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A DOMESTIC REVOLUTION.

(From our London correspondent.)

Nothing could better illustrate the complete revolution in the taste of the middle classes than a comparison of the furnishers' catalogues of 1870—1880 with those of today. Good taste there has always been, just as there have always been connoisseurs who are not mere collectors. But, leaving these people on one side with the artists and other experts, it is safe to say that the average taste of the fairly well-to-do has been completely transformed and, no doubt, improved. How has that change been accomplished? Let us not delude ourselves into the belief that the movement has come entirely from abroad. From France we took the Louis XIV, the Louis XV., and the Empire styles, but we have not in any way been affected by their modern movements. From Germany we have received nothing. The solid ugliness of the Romantic period, which roughly corresponds to our Victorian period, was never transported beyond the Rhine; while the new, exotic secessionism of today fell flat, and is now almost entirely discredited. From Spain and Italy we have borrowed, and still borrow, Renaissance patterns and forms, but nothing modern. From the northern countries we receive practically no suggestion except in the way of winter adornments. But from the East, from Turkey, from Africa, from India, from China and Japan, it must be admitted we are continually drawing inspiration which finds its way into the colour and design of many fabrics. From Japan especially we have been learning a deftness and lightness of touch which we are beginning to combine with the old English solidity. Nevertheless, the movement towards truly artistic standards in furnishing springs from two internal sources: first, from the eighteenth-century styles typical of this country, the Chippendale, Sheraton, and Adam; secondly, from the reaction, exaggerated though that was by the aesthetic movement, against the banality of the Victorian style, or rather absence of style.

To expect that the average taste should approximate to the best taste would be too sanguine. It is, however, a favourable sign when the average taste for the most part apes the best taste of today. The best taste is in the direction of simplicity of line, colour, and form. Thus the revival of antique patterns is mainly in the simpler traditions of the English schools. The elaborate patterns of France, Spain, and Italy do certainly command a sale among the wealthy, although they are necessarily beyond the limits of ordinary purses. But the fact that elaborate furniture is dear is not the only reason of its unpopularity. While the taste of the middle classes hankered after heavy hangings, plushes, heavy brocades, voluminous lace curtains and so forth, the furniture manufacturers managed to produce at a low figure imitations and adaptations of expensive designs. It would still be possible to produce such goods if there were really a demand. A casual survey of such emporiums as those of Messrs. Maple, Messrs. Liberty, and Messrs. Shoolbred soon convinces one that the demand does not exist. Without being obtrusively "arty," as are many of the articles offered for sale in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany, there is a certain unmistakable "note" in the furniture and decorations of our leading household purveyors. Messrs. Liberty carry furthest the principle of subtle, restful shades veiling their intrinsic brightness in a discreet mistiness. Half-tones, mainly in greys, greens, and dull tawny colours, certainly tend to produce an effect of restfulness, which is further enhanced by lines which lead the eye gently along their sweep and do not, like the lines of the Victorian or the Secession styles, startle by reason of complexity and of abruptness. Something of the grace and elegance of the eighteenth century is allowed to linger in almost all modern work, even when the classical forms are not strictly observed.

Simplicity, restfulness, and elegance are, then, the outstanding characteristics of modern furnishing, and they are characteristics common to cottage and mansion, to town houses and country seats. This seems to be due to at least two direct causes, the desire of an escape from the hurry and complexity of modern conditions of life, and the growing uniformity of cultured society. The discrepancies of income are bridged today by the equality of cul-

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ture in a way that was almost unthinkable half a century ago. "Gentlefolks," as the term goes, tend to mix on a tolerable footing of equality though their incomes range from £500 to £50,000 a year. Community of education, of social interests, of artistic experiences must lead inevitably to community of taste and to an approximate community in the manner of living. Even where wealth is ample there is often the dread of lapsing into the standards of a *nouveau riche* society to prevent any excursion into the too grand manner. The hideousness of the Victorian age followed on a great wave of prosperity which raised whole classes out of submersion. The last few waves of prosperity have not been so wholesale in their action. Society has been shaken up within the old limits, rather than redistributed over new areas.

GENERAL NEWS.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S PILGRIMAGE.

On Saturday morning Mr. Lloyd George was shown over the establishment of the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft at Berlin, and he subsequently received a number of labour representatives and officials of the local sick funds and workmen's insurance institutions, with whom he discussed German and English social legislation.

In the afternoon Mr. Lloyd George visited the Imperial Insurance Office, where the system followed was explained to him.

On Friday the Minister called at the Provincial Insurance Institute for Brandenburg.

Mr. Lloyd George left for Hamburg on Saturday. On arriving at Hamburg he had a lengthy conversation with the President of the Seamen's Guild with reference to the foundation and method of carrying on this institution. Yesterday Mr. Lloyd George was entertained to breakfast on board one of the Hamburg-American liners, leaving later for Bremen, whence he intended returning to England.

The *Liverpool Daily Post* says: With reference to the criticisms passed upon Mr. Lloyd George's visit to Germany, it is interesting to know that his plans were fully drawn up before he left this country. We have excellent authority for stating that before his departure the Chancellor of the Exchequer had an interview with the German Ambassador, and that at that time it was also his intention while in Germany to see Prince von Buelow. On equally good authority, we are in a position to state that Mr. Lloyd George has already decided upon his source of revenue for old-age pensions.

The *Standard* publishes the following authorized statement received from its correspondent in Berlin: Mr. Lloyd George has in no respect acted independently or irresponsibly. During his visit to Germany he has, in agreement with the Cabinet in London, done everything to promote good relations between England and Germany. As an individual member of the Cabinet, which wishes for peace with all Europe, and as a Minister of the King, who is working for the peace of the whole world, he has exercised his right, though it is the holiday season, to further by means of visits the relations that exist between Great Britain and the European Powers.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

GIGANTIC NEW YORK PROJECT.

New York, August 23.

Plans have been drawn up for the construction here of what is described as the largest office building in the world. The premises will cover an area of 52,000 square feet, and the building will be 35 storeys in height. The site chosen for this gigantic sky-scraper is quite close to the Battery, and it is stated that it will completely change New York's skyline. The cost will be over four million dollars.

"BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER." ATLANTIC FLEET FESTIVITIES AT SYDNEY.

Sydney, August 23.

The Government yesterday entertained 500 officers and men of the United States fleet. Three special trains conveyed them to Newcastle and Blue Mountains, returning in the evening.

A gathering of 29,000 witnessed the fire brigade parade in the Domain in the morning, the Americans applauding the fine display. Numerous private entertainments are being given for the sailors enjoying liberty ashore.

The banquet given by the State at the Sydney Town Hall on Friday night to the Admirals and officers of the fleet was a most brilliant function. Thousands of guests were present and the balconies were thronged with ladies. The hall was beautifully decorated. Everywhere were the American and Australian flags intertwined, and a large bust of President Roosevelt was elevated on a pedestal above Admiral Sperry's seat. The State Premier presided.

Mr. Deakin, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, who on rising received a magnificent ovation, said that Australia was one in body and soul in welcoming the Americans. The 16 white-clad visitors could scarcely be described as vessels of peace, but they might rightly be called harbingers of arbitration. He trusted that President Roosevelt would be informed in the words of Capt. Tattmull (of the American Fleet) that blood was, and always would be, thicker than water.

Admiral Sperry also received an ovation. He reiterated the indebtedness of the American Navy to the British example. He knew no better training for naval officers than the study of Great Britain's sea triumphs. Referring to the ties of blood and the community of interest between the British Empire and the United States, Admiral Sperry predicted that the completion of the Panama Canal would draw those ties still closer.

Reuter's correspondent at Oyster Bay telegraphs:

—On the arrival of the American Fleet at Sydney, President Roosevelt received through the British Chargé d'Affaires here the following telegram from Lord Northcote, the Governor-General of Australia:—

"The Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Australians in hundreds of thousands who are gathered on the shores of Sydney harbour to welcome the battleship fleet of the United States at this moment entering the eastern gateway of this continent, unite in cordial greetings to President Roosevelt. The people of the Commonwealth gratefully appreciate the generous response to their invitation to the President and citizens of the great Republic, and rejoice at the opportunity afforded by this demonstration of the might of the American naval power to express their sincere admiration for your sailors and their esteem and affection for the country whose glorious flag they hope to see always floating beside that of their Motherland."

Mr. Roosevelt replied as follows to the Chargé d'Affaires:—"Through you I have just received a cordial and kindly message from the Governor-General and the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, and desire to express in my turn to them, and through them to the entire people of the mighty Commonwealth of Australia, the appreciation of the American people feel of their generous hospitality to the American fleet. The people of this Republic hold in peculiar esteem and admiration the people of Australia. It is a very real pleasure to me, on behalf of the nation, to accept the generous hospitality proffered by Australia to the fleet. The voyage is one of peace for the American navy and of menace to no Power, but, on the contrary, as we believe, an asset of high importance in securing the peace of justice throughout the world."

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