

IMPROVEMENTS IN LITTLE DEAN'S YARD

AN announcement appeared in the Press on April 27th to the effect that The Pilgrim Trust had voted a sum of £2,500 "to make possible the restoration of the east side of Little Dean's Yard, Westminster."

The project owed its origin in the first place to a letter written to THE ELIZABETHAN some months ago by a prominent O.W., who bemoaned the fact that, whereas at Eton and Winchester the buildings of "College" correspond in dignity to its importance as the nucleus of the whole establishment, at Westminster, College displays to the public view only an expanse of gaunt and featureless wall surface with an unsightly facing of dilapidated cement. The suggestion that this state of things should be remedied (which in one form or another must long have been present to many minds) was taken up by a group of persons interested in the amenities of the Abbey precinct. It secured the sympathy and active support of the Dean, and the cordial approval of the Chapter and Governing Body. It has now been accepted and made feasible by the generosity of the Pilgrim Trust. The scheme which is proposed will do much to remove a long-standing reproach, and will also improve the amenities and increase the dignity of Little Dean's Yard as a whole.

Just as the fact and the importance of Victoria Street, Westminster Bridge Road, and the Bridge itself, make it difficult to visualise the lay-out of Westminster in the Middle Ages (when these did not exist and Tothill Street was the main westward thoroughfare), so it is extraordinarily difficult to realise that at the beginning of the 18th century Little Dean's Yard was merely the widest portion of a paved alley threading its devious way between the walls of private houses from the arched gateway in Dean's Yard, where was the Old Dormitory in which the Scholars slept and lived, to School, where they all worked. There was a house between the Head Master's and Ashburnham, and others on the opposite side of the alley, and a house built right in front of the present position of the Gateway and stairs up School. When it was first built (1729) the part of the

back wall of College now visible bounded a garden or "area" between the back of this latter house (which in the 1719 plan is "Mr. Farrer's") and a house ("Mr. Freind's") occupying the position of Number 3 and presumably approached from College Street.

We have to realise this in order to understand why Burlington's "New Dormitory"—which, although not so pompous as it would have been if Wren's design had been carried out, was a building of elaborately formal design—wore all its architecture on the Garden front and was left with an almost featureless back wall. Almost, but not entirely, featureless; for brick mouldings carried on the lines of the main stone cornice and two horizontal flat bands continued the string courses, as may be seen at the back of Number 3: there were also plain windows, some of which were blind. The back of the Staircase Block, however, was entirely blank, and even the horizontal string courses stopped on the corner.

By a strange piece of historical irony, the section of the buildings which was least conspicuous became, when the Yard was cleared, the one section exposed to public view; but only those most sensitively attuned to the atmosphere of the Yard have been conscious of the restless presence among them of the ghost of the Earl of Burlington, its fingers twitching with vain desire to be doing something to remedy this unseemly disclosure of nakedness.

The exact details of the proposed improvements are still under discussion, but the main lines of the scheme are as follows:—

(1) *Dormitory Wall.* Remove the cement rendering and reface the wall with brick specially chosen for its colour and texture. Restore the windows on the First Floor level, and the two string courses shown in old pictures of the building.

(2) *Staircase Block.* Reface the cemented walls, adding stone quoins as on the other corner, and carry on the stone string courses. Make a new window facing the Yard.

(The position of the blocked doorway once leading to the Second Master's rooms will be recorded by a slight recess.)

(3) Clear away the Fives Court and Copper House (together with its chimney and all the miscellaneous oddments which lurk behind its doors).

Continue and reface the back wall, and form in it an opening with wrought-iron gates giving a view through to the garden.

It does not need much imagination to realise how much the Yard will gain by this, especially at seasons when the flower-border beyond is in full blast.

The abolition of the Copper House will entail new water-heating arrangements for the Nymphs (and a suitable grotto is already in view): it will also mean that College will at last have its own heating boiler instead of circulating, in its far-flung system of pipes and radiators, water that has perseveringly found its way from the Boiler House on the other side of the Yard. Otherwise, the carrying out of the work now proposed should cause practically no disturbance or inconvenience.

PEACE, PROSPERITY AND FREEDOM

(This is the third of the series of political articles.)

When the National Government was formed in 1931 it had definite objects to achieve. It met to balance the Budget, to save the National credit and to restore commercial confidence. These things it did with a fair measure of success. Since then it has been steadily slipping back into the stagnant mire of Toryism. It has pursued a vacillating and distrustful foreign policy; it has practically ignored the whole question of unemployment; it has raised prices and diminished the export market by its tariffs; and, worst of all, it is devouring millions of pounds of the taxpayer's money in feverish preparations for another war. And we are told that the only alternative is Socialism. Socialism would involve us in complete economic chaos and ruin, and if given full play would eventually deprive us of all Liberty and Individuality.

It would indeed be difficult to choose between Toryism and Socialism. Happily it is not necessary to make that choice. Once again, as often in the past, it is for the Liberal Party to lead the nation forward. Wars and preparations for wars, poverty and the degradation that comes

from poverty, the gross inequalities between rich and poor—these things are wrong and the nation must rid itself of them. By a vigorous policy of reform and re-organization—based neither on *laissez-faire* nor on Socialism—the Liberals can rid us of these and other evils and lead us forth into a new era of Peace, Prosperity and Freedom. Let us therefore briefly examine the proposals of the Liberal Party.

First, the question of peace and disarmament. It must be evident to every thinking person that the Government's sudden trebling of the Air Force is the most incredible piece of folly it has yet perpetrated. Last month Herr Hitler expressed his readiness to agree to an all-round reduction of armaments: on the next day, in the House of Commons, Mr. Baldwin announced the trebling of the Air Force. The Liberal Party, like the Labour Party, realize that competitive armaments can only lead to war. It would have invited a conference at Geneva of Germany, France, Russia and Italy, to discuss measures for the limitation and final abolition of air armaments.

Secondly, Trade. This country depends much on its imports, and taxing them by means of tariffs means that the consumer—especially the poorer classes—has to pay more for his food, clothing and other necessities, so that the English manufacturer can make a bigger profit. Moreover, tariffs do not mean more employment, for when we introduced tariffs other countries introduced or increased theirs: consequently a big drop in our export trade and less employment in industries such as coal and cotton. What the Liberals would do would be to devote themselves with vigour and persistency to bringing together those countries—and there are many of them—who, seeing the evils of the present situation, would be prepared to allow between themselves complete or nearly complete freedom of trade.

Thirdly, Employment. At present there are over two millions unemployed, and the Government are taking few steps to see that this deplorable state of affairs is remedied. The Liberals would organize an extensive system of State-paid works—such as Slum Clearance, Road Building, Afforestation, etc.—which, besides vastly improving the country, would provide work for over a million men. A 40-hour week would be