undertook. Their first war work was in the Crimea, where they erected huts for the soldiers. To Cubitts were entrusted the arrangements for the funeral of the Duke of Wellington at St. Paul's—a remarkable task, remembering the character of the service they were asked to undertake.

To Cubitts was given the job of reclaiming the Isle of Dogs, once the most unsavoury and unstable marsh in the Thames, but to-day covered with factories and warehouses. It was whilst this contract was being carried out that "Cubitt Town" was added to the map of London.

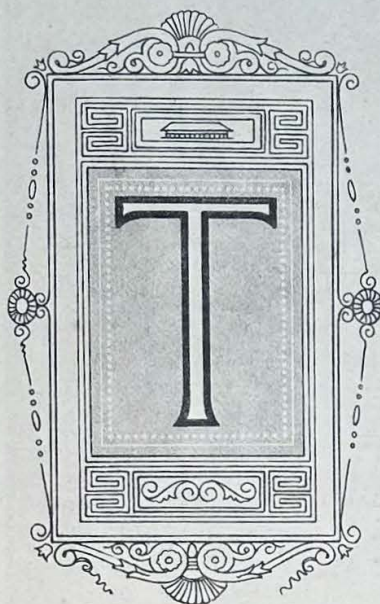
When one traces the activities of the firm, one is inclined to forget the individualities who were behind the various enterprises which were carried out by Cubitt & Company. For so evenly was the Cubitt policy pursued, so unbroken was the Cubitt tradition, that even after the last Cubitt had left the firm, and first the Hollands and then the Hannens had entered into management and joint management, there was practically no departure from the method and none whatever from the very high standard of workmanship with which the name of the firm is imperishably associated.



BALUSTRADING : EGYPTIAN EMBASSY, BUTE HOUSE.



NEW LODGE—WINDSOR.



HE coming of Holland and Hannen into the firm of Cubitt and the fusion of the two businesses has its own romance—and humour.

In the very early years of the nineteenth century a gentleman, one Nicholas Winsland, who owned property in the Holborn district, decided to start his own building operations, for the purpose of developing his estate, and with this object and plan in view he laid down a builders' yard adjacent to what is now New Oxford Street. The property was soon absorbed by the Bedford Estate, but the building business flourished and lived to become the well-known firm of Holland & Hannen.

Nicholas Winsland, having no sons, and no friends to embark on such an undertaking as building, took into partnership a friend, Mr.

Henry Holland, who, on the death of the Senior Partner, persuaded his brother Richard, then a solicitor, to abandon his profession and join him.

Henry did not long survive the partnership, and Richard, who until then had superintended the legal and financial branch only, looked around for someone to co-operate with him and take up the technical side. He was fortunate in his choice, selecting the nephew of the founder, Mr. Benjamin Hannen, under whose able guidance the firm grew to such prosperity and importance that it at once became a serious rival to the old house of Cubitts.

At this juncture, Mr. Richard Holland's two nephews, Mr. Frank May and Mr. S. Taprell Holland, joined the partnership which henceforth ran a neck and neck race with Cubitts to obtain the premier position in the building world in England. All through the 'fifties, 'sixties and 'seventies the two vied with one another in turning out work of the highest quality.

In the latter years the older partners in Cubitts were anxious to retire, and the one left behind, possibly fearing that the contest would become one-sided suggested that the two firms should bury the hatchet and amalgamate. The subsequent negotiations were prolonged, but eventually terminated by the proprietors of Holland & Hannen purchasing the remaining interests in Cubitts. Benjamin Hannen and S. Taprell Holland took command at Gray's Inn Road,



GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY HOTEL—PADDINGTON.

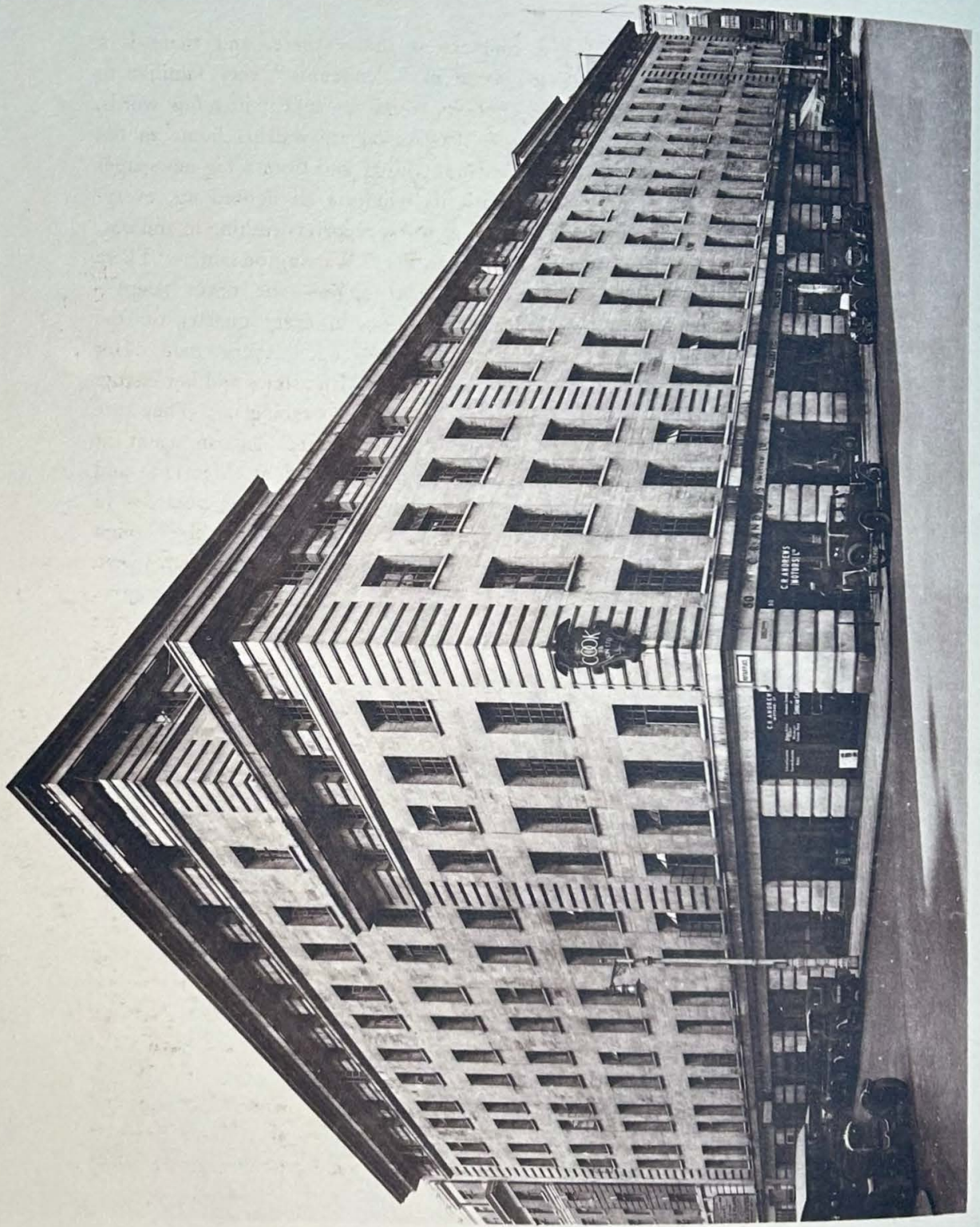
while R. D. Holland and F. May continued to direct the fortunes of Holland and Hannen, and thus the struggle that had existed for forty years and which had led to the most keen competition was apparently ended.

Yet the fighting spirit, which had been engendered in these competitive years died hard and certain petty jealousies remained. For instance, the finest examples of joinery in the world are perhaps to be found in the fittings at the British and Natural History Museums, and both firms had fought desperately in the past to obtain the contracts for supplying these fittings. Many outside competitors from time to time entered the lists, but they invariably retired hurt after a few contests, not from the point of view of price, but of quality.

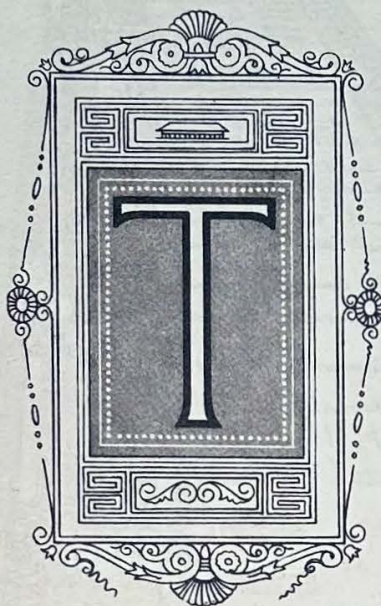
One might have thought that the amalgamation of the two houses would result in a uniform tender, but No! The old rivals carried on in the old way one generally undertaking the work at less than cost, to keep the other out!

For obvious economic reasons this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely, and, therefore, during the early part of the present century it was decided to drop the individuality of the two firms and form one private company, which came into being in March, 1909.

With that date, memorable not only in the firm's history but in the history of the whole building trade we have obviously come to modern times. That which is modern, which belongs to times that we ourselves can remember quite well, is not so palpably romantic as that which has grown a little dim with the passing of the years. To the small boy of to-day a motor-car is a very small affair, but he would sell his soul to drive in the most dilapidated of old hansoms or a four-wheeler if such could be found, with straw on the floor. Yet the romance is there in things going on all around us if we know how to look for it. It is certainly there in any big business and the Cubitts of to-day is bigger than ever it was, and some of the tasks they have undertaken do not yield, in magnitude and vision of planning, in swiftness and sureness of execution, to anything that William and Thomas ever did. When the direction of a great firm is changed there often takes place a change of policy so drastic as to make an obvious break in its history; but no such violent change has ever occurred in the history of Cubitts. To-day the business is conducted on the same flexible, economical lines as when Thomas Cubitt was on his throne. The old firm goes on with its splendid dignity, its restless enterprise, its continuous experiment and research into the fundamental problems of building. They made and they make good buildings and safe buildings, buildings that stand the stress of time and, though the builders did not foresee this, the stress of bombardments. It is the same business, only bigger than ever.



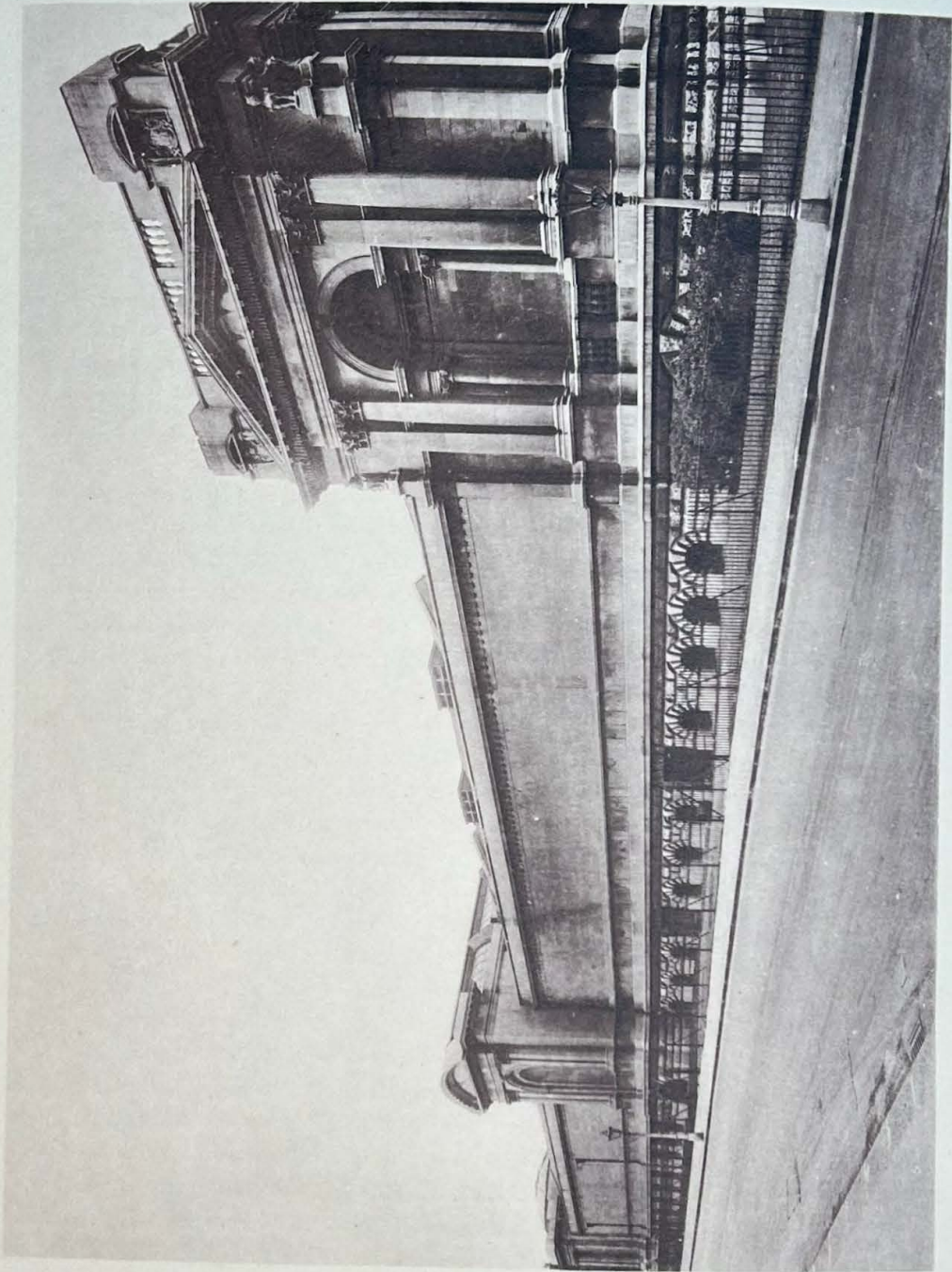
THOS. COOK & SONS, LTD., HEAD OFFICE—BERKELEY STREET.



HE romance is surely there, and there is a short scene in "Pendennis" very familiar to many people, which conveys it in a few words. Pen and Warrington are walking home to the Temple late at night and from a big newspaper office with its windows all lighted up, everybody hard at work, reporters rushing in and out. "Look at that, Pen," Warrington said. "There she is—the great engine—she never sleeps—she has ambassadors in every quarter of the world—her couriers upon every road. Her officers march along with armies and her envoys walk with statesmen's cabinets. They are ubiquitous. Yonder journal has an agent at this minute, giving bribes at Madrid; and another inspecting the prices of potatoes in Covent Garden. Look! here comes the Foreign

Express galloping in." Stirring words, and they might almost as well have been written about such a business as Cubitt's—that mighty, unsleeping engine. Think of the vastness and complexity of its undertakings, all going on at the same time, but in different places and all at full speed ahead: the brigades of plumbers, divisions of carpenters, armies of bricklayers that are wanted. Think for a moment of just one of Cubitts' undertakings in quite modern times—Devonshire House. There was the old Devonshire House with its wall discreetly veiling the dignified old house behind it. It was there one day where it had been a long time and on the two next days, as it seemed, it was not. Yet another day passed and the new Devonshire House was beginning to rise in its place with a ceaseless sound of hammering, and we could see its gaunt framework rising high above us with hundreds of little men busy as bees about it. A little longer and the huge house towered complete, looking out far beyond the London that the first Cubitts had helped to build into the country beyond. It was exciting even to stand in the Green Park over the way and see it being built. How exciting it must have been to build it and to be building a good many other things at the same time. The imagination of the man in the street boggles at the vastness of the task.

There is something fascinating about the colossal, and some of Cubitts' work has been on the colossal scale. Thus they built the great Bute Docks at Cardiff. That was a gigantic piece of work, but it was by no manner of means



TATE GALLERY—MILLBANK.

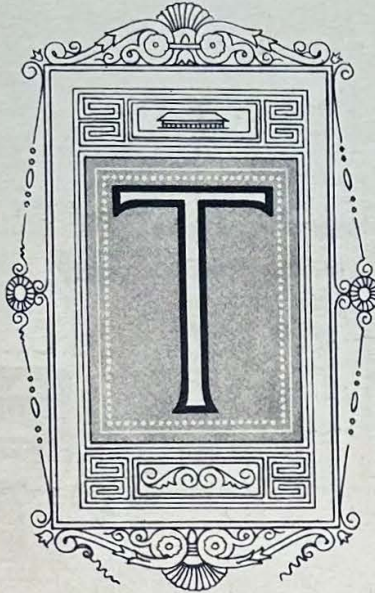
Cubitts' first experience of dock work. In 1853 they had carried out a very big piece of work for the London Dock Company. This was in the parish of Shadwell, a little to the south of "Ratcliff Highway." One must not call it Ratcliff Highway to-day; it has changed its name because de Quincey gave it too much fame or infamy by his magnificent horrific description of the Williams murders. No doubt it has changed vastly for the better since 1853, when the Cubitts tackled it. There was a large group of slum buildings, probably very slummy indeed; these were swept off the face of the earth and in their place came an enormous basin since known as the New Eastern Dock, and large new locks connecting it with the older basins and forming a new entrance from the river alongside the old Wapping Wall entrance. Statistics are generally dull, but can occasionally be eloquent. The area of these works was about 16 acres and the cube of the excavation about 13,387,500 feet. The cube of the warehouses surrounding the basin was roughly 1,200,000 feet. Prodigious!

It is a well-recognised fact that some men can think very well in thousands but grow dizzy and appalled if they have to think in millions. A highly efficient brigadier may make a very poor army commander. It is only the comparatively few who can tackle the really big jobs in any walk of life. Cubitts have always been a firm for the big jobs which have fallen to their share just because they had that rare power of tackling them and not being overwhelmed by them. Other big firms have come to them when they wanted big things done.

There are, as one obvious instance, the great banks. There could be no more impressive client surely than a banker, and Cubitts have always been the bankers' favourite house. To set out all the banks they have built is to make almost as long a list as that of the ships in Homer. Cubitts have built for the Bank of England; they built Coutts; they built the fine premises of Glyn, Mills, Currie & Co. The home of the Rothschilds, New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, is theirs. Lloyds Bank, both in the City and on the corner of Pall Mall and Lower Regent Street (which used to be Cox's), Williams Deacon's, the Royal Bank of Scotland, the Anglo-Egyptian Bank in King William Street, Barclays in Piccadilly, and the Midland Bank now nearing completion in Poultry. The pen grows, as it were, out of breath in writing down all these names, yet one more bank must be added, and that an important one abroad, to illustrate the foreign activities of the firm, namely the Westminster Bank at Antwerp. The example of the banks has been followed by the great insurance companies—the Prudential, the Metropolitan Life Association, the Scottish Provident Institution, the Scottish Widows, the New York Mutual, the Liverpool and Victoria Friendly Societies—here are six that have all gone to Cubitts for their building.



14/15 WATERLOO PLACE.



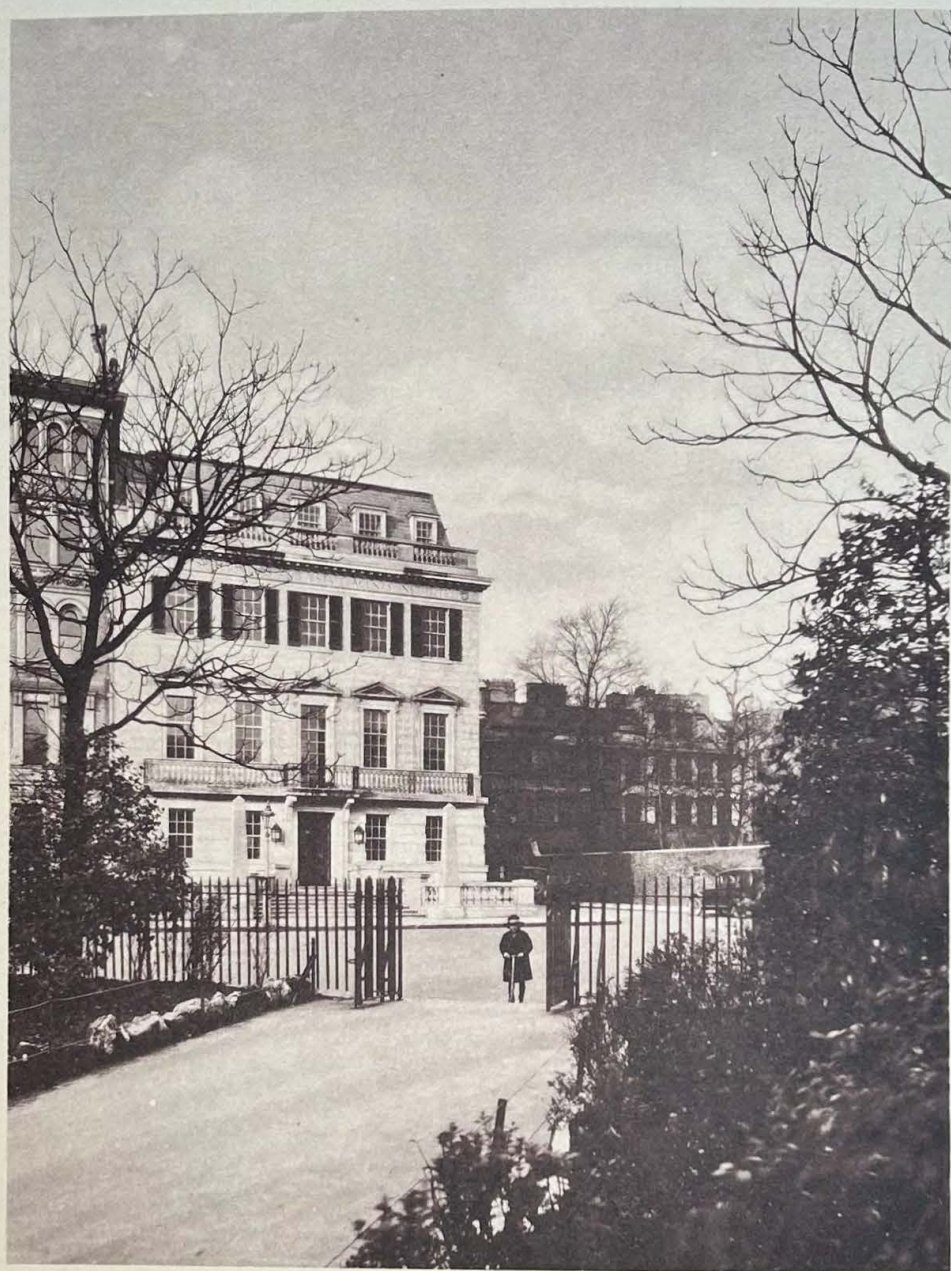
HERE are many other interesting buildings that must be mentioned, yet the most interesting things can become tedious if they assume too much the form of a catalogue. Let us then try to break away from the catalogue form. Let us imagine an ordinary young couple starting life and setting up house, and see how many of their everyday wants can be supplied by those who carry on their business in Cubitt buildings. The young couple will thrive on the Cubitt regime, they will scarcely ever need to go outside it.

First of all they will want somewhere to live. Well, as we have already seen, there are whole zones and regions of streets in London open to them ; they can pick and choose. If they prefer to start in a flat they can get one in

Devonshire House, already mentioned, or in Fitzherbert House in Park Lane, and wherever they live their electric light may be generated for them indirectly by Cubitts, who built several of the power stations on the Southern Railway, as well as numerous electric lighting plants.

We have already seen that they have a fine choice of banks for their modest account, and that there will be no difficulty in making provision for wife and child by insurance. Now they will want to furnish, and since Cubitts built the premises of Waring & Gillow they will not have to look any further. For that matter they can get, humanly speaking, anything they want in a single Cubitt building, because Cubitts built Shoolbreds, but that might be a little monotonous for them and would not do full justice to Cubitts, so they shall go to Shoolbred when they like, but shall have some variety as well.

Clearly they will want food, and Cubitts will do more for them in this respect than they will ever suspect, for goodness knows how much of their food must be landed on Cubitt wharves. Their bread can be made of flour from Messrs. Vernon & Sons' Mills. If they want to put jam on it they can get it from Crosse & Blackwell's Cubitt-built factory in the Charing Cross Road. The husband at any rate, will we trust, like honest British beer to drink, and he has a choice of three Cubitt-built breweries to provide him with it—Coombes, the



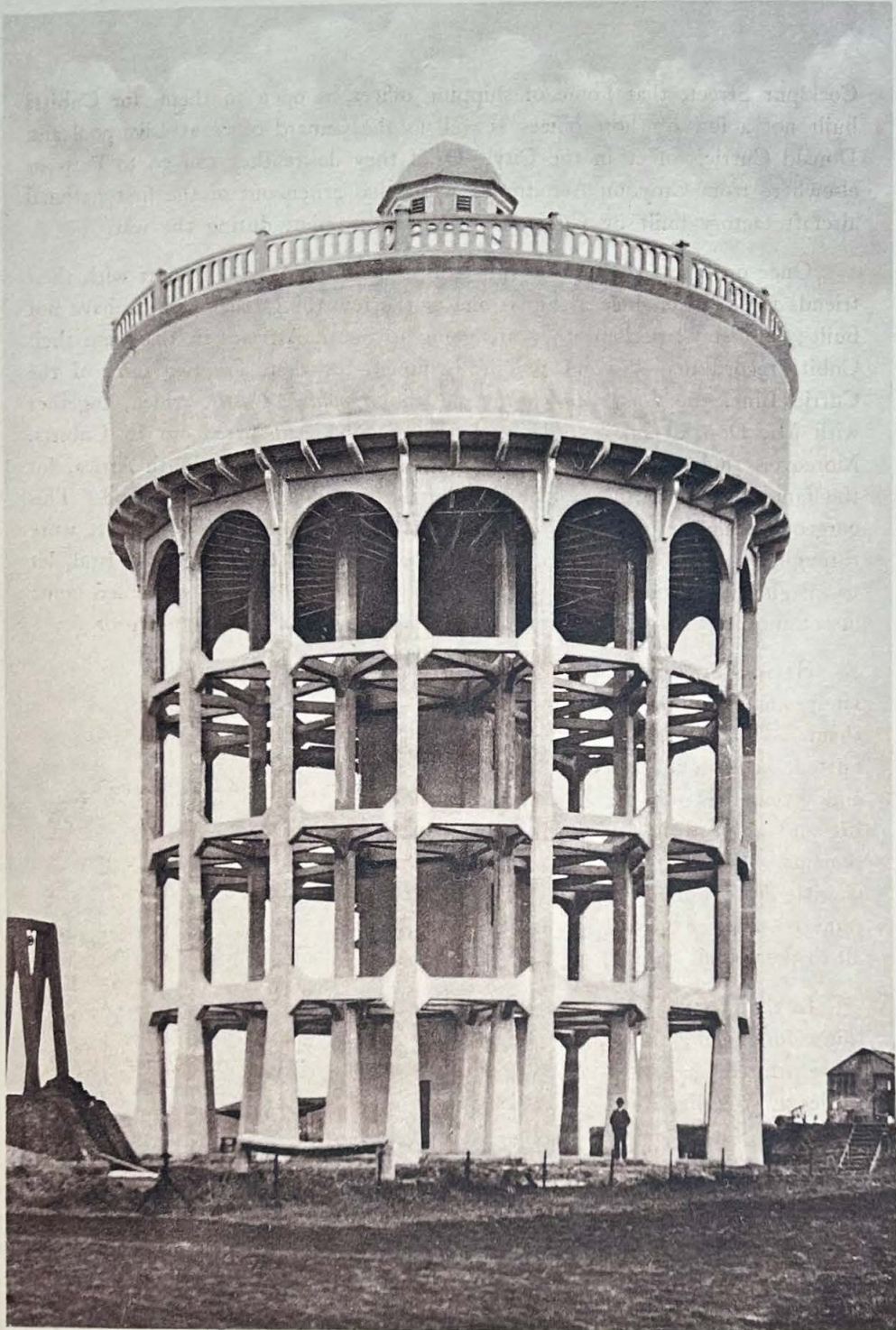
AUCTIONEERS INSTITUTE—LINCOLN'S INN.

Cannon and the Albion. When they have people to dine in their new abode they will want some wine, and this will come to them from the cellars under another Cubitt building of Hedges & Butler. After dinner the guests can smoke by the help of Cubitts, who built the magnificent premises of the British American Tobacco Company. The ladies in the intervals of their cigarettes can nibble chocolates made in the factory of Messrs. Terry & Company at York.

Cubitts can provide restoratives, for they are the authors of the building where Oxo is made. They can also give her a newspaper to read, lazily looking at the pictures as she sips her Oxo, for they built the Gray's Inn Road offices of the *Daily Sketch*. Having thus been agreeably fortified, she may feel strong enough to go out and do a little shopping. She ought indeed to be fully provided with clothes, her trousseau being still quite new, but still—moreover Cubitts can offer her considerable temptation in the shape of Debenhams and Woollands. So she will probably fall.

Young people nowadays will be almost sure to feel that life is unimaginable without a car. Whatever else they do without, they cannot do without that. No doubt they will persuade themselves that when you think of railway fares and taxis, it is really a positive saving. Cubitts will be at their elbow to tempt them again, for they built the new premises of the Rover Company in Bond Street. Then, having got their car, our young couple will want to dash off in it for a week-end. Well, then, where can they go more pleasantly than to the Grand Hotel at Eastbourne which Cubitts built, as also incidentally they built two big hotels in London, the First Avenue and the Great Western at Paddington. If they only go out for a little run in the evening after the day's work is done, Cubitts can still help to amuse them, for what can be nicer than Kew on a fine summer evening, and Cubitts built the great Palm House there.

Little runs and week-ends are all very well in their way, but our couple's ideas will gradually enlarge. Sooner or later they will want to go abroad, and really they have been working so hard at getting settled in that a holiday becomes a duty. It does not matter where they want to go, Cubitts can do it for them with the utmost simplicity, for the great organisation of Thomas Cook & Sons, which to-day includes the International Wagons Lit Company, is housed in Cubitt premises in Berkeley Street. If in particular they are set on a sea voyage,



WATER TOWER—NEWTON LE WILLOWS.

Cockspur Street, that home of shipping offices, is open to them, for Cubitts built not a few of those offices as well as the Cunard office at Liverpool and Donald Currie's office in the City. Or if they desire they can go to Paris or elsewhere from Croydon Aerodrome, which has arisen out of the first national aircraft factory built by Cubitts for the Government during the war.

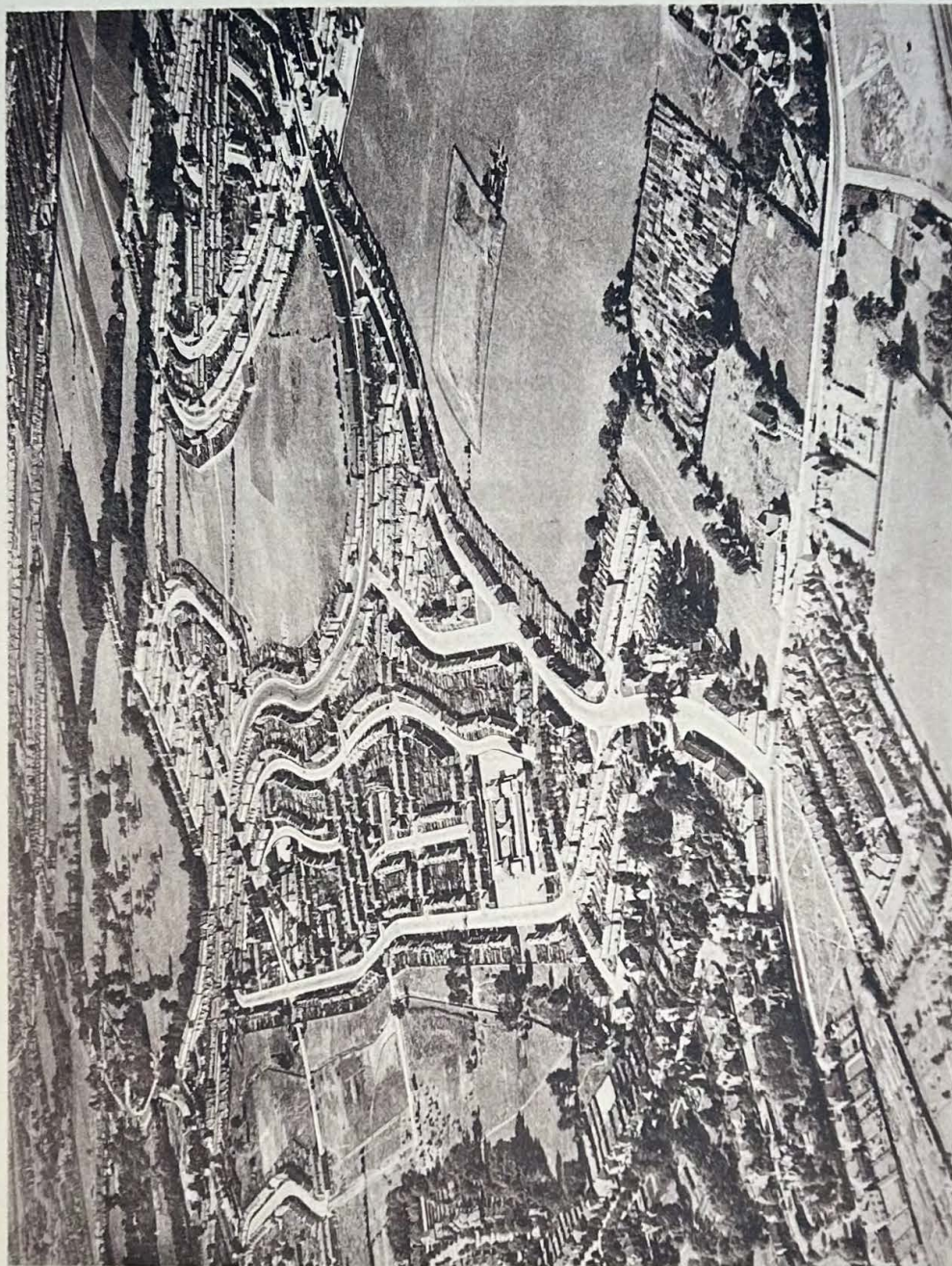
Once on board their vessel they will, sad to relate, have to part with their friends for a little, since a ship is one of the few things that Cubitts have not built; but stay! perhaps they are going to South Africa. In that case their Cubitt record may be kept practically intact, for there are two ships of the Currie Line, the *Dunvegan Castle* and the *Armadale Castle*, which, together with Mr. Donald Currie's own yacht the *Iolaire*, were fitted out by Cubitts. Moreover, their record will still be intact when they get to South Africa, for the famous Mount Nelson Hotel is waiting for them when they land. This gorgeous chalet standing in the shadow of Table Mountain is of Cubitt work throughout. And then, when they come back from their voyage and land, let us imagine, too late at night to go on to London, they can be welcomed home in yet another Cubitt hotel, the big South Western Hotel at Southampton.

Having brought our young couple safely home, we must now part with them. Cubitts, it must surely be admitted, have done pretty well by them and given them so far a comfortable life and a good time. Only one thing remains. They are so struck by what Cubitts have done for them that they want to write it all down and publish it all to the world.

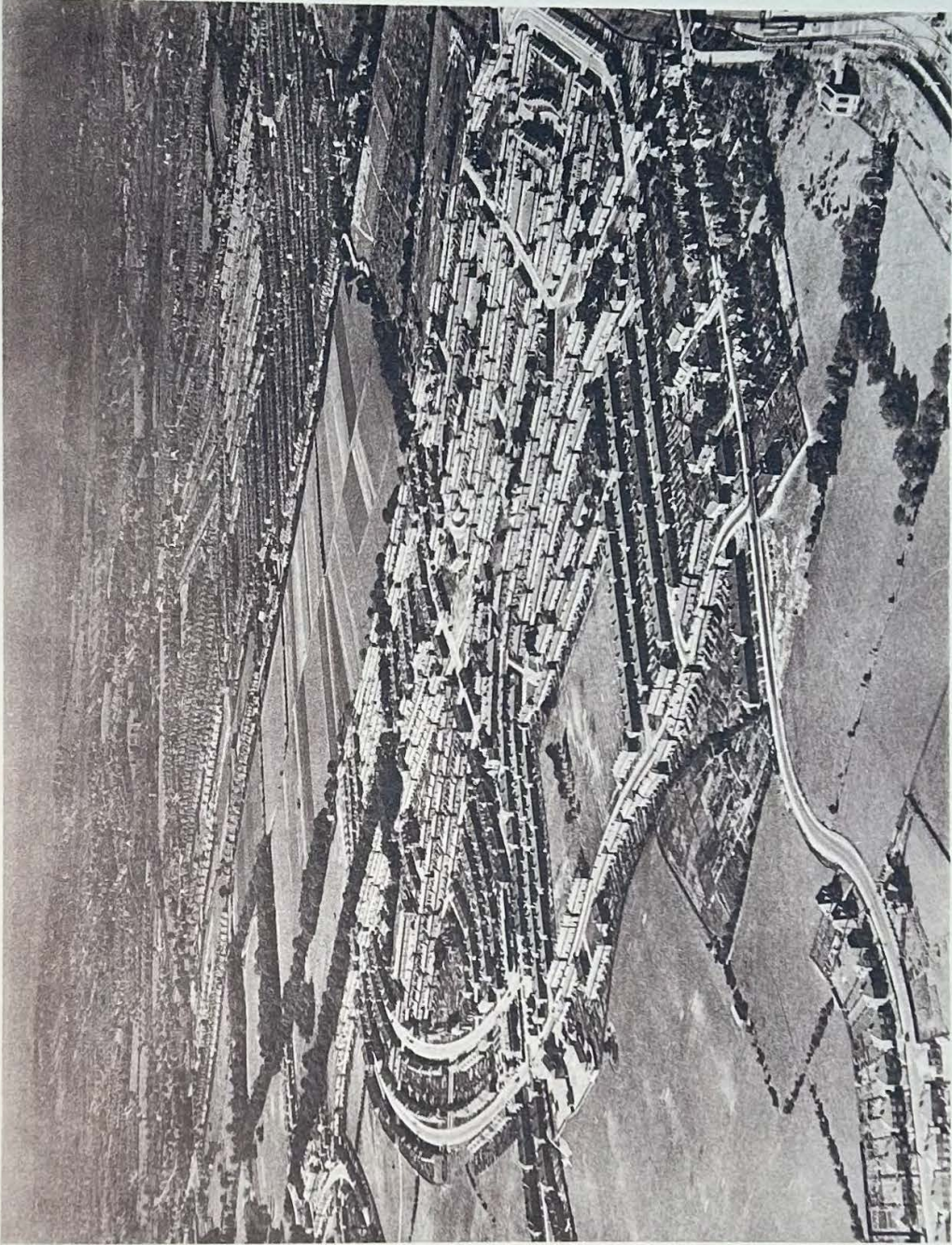
In that case, they can do one more thing for them, they can have their books printed for them, either by Messrs. Blades, East & Blades or Messrs. Hudson & Kearns, both of whom are housed in Cubitt buildings.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



PART WESTERN PORTION OF ESTATE.

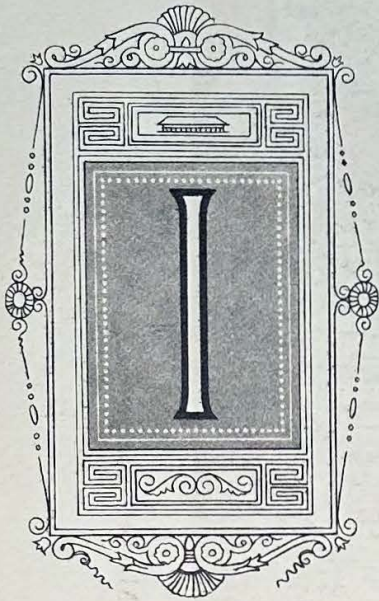


EASTERN PORTION OF ESTATE.

HOUSING SCHEME—DOWNHAM.



CITY CORPORATION POULTRY MARKET—SMITHFIELD.



IN setting out these achievements of Cubitts no chronological order has been attempted; there have presumably been some years still busier than others, but for the last hundred years there has very seldom been less than a million pounds of work in hand at one and the same moment. Neither will there be a chronological order in the buildings that remain briefly to be mentioned. We may try, however, to group them roughly in classes.

First of all, ten Governments have been patrons of Cubitts, and not only British Governments. At least three foreign Embassies in London, the French, American and Egyptian, have given Cubitts their work, and the firm also built the larger part of the Great French Exhibition. Then we may give two examples

from the Governments of our Overseas Dominions. When in the earliest days of Rhodesian Administration it became necessary to build a Government House in far-away Salisbury, the work was given to Cubitts. An illustration at home is British Columbia House in Regent Street.

Next to Governments we may put local governments, and the London County Council came to Cubitts when they wanted done a very big piece of work indeed. It was in 1912 that the King laid the foundation stone of the County Hall by means of which all the Council's work was to be gathered together under one roof, a roof so vast as to cover in all some six and a half acres. Now that completed building, of which the late Mr. Ralph Knott was the architect, has added vastly to the pleasure of the Londoner who walks along the Thames Embankment and looks across to the southern side. It is a fine building and enhances the beauty and dignity even of a river of which it has been said that "every drop is liquid history."

Among buildings of a public character, hospitals are some of the greatest alike in their size and in their vital importance, and Cubitts have done their full share in the building of them. They added to and raised the Westminster Hospital, and that without disturbing the staff or the patients; they undertook the rebuilding of the Middlesex on its old site, and in that greater London

which is ever spreading further and further out they built the Tottenham and Northwood Hospitals.

Various other large and important corporations have come to Cubitts. Theirs are the Grocers', the Freemasons' and the Fishmongers' Halls. They built the Poultry Market for the City Corporation and the Auctioneers' Institute in Lincoln's Inn Fields; but now we must leave further buildings for a glance just for a moment at some of the work done for private individuals. We have seen that they were employed by the Rothschilds on their famous place of business in the City; they worked for them also in their private capacity, for they built Ascott, the beautiful home of the late Mr. Leopold de Rothschild. Then there is Ickworth, Lord Bristol's house, and the great house of Lord Portman at Blandford which cost a quarter of a million. Sledmere is a name which brings thoughts of yearlings even to those who read the sporting columns of their newspapers with a comparatively lacklustre eye; this is a Cubitt house, so is Marsh Court, near Stockbridge, so is Crewe Hall in Cheshire, which was restored after a fire, by Cubitts. This restoration was almost exactly on the lines of the original house. Carved oak and marble were used throughout, and for those who are interested in such detail, it may be added that the joiners' work was extraordinarily good—even judged by the standard of those who did it.

A longer list of big country houses might easily be given, but there is always the fear of that catalogue habit before the writer's eye. One set of fine town houses must be mentioned, however, catalogue or no catalogue. Cubitts performed one feat, reminiscent of the great William and Thomas. They built a whole new street in Kensington, the street known as Palace Gate, opposite the end of the Broad Walk, and amongst the houses built there were those of the then Duke of Bedford and Sir John Millais. Kensington Gardens is still as delightful a spot as when the poet Tichell described it, filled with all the "dames of Britain" in their smartest frocks as a moving tulip bed. It would be hard to imagine a pleasanter place in London wherein to live.

Another very conspicuous achievement of the firm in the direction of fine London houses was the building of Dorchester House. It cannot be better described than in the now pleasantly quaint and archaic language of the *Builder* of August 29th, 1852.

"Every Metropolitan journeyer must have noticed in Park Lane a mansion of more than ordinary size and pretensions which has been steadily growing up for a long time past to external completion. This is for the

residence of R. S. Holford, Esq. It has been built from the designs of Mr. Lewis Williams, architect.

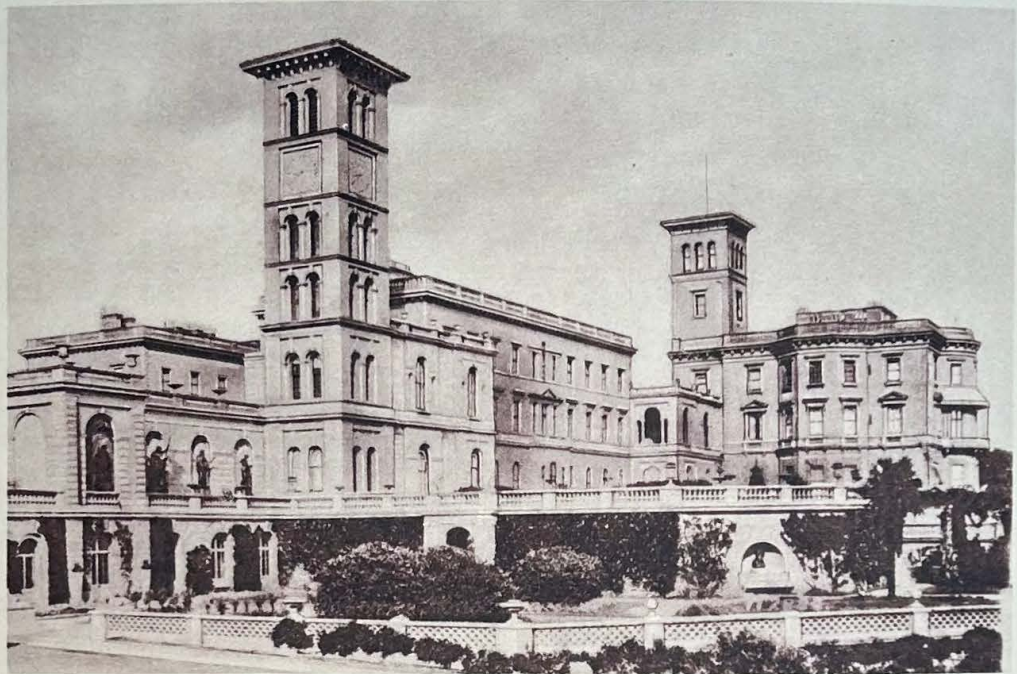
“It is faced with Portland Stone from the Waycroft and Maggot Quarries. The works are being executed by Messrs. W. Cubitt & Co., with the exception of the carving which is by Mr. C. H. Smith to whom was entrusted the approval of the stone.

“If we may judge from the proposed arrangements of the grand staircase, which is to be of marble, the interior will be fitted up with a view to great completeness; but as yet nothing has been done.

“We must add that this mansion is a very good specimen of masonry and is built for long endurance. If the New Zealander who is to gaze on the deserted site of fallen London in some distant time to come, sees nothing else standing in the neighbourhood, he will certainly find the weather tinted walls of Dorchester House erect and faithful and will perhaps strive to discover the meaning of the monogram which appears on the shield beneath the balconies ‘R.S.H.’ that he may communicate his speculations to some Tasmanian Society of Antiquaries, perhaps not more pugnacious if less erudite than our own.”

Park Lane has changed a good deal since that facetious gentleman in the *Builder* made his jokes about the New Zealander, but he paid at any rate one well-deserved compliment to Cubitts. Dorchester House was built “for long endurance,” as all the rest of their work has been.

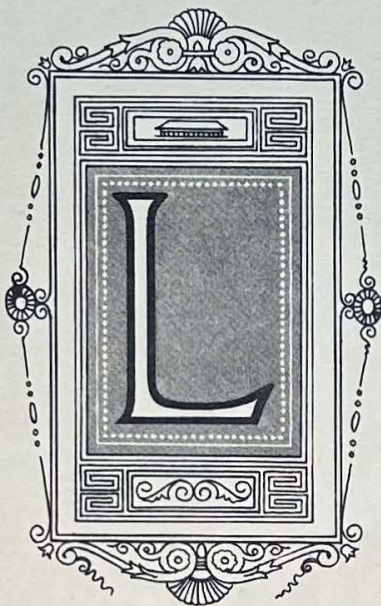
We have been talking about houses for the rich, but Cubitts in their building have also been very good friends to the poor. Here is no more than a summary of their work for the working classes: the various Peabody Buildings and the Peabody Cottages at Herne Hill and Tottenham, the great blocks of flats at Whitecross Street in the City, in Wild Street which runs out of Kingsway, in Orchard Street, in Westminster, in Clerkenwell, Tottenham, Bethnal Green and Fulham, and the big blocks of Midland Railway Buildings in Clarendon Square, while the Downham Housing Estate, where up to the present upwards of 7,000 homes have been erected by Cubitts for the London County Council, has still to be completed. Baroness Burdett-Coutts, than whom the poor of London never had a more generous friend, commissioned Cubitts to build the ornately Gothic structure at Bethnal Green known as Columbia Market, and also Holly Village at Highgate. And the work, like everything else that Cubitts have touched, was well and truly done.



OSBORNE HOUSE—ISLE OF WIGHT.



MOUNT NELSON HOTEL—CAPE TOWN.



AST of all something must be said about a phase in the history of the firm of which Cubitts is very justly proud, namely its work in the Great War. It is already some years old now but it ought not to be and never will be forgotten by anyone having any knowledge of it. There was hardly a life in England that could keep on the normal tenor of its way during that tremendous time. Every one of us had to re-adjust ourselves to new views and new standards. Every one of us found that the first cry of "Business as usual" was an impossible one. Probably however only those who had the control of big undertakings, who felt themselves responsible for big numbers of their fellow-citizens whom they employed, fully realised how great and sudden was the disorganisation,

how vital the need for reorganisation.

Cubitts had as hard a row to hoe as had most people because the declaration of war in August 1914 found the building trade in a chaotic condition owing to the building strike which had broken out some months before and was still continuing. The men behaved with a spirit and patriotism which must always be remembered to their credit; they came back to work under the old conditions. Even so, however, any kind of private enterprise in building was naturally and necessarily handicapped—work could only be carried on under great difficulties, and these difficulties grew as more and more men of military age realised the gravity of the situation and volunteered for service. There were big contracts on hand, notably those for the New County Hall in London and the Cunard Buildings in Liverpool and a great effort had to be made to carry them out. The Directors had to reorganise their whole business in order to try to carry out the contracts to which they were pledged and yet give every conceivable service of which their firm was capable to help their country. This was no new service for them, for they had built the wooden huts for British troops in the Crimean War. It was decided to turn the Cubitts' side into a munition factory while the Holland & Hannen side took over all the construction work then on hand.

Moreover, there was the shortest possible time in which to settle down on



ANGLO-EGYPTIAN BANK—KING WILLIAM STREET. E.C.



FITZHERBERT HOUSE—PARK LANE.

this new basis, for Government Departments knew that the firm could be relied upon for a big job in a tight place, and a flood of Government contracts began to pour in at the very moment when the places of those who had enlisted were still being filled.

The first really considerable contract, judged by war standards, of magnitude, was for the Shell Filling Factory at Chilwell, under the directorship of Viscount Chetwynd, now famous as the pioneer factory and school of shell filling. Then, when the work at Chilwell was well under way, there came an order from the Explosives Supply Department, under the late Lord Moulton, for a large plant for the manufacture of oleum by a process new, as far as England was concerned, at Queen's Ferry, near Chester. This factory was such a success that it was decided to build another like it at Avonmouth, and before this was finished came the beginning of the enormous undertaking at Henbury, which was afterwards abandoned when the Americans joined the Allies.

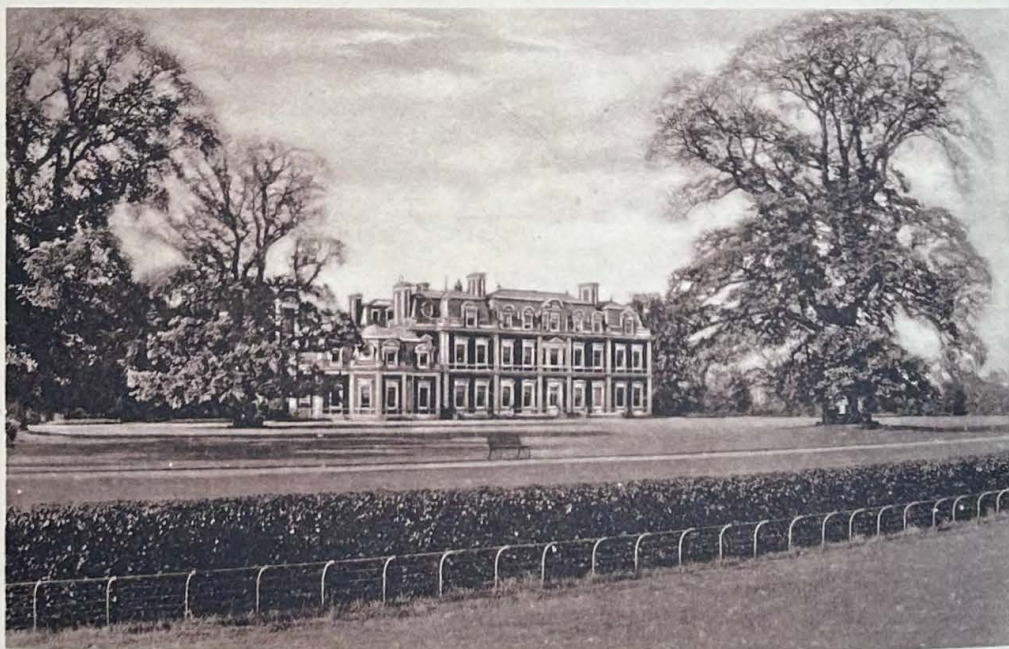
These were the larger contracts, but there were others, smaller only by comparison, going on at the same time. Handley Page's Works at Cricklewood, a dozen aerodromes, the factory for making "tanks" in France—bringing the total amount of constructional war work to over five millions sterling.

No matter what the work was, as soon as the order for it was given, on that instant was it begun and the firm gained as great a reputation for their promptness as for their thoroughness. Thus in October, 1914 the War Office found the putting up of stabling at the Shirehampton Remount Depot, near Avonmouth, was not going quickly enough, so that if something were not done it would be impossible to stable the remounts which were being landed in ship loads. Holland & Hannen and Cubitts were called to the rescue. They were handicapped in every way and particularly by the wettest of weather, but they pushed ahead, and the remounts were even landed from the ships without going straight under cover. This work, begun in October, was finished by the following April, and in addition a small camp was built at Avonmouth to house Motor Transport Companies while their lorries were being stripped. During that April and the following May the staff at Bristol was gradually transferred to Grantham, where there was another big job for the War Office, the building of a Camp for Divisional Artillery, Infantry Camp and Training Centre of the Machine Gun Corps.

So much—very briefly—for the building work at home, but there was also building work abroad. After about three months' experience of war conditions the firm were asked by the architects, Messrs. Dunn Watson & Curtis Green, to consider a proposal to put up a Wireless Station for the Marconi Wireless



ASCOTT, BUCKS.



TRING, BUCKS.

Telegraph Company on Ascension Island. If the contract were accepted, time was to be an essential part of it, the importance of the station for wireless telegraphy being obviously enormous. It was accepted and complete sets of drawings supplied with minute details for a Station to accommodate engineers, officers and staff with the buildings for the engineering work of the station. It was a big task to undertake at a moment's notice but everybody concerned rose splendidly to the occasion. Work began on November 19th and on December 17th the Elder Dempster steamship *Buruta* had on board a staff of seventy of the firm's men with plant and material for erecting a wireless station, engine room, transmission room, workshop, stores and offices—all to be surrounded by verandahs and suited to the climate of Ascension Island.

That first order, so swiftly carried out, brought many more, and the firm erected wireless stations at the following places (given in chronological order): Newfoundland, Demerara, Falkland Island, Singapore, Ceylon, Mauritius, Seychelles, Aden, Durban, Port Nolloth, Bathurst.

Another very important piece of war work of a different type, this time at home again, was the making of fuzes. The Directors offered the services of their firm for any kind of war work that was thought best, with the result that in April of 1915 an order was given for three-quarters of a million fuzes of the type known as No. 100. Moreover even before the order came the Directors had by a bold stroke anticipated it and ordered the necessary machinery so that many months were saved. On May 15th the first working drawings of the fuze were obtained: the first fuzes were delivered in the first week of December; within eight months of the beginning of delivery and more than two months ahead of time the original order had been completed. Long before it had been completed more and much larger orders had been accepted, until every inch of the premises in the Gray's Inn Road was taken up by fuze making, and finally a maximum effort of 200,000 a week was attained. From first to last twenty-two and a half million new fuzes and about 75,000 tons of completed fuzes were delivered. On May 22nd, 1917 the King visited the works and inspected all the shops, and a little later came Queen Alexandra, Princess Victoria, the Princess Royal and Princess Maud.

The firm also undertook the erection, equipment and running of the First National Aeroplane Factory near Croydon and continued to run it until after the Armistice. In spite of innumerable difficulties and troubles they delivered large numbers of complete aeroplanes known as D.H.9, made several Handley Page machines and when the Armistice intervened were just about to make the Salamander.



FENCHURCH STREET STATION.



EUSTON STATION.

Such a list of achievements, and it has been rigidly compressed, needs little comment. Directors and men had stood fast together in the traditions of their founders, and had surpassed themselves—let that suffice. Whatever, then, is to say could not be better said than it was in a foreword written by Mr. B. Hannen for *Cubitts' Magazine*—this little publication never in fact saw the light of day, since it was only on the point of being published when the Armistice came and everything was changed. His spirited words however should not be forgotten: "*For the very highest and richest, and for the poorest, Cubitts built, backed by a faithful staff and honest workmen, through triumphs and vicissitudes holding to their motto—and now that this great war is with us, how is the old Firm upholding its great name and reputation? It is not for us, the keepers of its honour, to say; history will tell when those who fought for it, both men and women this time, have gone, like those before them, to their well-earned rest; but the old Firm will go on. I hope and believe that the judgment of posterity will be: 'Cubitts? Yes! They played the game!'*"

In those words may be read something of the reverence which is felt by every man in the firm for its two founders, something of legitimate pride in the way in which those founders have been followed. It is a fine and a proper thing to be proud of a good name, and who has a greater right to be proud than those who to-day collectively bear the name of Cubitts.



HOLLAND & HANNEN AND CUBITTS, LTD. : GRAY'S INN ROAD PREMISES.

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