

The last issue of the ' Gazette ' in the only surviving bound copy is dated December 15 1855. Its contents reveal no evidence that the paper was about to fold. The serial story is still in full flood 'to be continued in our next...' and Strutt is confidently holding forth on the subjects of temperance and poor street lighting.

As the British Library has no copies of the paper or any record of its existence they cannot shed any light on its fate and the Kensington and Chelsea Public Library's Local History department is equally in the dark.

Edith Strutt, Charles' only surviving daughter said in the 1950s shortly before her death that her father gave up the paper and moved to Holborn where he ran a printing business and did what would be described in modern terms as ' PR' (public relations) work, writing material for West End stores and certainly a few of these remain. They include extracts from publicity material written for Peter Robinson in Regent Street. Strutt commends the store particularly for its ' mourning trade ' for which it was unrivalled both at home and abroad. ' The boundless variety and quality of the materials and the depth of feeling and poetry they are made to express Messrs Druce & Co of Baker Street receives a similar eulogy 'a real emporium in which the influence of unlimited capital is instantly seen and felt, avenues of polished tables and battalions of chairs ranged like endless infantry wearing their uniforms of buhl, marquetry morocco and chintz. '

Strutt had also visited the Industrial Exhibition at the Agricultural Hall Islington where he had much admired the sewing machines made by Mr Singer not only for their neatness and precision but their handsome appearance ' In their quiescent state they assume an elegant exterior giving the impression to the beholder that a precious casket fronts his position '.

This latest enterprise of Strutt's can be dated by a reference to the approaching Paris Exhibition and the fact that Edith Strutt wrote in pencil on the back of the cuttings ' I was five years old '. (She died in 1954 at the age of 95.)

Taking a final look at the Gazette we are left with a picture which is already fading like an unfixed sepia photograph. Here is Strutt writing his verbose editorials and doggerel verse, the romantic correspondent, ' Estellina ' (was she really a Victorian literary lady or the editor in ' drag ' ?), the feuding vestrymen taking a High Court action over a torn coat and the solemn burgher being accused of a drunken orgy.

Gaslight Gazette Conclusion.

As a correspondent indignantly observed

'I have attended the Vestry of this parish for above thirty years and I do not hesitate to say it was the most disgracefully conducted meeting I ever saw and the only one I have ever attended where the Chairman indulged in intoxicating liquor and I protested at our Vestry Hall being turned into a place as bad^{as} a tap room ! '

The there are the flashes of progressive thought, on universal suffrage, adult education and broader approaches to religion, all of which we take for granted today and which gain significance in hindsight which they would not have had at the time they were written.

It is popularly believed that one of Strutt's young apprentices, James Wakeham, became the founder of the later and enduring newspaper 'The Kensington News' (now the 'Kensington News and Post') in 1869 from an address in Kensington Church Street. The only surviving copies of the ' Gazette', now microfilmed for posterity by Kensington and Chelsea Library have survived in a remarkably good physical condition considering their age and travels. The paper is browning and somewhat brittle but vastly more durable than modern newspapers which begin to disintegrate after a decade, let alone over a century (In Victorian times paper was made of rag rather than wood pulp)

Auctioneers classify old newspapers and other types of printed paper as 'ephemera' describing their normal ' here today and gone tomorrow ' existence. The 'Gazette', at least these hundred or so copies of it, have survived its tomorrow into our today. If there are still readers in 2116 AD they will judge 1980s journalism, and the events and views it imparts, its style and its sensations, as we now judge the news of the 1850s, and 'all our poms of yesterday....as theirs... will be ' one with Nineveh and Tyre '.

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