

Vivekananda Abroad – A Postcard Pilgrimage

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Vivekananda Abroad A Postcard Pilgrimage

The goal of the Vivekananda Abroad Postcard Collection is to find vintage postcards that follow the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda to every place that he travelled outside of his homeland, India, between the years 1893 and 1900. The purpose of this blog is to share that journey of historic discovery with others interested in the chronicle of his life.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Probably most readers who find this blog will have done so because they already know about the life and work of Swami Vivekananda. But for those postcard aficionados who are unfamiliar with the swami, here is an early 20th century postcard of him: It is an artist's interpretation of his best known

photograph created as one of a series of postcards of Indian patriots printed in India by Phoenix P. Works. The original photograph, by Thomas Harrison of Chicago, taken in 1893, is shown below.



Source: [Vedanta Society of St. Louis](#)

The magnetic, meteoric Swami Vivekananda was an Indian sannyasin (Hindu monk) who played a key role in introducing the Indian philosophies of [Vedanta](#) and [Yoga](#) to the Western world during La Belle Époque. Vivekananda was a gifted orator who succeeded in elevating the status of Hinduism as a vital and enduring world religion after decades of debilitating deprecation from the then politically dominant Christian world. He was a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India, and contributed to the concept of national self-determination in colonial India. He inspired Mahatma Gandhi. In America he is credited with raising interfaith

awareness. [Philip Goldberg](#) recently dubbed him the “Jackie Robinson of Hinduism” because he broke the “heathen barrier” in an era of prejudice against the misunderstood ancient religion of India.

Vivekananda’s pre-monastic name was Narendranath Datta. He was born in 1863 in Calcutta where his father was a prominent lawyer. While still a college student reading law, he became a disciple of the 19th-century saint [Ramakrishna](#). After his guru's death, Vivekananda traversed India as an itinerant sannyasin seeing first-hand the effects of British rule in India. In 1893 he travelled to the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he represented Hinduism at the Parliament of the World’s Religions. The Columbian Exposition dazzled Americans and its foreign guests with scientific and technological marvels, with displays of wealth, art and culture, and with exotic ethnographic exhibits from every corner of the globe. But one of the most forward-thinking and far-reaching ideas of the Exposition was to host the world’s first true interfaith congress. In this arena Vivekananda shone and he soon became much in demand as a popular speaker. He did not preach to a vacuum. The time was ripe, and Americans were more than curious about cultures beyond their shores. After the Parliament he gave hundreds of public and private lectures and classes. He taught spiritual yoga and disseminated the tenets of Hindu philosophy in America, England and Europe. Before his early death in 1902, Vivekananda founded several respected organizations, the [Ramakrishna Math](#) and the [Ramakrishna Mission](#) in India and Vedanta Societies in New York and San Francisco. In India, Vivekananda is regarded as a [patriot/saint](#) and his birthday is celebrated there as [National Youth Day](#).

In 1893, photographs of artists and celebrities were still distributed and collected mainly as cabinet cards. Vivekananda discovered—much to his chagrin, since he had taken vows to be a self-effacing monk— that his image was in demand as well as his words, and he had to order more of his photographs to give to friends and promoters. (It wasn't until a decade later

that postcards and cigarette cards eclipsed cabinet cards as popular media for collecting images of famous people.)

Vivekananda's main entry into paper ephemera during his lifetime, apart from pamphlets, and magazine and newspaper articles, is a gorgeous poster that was printed by Goes Litho Company of Chicago about two months after the Parliament of Religions. It was probably commissioned by the Slayton Lyceum Bureau which contracted Vivekananda for a lecture tour of the Midwest in the fall of 1893 into the spring of 1894.



Source: [Vedanta Society of Berkeley](#)

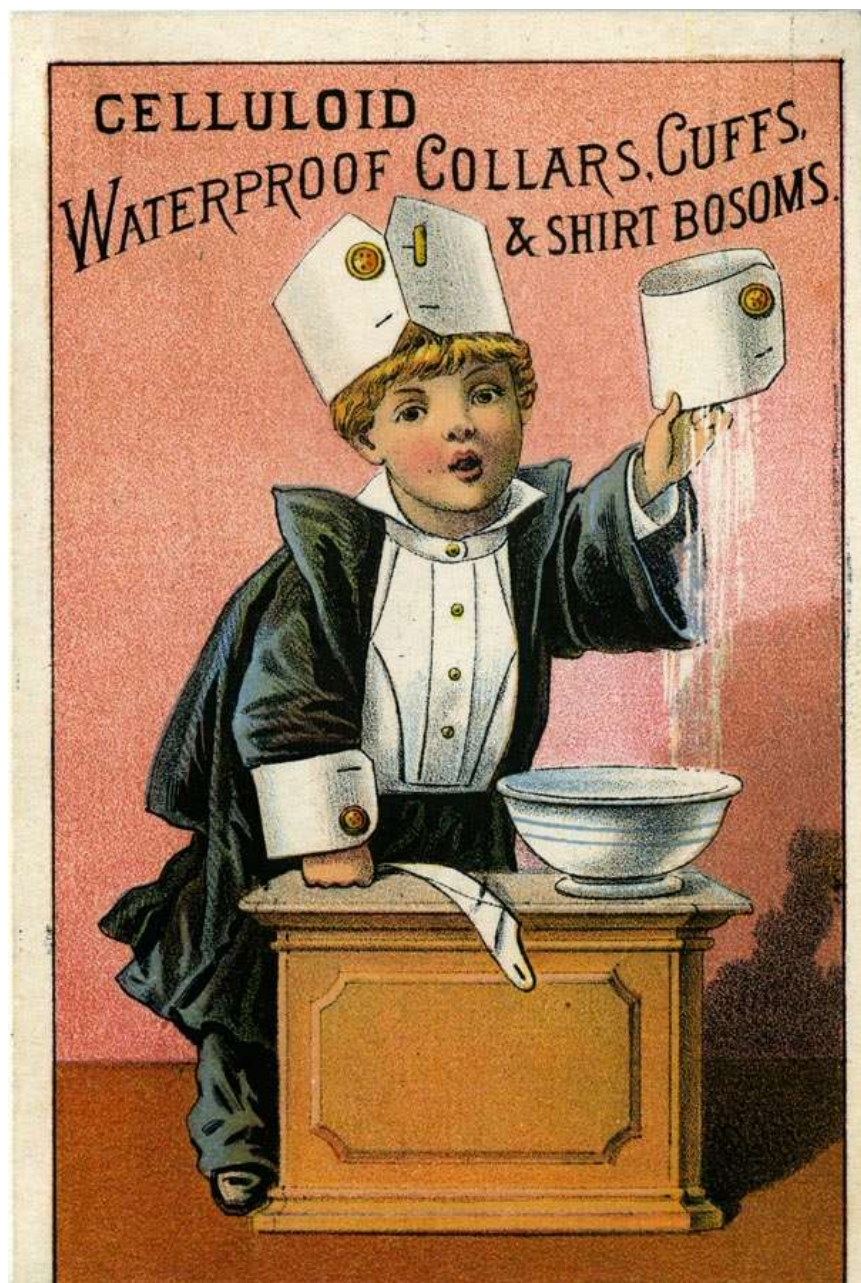
Henry Slayton, who had represented such notable speakers as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had moved his offices to the Central Music Hall at the south-east corner of Randolph and State Streets in Chicago in 1880. Thomas Harrison's photo studio was in the same building. The artist who executed the crayon drawing for the poster is unknown, but may have had some connection with the Central Music Hall.

In the postcard below, the 1879 Central Music Hall, which had been designed by Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, is the building with the cupola in front of the 22 story Masonic Temple. It was demolished in 1901 when Marshall Field's Retail Store expanded to encompass the entire three-acre block. Vivekananda had to visit the Central Music Hall many times, for his portraits and for business with Slayton as mentioned, but especially because he gave a lecture there on The Divinity of Man on [4 December 1893](#).



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Postcards can furnish a record of historically significant places that Vivekananda visited. Other paper ephemera such as Victorian trade cards will sometimes make a contribution to this narrative. Below is an advertisement for celluloid cuffs and collars.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

I include it here because I observed that all of the photographs of Vivekananda taken during the Parliament of Religions show him minus collar or cuffs. Those accouterments make their first appearance in Harrison's portraits. Evidently someone—possibly Mrs. Ellen Hale—gently

persuaded Vivekananda that these stiff items were necessary to present the picture of a respectable clergyman. On 19 September 1894 he wrote to her: "I am taking good care of my cuffs and collars, etc." Most likely he wore traditionally starched collar and cuffs rather than new-fangled celluloid—either way, they were a botheration!



Source: [Vedanta Society of St. Louis](#)

Vivekananda sans collar at the Parliament of Religions



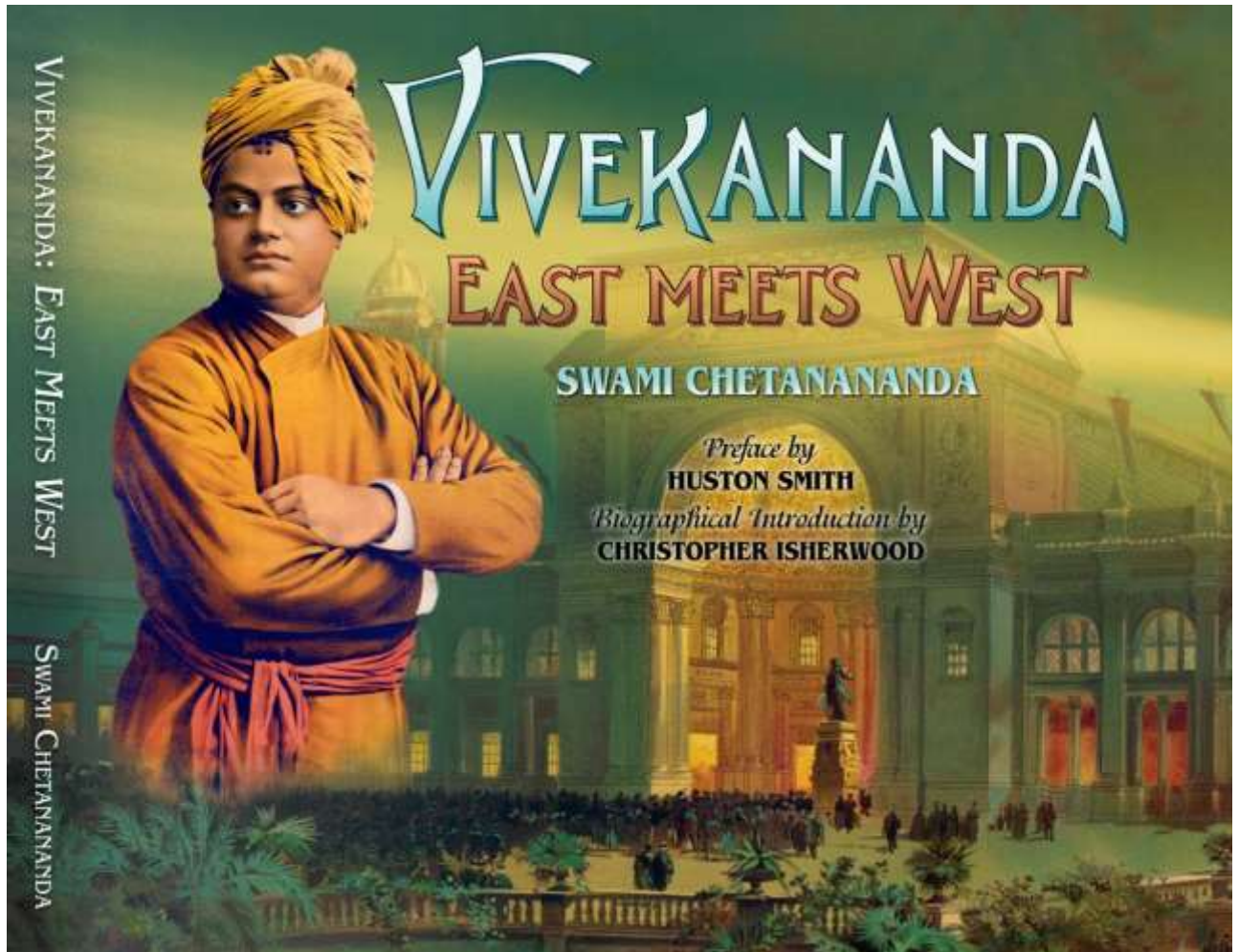
Source: [Vedanta Society of St. Louis](#)

Vivekananda with collar in one of a set of seven formal portraits by Thomas Harrison.

It may seem trivial to launch a blog about this great man by pointing out that he wasn't wearing a starched collar when he was electrifying audiences at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. His appearance was striking but he was not a man of appearances, he was a man with a message. To read what Vivekananda actually said, there are several websites with the [Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda](#), and his [biography](#) This blog is about the sights that Vivekananda saw and the society that he encountered, and it also includes new research.

Why Postcards?

Several fine biographies replete with historical photographs have already been published on the life of Swami Vivekananda. I was recently privileged to work with [Swami Chetanananda](#) on his excellent visual biography, *Vivekananda: East Meets West*.



Source: [Vedanta Society of St. Louis](#)

While digitizing the images in *East Meets West*, I noticed that Vivekananda's eminent biographer, Marie Louise Burke, had used some postcards to illustrate her six volumes of pioneering research titled *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries*. That noted, I did a little online search of my own and had an epiphany when I found this postcard for sale.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The ship that first brought Vivekananda to North America was the S.S. *Empress of India* owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Gazing at this postcard, I felt as if I was seeing the ship at that historic moment when the swami disembarked in Vancouver, B.C. at 7 p.m. on July 25, 1893.

Later I discovered that this is actually a commonly found postcard of the *Empress of India*. Its career as a Royal Mail Steamship for the C.P.R. lasted from 1891 to 1914. This particular card published by E. P. Charlton & Co. Ltd., Vancouver, B. C. has a divided back which indicates that it was printed after 1905. I do not know when this photograph of the *Empress of India* at the C.P.R. docks was taken, however it was not unusual for postcard publishers to keep reprinting photographs shot many years earlier. So yes—despite the fact that this black and white photograph was hand-colored by a studio artist far from the scene—it is probably an accurate picture of the docks as they appeared when Vivekananda first set foot in North America.

No matter that this mass-produced postcard lacks the cachet of, say, an albumen print. This cheap piece of paper ephemera held in my hand, was to me a miniature souvenir of the life and times of the great Vivekananda. I realized that from the vast holdings of vintage postcards available, there was probably a postcard of every public place Vivekananda visited. And so it became a game—actually, an obsession—to follow his footsteps with postcards from his era.

Texting 120 years ago

From the first major edition of colored souvenir postcards in 1893 to approximately 1905, when postal regulations introduced the divided back, most postcard messages had to be written in a small white space on the illustrated side of the card. The back of the postcard was reserved for the address only. Therefore, the messages were necessarily terse. They were the “tweets” of the Belle Époque. People used postcards to “text” each other much like we communicate wirelessly today. Quick and reliable postal delivery insured that penny postcards sent with penny stamps became a gratifying social media, not only for communication—but also for collection. Postcard clubs and albums served a similar function to web album sites such as Flickr today. During the Golden Age of postcard production, 1900 to 1912, sending postcards became a craze, swamping post offices everywhere, if this 1906 illustration from Puck is to be believed.



Illustration by J.S. Pughe. Source: [Library of Congress](#)

As is often the case with a man whose star rises when he appears in the right place at the right time, many other technological and cultural changes were also afoot in 1893. The debut of Vivekananda’s public career in the West coincides with the popular debut of the colored, chromo-lithographed postcard as official souvenirs of the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Together, (as I see it), the colorful monk Vivekananda and the colored picture postcard stepped into the arena of public popularity in 1893.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Prior to the World's Columbian Exposition, postal cards in the United States were standard government issue, with pre-printed postage on the address side and blank for a message or advertisement on the other side. They were usually used by businesses, sometimes stating the cost of an order, or that an account was overdue. Apparently this type of postal card played a part introducing one of Vivekananda's first talks in America. On August 24, 1893 at a committee meeting at [Kate Tannat Woods](#) home, "It was decided to have post cards sent to the members...." of the Thought and Work Club to notify them that the swami would be their guest speaker at Wesley Methodist Church, Salem, Massachusetts on August 28. How fantastic if any of those cards got saved!

Here is an example of a U.S. government postal card sent on December 11, 1893 to notify a member of an organization that there would be an election of officers that evening and his presence was required. Evidently one could post a card at 7:30 a.m. confident that it would be delivered that afternoon.



Mr. Jas. M^r Crosby,
Summer Str.,
Orange, N. J.

C. B. L. -

Dec. 11. 93

Com. M^r Crosby -

We have
a lecture of Officers this evening -
Please be on hand.

Yours truly
L. C. L. Schreiner

Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Vivekananda himself is known to have sent souvenir postcards. On 30 September 1897 he sent a postcard from Kashmir in India to [Josephine MacLeod](#). In November 1900 he sent three post cards from Constantinople and Athens to [Margaret Noble](#), [Alberta Sturges](#) and [Christine Greenstidel](#). These cards are now in the Gertrude and Boshi Sen Collection. Therefore, postal cards may be seen as bracketing Vivekananda's time abroad, from 1893 to 1900.



Source: [PrabuddhaBharata](#)

Vivekananda mailed this card from Athens to Christine Greenstidel in Detroit, 11 Nov 1900 . He wrote: "*Great fun. I write without the possibility of being written to as I am changing place all the time. How do you do? Vivekananda*"

She must have been delighted to receive it. Picture postcards were still novelties at the time. Coming from Vivekananda, "Hope you are well," was a spiritually activated and abiding wish. For his devotees, any paper autographed by his own hand would be held sacred.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

While I do not have access to the postcards in the Gertrude and Boshi Sen Collection, I was able to buy my own copy of a postcard from the same edition that Swamiji sent. That is part of the fun of following in his historical footsteps.

I think most ordinary postcard messages were benevolent. Their content was usually some sort of reassurance. And it is gratifying, more than a hundred years later, to know that so many of these well-wishing cards are still circulating in collectors markets. Perhaps there is some hidden power deposited in these postmarked messages from yesteryear that trumps all the artificial values of the collectibles market. The intangible still governs the tangible.

Caversham, Berkshire, England 10 September 1895

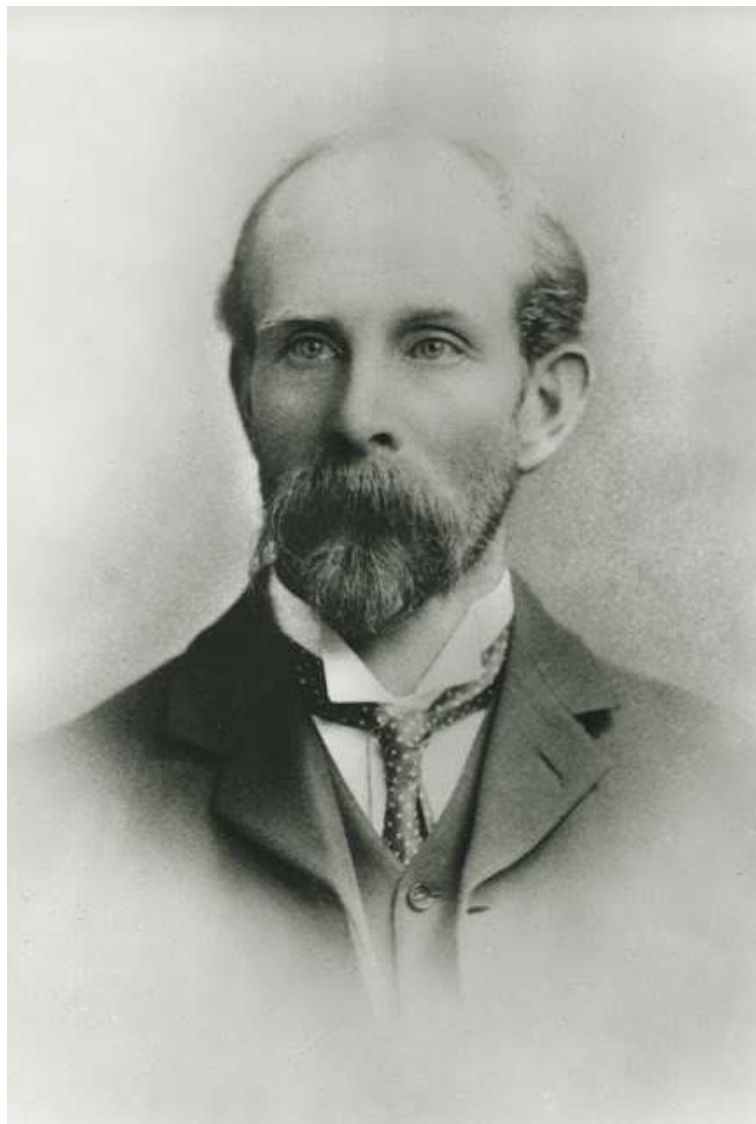
In England at last



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

In the spring of 1895, while he was in New York, Swami Vivekananda received an earnest letter from Edward Toronto Sturdy inviting him to be his guest in Caversham, Berkshire, England. As it happened, Swamiji had another invitation to come to Berkshire, in nearby Maidenhead. This invitation seems to have been extended by Akshay Kumar Ghosh, whom Swamiji had met in Khandwa, and again in Bombay, in 1892. Ghosh became the "adopted" son of Miss Frances Henrietta Muller. Miss Muller had been in Chicago as part of the Theosophical delegation to the Parliament of Religions, but it seems that she learned of Swamiji from Ghosh.

The boundary lines between [Oxfordshire](#) and Berkshire were redrawn in the Local Government Act of 1894, but [Caversham](#) did not join Reading as an urban district until 9 November 1911. At least, that is what I glean from Wikipedia, in case it is necessary to be technical about whether Swamiji was in Berkshire or Oxfordshire while he was in Caversham.



Source: Vedanta Society of St Louis

An aspiring Sanskrit scholar, Sturdy had met Swamiji'sgurubhai, Swami Shivananda, in India in 1893. Sturdy had dreamed of leading the life of a sannyasin. But in the space of two short years, his life changed abruptly. He now had a wife and an infant son. When Sturdy read Swamiji's article in the March 1895 issue of *Metaphysical Magazine*, see my [previous post](#), it must have reawakened the memory of his brief but idyllic moksha-seeking life in India.

Over the summer, Swamiji kept up a correspondence with Sturdy. By late August he had crossed the Atlantic to witness the wedding of his friend Francis Leggett to Betty Sturges, one of his New York students, in Paris. See my [previous post](#).

Swamiji wrote to Sturdy on 26 August, the day after he arrived in Paris, to say that he would be coming to London as soon as his friend was wed. Then on 5 September, he wrote to Sturdy again, stating: "I have a cordial invitation from Miss

Müller, and as her place is very near to yours, I think it will be nice to come to her place first for a day or two and then to come over to you."



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

News of Muller's invitation probably alarmed Sturdy, knowing as he did of her Theosophical connections. He was anxious to avoid all contact with the Theosophical Society. Not only had Sturdy experienced a deep disillusionment with Theosophy, so had most of English society—see my [previous post](#). Therefore he pre-empted any possibility of Swamiji meeting Miss Muller—who, FYI, had also discontinued her Theosophical membership—and he hastened to meet Swamiji in London and escort him to Caversham.

We don't know exactly where Sturdy arranged to meet Swamiji. However, in order to go to Caversham, they had to catch a train from Paddington Station shown in the postcard above.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Swamiji probably passed through Paddington Station many times. This early postcard shows the departure platform that he no doubt stood on.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

Raphael Tuck & Sons created a more animated view of Paddington Station in this colorized postcard. Paddington Station was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1854 and it was the terminus for the Great Western Railway.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

The Flying Dutchman, shown in this Raphael Tuck postcard, made its last run in 1892, but it still helps to illustrate the type of engine and train cars used by the Great Western Railway. Swamiji had to pass through Slough on his way to Reading.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

Swamiji and Sturdy alighted from the train at this station in Reading, shown in this 1908 real photo postcard.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

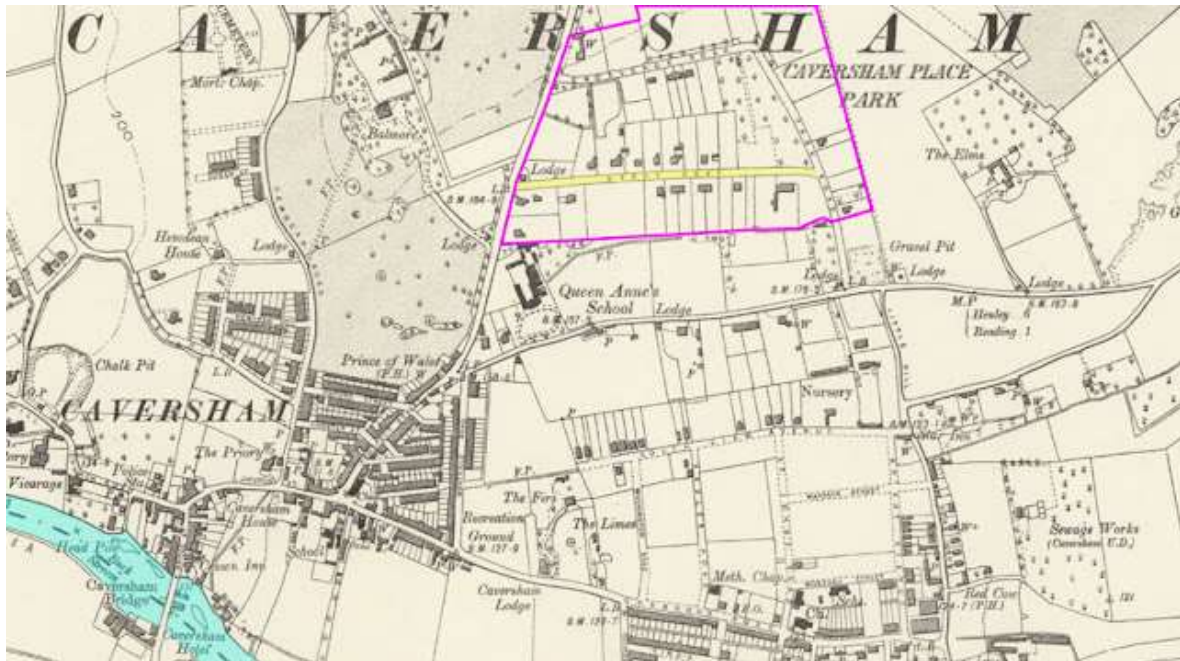
They would have taken a carriage from the station, through the northern part of Reading to the Thames River. This postcard shows Friar Street which is about two streets south of the station. M.L. Burke showed a photograph of Friar Street in Volume 3 of *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries*.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

At the Thames, Swamiji and Sturdy crossed over Caversham Bridge, shown in this 1905 postcard, and up a hill to Sturdy's residence. The bridge in the postcard was

built in 1869. The present Caversham Bridge was built in 1926.



Source: NLS

At least, we presume that Sturdy lived on a hill because his house, instead of having a street number, was named High View, but what street it was on is not known with certainty. However there are several clues which point to Sturdy's residence as being in Caversham Place Park, a late nineteenth century housing development marked in magenta on the 1897 Ordnance Survey map above.

According to online sources the main route through Caversham Place Park was renamed Derby Road. Caversham Place Park is a private, gated community. It is at present not known if the house that Sturdy once occupied is still standing. A number of the large houses in Caversham Place Park were torn down and redeveloped. Sturdy, raised to be a gentleman, would have had a detached residence with its own grounds, garden and stables.

The 1897 Ordnance Survey map gives a good idea of the distance of the probable location of Sturdy's house from the Thames and Caversham bridge. It also reveals that the nearest postcard landmark to High View was Queen Anne's School.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

Queen Anne's School for girls was quite new in 1895. The main building had until recently housed Amersham Hall School for boys. For Swamiji the school must have been a constant reminder of the privileged lives of the English upper classes who were able to send their children to boarding schools.

There is an interesting connection to Swamiji's life in London via Queen Anne's School. During the autumn of 1896, he lived at 14 Grey Coat Gardens, a new apartment complex built adjacent to the grounds of Grey Coat Hospital. Grey Coat Hospital had begun as a Christian foundation in 1698, but by 1874 it had transformed into a school for girls. Grey Coat Hospital had received its royal charter from Queen Anne. The Grey Coat Hospital purchased the former Amersham Hall in 1894 to form a new girls school. Swamiji probably only saw Queen Anne's School from the road as he went up the hill to visit E.T. Sturdy.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

I don't usually show aerial view postcards because airplane travel was not part of Swamiji's world. However, since the former site of High View is probably in a private access community, the land at the top edge of this real photo postcard is as close a glimpse of High View as I can hope for. The main campus of Queen Anne's School occupies impressive grounds.

To get to High View Swamiji would have crossed the Thames at Bridge Street, turned east on Church Street, northeast on Prospect Street and north on Peppard Road. High View was advertised as being 1.5 miles from Reading Station.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

Swamiji wrote to Josephine MacLeod in September about his activities and plans in Caversham:

Dear Joe Joe,

A thousand pardons for not promptly writing to you. I arrived safe in London, found my friend, and am all right in his home. It is beautiful. His wife is surely an angel, and his life is full of India. He has been years there — mixing with the Sannyasins, eating their food, etc., etc.; so you see I am very happy. . . .

I am very much more at home here than anywhere out of India. The English people know us, we know them. The standard of education and civilisation is very high here — that makes a great change, so does the education of many generations. . . .

My friend being a Sanskrit scholar, we are busy working on the great commentaries of Shankara etc. Nothing but philosophy and religion here, Joe Joe. I am going to try to get up classes in October in London.

Ever affectionately with love and blessings,

Vivekananda

Earlier, on 9 August, Swamiji had written to Sturdy about rising above partisanship and social allegiances:

. . . One word more. Doubtless I do love India. But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree?

There is but one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual — to know that I and my brother are one. This is true for all countries and all people. . . .

Let us work without desire for name or fame or rule over others. Let us be free from the triple bonds of lust, greed of gain, and anger. And this truth is with us!

Caversham, Reading, Berkshire September 1895

Days in Caversham



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda spent most of September and October 1895 at the home of Edward and Lucie Sturdy in Caversham. The view of the Thames from Caversham Bridge shown in this 1905 postcard gives a glimpse of the tower of St. Peter's Church. Caversham village was originally part of Oxfordshire, but it was re-districted to Berkshire in 1894. In 1911 Caversham became part of the Borough of Reading.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This postcard shows the 1869 iron bridge that linked Caversham and Reading. The bridge was completely rebuilt in 1926. There were many places in Caversham where Swamiji and Sturdy might have taken walks, all the while talking about myriad subjects, but above all, the philosophy of Vedanta.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Thames was generally an agreeable river. This postcard shows the Clappers footpath over Caversham Weir during the summer floods of 1903. You can listen to a recording of water rushing over the weir at [Sound Diaries](#).



Source: TuckDB

Caversham Lock was built in 1778 and rebuilt in 1875. Swamiji may have watched boats pass through the lock as there were pleasant footpaths along the riverside.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This view of The Clappers footpath shows more tranquil waters. Several islands in Lower Caversham were connected by foot bridges.



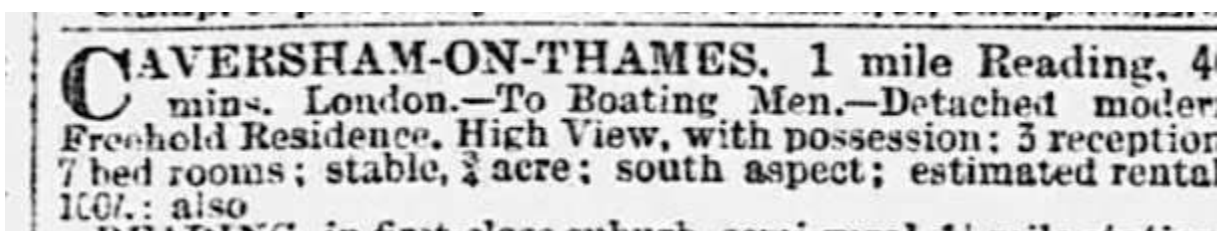
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

St Peter's Church is the oldest building in Caversham, dating from 1162. There had been holy sites in Caversham, notably the shrine of Our Lady of Caversham near Deans Farm, which was pulled down during the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538, and the Holy Well of St. Anne, the location of which was re-discovered in 1906.



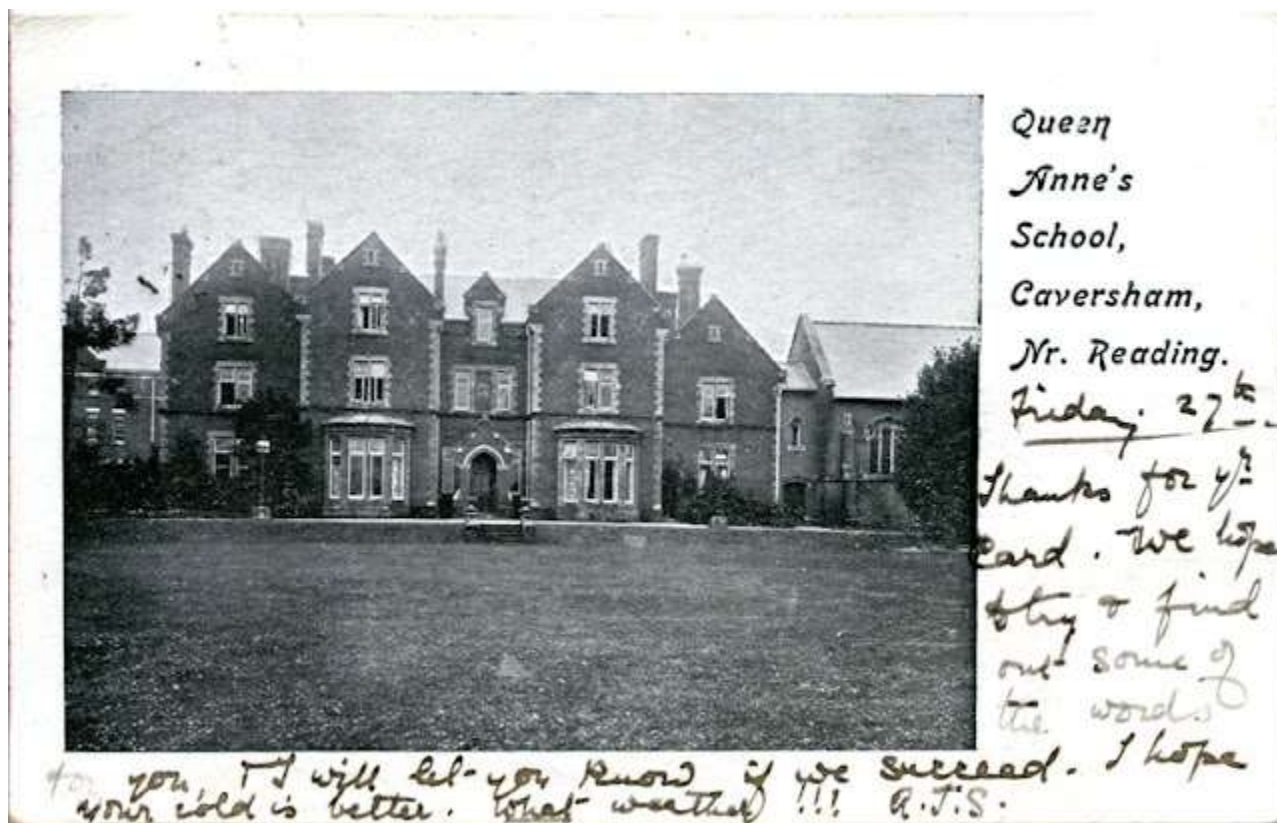
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Warren is a road running beside the Thames that links St Peter's Church to Chazey Court Farm which has a medieval barn. There are a number of postcards that show The Warren as a pleasant tree covered lane.



Source: Standard 3 April 1895

A few clues indicate that High View, Edward T. Sturdy's residence, may have been in the housing estate known as Caversham Place Park. Today it is a gated community. The ad above is dated 3 April 1895. Sturdy's first letter to Swamiji was dated 30 March 1895, c/o King & Co. 65 Cornhill, London. Swamiji's first letter to Sturdy was dated 24 April 1895.



Queen
Anne's
School,
Caversham,
Mr. Reading.

Friday, 27th

Thanks for yr
card. We hope
to try & find
out some of
the words

to you. I will let you know if we succeed. I hope
your cold is better. What weather!!! A.T.S.

Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

To get to Caversham Place Park Swamiji would have entered Caversham at Bridge Street, turned east on Church Street, northeast on Prospect Street and north on Peppard Road. Up the hill on Peppard Road he would have passed Queen Anne's School for girls, shown in this 1904 postcard.

A Present from CAVERSHAM.



Keep them, they are
sure to come in handy

Titchfield Series No. 247 Copyright

Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

One thing that made Swamiji's stay in Caversham unique was the presence of the Sturdy's adored baby son, Ambrose. Swamiji was able to observe some aspects of British child-rearing. Sturdy, being a gentleman, would have hired a nanny or nurse-maid for Ambrose. However, since his wife, Lucie, had been a hospital nurse, she was no doubt well-informed on the latest theories on infant care and probably spent a diligent amount of time with her baby. On 24 October Swamiji wrote to Isabelle McKindley:

A calm, restful, settled married life is good for the majority of mankind. Mr. [Edward T.] Sturdy, the friend with whom I am living now, was in India

several times. He mixed with our monks and is very ascetic in his habits, but he is married at last and has settled down. And [he] has got a beautiful little baby. Their life is very nice. The wife, of course, doesn't much care about metaphysics or Sanskrit, but her whole life is in her husband—and husband's soul is in Sanskrit metaphysics! Yet it is a good combination of theory and practice, I think.

It was thanks to Ambrose that Swamiji's biographer, M. L. Burke, was able to obtain most of the biographical information about his father. Ambrose was too young to have remembered Swamiji or exactly where their house was located in Caversham. He became a Major in the British Army but suffered shell-shock in World War I. Later he compiled his family's genealogy.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In 1901 E.T. Sturdy bought an estate near Burton Bradstock, Bridport, off the Dorset coast. His father had done an admirable job of developing Trigon Estate near Wareham, Dorset. Similarly, E.T. Sturdy made

extensive improvements to the property he now called Norburton Hall. Inside the great hall is an elaborately carved stone fireplace with the date 1902 and a Sanskrit inscription meaning: "There is no higher law than Truth."

TO
SWÂMI VIVEKÂNANDA
THIS WORK, UNDERTAKEN WITH HIS ASSISTANCE,
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

Source: HathiTrust.org

On 4 October Swamiji wrote to Swami Brahmananda in India: "Mr. Sturdy has taken initiation from me, and is a very enterprising and good man." Two days later he wrote to Sara Bull in Cambridge, Massachusetts:

Dear Mrs. Bull,

. . . I am translating a little book on Bhakti with Mr. Sturdy with copious commentaries, which is to be published soon. This month I am to give two lectures in London and one in Maidenhead. This will open up the way to some classes and parlour lectures. We do not wish to make any noise but to go quietly. . . .

Yours with best wishes,

Vivekananda

The *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* announced in its Notes for the July, August, September quarter of 1896 that "Mr. Sturdy has published a translation of the Narada-sutra, a

short treatise on the subject of Bhakti, or Faith, with an original Commentary.” The *Narada-Bhakti Sutras or an Inquiry into Love* was published under Sturdy’s name with this dedication to Swamiji.

However, on 31 October 1895 Swamiji had written to Sturdy from his lodgings in Chelsea: “First, we must hurry the book through. We will touch a class thereby who are philosophically religious without the least mystery-mongering.” Swamiji’s use of “we” seems to indicate a sense of co-authorship. He probably deserved more than a dedication. But Swamiji was a sannyasin—therefore he did not claim ownership, and since Sturdy wished to claim the book as his, Swamiji made no objection.

Maidenhead, Berkshire 17 October 1895

First lecture in England



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda and E.T. Sturdy must have gone to Maidenhead to call on [Frances Henrietta Muller](#) sometime during September 1895. On 24 September Swamiji wrote to Sara Bull that "Miss Muller is getting up a lecture for me in Reading & there will be some lecturing in London too." By 6 October plans had solidified and he again wrote to Bull that "This month I am to give two lectures in London and one

in Maidenhead." This postcard shows the approach to the railway station. The clock tower in the background was built in 1897 in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.



Source: Google Maps

Henrietta Muller lived in this house called The Meads in Pinkney's Green, a picturesque hamlet in the parish of Cookham, three and a half miles northwest of the Great Western Railway station at Maidenhead.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji gave his first lecture in the Town Hall on High Street in Maidenhead on 17

October 1895. The view in this postcard of High Street approaches the Town Hall. The Bear Hotel on the right still looks much the same as it did then, with a large sculpture of a bear holding a clock on the front canopy.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Town Hall is on the left in this colorized postcard, showing a columned entrance and alternating arched and peaked windows on the upper floor. Today the Town Hall has been replaced by modern shops, but the buildings in the center still exist.

Swamiji spoke on the subject "The Eastern Doctrine of Love." The reporter hastened to disclaim any connection with the Theosophical Society:

Many of the public also associated the lecturer with the Theosophical Society, with which, however, he has, we are informed, nothing whatever to do, nor with any other society, neither does he propose forming any society himself. He believes in expounding his views to whoever will listen to them and leaving those individuals to advocate them as a whole, or with whatever modifications they may deem fitting, or to reject them altogether, believing that out of the strife of all opinions truth at length prevails



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Muller's sister, [Eva Maria McLaren](#) and her husband [Walter Stowe Bright McLaren](#), [MP](#) took part in organizing the lecture. They had a house in Pinkney's Green named The Nook and a house in London at 3A Poet's Corner, Westminster.



Source: [ArtUK](#)

The *Maidenhead Adviser* 23 October 1895 reported that "the chair was taken at 8 p.m. by Mr. E. Gardner, J.P., C.C., and he very briefly introduced the lecturer, who was clad in his native costume." The chairman was probably Ernest Gardner, of Cookham, a city councillor. Gardner had served as mayor of Maidenhead in 1892. In 1901 he was elected to Parliament. The newspaper article concluded:

The lecture was impressively delivered, and at the close a vote of thanks was accorded the Chairman (on the proposition of Mr. E. T. Sturdy, of Caversham).



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Town Hall is on the right in this colorized postcard, which gives a slightly better view of its facade.

Swamiji had been helping Sturdy translate the Narada Bhakti Sutras—see my [previous post](#). In his Maidenhead lecture Swamiji explained the seventh sutra which he called the Triangle of Love:

In its more general sense it might be divided threefold: (1) That love which is for one's own pleasure, irrespective of pleasure or pain to others — the purely selfish, the lowest. (2) That love which exchanges — "I will love you if you love me. We will make each other mutually happy" — the partially selfish, the middle path trodden by the great majority of mankind. (3) That love which gives all and asks for nothing, without premeditation and which never regrets, unconquerable by any evil thing done to him from whom it emanates. It is the highest, the divine. Only with this last kind are we concerned here.

The first is the path of the sensualist and the animal, the second the path of struggling humanity on its way to better things, the third the real path of love, trodden by those who renounce the world and set out upon that road which leads to Eternal Peace. In that love there is no fear. Love kills fear. A lion might stand over a babe

and threaten its life; the mother knows no fear, she does not fly, but she opposes. At that moment love destroys terror; at other times the same woman would run from a small dog.

Swamiji later re-interpreted Sutra 7 and talked about his version of the triangle of love on several occasions. In chapter seven of Para-Bhakti Yoga or Supreme Devotion, delivered in 1900, *CW V3* he said:

The first angle of our triangle of love is that love knows no bargaining. . . .

The second angle of the triangle of love is that love knows no fear. . . .

The third angle of the love-triangle is that love knows no rival, for in it is always embodied the lover's highest ideal. . . .

Swamiji always spoke extemporaneously. Sometimes he described the triangle of love with different words, but the meaning was the same. In San Francisco, 12 April 1900, *CW V6* he said:

[The first angle is,] love questions not. It is not a beggar. . . .

The second [angle of love] is that love knows no fear. . . .

The third [angle is that] love is its own end. It can never be the means. . . .

If any doubt remains as to the nature of the love of which the *Nârada Sâtra* treats, as to whether it refers to human passion or that other wonderful attribute, divine in its nature, which man can make manifest within himself, Sûtra 7 sets this at rest. The very nature of this Love is renunciation.

Love may be divided threefold.

1. Where the only motive is to receive pleasure—to take all and give nothing.

2. Where there is exchange, and the loving depends upon being loved—“ I love thee because thou lovest me.”

3. Where there is unconditional devotion, the giving everything and seeking nothing, no recognition, no return.

Source: HathiTrust.org

This is page 25 from the *Narada-Bhakti Sutras or An Inquiry into Love* that Swamiji was helping Sturdy translate. The book was published under Sturdy's name in 1896.

maybe not on Pinkney's Green, Berkshire, England 1895

A bull on the green



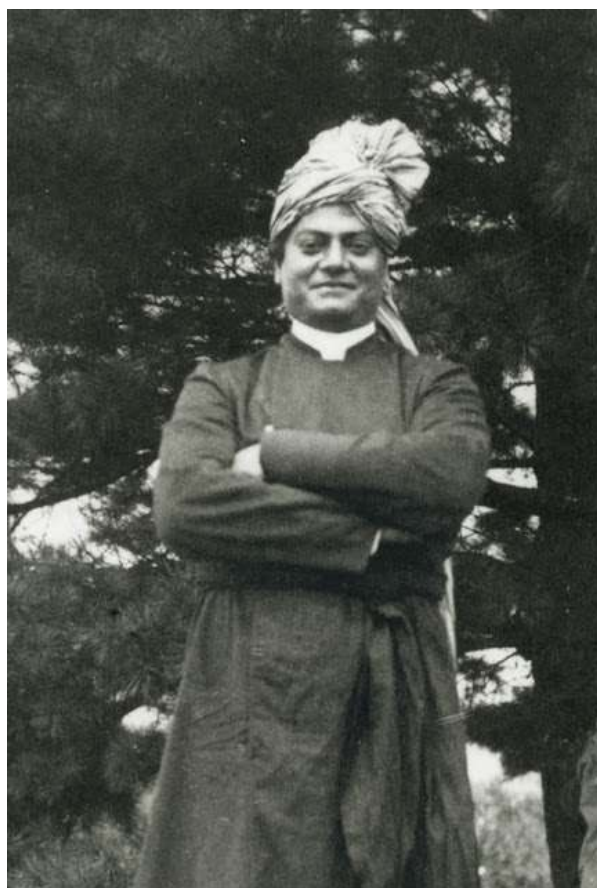
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

Somewhere in England, possibly in Berkshire, probably in 1895, Swami Vivekananda stared down a charging bull. The story comes to us from Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble) in her book, *Notes of Some Wanderings*. The "Wanderings" took place mostly in Kashmir during the summer of 1897. Nivedita and her traveling companions, Sara Bull and Josephine MacLeod, were on their houseboat listening to a talk by Swamiji. Something Swamiji said that day about unflinching resolution reminded Nivedita of a story he had previously told her:

"And one remembered *apropos* of this coolness, the story of a walk across the fields, in England, where he and an Englishman and woman had been pursued by an angry bull. The Englishman frankly ran, and reached the other side of the hill in safety. The woman ran as far as she could, and then sank to the ground incapable of further effort. Seeing this and unable to aid her, the Swami,—thinking "So *this* is the end,

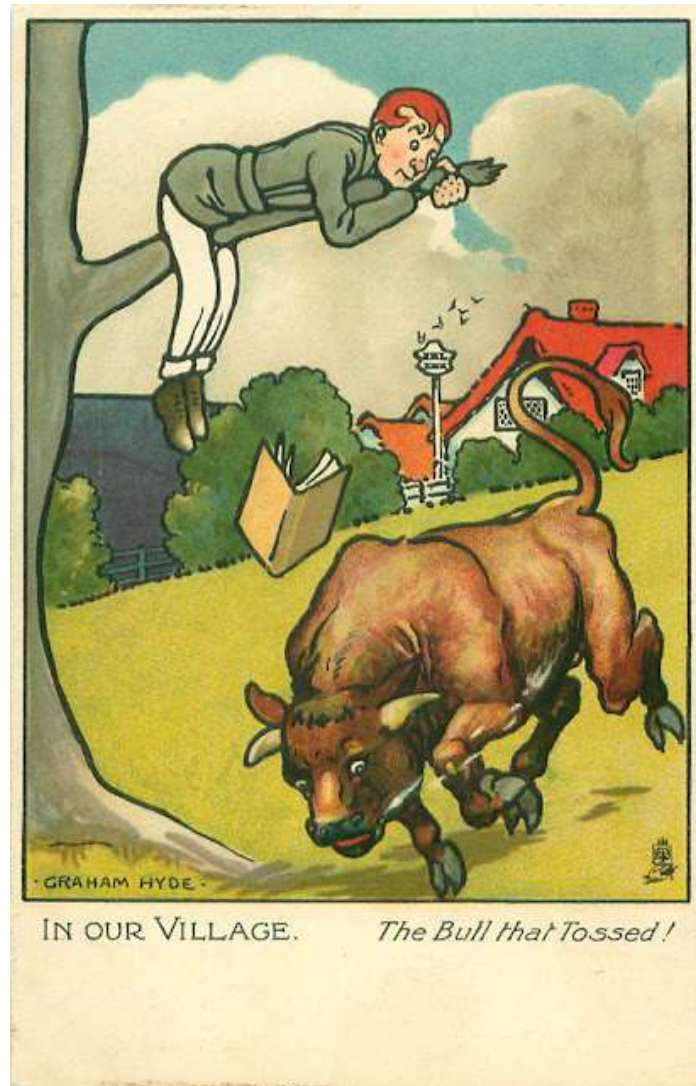
after all”— took up his stand in front of her, with folded arms. He told afterwards how his mind was occupied with a mathematical calculation, as to how far the bull would be able to throw. But the animal suddenly stopped, a few paces off, and then, raising his head, retreated sullenly.”

The postcard above advertised a pub on Hampstead Heath known as [The Bull and Bush](#). It was so named for an 1867 song by Florrie Forde. There are any number of humorous golden age postcards about hapless hikers escaping a charging bull. In this case, I needed a card that would illustrate Swamiji's story with an English bull rather than an American longhorn.



Source: Vedanta Society of St Louis

It is not hard to imagine Swamiji standing his ground, facing an angry bull. In his particular situation, it was probably the best strategy. As the story was told, he must have been running from the bull also, but lagged behind his two companions. It was not until the woman in front of him fell that he turned and faced the animal.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

Swamiji said he calculated how far the bull would be able to throw him. Our thoughts, in the split seconds before an impact or collision or impending injury become fixed in peculiar ways. Why would a bull toss rather than trample? According to this Raphael Tuck postcard, the conventional thinking was that bulls tossed their victims.

For me, the problematic part of Nivedita's story is the identification of Swamiji's rambling companions. When this story was repeated in the 1914 biography *Life of Swami Vivekananda* by Swami Virajananda, it was claimed that the woman who fell was Miss Muller. And when M. L. Burke repeated the story in *New Discoveries V3*, she suggested that E.T. Sturdy was the Englishman who fled. Subsequently, devotees have categorically stated that Swamiji saved Miss Muller from a bull.

It was entirely in character for Swamiji to stare down a bull. His courage is not in question. However, it was out of character for Sturdy to abandon his guru as early as 1895, and it was out of character for the energetic Muller to exhaust herself by a short run.



Source: Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries V3

This photograph of [Frances Henrietta Muller](#) is from the *Woman's Herald*, London, 28 November 1891.



Date of Application, 25th Apr., 1896—Accepted, 30th May, 1896.

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.

Improvements in Ladies' Garments for Cycling and other Purposes.

I, FRANCES HENRIETTA MÜLLER, of Meads, Maidenhead, in the County of Berks, Gentlewoman, do hereby declare the nature of this invention and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be particularly described and ascertained in and by the following statement :—

5 These improvements consist in the form and combination of three specially constructed articles of ladies' costume, so made as to afford special facility and convenience when cycling.

Reference is made to the accompanying drawings in which

Figs. 1 and 2 illustrate a combination vest and knickerbockers.

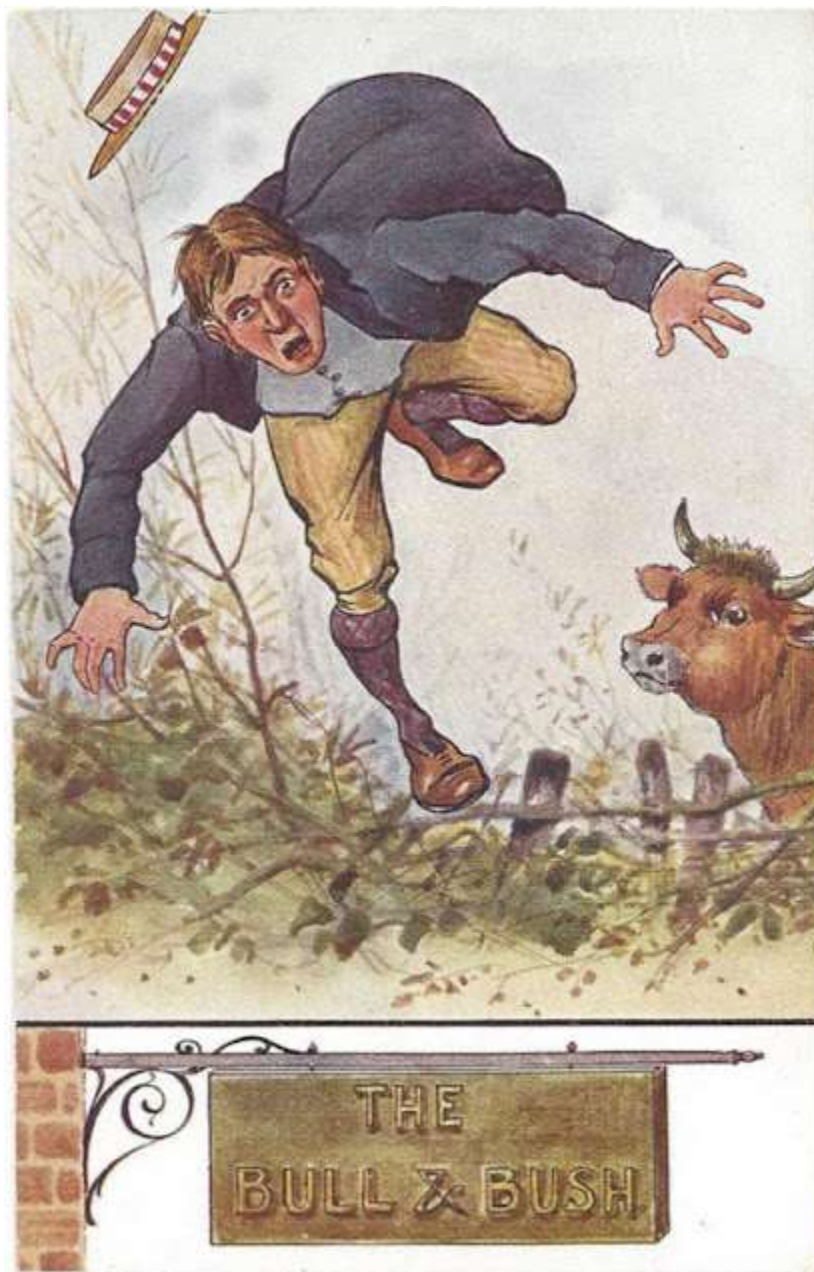
10 Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6 refer to a skirt, and Figs. 7, 8, 9 and 10 show an outside garment or coat.

Referring to Figs. 1 and 2 which form respectively front and back views of a combined vest and knickerbockers, it will be seen that the fastening is made by buttons A down the left side, and that at the back a fold B may be let down
15 by undoing the buttons C. The knickerbockers are long enough to extend below the knee and may be provided with strap and buckle, buttons, or elastic band, to retain them at this point. They may be of more or less fulness according to the taste of the wearer.

Over this garment the skirt shown in Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6 is intended to be worn.
20 It will be seen that it is a simple gored article, and may clear the ground say by about six inches. Dispensing entirely with lining, it has only a narrow stitched hem around the bottom, and a waistband provided with a row of buttons on the outside, as marked D in Fig. 3.

Source: [Bikes & Bloomers](#)

Muller was quite an able-bodied woman and unless she had sustained an ankle twisting injury it is most unlikely that she would "sink to the ground, unable to go further" after a sprint. Burke wrote that she regularly went for fifty mile bicycle rides through the country lanes. Above is a detail from a patent she filed in 1896 for a cycling costume. She was one of those freedom loving women who advocated what Swamiji called "scientific dress". If she went striding across the fields, she would not have worn cumbersome clothing.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

Equally mysterious is the identification of the self-preserving “Englishman”. Here's a more colorful ca. 1910 postcard advertising the Bull & Bush.

Although it seems likely that Swamiji would have gone for some country rambles near Caversham with his host, E. T. Sturdy, Sturdy would not have deserted him in such haste. He had high respect for Swamiji and had recently taken diksha from him. If the woman in the story had been Sturdy's wife, Lucie, then abandoning her—a young mother—would have been even more cowardly.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2018

The cows are placid in this real photo postcard of a pasture on Lea Farm in Pinkney's Green. Here are links to other ca. 1913 real photo postcards of Pinkney's Green at [Postcards Then and Now](#). Swamiji probably mailed some letters in the [postoffice on Lee Lane](#), where Hannah Cannon was sub-postmistress. Dispatch was at 12.10 & 7.10 p.m. week days; 11.30 a.m. on Sundays. There was no delivery from here, the postman came from Maidenhead. Selina Sparrowhawk was proprietor of the [Stag and Hounds](#) pub, just around the corner from The Meads, Miss Muller's house, on Pinkney's Drive.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

The only other man and woman that we know the names of who might have gone for a walk near Pinkney's Green with Swamiji were Miss Muller's sister, [Eva Maria McLaren](#) and her husband [Walter Stowe Bright McLaren, MP](#). They lived nearby in a house named The Nook. Again, it is difficult to ascribe the actions of the walkers—one falling, the other fleeing—to the McLaren's, who were dedicated political activists. A Member of Parliament could not afford the disgrace of abandoning his wife and his friend to an aggressive animal.

Swamiji made many friends during his first visit to England that we have no record of. One of them may have invited him to their country home for the weekend. It is quite possible that this incident had nothing to do with Pinkney's Green or Caversham. It is only that these are places where it is easy to picture Swamiji walking through green fields, conversing with his friends, unaware of bovine territorial hazards.

Swamiji's rambling companions will remain unknown, but I do think it is unfair to say that either Muller or Sturdy were with him that day.

Piccadilly, London, England 22 October 1895

An Indian Monk in London



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda gave his first lecture in England at the Town Hall in Maidenhead on 17 October—covered in the [previous post](#). It had not been well attended. The organizers, particularly E.T. Sturdy, realized that more advance publicity was needed for his London lecture which was to be at Princes' Hall, Piccadilly. Advertisements were placed in *The Times*, *Standard*, *Morning Post*, etc., and reporters were summoned to interview Swamiji.

On the 20th Swamiji sent a personal invitation to Josephine MacLeod who had lately arrived in London from Paris. It appears that he had felt very much at home with the Sturdys in Caversham:

Dear Joe Joe,

This note is to welcome the Leggetts [Betty and Francis] to London. This being in a sense my native country, I send you my welcome first, I shall receive your welcome next Tuesday the 22nd at Princes' Hall half past eight p.m.

I am so busy till Tuesday, I am afraid, I shall not be able to run in to see you. I, however, shall come to see you any day after that. Possibly I may come on Tuesday.

The Raphael Tuck postcard above is from a 1901 series on London. Swamiji passed through Piccadilly Circus many times, and he would have noticed the flower sellers there.



Source: Vedanta Society of St. Louis

The article “An Indian Monk in London,” that appeared the day before the lecture in the *Daily Graphic* featured this photograph. The *Daily Graphic* was a popular illustrated morning paper. Swamiji was by now an experienced public speaker and he had probably brought some cabinet photos of himself from America. My guess is that Sturdy did not approve of them because those photos featured Swamiji wearing a turban. Sturdy probably felt that a turban was too “mahatma-ish” for the press, i.e., it might remind people of the recently discredited Theosophical Society.

An alternative sort of headgear was deemed necessary for his photograph. There must have been some consultation on this subject. The style of the cap he wears in the photo resembles a Kashmiri karakul, but it does not have the heavy texture of actual lamb skin. The texture is like wool felt. The cap has seams in the front and back. It appears that Swamiji wore something like a Nepali bhadgaunle or kalotopi. He evidently found it comfortable to wear.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Swamiji's *Daily Graphic* photo was credited to Walery, Regent Street. "Walery" was Stanisław Julian Ignacy Ostroróg who was continuing a photographic studio begun by his father that specialized in social celebrities. Swamiji would return to Walery for more photographs in 1896, after Walery had joined with Alfred Ellis and moved his studio to 51 Baker Street.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Regent Street was another busy London thoroughfare that Swamiji would become familiar with. He would return to Regent Street to address the Balloon Society on 5 November.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

A reporter from the *Westminster Gazette* had been called to write an advance publicity, but the actual article did not appear until after the lecture. Curiously the article began by stating that the lecture was a *fait d'accompli* but it concluded with the announcement of the event. The interview, however, was the meat of the article, and Swamiji explained himself in part:

"And what induced you to forsake the ordinary course of the world, Swami?" I asked.

"I had a deep interest in religion and philosophy from my childhood," he replied, "and our books teach renunciation as the highest ideal to which man can aspire. It only needed the meeting with a great Teacher — Ramakrishna Paramahansa — to kindle in me the final determination to follow the path he himself had trod, as in him I found my highest ideal realised."

"Then did he found a sect, which you now represent?"

"No", replied the Swami quickly. "No, his whole life was spent in breaking down the barriers of sectarianism and dogma. He formed no sect. Quite the reverse. He advocated and strove to establish absolute freedom of thought. He was a great Yogi."

"Then you are connected with no society or sect in this country? Neither Theosophical nor Christian Scientist, nor any other?"

"None whatever!" said the Swami in clear and impressive tones. (His face lights up like that of a child, it is so simple, straightforward and honest.) "My teaching is my own interpretation of our ancient books, in the light which my Master shed upon them. I claim no supernatural authority. Whatever in my teaching may appeal to the highest intelligence and be accepted by thinking men, the adoption of that will be my reward." "All religions", he continued, "have for their object the teaching either of devotion, knowledge, or Yoga, in a concrete form. Now, the philosophy of Vedanta is the abstract science which embraces all these methods, and this it is that I teach, leaving each one to apply it to his own concrete form. I refer each individual to his own experiences, and where reference is made to books, the latter are procurable, and may be studied by each one for himself. Above all, I teach no authority proceeding from hidden beings speaking through visible agents, any more than I claim learning from hidden books or manuscripts. I am the exponent of no occult societies, nor do I believe that good can come of such bodies. Truth stands on its own authority, and truth can bear the light of day."

"Then you do not propose to form any society. Swami?" I suggested.

"None; no society whatever. I teach only the Self hidden in the heart of every individual and common to all. A handful of strong men knowing that Self and living in Its light would revolutionise the world, even today, as has been the case by single strong men before each in his day." "And what is your attitude towards the Western religions, Swami?"

"I propound a philosophy which can serve as a basis to every possible religious system in the world, and my attitude towards all of them is one of extreme sympathy — my teaching is antagonistic to none. I direct my attention to the individual, to make him strong, to teach him that he himself is divine, and I call upon men to make themselves conscious of this divinity within. That is really the ideal — conscious or unconscious — of every religion."

"And what shape will your activities take in this country?"

"My hope is to imbue individuals with the teachings to which I have referred, and to encourage them to express these to others in their own way; let them modify them as they will; I do not teach them as dogmas; truth at length must inevitably prevail. . .

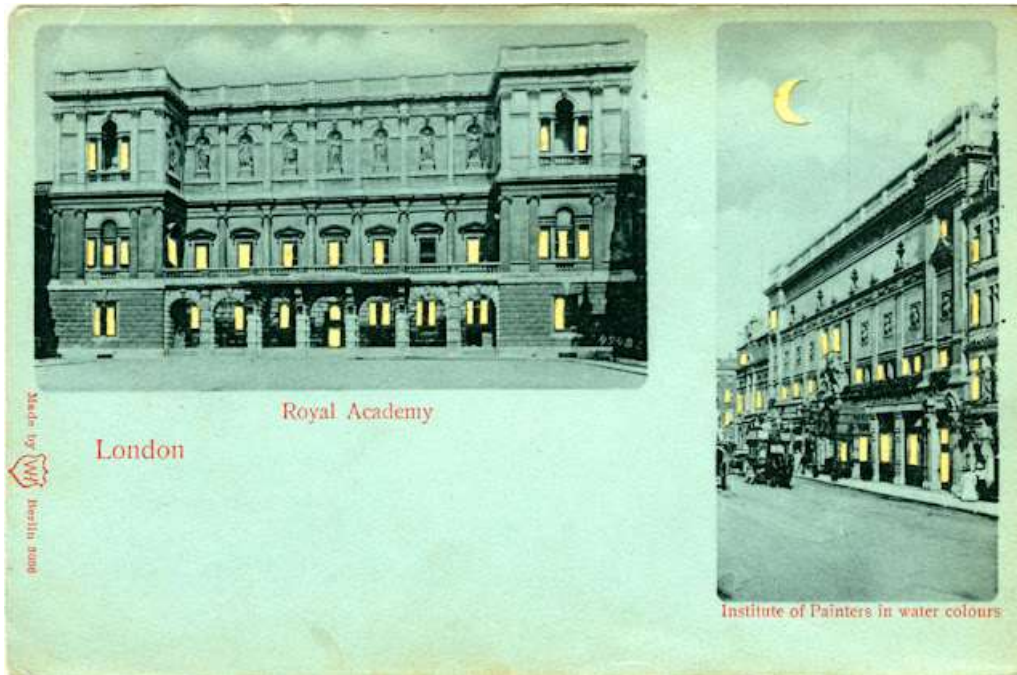
I then took my leave from one of the most original of men that I have had the honour of meeting.

The *Westminster Gazette* article was reprinted in the *Indian Mirror*, Calcutta, on 19 November 1895 and also in the *Express & Telegraph* on 30 November and the *Chronicle* on 7 December, both in Adelaide, Australia.



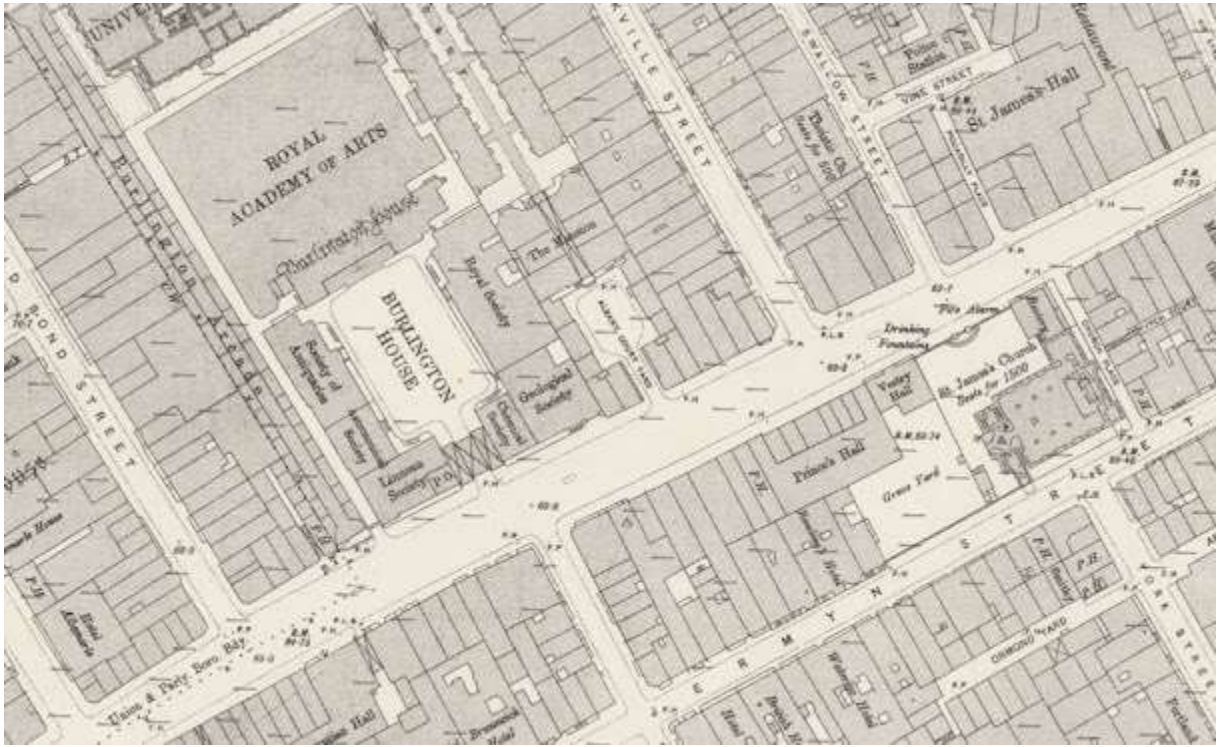
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Continuing along Piccadilly from Piccadilly Circus going toward Green Park, Burlington House is a major landmark on the right side of the street. It housed the [Royal Academy of Arts](#), which is inside the courtyard of Burlington House. The [Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours](#) was on the opposite side of the street.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This early hold-to-light postcard highlights the opposition of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours from the Royal Academy of Arts. The New Society of Painters in Water Colours was founded in 1831 in part because the Royal Academy did not acknowledge watercolors as an "appropriately serious" medium. Renamed as the Institute of Painters in Watercolours, the society moved to its premises at 190-195 Piccadilly in 1883.



Source: NLS

T. J. Desai heard Swamiji speak at Princes' Hall. It was Miss Muller who had invited him, although he attended with a Mrs. Ingall. Desai misremembered the location of the lecture, stating that it was at St James' Hall—which was across the street from Princes' Hall, shown on the 1893 Ordnance Survey map. Apart from this detail, Desai's memory of Swamiji was quite vivid:

That was the first time I saw the commanding figure of the great Swami. He looked more like an Indian Prince than a sadhu (holy man). He had a bhagvapatka (ochre coloured turban) on his head. He electrified the audience by his grand and powerful oratory. The next day the report appeared in the papers that he was the next Indian after Keshab Chandra Sen, who had surprised the English audience by his magnificent oratory. He spoke on the Vedanta. His large eyes were rolling like anything, and there was such an animation about him that it passeth description. After the meeting was over, the Swami took off his turban and put on a huge and deep Kashmiri cap looking like a big Persian hat.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Desai recalled reading the papers the next day and no doubt exulted at the *Standard's* opening line:

Since the days of Ramahoun Roy, (says the *Standard*), with the single exception of KeshubChunder Sen, there has not appeared on an English platform a more interesting Indian figure than the Brahman who lectured in Princes' Hall last night.

The postcard above shows the facade of the Institute of Painters in Watercolors and gives an accurate picture of Piccadilly as it was when Swamiji was there.

AN INDIAN ASCETIC.

Since the days of Ramahoun Roy, with the single exception of Keshub Chunder Sen, there has not appeared on an English platform a more interesting Indian figure than the Brahman who lectured in Princes' Hall last night. Clothed in the long orange-coloured robe of the Buddhist priest, with a monk-like girdle round his waist instead of the usual Indian cum-bund, and wearing the massive turban of Northern India on his head, the Swami Vivekánanda discoursed for an hour and a quarter, in the most faultless English, on the cardinal doctrines of the school of religious philosophy to which he is devoting his life. The name by which he makes himself known is a name assumed, on his becoming an apostle of his school, in the style of many philosophers and doctors of antiquity and the Middle Ages. As the Chairman, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, explained, the first of his names is a Sanskrit word signifying "Master," and the second is also a Sanskrit term, signifying "the bliss of discrimination." The lecture was a most fearless and eloquent exposition of the pantheistic philosophy of the Vedanta school, and the Swami seems to have incorporated into his system a good deal also of the moral element of the Yoga school, as the closing passages of his lecture presented in a modified form not the advocacy of mortification, which is the leading feature of the latter school, but the renunciation of all so-called material comforts and blessings, as the only means of entering into perfect union with the supreme and absolute Self. The opening passages of the lecture were a review of the rise of the grosser form of Materialism in the beginning of the present century, and the later development of the various forms of metaphysical thought, which for a time swept materialism away. From this he passed on to discuss the origin and nature of knowledge. In some respects his views on this point were almost a statement of pure Fichteism, but they were expressed in language, and they embodied illustrations, and made admissions which no German transcendentalist would have made or used. He admitted there was a gross material world outside, but he confessed he did not know what matter was. He asserted that mind was a finer matter, and that behind was the soul of man, which was immovable, fixed, before which outward objects passed, as it were, in a procession, which was without beginning or end—in other words, which was eternal, and finally which was God. He worked out this pantheistic conception of the personal identity of man and God with great comprehensiveness and an ample wealth of illustration, and in passage after passage of great beauty, solemnity, and earnestness. "There is only one Soul in the Universe," he said; "there is no 'you' or 'me;' all variety is merged into the absolute unity, the one infinite existence—God." From this, of course, followed the immortality of the soul, and something like the transmigration of souls towards higher manifestations of perfection. As already stated, his peroration of twenty minutes was a statement of the doctrine of renunciation. In the course of it he made some remorselessly disparaging criticisms on the work that factories, engines and other inventions, and books were doing for man, compared with half a dozen words spoken by Buddha or Jesus. The lecture was evidently quite extemporaneous, and was delivered in a pleasing voice, free from any kind of hesitation.

The *Standard* concluded:

He worked out this pantheistic conception of the personal identity of man and God with great comprehensiveness and an ample wealth of illustration, and in passage after passage of great beauty, solemnity, and earnestness. "There is only one Soul in the Universe", he said:

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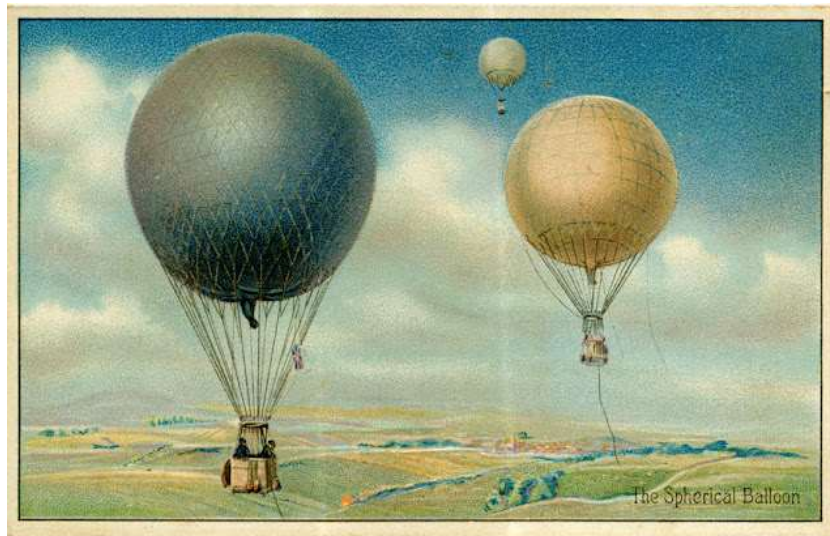


Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

It was late when Swamiji and his friends finally emerged from Princes' Hall. This Raphael Tuck postcard of Piccadilly Circus at night illustrates Victorian London that Swamiji passed through.

London, England 5 November 1895

Balloon Society



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On Tuesday evening, 5 November 1895, Swami Vivekananda addressed the Balloon Society on the topic of "Indian Philosophy and Western Life."

Balloon Society — Address on "Indian Philosophy and Western Life," by S. Vivekananda, 8.

Source: Morning Post 5 November 1895

The meeting was announced in *The Standard* and the *Morning Post* under the heading "Scientific and Learned Societies", where other groups such as the Royal Asiatic Society and the Royal Photographic Society placed their meeting announcements.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Balloon Society regularly met in The Gallery at Regent Street and Conduit Street. This Stengel postcard looks south from Liberty's East India House at 218 Regent Street toward Conduit Street on the right hand side.

December 1, 1895

At the weekly meeting of the Balloon Society, an address on "Man and Society in the Light of Vedanta" was given by Swami Vivekananda. The Swami who wore the red robe of his sect, spoke with great fluency and in perfect English for more than an hour without the help of a single note. He said that religion was the most wonderful factor in the social organism. If knowledge was the highest gain that science could give, what could be greater than the knowledge of God, of the soul, of man's own nature which was given by the study of religion? It was not only impossible that there should be one religion for the whole world, but it would be dangerous. If the whole of religious thought was at the same level, it would be the death of religious thought ; variety was its life. There were four types of religion—(1) the worker, (2) the emotional, (3) the mystical, and (4) the philosophical. Each man unfortunately became so wedded to his own type that he had no eyes to see what existed in the world. He struggled to make others of the same type. That religion would be perfect which gave scope to all the different characters. The Vedantic religion took in all, and each could choose in what his nature required. A discussion followed.

(News and Notes)

From the synopsis above, it sounds like Swamiji gave a very logical and well organized argument for the function of religion in the web of human society. It was a talk that gave a psychologically sound introduction to the philosophy of Vedanta. Sankari Prasad Basu transcribed this article originally printed in the 1 December 1895 *Indian Mirror*.



Source: TuckDB

T. J. Desai wrote that Henrietta Muller had invited him to come to Swamiji's lecture that night:

The next time I heard him was at the Balloon Society. He spoke there for some time but not with his former fire. A clergyman got up after the lecture and attacked the Swami, and said that it would have been better if the Swami had taken the trouble of writing out his lecture at home and of reading it there, etc. The Swami got up to reply, and he was now on his mettle. He made such a fiery speech that the clergyman was nowhere. He said that some people had crude notions that the Vedanta could be learnt in a few days. The Swami further said that he had to devote about twelve long years of his life to the study of the Vedanta. He replied to the objections of the clergyman categorically one by one, recited the sonorous Vedic

hymn beginning with "Supurnam" (TaittiriyaAranyaka, III. xi.1.) and ended with a triumphant peroration that still rings in my ears.

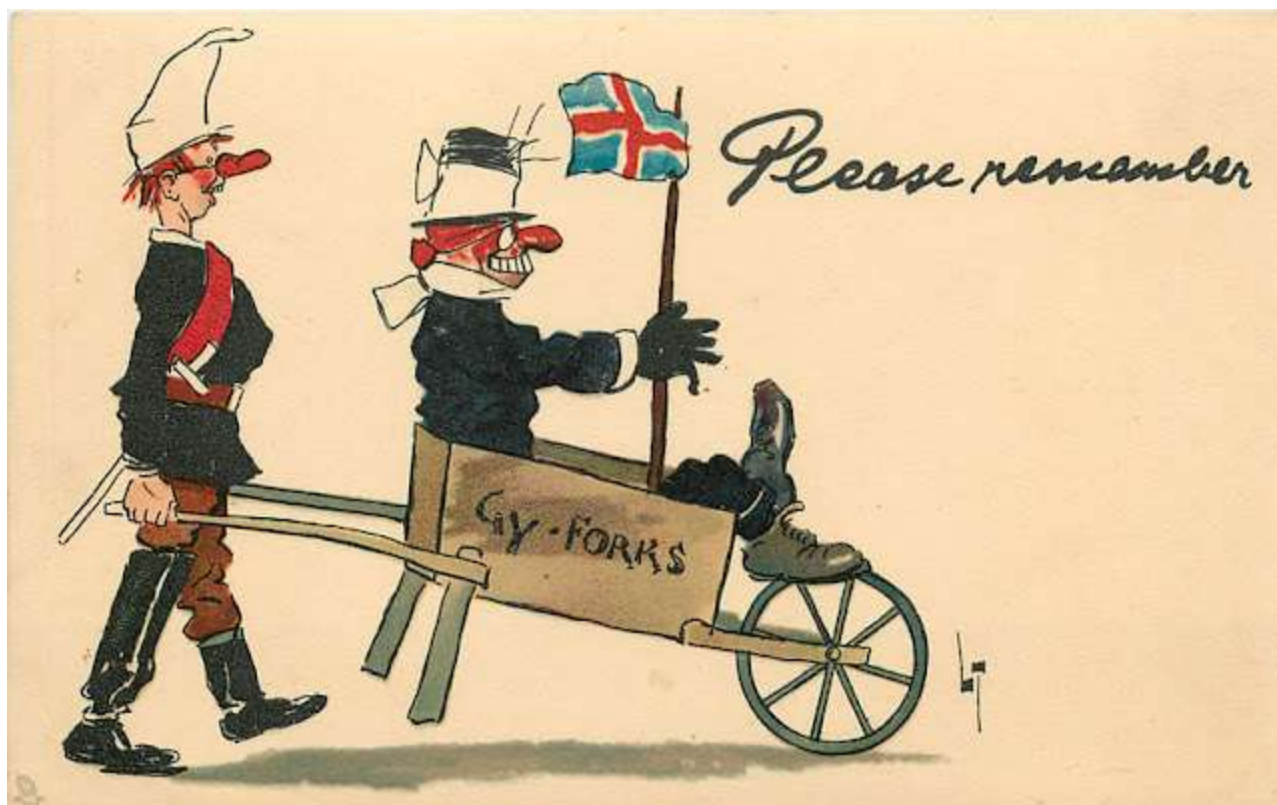
Desai's reminiscence raises the question, why would the science oriented Balloon Society have a hostile clergyman in their midst?



Source: TuckDB

The Balloon Society's mission was to promote interest in the future of aviation and other scientific fields, however, recently their focus had become narrower. They had had some meetings about the abatement of street noise. The Secretary, Charles Fox, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Standard* on 12 November criticizing the London County Council for doing nothing about "intolerable street noises, which

have a very prejudicial effect on the health of the inhabitants of London.” His primary objection was to barrel-organs, illustrated in the Raphael Tuck postcard of a poor organ grinder. He also objected to yelling newspaper boys and street preachers. Perhaps Fox's crusade had attracted some intolerant and cranky persons to the Society's meetings.



Source: TuckDB

That evening was the 290th anniversary of [Guy Fawkes](#)'s foiled plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament with gunpowder. Children would create dummies of Guy Fawkes and ask passers by for a penny in appreciation of their "Guy". No doubt Mr. Fox was irked by street urchins shouting, "Penny for the Guy, Gov!" and "Remember, remember the Fifth of November, Gunpowder, treason and plot!" In this comic Raphael Tuck postcard the boy cannot spell the name of his Guy properly.



Source: TuckDB

The weather was particularly bad that evening. Torrential rain impeded the traditional celebration with bonfires on Hampstead Heath. Bad weather gives a clue as to why Desai thought that Swamiji did not at first speak "with his former fire," i.e., he did not speak with the rousing oratory that he used at Prince's Hall on 22 October. Due to the weather, the audience was probably small. Statements in his letters suggest that Swamiji had been teaching daily classes for the past two weeks in Chelsea. Some of his earnest students may have braved the rain and come to the Balloon Society that evening. In this more intimate setting with fewer people and some familiar faces, Swamiji may have been speaking in "teaching mode" rather than "peroration mode." As it happened, circumstances demanded preaching more than teaching, and Swamiji rose to the challenge.

I hope that one of Swamiji's friends gave him cab fare back to Oakley Street in Chelsea. The view in this Raphael Tuck postcard looks north on Regent Street towards All Souls Church and Queens Hall.

Chelsea, London, England 16 November 1895

Abode of artists



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

During the latter part of October, Swami Vivekananda arranged to rent a flat at 80 Oakley Street for the month of November. The view in this Charles Martin postcard looks north from the Thames end of Oakley Street. No. 80 was located on the west side of the street. The house was only two windows wide. In the postcard, a narrow house painted white appears like a vertical stripe on the left hand side. This was the approximate location of No. 80. The section of Oakley Street where Swamiji stayed has been replaced with modern flats.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

This ca. 1910 Sidders Series real photo postcard of Oakley Street includes the former Pier Hotel on the western corner. At the end of Oakley Street there is a wide, curved intersection with Cheyne Walk and Chelsea Embankment before crossing the Thames at Albert Bridge.



Source: NLS

Chelsea Embankment on the northern bank of the Thames was opened in 1874. It was the hardscaping over a massive sewer project that took West London's waste water far downstream. A slender park separated the Embankment from Cheyne Walk, a residential street historically inhabited by artists, writers, musicians and notables.

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AN INDIAN YOGI IN LONDON.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—As Chairman, on the occasion of the Swâmi Vivekânanda's recent oration at Prince's Hall, of which you gave so full and lucid a synopsis, may I be permitted to make one short statement, for the convenience and assistance of your readers who may desire to hear more of the Vedânta Philosophy from this learned Oriental?

I merely desire it to be known that the Swâmi may be communicated with, either by letter or personally, by anybody whomsoever, at 89, Oakley-street, S.W. and that, his work being wholly in the interest of Truth and for Love, no fees, costs, or collections of any kind whatever fall upon those who attend his classes or meet him privately.

No Society is being formed, nor is such meditated nor does any inquirer commit himself to any doctrine whatsoever.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
E. T. STURDY.

High View, Caversham, Reading, October 23.

Source: Standard 26 October 1895

On 22 October Swamiji gave a rather brilliant lecture at Prince's Hall in Piccadilly that garnered excellent reviews—see my [previous post](#). His London debut had been a success, but it needed to be followed up by making additional contacts with persons interested in the Vedanta philosophy. Swamiji was making many new friends and he needed a place of his own to teach classes as he had done in New York City the previous year. His host in Caversham, E.T. Sturdy, rented the flat for him and

publicized its address to direct enquires to Swamiji himself.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji may have been spending some time in Chelsea even before his Piccadilly lecture. Cheyne Court is a large, upscale apartment complex in Chelsea at the eastern end of Cheyne Walk. Cheyne Court fits into a wedge-shaped block bounded on the west by Flood Street, and the south by Royal Hospital Road. In a letter to Josephine MacLeod dated 31 October, Swamiji mentioned that he had been giving some classes at Mr. Chamier's. Asim Chaudhuri published the information that Daniel and Lena Chamier lived at 50 Cheyne Court. Swamiji wrote:

Two American ladies, mother and daughter, living in London came in to the class last night — Mrs. and Miss Netter. They were very sympathetic of course. The class there at Mr. Chamier's is finished. I shall begin at my lodgings from Saturday night next. I expect to have a pretty good-sized room or two for my classes.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This animated Charles Martin postcard looks south on Flood Street from Rossetti Studios to Cheyne Court, marked by the onion-domed turret on the left.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This real photo postcard zooms in on the Flood Street side of Cheyne Court. Years later, in 1899, when Swamiji's ship was quarantined in Madras harbor, he caught a glimpse of Daniel Chamier waving to him from a boat filled with other welcoming supporters.

SURYA GITA :
OR
THE SONG OF THE SON
BY
LENA M. CHAMIER.

Price per copy excluding postage :
Thick paper Edition—Two Rupees.

Thin paper Edition—One Rupee. Eight Annas.

NO. 1 SRI RAMA GITA (forming part of "Tattvasarayana" the occult philosophy taught by the great sage Śri Vasishtha), the Samskrita text in Devanagari characters with an appendix containing the table of contents and the teachings in brief of the three Kandas of Tattvasarayana, price One Rupee, Twelve annas, postage extra.

NO. 2. The English translation of NO. 1, with an appendix containing the teachings in brief of the Tattvasarayana, price Two Rupees, postage extra.

Source: *Brahmavadin* October 1904

Lena [Helena] Marie Chamier (née Neville) was born in India in 1866. She had an interest in Sanskrit scholarship and translated the *Surya Gita* or *Song of the Sun* into English. It may have been published in 1904 as three advertisements for the book appeared in the *Brahmavadin* that year.

*

The *Brahmavadin*, a new fortnightly paper, has just been published in Madras, "under the advice and with the encouragement of the Swami Vivekananda."

Source: *The Colonies and India* 16 November 1895

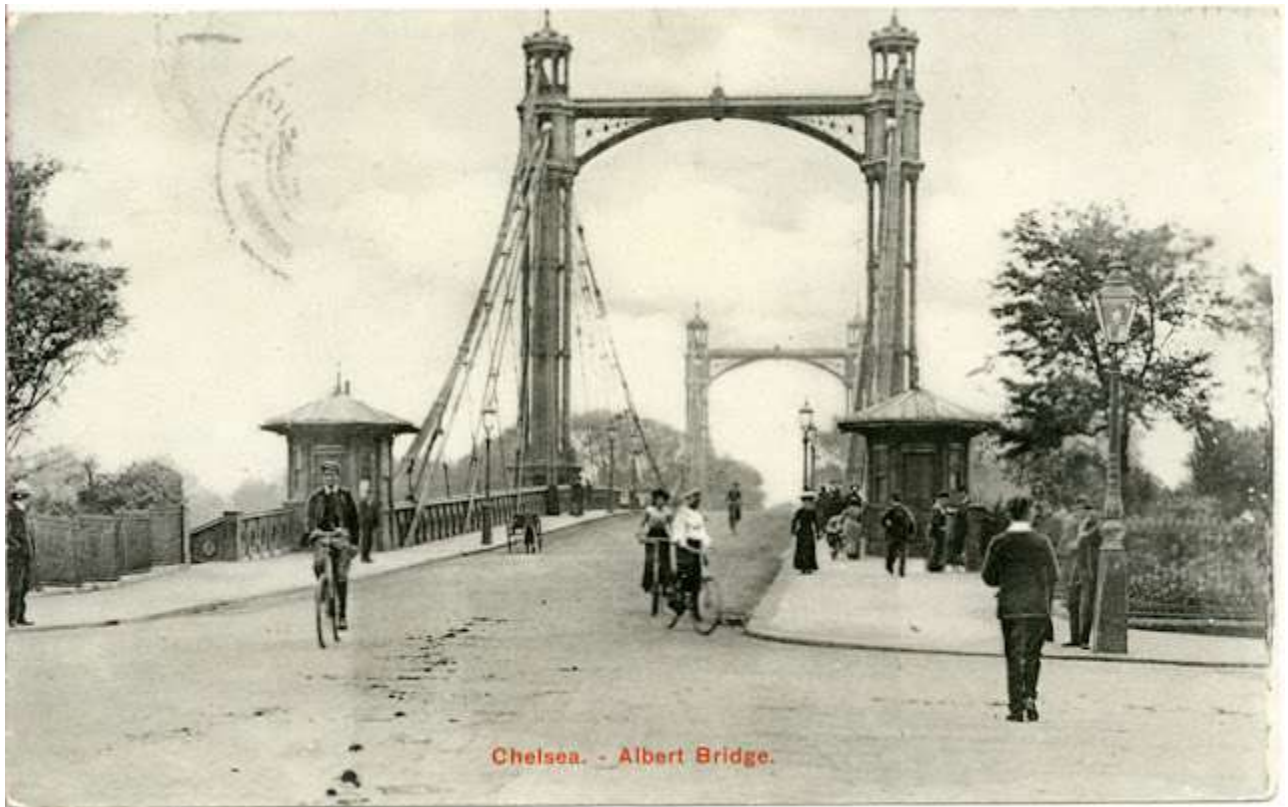
The 16 November 1895 issue of *India and the Colonies*—not a periodical friendly to Swamiji—printed the announcement above. A fortnight earlier, on 24 October, 1895 Swamiji had written to Alasinga Perumal in Madras:

. . . I have already delivered my first address, and you may see how well it has been received by the notice in the Standard. The Standard is one of the most influential conservative papers. I am going to be in London for a month, then I go off to America and shall come back again next summer. So far you see the seed is well sown in England. . . .



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji lived very close to the Thames, and it is natural to assume that he took frequent walks along Chelsea Embankment.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Albert Bridge crossed the Thames at the foot of Oakley Street. In addition to this Charles Martin postcard, period real photo postcards of the bridge can be viewed at [Postcards Then and Now](#). It acquired the nickname of "The Trembling Lady" because of its tendency to vibrate, particularly when used by troops from the nearby Chelsea Barracks.



Source: TuckDB

Swamiji must have walked across the Albert Bridge and along the Chelsea Embankment many times, contemplating the river's relentless journey to the ocean. He wrote to Isabelle McKindley on 24 October, two days after his lecture at Prince's Hall:

Sometimes—and generally when I score a success— I feel a despondence; I feel as if everything is vain— as if this life has no meaning, as if it is a waking dream. Love, friendship, religion, virtue, kindness— everything, a momentary state of mind. I seem to long to go; in spite of myself I say, how far— O how far! Yet the body-and-mind will have to work its Karma out. I hope it will not be bad.

Swamiji's "despondence" was not so much brooding as it was indicative of his sensitive intelligence. Ever buoyant, he quoted this Bengali saying, translating it poetically. It sounds as if Tennyson wrote it:

My bed is in the foaming deep
What care I, friend, the dew!

Asim Chaudhuri gives a literal translation of "*samudreyshayan jar, sisirekibhoy tar*" as "once one has made his bed at sea he should not be afraid of dewdrops." And Swamiji, always compassionate, must have gazed with penetrating mercy at the homeless of London, such as the sleeping waif in this Raphael Tuck postcard.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

While Swamiji was at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago he made a friend in the unconventional and musical C of E clergyman, [Rev. Hugh Reginald Haweis](#). Haweis and his wife, Mary, lived just around the corner from Oakley Street at No. 16 Cheyne Walk. It was a famous residence. The Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter [Dante Gabriel Rossetti](#) had lived at No. 16 for twenty years until his death in 1882. For some interior views of the home as Rossetti lived in it, visit this link, [Exploring Rossetti's Home](#).

Cheyne Walk and its Embankment Gardens are divided into two sections, bisected by Oakley Street. Haweis lived in the eastern section. This colorized [Edward Gordon Smith](#) postcard view looks toward No. 16.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

A similar colorized postcard view looks east on Cheyne Walk and the lack of vehicle traffic on the A3212 is enviable.



MRS. HAWEIS.

Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Mary Eliza Haweis was an artist in her own right. She wrote and illustrated several books, including *Chaucer for Children*, *A Golden Key* published in 1877. The Pre-Raphaelite style begun by Rossetti and its fascination with Medievalism definitely influenced her.



Source: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Eliza_Haweis)

Haweis was adept at illustrating historic costumes and architectural interiors, and possessed considerable scholarship in these areas. In *Chaucer for Children* she set the stage for Chaucer's stories by bringing to life the manners and customs of his day. Her illustration above shows a dinner for a well-to-do family, one that Chaucer himself might have partaken of.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This postcard view taken from the far eastern end of Cheyne Walk looks west toward No. 16. Swamiji gave a talk at one of Mary's "At homes" on 16 November. The article, "An Universal Religion" appeared in *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper* 23 November 1895. This was a society paper, telling what everyone wore and next to nothing about what was said:

Mrs. Haweis's first autumn At home took place last Saturday at Queen's House, when the Indian Yogi, or ascetic, Swami Vive Kananda (Buddhist [sic] delegate at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893) discussed in a liberal spirit, and not without humour, the chances and the charms of an universal religion. He showed that the underlying principles of all the great religions of the world resembled one another, and amongst the great prophets he placed the Christian Redeemer very high, implying, however, that His teaching was little borne out sometimes by His professed followers. There was no radical impossibility of reconciliation between sects, now biting and devouring each other from the best motives, if charity and sympathy were carried into the kiosque, the temple, and the church. Canon Basil

Wilberforce and the Rev. H. R. Haweis both made interesting speeches in reply to the Swami. . . . The guests numbered 150.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Mary Haweis promoted the name of [Queen's House](#) for No. 16, as it supposedly had been owned by Catherine of Braganza, the wife of Charles II. It was built in 1717, but the wrought iron initials RC on the original gate stood for Richard Chapman and not Regina Catherine. A plan and detailed description of the house are at [British History Online](#). Haweis no doubt kept the house tastefully furnished with art and curiosities.



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Mary had a statue of [Hermes/Mercury the messenger](#) placed atop No. 16. It was over six feet tall.



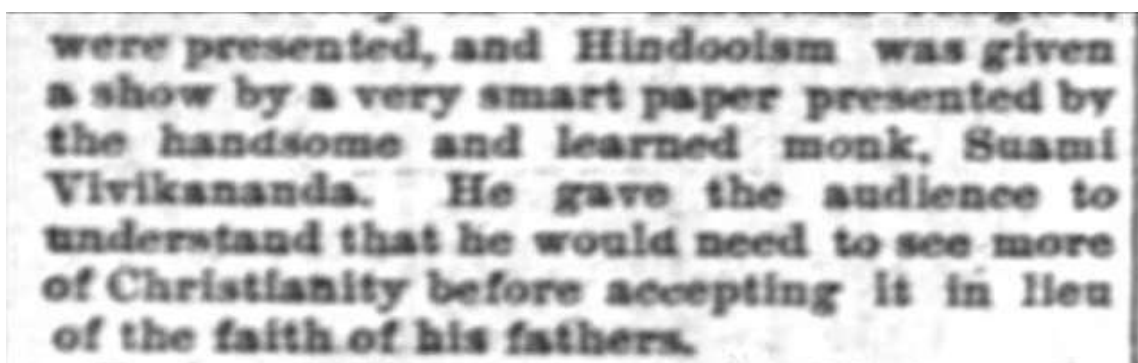
Source: Chicago InterOcean 20 September 1893

The drawing above of Rev. Haweis at the Parliament of Religions shows him sans whiskers, which he had recently shaved to “keep up with the times.” Swamiji was sure to have listened to him on 20 September as his talk was preceded by a paper by Max Muller. The *Inter-Ocean* had this to say about Haweis:

But the paper that gave most variety to the session, and evidently most pleasure to the audience, was that by Rev. H. R. Haweis, the well-known cosmopolitan clergyman of the Church of England, whose contributions to current literature have made him well and widely known. Mr. Haweis is a crank on the question of music, and a delightful crank at that. His subject was “Music, Emotion and Morals,” and instead of reading a paper he gave a charming offhand talk . . . In London Mr. Haweis is one of the few public characters whose acquaintance every visitor desires to make. He is a little man with a big head, and an original way of saying things. . . He is not by any means a conventional churchman. . . . He has a bit of halt in his walk,

and he carries a fancy ebony gold-headed cane. This he brought with him and he used with dramatic effect while he spoke. Occasionally, when he wanted greater freedom of gesture, he laid it down upon the desk. Then he would take it up again, strut along the rostrum cane in hand like a soldier, and to round a point, flourish it after the fashion of a drum-major.

Hopefully Haweis listened to Swamiji's paper which he read that afternoon:



were presented, and Hindooism was given a show by a very smart paper presented by the handsome and learned monk, Suami Vivikananda. He gave the audience to understand that he would need to see more of Christianity before accepting it in lieu of the faith of his fathers.

Source: Chicago InterOcean 20 September 1893

Three years later, J.J. Goodwin, who had been residing with Swamiji in London, wrote to the *Brahmavadin*:

“I wish those in India and elsewhere who are so eagerly following the Swami's movements could have heard the eloquent and generous tribute paid to him by this other worker [Haweis] in God's vineyard. The Rev. gentleman spoke of the Swami's teachings from the point of view of the support they give to Christ's teachings, and what better evidence could I give that the “Ideal of a Universal Religion” is not falling on barren ground?”



Source: The Building News 17 October 1879

Rev. H.R. Haweis was Curate of St James Chapel, Marylebone. George Gilbert Scott was the architect of this Italian Baroque church, built in 1774 by the Duke of Portland. Haweis made it a very popular place for highbrow people to assemble. He installed three stained glass windows by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. He even had secure parking for bicycles—trendy transportation then. It seems odd that such a well-known church could stand for almost 140 years in populous London, and yet this architect's drawing of its original facade is the only visual record available of it.



Source: NLS

St James Chapel was located on Westmoreland Street at the end of Great Chesterfield Street. The church has been replaced by University College Hospital and Great Chesterfield Street is now called Wheatley Street.



Source: Wikipedia

Around 1913 St James Chapel was razed and the London Heart Hospital was built on its site. Rev. Haweis gave two sermons about his acquaintance with Vivekananda and what he had learned from his teachings on this spot on 21 June 1896.

Finsbury, London, England 10 November 1895

An unconventional pulpit



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On the first of November Swami Vivekananda met Josephine MacLeod and Stanton Coit for lunch at the Albemarle Hotel. In the postcard above, which looks toward Piccadilly Circus, the Albemarle is on the far left at the corner of Albemarle Street and Piccadilly. St. James Street commences on the opposite side of Piccadilly. Jo MacLeod maintained a wide circle of intellectual friends. In this case she had probably offered to host the lunch because, I assume, Swamiji and Coit had become wrapped in conversation on an earlier occasion, probably after Swamiji's lecture at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly—see my [previous post](#).



Robert Friedus at [Victorian Web](#)

Albemarle House was built in 1887-88 by H. A. Peto and Sir E. George. It is faced with pink stone, decorated with portrait medallions, and features stacked bay windows on its Piccadilly side. It was a popular meeting place in Mayfair. In Volume 3 of *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries*, M. L. Burke confused the location of the Albemarle with St. James Hall.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

[Stanton George Coit](#) was a follower of [Felix Adler](#), whom Swamiji had met the previous year in Plymouth, MA at the Free Religious Association conference—see my [previous post](#). In London, Coit had succeeded Moncure Conway as leader of the South Place Ethical Society. Coit held that position for five years, but then he broke away and established the London Ethical Society. Conway, who had been semi-retired, resumed his pastorship of South Place.



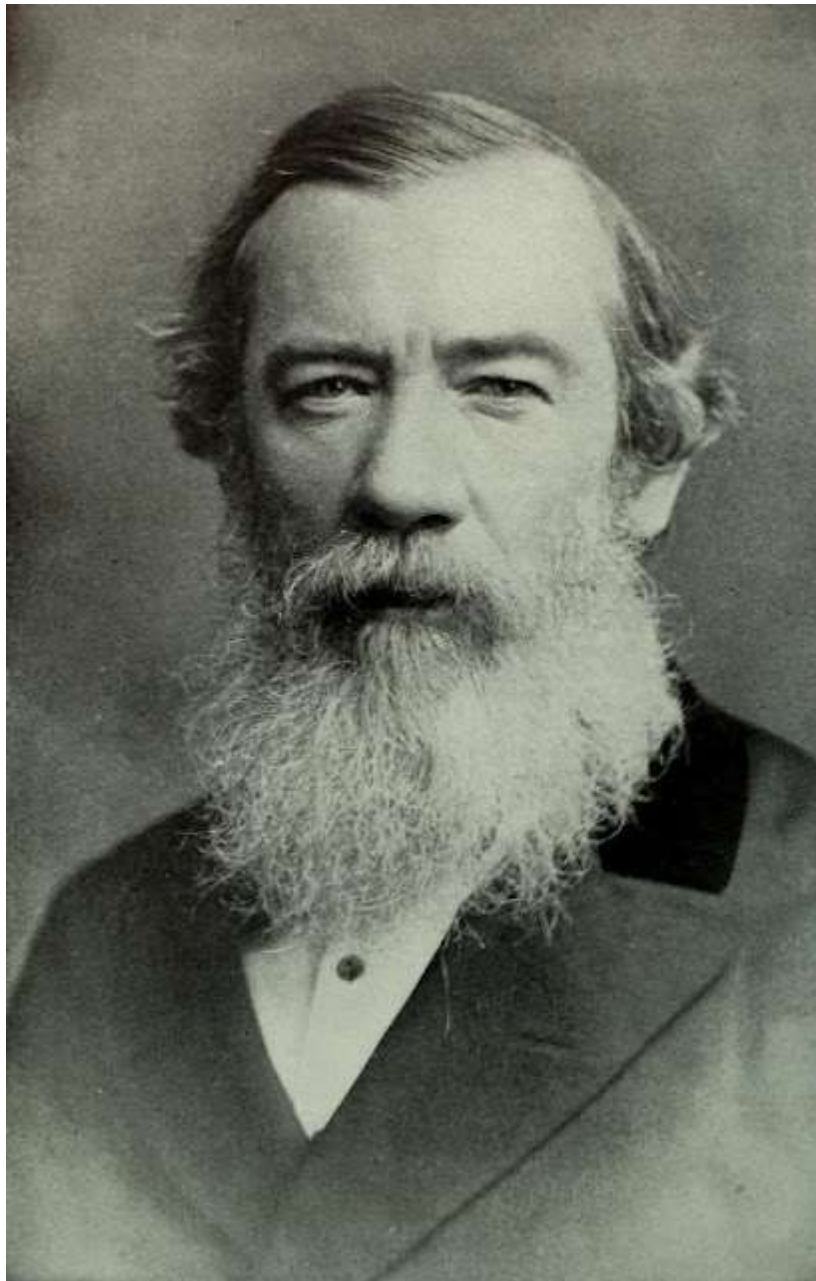
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This 1900 postcard view of Piccadilly at the intersection with Stratton Street shows the building on the right that existed before the Ritz Hotel was built in 1905.

One result of Swamiji's lecture at Prince's Hall was an invitation to speak at [South Place Chapel](#) on 10 November. Swamiji wrote a letter to E.T. Sturdy at 5 p.m. on 31 October mentioning that there had already been an exchange of letters on this topic:

The Ethical Society has sent me another letter thanking me for the acceptance of this offer. Also a copy of their forms. They want me to bring with me a book from which to read for ten minutes. Will you bring the Gita (translation) and the Buddhist Jâtaka (translation) with you?

It is not known if it was Coit or Conway who invited Swamiji to speak at South Place. Coit was scheduled to speak to the West London Ethical Society at Prince's Hall on 26 October, which increases the probability that he met Swamiji there. No doubt he retained relationships with South Place that enabled him to recommend or arrange for guest speakers.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

In *New Discoveries* Burke wrote a brief history of the South Place Society and a charming bio of [Moncure Daniel Conway](#). A Virginian and a Methodist, Conway began his career as a God-fearing itinerant preacher. As Burke put it: "He went on to spend two years at Harvard Theological School, to become a Unitarian, to meet Ralph Waldo Emerson, and through him, to enter the roofless thought-world of the Bhagavad Gita and other books of Eastern wisdom. As a Christian minister he was, one might say, done for." Conway came to London in 1863 with a diplomatically ill-considered scheme to end the Civil War—and found he could not return to the U.S.. South Place Religious Society had been founded by William Johnson Fox in 1817, and its Chapel was built in 1824. After Fox's tenure, leadership of the Society was "becalmed." Burke wrote, "Not until South Place and Moncure Conway discovered

one another in 1864 did this Freethought vessel once again sail out into a boundless and uncharted sea." Conway led the South Place congregation until 1885, and then again from 1892 to 1897. In November 1895 Conway was busy preparing for his exhibition of Thomas Paine memorabilia opening at South Place on 2 December.

Wikipedia pointed out that Conway had the distinction of being the only descendant of a signer of the Declaration of Independence who actively led a group of slaves to freedom.

Burke speculated that Conway was present when Swamiji addressed the South Place congregation. The review in the *Standard* of Swamiji's lecture at Prince's Hall had opened with: "Since the days of Ramahoun Roy, says the Standard, with the single exception of KeshubChunder Sen, there has not appeared on an English platform a more interesting Indian figure than the Brahman who lectured in Princes' Hall last night." Keshub had lectured at South Place Chapel, as had PratapMazumdar. Therefore, it seems that Conway would definitely have been keen to hear Swamiji speak, and of course he would have approved the agreement Swamiji signed before speaking at South Place. However, there is as yet no published record of them meeting in November 1895.

In [Conway's memoir](#), he clearly recalled hearing Swami Abhedananda speak at Max Muller's memorial service held at Columbia University. If listening to Abhedananda was an "especially impressive" experience for Conway—in the context of recalling everyone he had met who held Max Muller in high regard—then it is unclear to me why he forgot to mention Vivekananda. Almost everyone who met Swamiji remarked that he left a vivid impression in their memory. According to an article in the *Daily Chronicle* 20 July 1896, Conway was present when Swamiji presided over a meeting of the Hindu Association. So at some point they definitely did meet in London.



Source: [NLS](#)

South Place Chapel was located on the northern edge of [Finsbury Circus](#) discernible as a dark square on this 1893 map.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Liverpool Street Station is just east of Finsbury Circus. It was the terminus for the Great Eastern Railway boat train from Harwich. Swamiji would pass through this station in September 1896 after his Channel crossing from Hoek van Holland.



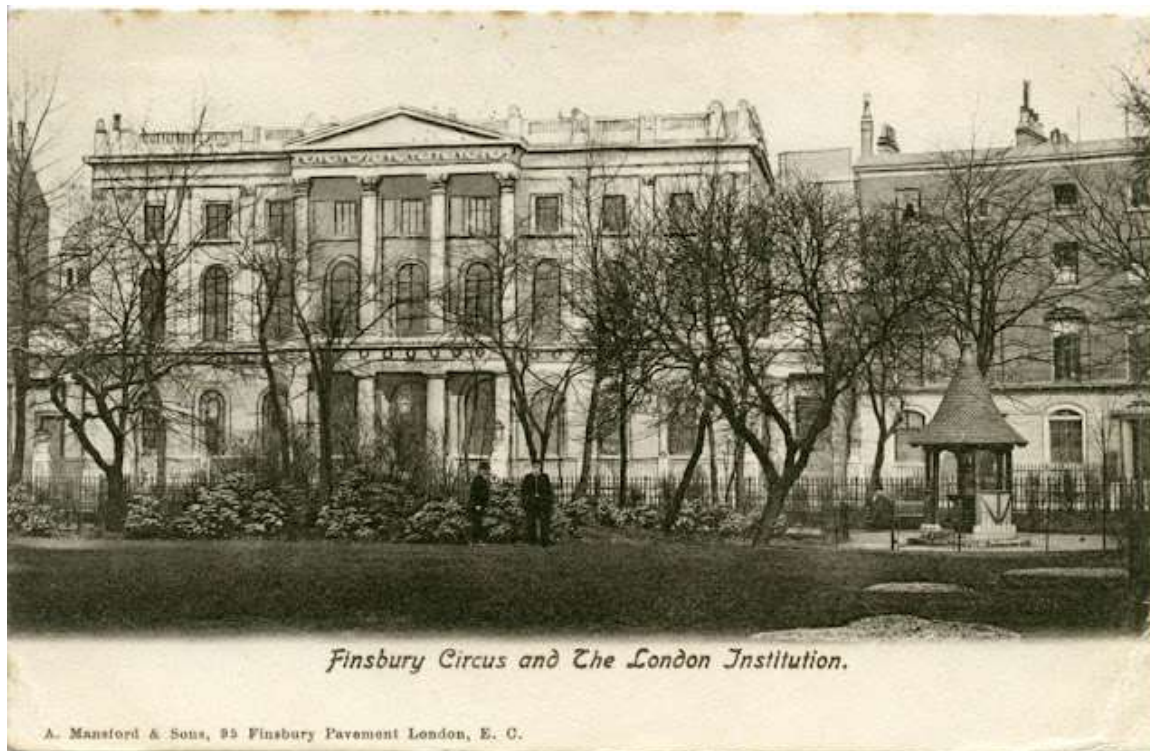
Source: [TuckDB](#)

Moorgate Station is just west of Finsbury Circus. E. T. Sturdy intended to attend Swamiji's talk at South Place Chapel. In fact, Swamiji asked him to bring two books of sacred text to read from for that part of service known as the "lesson." I haven't researched the timetables, but it seems possible that Swamiji may have taken the underground [Metropolitan Railway](#) from South Kensington to meet Sturdy at Paddington Station and together they travelled to Moorgate Station in time for the 11:15 service at South Place Chapel.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

South Place Chapel, shown in this 1905 postcard, had been built in 1824. South Place Chapel, Finsbury Circus and the London Institution were all developed about the same time from the 1527 Finsbury Manor.



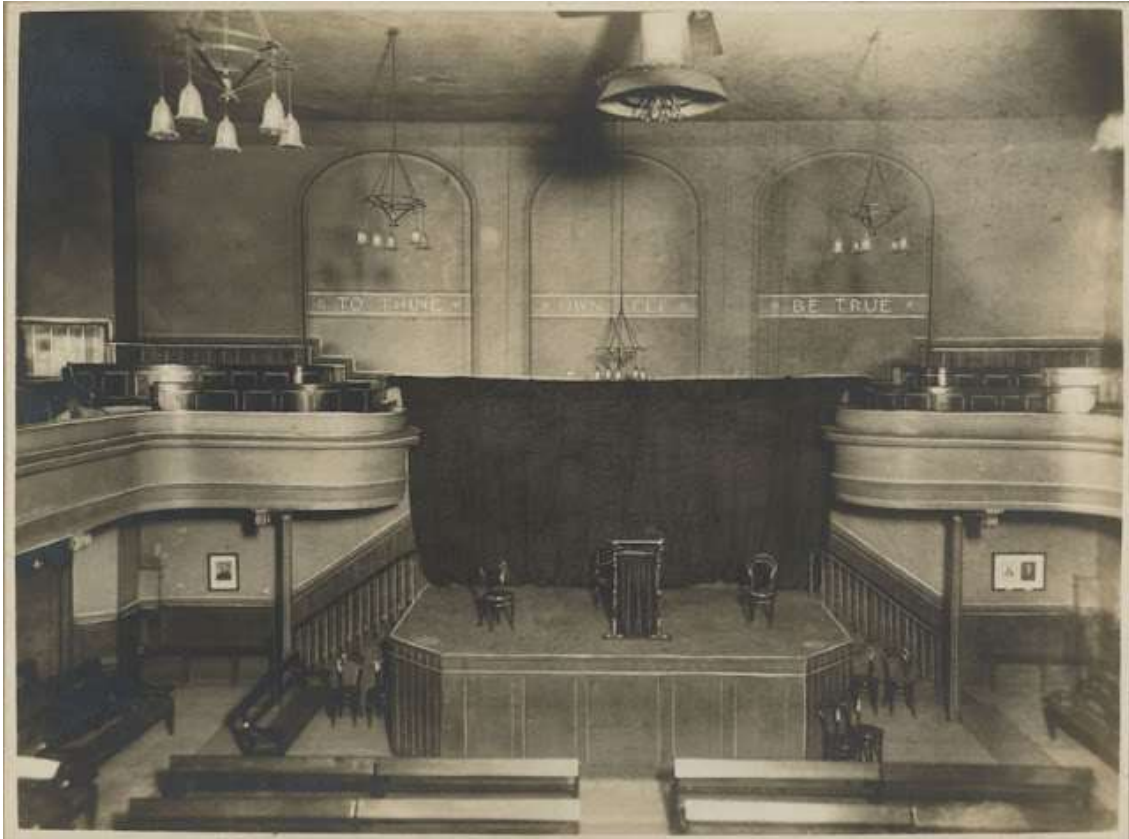
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

[London Institution](#) was the property adjoining South Place Chapel. It is not known if someone pointed it out to Swamiji, but he might have appreciated that it was founded in 1815 to make scientific education accessible to people who held non-conformist religious beliefs. At that time, persons who dissented from the state Church of England were barred from attending Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The London Institution closed in 1912 and four years later the School of Oriental Studies was created there.

South-place Institute, Finsbury:—Mr. H. Rawlings, "A South African Village," illustrated, 4; The Swami Vivekananda, "Vedanta Morality," 11.15.
 Sunday Lecture Society, St. George's Hall, Langham-place:—Prince Krapotkin, "Man and the Land," illustrated, 4.
 Lewisham L.R. Club, 170, High-street, 8.
 London Ethical Society:—Westminster Town Hall: Dr. S. Coit, "Historic Lies," 11.15.
 Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road: Dr. Stanton Coit, "Huxley's Soul," 7.

Source: Lloyds Weekly News 10 November 1895

As Burke reported, and confirmed here by *Lloyds Weekly News*, Coit did not hear Swamiji speak because he was speaking that morning to his own Society which met at Westminster Town Hall. Notice of Swamiji's talk also appeared in *The Times*.



Source: [Conway Hall Collections](#)

Here is the podium of South Place Chapel where Swamiji stood to give his lecture. The *Christian Commonwealth*—which did not speak on behalf of the South Place Ethical Society—gave a brief but rather snooty report of the "South Place Chapel Lecture" on Thursday, 14 November 1895. Every micro culture has its own tone of commentary. In America Swamiji had experienced the gamut from hostility to curiosity to fad-of-the-day adulation. In England his reception in the press was generally more even-handed, but sometimes the British were especially good at being patronizing. On the whole, Swamiji felt huge relief from racial prejudice in England, and he wrote to MacLeod's sister, Betty Leggett:

The Englishmen here are very friendly. Except a few Anglo-Indians, they do not hate black men at all. Not even do they hoot at me in the streets. Sometimes I wonder

whether my face has turned white, but the mirror tells the truth. Yet they are all so friendly here.

And yet the writer for the *Christian Commonwealth* managed to twist the knife a little by using a “lady observer” to pin the adjective “swarthy” on Swamiji because his dark skin was “admirably suited” to his exotic ochre colored garment. Note that Swamiji did not wear his usual turban to speak at South Place. That may have been Sturdy’s wish, but it also seems like a democratic nod of recognition to his audience.

Attired in a terracotta colored cassock-like garment—which a lady observer was quick to point out, admirably suited his swarthy complexion—his face clean-shaven, his rotund head covered with an amplitude of black hair, his eye large and lustrous—the clever exponent of Hinduism has a picturesque and prepossessing appearance. Observing his calm and easy bearing, his perfect command of English, his unbounded confidence in the finality of his statements, one can understand the stir he made at the Parliament of Religions. His manner and tone seem to imply: —“You have heard many doctrines and theories propounded: now listen to me; I have probed to the root of things; I can speak the final word: here it is.”

The writer for the *Christian Commonwealth* probably did not intend to praise Swamiji, but there is a compelling accuracy in the observation of Swamiji’s “unbounded confidence” and his implicit affirmation that he had “probed to the root of things.” According to the Upanishads and the Yoga sutras, he had done exactly that.

The Swami explained that in the system of morality which he was expounding actions were not inspired by any hope of reward, here or hereafter, nor by any fear of punishment in this world or in the beyond: “We must work simply from the impetus within, work for work’s sake, duty for duty’s sake.” This idea of morality is claimed to be superior to the religion of Jesus, and so has beguiled some so-called Christians into Buddhism or other Eastern philosophies. But the essence of true Christianity is that, if your actions are inspired by the heavenly kingdom within you, Paradise will be the result, whereas, if you act in harmony with the devil’s kingdom without you will land in Perdition. The genuine Christian does not, as the Swami seemed to suggest, act for the purpose of evading punishments, but at the same time he sees the ultimate consequences of all actions. . .

The reporter again felt obliged to correct what Swamiji “seemed to suggest” in defense of the “genuine Christian,” but it is likely that Swamiji was speaking in more general terms about human nature. Swamiji was quite adept at discerning motives and spiritual character, and he had high respect for “genuine” Christians.



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

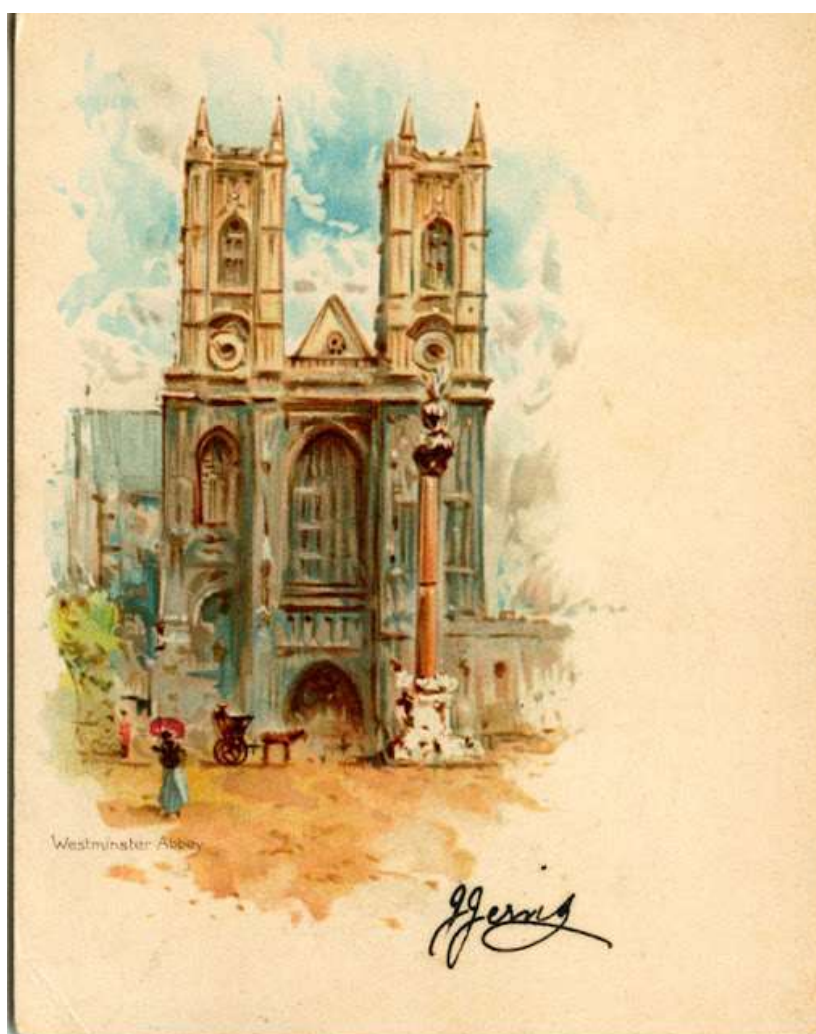
Here is the meeting hall of South Place Chapel as Swamiji saw it. The auditorium and balcony seated about 1000. The *Christian Commonwealth* made some comments about the Society as a whole, sniffing that a mere "semblance" of Christian liturgy survived there:

At South Place Chapel the semblance of Christian worship is preserved, except that public prayer is omitted: why, it is not easy to understand. It is curious to hear selections from Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson, Lowell, George Eliot, and others sung to tunes usually associated with Evangelical hymns. The hymn-singing, however, is left almost entirely to the professional quartette, who also render two anthems at each service. The first and second lessons were read by Vivekananda. They were selections from the Vedas and formed the text of his address.

The reporter's comment that the lyrics of modern poets were being sung to "Evangelistic" music is curious. The Church of England did not officially approve of hymn singing until 1820, but the golden age of English hymn composition was concentrated in the first half of the eighteenth century, and it was associated with the growth of nonconformist sects of Protestantism—particularly the Methodist movement.

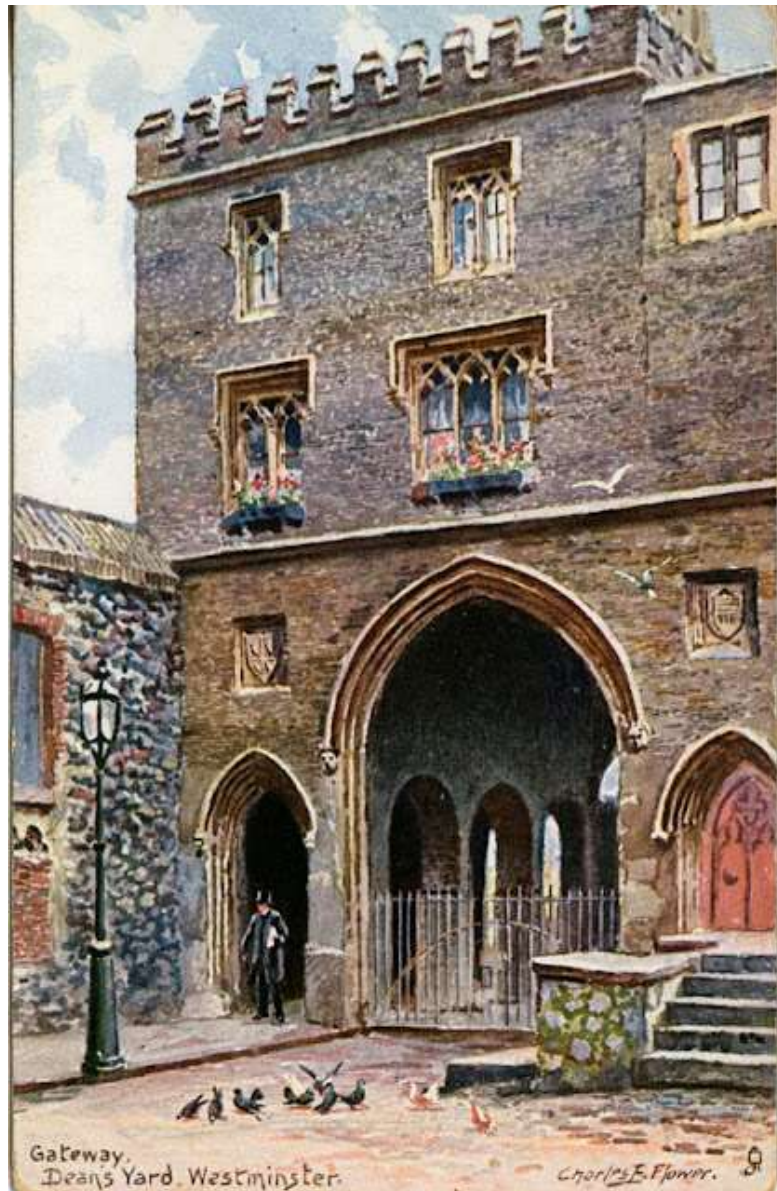
Westminster, London, England 17-25 November 1895

Westminster Abbey



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda visited the grounds of Westminster Abbey during the last two weeks of November 1895. This postcard is known as a court card because of its size. Court cards were mainly produced in England from about 1894 to 1902. Court cards were approximately 4.75 x 3.5 inches and they predated the traditional vintage postcard size of 5.5 x 3.5 inches. New, or Continental size, postcards are generally 4 x 6 inches.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

There was a particular reason why Swamiji would have gone to Westminster Abbey. On 16 November Swamiji met [Canon Basil Wilberforce](#) at the Chelsea residence of Rev. Hugh Reginald Haweis on the special occasion of an “At home” arranged by his wife, Mary. The event was reported in *The Queen*, *The Lady's Newspaper* November 23, 1895. See my [previous post](#).

This Raphael Tuck postcard shows a watercolor of the interior of the gateway to Dean's Yard by Charles Flower. He painted many London landmarks from Swamiji's era. For a photograph of the artist and more of his work, see [HistoryLondon](#).



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji had given a short talk on universal religion at the Haweis's "At home" to which 150 well-dressed guests were invited. After Swamiji spoke, Reverend Haweis and Canon Wilberforce gave their responses to the assembly. Basil's wife, Charlotte, was no doubt among the guests. Swamiji was soon invited to a similar event held in his honor at the Wilberforce residence.

Canon Wilberforce lived in a church owned building facing Dean's Yard, shown in the postcard above. His front door is visible directly above the word "Yard" in the caption.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Albert Basil Orme Wilberforce came from a family long distinguished in politics and the church. He was the grandson of William Wilberforce, the leader of the movement that stopped the slave trade in Britain by fighting to pass the [Slave Trade Act of 1807](#) .

Basil's mother died a month after he was born and he was raised by his grandmother in Cuddesdon near Oxford until he was sent to Eton. He graduated from Exeter College, Oxford in 1860. After his father died suddenly in 1875, Basil went to India. "This led to his acquiring an interest in Eastern philosophy which never left him, and which incalculably enriched his spiritual outlook." Shortly after this, around 1884, he was highly influenced by a book by John W. Farquhar, *The Gospel of divine*

humanity: a reconsideration of christian doctrine in the light of a central principle. He made another visit to India as part of a temperance and anti-opium crusade, before his appointment as Canon at Westminster Abbey, in April 1894. He had the responsibility of preaching from two pulpits, since he was also Rector of St. John's, Smith Square.

In January 1896 Basil was appointed [Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons](#). It was an appointment that was deemed "universally gratifying both to the members of the House of Commons and the public at large." At the same time, his elder brother, Ernest, was Bishop of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Basil became [Archdeacon of Westminster](#) in 1900.

According to a memorial volume, [Archdeacon Wilberforce, his ideals and teaching](#), "in religion he was largely a law unto himself . . . In fact there was to him but one truth in the Universe. "God is all, and all is God, and God is Love."



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

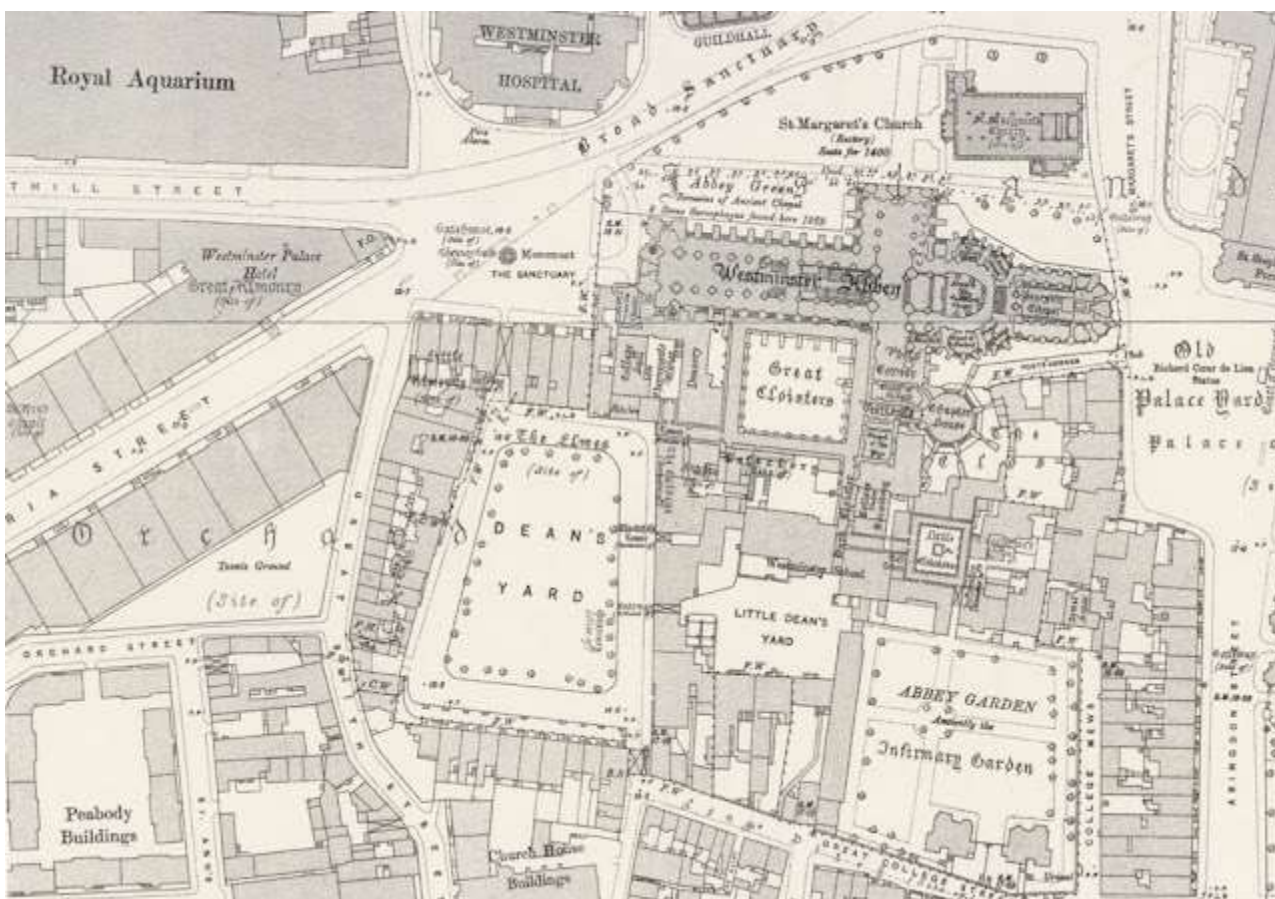
The *Indian Mirror* 18 January 1896 reported: At [Canon Wilberforce's] residence there was a levee in honor of the Swami, to which some of the distinguished ladies and gentlemen of London were invited."

Swamiji left England on 27 November 1895, so the news of this event was a little slow in arriving in India. Canon Wilberforce lived at 20 Dean's Yard next to Westminster School. The building is now the Chapter Office entered through the white door in the postcard above.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

To go from his residence into the Abbey, Canon Wilberforce would have walked across Dean's Courtyard shown in this postcard.



Source: NLS

This 1893 map shows the Abbey compound including Dean's Yard. During 1894, Church House, the present headquarters of the Church of England, was under construction on the south side of Dean's Yard.



Source: TuckDB

It would not have taken Canon Wilberforce long to realize that Swamiji was a sincere lover of God—and of history, and so I have to imagine that he may have given Swamiji a tour of the Abbey, as part of establishing their friendship. Swamiji wrote to Prof. John Henry Wright, his dear friend at Harvard, indicating that his relationship with Wilberforce was very cordial, and the Canon seems to have assured him that he was already preaching “in substance the Vedanta philosophy in the Church.” Wilberforce complimented Swamiji for his philosophic teaching, calling him a “missionary to the Church of England.”

To be sure which monuments Swamiji might have seen that were installed when he was there, I turned to Baedeker's Guide of 1894:

Westminster Abbey, with its royal burial-vaults and long series of monuments to celebrated men, is not unreasonably regarded by the English as their national Walhalla, or Temple of Fame; and internment within its walls is considered the last

and greatest honor which the nation can bestow on the most deserving of her offspring.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Raphael Tuck issued several series of postcards of Westminster Abbey, all the better to illustrate the imaginary ramble that Swamiji and Wilberforce may have taken through the great church. Here is another Charles Flower painting of the choir stalls looking toward the presbytery. At the end of the choir, said Baedeker, was the half recumbent figure of Sir Isaac Newton reposing upon his black sarcophagus accompanied by an allegorical figure of Astronomy upon a large globe. Nearby were Charles Darwin, Sir John Herschel, the astronomer, and Robert Stephenson, the

engineer. There was a window in memorial of Isambard Brunel, and a bust of Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist.

Perhaps because many Americans used Baedeker's, the Guide included some quotes by Washington Irving:

The spaciousness and gloom of this vast edifice produces a profound and mysterious awe. We step cautiously and softly about, as if fearful of disturbing the hallowed silence of the tomb; while every footfall whispers along the walls, and chatters among the sepulchers, making us more sensible of the quiet we have interrupted. It seems as if the awful nature of the place presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence. We feel that we are surrounded by the congregated bones of the great men of past times, who have filled history with their deeds, and the earth with their renown.



Source: TuckDB

In the west aisle of the North Transept, Swamiji may have noticed the bust of Warren Hastings, Governor General of India and the monument of Admiral Watson. Baedekers described Watson's monument:

“The Admiral, in a toga, is sitting in the centre, holding a palm branch. On the right the town of Calcutta on her knees presents a petition to her conqueror. On the left is an Indian in chains, emblematical of Chandernagore, also conquered by the Admiral.”

One wonders what silent thoughts may have passed through Swamiji's mind if he had gazed at this folly. The British captured Chandernagore twice, and twice the French won it back. Swamiji's guru, Sri Ramakrishna, said in a moment of Divine

inspiration, "I am the French colony."

Next there was a sitting figure of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, Governor of Java and founder of the Zoological Society. Swamiji had visited the Raffles Museum on his brief visit to Singapore.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Near Raffles was the sitting figure of William Wilberforce, the grandfather of Canon Basil Wilberforce. Parliament revered Wilberforce as an apostle of freedom. Undoubtedly he was a great and influential man, but it should not be assumed that great people are equally liberal in all their opinions. He opposed women's involvement in the abolition movement, and opposed allowing Catholics the freedom

to vote and run for Parliamentary office. He also supported the conversion of Hindus to Christianity, mainly on social reform issues, but also asserting: "Our religion is sublime, pure beneficent", he said, "theirs is mean, licentious and cruel". William Wilberforce was buried in the north transept of Westminster Abbey on 3 August 1833.

In 1916, Wilberforce's grandson, Basil, would be buried in the Abbey.



Source: Wikipedia

Basil's father, [Samuel Wilberforce](#), had been Dean of Westminster in 1845. He was offered the Bishopric of Oxford and later he became Bishop of Winchester. Swamiji's

Brooklyn disciple, Sarah Ellen Waldo, heard Basil's father preach on 9 April 1872. At the time, Basil was Rector and Waldo wrote in her diary that he had a fine voice. As Bishop of Oxford, Samuel opposed [Charles Darwin's](#) theory of evolution at a famous debate with Thomas Huxley in 1860. Wilberforce's speech is generally only remembered today for his inquiry as to whether Huxley considered himself descended from a monkey through his grandmother's or his grandfather's line? Huxley is said to have replied that he would not be ashamed to have a monkey for his ancestor, but he would be ashamed to be connected with a man who used his great gifts to obscure the truth.



Source: TuckDB

I imagine that Swamiji was not as interested in the tombs of royals as he was in the

memorials to poets and scientists. In the South Aisle was a figure of William Wordsworth, the poet, and a bust of Matthew Arnold. In the South Transept was a full figure sculpture of Shakespeare, and rounding a pillar, Swamiji may have entered the Aisle of the Poet's Corner. There was a medallion to Thomas Grey. Swamiji could quote many of his poems. There was a bust of John Milton and a lyre with a serpent and an apple in homage to *Paradise Lost*.

On the left in the postcard above is a bust of the great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Swamiji had read many of his poems, met his children, and visited the scenes of some of his most famous poems.



WESTMINSTER ABBEY.—Chaucer's Tomb.

Source: TuckDB

The tomb of Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, began the Abbey's tradition of memorializing poets.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Chapel of Henry VII is most notable for its architectural style. Baedeker said: The chief glory of this chapel, however, is its fan tracery ceiling with its fantastic pendentives, each surface being covered with rich fret-work, exhibiting the florid Perpendicular style in its utmost luxuriance. The airiness, elegance, and richness of this exquisite work can scarcely be over-praised.

“Stone seems, by the cunning labor of the chisel, to have been robbed of its weight and density, suspended aloft, as if by magic, and the fretted roof achieved with the

wonderful minuteness and airy security of a cobweb.” —Washington Irving



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This Charles Flower postcard of Westminster Abbey, viewed from the east, shows the exterior of the chapel of Henry VII on the right, and the octagonal Chapter House on the left.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

A short street behind the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey was known as Poets' Corner. Henrietta Muller's sister, Eva McLaren had a house at No. 3A Poets' Corner with her husband, Walter McLaren who was a Member of Parliament. It is possible that Swamiji may have visited them.

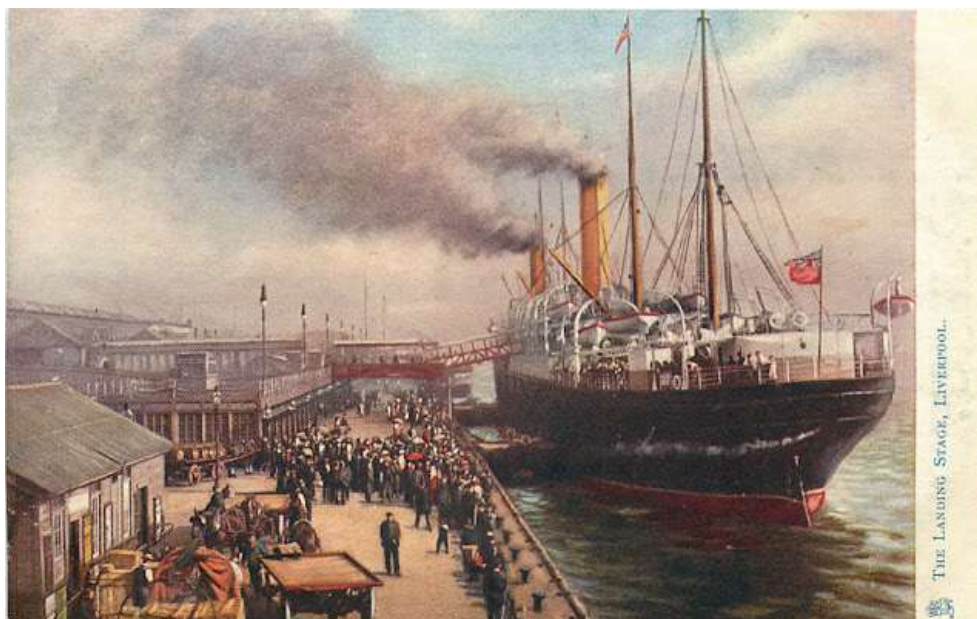


Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

It would have been dark by the time Swamiji left the reception given by Canon and Mrs. Wilberforce. Westminster Abbey in moonlight? The new moon was on the 16th and the first quarter did not appear until the 24th. Perhaps a crescent glimmered as Swamiji departed.

Liverpool to New York City 27 November to 6 December 1895

The Atlantic in winter



Source: TuckDB

Swami Vivekananda concluded his first trip to England near the end of November 1895. He had taught classes from his digs in Oakley Street, Chelsea, given a few public lectures, and made many new friends. On 21 November he wrote to Sara Bull in Cambridge, Massachusetts, "I sail by the Britannic on Wednesday, the 27th." Swamiji thus departed London for Liverpool where he would board a steamship bound for New York City.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Prince's Landing Stage on the River Mersey in Liverpool was the longest

floating structure in the world. London and Northwestern Railway's Riverside Station opened in 1895. It was possible for passengers to take the train from London right out to the docks and board their ship via gangplanks.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The first time Swamiji crossed the Atlantic to go to Paris, he sailed on SS *La Touraine*, a fairly new ship of the French Line—plus it was summer—see my [previous post](#). Now it was winter, and his ship, the *RMS Britannic*, was over twenty years old. The ship lacked the efficiency and luxury of SS *La Touraine*, and the season was bitterly cold.

This reproduction postcard of a nineteenth-century painting advertising the White Star Line represents the *Britannic*.



Source: Library of Congress

The 1874 *RMS Britannic* was the first of three incarnations of ships by that

name for the White Star Line before it merged with Cunard. *Britannic* number one was a single screw steamer with four sailing masts. *La Touraine* by comparison, had twin screw propellers and was considerably swifter. The *Britannic* had room for 220 Saloon Class passengers and 1,500 steerage passengers—many of these must have been emigrants. The ship was not full, however, because Swamiji was offered his own cabin and it seems that he had expected to share.

Swamiji wrote to Alberta Sturges:

The steamer is standing at anchor on account of fog. The purser has very kindly given me a whole cabin by myself. Every Hindu is a Raja, they think, and are very polite—and the charm will break, of course, when they find that the Raja is penniless!!

This photograph of the *Britannic* was made by Detroit Publishing Co. which also published postcards such as the one of the Statue of Liberty, below.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The first port of call, on the second day out, was Queenstown, Ireland. *RMS Britannic* was a mail ship, therefore its mission was to deliver and pick up the post. The ship was delayed here due to fog.

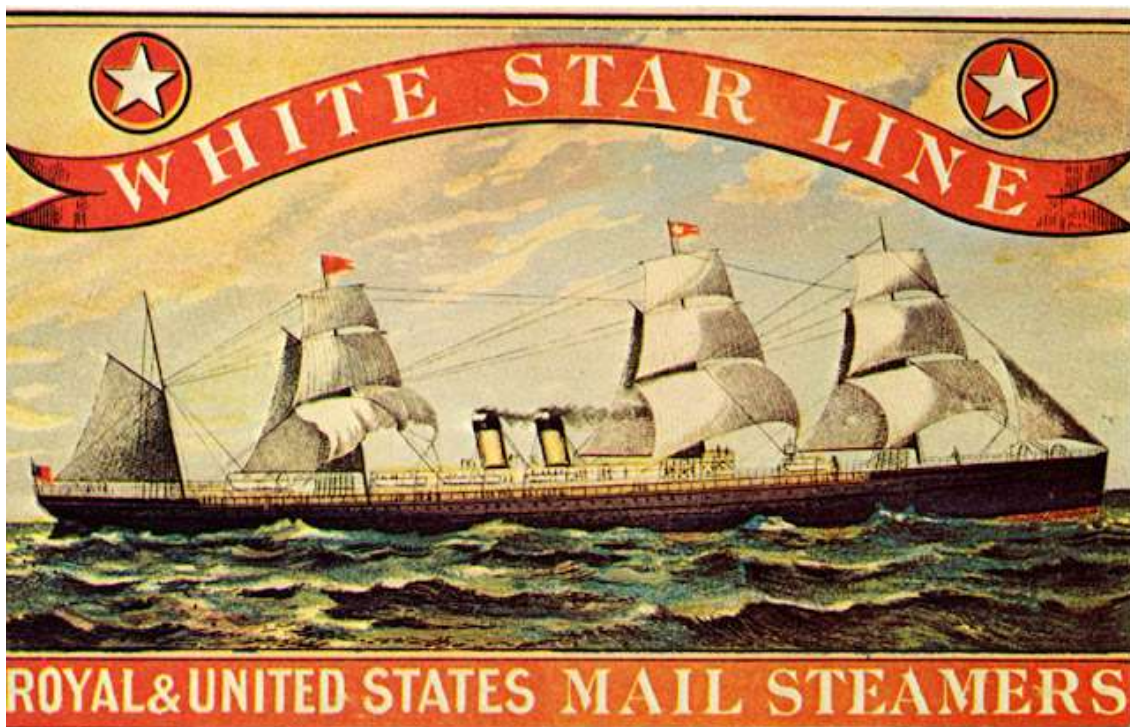
While the ship was in calm water, Swamiji wrote to his disciple, E. T. Sturdy:

So far the journey has been very beautiful. The purser has been very kind to me and gave me a cabin to myself. The only difficulty is the food — meat, meat, meat. Today they have promised to give me some vegetables.

We are standing at anchor now. The fog is too thick to allow the ship to proceed. So I take this opportunity to write a few letters.

It is a queer fog almost impenetrable though the sun is shining bright and cheerful. Kiss baby for me; and with love and blessings for you and Mrs. Sturdy.

Queenstown was so named by the British for Queen Victoria. When Ireland became a free state in 1922, the seaport's name was changed to [Cobh](#). Because this post concerns events from the 1890s, Cobh will be called Queenstown.

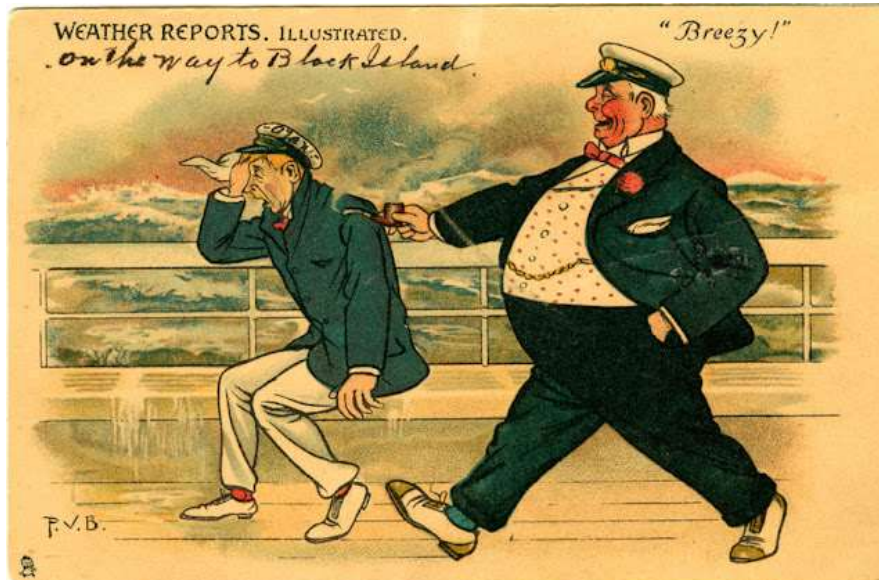


Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Writing was much easier while the ship was at anchor, so Swamiji dashed off a few letters while the ship was delayed by fog. The date of Swamiji's letter to Alberta—Thursday morning, 5 December—is confusing, however, because that was toward the end of the voyage, and from the tone of his letters to her and to Sturdy, he had not yet encountered rough weather.

The *Britannic* had already suffered two accidents in her career, once running aground in fog off the coast of Ireland, and again colliding in dense fog with another White Star liner off the coast of New Jersey. The previous mishaps perhaps accounted for extra caution of waiting out the fog.

This postcard by the Oceanic Navigation Research Society is a reproduction of a nineteenth-century advertisement depicting the *Britannic*.

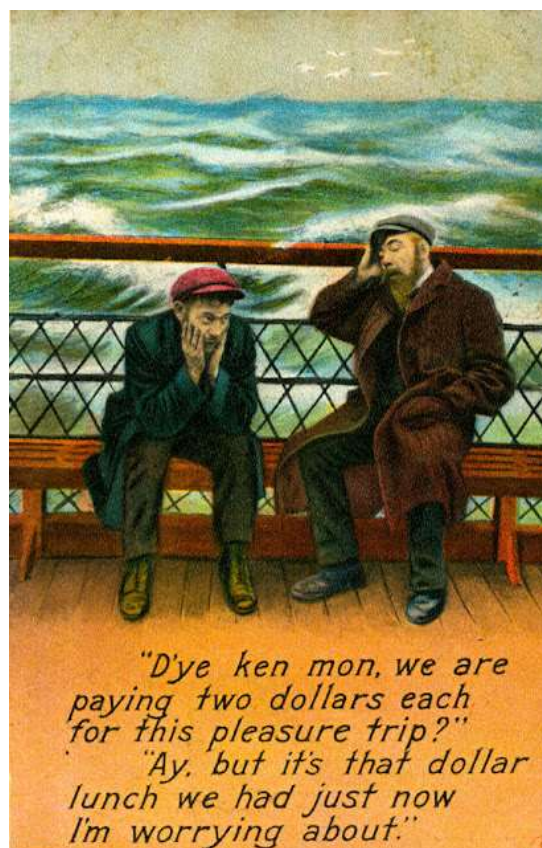


Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

After landing in New York, Swamiji found a letter from Sara Bull awaiting his arrival and so he responded on 8 December 1895:

Many thanks for your kind note of welcome. I arrived last Friday after ten days of a very tedious voyage. It was awfully rough and for the first time in my life I was very badly seasick. . . .

Postcards about *mal-de-mer* were often humorous and emphasized the inequality of feeling between those miserably affected and those oblivious to their plight.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji confessed his discomfort to his kind-hearted friend, Jo MacLeod on 8 December 1895.

Dear Joe Joe, After 10 days of the most disastrous voyage I ever had I arrived in New York. I was so so sick for days together.

Jo was a seasoned and intrepid traveller, and she would have sympathized with Swamiji's unpleasant experience, but being a MacLeod, she might have appreciated the problem described in a Scottish accent and laughed at the penurious concerns of the two Scots in the postcard.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

[Wikipedia](#) offered a technical explanation for Swamiji's sea-sickness: As built the *Britannic* incorporated a novel system which allowed the single propeller to be raised and lowered while still connected to its shaft and without stopping the engine. This was achieved with a flexible coupling and an elongated aperture in the ship's sternpost. This feature was an attempt to overcome the disadvantage of long-hulled single-screw liners, which pitched in heavy seas. In bad weather the stern could rise enough to lift the propeller partially out of the water, reducing thrust and causing unpleasant vibration.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Early in the morning of Friday 6 December, the *Britannic* sailed into New York harbor. Marie Louise Burke described the day: "The temperature was six degrees below freezing and a sharp wind was blowing, but the sky was clear and the sun was rising . . . "



Source: NYPL

The ship stopped at Ellis Island to allow emigrant passengers to disembark. Ellis Island was a wooden structure in 1895. The present historic edifice had not yet been built. In the postcard, the Ellis Island complex is on the horizon to the right of the Statue of Liberty. It appears to be the earlier wooden building.

It was probably Swamiji's disciple, Leon Landsberg—now Swami Kripananda—who met him at the landing pier and escorted him to their new lodgings at 228 West 39th Street—see my [previous post](#) for a description of these rented rooms. Kripananda, a former lecturer at the Theosophical Society, soon updated Swamiji on the latest news.

After he arrived in New York, Swamiji wrote again to E. T. Sturdy on 8 December 1895. Sturdy was no longer a member of the Theosophical Society and he was particularly anxious to divest himself from his former association:

Dear Friend, After ten days of a most tedious and rough voyage I safely arrived in New York. My friends had already engaged some rooms at the above where I am living now and intend to hold classes ere long. In the meanwhile the Theosophists have been alarmed very much and are trying their best to hurt me; but they and their followers are of no consequence whatever.

I included the August 1895 article about Swamiji and Kripananda from *Theosophical Forum* in a [previous post](#).

ABOUT BEN ADER'S IDEAL.

Swami Vivekananda, the Yogi,
Comes from Bombay, Preaching
Love for His Fellow-Man.

To find an ascetic of the highest Eastern type clad in a red and flowing Hindoo cloak over unmistakable American trousers is necessarily a surprise. But in other things besides dress is Swami Vivekananda astonishing. In the first place he declares that your religion or any one else's religion is just as good as his own, and if you should happen to be a Christian or Mussulman, Baptist or Brahmin, atheist, agnostic or Catholic, it will make no difference to him. All that he asks is that you act righteously according to your lights.

The Yogi, with his peculiar notions of dress and worship, arrived Friday on the Britannic. He went to No. 228 West Thirty-ninth street. While in New York he will lecture upon metaphysics and psychology, and will also disseminate

in a general way his ideas on the universal religion which asks no man to take another by the throat because his creed happens to be different. "Let me help my fellow-man; that is all I seek," he says.

"There are four general types of men," he says, "the rational, the emotional, the mystical and the worker. For them we must have their proper worship. There comes the rational man, who says, 'I care not for this form of worship. Give me the philosophical, the rational—that I can appreciate.' So for the rational man is the rational, philosophic worship.

"There comes the worker. He says: 'I care not for the worship of the philosopher. Give me work to do for my fellow-men.' So for him is made a worship, as for the mystical and the emotional. In the religion for all these men are the elements of their faith.

"No," said the Swami, very softly, in answer to a question, "I do not believe in the occult. If a thing be unreal it is not. What is unreal does not exist. Strange things are natural phenomena. I know them to be matters of science. Then they are not occult to me. I do not believe in occult societies. They do no good, and can never do good."

In fact, the Swami belongs to no society, cult or creed. His is a religion which compasses all worship, all classes, all beliefs.

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Swami, who is a very dark-featured and good-looking young fellow, explained his creed yesterday in remarkably pure English. One forgot when he spoke that an orthodox choker peered over the Bombay robe which in turn scantily concealed the American trousers. One saw instead a winning smile and a pair of deep, lustrous black eyes.

Swami believes in reincarnation. He believes that with the purification of the body the soul rises to a higher condition, and as the purification through matter continues the spirit rises, until released from further migration and is joined with the universal spirit.

Such a man as the Jew-baiter Ahlwardt, who has just arrived in this country, the Swami cannot understand. "You say," he said, "that he comes here to preach hate against his fellowmen. Is he not of wrong mind? Is he allowed to spread this hate? The doctors should examine his brain to find out the wrong."

The peculiar name of the Yogi signifies, literally, "the bliss of discrimination." He is the first Indian Yogi who ever came to this country. He comes from Bombay.

Source: New York World 8 December 1895

Kripananda, a former journalist, would have wanted to publicize Swamiji's next course of classes. Swamiji was soon interviewed by a reporter from *The World*. Compared to the knowledgeable and urbane journalists that Swamiji had met in London, this clothes-conscious reporter seemed like a country gawker. While aboard the *Britannic*, Swamiji wrote about the contrast between America and England, which was not so much a contrast in intellect, I think, as in attitude and superior manners:

"In your country, Alberta, the Vedantic thought was introduced in the beginning by ignorant "cranks", and one has to work his way through the difficulties created by such introductions. . . . On the other hand in England the Vedantic ideas have been introduced by the most learned men in the country, and there are a large number among the upper classes in England

who are very thoughtful. So you will be astonished to hear that I found my grounds all prepared, and I am convinced that my work will have more hold on England than America.”



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Somehow *The World* reporter felt compelled to link Swamiji with a popular poem by Leigh Hunt titled "[Abou Ben Adhen](#)". The Orient, vast as it was from Turkey to Japan, became a pigeonhole to stick Swamiji in, and this poem helped locate a familiar category of reference. When the *Brahmavadin* reprinted this article in India, it omitted all mention of the poem. Actually, the poem was a rather good comparison. Swamiji would have humbly appreciated the poet's line: "Write me as one that loves his fellow men." The public may not have been aware of it, but the poem was

about the eighth century Sufi saint, Ibrahim ibn Adham. Swamiji was well acquainted with the poetry of Rumi, who had written about the legend of Ibrahim in his *Masnavi*, centuries before Hunt. The reporter quoted Swamiji as saying "Let me help my fellow-man; that is all I seek." This earned him the comparison with "Abou Ben Adhen".

The journalist did a fair enough job of following what Swamiji said about his work: he explained the psychology of aptitude behind the four yogas, which he couched in the simplest possible terms. Even so, he was confounded by Swamiji's mixture of Eastern and Western clothing. Was it so hard to understand that a "man of the cloth" might have to respect the clerical dress codes of two different worlds? Swamiji seemed to lower his voice when asked obtuse questions.

INDIAN YOGI REACHES NEW YORK.

Will Travel Around in a Hindoo Cloak and European Trousers.

New York, Dec. 6.—[Special.]—Swami Vivekananda of Bombay, a Yogi by profession, arrived in New York today on the steamship *Britannic*. To find an ascetic of the highest Eastern type clad in a red and flowing Hindu cloak over unmistakable European trousers is necessarily a surprise.

But in other things besides dress is Swami Vivekananda astonishing. In the first place he declares that your religion or any one else's religion is just as good as his own, and if you should happen to be a Christian or Moslem, atheist, agnostic, or Catholic, it will make no difference to him.

This is the doctrine Swami has come to this country to preach as a side issue to metaphysics and psychology. Incidentally, he will travel around and see the country.

Curiously, news of Swamiji's arrival reached Chicago before the longer article was printed in New York. It was the practice to print the names of notable persons when they arrived by ship. Swamiji certainly looked interesting and newsworthy as he disembarked. Perhaps the reporter sent out the news of his arrival by wire, and he may have been invited for an interview later at 228 West 39th Street.

Kripananda had been a Jewish immigrant from Germany. Somehow the interview got sidetracked by current events. Hermann Ahlwardt was a German member of the Reichstag who came to America to stir up anti-semitic sentiment, claiming that a Jewish firm had defrauded the German government. There were numerous incidents resulting from his slanders. In general, American Jews resisted hate speech more than they could have in Berlin.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Hearing a speech by Ahlwardt at Cooper Union on 12 December 1895, an exasperated Louis Silverman threw a rotten egg at him. The *New York Times* reported the outcome of this incident on 28 January 1896. Justice Jerome ruled that "In this case, whatever may be its legal aspects, the Court does not feel in sympathy with any member of the community who seeks to create prejudice against the religious belief of any race or sect." . . . "However, the rights of citizens to hold public meetings must be respected." Silverman was fined \$25.

On 12 September 1897, the *Buffalo Sunday Morning News* dismissed Ahiwardt as petty, "The notorious anti-Semite Deputy Ahiwardt who visited this country last year, has opened a small cigar shop in Berlin."

New York to Reading 15 to 26 April 1896

A "little run through Ireland"



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda had been in Chicago for the first two weeks of April 1896, and that story was covered in the [preceding post](#). He took a train to New York, and on the 14th he wrote a letter from 6 West 43rd Street to Mary and Harriet Hale back in the Windy City:

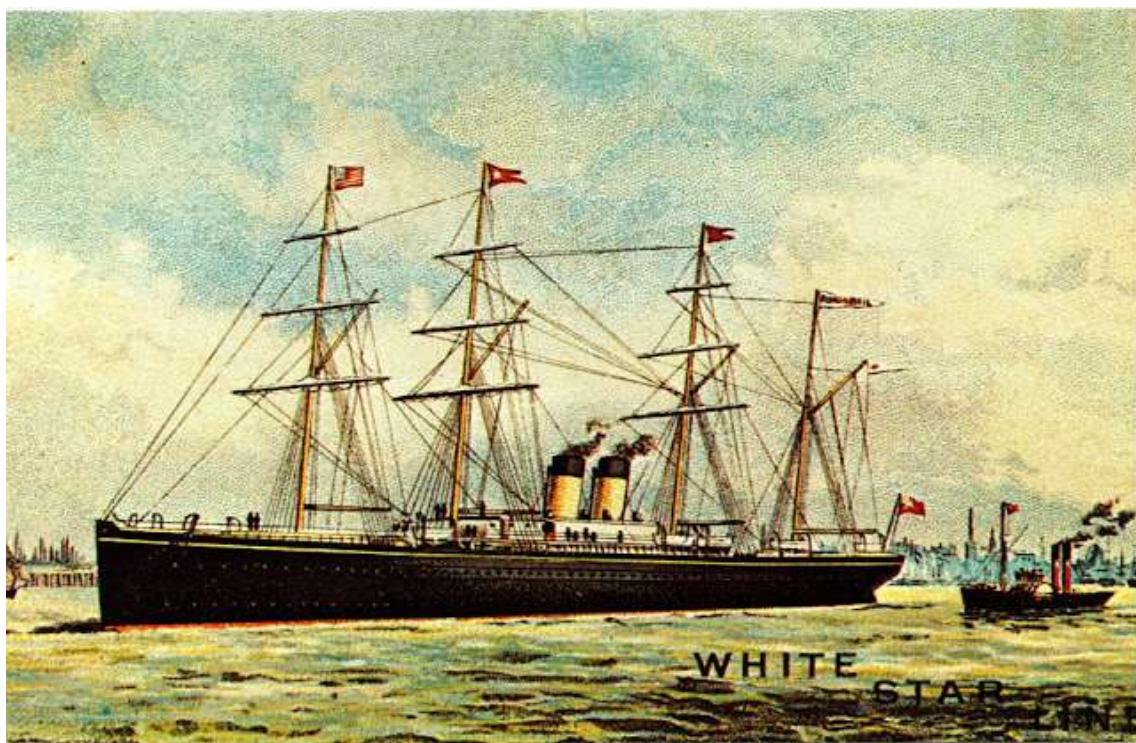
Dear Sisters,

I arrived safe on Sunday and on account of illness could not write earlier. I sail on board the White Star Line Germanic tomorrow at 12 noon. With everlasting memory of love, gratitude and blessings, I am, your ever loving brother, Vivekananda.

NEW YORK, April 15.—Germanic left at 2.0 p.m. Havel, from Bremen, arrived at 8.0 p.m. April 16.—State of Nebraska arrived at 6.0 a.m. from the Clyde.

The Standard 15 April 1896

Ships of the White Star Line carrying passengers and mail—but no cotton (so the ads declared)—departed New York for Liverpool every Wednesday at noon. On the 15th the London *Standard* reported that the *Germanic* did not actually get under way until 2 p.m. The Vedanta Society's British stenographer, J.J. Goodwin, was making the voyage with Swamiji. Goodwin was introduced in a [previous post](#). They had a number of well-wishers at the White Star Line pier, shown in the postcard above, to see them off, including the family of Carl Le Vinson.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This postcard by the Oceanic Navigation Research Society is a reproduction of a chromolithograph advertisement for the White Star Line representing the *Britannic* and her sister ship the *Germanic*, built in 1875. Both ships had four masts, two coal smokestacks, and single screw steam propulsion. Swamiji had sailed on the *Britannic* in [December 1895](#).



Library of Congress

This photograph of the *S.S. Germanic* shows the accuracy of its postcard illustration. On 12 December 1895 the *Germanic* collided with another ship in dense fog off the coast of Ireland. As part of repairing the damage, she was retrofitted with a larger steam engine and the rigging was removed from three of the masts. Due to the new engine and better weather, the *Germanic* made good time.

Browhead, Thursday.—White Star steamer *Germanic*, with mails and passengers from New York, passed here at 12 55 a.m., en route for Liverpool, via Queenstown,

Liverpool Mercury 23 April 1896

The first news of Swamiji's voyage comes from the *Liverpool Mercury* on Thursday 23 April 1896. The *Germanic* passed Browhead at 12:55 a.m. **Brow Head** was a signal station on the extreme southwestern tip of Ireland. The item is datelined 23 April. Both the *Times* and the *Liverpool Mercury* confirmed that the *Germanic* landed in Liverpool on Thursday 23 April.

yesterday afternoon for Cuba.
The White Star Line s. MAJESTIC, from Liverpool for New York, left Queenstown at 12 55 p.m. yesterday. The GERMANIC, from New York for Liverpool, arrived at Queenstown at 4 19 a.m. yesterday, and has since arrived in the Mersey.

The Times 24 April 1896

According to the London *Times* of 24 April, the *Germanic* arrived in Queenstown "at 4:19 a.m. yesterday" [Thursday 23 April]. The London *Morning Post* reported that the *Germanic* "landed mails and passengers, left for Liverpool" on 23 April.

QUEENSTOWN, April 23.—Germanic, left at 4.45 a.m. for
Liverpool.
RIO LANEIRO April 20.—Home from London

The Standard 24 April 1896

Swamiji's ship spent only a half-hour in Queenstown harbour. According to the London *Standard*, the *Germanic* left for Liverpool at 4:45 a.m. Lloyd's List was the source for the arrival times of the mails published in the newspapers.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

There is an important reason for being accurate about the *Germanic*'s arrival in Queenstown. That is because Swamiji wrote a second letter to the Hale sisters from E.T. Sturdy's house near Reading supposedly dated 20th April, 1896:

Dear Sisters,

Greetings to you from the other shore. The voyage has been pleasant and no sickness this time. I gave myself treatment to avoid it. I made quite a little run through Ireland and some of the Old English towns and now am once more in Reading amidst Brahma and Maya and Jiva, the individual and the universal soul,

etc.

Historian M. L. Burke interpreted Swamiji's letter this way:

"The ship touched at Queenstown, or Cobh, on the south coast of Ireland, and it would seem that Swamiji and Josiah J. Goodwin there disembarked, "made quite a little run through Ireland," reboarded the *Germanic* at a port further north, and crossed the Irish Sea to Liverpool. From there they went by train through "some of the Old English towns" at one of which Mr. Goodwin changed trains for Bath to visit his widowed mother before going to London, Swamiji proceeded to Reading, and on April 20 we find him once more in Caversham with Mr. Sturdy."

Because of the date of his letter, Burke and others assumed that Swamiji crossed the Atlantic in under 5 days. Not possible. The *Germanic's* best time crossing the Atlantic was 7.5 days. As evidenced by the newspaper clippings, the *Germanic* landed in Liverpool on the 23rd. My thought is that either Swamiji approximated the calendar date, or more likely, someone could not read his handwriting and a very loosely written 6 became a 0.

Cabin Passengers

John F. Sencer	15	None	1	Crew
John G. Miller	19	None	1	"
John J. Carr James G.		Emilian	1	"
James G. Carr	29	Merchant	1	"
Wm. J. O'Rourke		Black	1	"
Joseph M. Schumert		W/Singer	1	"
Henry Marx	37	Man of B.	1	"
Asa O.B. Scully	30	None	1	"
Isaac J. Goodwin	29	"	1	"
Swart Westerman	36	"	1	"
Nicholas C. Marshall	54	Man of B.	1	"
Alce Sute	30	Wife	1	"
Amel Gamin	37	Wife	1	"
Ann B. Hill	15	None	1	"
		5 5 20 1 1 2		4 3
		20 1 1 2 2 2		5 1

[Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

The actual passenger list further complicates these date calculations. According to Ancestry.com Swamiji and Goodwin landed at Queenstown on 20 April 1896. Since all the newspaper clippings show that the *Germanic* did not reach Ireland until the 23rd, my thought is that a clerk on the ship filled out a list—in advance—of

passengers who were to disembark at Queenstown.



[Wikipedia](#)

Furthermore, Burke supposed that Swamiji and Goodwin “reboarded the *Germanic* at a port further north.” Queenstown was the *Germanic*’s only port of call in Ireland. The ship went on to Liverpool without them. (Perhaps Burke was thinking of Swamiji’s trip to Japan in July 1893, when he alighted from his ship in Kobe and may have reboarded the same ship in Yokohama three days later—[see that post](#).) However, it is not certain if the ship Swamiji took from Hong Kong to Nagasaki and thence to Kobe, was the RMS *Empress of India*, which he boarded in Yokohama, although the *Empress* stopped at all the these ports.

Queenstown was so named by the British for Queen Victoria. When Ireland became a free state in 1922, the seaport's name was changed to [Cobh](#). Because this post concerns events from the 1890s, Cobh will be called Queenstown.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji wrote that he “made quite a little run through Ireland” and that, alas, is all he tells us!

This is quite frustrating for historians, leaving no recourse but conjecture as to what “quite a little run” consisted of. Only one thing seems sure. Swamiji and Goodwin had to have planned their Irish excursion in advance, because the ship did not linger in the harbor. They had to hop on the mail delivery boat and go ashore at 4:30 in the morning while it was still dark.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Burke also speculated that their “run” through Ireland was by means of a jaunting

car—which was a reasonable guess. It was easy to hire a car right on the promenade in Queenstown, as the caption of this early postcard suggests.



[Library of Congress/Wikipedia](#)

This mode of transportation would have contributed greatly to their sense of adventure. I like the idea that Swamiji and Goodwin took off on their own. It is as if they chose to drive off on a winding two-lane blacktop instead of staying on the Interstate.



There is no lack of postcards about Irish jaunting cars. Let us hope that Swamiji and Goodwin had a pleasant ride. But which direction did they go?

BATH AND WEST OF ENGLAND
SOCIETY,
For the encouragement of
AGRICULTURE, ARTS, MANUFACTURES, AND
COMMERCE.
PATRON, H.R.H. The PRINCE OF WALES, K.G.

SALISBURY MEETING, 1866.
PRESIDENT, The RT. HON. the EARL of PORTSMOUTH.

The ANNUAL EXHIBITION of HORSES, POULTRY,
DOGS, IMPLEMENTS, WORKS of ART, HONITON
LACE, and HORTICULTURAL SPECIMENS, will take
place at SALISBURY, on the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th
JUNE, 1866.
By order of the Council,
JOSIAH GOODWIN, Secretary,
4, Terrace-walk, Bath.
1st May, 1866. [2820 4015

Bristol Mercury and Daily Post 26 May 1866

J.J.'s father, Josiah Goodwin, FSA, worked for 36 years as secretary of the Bath and West of England Society in Bath, Somerset and as editor of the Society's journal. His efforts contributed greatly towards making the Society an important institution for the promotion and improvement of agriculture. The *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* said: "He was a man who, while enjoying good health, was capable of performing a vast amount of work, and was endowed with remarkable memory." Josiah Goodwin's health deteriorated and later in life he had been unable to walk. Observing his father's physical handicap must have increased J.J.'s desire to be of service. Josiah Goodwin died 3 June 1890. At the end of his father's life, the family lived at 6 Southbourne Gardens on the eastern side of Bath.



TuckDB

Through his father's occupation, J.J. would have known about cattle markets and horse fairs all over the region. A generic illustration of "Our Cattle Market" on the Raphael Tuck postcard above typifies scenes and characters at local cattle markets and horse fairs around the British Isles.




TuckDB

The Raphael Tuck postcard above shows a horse fair in Ireland. When he was a boy J.J. probably went with his father to see horses judged and sold. Horse breeding and horse

racing are something of a national obsession in Ireland. J.J. had a keen appreciation for the swiftness of horses. He liked to go to horse races.

J.J. probably knew, for example, that on Tuesdays and Fridays steamships went from Waterford, Ireland to Bristol, England so farmers could sell their cattle and other goods at the markets in those towns. It is possible that J.J. had made this market voyage with his father on a previous occasion.

There must have been Irish newspapers on board the *Germanic*. The steamship companies advertised their monthly sailings schedules in case someone picked up a paper that was a week or so old.



WATERFORD STEAMSHIP COMPANY (LIMITED).

DUNBRODY, REGINALD, COMERAGH, & LARA,
From BRISTOL to WATERFORD, direct from Cumber-
land Basin. Average Passage about 15 hours,
Intended Order of Sailings for APRIL, 1896,

To WATERFORD Direct.		From WATERFORD Direct	
Wednes, Apr. 1	.. 7½ after	Friday April 3	.. 5 after
Saturday .. 4	.. 8½ night	Tuesday .. 7	.. 6 after
Thursday .. 9	.. 8 morn	Friday .. 10	.. 1 after
Saturday .. 11	.. 5 after	Tuesday .. 14	.. 3 after
Wednesday .. 15	.. 7 after	Friday .. 17	.. 4 after
Saturday .. 18	.. 8½ night	Tuesday .. 21	.. 6 after
Wednesday .. 22	.. 12 m'ngt	Friday .. 24	.. 6 after
Sunday .. 26	.. 3 morn	Tuesday .. 28	.. 2 after
Wednesday .. 29	.. 7 after	Friday May 1	.. 4 after
Saturday May 2	.. 8½ night		

FARES — Cabin, 15s ; Return, 25s, (available for Two Months) ; Children and Servants travelling with Families, 10s. ; Deck, 7s 6d ; Children, 4s.

Bristol Mercury and Daily Post 24 April 1896

Their excursion plan depended upon reaching a port where there was a Thursday or Friday departure from Ireland to the "Old English towns" that Goodwin intended to show Swamiji.

Therefore, my proposal—which is pure speculation—is that Swamiji and Goodwin went to Waterford. They started out at dawn on Thursday. A steamer left Waterford for Bristol at 6 p.m. on Friday the 24th. Waterford was a fairly busy port, but the only service advertised to go to Bristol left on Friday afternoon.



David Rumsey Map Collection

It is about 69 miles from Queenstown [Cobh] to Waterford. According to Google maps it takes 23 hours to walk from Queenstown to Waterford along today's N25 which was a rough country road in 1896. It takes 6.5 hours to go the same distance by bicycle. According to one [source](#), a jaunting car went about 7.5 miles per hour. Therefore they could have easily made the trip to Waterford in about 10 to 12 hours, plus allowing some additional time for meals and a little sightseeing. They may have stopped in Dungarvan.

I put three red dots on this 1891 map of the south coast of Ireland marking Queenstown, Dungarvan and Waterford. Green dots mark Brow Head on the left and Hook Head on the right. The map also outlines a shipping route of 220 [English] miles to Bristol from Waterford harbor.

I am hoping that this theory is a logical match for Swamiji's "run through Ireland."

The Waterford Steamship Company steamer would take 15 hours to cross St. George's Channel, landing in Bristol by 9 a.m Saturday.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Dungarvan is a port town halfway between Queenstown and Waterford. The town had the ruins of a 12th century Augustinian abbey and a castle.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

IF Swamiji went to catch a steamship on Waterford quay, he may have passed by [Reginald's Tower](#). It is thought to have been constructed between 1253 and 1280 upon older Viking foundations. The name of this ancient fortification evolved

into "Reginald" over centuries of Norse into Gaelic into English pronunciations. It has had many uses, from mint to prison. In the late nineteenth century the Waterford council housed the Chief Constable in the tower.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The old town of [Waterford](#) on the river Suir was founded by Vikings in the ninth century. IF Swamiji and Goodwin boarded a ship here, they would have steamed down the river Suir to converge with the river Barrow, and from there into the [Celtic Sea](#).



[Wikipedia/National Library of Ireland](#)

In 1896 the Waterford Steamship Company had four ships servicing the route

between Waterford and Bristol: *Dunbrody*, *Reginald*, *Comeragh*, and *Lara*. Here is a photo from 1897 of the steamship *Lara* at Waterford quay.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

[Hook Head lighthouse](#) is one of the oldest operating lighthouses in the world. A small group of monks kept the tower lit in the 12th century. IF Swamiji and Goodwin went on a Waterford Steamship, they would have passed this lighthouse on the southeastern tip of Ireland before they crossed St. George's Channel.



TuckDB

Steamships from Waterford navigated the Bristol Channel. Wales was on the Channel's northern shore. The ship passed Portishead on the southern shore and then entered the River Avon. In the early morning light it steamed under the [Clifton Suspension Bridge](#) spanning the Avon Gorge. A grand sight indeed.

The ship landed at Cumberland Basin in the River Avon. From the Harbor Master's Office it was two miles to Temple Meads Railway Station in the center of Bristol. According to this theory, Swamiji and Goodwin made it to England on Saturday morning 25 April.



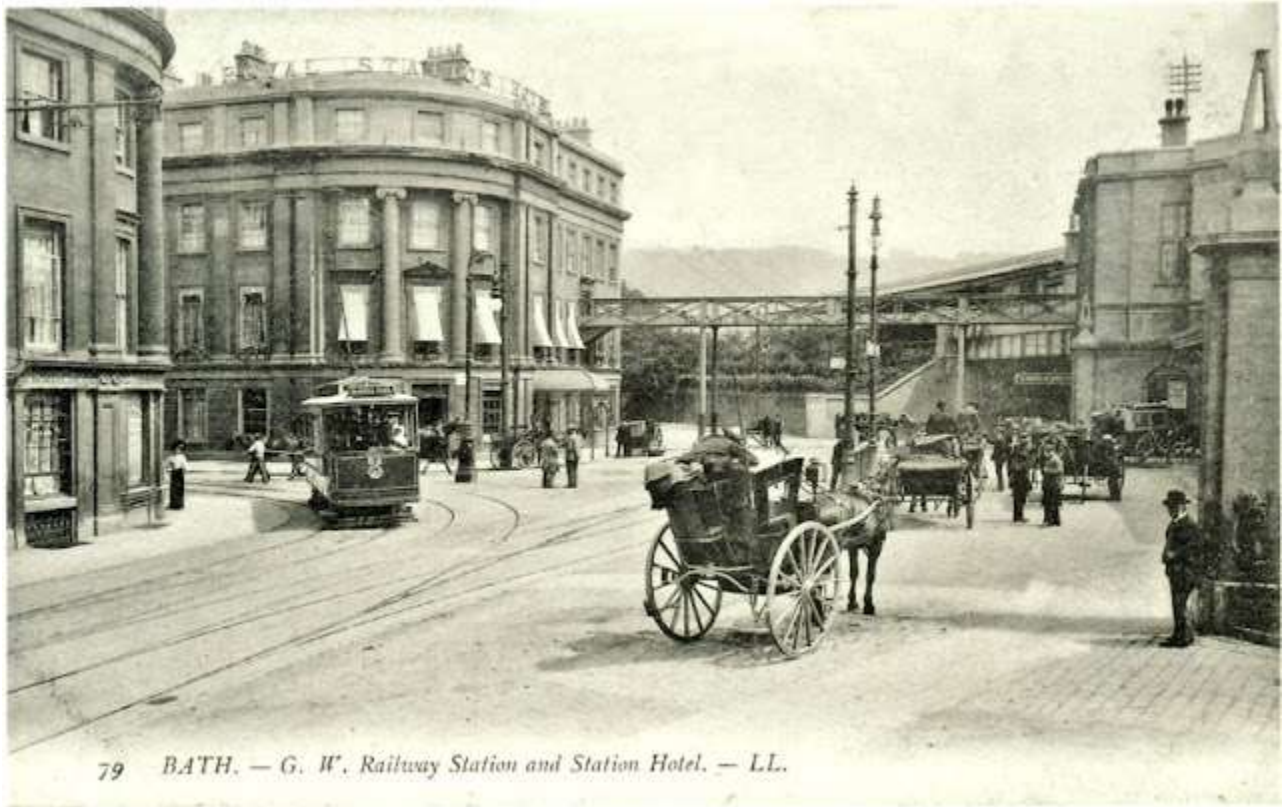
[Flickr/National Library of Ireland](#)

The Avon, being a tidal river, could be treacherous to navigate in places. In December 1896 the S.S. *Dunbrody* ran aground in dense fog on the muddy banks of the Avon. This photograph gives excellent detail of the ship's deck. It was one of four possible ships on which Swami Vivekananda may have been a passenger in April 1896.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

[Temple Meads Railway Station](#) in Bristol was 118 miles from Paddington station in London on the Great Western Railway. It would have connected Swamiji to Reading via Bath. It was approximately 75 miles to Reading, and only 12 miles to Bath. Perhaps Swamiji's casual reference to running through "some of the Old English towns" meant that they passed through Bristol and Bath before he got on the train to Reading. Since he would be passing Bath anyway, did Swamiji disembark there with Goodwin?



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Considering that Bath was Goodwin's hometown, it seems logical that J.J. would have wanted to show Swamiji one of the oldest of "Old English towns." They had travelled a long way together; it seems natural that J.J. would have mentioned the Roman baths to Swamiji. J.J.'s father had been a member of the Society of Antiquarians, so he took an interest in the history of Bath.

Bath Spa Great Western Railway station, shown on the right of this copy of a circa 1905 postcard, was built in 1841 on a bend in the River Avon. It was a short walk from the station to the Roman baths. It was a shorter walk from the station to Newark Street where J.J. had owned a newspaper, the *Bath and County Weekly News*. Unfortunately his business partner died and J.J. had to declare bankruptcy in October 1893.

The image above of the Bath Spa Great Western Railway station is scanned from a photographic copy of an original postcard.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The 1903 postcard above shows that it was possible, before the present outer wall was built, to look directly down into the main [Roman bath](#) from York Street. Swamiji was certainly keen to see Rome—see the [Christmas 1896](#) posts—but I am hoping that before he saw the ruins of the Terme di Caracalla in Rome, he gazed upon the waters of the Great Bath built in England in the second century.

Swamiji inspired Goodwin, and J.J. expressed his dedication to Vedanta in letters to Sara Bull; but Goodwin also inspired Swamiji. Through Goodwin, Swamiji got to see Ireland, a country struggling to free itself from British domination, and I am hoping that he had the chance to see Bath, a town built when the Romans conquered Britain.



TuckDB

The Roman baths were right next to the [Abbey](#), which was built between the 12th and 16th centuries. It may have been midday Saturday; perhaps they looked inside. Swamiji had very much enjoyed his visit with Basil Wilberforce, Canon of Westminster Abbey in November 1895.

Above and below are two Raphael Tuck postcards illustrated by Charles Flower, the artist who painted the postcards in the [previous post](#) on Westminster Abbey.



TuckDB

The ceiling of the nave of Bath Abbey—if he saw it—may have reminded Swamiji of the fan tracery in the ceiling of the [Chapel of Henry VII](#) in Westminster Abbey. Most of the fan vaulting in the Bath nave was completed in the 1860 restoration, in contrast to the more elaborate work done in 1509 in Westminster.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

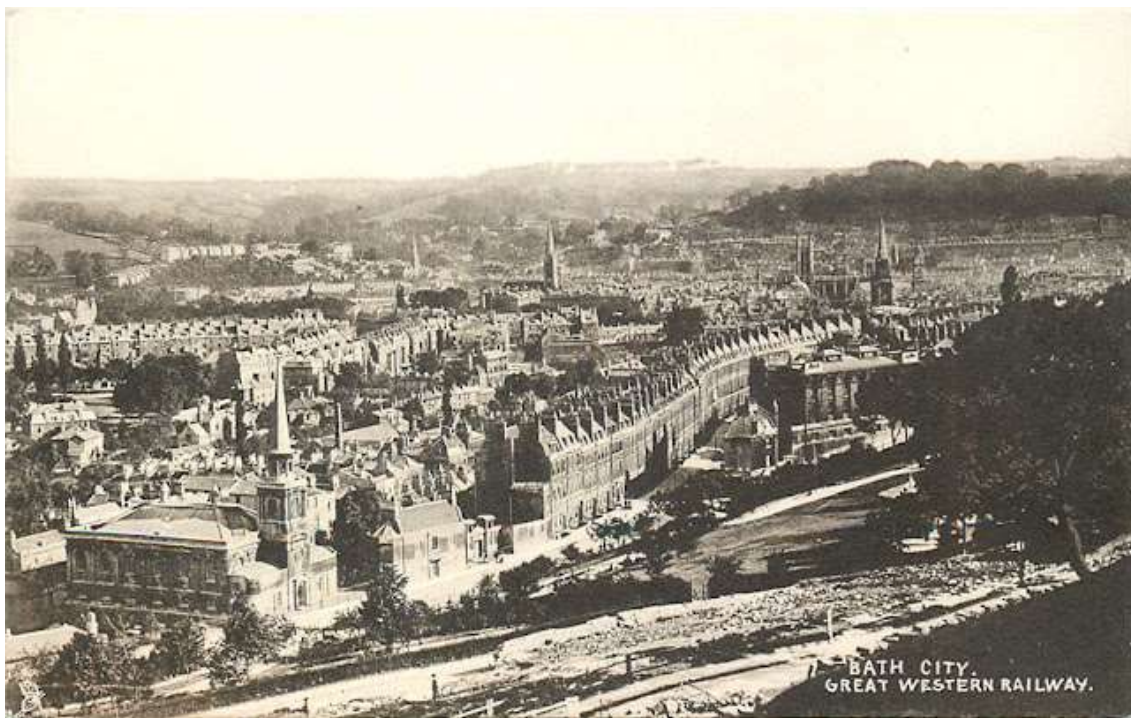
Considering Swamiji's tender regard for his own widowed mother, might he have asked to pay his respects to Goodwin's mother? Perhaps, if the railroad timetables permitted, Swamiji met Goodwin's family, as he later met Margaret Noble's family in Wimbledon.

Goodwin's mother lived in Batheaston, a small village two miles east of Bath. Josiah John Goodwin had been born on 20th September 1870 in a house located between 242 and 290 High Street in Batheaston and he lived there until he was four. On 14 June 1898 J.J.'s sister Margareta was married in St John the Baptist parish church shown in the postcard above. On 25 June the *Bristol Mercury* printed the sad notice of J.J.'s death on 2 June, in Ootacamund, India. The family probably did not know until after the wedding.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In the 1960s, Swami Avyaktananda, a former monk of the Ramakrishna Order, started a Vedanta retreat in Batheaston Villa, shown in the postcard above. During the 1910s it was a center for the suffragette movement. Swamiji said that women should be allowed to vote.



[TuckDB](#)

If Swamiji and Goodwin had landed at Liverpool—as Burke supposed—then probably they would have boarded the train to Euston station together and crossed London to Paddington station so that Swamiji could go west to Reading and Goodwin could go further west to Bath. This would have been the same route that Swamiji had traversed in 1895. I do not think that he would have considered watching English towns flit by from the train window as equivalent to a "run through . . . some of the Old English towns" with Goodwin.

Going east across Ireland and catching the steamer from Waterford to Bristol and taking the train to Bath is certainly a more direct way to "run through Ireland and some of the Old English towns". For Goodwin, this side trip—although personally important to him for the time he spent with his guru—was evidently not a big deal travel-wise. It must have been a scenic route that he was already familiar with.

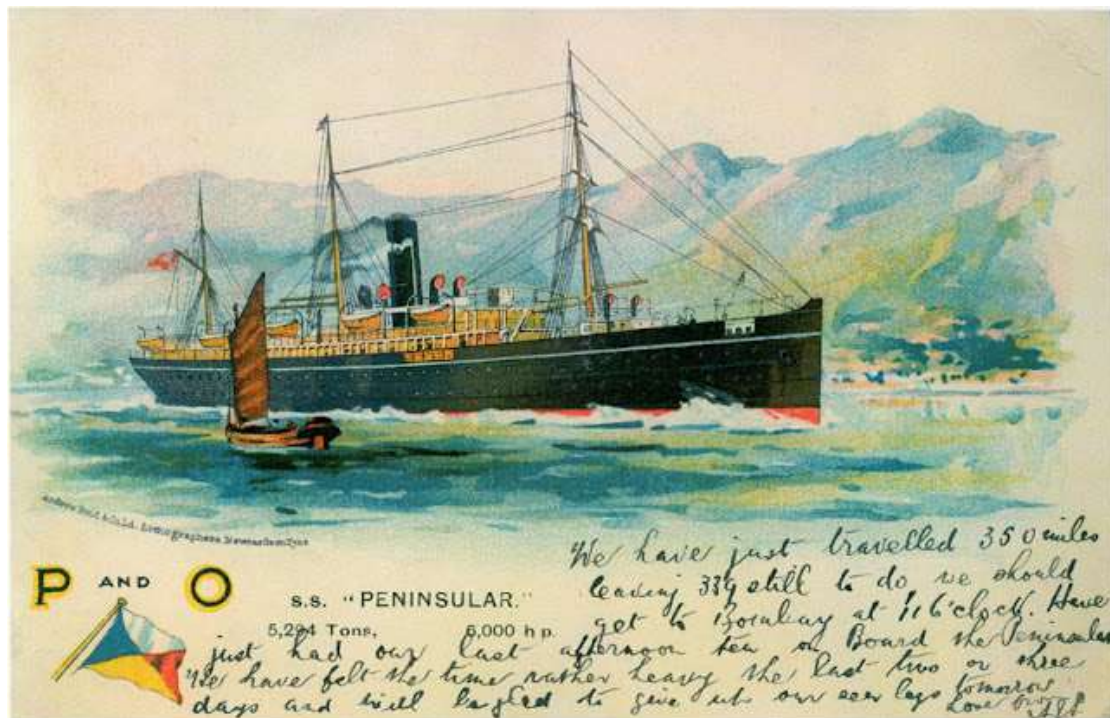
At least that is my conjecture.

Having done all that—whatever he actually did—Swamiji wrote to the Hale sisters from Sturdy's house in Caversham on the more plausible date of Sunday April **26**:

"We are busy editing books now. Nothing of importance happened on the way. It was dull, monotonous, and prosaic as my life."

Swamiji must have been enjoying a private joke with Mary and Harriet. They knew that he most certainly did not lead a dull, monotonous or prosaic life. He promised them a longer letter later.

Ships on the highways of the sea



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda sailed around the world between 1893 and 1900 on ships powered by coal and steam. It was an era when ocean liners still bore masts and rigging, but canvas sails were increasingly used only for fishing and sports sailing. Old wooden sailing ships, like old work horses, were still a common sight in harbors. Here is a brief outline of the ships known to have transported Swamiji over waters both salt and fresh. In 1900 he wrote a refreshing series of articles known as "Memoirs of European Travel" [*Parivrajak*] for the Bengali magazine *Udbodhan*. This bit is translated from the original version in Bengali, but does not fully convey his wit and humor:

What a wonderful thing a ship is! The sea, which from the shore looks so fearful, in the heart of which the sky seems to bend down and meet, from whose bosom the sun slowly rises and in which it sinks again, and the least frown of which makes the heart quail — that sea has been turned into a highway, the cheapest of all routes, by ships. Who invented the ship? No one in particular. That is to say, like all machinery indispensable to men — without which they cannot do for a single moment, and by the combination and adjustment of which all kinds of factory plants have been constructed — the ship also is the outcome of joint labour.

Indeed, it took many hands to build and sail the ships that Swamiji voyaged on. Ships being an established subject of art, I have tried to find images of them as they circulated in the popular vernacular medium of postcards. Some of these postcards are common and others have been hard to find.

Swamiji left Bombay on 31 May 1893 on the S.S. *Peninsular*, a mail packet steamer of the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company. The company's docks were near Kussara Basin. The image above was scanned from a reproduction of a postcard of the S.S. *Peninsular*. The P&O company would not have had a named postcard of the *Peninsular* as early as 1893. The P&O's early postcards were generic, and did not print the names of the ships.

The *Peninsular* stopped first in Colombo, Ceylon. Then it went to Penang, Singapore and Hong Kong. In the 1914 biography by Swami Virajananda it states:

"At Hongkong the passengers had to halt for three days waiting for transit to Japan."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

According to a letter that Swamiji wrote from Japan dated 10 July, he explored Hong Kong for three days and then went upriver on a paddle steamer, probably like one of the steamers docked in this postcard of the riverfront in Hong Kong. He wrote:

A number of Chinese steamers ply between Hong Kong and Canton. We took

passage on one of these in the evening and reached Canton early in the morning.

The English names of Canton for Guangzhou and the Canton/Pearl River for the Zhujiang were the parlance of Vivekananda's day.

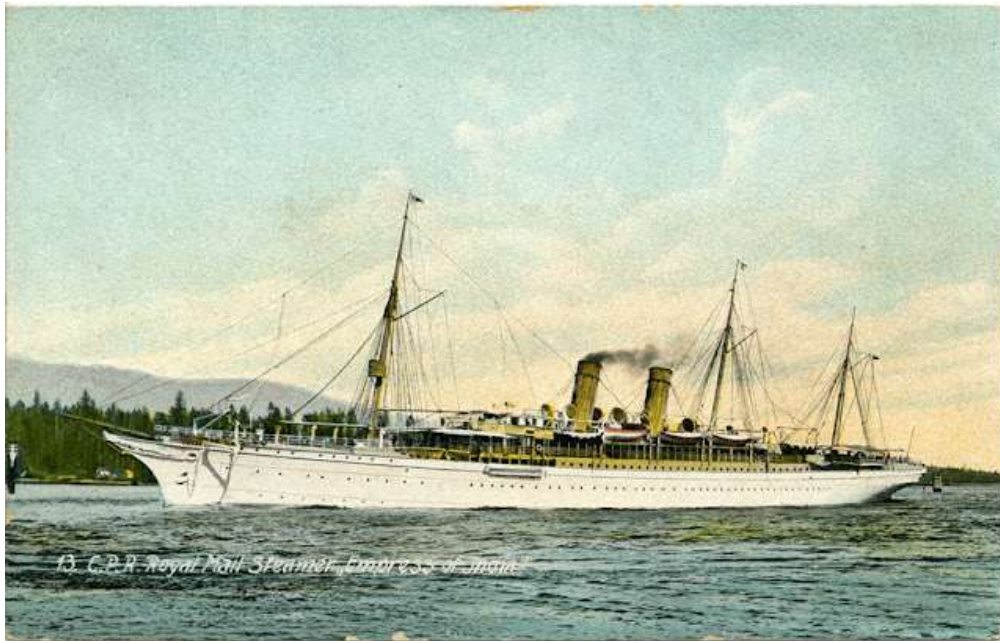


Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

It is necessary to speculate over which ship Swamiji took from Hong Kong to Japan. His passage to Chicago had been arranged in Bombay through Thomas Cook & Son. This most likely meant that his ticket fare was fixed to continue from the *Peninsular* to the *R.M.S. Empress of India* since those two ships connected at the same port. A Canadian Pacific timetable states that passengers disembarking from their steamships at Hong Kong can connect there with P&O ships bound for Colombo. Swamiji had just arrived from Colombo. However, the *Peninsular* arrived on 13 June and the *Empress of India* did not arrive in Hong Kong until the 30th and would not sail until the 5th. If Swamiji went to Japan aboard the *Empress of India* he could not have written a letter from Yokohama dated 10 July. Passengers on the *Empress of India* were in Nagasaki on 10 July.

Evidently Swamiji had made a friend, probably ChhubildasLallubhai, while on the *Peninsular*, and he arranged for them to go to Japan on an earlier ship. Three ships matching Swamiji's described itinerary are named in the *Hong Kong Daily Press*: An American ship, the *Peru*, sailed at 1 p.m. on the 17th; a P&O ship, the *Verona*, sailed on the 22nd at 5 p.m.; another American ship, the *Oceanic*, sailed on the 27th at 1 p.m.

It is believed that Swamiji may have taken the P&O SS *Verona* which left Hong Kong at dawn on 24 June 1893. It took four days to reach Nagasaki. Nagasaki was a coaling station, so a stay of a few hours there meant that the ship was loading coal. Swamiji continued on the *Verona* to Kobe. He left the ship at Kobe and took the train north to Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo and Yokohama. This scan of the SS *Verona* is a reproduction by P&O Heritage of an 1880 print.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

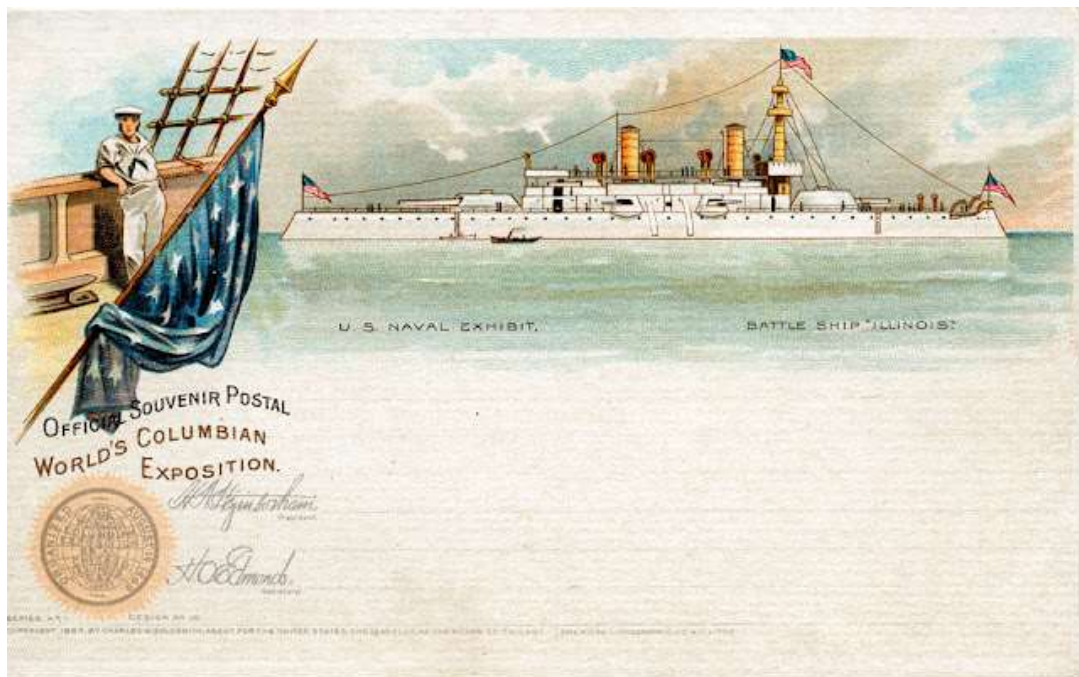
As mentioned, the *Empress of India* left Hong Kong on 5 July, then it went to Woosung (Shanghai) but no passengers were allowed to disembark there. The ship arrived in Nagasaki, Japan on the 10th. After a few hours the ship left Nagasaki and went to Kobe, arriving there on the 11th, and then it went on to Yokohama on the 12th.

Swamiji departed Yokohama on the *R.M.S. Empress of India* on 14 July at 3:40 p.m. According to searoutes.com it was 7911 kilometers; 4,272 nautical miles; or 4916 US miles across the north Pacific Ocean to Vancouver, B.C. In the arc of the route they may have passed the Aleutian Islands—explaining why Swamiji was so cold. On the evening of 25 July 1893 the *Empress* docked in Vancouver—described in a [previous post](#). His journey across Canada to Chicago is covered in nineteen contiguous posts.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In Chicago, during the first twelve days of August 1893, Swamiji was invited aboard a steam-yacht belonging to the Argo Club—see the [previous post](#)—and he went for an excursion on Lake Michigan. He may have boarded the *Argo* from the Illinois Central Pier at the end of Randolph Street, Chicago and sailed to the pier of the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji may have toured a ship that was not actually an operational vessel. The *Battleship Illinois* was built for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition so visitors

could tour a state-of-the-art military battleship. This exhibit, however, did not actually have coal-fired steam engines below deck. Instead it was a replica powered by electricity. In all other respects it was a working military ship. What Swamiji later wrote in humorous detail about battleships in his [Memoirs of European Travel](#) may reflect his guided tour through the *Battleship Illinois*:

During the Civil War of the United States of America, the Unionist party fixed rows of iron rails against the outer walls of a wooden ship so as to cover them. The enemy's cannon-balls striking against them were repulsed without doing any harm to the ship. After this, as a rule, the ship's sides began to be clad in iron, so that hostile balls might not penetrate the wood. The ship's cannon also began to improve — bigger and bigger cannon were constructed and the work of moving, loading, and firing them came to be executed by machinery, instead of with the hand. A cannon which even five hundred men cannot move an inch, can now be turned vertically or horizontally, loaded and fired by a little boy pressing a button, and all this in a second! As the iron wall of ships began to increase in thickness, so cannon with the power of thunder also began to be manufactured. At the present day, a battle-ship is a fortress with walls of steel, and the guns are almost as Death itself. A single shot is enough to smash the biggest ship into fragments. But this "iron bridal-chamber" — which Nakindar's father (in the popular Bengali tale) never even dreamt of, and which, instead of standing on the top of "Sâtâli Hill" moves dancing on seventy thousand mountain-like billows, even this is mortally afraid of torpedoes! The torpedo is a tube somewhat shaped like a cigar, and if fired at an object travels under water like a fish. Then, the moment it hits its object, the highly explosive materials it contains explode with a terrific noise, and the ship under which this takes place is reduced to its original condition, that is, partly into iron and wooden fragments, and partly into smoke and fire! And no trace is found of the men who are caught in this explosion of the torpedo — the little that is found, is almost in a state of mince-meat! Since the invention of these torpedoes, naval wars cannot last long. One or two fights, and a big victory is scored or a total defeat. But the wholesale loss of men of both parties in naval fight which men apprehended before the introduction of these men-of-war has been greatly falsified by facts.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji traveled on ferries numerous times while in America. It can be deduced that Swamiji traveled via the Michigan Central Railroad between Chicago and the east coast because that route passed Niagara Falls. Swamiji wrote in Bengali to his brothers at Alambazar Math in a letter questionably dated 1894 that he had seen Niagara Falls seven or eight times—additionally he wrote that he knew the Falls were frozen in winter. Another memorable part of traveling on the Michigan Central Railroad, which crossed southern Ontario, was that the train had to be loaded on a ferry to cross the Detroit River between Windsor and Detroit. This meant that as many times as Swamiji had seen Niagara Falls he had also crossed the Detroit River by ferry.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

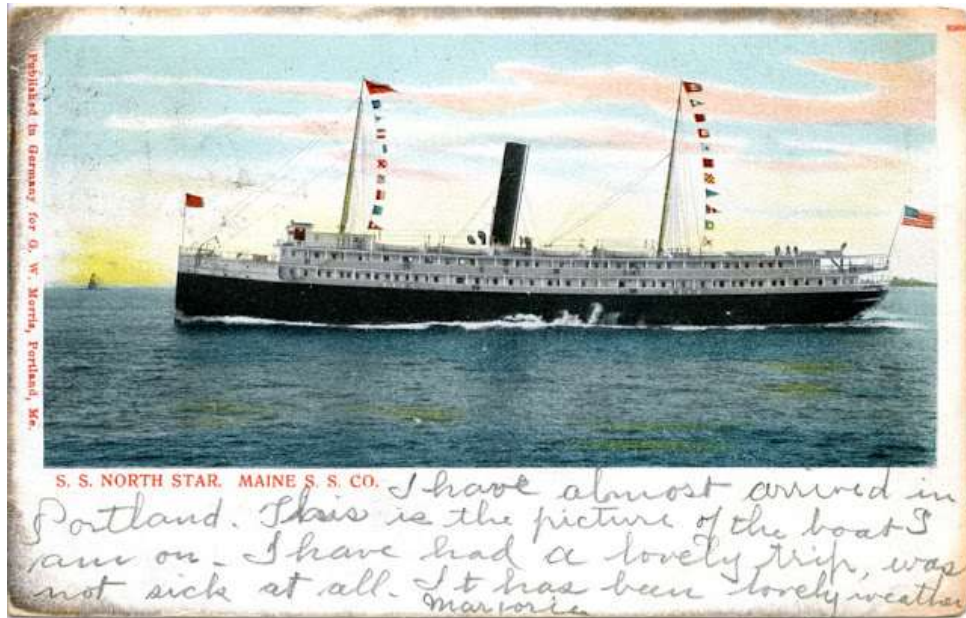
The next time Swamiji took a boat trip was probably 27 July 1894—described in an [earlier post](#). Swamiji went by steamer on the Piscataqua River from the pier of the Boston & Maine Railroad in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to Greenacre Inn near South Eliot, Maine. According to M.L. Burke in *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries Vol. 2*, the trip took about an hour. In 1899, when Swami Abhedananda spoke at Greenacre, the new *Steamer Columbia* took people from Portsmouth to Greenacre. The *Columbia* began service in June 1899. The name of the steamer that Vivekananda travelled on is not known.

Swamiji mentioned in a letter on 31 July that he had been invited to go "to an island fifteen miles out at sea. I hope we shall have a nice time." If he had gone to the Isles of Shoals, a popular destination about fifteen miles from Greenacre, he may have traveled on the 1883 *Steamer Viking*—visible at [this link](#). The passenger steamer in this 1907 Detroit Publishing Co. postcard represents the type of craft Swamiji would have traveled on the Piscataqua River.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji traveled several times on the ferries in New York harbor. On 11 October 1894 Swamiji left New York to go to Baltimore on the Pennsylvania Railroad. To do his he had to cross the harbor by ferry to get to the Pennsylvania Railroad terminal in Jersey City, as described in this [linked post](#).



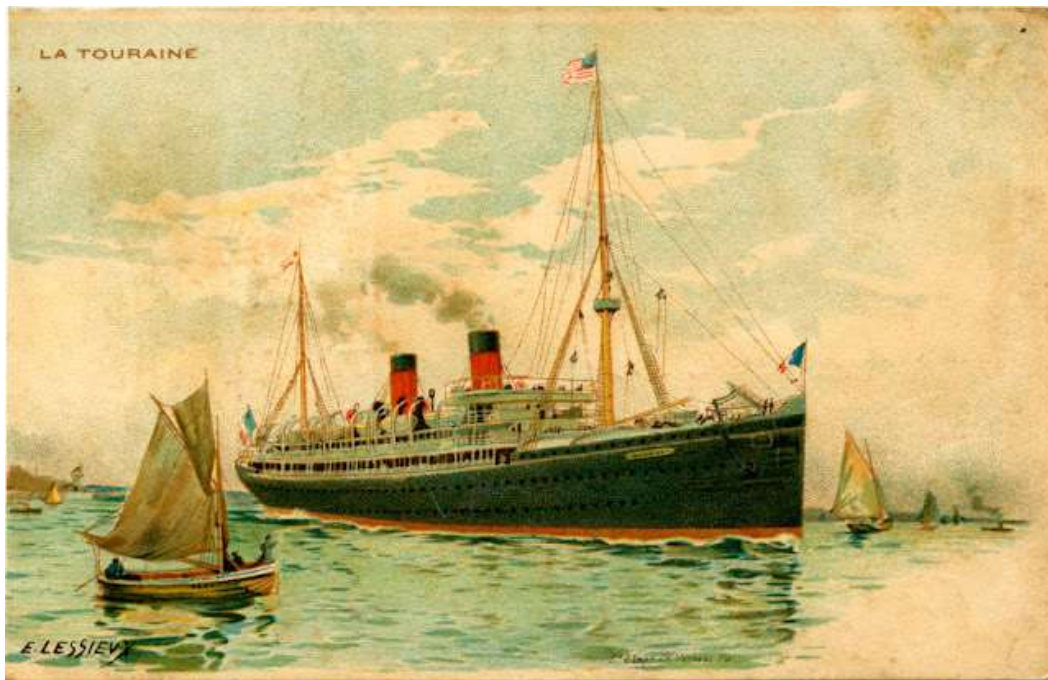
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

At 5 p.m. on Tuesday, 4 June 1895, Swamiji departed from Pier 38 on the East River, New York City for Portland, Maine on a 26 hour voyage through Long Island Sound and up the New England coast. The first leg of the trip to Cottage City on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts was covered in [this linked post](#), and the second part in the [succeeding post](#). In 1895 the Maine Steamship Company had three ships dedicated to its New York/Portland route: *The Cottage City*, *Tremont*, and *Manhattan*. This circa 1904 postcard shows the *North Star*, built in 1901 for the Maine Steamship Company.



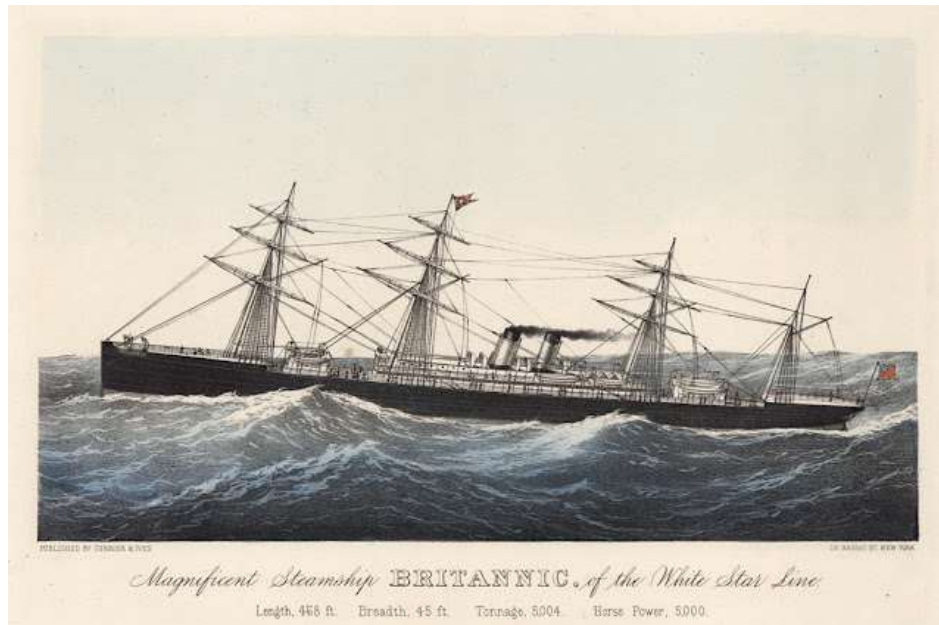
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

A few weeks later, early in the morning of 19 July 1895, Swamiji traveled on the palace steamer *St. Lawrence*, dubbed "The Greyhound of the River." from Clayton New York to Thousand Island Park—covered in a [previous post](#). In 1895, the ships owned by the Thousand Island Steamboat Company were: the *Empire State*, the largest of the fleet, with a capacity of 1000; the *St. Lawrence*, capacity 860; and a new steamer, *America*, capacity 600.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

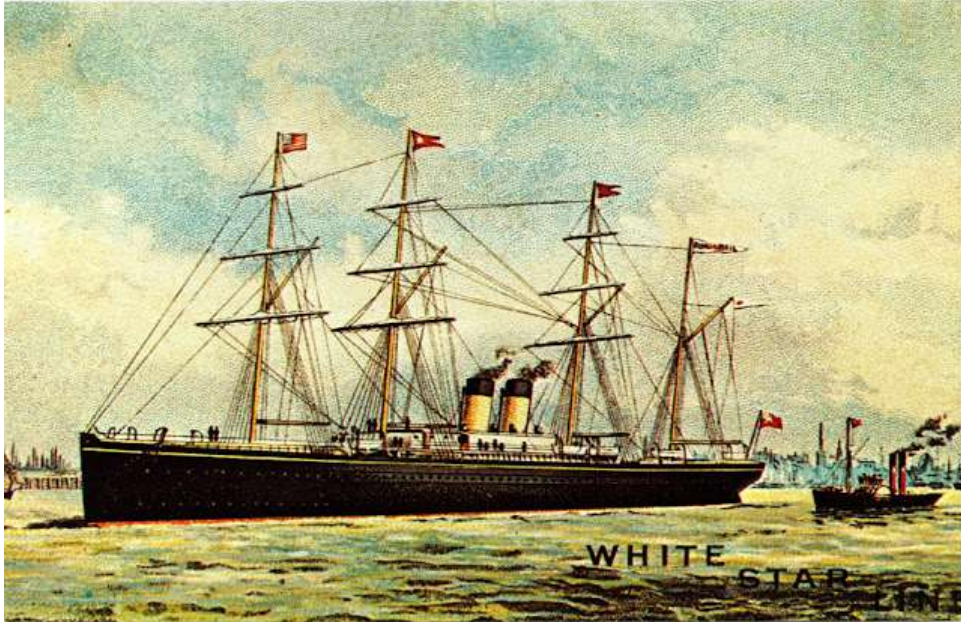
At noon on Saturday 17 August the steamship *SS La Touraine* owned by CGT, Compagnie Générale Transatlantique set sail from the pier at the end of Morton Street, on the Hudson River side of Manhattan with Swamiji and Francis H Leggett on board—see the full story at a [previous post](#). They traveled 5854 kilometers/3161 nautical miles to Le Havre, France landing on 24 August.



Mariners Museum

On 27 November 1895 Swamiji departed London from Euston Station on the London and Northwestern Railway to Riverside Station, Liverpool right on the River Mersey where he would board a steamship bound for New York City. This ship, the *RMS Britannic* of the White Star Line, was built in 1875—too early to have its own postcard. Currier & Ives prints were popular media long before postcards. Other prints of the *Britannic* in the [Royal Museum Greenwich](#) show this ship with sails unfurled, but the Currier & Ives print shows the more progressive aspect of this ship: steam power. Her sailing masts were superfluous.

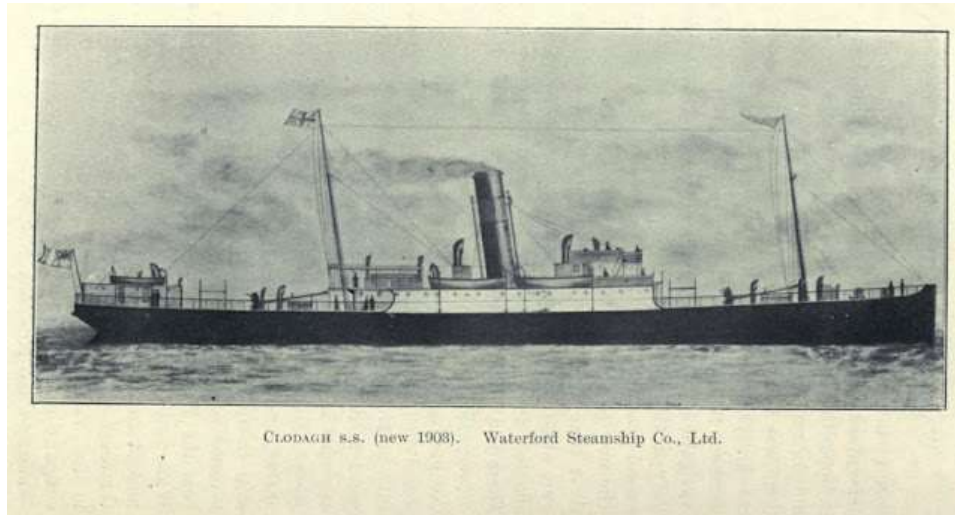
Early in the morning of Friday 6 December, after an unpleasantly rough voyage, the *Britannic* sailed into New York harbor with Swamiji. This story was covered in [a previous post](#).



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

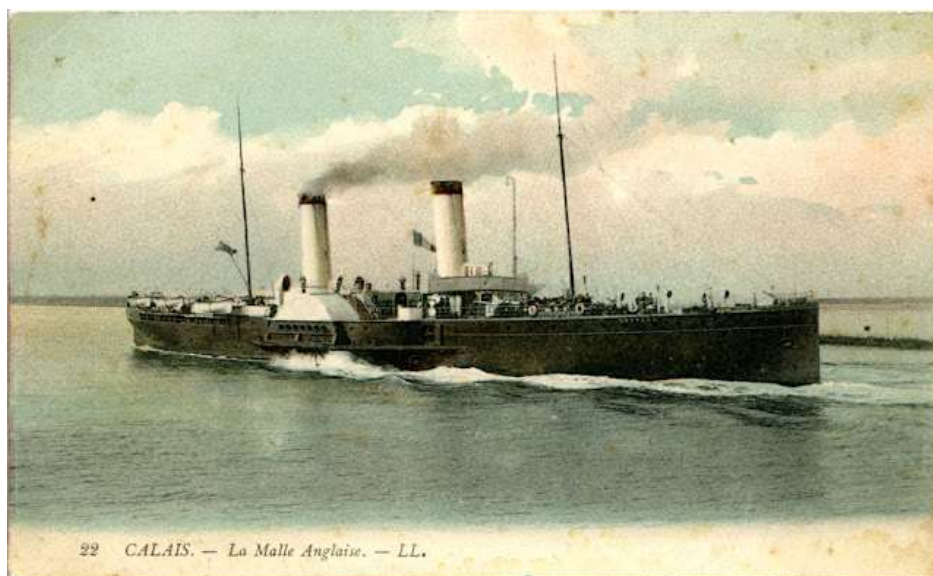
At noon on 15 April 1896 Swamiji and J.J. Goodwin boarded the *RMS Germanic* for his second voyage from New York City to Liverpool, England. The *Germanic* was the sister ship to the *Britannic*. Since his trip on the *Britannic* had been unpleasant, the reason why he sailed again on the White Star Line must have been the low ticket price. This modern postcard by the Oceanic Navigation Research Society is a reproduction of a chromolithograph advertisement for the White Star Line. It faithfully resembles a photograph of the *Germanic*.

Swamiji could not have arrived in Liverpool on the *Germanic* as assumed by M.L. Burke if he and Goodwin went ashore to see something of Ireland. The *Germanic* arrived in Queenstown at 4:19 a.m. on 23 April and the names of Vivekananda and Goodwin were among those passengers who went ashore with the mail. The ship departed for Liverpool at 4:45 a.m. See this [previous post](#) for the story of Swamiji's "run through Ireland."



[Archive.org](https://www.archive.org)

According to my theory on what Swamiji and J.J. Goodwin did in Ireland, they took a steamer from Waterford, Ireland to Bristol, England. On 24 April 1896 they went from the quayside in Waterford, down the River Suir, merged into the River Barrow, crossed St. Georges Channel, entered the Bristol Channel, went up the River Avon and landed in Bristol. The journey took 15 hours. In 1896 the Waterford Steamship Company had four ships servicing the route between Waterford and Bristol: *Dunbrody*, *Reginald*, *Comeragh*, and *Lara*. There are photographs of the *Lara* and the *Dunbrody* in a [previous post](#). My attempt here is to show a ship of the Waterford Steamship Company as it was published in the media, in this case, the 1903 [History of Steam Navigation](#) by John Kennedy. This illustration of the 1903 SS *Clodagh* closely resembles the four older Waterford steamers, on one of which Swamiji may have been a passenger.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 19 July 1896 Swamiji, accompanied by Captain James Henry Sevier and his wife Charlotte, crossed the English Channel to France. They would have traveled via the London, Chatham & Dover Railway, going from Admiralty Pier, Dover to Calais. This shipping line employed paddle boats, an unnamed vessel shown in the French postcard above. Swamiji and the Seviers crossed the Channel again 16 December 1896 when they went to Italy. Swamiji's first Channel crossing, about which nothing is known, was after 10 September 1895. The story of his first trip to Caversham, England was covered in a [previous post](#).



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 22 July 1896 Swamiji with Captain and Mrs. Sevier took a boat excursion on Lake Geneva to see the Castle of Chillon. The boat on this postcard is representative of the type of steamers on the lake in that era.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 22 August Swamiji and the Seviars took another steamer trip in Switzerland, this time on Lake Lucerne to William Tell's Chapel.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

From 27 August to 3 September 1896 Swamiji with Captain and Mrs. Sevier enjoyed a cruise up the River Rhine in a steam powered excursion ship, name unknown, but it was probably a paddle ship/sidewheeler like the one shown in this postcard of Ehrenbreitstein. Their river cruise extended from Coblenz to Cologne. There were many passenger ships on the Rhine. It is not known if they changed ships during their eight day cruise.



[Wikipedia](#)

On 16 September 1896 Swamiji and the Seviars departed Europe from the jetty at Hoek van Holland and landed at Parkeston Quay in Harwich at the mouth of the River Stour opposite Felixstowe. The Great Eastern Railway operated a passenger route connecting London with Amsterdam and Berlin. In 1896 there were four screw propeller ships servicing the route between Harwich and Hoek van Holland that Swamiji may have sailed on: *Berlin*, *Vienna*, *Amsterdam*, or *Chelmsford*. The postcard here shows the S.S. *Berlin*, built in 1894.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 30 December 1896 Swamiji and the Seviars met JJ Goodwin in Naples and sailed for Ceylon on the *Prinz Regent Luitpold* operated by the Norddeutschen Lloyd company, a distance of 4984 nautical miles. The ship went through the Suez Canal. Swamiji arrived in Colombo on 15 January 1897 and was given a triumphal welcome. Swamiji, Goodwin and the Seviars went by train and bullock cart through Ceylon to Jaffna in the north.

On 26 January Swamiji left Jaffna, Ceylon by ship unknown to Pamban Roads, Rameswaram, India. Swami Virajananda wrote in the 1914 biography:

"At the Swami's request arrangements were made immediately to convey him and his party across the sea from the Island of Jaffna to the shores of his own native land. The voyage, about fifty miles, was commenced soon after midnight, and the weather being favorable, the crossing was throughout delightful. On Tuesday, the 26th of January about 3 p.m. the steamer carrying the Swami and his European disciples arrived in Pamban Roads. The Swami having been previously invited by the Rajah of Ramnad to Rameswaram, was about to leave for that place when he heard of the unexpected arrival of the Rajah himself to receive him in person at Pamban in the evening. The Swami was later on transferred from the ship in which he had made the voyage to the State-boat of His Highness."

The moon was in its third quarter when Swamiji's party sailed away at midnight.



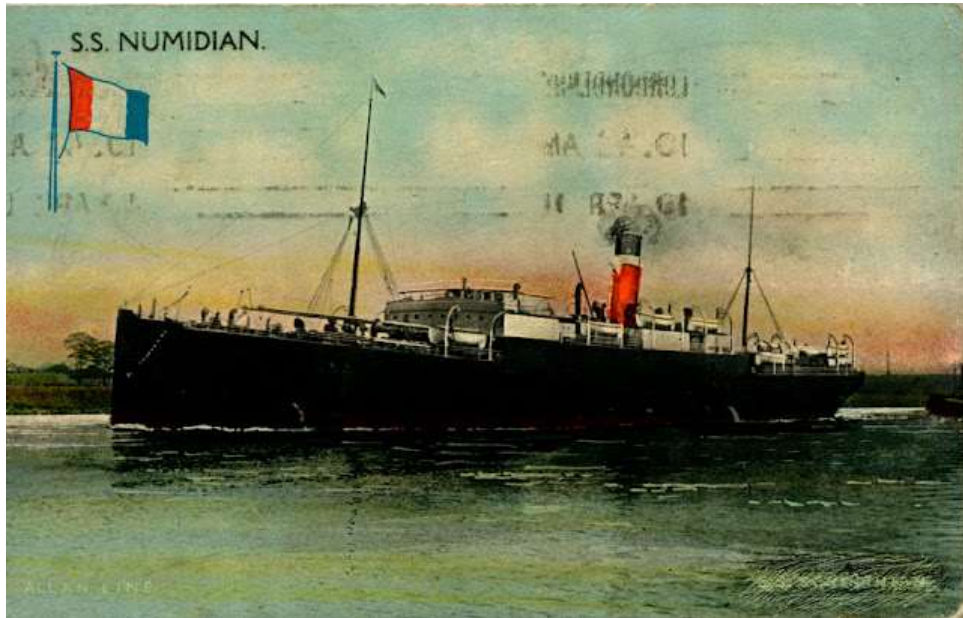
Wrecksite

On Sunday 14 February 1897 Swamiji left Madras for Calcutta on the British India steamship Mombassa.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 20 June 1899 the S.S. *Golconda* owned by British India Steam Navigation left the Hoogly River, Calcutta with Swamiji, Sister Nivedita and Swami Turiyananda aboard. This would be Vivekananda's longest voyage yet, at 8725 nautical miles. The ship stopped at Madras, but no one could go ashore due to plague quarantine. The ship stopped in Colombo and Swamiji disembarked to visit friends. The *Golconda* was quarantined in Aden and again in Naples; then the ship swung by Marseilles, and passed through the Strait of Gibraltar. Finally all arrived at Tilbury Docks on the Thames opposite Gravesend on 31 July 1899.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 17 August 1899 Swamiji, Nivedita and Turiyananda left Princes Dock on the River Clyde Glasgow on the S.S. *Numidian* of the Allan Line. They arrived 27 August at Dock 21, New York City.

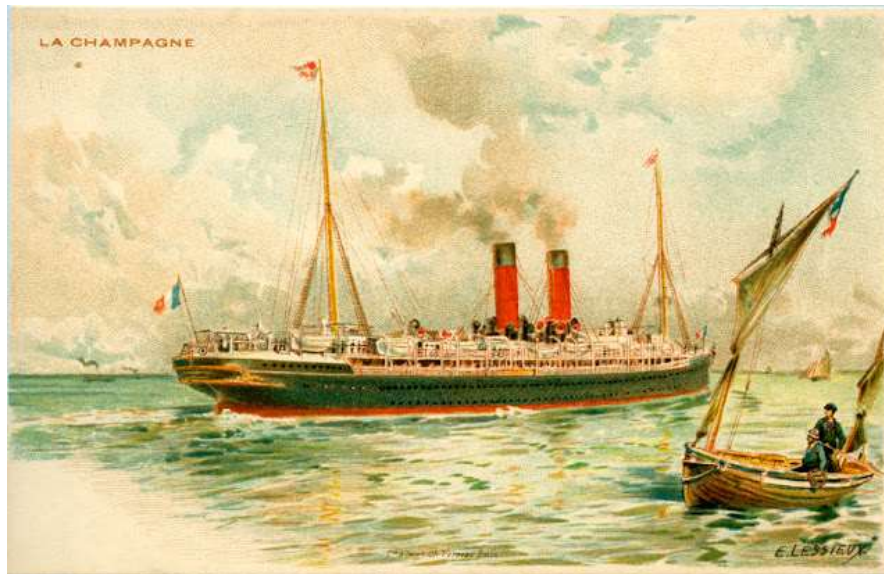
On the 28th they took a New York City ferry to Weehawken, New Jersey to go 90 miles north on the West Shore RR to Stone Ridge, NY.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji came to San Francisco on 22 February 1900 on the Southern Pacific Railroad. To get around the Bay area Swamiji rode on ferries numerous times between San Francisco and Oakland and Alameda. On 2 May he took a ferry across

the Bay to Marin County to Camp Taylor, returning on 15 May. On 30 May 1900, when Swamiji left San Francisco, on the Overland Limited of the Southern Pacific railroad, the whole train was transported across the Carquinez Strait on the *Solano*, the world's largest ferry. The *Solano* was a sidewheel paddleboat built in 1879 that operated between Benicia and Port Costa in California.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 26 July 1900 Swamiji left New York on *La Champagne*, his second voyage on a ship owned by Compagnie Generale Transatlantique. He arrived in Le Havre on 3 August and took the train to Gare St. Lazare in Paris.



Royal Museums Greenwich

On 10 November 1900 Swamiji with Josephine MacLeod and Emma Calvé left

Constantinople on a steamship which first took them to L'isle de Prinkipo [Büyükada], an island in the Sea of Marmara. They sailed through the Dardanelles into the Aegean to Port Piraeus. Swamiji toured Athens and Eleusis for about three days. On 14 November in Port Piraeus, they boarded the *Czar* (or *Tsar*) built in 1883 and owned by ROPIT, the Russian Steam Navigation & Trading Company. Their intention was to visit Cairo, and their ship arrived in the Port of Alexandria on the 15th.

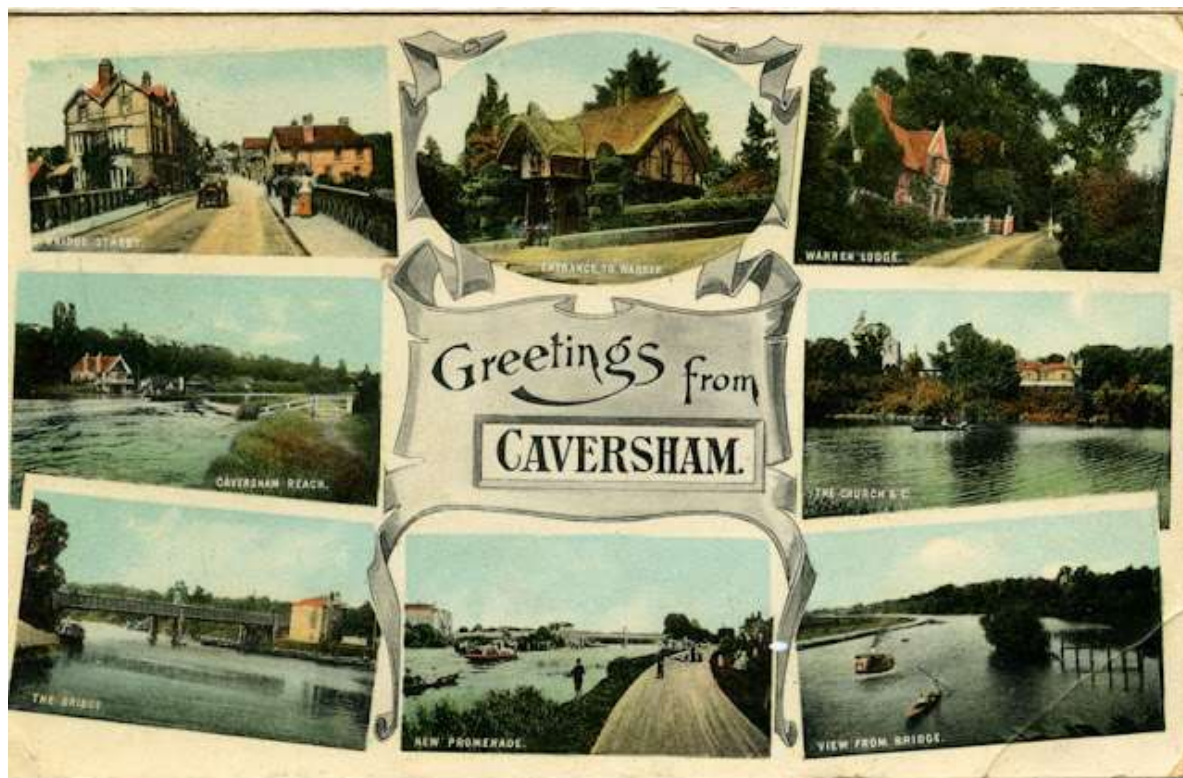


Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In Cairo Swamiji decided that he had had enough of the West. He felt the call to go home to India and on 26 November 1900 he left Cairo to catch the *RafaeleRubattino* owned by the NGI, NavagazioneGeneraleItaliana at Port Tawfiq, at the southern end of the Suez Canal. His ticket had been hastily procured and then he encountered lengthy red tape sorting it out. After 3195 nautical miles through the Red Sea into the Arabian Sea, he arrived in Bombay on 6 December 1900.

26 April to 6 May 1896 Berkshire, England

Bicycles in Berkshire



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

After their little “run through Ireland”—described in a [previous post](#)—Swami Vivekananda and his traveling companion, J.J. Goodwin, went their separate ways for a fortnight. Goodwin went to visit his mother in Batheaston, Somerset, and Swamiji went to stay with his disciple, [E.T. Sturdy](#), in Caversham, just across the Thames from Reading, Berkshire.



Source: TuckDB

In the aforementioned post about Swamiji's trip through Ireland, I questioned the date transcribed from one of his letters which led to a mix-up over the date of his arrival in England. The letter in question, to the Hale sisters in Chicago, was supposedly written on 20 April, but logistically, it must have been written on 26 April. As soon as Swamiji settled in at Sturdy's house, he wrote several short letters back to the States telling of his safe arrival, one of them, to Sister Christine, retained the correctly transcribed date of 26 April.



Source: VSStL

Swamiji was very glad to see Swami Saradananda in Caversham. He had summoned Saradananda from India to take over the work in Boston, and the swami had arrived in England on the first of April. Swamiji had not seen his gurubhai for several years. He wrote to the Hale sisters: "The other monk is here; he is one of the nicest of men I see, and is quite a learned monk too." Between them, there was much to discuss about Alambazar Math back in Calcutta and the rest of the band of brothers who had taken vows of sannyas, determined to follow the teachings of their guru, Sri Ramakrishna.



Source: TuckDB

The next day, 27 April, Swamiji wrote an important letter to India, outlining the rules, regulations, and basic organization for the monastery in India which would become the Ramakrishna Math at Belur. He appointed Swami Brahmananda as president of the monastery and wrote this postscript:

"Please tell Brahmananda that he who is the servant of all is their true master. He never becomes a leader in whose love there is a consideration of high or low. He whose love knows no end, and never stops to consider high or low, has the whole world lying at his feet."

Raphael Tuck & Sons published these postcards of a postman collecting the Royal Mail with a bicycle. By 1889 red pillar boxes were common in London, but in Caversham, Swamiji probably did not have the convenience of dropping his letters in a nearby red pillar box.



Source: Google Maps

Swamiji stayed with Sturdy for about a week. His intention was to go to London at the first of the month, but for some reason, Swamiji and Saradananda instead went to spend a few days with Frances Henrietta Muller in Pinkney's Green, not far from Caversham. This would be Swamiji's second visit to The Meads, Muller's residence. This time, he not only had Saradananda as a companion, but his younger brother, Mahendranath, came to stay with Miss Muller as well

N^o. 8766



A.D. 1896

Date of Application, 25th Apr., 1896—Accepted, 30th May, 1896.

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.

Improvements in Ladies' Garments for Cycling and other Purposes.

I, FRANCES HENRIETTA MÜLLER, of Meads, Maidenhead, in the County of Berks, Gentlewoman, do hereby declare the nature of this invention and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be particularly described and ascertained in and by the following statement:—

5 These improvements consist in the form and combination of three specially constructed articles of ladies' costume, so made as to afford special facility and convenience when cycling.

Reference is made to the accompanying drawings in which

Figs. 1 and 2 illustrate a combination vest and knickerbockers.

10 Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6 refer to a skirt, and Figs. 7, 8, 9 and 10 show an outside garment or coat.

Referring to Figs. 1 and 2 which form respectively front and back views of a combined vest and knickerbockers, it will be seen that the fastening is made by buttons A down the left side, and that at the back a fold B may be let down by undoing the buttons C. The knickerbockers are long enough to extend below the knee and may be provided with strap and buckle, buttons, or elastic band, to retain them at this point. They may be of more or less fulness according to the taste of the wearer.

Over this garment the skirt shown in Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6 is intended to be worn. 20 It will be seen that it is a simple gored article, and may clear the ground say by about six inches. Dispensing entirely with lining, it has only a narrow stitched hem around the bottom, and a waistband provided with a row of buttons on the outside, as marked D in Fig. 3.

Source: [Bikes & Bloomers](#)

In a [previous post](#) about Nivedita's story of the time when Swamiji faced a charging bull, I disputed the commonly held belief that it was Miss Muller who sank helplessly to the ground, unable to run from the bull. To support my argument, I cited this patent that the very able-bodied Miss Muller had filed for a woman's cycling costume, with improvements for the facilitation of movement. Muller applied for her patent on 25 April 1896, just a few days before Swamiji arrived as her houseguest. So bicycling was "in the air" so to speak, while he was there.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Swamiji had made his historic debut at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893. The month of September 1893 was also historic for another event. [Tessie Reynolds](#) became the first woman to bicycle from Brighton to London and back again—120 miles (190 km)—in the record breaking time of 8 hours and 30 minutes. She was sixteen years old and she wore the “rational” dress shown in this photo. Male cycling enthusiasts were outraged. They could not admit that a woman had set a new speed and endurance record in their cherished sport. Oh no, her performance was somehow invalidated by her scandalous outfit. All the publicity, despite its negativity, gave a boost to the suffragette movement that Muller ardently supported. No doubt in response to Reynolds’s allegedly scanty costume, Muller sought to design a cycling costume more acceptable to gentlewomen while still permitting athletic movement.

Reynolds’s record stood for a whole year before a man broke it by 42 minutes. According to Google Maps, it takes five hours and 20 minutes to

bicycle one way from Brighton to London via Brighton Road and National Cycle Route 20. Reynolds's record is still a very respectable time.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji's brother, Mahendra, was studying law in London. Swamiji preferred that he study electrical engineering, which in the 1890s was a hot career with a great future, but Mahendra did not have that technical inclination. In *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries V4*, M. L. Burke cited some incidents from a memoir that MahendraNath wrote in Bengali, *Londone Vivekananda*:

One day he [Swamiji] was in a buoyant mood, light-hearted, and a hilarious scene took place in which the two stout swamis tried to mount and ride a bicycle, in the field in front of Miss Muller's house. That day he was his boyish self, all jokes, and sang in a sweet voice a Bengali song: "Who set me adrift on the waves in the boat of desire? At morn the boat went floating and I thought this was a grand play of the water, and the spring breeze would blow sweet. I would go floating in joy."

Of course, Mahendra wrote this as if he, the younger brother, remained a

dignified observer throughout this exercise. I am sure that all three of them took turns on the bike. Was it Miss Muller's bicycle, or someone else's? In the spirit of this event here are three young cyclists in a RP postcard from Berkshire. Close observation reveals that all three are preparing for their ride by smoking cigarettes. Fashionable then—foolish now. Note the lanterns mounted on the bikes.

From Swamiji's point of view, I think it was key that Goodwin was not there to witness his awkwardness. Other people in America may have urged Swamiji to ride a bicycle, but this time, perhaps for Goodwin's sake, he made an effort. During their travels together Goodwin must have confessed to Swamiji his disastrous publishing ventures that had ended in bankruptcy in October 1893. One of the periodicals he had invested in was *Cycle Record*. Goodwin was no doubt an able cyclist, as was Sturdy. Better to be clumsy in front of your brothers than in front of your students. At least a good time was had by all. Much later, Swamiji may have bicycled in Wimbledon Common. In previous posts I covered Swamiji's attempts at [roller-skating](#) and also his spectacular first round of [golf](#).



READING — SONNING CHURCH AND WHITE HART HOTEL

Sturdy had rented a house in London where Swamiji could live and give classes. Mahendranath wrote in *London Vivekananda* that while they were at The Meads:

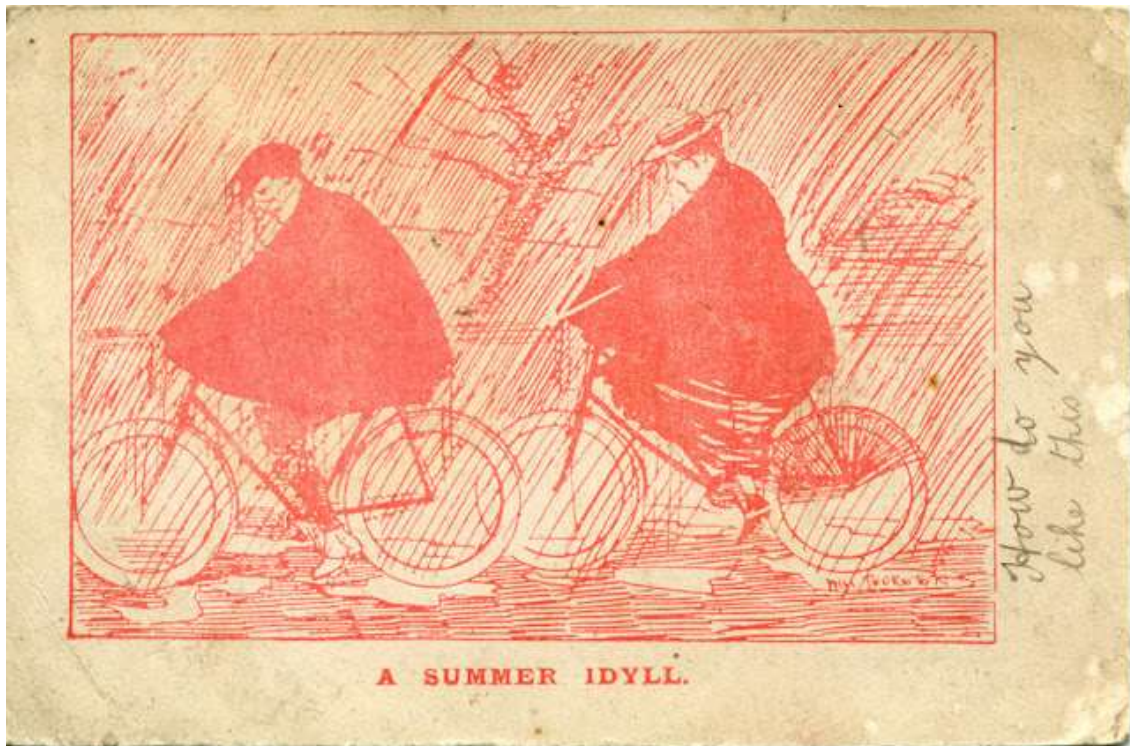
“One day at 3 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Sturdy arrived on two bicycles, sat and talked about the London plans, rent, etc. They decided to forward money themselves in hope of recovering some later. Miss Muller wore a “man’s” suit, in the fashion of London at the time. Swami Vivekananda always followed the custom of speaking in the language understood by all present.”

Mahendra packed a lot of information into his few sentences. Sturdy and Muller, both former Theosophists, had become allies in their devotion to Swamiji. They were planning how the house that had been rented in London would be used, and by whom. There were expenses to consider. Both Sturdy and Muller were persons of "independent means," meaning they had inherited money and they did not have to work for an employer. They were probably planning on charging for some of Swamiji's publications. Swamiji was against charging admission to his public lectures, but there was hall rental to consider.

Mahendra verified, without comprehending it, that Miss Muller wore her cycling suit. Lucy Sturdy had just cycled over wearing a long skirt, and so Muller was modeling her outfit for Lucy. Long skirts tended to get caught in the bike chain or the spokes, therefore Muller probably demonstrated the advantages of her design. Mahendra also revealed that there may have been occasions when Swamiji instructed his brother to speak English, and not Bengali, in front of guests.

It was about twelve miles from the Sturdy's house in Caversham to The Meads. Depending upon where Sturdy's house, High View, was actually located, they would have crossed the Thames either at Henley or at

Sonning, shown in the postcard above.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Considering the realities of life under uncertain English skies, I thought of Edward and Lucy Sturdy when I saw this 1905 postcard. Rain capes are a necessary item for cyclists in England. They have loops on the inside for your thumbs, to keep the cape positioned over the handlebars.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Even more certain than the probability of showers was the hilly terrain around Caversham. Sturdy's house must have been named High View for a reason.



Source: Wikipedia

In this 1905 photo of Bridge Street in Caversham, two bicycles are parked at the curb and two more are being pushed up the hill by a man and a woman.



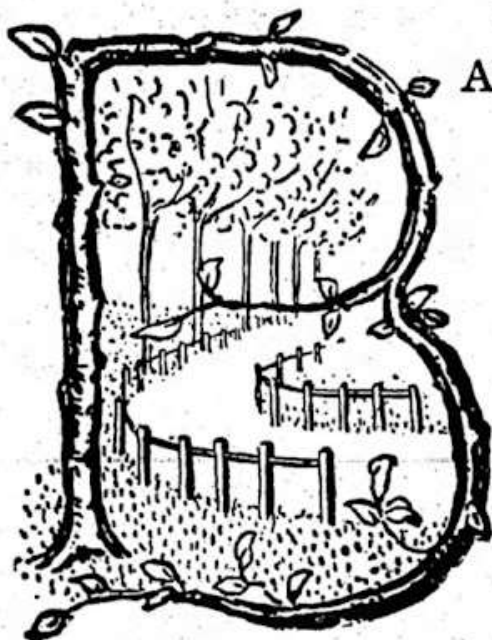
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji began his classes in London on 6 May. He, Sturdy, Muller, Saradananda, Mahendra, and Goodwin all moved to 63 St. George's Road, Pimlico.

Did Miss Muller bring her bicycle to London? If so, she may have ridden it in Hyde Park, like the woman coasting along in this postcard of Rotten Row. Horses usually dominated the traffic in Rotten Row, but judging by the number of cyclists in the crowd there may have been a special cycling event that day.

THE PARKS.

BY ADELINE ANNING.



ATTERSEA PARK.—

An aggressive looking orange-coloured card on my mantelpiece insisted with great persistence in reminding me that I had half-promised to go and hear the Swami Vive-trananda expound "The Vedanta Philosophy" to an elect few. I hesitated long 'twixt the Swami and the Cycle, and the cycle won. It was such a hot evening, and the very name of the man made one hotter. So of "The Vedanta Philosophy" I am as ignorant as ever, but it matters not; the Philosophy of the Wheel is the only philosophy of to-day.

Did Adeline Anning ever learn from her friends what she had missed? Who else but Henrietta Muller would have sent out special invitations on orange card to the members of the Wheelwoman Society? Swamiji would have been glad that on the Fourth of July Ms. Anning made a choice that represented freedom for herself, but in the long run, many miles and flat tires later, a little Vedanta philosophy might have come in hand.

Pimlico, London, UK 6 May to 18 July 1896

63 St George's Road



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On Wednesday, 6 May 1896, Swami Vivekananda moved into 63 St. George's Road [Drive] in the Pimlico section of London. It was the townhouse of Sir Mortimer Reginald Margesson and his wife Lady Isabel Margesson. Back in March, Edward T. Sturdy had arranged to rent the house for five months, until 1st October. Two days after moving in, Swamiji wrote to Sara Bull back in Massachusetts:

I am very sorry you are not coming over this year. We are in Lady Isabel's

house. Miss [Henrietta] Muller has taken some rooms in it too. Goodwin is here with us. We have not yet made any big stir here. The classes have begun; they are not yet what we expected. We [have] had only two yet. We will work on steadily the next 4 or 5 months. Sturdy is as patient and persevering and hopeful as ever.

It is cool enough here yet to have a fire in the grate.

63 St. George's Road is just a few doors away from St. Gabriel's Church. This Charles Martin postcard view of St. Gabriel's Church is from the Belgrave Road end of Warwick Square.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The spire of St. Gabriel's Church is visible looking down Cambridge Street from its intersection with Charlwood Street in this Charles Martin postcard. Cambridge Street runs parallel with St. George's Road, behind No. 63.



Source: NLS

A red dot marks 63 St. George's Road in this 1895 Ordnance Survey map of London. The map shows the density of terraced houses in this residential neighborhood and the high value for the residents of having a green square to gaze at and walk around.



Source: NLS

Again a red dot marks 63 St. George's Road in this close-up detail from the same 1895 Ordnance Survey map. The Margesson house was near the intersection with Gloucester Street. Compared to other parts of London, the neighborhood has not changed that much.



Source: Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries

A circular blue English Heritage marker stating "Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) Hindu philosopher lived here in 1896" is now fixed on the wall in place of the former street sign seen in this older photograph of 63 St. George's Road. A bicycle is appropriately parked by the railing—see my [previous post](#).

M L Burke, described the house and its summer occupants in *Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries*:

"let us go quickly from bottom to top of its five floors. In the basement, below street level, were the kitchen, storerooms, and servant quarters. On the floor above—the ground floor—was the entrance hall and to its right the parlor. This room, which had one tall window looking over the iron-fenced areaway to the street, was used by Swamiji (and the others) as a sitting room and dining room combined. Behind it were two small rooms, in one of which he slept, and beyond them was a small lavatory [W.C.]. ... The floor above to which a narrow stairway led, [was] given over to the double

drawing room where Swamiji held his classes. Above this was the second floor, one room of which—surely the front and larger one—was occupied by Miss Muller, and the other by Mr. Sturdy. Proceeding upward, one came to the bathroom—*the bathroom*—off the landing between the second and third floors. The third floor contained a large [nursery], probably the same size as the double drawing room, in which several people could sleep. ... it was occupied by Swami Saradananda and Mahendra. As in all the rooms, there was a fireplace here ... Above this was the garret, a long, narrow room with dormer windows and a sloping ceiling. Here slept Goodwin.”

Vivekananda's room was peculiar. It was quite small and had no exterior windows. Some natural light came from a few interior clerestory windows. They may have opened like transoms. This detailed description of the original configuration of the rooms at No. 63 was made thanks to the enterprise of Swami Yogeshananda who documented the house in 1973 shortly before it was remodeled into flats.



Source: [NPG](#)

Lady Isabel Margesson was a woman of progressive ideas and she was the first to host Swamiji in her home on 10 November 1895 for a meeting of the Sesame Club. When she met Swamiji, her son [David](#) was only five years old. In 1916 David wed Frances Leggett, the daughter of Swamiji's friends, Betty and Francis Howard Leggett. By the time this photograph was taken in 1921, Lady Margesson was a grandmother.

At the Sesame Club, 171, Victoria-street, this afternoon, the Committee are "At Home" from 4 to 7. The Education League and Sesame Club exists for promoting reform in education. The Committee includes the Marchioness of Ripon, Lady Isabel Margesson, who is also one of the hon. secretaries, Mrs. Ashton Jonson, also an hon. secretary, Mr. W. Jolly, Mr. Bernard Wishaw, Mr. C. O. Ashton Jonson, hon. treasurer, and thirteen or fourteen other ladies and gentlemen. The Sesame Club is the headquarters of the Education League. Tuesday evenings are set apart for lectures or debates on such subjects as music, art, science, and others coming under the general head of education, taken in its widest sense. Similar meetings are also held in the afternoon to suit the convenience of those unable to attend in the evening.

Source: Daily News 19 November 1895

The previous year, on 10 November 1895, Swamiji had given a lecture at the Margesson's home. This small invitation-only meeting later took on historic importance because it was Margaret Noble's first sight of Vivekananda. Margaret, the future Sister Nivedita, was an early childhood teacher. Lady Isabel Margesson had young children during the period the 1890s and she was involved with the latest education methods.

This item from the *Daily News*, 19 November 1895, gives an outline of the newly formed Sesame Club of which Lady Margesson was one of the honorary secretaries. The other honorary secretary was Mrs. Ethel Mary Ashton Jonson (no H in Jonson). She was an aspiring playwright and her nom de plume was Dorothy Leighton. Her husband, music critic George Charles Ashton Jonson, was the Sesame Club's honorary treasurer. (His name in the *Daily News* article must have been a typo, G.C. morphed into C.O.) In 1910 G. C. Ashton Jonson wrote [A Handbook to Chopin's Works](#).



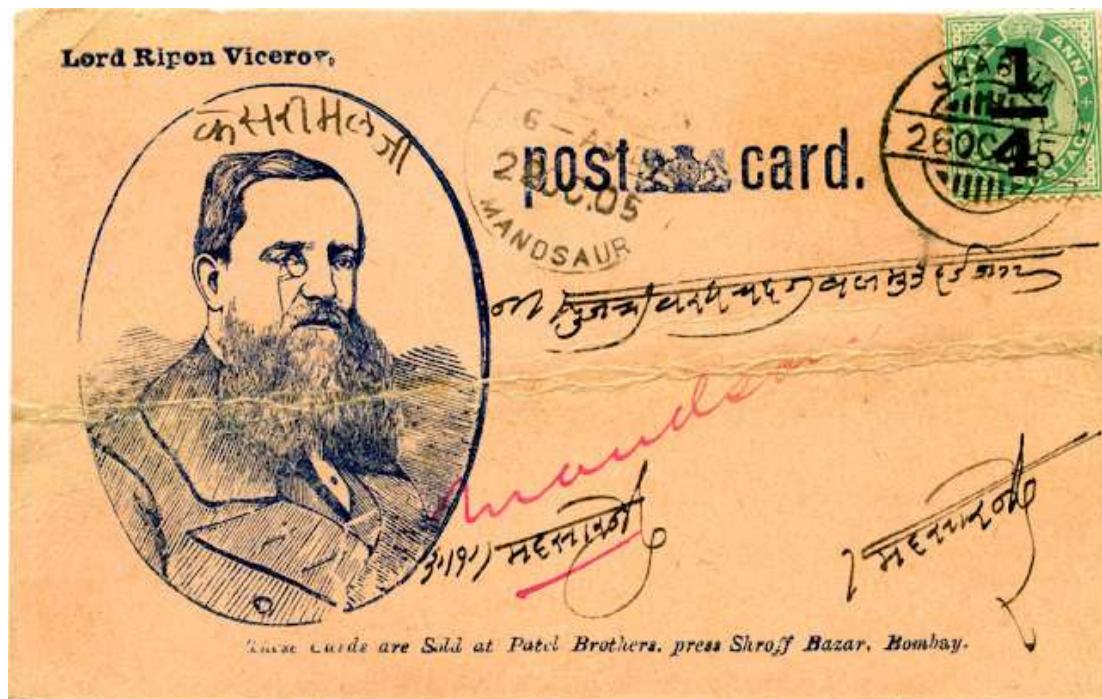
Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The *Daily News* stated that the aristocratic patron and honorary head of the Committee was the Marchioness of Ripon, who is represented here by a postcard of her country estate, [Studley Royal](#). Swamiji did not visit Studley Royal. This is a postcard and paper ephemera blog, and I'm using it to show the Yorkshire home of [George Robinson](#), the 1st Marquess of Ripon who was Viceroy of India from 1880 to 1884.

It is not known whether the Marchioness of Ripon had any actual involvement in the Sesame Club beyond being the titular head of the Committee. At first I imagined that the 2nd Marchioness of Ripon, [Constance Gwladys Herbert Robinson](#), was more likely to have headed the Sesame Club Committee, since she was a noted patron of the arts and mingled with many of the same artists and musicians known to members of the Sesame Club. Her second husband was [Frederick Oliver Robinson](#), 2nd Marquess of Ripon, the son of the former Viceroy of India. However, before 1909 the younger couple were known as the Earl de Grey and Lady de Grey. So to be named in the press in 1895 as the Marchioness of Ripon, surely indicated the elder Lady Ripon.

M. L. Burke supposed that it may have been Henrietta Vyner Robinson, 1st Marchioness of Ripon, who asked Swamiji questions at a Sesame Club

meeting on 10 November 1895. This is conjecture. Burke was trying to guess the identity of "the white-haired lady with the historic name" that Margaret Noble refrained from identifying in her book, *The Master As I Saw Him*. Noble wrote: "Only this first time we were but fifteen or sixteen guests, intimate friends, many of us, and he sat among us." She knew the white-haired lady well enough to know that she was a follower of **Frederick Denison Maurice**. If the former Vicereine of India had been that close of an acquaintance of Miss Noble's, there would have been further mention of it.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The elder Marchioness of Ripon was in Ripon on Saturday 9 November because her husband, the former Viceroy of India, was elected Mayor of Ripon that day, and a great many civic formalities ensued, including presenting Lady Ripon to the council as Mayoress. The Marquess of Ripon then held a shooting party at his estate, Studley Royal, continuing through Tuesday. Lady de Grey may have also gone to Ripon, as her husband, the Earl de Grey was there. Plans were underway to hold a large Town Hall reception for the new Mayor and Mayoress on the 22nd. It seems that the Marchioness of Ripon was probably too busy up north to attend Lady Margesson's small meeting.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This Charles Martin postcard view looks north along Belgrave Road from Warwick Square.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This street view looks up Charlwood Street past the intersection with Alderny Street toward St. Georges Road [Drive]. There were some shops nearby, seen in this Charles Martin postcard.

June 3, 1896

The following news has been received, by yesterday's mail, from London, regarding Swami Vivekananda's present work there :—

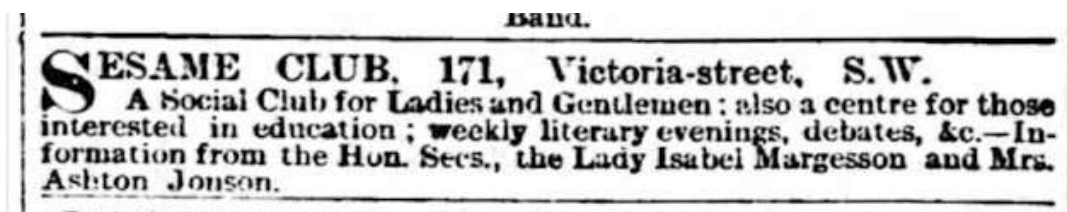
“Here in London, Swami Vivekananda has been holding class lectures, 63, St. George's Road, S. W., every Tuesday and Thursday both in the morning and evening. The number of his students has been increasing very rapidly. He has, therefore, opened a *question class* which he holds every Friday, at 8-30 P.M. It is a great wonder, indeed, that the Swami has been able to attract, from the very commencement of the course of his lectures, so many men in a materialistic city like London, where none cares a fig for religion, where politics reigns supreme in the minds of the people, especially now at the time of the London season—the season of balls, feasts, and all sorts of entertainments. He, who has once listened to the great Swami, is tempted to attend every lecture that he delivers. We cannot but own that the man possesses a great magnetic power or some power divine by which he even draws so many Londoners towards him. Many a lady and many a learned man here have become his students. Today Rev. Canon Haweis, a very learned man, came to his class. He has at once marvelled at his lectures. (News)

Source: [Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers](#)

The article above appeared in *The Queen, A Lady's Newspaper* and was reprinted in the 3 June *Indian Mirror*. Swami Saradananda wrote a letter from London to the editor of the *Brahmavadin* which appeared in its 6 June 1896 issue. Saradananda mentioned that "Canon Haweis, one of the leaders of the Anglican Church, came the other day." In a [previous post](#) I described Swamiji's visit to the home of Rev. H.R. and Mary Haweis, which had been reported in *The Queen*.

Mrs. Henry Norman had been scheduled to speak to the Sesame Club on "A Simpler Life" on 12 May, but she was indisposed and Swamiji ably stepped in with an impromptu lecture on "Education." Saradananda's report continued:

"On Tuesday last [12 May], the Swami lectured on "Education" at the Sesame Club. It is a respectable club got up by women for diffusing female education. In this he dealt with the old educational system of India, pointed out clearly and impressively that, the sole aim of the system was 'man-making' and not cramming and compared it with the present system. He held that, the mind of the man is an infinite reservoir of knowledge, and all knowledge, present, past or future, is within man, manifested or non-manifests, and the object of every system of education should be to help the mind to manifest it. For instance, the law of gravitation was within man, and the fall of the apple helped Newton to think upon it, and bring it out from within his mind."



Source: Morning Post 15 May 1896

Saradananda was mistaken about the purpose of the Sesame Club being "for diffusing female education". Men and women met together to hear about a wide range of topics. The previous lecture, 5 May, had been on Roentgen Rays.

M L Burke reprinted an article from the *Daily Chronicle* which caught a different aspect of his lecture,

"Morality gave strength; the immoral were always weak, and could never raise themselves intellectually, much less spiritually. Directly immorality began to enter the national life its foundations commenced to rot. As the life blood of every nation was to be found in the schools, where boys and girls

were receiving their education, it was absolutely essential that the young students should be pure, and this purity must be taught them.

From the memoirs of Swamiji's brother, Mahendra, we learn that conversation at No. 63 sometimes dwelt upon stories in the news, including the dreadful case of Amelia Dyer of Reading who murdered illegitimate infants that were left in her care. Dyer's trial filled newspapers throughout the month of May with several long articles on the 9th, culminating with her verdict of guilty on the 23rd. Mahendra recalled that Swamiji said to Sturdy:

“I see that the society is rotten. This baby-murder goes on in house after house. A race begins to rot from the inside first: then comes an enemy and conquers it. If this race goes on in this way, its fall is assured, I see. From social evil every evil eventuates.” Sturdy agreed. “In this country the standard of living is high, and human nature will be what it is; so there is much social evil.”

Apparently some of this stream of thought resurfaced in his Sesame Club talk. In America Swamiji had been accosted repeatedly with allegations that Indian mothers committed infanticide, leaving their babies on the banks of the Ganges to be eaten by crocodiles, and now here in London, the bodies of unwanted babies were being fished out of the Thames. In a poor country there was no food to feed children and in a rich country children with social stigma were disposed of. Instead of countering allegations against India with evidence against England, Swamiji's focus was on the big picture. He tended to take a millennial view, seeing social problems as indicators of the rise and fall of civilizations, and of the ultimate futility of pursuing material goals. For him, the spiritual path was the only way forward.



Source: TuckDB

From Eric Hammond comes a third account of Swamiji's 12 May talk to the Sesame Club. Eric and his wife Nell had gone to No. 63, but were re-directed to 171 Victoria Street. It was raining. Upon arrival at the Sesame Club, feeling conspicuous in their dripping raincoats, they were ushered to the last vacant seats near the front of a well-dressed audience. Eric made these observations:

"Above all, eloquence acclaimed him, . . . Swamiji soon showed that he was equally versed in history and political economy. He stood among these people on their own ground. Without fear, beseeching no favor, he dealt them blow upon blow enforcing the Hindu principle that the teacher who taught for the money-making was a traitor to the highest and deepest truth. "Education is an integral part of religion and neither one nor the other should be bought nor sold." His words, rapier-like, pierced the armor of scholastic convention; yet no bitterness spoilt his speech. This Hindu, cultured, gracious with his notable smile that disarmed unkindly criticism, held his own and made his mark."

Eric and Nell Hammond lived in Wimbledon where they were friends of Margaret Noble. It was she who had urged them to go see Swamiji on that "dark and dismal" night. The Raphael Tuck postcard gives the appropriate atmospherics.

Piccadilly, London 7 June 1896

The Galleries, Piccadilly



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Throughout the month of May 1896, Swami Vivekananda had been giving classes at 63 St. George's Road [Drive] in London. On 12 May he addressed the Sesame Club at 171 Victoria Street—covered in the [previous post](#). That work, plus a few newspaper articles, had swelled attendance at the classes to the point that it was time to rent a hall for a public lecture. The previous year, on 22 October, Swamiji had lectured at Princes' Hall in the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours at 191 Piccadilly—see the [post](#) about that event. The location and its audience had proved very congenial, however Princes' Hall had been converted into a restaurant, so Swamiji lectured in spacious rooms upstairs hung with paintings.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In his memoir, *Londone Vivekananda*, Swamiji's younger brother, Mahendra, referred to the Institute of Painters in Water Colours as the Galleries. He recalled that he, Swamiji, Goodwin, Saradananda, and Sturdy went to Piccadilly by horse drawn omnibus. They sat on the open upper deck of the bus where smoking was permitted.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Mahendra also mentioned that Miss Muller went ahead, alone. She probably took a hansom cab. It was hard to be an independent woman in the 1890s. Henrietta Muller was a bit of a misfit, not belonging to any society except that of suffragettes and they were definitely oddballs then. Although she supported Swamiji's cause, she couldn't really hang out with the guys. Her temper was a little touchy. Even so, I don't think she gets a fair shake from Mahendra. There is a lot of male bias and culture-clash misunderstanding in his reminiscences of Muller. He recalled little details, though, that give color to his memory of Swamiji's lecture, such as "Miss Muller, not [yet taking] a place in the hall, stood near the door, with a necklace of huge yellow glass beads around her neck." Josephine MacLeod, Swamiji's American friend, also attended the lecture.

PREACHERS FOR TO-MORROW.

ITALIAN CHURCH, Hatton-garden, E.C.—To-morrow (Sunday). Solemn High Mass, 11.15 a.m. ; Grand Special Service, 7.0 p.m.

REV. DR. MOMERIE will Preach on Sunday Morning, June 7th, at 11.0 o'clock, at ST. LUKE'S, Berwick-street, Oxford-street, W.

THE Rev. FATHER IGNATIUS will (D.V.) PREACH at the PORTMAN ROOMS, Baker-street, To-morrow (Sunday), June 7th, at 11.0., 3.30, and 7.0. Subject of Sermons:—11.0. "The Encouragement of Atheism by the Press;" 3.30. "The Religious Training of Young Children (the Mighty Atom);" 7.0. "Fashionable Marriages."

THE THEISTIC CHURCH, Swallow-street, Piccadilly, W.—The Rev. CHARLES VOYSEY will PREACH To-morrow twice. Morning Subject, "National Sins and their Fruits."—Part II. Evening, "The Origin of Moral Evil." Divine Service at 11.0 and 7.0.

ROYAL INSTITUTE of PAINTERS in WATER COLOURS, 191, Piccadilly.—The Swami Vivekananda, on "The Vedanta Philosophy," at 3.30 p.m. Admission free.

Source: London Standard 6 June 1896

Swamiji's first public lecture of the summer was advertised in the 6 June 1896 *Standard*. Mahendra recalled that Goodwin submitted notices to all the papers for every lecture, but the papers would not print them. Indeed, this was the only printed notice that I could find, although Swamiji gave six

lectures there on 7, 14, 21, 28 June and 5, 12 July. The lectures were also advertised by handbills. People kept coming. Sturdy would not have rented the hall if attendance had been low. John Fox reported that for the July lectures, when many people were on holiday, attendance had dropped, but the room was still three-quarters full.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This was Mahendra's first experience of seeing his brother give a public lecture. He must have been speaking for himself as well as the audience when he wrote, "those who were hearing it for the first time were astonished." He described the moments leading up to the lecture:

"Upstairs at the Galleries Swamiji first made light talk with acquaintances. In the hall, four or five hundred could be seated. Goodwin said there would be many people at lecture time. Ahead of time, Swami Saradananda and Mahendra occupied a sofa near the lecture platform, lest they not be able to get out afterward. Swamiji seated two Indians inside and turning around and coming back, began to welcome everyone at the door. . . . There were some pictures on the walls, and a polished wooden floor. The speaker's place was a platform at one end with table and glass of water. Mr. Sturdy

mounted this and introduced the subject and speaker in a couple of minutes and stepped down.”

For some reason an American flag is flying above a shop next to the Institute of Painters in Water Colours in the postcard above. The sign for the new Princes' Restaurant is visible above the entrance.



Source: VStL

"Meanwhile Goodwin tipped off Swamiji as to the subject announced, as he would forget what had been published. He did not worry about or prepare the lectures. He wore a red tunic or long shirt, a collar but no tie. There was a sash around his waist but he was bare-headed."

Swamiji generally wore a turban when he lectured in America. I think that it

was Sturdy who decided that he should speak bareheaded in London. It was autumn when Swamiji spoke at the Institute of Painters in Water Colours in 1895, and after the lecture T.J. Desai recalled that he donned a hat resembling a kalotopi. This photograph was taken in London in 1896.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Mahendra's memoir was written many years after his brother passed away. His description may be an amalgam of observations of Swamiji when he was in speaking mode:

"With his arms crossed on his chest he began to pace the platform like a swift lion. His facial expression was now altogether changed. . . . The same person who, five minutes before had been just laughing and making jokes like an ordinary man, smoking a cigarette, now in him a sleeping power had suddenly awakened; the muscles had become firm and hard, the eyes dilated and his glance full of fire and authority. He had become a man free and disembodied. Then he lowered his arms to his side and occasionally swung them a little. All of a sudden he stood stiff, his eyes had an inward look; he seemed to have left the gross body and gone to the subtle, and he remained with a fixed gaze like this, as if looking at something in the air.

Then gradually, with tones of affection the words began to come out quickly. Even when his voice was soft, he would be clearly heard to the end [of the hall]. Gradually as the thought became tense and complex, so the voice would rise accordingly. Slowly his left arm was set in motion and the fingers of his hand sometimes clenched, sometimes spread, expressing the thought in his mind. Sometimes he would raise his right arm, and sometimes when the thought was very profound, he used both arms to aid the expression.

Thus the lecture ended after nearly an hour and a half. The audience had sat still and breathless as if there were no one in the room. Then he drank water, came down, seemed his normal self and within five minutes tried to mix with everyone. Even then a "lit" look remained in his face and eyes."

In keeping with Swamiji's "lit" expression, here is a hold-to-light novelty postcard by Stengel of the Institute of Painters in Water Colours, so you can imagine the whole street lit up, even though the lecture took place in the afternoon.

Oxford, England 28 May 1896

A day with Max Muller



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 28 May 1896 Swami Vivekananda went to Oxford along with Edward T. Sturdy, and probably Swami Saradananda—(why would they leave him behind?)—to visit Professor [Friedrich Max Muller](#), the venerable German scholar who had translated many of India's scriptures from Sanskrit to English.

The 1903 Raphael Tuck postcard above shows Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. Muller had been made a member of Christ Church college in 1851.

Swamiji, of course, had read Muller's writings. At the 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Muller sent a paper in the form of a letter to Dr. John H. Barrows, the Chairman, who read it aloud on the ninth day. Many other speakers at the Parliament cited Muller as an authority on comparative religion. On 5 May 1895, while he was in New York City, Swamiji wrote to the Hale sisters in Chicago:

"What I expected has come. I always thought that although Prof. Max Muller in all his writings on the Hindu religion adds in the last a derogatory remark, he must see the whole truth in the long run. As soon as you can, get a copy of his last book *Vedantism*; there you will find him swallowing the whole of it — reincarnation and all.

Of course, you will not find it difficult at all to understand, as it is only a part of what I have been telling you all this time.

Many points you will find smack of my paper in Chicago.

I am glad now the old man has seen the truth, because that is the only way to have religion in the face of modern research and science.

Hope you are enjoying Todd's *Rajasthan*."

This letter reveals the extent to which Swamiji had been discussing Vedanta and related subjects about India with his Chicago friends. Later, Swamiji evidently sent Professor Muller one of his New York lecture pamphlets. On 2 April 1896 Max Muller replied to Swamiji with a postcard! A copy of it was formerly in the Sara Chapman Bull papers. All we have is the text:

Dear Sir, Accept my best thanks for your interesting pamphlet. I believe you are a pupil of Rama Krishna Paramahansa, who I have always sincerely admired. I hope you will continue your work in America and make both Sankara and Ramanuja widely known.

Yours faithfully,

F. Max Müller

Therefore, when Swamiji crossed the Atlantic that April—see the [previous post](#) about the voyage—one of his objectives was to meet the renowned scholar. The necessary arrangements were made by E.T. Sturdy or, according to MahendraDatta, Henrietta Muller.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Max Muller was essentially professor emeritus by the time he met Swamiji. He was born in Dessau Germany in 1823 and he graduated from Leipzig University in Philology in 1843. He came to Oxford in 1850 as a deputy professor of modern European languages for the Taylor Institute, and a year later was made an honorary MA. He attained full professorship in 1854, and four years after that he was elected a life fellow of All Souls College. He applied for the chair of Boden Professor of Sanskrit, but that post went to the more conservatively Christian Sir Monier Monier-Williams. In 1868 Muller assumed a new chair, that of Professor of Comparative Philology.

This postcard is a reminder of the complex hierarchical traditions of academia in Oxford.

THE GREATEST PHILOLOGIST.

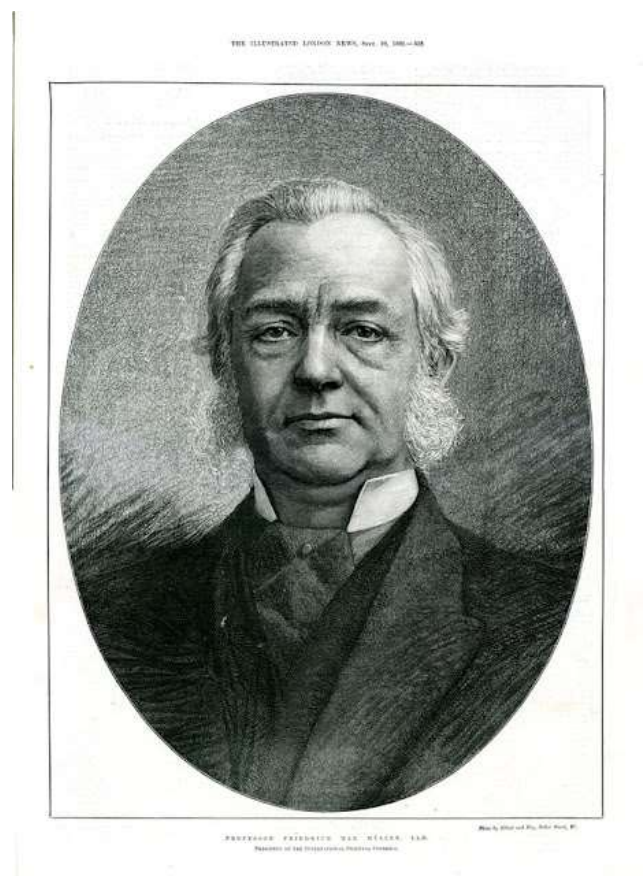
Max Muller's Worldwide Fame and How It Was Achieved.

Undoubtedly the greatest oriental scholar living today and among the greatest who ever lived is Dr. Max Muller, who at 50 years of age still busies himself with the work to which he has devoted his long and laborious life, opening to the world the treasure house of ancient Brahmanical literature, translating from the ancient Sanscrit, the oldest of the sacred books of India, and preparing for publication those voluminous lectures, essays and histories which, though profoundly learned, he knows how to make so delightful. He still nominally holds the chair of comparative philology of Oxford university, though he resigned its actual duties in 1875, and has

since then devoted himself with renewed vigor to ransacking dusty eastern libraries that were formerly unpenetrable and deciphering outlandish ancient manuscripts and inscriptions that were formerly unknown.

The value of Professor Muller's life work cannot be even approximately estimated by the ordinary man, and the enormous amount of labor it has involved is beyond calculation—almost beyond belief. Almost everybody knows something about him, but very few know much. He has grown so great that men have lost sight of his beginnings, and when, as quite frequently happens, the press announces that some new decoration or degree has been conferred upon him, or that he has been elected a fellow of some additional learned society, a knowledge of his past is always apparently taken for granted, though there are not many who can pretend to have it.

The importance of Vivekananda's meeting with Max Muller can hardly be overstated. The professor had earned a worldwide reputation for his scholarship. The excerpt above from a newspaper column printed in Caldwell, Idaho praised Muller lavishly. Why would people in places as remote as Idaho be in awe of a philologist? In the 1890s Latin and Greek were still required subjects in high school and college, but Proto-Indo-European languages were an arcane academic specialty. It was not exactly common knowledge that the link connecting the languages of the Indian subcontinent with the languages of Europe had been made in 1767 by Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux in Pondicherry and in 1786 by William Jones in Bengal. Max Muller's prodigious work translating ancient Sanskrit texts into English made him a sort of walking Rosetta Stone in the public imagination. On a trivial level, people were fascinated with the notion that they might have linguistic cousins in a far off exotic land. On a colonial level, control of language and culture meant political control. Never mind that there were Brahmins in India who could read and understand their own Sanskrit texts.



Back in London, on 30 May 1896 Swamiji wrote enthusiastically about his day-trip to Oxford to two very dear friends in America—Sara Bull in Cambridge and Mary Hale in Chicago—with whom he could express his feelings freely, and in confidence.

Dear Mrs. Bull,

. . . Day before yesterday I had a fine visit with Prof. Max Muller. He is a saintly man and looks like a young man in spite of his seventy years, and his face is without a wrinkle. I wish I had half his love for India and Vedanta. At the same time he is a friend of Yoga too and believes in it. Only he has no patience with humbugs.

Above all, his reverence for Ramakrishna Paramahansa is extreme, and he has written an article on him for the *Nineteenth Century*. He asked me, "What are you doing to make him known to the world?" Ramakrishna has charmed him for years. Is it not good news? . . .

Dear Mary,

...I had a beautiful visit with Prof. Max Müller. He is a saint — a Vedantist through and through. What think you? He has been a devoted admirer of my old Master for years. He has written an article on my Master in *The Nineteenth Century*, which will soon come out. We had long talk on Indian things. I wish I had half his love for India. ...



[Wikipedia](#)

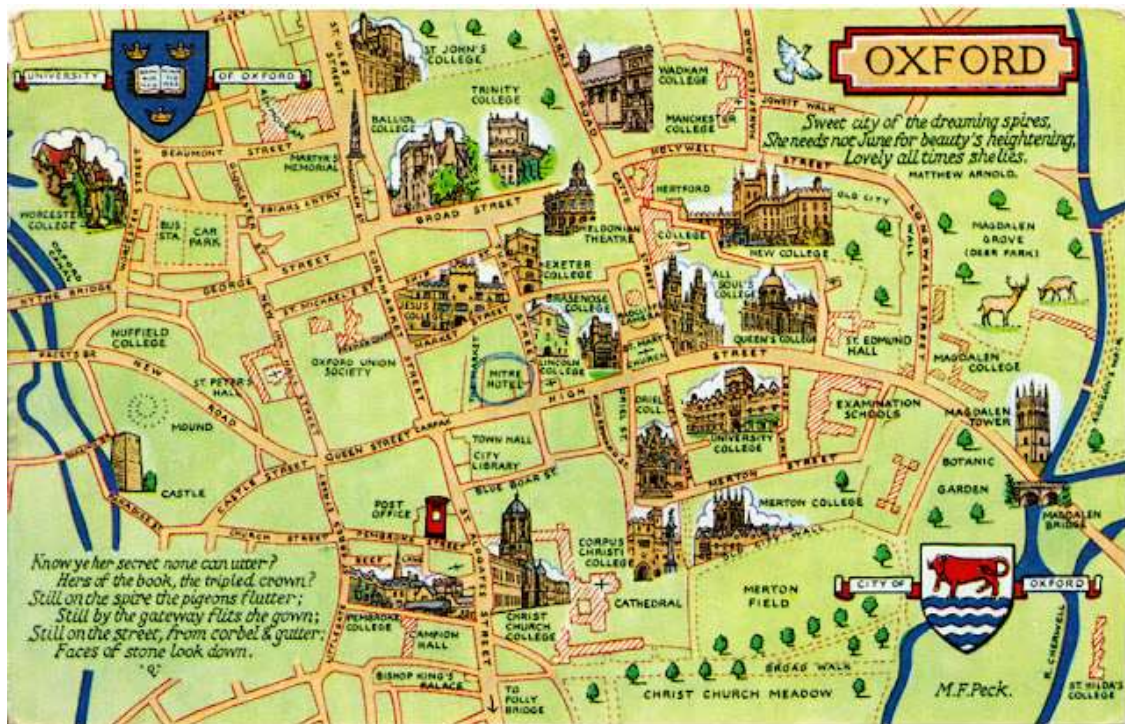
The Oxford train station that Swamiji passed through, known as Rewley Road, had been built by the Great Western Railway in 1852 on the site of [Rewley Abbey](#), a 13th-century Cistercian monastery. After a century of service, most of it for the London, Midlands & Scottish Railway, Rewley Road was closed to passengers in 1951. The cast-iron frame building languished through sundry commercial usages until it was dismantled in 1994. Then, thankfully, the station building components were moved to the [Buckinghamshire Railway Centre](#) and re-erected at [Quinton Road](#) where it can be visited as part of the museum complex.

In Oxford there is a bronze plaque in the pavement by the Said Business School marking where the Rewley Road Station stood.



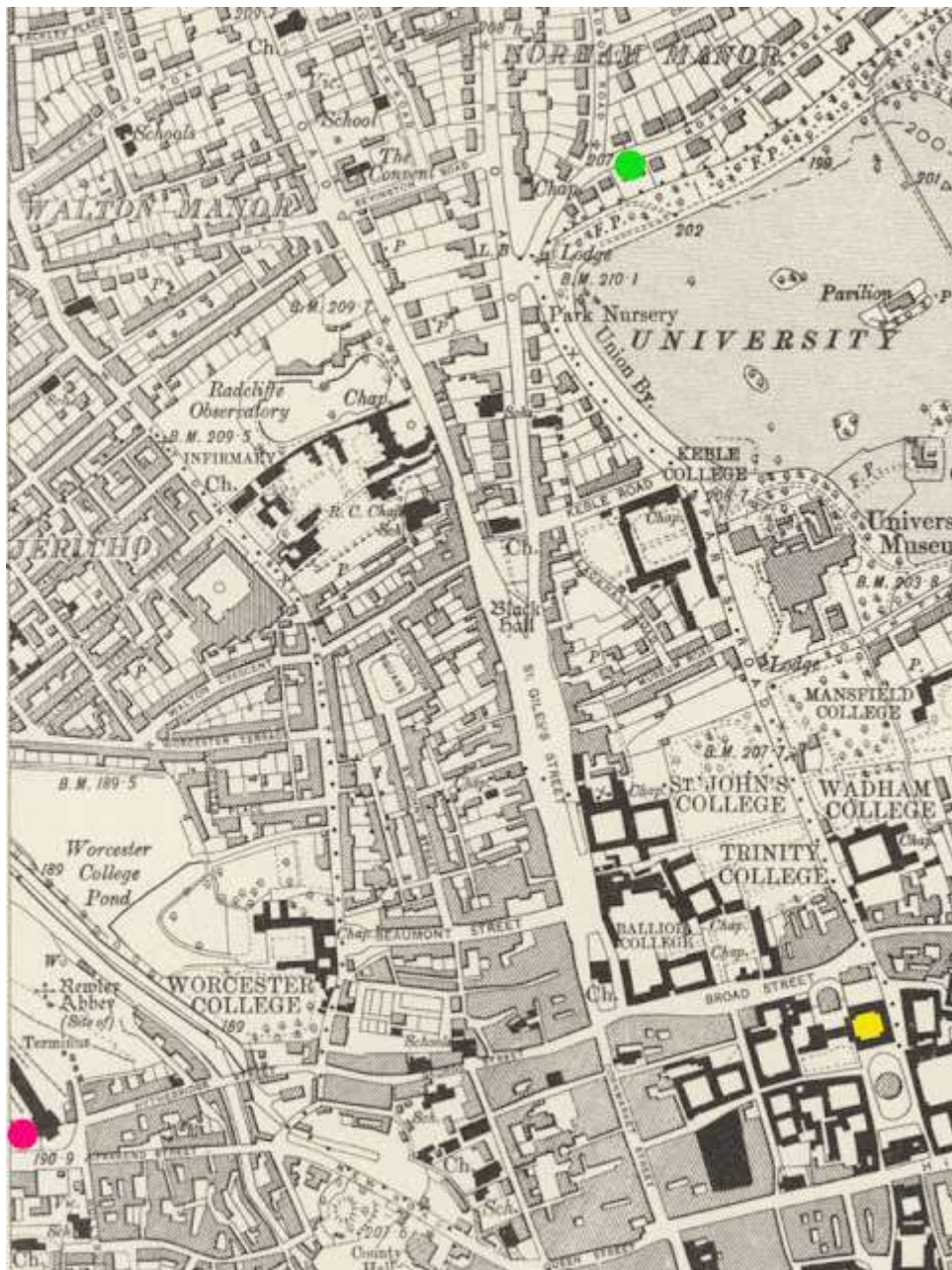
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

To get to the university from the railway station, Swamiji would have used the Hythe Bridge that passed over the Thames and Oxford canal.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This 1960s chrome postcard gives a general idea of Swamiji's possible routes through Oxford and the important landmarks he may have passed on his way to Muller's home. Prof. Muller lived north of the university in Norham Gardens.



Source: [NLS](#)

Since the postcard map does not go far enough north, here is a detail from an 1898 Ordnance Survey map. I put a green dot on Prof. Muller's home in [Norham Gardens](#). The red dot shows the train station and the yellow locates the Bodleian Library. These are the only definitely recorded places that Swamiji visited in Oxford.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

I would assume that Sturdy already had some familiarity with Oxford, and that he would have acted as Swamiji's guide through the university on the way to Muller's house which was in a general northeasterly direction from the station. Therefore I think that they may have driven—in a hansom cab—past the [Ashmolean Museum](#) on Beaumont Street toward the Martyr's Memorial.

[Arthur Evans](#), director of the Ashmolean, had written an exciting paper, "most startling to archaeologists," reported in the 13 August 1894 *Guardian* about his discovery of evidence for a pre-Phoenician script from Crete. I think it likely that Swamiji would have discussed topics like this with Sturdy. The leitmotif of the rise and fall of civilizations particularly intrigued him. Six months later, on a ship in the Mediterranean off the coast of Crete, he would have a vivid dream about the development of Christianity.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Taylor Galleries were next to the new Ashmolean Museum. Muller's first post at Oxford had been as a deputy Taylorian Professor of Modern European Languages and he advised the [Taylor Institution](#) on its collections.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

It seems likely that Sturdy would have pointed out the [Martyrs Memorial](#) to

Swamiji. The 1843 memorial commemorated the deaths of [Hugh Latimer](#), Bishop of Worcester, and [Nicholas Ridley](#), Bishop of London, who were burned for their Protestant beliefs on 16 October 1555. Five months later, their colleague [Thomas Cranmer](#), Archbishop of Canterbury, was similarly executed.

From the Martyrs Memorial, they may have continued up St. Giles and Banbury Road to Norham Gardens.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Obtaining a postcard of Muller's home at [7 Norham Gardens](#) was truly a fortunate find. The house had been built in 1862 for Professor Goldwin Smith, historian and abolitionist, before Muller occupied it. In 2011 the house reverted from university use back to private use. It has recently undergone [extensive renovations](#), and its appearance from the street is considerably altered.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Muller died at his home in Oxford on 28 October 1900. Georgina, his widow, sent out this postcard for Christmas 1906.

Swamiji and Sturdy had lunch with the professor and his wife. I'm sure the conversation was fascinating and memorable. It was probably mid-afternoon when they took leave of Mrs. Muller and departed the house. The professor escorted them on to the Bodleian Library.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

As a bonus, just for a glimpse of the Mullers' neighborhood as it was in when Swamiji passed by, here is a RP postcard of the house across the street at 6 Norham Gardens.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Since their time was limited I imagine that they went quickly down Parks Road to Broad Street. Swamiji said that Professor Muller showed them the Bodleian Library plus "several colleges" but which colleges they saw are unknown. Therefore I can only show postcard views of some notable buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Bodleian.

The [Old Clarendon Press](#) and the [Sheldonian Theatre](#) were particularly distinctive landmarks at the junction of Broad Street and Cattle Street. The Sheldonian was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and commissioned by Gilbert Sheldon.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Turning around from the wrought iron gate leading to the Clarendon Press and the Sheldonian, Swamiji would have seen across Catte Street, Oxford's apocryphal version of the Bridge of Sighs, the [Hertford Bridge](#) over New College Lane.



TuckDB

Muller was a fellow of [All Souls' College](#). No doubt he gave Swamiji a tour of the college. This view looks toward Radcliffe Camera and the Bodleian from inside All Souls Quadrangle.



[TuckDB](#)

The chapel of All Souls was built between 1438 and 1442. This Raphael Tuck postcard shows the reredos which was originally designed by Sir Christopher Wren in the 1660s, but it had been rebuilt around 1713. Many other aspects of the chapel were rebuilt during the nineteenth century so Victorian design sensibilities had crept in.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

One place that Muller definitely showed Swamiji and Sturdy was the Bodleian Library, of which institution he had been appointed under-librarian in 1865. A collection of Sanskrit manuscripts were purchased for the Bodleian by the [Max Muller Memorial Fund](#) in 1907.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This postcard shows the part known as Duke Humfrey's Library. It opened in 1488. The library was forced to close in 1550 during the English Reformation. After the turmoil of that time, the "cleansed" library was refurbished by Sir Thomas Bodley and opened again in 1602.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This postcard shows the upper reading room of the Bodleian. When Swamiji saw it, electric lighting had not yet been installed.



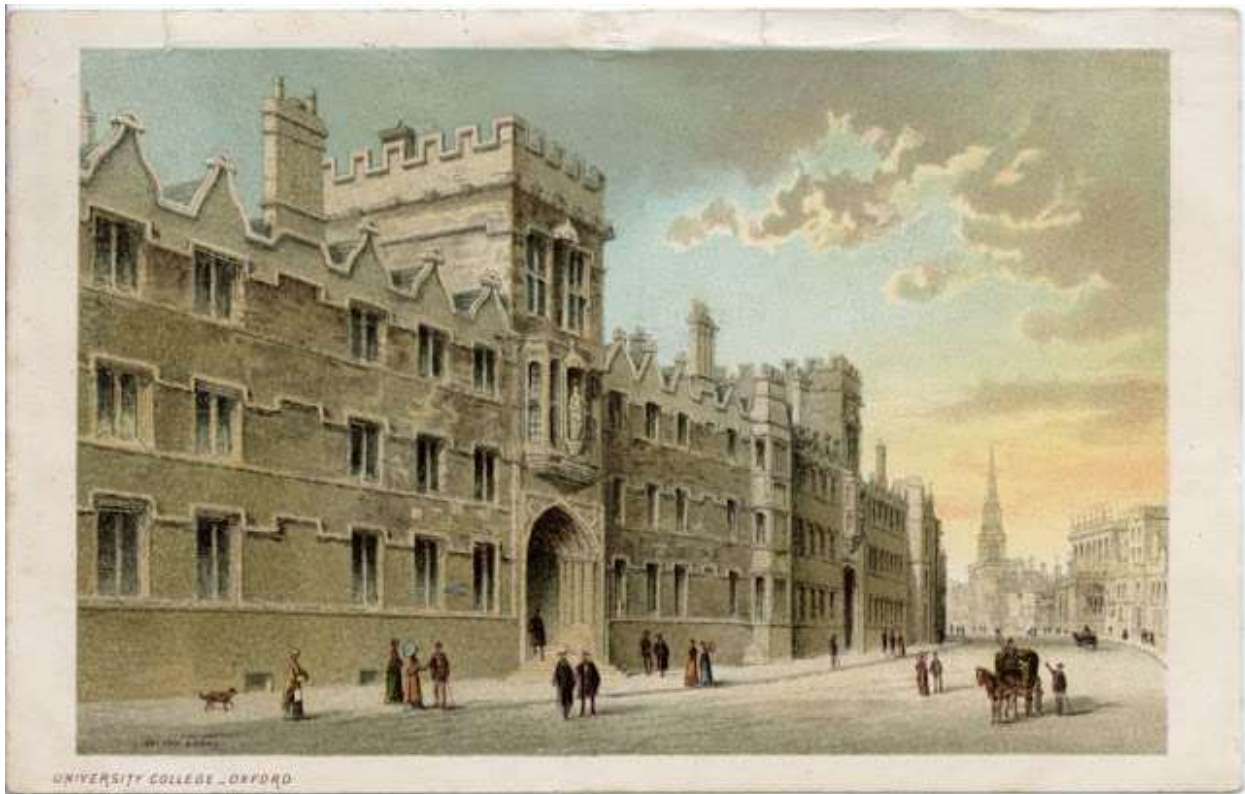
TuckDB

Catte Street runs outside the entrance to the Bodleian, but in Swamiji's day it was named Catherine Street. The street was renamed in the 1930s. Rotund Radcliffe Camera, built in 1749, sits in its own square yet it is part of the Bodleian with a reading room on the upper floor and books stacks on the lower floors.



TuckDB

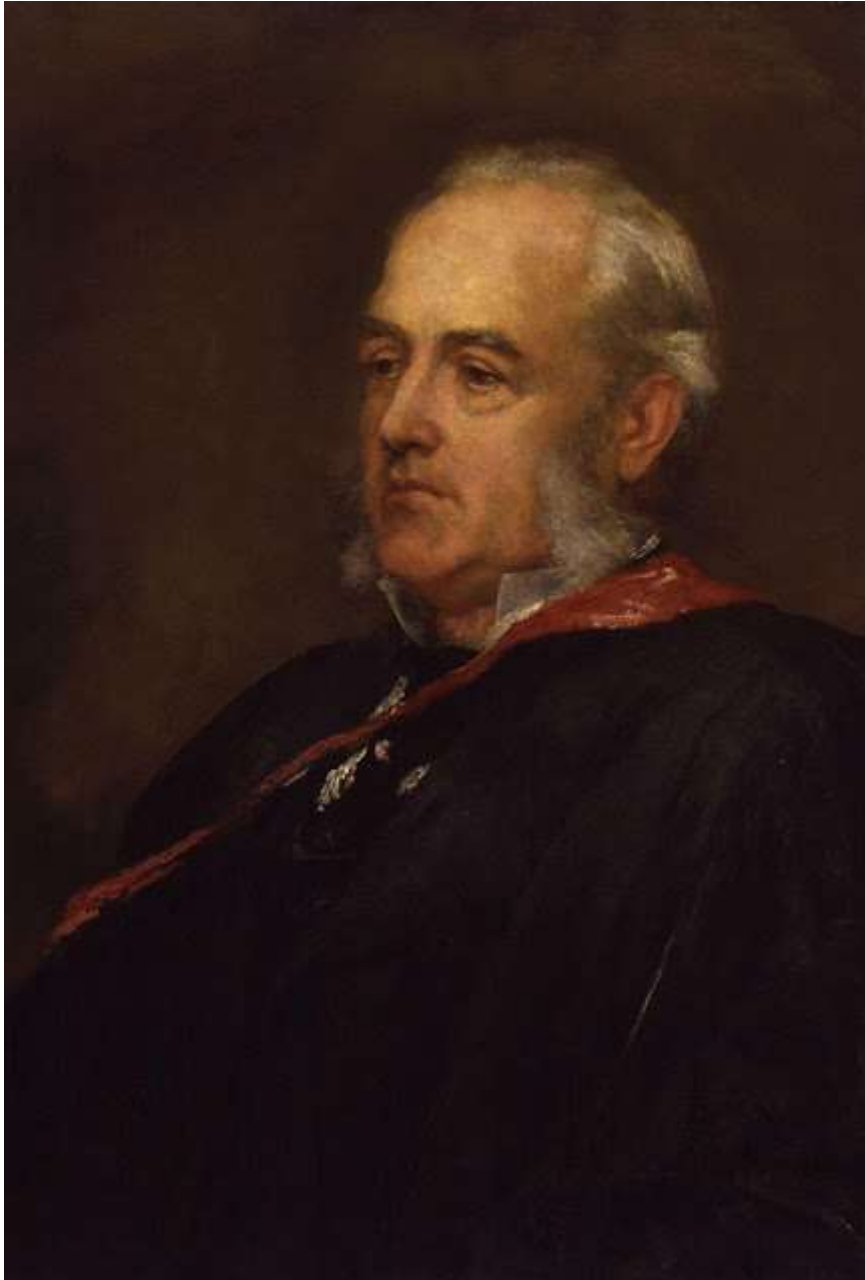
By the time Swamiji, Sturdy, and the professor reached High Street the shadows were probably growing long. In this Raphael Tuck postcard, the spire of [University Church of St Mary the Virgin](#) rises above the street side walls of All Souls College.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

[University College](#) was on the other side of High Street. It is arguably the oldest college in Oxford. Swamiji summed up his brief tour of Oxford:

“The Professor was kindness itself, and asked Mr. Sturdy and myself to lunch with him. He showed us several colleges in Oxford and the Bodleian library. He also accompanied us to the railway station; and all this he did because, as he said, "It is not every day one meets a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.”



[Wikipedia](#)

Müller invited Swamiji to lecture at Oxford in the autumn of 1896, and plans were underway, but for unknown reasons the lecture never took place. Swamiji wrote an article about his visit to Oxford for the *Brahmavadin* 6 June 1896 with these comments:

"What an extraordinary man is Prof. Max Müller! I paid a visit to him a few days ago. I should say, that I went to pay my respects to him, for whosoever loves Shri Ramakrishna, whatever be his or her sect, or creed, or nationality, my visit to that person I hold as a pilgrimage. . . . It was neither the philologist nor the scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day

realising its oneness with the Brahman, a heart that is every moment expanding to reach oneness with the Universal. Where others lose themselves in the desert of dry details, he has struck the well-spring of life. Indeed his heartbeats have caught the rhythm of the Upanishads."

In 1899 Muller published *Auld Lang Syne, My Indian Friends*, mentioning Vivekananda, Abhedananda, and Saradananda as missionaries of Vedanta. This leads me to think that Muller met each swami personally. According to a memoir by MahendraDatta, Swamiji's younger brother, Swami Saradananda accompanied Swamiji and Sturdy to Oxford. Swamiji had asked Saradananda to write a short biography of Sri Ramakrishna for Max Muller, and it was only right that Saradananda present it in person. Swamiji intended to send Saradananda to Boston, and he knew that a meeting with Max Muller would have greatly boosted his credibility there.

In 1936 SarvapelliRadhakrishnan cited this statement by Swami Abhedananda in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*:

"When I was in London, Swami Vivekananda took me to meet Professor Max Müller and Professor Paul Deussen of Kiel University, . . . I had a conversation with them in Sanskrit...."

Swami Abhedananda may have been combining two separate occasions together in his statement. There is as yet no known record in Vivekananda's biography of such a group encounter. Swamiji met Deussen in Kiel in September 1896 and Deussen accompanied him to London. There he met Deussen several times during September and October. It is possible that Abhedananda met Muller separately during December 1896. Muller was in London during the week of 13 December when a farewell reception was held for Swamiji at the Royal Institute for Painters in Water Colours.

Pimlico, London May-June 1896

Spices of life at 63 St George's Road



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

It was a busy summer for all the occupants of 63 St. George's Road who had come to London to support Swami Vivekananda's teaching work. On 30 May 1896 Swamiji wrote a letter to Mary Hale in Chicago and he was in a playful mood. He began with a curious mixing of idioms which must have been deliberate—perhaps it was an inside joke. A pin (needle) would be lost in a haystack and a light would be hidden under a bushel.

"You will hear from me now and then. I am not a pin to be lost under a bushel. I am having classes here just now. I begin Sunday lectures from next week. The classes are very big and are in the house. We have rented it for the season. Last night I made a dish. It was such a delicious mixture of saffron, lavender, mace, nutmeg, cubebs, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, cream, limejuice, onions, raisins, almonds, pepper, and rice, that I myself could not eat it. There was no asafoetida, though that would have made it smoother to swallow."

Mary was no doubt familiar with Swamiji's cooking. He had surely taken over the Hale's kitchen on some special occasion and it had been a memorable experience for the whole household. This time, he was celebrating with the spices that Swami Saradananda had brought with him

from India to London.

Swamiji's list of spices is a reminder that it was the coveted spice trade with Asia that had motivated Columbus to make his first voyage. Chicagoans had been well drilled in the deeds of Columbus during their long celebration of the World's Columbian Exposition. The World's Fair had definitely encouraged people to try new things. Surely a select few were brave enough to try Swamiji's cooking. Here is a 1902 set of six Liebig trade cards illustrating the origins of cloves, nutmeg, pepper, cinnamon, vanilla and ginger.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Actually Swamiji was rather ahead of his time in regarding the kitchen as a laboratory for cheerful inspiration. Paying a cook to make all the meals was de rigueur for the middle and upper classes in the nineteenth century. Middle-class women were supposed to manage the housework—not actually perform it. Cookery was particularly complex and time-consuming work then. Most kitchens in London townhouses were below street-level. The whole business of cooking was concealed.

The [Liebig](#) Company began printing sets of illustrated trading cards in 1872. Vegetarians, kindly ignore the fact that they advertise beef extract.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

There were some issues with the hired cook at 63 St. George's Road. The Raphael Tuck postcard defines "Cook" as one who is "decidedly set in her ways" and this seems to have been the experience for the summer residents at No. 63, most of them young men keenly appreciative of a good meal. Generally, Cook was considered "boss" in her domain because the reputation of her employer as a host depended upon her skill at providing

the food for entertainment. No doubt this was a responsibility she took seriously.

Most of the anecdotal information about life at No. 63 comes from Swamiji's younger brother, Mahendra, who wrote a memoir in Bengali, *Londone Vivekananda*. M. L. Burke, the writer of *Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries*, had to rely on a rather cursory English translation by Swami Yogeshananda. She consolidated these kitchen woes from Mahendra's memoirs:

“One of Miss Muller's main grievances was the cooking done by the elderly housekeeper, who had, no doubt, been engaged by Mr. Sturdy. One day, Mahendra reports, “She grumbled and grumbled about the food, got dressed up and went off to her relatives.” Swamiji was much annoyed. “Nothing but quarrels! Let her stay with her family for a while; she will cool off and come back.” And so she did, bringing another cook, whose British method of boiling rice threw Swami Saradananda and Mahendra into such spasms of choked laughter that another row was barely avoided.”

To see where Miss Muller went, see the [post on Westminster Abbey](#). Henrietta's sister and brother-in-law lived at 3A Poet's Corner behind the Abbey. Along with these anecdotes from Mahendra, this post offers some cameos of the various personalities at No. 63 as they interacted that summer in London.



Source: Harvard Class of 1894 Alumni Directory

John Pierce Fox was a grad student at Harvard's School of Divinity when he helped arrange Swamiji's lecture in the psychology lab at Harvard—see the [previous post](#). The ministry, however, was not really his metier. He came to London on 6 June to study architecture. Did he manage to hear Swamiji's lecture at Princes' Hall on 7 June? Eventually, after multiple internships, he developed a successful career in city planning and municipal transit systems. In 1916 he wrote [A Study of Reading Street Car Service](#), among other technical treatises.

Fox, born in Dorchester, Massachusetts in 1872, came from an old and respected Yankee family. He resided for a while at 63 St. George's Road. Even after finding his own digs nearby at 137 Cambridge Street, he hung

out with his new friends at No. 63. He remained interested in Vedanta, and in 1897 he assisted with the Greenacre Conference in Eliot, Maine and he helped Sara Bull with her Cambridge Art Conferences at her home at 168 Brattle Street.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji's younger brother, Mahendra, came to London ostensibly to study law. The *Indian Magazine and Review* reported that he was studying Sanskrit. Their father had been a successful lawyer in the High Court in Calcutta, and Swamiji himself had studied law. But he wanted his younger brother to study electrical engineering, which in the 1890s was not only a scientific vocation, but one that Swamiji felt would greatly help India. Mahendra did not really have that technical inclination. Swamiji tried to persuade Mahendra to go to Boston, but Mahendra insisted that he wanted to continue studying in the Reading Room of the British Library. If anyone could have persuaded Mahendra to study technology in America, it might have been John Fox, but Fox, too, was probably enamored of the famous glass domed Reading Room shown in the postcard above.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

The two persons who helped Swamiji the most with the business of publishing his lectures were E.T. Sturdy and J.J. Goodwin. There were discernible class differences between them. Sturdy was considerably more privileged than Goodwin. He had gone to boarding school at [Clifton College](#), Bristol, shown in the Raphael Tuck postcard above. Both Goodwin and Sturdy had traveled widely, but they had vastly different life experiences. Sturdy had been to India, undertook some Sanskrit translation, and considered himself a scholar.

While Sturdy was in India in 1893, Swami Shivananda inspired him with the idea of being a sannyasin. Sturdy returned to England, fell ill, and fell in love in quick succession. Now that he had a wife and child, No. 63 became his part-time ashram. He could indulge his dream of being a monk for a while, at least.

YESTERDAY'S NEW BOOKS.

"The Flower Seller," and other Poems. By Lady Lindsay; "Nārada Sūtra." An Inquiry into Love. Translated from the Sanskrit, with an Independent Commentary, by E. T. Sturdy; "Practical Reflections on Every Verse of the Minor Prophets." By a Clergyman. With a Preface by the Right Rev. Edward King, D.D., Lord Bishop of Lincoln. Longmans and Co.

Source: Standard 25 April 1896

The publication of Narada's Bhakti Sutras which Sturdy had translated with Swamiji's help, coincided with Swamiji's return to England on 25 April 1896—see the [previous post](#) about Swamiji's collaboration with that text.



Source: VSStL

J.J. Goodwin probably had only a secondary school education, supplemented by his stenographic training, which in the 1890s was a respectable IT skill. Both Sturdy and Goodwin had taken diksha from Swamiji. Burke described Sturdy as "sobersided" whereas Goodwin wore his discipleship on his sleeve, so to speak.

Goodwin gave valuable service to Swamiji through his skills as a stenographer. He also had enormous respect for Sara Bull, whom Swamiji had left in charge of the Vedanta work in Boston. Goodwin had a weakness for betting on horse racing and his keenness for the sport manifested itself at No. 63 on the 4th of June.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

Raphael Tuck & Sons published a postcard of [Persimmon](#), the great horse who won the Derby at Epsom Downs on 3 June 1896. Temperamental Persimmon was not the favorite. Rival St. Frusquin was favored to win. Both horses had been sired by the same stallion. In the last quarter mile, Persimmon came from behind and passed St. Frusquin by a neck. It was considered a very exciting race. Mahendra, wrote in *Londone Vivekananda*:

Goodwin became excited and talked a lot about horse-racing, which did not please the others. He said the name Persimmon time after time. Swamiji was walking back and forth and began to make faces, saying Persimmon in mockery of Goodwin. The latter, who understood Swamiji's every mood, got down on his knees and with folded hands pleaded, "Swamiji, whatever ridicule or teasing has to be done, please do it to poor Goodwin. Poor Goodwin is your disciple, your servant; but please do not say anything against the Royal Family; that is considered very censurable in this country. Have pity on me." Hearing his words all were bemused. This Goodwin was supposed to be a dyed-in-the-wool radical, and here was such unswerving devotion to the Royal Family!"

The scene which followed the victory of the Prince of Wales's horse almost surpasses description. As Persimmon went past the post nearly every silk hat in the Club Enclosure was sent into the air, and thousands of hats from every part of the course followed suit. A roar which swelled into a torrent broke upon the air, and as the number was hoisted a noise, the like of which Epsom Downs has never known, seemed to envelope the course. In an instant the course from Tattenham Corner to the paddock became a mass of blackness, and so dense was the crowd that men were carried off their legs. All seemed drunk with excitement, and when the Prince appeared on the steps, holding his hat, the enthusiasm reached a climax. He descended the steps, and went out on the course, still hat in hand, to meet the winner.

The Standard 4 June 1896

Mahendra did not understand Goodwin's sense of sporting loyalty. There had been foreign horses in the Derby. Racing fans identified the Prince's success with England's success. Persimmon winning the Derby then, was like England winning the World Cup now.

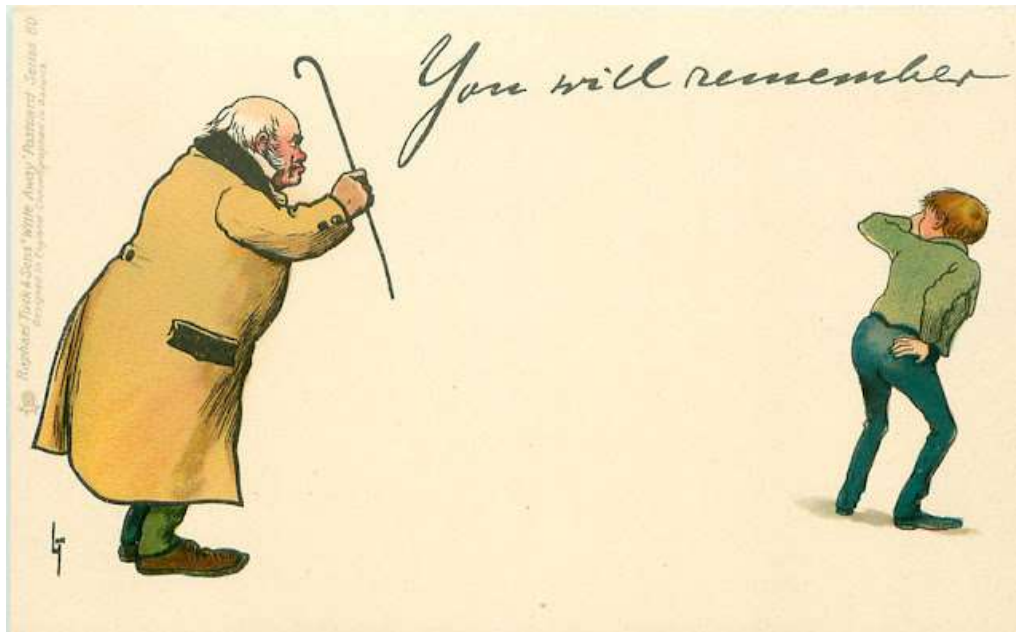


Source: [TuckDB](#)

Goodwin's affection for the Royal Family did not apply to Queen Victoria's extended family in Europe. On the 1st of June the *Standard* ran a long story about the disaster now known as the [Khondynka Tragedy](#) attending the coronation of Czar Nicholas II. Goodwin read it aloud to everyone in the parlor at No. 63. Nearly two thousand poor people were killed in a mass stampede for free souvenir cups and packages of food. The police were unable to control the panic. People perished. There were many pitiful descriptions of the victims and their mangled bodies. Both Sturdy and Goodwin condemned the Russians as barbaric. Mahendra wrote:

"Swamiji had till now remained silent in his chair and as if sunk in deep

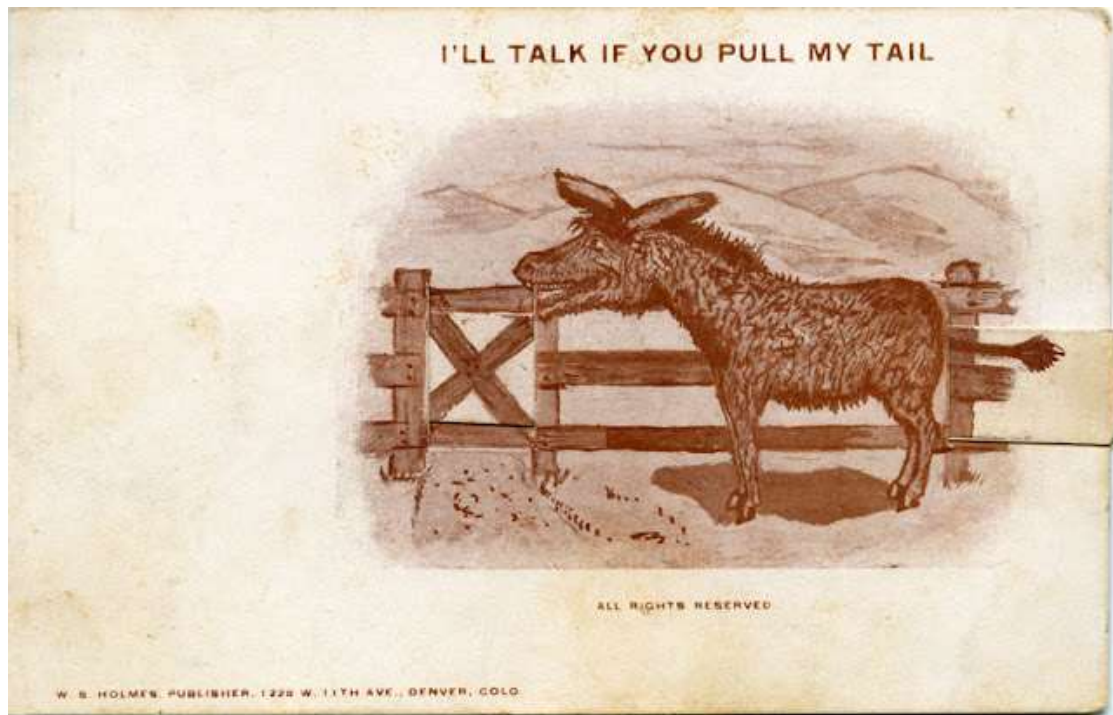
thought. His face was serious, his eyes wide and filled with sadness. Suddenly he said, "What misery! What suffering! For the sake of one cup all those people left their villages and came to the city and so many [killed]! How poor the country is. They are starving. They have given their lives for a two-bit enameled glass. . . . How sad." And he began to walk the floor."



Source: [TuckDB](#)

This Raphael Tuck postcard is a reminder that corporal punishment was a normal part of school discipline in the nineteenth-century. In *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries V4*, M. L. Burke cited this incident from Mahendra's memoir:

"Once Mr. Sturdy who had attended an English public school, told with indignation of the canings given to the boys. "I get angry," he said, "whenever I see a man beating a boy." "I, too," said Goodwin, "I get angry even when I see a man beating a donkey." Swamiji smiled, "That is because it arouses your fellow feeling," he said. They all laughed, perhaps Goodwin the loudest."



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In the spirit of Swamiji's witty repartee, here is this novelty postcard, which requires manual manipulation.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Donkeys were quite popular objects of postcard humor, and they often got to have the last word. I'm sure Goodwin's cheerful presence was missed after he departed for America. Goodwin accompanied Swami Saradananda when he left London and sailed for Boston on Saturday June 27.



Source: [NYPL](#)

While he was at No. 63, Swami Saradananda suffered a recurrence of malarial fever and begged Swamiji to cure him. Swamiji sternly—but affectionately—ordered him to conquer his illness mentally. Sturdy, however, was alarmed at Saradananda's condition and summoned a doctor, paying "twelve pounds or so on medicine, which mortified Swami Saradananda." . . . Swamiji ordered Mahendra to stay at his bedside, "So long as this fellow is ill, stay by him; when he has fever he will create more problems." Embarrassed, Saradananda pulled the covers over his head. After Swamiji left the room, Saradananda and Mahendra snickered.

As the fever abated, Swami Saradananda said with a laugh, "We are malaria-country people; we get this illness twelve months a year and are used to that. But here people have never seen this kind of disease, so they raise a fuss over it."

[Dr Ronald Ross](#), born in Almora, India, was not so accepting of the curse of malaria as the Indians, and in 1897 he proved that mosquitoes transmitted a malarial parasite.

The efficacy of South American quinine bark used by Native Americans to relieve fever had been observed in the 17th century by Jesuits in Peru. Quinine became popular in London when it cured King Charles II of

malaria. *Cinchona officinalis* was isolated from quinine bark by the French in 1820. In the words of a poem circa 1900:

When you have a great big headache,
And your back and legs grow tired—
And you think of home and mother—
Then King Quinine is required.
When you have a burning fever,
And your stomach's out of gear,
Take a dose or two of quinine,
And you'll have naught to fear.

Swamiji told his brother Mahendra “Don't take any more quinine; take it out and throw it away; will-power is everything.” By the 1890s quinine was used as a cure-all, unregulated, OTC medicine, but due to side effects, its use is restricted today.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On 30 May, Swamiji continued his newsy letter about cooking and spices, etc. to Mary Hale:

"Yesterday I went to a marriage à la mode. Miss Müller, a rich lady, a friend who has adopted a Hindu boy [Akshay Kumar Ghosh] and to help my work has taken rooms in this house, took us to see it. One of her nieces was married to somebody's nephew I suppose. What tiring nonsense! I am glad you do not marry. Good-bye, love to all. No more time as I am going to lunch with Miss MacLeod."

Muller's invitation enabled Swamiji to show Swami Saradananda this important Christian ritual. Swamiji had been to a society wedding before, in

Brookline, Massachusetts, mentioned in a [previous post](#). He had also witnessed the wedding in Paris of his friends, Betty and Francis H Leggett—covered in [another post](#). He showed more sympathy for “the turtledoves” as he called the newly wed Leggetts. Was that because theirs was a union of equals, rather than an alliance of family ambitions?

“How did you come to take such a deep interest in Women's Suffrage?”
“I really cannot say how I came to feel as I do on the subject of the emancipation of women. I think it must have been born in me. During my girlhood I saw and felt a good deal of masculine tyranny. I was always a great champion of my mother, and I did not approve of the position which people seemed to consider it quite natural for women to occupy. I must have been about twenty-one when I began to realise the deep hold that this question had taken of me, although in those days it was scarcely a ‘question’ of public importance as it now is. There seemed to come a critical moment in my life, when I made the deliberate choice to devote myself, body, soul, and spirit to what was then the unpopular cause of women's emancipation. I have never swerved a single instant from that position. This cause has been my study, my practice, my hope, in fact filled my whole life, and I very much doubt whether any other woman lives, who feels more strongly about it than I do.”

Source: London Woman's Herald 28 November 1891

Mahendra did not get along with Henrietta Muller and she is not remembered with any fondness in his memoir. Some of the friction can be attributed to her prickly personality, but I also think that Mahendra contributed his own gender bias and cultural outlook to her portrayal. Muller stated her position quite passionately in the excerpt above from an interview printed in *Woman's Herald*. In 1879 she, a woman who could not vote in parliamentary politics, had been elected to the Lambeth School Board—beating nine male candidates for the position. Around this time [Annie Besant](#) had been elected to a different district school board. Muller had been very active in suffragette politics until 1891 when she became involved in Theosophy through friendship with Besant. In October 1893 Muller and Besant made their first trip to India. For Muller, venturing into the strange field of Indian philosophy was a major change of direction. She was trying to help Swamiji's cause—in her own way—but it seems that she thought that 63 St. Georges Road had turned into a male enclave.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

Postcards about suffragettes, apart from photographs of known persons, were unkind, to put it mildly, and comic postcards about old maids were downright cruel. The mocking Raphael Tuck postcard above, considered absurdly ridiculous when it was published, has gained dignity over the past century now that the UK has had two female prime ministers, and one Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, 1992 to 2000.

Swamiji tried to keep the peace. Mahendra recalled:

After morning lecture one day Swamiji was slowly coming downstairs with Miss Muller. . . .Swamiji was saying to her in a soothing voice, but by way of chiding, "We are all monomaniacs. I am a monomaniac for my preaching of Vedanta; you are a monomaniac for your [causes]. The world is full of monomaniacs."

Swamiji of course was the centre of life at No. 63. His moods could be cheerful or comic or solemn and sometimes spiritual power just poured off him. Mahendra recalled:

"One day about two or three o'clock Swamiji was leaning back in his easy chair in one corner of the room, his legs crossed, eyes closed, as if pondering something." He turned to Fox. "Fox, I have been thinking about Paul and the Christian religion. Do you know what I see? A minor religion was in the hands of a few fishermen. At that time the Greeks and Romans were two powerful races. The Jews were a subject race. Paul became the advocate of the ideas of these fishermen. Paul was a learned fanatic, so he could overturn the Greek philosophy and Roman government. Mere religion and devotion doesn't do the trick; there have to be fanatics. Do you know what I am? Paul was a learned fanatic and I want to create a band of learned fanatics." Swamiji became quite animated as he spoke.

The phrase "learned fanatic" was already well-known. It had several uses, but was most often applied to St. Paul. The newspaper clipping below is from an 1884 commencement address.

And yet, doubtless, the large majority of the men whom Paul addressed at Jerusalem, or in the cities of the Mediterranean and at Rome, as they turned away from his fervid utterances, exclaimed what a gifted, learned fanatic! The creed he then proclaimed, so visionary and fanciful to that generation, is to-day the cherished hope of the world.

Source: Burlington Patriot 24 June 1884

By the time Mahendra wrote his memoir, Swamiji had become—symbolically—Sri Ramakrishna's greatest apostle. Swamiji's words, recalled in retrospect from that day in the parlor of No. 63, were bold, but I don't think he uttered them with the messianic meaning ascribed to them later. Swamiji lived for the big picture; the mountaintop view was his field of vision. He had the power to lift others up to that mountaintop. He was having a "we can do this" moment, and the others in the room felt like they were witnessing not just a moment of inspiration—since Swamiji was frequently inspiring—but they felt like they were watching the birth of a history altering idea. Swamiji wanted every weakness that he saw in India to be transformed into the strengths he saw in England and America, and when he was charged with inspiration, he was sure this massive job was do-able. As he wrote to Mary Hale in May 1896: "I have become horribly radical. I am just going to India to see what I can do in that awful mass of conservative jelly-fish, and start a new thing, entirely new—simple, strong, new and fresh as the first born baby. The eternal, the infinite, the omnipresent, the omniscient is a principle, not a person." Therefore, I do not think that he was elevating himself as a new St. Paul—even though he was doing the work of a pioneering evangelist. He wanted to convert the West to respect India, and he wanted to convert India to believe in itself. His call was to uplift India through education and dedication—with the help of "a band of learned fanatics."

And that would be an uphill battle on many fronts.

The Brahmins are the cultured caste and appreciate a good education. Hence they flock to the colleges now opened in India. The introduction of Western ideas and Western education has caused old religious dogmas and traditions which had been handed down from time immemorial to be altogether discarded, to become things of the past. The result has been to launch the greater portion of the educated minds of India into misbelief. As evidence of this tendency we have but to quote the words of the Hindu ascetic Paramahansa Swami Vivekananda who, among the worshippers of Krishna and Buddha, was considered the most worthy to represent them at the Parliament of Religions at the World's Fair. In a lecture before the Brooklyn Ethical Society, he said: "In fact every idea and hence every religion of God is true, as they are all but different stages in a journey, the aim of which is the perfect conception of the Vedas. Hence, too, we not only tolerate, but we Hindus accept every religion, praying at the mosque of the Moham-medans, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroas-trians, and kneeling before the cross of the Christians. . . . We gather these flowers all and bind them with the twine of love, making a wonderful bouquet of worship." As all religions contradict one another on some fundamental point, and as contradictories cannot be true at the same time, this is truly a "wonderful bouquet of worship!"

Source: Church Weekly 31 July 1896

Christian criticism of Swamiji in England was more condescending and patronizing than the indignation the American press had relished upon him. The London based *Church Weekly* seemed to derive smug satisfaction from the idea that "all religions contradict one another."



Source: [TuckDB](#)

A chromolithographed Raphael Tuck postcard helps end this column with a "wonderful bouquet of worship" as an offering to Swamiji's idea that "every religion of God is true, as they are all but different stages in a journey."

Kensington, London 10 June 1896

Two scandalous women

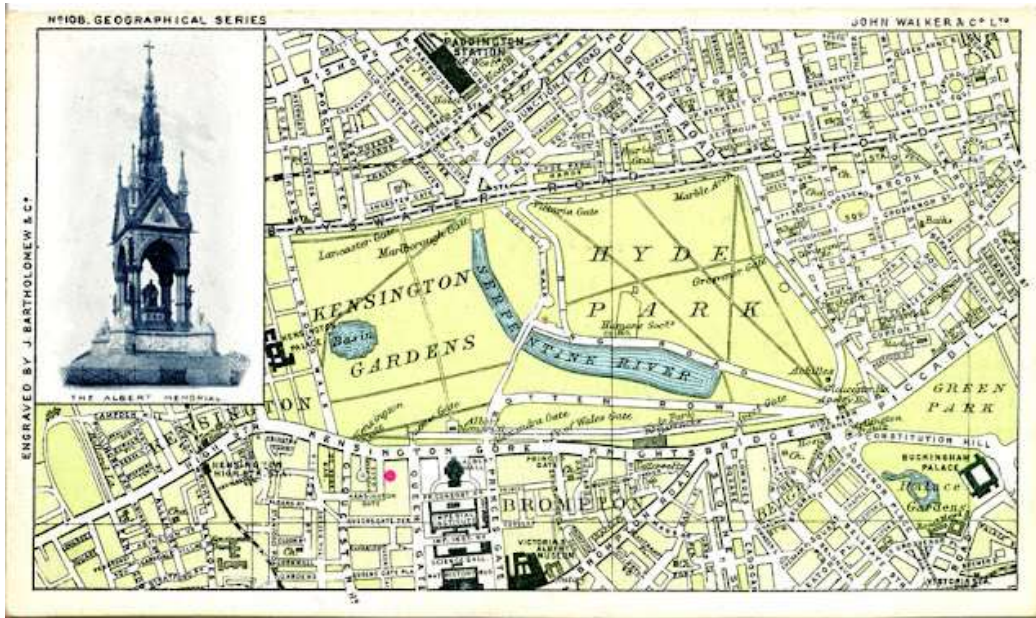


Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In the summer of 1896 Swami Vivekananda gave talks in the London homes of two remarkable feminists whose activism was deemed “scandalous” by nineteenth century standards. Both of these courageous individuals, [Victoria Woodhull Martin](#) and [Annie Besant](#), had weathered the storms of public derision for decades. They had had the audacity to champion rights of self-determination for women in an era when certain rights that are today considered basic—even ordinary—were considered extraordinarily outrageous.

The social reality in the 1890s was such that the rights that they fought for—which included universal suffrage and birth control—were still way beyond the pale of acceptability. Swamiji had told a Baltimore journalist in October 1894 that women ought to be able to vote. Both Woodhull Martin and Besant continued to fight for social justice, but in different ways. Their uniquely individual and complicated lives can be readily researched online. Of interest here are the events of June and July 1896 that involved Swamiji.

Historian M.L. Burke found an article in the 13 June *London American* about a talk Swamiji had given on Wednesday 10 June at the home of Mrs. Victoria Biddulph Martin. She lived at 17 Hyde Park Gate, not far from the Royal Albert Hall, Kensington, shown in the 1900 Raphael Tuck postcard above.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

I put a small red dot on this 1905 John Walker & Company Geographical postcard to locate Victoria Woodhull Martin's residence in relation to Hyde Park. The Albert Memorial is a nearby landmark in Hyde Park directly across the street from Albert Hall auditorium.



Source: NLS

The Biddulph Martin mansion was replaced decades ago by an apartment building known as Chancellor House. Its plot on this 1895 Ordnance Survey map suggests that it did not face the street, but fronted a very large garden. It probably had a private drive and stables that connected to Queens Gate Mews.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This modern postcard reproduces a circa 1870 engraving of [Victoria Claflin Woodhull](#). Woodhull is deservedly famous as the first woman to run for President of the United States in 1872. Some historians quibble over the validity of her candidacy as a constitutional argument since she was a few months shy of the minimum age to be president, but that is a mere blip in the overall drama of her campaign. Just the notoriety of her declaration eclipsed the fact that she was running against incumbent President Ulysses S. Grant. She was jailed before election day because her newspaper had published an article about the acknowledged adultery of a famous preacher. Thus thwarted, suffragist groups kept trying to get her to repeat her run for the presidency and they nominated her again for the 1893 election.

into fits? It is genuinely amusing, this sublime confidence in the ability of women to settle problems which have troubled humanity for centuries. There is no question of the relative superiority of one sex over the other. What these hot-headed enthusiasts will not recognise is, that the respective spheres of man and woman have been firmly and finally marked off from one another by nature, and it is idiotic in the last degree to attempt to overstep those limits.

Source: Sheffield & Rotherham Independent 24 September 1892

The British press excelled at mocking. This excerpt from an article in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* announcing that Mrs. Martin had again been nominated by suffragettes to run for the US Presidency is but a mild example of the media firestorm that she had excited years earlier in America.



Source: NYPL

This cabinet card announces that Victoria Claflin Woodhull was now Mrs. John Biddulph Martin. Sometime in 1882 she quietly married the "scion of a Noble house" as the *London Morning Post* phrased it—without actually naming her husband, British banker John Biddulph Martin.

for her daughter's sake that Mrs. Woodhull has renounced her projects of prominence before the public and is repudiating the doctrines with which her name has been so long associated. For a woman of talent this is a sacrifice which the ordinary female mind will fail to grasp in its full extent. Mrs Woodhull, repudiating her iconoclastic ideas and losing her identity as the wife of a well-to-do, respectable man (as she is now said to be), is simply Mrs. Nobody-in-particular. As Victoria Woodhull she is Victoria Woodhull, and that is something that no other woman is. Whether any other woman would want to be is another question, which I leave you to solve according to your own ideas on the subject of seeking glory even at the cannon's mouth.

Source: Mexico Weekly Ledger 22 March 1883

Criticism of her British marriage echoed from the American side of the Atlantic. Victoria Woodhull, despite marrying for love, was now Mrs. Martin, locked into the wealthy financial establishment of England; but she had not "repudiated her doctrines". She published *The Humanitarian*, advertised as "the best of the six-penny magazines" which espoused social justice causes.

HINDOO SOCIAL SYSTEMS.

In all social systems the most important matters of legislation are marriage, filiation, paternal authority tutelage, adoption, property, the laws of contract, deposit, loan, sale, partnerships, donations, and testaments.

We shall see, on examination, that these divisions have passed, almost unaltered, from Hindoo law into Roman law and French law, and that the greater part of their particular dispositions are to-day still in vigor.

There can be no comment or possible discussion; where there is a text there is no room for dissent.

The Hindoo laws were codified by Manou, more than three thousand years before the Christian era, copied by entire antiquity, and notably by Rome, which alone has left us a written law—the code of Justinian, which has been adopted as the base of all modern legislations.

Let us see and compare :

Source: The Humanitarian December 1892

So begins an article, above, that Mrs. Martin wrote for the December 1892 *Humanitarian* about the Codes of Manu which she interpreted cleverly to prove her own argument for the rights of women in the West. Her article concludes below.

India, according to Vedas, entertained a respect for woman amounting almost to worship.

MAXIMS FROM THE SACRED BOOKS OF INDIA.

“He who despises woman despises his mother.”

“Who is cursed by a woman is cursed by God.”

“The tears of a woman call down the fire of Heaven on those who make them flow.”

“Evil to him who laughs at woman's sufferings: God shall laugh at his prayers.”

“It was at the prayer of a woman that the Creator pardoned Man: Cursed be he who forgets it.”

“Who shall forget the sufferings of his mother at his birth shall be reborn in the body of an owl during three successive transmigrations.”

“There is no crime more odious than to persecute woman.”

“When women are honored the Divinities are content; but when they are not honored all undertakings fail.”

“The households cursed by women to whom they have not rendered the homage due them find themselves weighed down with ruin, and destroyed as if they had been struck by some secret power.”

Source: *The Humanitarian* December 1892

The Humanitarian was published in New York as well as London. Considering Victoria Woodhull Martin's well-known feminist opinions, Dr. Janes might have scored a point by citing this December 1892 article when he was writing letters on Swamiji's behalf to the editors of Brooklyn newspapers in 1895—see the [previous post](#).

One person who may have alerted Mrs. Martin to Swamiji's teaching in London was Mary Haweis—see the [Chelsea post](#). Mrs. Haweis had written an article on astrology for the July 1896 *Humanitarian*.

After her imprisonment in 1872, Woodhull began to explore the spiritual dimension of life, and she turned to lecturing on religious matters. After years of relative stability in England, as M. L. Burke put it: "it is not at all unlikely that Swamiji brought a welcome shaft of light into what she referred to as her 'dreary, smokey, foggy' London world."



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The previously mentioned article about Swamiji in the *London American*, a newspaper for ex-pats, began with self-congratulations stating that the Chicago Parliament of Religions had been “a bold idea, and one which could scarcely have been conceived of, let alone carried through, by any but Americans.” It continued:

“The Indian representative at that great gathering was Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu with a marvelous grasp of his subject, and an equally marvelous power of expression. This interesting man is at present in London, and with her usual eagerness to learn and have others do the same, Mrs. Victoria Biddulph Martin, on Wednesday afternoon, asked him to deliver an address at her house in Hyde Park Gate on the Hindu Idea of Soul. The weather on Wednesday was wretched, but this did not prevent a large number of ladies and gentlemen accepting Mrs. Martin’s hospitality. The address was, as its title would show of a most fascinating nature, the Hindu theology being most graphically and picturesquely explained. After the address, general conversation took place over the teacups, and the Hindu was plied with questions by several ladies who seemed to have studied the

subject to some purpose. This, perhaps, was as interesting as the address itself, as it showed wherein the main difference lies between the Christian and Brahmin beliefs. . . .



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The memoirs of Swamiji's brother, Mahendra, about Swamiji's morning classes at 63 St George's Road, mentioned that the Duchess of Albany was one of the distinguished women who attended—see the [next post](#). The *London American* article continued:

"It is the usual thing at Mrs. Martin's receptions to meet Americans, and on Wednesday we noticed many well-known faces. There were also present some members of the Royal Household, but these were strictly incognito. Mrs. Martin's drawing room looked, as it always does, artistic from floor to ceiling. The room formed, indeed, a fitting stage for the Swami, who himself presented a picture with all the Eastern coloring in perfection. His dark olive face with its dignity of expression, his little yet powerful figure clothed in a long brown garment with a crimson girdle, and his raven-black hair, made him look what in truth

he is—the Hindu Swami (the Master); the expounder of an Oriental creed.”



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Josephine MacLeod probably accompanied Swamiji to Mrs. Martin's on 10 June. She and her sister Betty Leggett were doubtless already acquainted with the most important Americans in London. At Mrs. Martin's invitation Jo and Swamiji returned to Hyde Park Gate on the Fourth of July.

MRS. JOHN BIDDULPH MARTIN'S RECEPTION.

Mrs. John Biddulph Martin gave a reception at Hyde-park-gate on Saturday evening in celebration of Independence Day. Gottlieb's Vienna Orchestra played in the conservatory, and the garden was illuminated with electric light. More than 500 guests were present, including many Americans resident in London. Among those who accepted Mrs. Martin's invitation were:—

There were a number of Independence Day celebrations in London that summer. Britain was obviously finding its relationship with America exceedingly profitable. Victoria Biddulph Martin's reception was surely the most glittering. The *Morning Post* listed about 200 of the more heavily titled guests. There was Viscount This and Dowager Duchess That plus dozens of Earls, Countesses, Honorables, and a generous sprinkling of Ambassadors. Swamiji and Jo were not named. One person among the named guests who Swamiji would have recognized from the Parliament of Religions was [Rev. Alfred W. Momerie](#). One wonders if ex-pat [Moncure Conway](#) was also among the guests.



Source: TuckDB

Two days later Swamiji wrote to Francis Leggett back in New York. It sounds as if many of the notables at the reception greeted him with some familiarity. In America he had been a curiosity. In England it felt as if his message was gaining some recognition:

“The night before last I was at a party at Mrs. Martin's, about whom you must already know a good deal from Joe. Well, the work is growing silently yet surely in England. Almost every other man or woman came to me and talked about the work. This British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine, and they will spread all over the world.”

A report of the Biddulph Martin reception appeared in *The Lady* on 9 July commenting that “the extensive garden was turned into a fairy retreat with its many coloured electric lights, and its garlanded umbrellas spread under a cloudless sky”. . . “it seemed impossible to believe that within a stone’s-throw Kensington High Road was teeming with nocturnal traffic.” Swamiji told Leggett:

“I simply admire Joe in her tact and quiet way. She is a feminine statesman or woman. She can wield a kingdom. I have seldom seen such strong yet good common sense in a human being.”

Jo was socially adroit. She was especially grounded in this peculiar mixture of intellectual Brits and wealthy Americans who were more at home abroad than in the States.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Shortly after the Independence Day reception, Swamiji gave a talk to the Theosophists, presided over by Mrs. Annie Besant. She was quite famous for her active endorsement of many causes over the course of her long life. As evidence of her celebrity status, she is pictured in a 1901 series of Ogden's Guinea Gold cigarette cards.

BRAVE MRS. BESANT.

THE THEOSOPHIST LEADER IS
COMING HERE AGAIN.

Story of Her Life from the Time of
Her Marriage to the Present Day—
A Glance at the Religion She Is
Advocating.



SINCE the death of
Mme. Blavatsky,
Mrs. Annie Besant
has been the ac-
knowledged head
and front of the
theosophists. The
theosophist may be-
lieve anything with
regard to religion,
but the vast mass of
them agree on one

point, and that is that the great religious teachers were men who had reached perfection through having lived many lives on earth, and that they constitute a secret brotherhood, from which members are sent at intervals to teach humanity. As Mrs. Besant is said to contemplate a third visit to the United States in the near future, it may be expected that the agitation of this peculiar religious theory will soon take on new life.

Viewed from any aspect Mrs. Annie Besant is a strangely strong woman. Born in England, of Irish parents, her childhood was spent in an atmosphere of pure religion, and, upon attaining the age of young womanhood, she was of an exceedingly devotional nature. With a

strong inclination for the cloister, she was diverted from the purpose of seeking seclusion in a nunnery by the belief that she could accomplish more for religion by marrying a clergyman, and at 20 she became the wife of Rev. Frank Besant, brother of the novelist, Walter Besant. She soon discovered that her husband's life did not conform to the lofty ideas of perfect religion which she had formed, and resented the disappointment by not only refusing to go to church, but by resisting his authority as a husband, and finally becoming a heretic. The result was a separation, then a divorce, and, after that, all sorts of trials and troubles for the woman, which culminated in making her a leader among the socialists of London, a colaborer with Charles Bradlaugh in promulgating the doctrines of infidelity, and subsequently the disciple of and then the successor of Mme. Blavatsky as the leader and teacher of theosophy.

Source: Caldwell Tribune 4 January 1896

Public opinion is frequently a fickle phenomenon. "Brave" Annie Besant was forgiven for endorsing a weird occult religion replete with secret doctrines, but not for endorsing birth control—which is what the *Caldwell Tribune* meant by "promulgating the doctrines of infidelity" with Liberal MP [Charles Bradlaugh](#).

Swamiji wrote a letter to Ellen I. Hale dated 7 July 1896. It seems that she and her husband George were on holiday in Europe, so perhaps he wrote to her care of an agent such as Thomas Cook. Swamiji was expecting to be in Switzerland soon, and he wondered if their paths might cross. (As it happened, their paths did cross, but that would be months later, in Italy.)

Dear Mother—

[On the] 18th of this month I start for Switzerland for a holiday. I will come back to London again to work in the Autumn. The work in England bids fair to be much better and deeper than in the U.S. And here in London is the heart of India also. Where are you now? I am passing through Geneva on my way to the Hills. I will be there a day or two.

If you be somewhere near, I will make it a point to come to see you. Did you hear Annie Besant? How did you like her?

Annie Besant had been lecturing in London. Did the Hales write that they intended to hear her lecture? There was talk on the other side of the Atlantic that Mrs. Besant would soon visit America, but for the spring and summer of that year, she remained in London.

Divine Service at 11.0 AM & 7.0.
ROYAL INSTITUTE of PAINTERS in WATER COLOURS. 191, Piccadilly. — The Swami Vivekananda, on "The Vedanta Philosophy," at 3.30 p.m. Admission free.
THEOSOPHY.
Mrs. ANNIE BESANT
Will Deliver a LECTURE
On the above Subject,
At the QUEEN'S SMALL HALL,
On SUNDAY EVENING NEXT.
Doors open at 7.0: commence at 7.30. Tickets 2s., 1s.

Source: London Standard 6 June 1896

By chance, advertisements for Swamiji's lecture at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours and Besant's lecture at Queens Small Hall appeared together on 6 June.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji's mention of Besant to the Hales was two days before he was due to give a lecture at Blavatsky Lodge in St. Johns Wood. It seems likely that his invitation to lecture there was arranged by Henrietta Muller. Besant remembered Swamiji as "a striking figure" at the Parliament of Religions, and she recalled meeting him in one of the rooms set aside for delegates. She was one of the first to describe him as "a warrior-monk" and "a matchless evangel of the East."

E.T. Sturdy, a former member of the Theosophical Society, had been so mortified by the acrimonious power struggle scandals of the Society in 1894, that he would have nothing more to do with them. Now William Q. Judge, who had been at the center of the scandal was dead. Miss Muller, while not active in the Theosophical Society, remained a personal friend of Mrs. Besant. And Swamiji's mood had changed. He wrote to Francis Leggett:

"Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless every one, everything, love and embrace everything, and I do see that evil is a delusion. . . . Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play."

Swamiji's forgiving mood expressed in his letter to Leggett suggests that the animosity of William Q. Judge, the late president of the American Theosophical Society—covered in a [previous post](#)—was forgiven.

The Theosophists' meeting hall had been built into Mrs. Besant's rented home at 19 Avenue Road. The Charles Martin postcard above shows the northern portion of Avenue Road by St. Paul's church. No. 19 was located at the southern end of the Avenue where it joined Regent's Park.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

With the trees leafed out, this earlier, pioneer style postcard is less specific about which stretch of Avenue Road it depicts, so it might be imagined that it is nearer to No. 19.

In the Blavatsky Lodge the meetings do not seem to have been affected by the heat of the weather. Mr. Leadbeater, Mr. Keightley and Mrs. Besant occupied the platform on the last two Thursdays in June and the first in July, and on July 9th Swâmi Vivekânand delivered an eloquent discourse on Bhakti Yoga to a crowded lodge. The lodge will be closed during August.

Source: Lucifer 15 July 1896

This clipping from the 15 July issue of *Lucifer*, the Theosophist's newsletter, states that Swamiji's lecture topic was [Bhakti Yoga](#). It seems like Besant would have preferred this topic. When Swamiji was in Switzerland, he wrote to Alasinga Perumal on 8 August:

"By the by, Mrs. Annie Besant invited me to speak at her Lodge, on Bhakti. I lectured there one night. Col. Olcott also was there. I did it to show my sympathy for all sects. . . . Our countrymen must remember that in things of the Spirit we are the teachers, and not foreigners—but in things of the world we ought to learn from them."

Alasinga must have been flabbergasted when he read this, as it was a 180° shift from Swamiji's letter of only six months ago when he wrote:

"You think you can get more subscribers in England by advertising Annie Besant? Fool that you are.

I do not want to quarrel with the Theosophists, but my position is entirely ignoring them."

Circumstances had changed and Swamiji had moved on. He probably still had reservations about the motives of Col. Henry S. Olcott, president of the Theosophical Society of India. Despite his explanation to Alasinga that he was impartially showing his sympathy for all sects, it seems clear that he spoke to the Theosophical Society in London out of personal respect for Annie Besant.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Besant became president of the Theosophical Society in 1907. She would become very involved in the [Home Rule](#) movement for India. This postcard of her was made in the 1920s.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Annie Besant participated in Theosophical conferences in Adyar, India in 1896 and 1901. Although she wrote a Preface dated 3 January 1897, in France her speeches were later published in 1907 as [Des religions pratiquées actuellement dans l'Inde](#). It appears that this postcard may have been a promotion of that book, as it illustrates a quote from page 256:

“Chaque religion n'est qu'un rayon de la lumière de Dieu ; chacune a sa couleur propre et l'union de toutes ces religions réalise la vraie lumière blanche.”

“Each religion is only a ray of God's light; each has its own color and the union of all these religions achieves the true white light.”



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

I usually try to find postcards of landmarks close to places that Vivekananda visited. Avenue Road intersects with the northern boundary of Regent's Park, and the road itself continues into the park across [Macclesfield Bridge](#). Here is a modern postcard of an 1827 engraving of the original Macclesfield Bridge. In Swamiji's day this bridge was famous throughout London as “Blow-up Bridge.” On 2 October 1874, a barge passing under the bridge, like the one shown in the engraving—except it was carrying gunpowder and petroleum—exploded and destroyed the

bridge leaving only its iron pillars. The bridge was duly rebuilt according to its original design.



Source: NLS

The 1895 Ordnance Survey map shows the relationship of 19 Avenue Road to Macclesfield Bridge in Regent's Park.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Another nearby landmark that Swamiji may have passed on his way to Blavatsky Lodge was [St. Johns Wood Chapel](#). A few weeks earlier J.J. Goodwin and Swami Saradananda probably passed by here on their way to [Lord's Cricket Ground](#).

Park Lane, London 1896

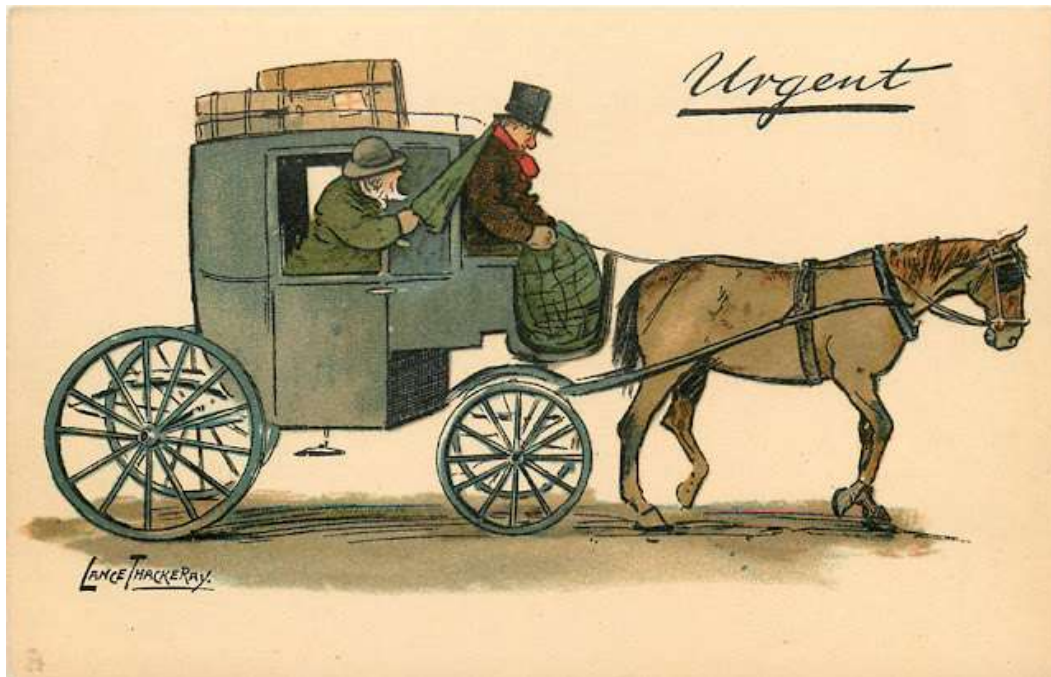
Some Notables



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swami Vivekananda's younger brother, MahendraNath Dutta, wrote a memoir in Bengali, *Londone Vivekananda* about Swamiji's days in London during 1896. It contained this amusing anecdote:

Once as they sat down to a meal Swamiji asked Goodwin to look in the diary to see if there was any engagement today. Goodwin saw that there was an invitation from a duke in Park Lane at this very hour. A terrible rush ensued, with everyone trying to get Swamiji ready. A carriage was called, etc. Goodwin was at his beck and call, whirling like a spinning wheel. Then they sat down again to their meal. Goodwin raved about the split pea dal. "How delicious! I could eat this all my life," etc. Swami Saradananda and Mahendra smiled to themselves. Swamiji returned very late at night.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

This Raphael Tuck postcard illustrated by Lance Thackeray reminds us of the common frustration over getting to appointments on time—whether the tardy transport be an Uber or a hansom cab.

Someone, either Mahendra or the translator, speculated that the “duke” with whom Swamiji had an appointment was the “Duke of Cambridge, one of Queen Victoria’s sons”. Thankfully, historian M.L. Burke did not take up that speculation. None of the Queen’s four sons held that title. Prince George, Duke of Cambridge (1819-1904) was actually a cousin to the Queen. The well known facts of Prince George’s life tend not to suggest any interest in Hindu philosophy. It is possible that whoever injected the ducal title into Mahendra’s narrative meant instead Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, one of Victoria’s sons who had served as Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army from December 1886 to March 1890. Again, this is a futile speculation. In 1896 the Duke of Connaught was in command of the army at Aldershot, so any connection with Swamiji and/or Park Lane remains both obscure and improbable.

A more plausible connection to an aristocrat in Park Lane might have been the residence—in absentia—of Lord Brassey at No. 24, which was close to Hyde Park Corner, shown in the postcard at top. [Thomas Brassey](#), the First

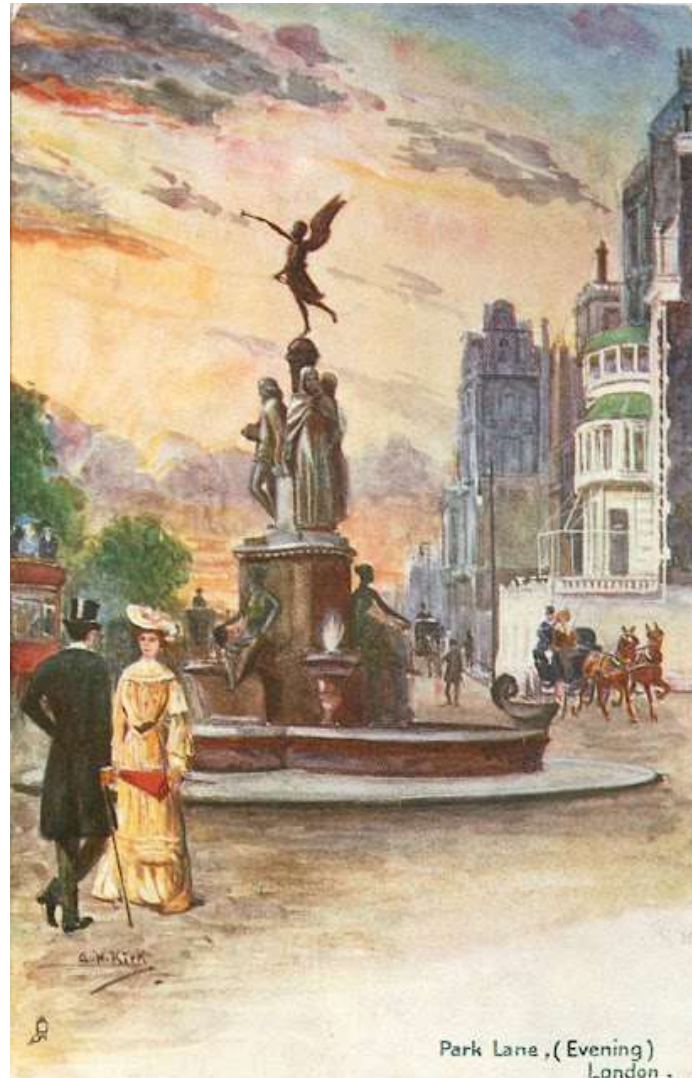
Earl Brassey, had been appointed Governor of Victoria, Australia in 1895. He was not in London during the summer or autumn of 1896. However, a room in his Park Lane house had been converted into an Indian Museum. This room was used by SEPIA, the Society for Encouragement and Preservation of Indian Art, for an exhibition and sale of Indian arts and crafts in November 1896. Many notables were involved in the planning of this event. Perhaps someone on the planning committee needed to consult Swamiji about a spiritual matter.

Lord Brassey's London house was used as a meeting place for various charitable causes. On 22 June there was a morning concert in the Indian Museum in aid of orphans in the British and American Missions in Paris. On 30 June the Boarding-out and Cottage Training Homes Association of which the Duchess of Albany was patroness met at 24 Park Lane. On the afternoon of July 1st there was a concert for the Barclay Home for Blind and Partially Blind Girls at 24 Park Lane.

According to Mahendra's memory, Swamiji returned very late that night. Below are three postcards of Park Lane, transitioning from afternoon into night.

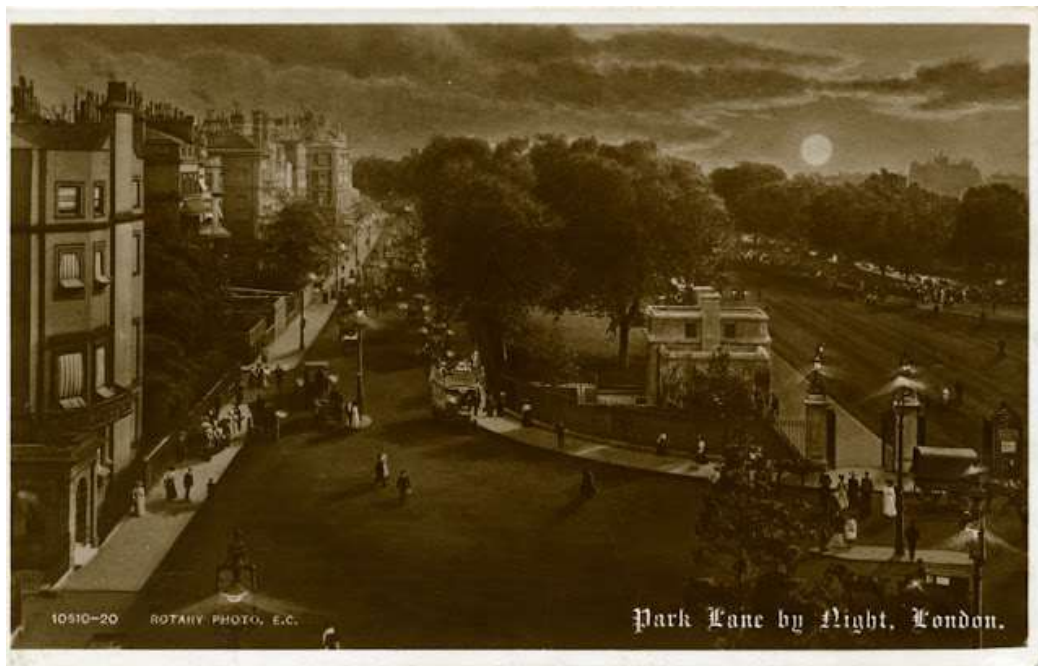


Park Lane, running along the eastern edge of Hyde Park from Hyde Park Corner to Marble Arch, was a street populated by upper-crust society. Exactly where Swamiji met a "duke" or some other titled person there is not known with certainty.



Source: TuckDB

A different member of the Royal Family was connected to the previously mentioned exhibition of Indian arts and crafts at Lord Brassey's house. Princess Christian opened the Indian exhibition and sale at 24 Park Lane on 10 November 1896. Princess Helena, the third daughter of Queen Victoria, became known upon her marriage as [Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein](#). She lived at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor and in London at Schomberg House, 71 Pall Mall (now the Oxford and Cambridge Club). She was active in charity work, mainly as a sponsor for nursing.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

M. L. Burke included Mahendra's anecdote about Swamiji meeting an aristocrat in Park Lane in her narrative of the summer of 1896, but it might have occurred in the autumn of that year.

The SEPIA exhibit was open for at least three days. Perhaps someone arranged to meet Swamiji at Lord Brassey's Indian Room after the exhibition opened. The *Indian Magazine and Review* reprinted this description:

“It would, indeed, be difficult to find a more appropriate spot for showing such productions than this “Indian Room” of Lord Brassey's, because, in addition to work just fresh from skilled and patient hands, there is an opportunity for the visitor to inspect at the same time the famous museum of curiosities upstairs, where strange and beautiful relics from different parts of the earth, together with treasures from the sea, are all preserved and encased in a unique fashion.”



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Swamiji, however, was particularly busy on 10 November so he did not meet the Princess when she opened the exhibit at 3 p.m.. He gave a class in the morning at 39 Victoria Street. Then he and E.T. Sturdy attended the general meeting of the [Royal Asiatic Society](#) at 22 Albemarle Street where General G.G. Alexander read a paper "On the Most Appropriate Equivalent for the Word 'Tao' as used by Lao-tsze". Robert K. Douglas of the British Museum responded by letter with the opinion that the Tao was not a personal God but more like Brahman of the Upanishads. Sturdy took part on the discussion panel.

In the evening Swamiji addressed the Sesame Club at 171 Victoria Street.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

There was another Princess Helena, a daughter-in-law of the Queen. Born Helene FriederikeAuguste, Princess Helena of Waldeck and Pymont, she had married Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, youngest son of Queen Victoria. As [Duchess of Albany](#), she was also involved in charity work. Ironically, Helena, wife of Prince Leopold, garnered more favor from the Queen than her own daughter. She was widowed after only a few years of marriage, when her husband, Leopold fell prey to the hemophiliac gene.

Mahendra wrote about a morning lecture at 63 St Georges Road attended

by some élite ladies. A lot of fine carriages were at the door and there was a great deal of bustle going on. Swamiji's lecture was "very moving and everyone was listening intently." As people slowly left the lecture room, Mahendra noticed the ladies side-glancing, whispering and nudging one another.

"It was all about one particular lady. When she had left they heard, "It is the Duchess of Albany," Then it was learned that she had come incognito and secretly, to hear Swamiji's lecture; earlier her lady-in-waiting had come to hear them and had told her all about it."

Mahendra's recollection naming the Duchess of Albany is more tangible than a vague duke. Another source, the *London American*, confirmed that an incognito member of the Royal Family had listened to Swamiji's talk at the Kensington mansion of Victoria Woodhull Martin on 10 June 1896—see the [previous post](#).



Source: [TuckDB](#)

The reported "whispering and nudging" over the incognito presence of the Duchess of Albany is a reminder of the rigidity of upper class society when Queen Victoria reigned. Members of the Royal Family had to be either circumspect or covert in their activities lest they risk any whiff of disapproval from Her Majesty. But there is more to this picture than mere propriety.



Source: The Graphic 17 October 1897

During the 1890s the elderly Queen firmly maintained her own very controversial favorite servant and personal secretary, [Abdul Karim](#), her Indian Muslim Munshi. The resistance and prejudice that Karim's favored treatment aroused in the Royal Household might have made it more difficult for the Duchess of Albany to make her own investigation of Indian philosophy. She certainly could not allow her interest in Swami Vivekananda to become public, lest it inspire a similar backlash.

Such is the fascination with royals that some may be tempted to fantasize over what influence Swamiji may have had with them. If the Duchess of Albany had openly patronized him it might have worked to his detriment. Swamiji wanted his energized vision of Vedanta to be disseminated throughout the British Empire by freedom-loving intellectuals and activists—not stifled by the staid confines of the aristocracy. Yet perhaps, Swamiji enabled some members of the establishment to "see India with new eyes," as he remarked to Swami Saradananda.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

One of the notables that Swamiji met in London was the as yet uncelebrated writer [John Galsworthy](#). It seems that Josephine MacLeod introduced him to several members of the Galsworthy family. Swamiji wrote to Francis H Leggett on 6 July: "The Galsworthys have been very, very kind." When Swamiji's classes started up again in the fall, he wrote to Jo MacLeod on 7 October: "Most of our friends came—one of the Galsworthys too—i.e. the married daughter [[Lilian Sauter](#)]. Mrs. [Blanche] Galsworthy could not come today; it was very short notice."

Galsworthy's novels and plays laid open the hypocrisy of upper class pretense and privilege. The French postcard above was published after he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932. J.J. Goodwin reported that Galsworthy attended Swamiji's lecture "Practical Vedanta" at 39 Victoria

Street on 19 November 1896. A few days later, on 24 November, Swamiji had lunch with Galsworthy.

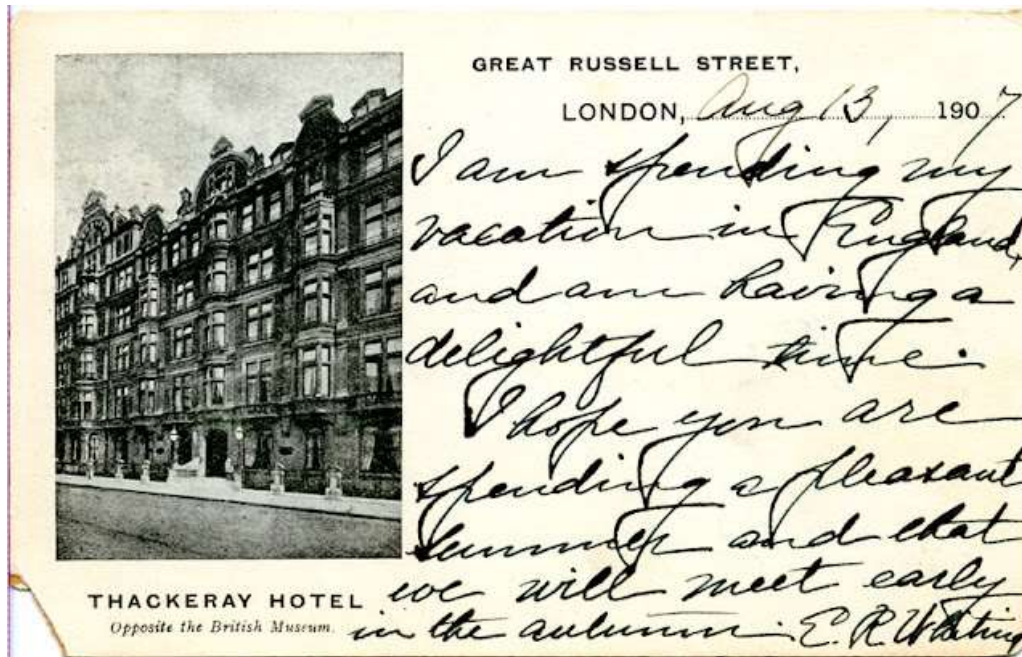
18 July 1896 London & 21 November 1896 Cambridge

A presiding presence



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

By the late nineteenth century the number of Indian intellectuals living in London, the hub of the British Empire, formed a considerable community. The June 1896 *Indian Magazine and Review* reported that there were 326 Indian gentlemen studying in England—plus 20 women students. There were several Indian organizations active in London serving specific religious or regional groups from India. Swami Vivekananda participated in some honorary aspects of this world although he maintained his independence from any organization. On the afternoon of 18 July 1896 he presided at a meeting of the London Hindu Association held directly across the street from the British Museum, shown in this 1902 Raphael Tuck postcard.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The Hindu Association met in Montague Mansions. A decade later, according to the postcard above, Montague Mansions had become the Thackeray Hotel. The building is still extant opposite the main entrance to the Museum.

LONDON.—MONTAGUE MANSION (opposite the British Museum entrance), Great Russell Street, W.C. This establishment is arranged in suites of rooms each fitted with bath room and lavatory; 60 single and double bed rooms 18 bath rooms, passenger lift, splendid dining saloon, coffee, smoking, billiard, and reception rooms; high-class board; *table d'hôte*, separate tables Terms moderate, no extras; night porter; telephone 2906. Also at Henrietta Mansion, corner of Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square, W.; telephone 35991; and 40 Weymouth Street, Portland Place, W.

Source: Colonies & India 11 January 1896

This 1896 newspaper advertisement from *The Colonies & India* describes the accommodations in Montague Mansions in more detail, and suggests by its placement that the neighborhood may have been popular with the Indian community. In fact it was just around the corner from the former residence of the great Bengali reformer, [Raja Ram Mohan Roy](#) (1772-1833) now marked with a blue historical plaque at 50 Bedford Square.

*

On July 19 a social conference of Indians resident in Great Britain and Ireland was held under the auspices of the London Hindu Association at Montague Mansions, Museum Street,

W.C., when Swami Vivekananda, M.A., the representative of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, presided. Mr. Ram Mohan Ray, barrister, delivered an interesting address on "Hindus and their Needs."

* * *

Source: Colonies & India 25 July 1896

M.L. Burke reprinted an article from the 20 July *London Daily Chronicle* in *Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries V4* which gave more information about the meeting than the two small clippings reproduced here.

The meeting was a social conference of Indian residents—Hindus, Parsees, and Mohammedans—plus English ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Ram Mohan Roy—not to be confused with the aforementioned founder of the Brahma Sabha—spoke first on "Hindus and their needs."

The *Chronicle* noted the presence of Dr. Moncure Conway—which is quite significant. Moncure Conway was a popular American minister on the outer fringe of Unitarianism and in London he headed South Place Chapel. When Swamiji addressed his congregation at South Place Chapel in 1895—see the [previous post](#)—it could not be confirmed that Conway was present, therefore the Hindu Association meeting confirms that Conway witnessed Swamiji give an inspiring talk. Conway, himself an unconventional minister, gave the Association some rather conventional advice on this occasion. He "advised the association not to go rashly to work, but to gather together the genius of India and by careful action they would in time succeed."

WORLDLY VOICE.

A social conference of Indians resident in Great Britain and Ireland was held yesterday afternoon, under the auspices of the London Hindu association at Montague-mansions, Museum-street. Mr. Swami Vivekananda, M.A., presided, and an address was delivered by Mr. Ram Mohun Ray, barrister, on "The Hindoos and their Needs." The lecturer laid particular stress on a demand that infant marriages should be made illegal, and widows allowed to re-marry.

Source: Lloyds Weekly News 19 July 1896

DadabhaiNaoroji, Mr. Martin Wood, T. J. Desai, and Sevak Ram (the hon sec'y) also spoke. According to his reminiscence published in *Vedanta Kesari* 1932, T. J. Desai recalled that Swamiji's speech was the most impressive:

In July, 1896, a conference of the London Hindu Association was held at the Montague Mansions. The chair was taken by Swami Vivekananda. The Hon. President of the Association, Mr. DadabhaiNaoroji was also present. A lecture was delivered on the "Needs of India" by Mr. Ram Mohan Roy, a gentleman from Madras. I, being the Secretary of the Association, had to arrange for the meeting, refreshments, etc. Swami Vivekananda, as chairman of the conference, rose to speak, and he electrified the audience. Reporters of the press were also present. When he struck his hand on the table during his speech, my watch bounded from the table and fell down on the ground, and created a visible sensation. He had a commanding figure, and my landlady, who had come to the meetings with me, was greatly impressed with his speech and personality.

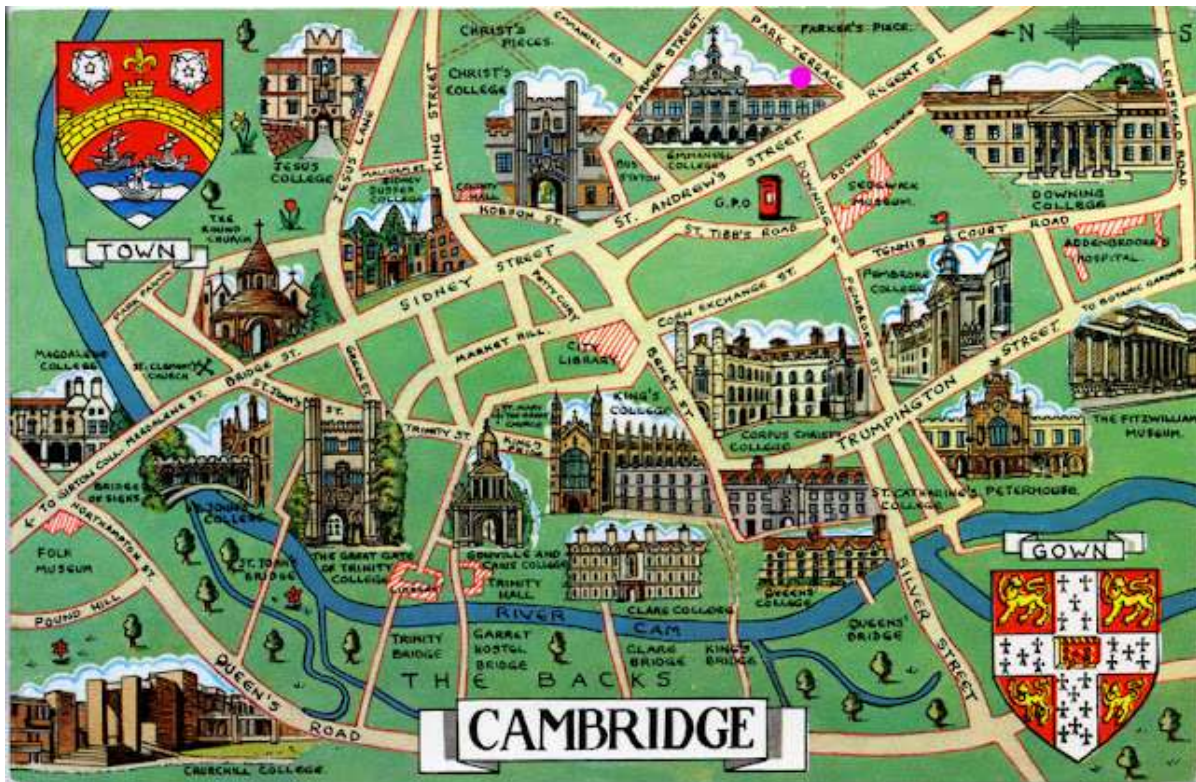
Presumably Desai placed his pocket watch on the podium for the speakers

to keep their remarks to a timetable.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Just for some nearby local color, this postcard shows the corner of Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Street, which was once an art shop and is now a restaurant.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Shortly after the Hindu Association meeting, Swamiji went to the Continent for a summer vacation with Captain James Sevier, his wife Charlotte, and Henrietta Muller. It was a refreshing interlude for Swamiji, culminating in founding a friendship with the German Sanskrit scholar Paul Deussen.

Meanwhile, T. J. Desai's memoir of the July meeting continued with a segue into an event that Swamiji attended later in Cambridge on 21 November 1896:

“While the Swami had captivated the British public by his oratory, it was placarded, as I was going home, that Prince RanjitSinhji had saved the honour of England against the Australian team. He had scored 154 runs and was not out. The next day there was a big leading article in the London Times about the "Exploits of Indians in England". Mr. Chatterji had come first in the Indian Civil Service Examination, and Prince Ranjit Sinhji had stood first in the cricket averages in that very year.”

Desai referenced the fact that RanjitSinhji had made news with his Test debut on 16 July 1896, just a few days before the London Hindu Association meeting. Back in India there was jubilation. An Indian prince had "saved the honour of England" as Desai put it, on the battlefield of cricket. Atul Chandra Chatterjee, a graduate of Kings College, Cambridge had also added lustre to India by coming first in his ICS exams. In 1919 he would become the first Indian appointed Chief Secretary of the United Provinces. And Swami Vivekananda's lectures in London had gained the respect of the cognoscenti. A feeling of vindication for India in religion, sports and government inspired this banquet in Cambridge.

A pink dot on this vintage chrome postcard of Cambridge marks Swamiji's destination.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

J.J. Goodwin wrote to Jo MacLeod on Friday 20 November: “At Cambridge tomorrow, the undergrads are giving a complimentary banquet to RanjitSinhji, the famous Indian cricketer, and the Swami has accepted the invitation to the toast of India.”

The banquet was held in the University Arms Hotel on Park Terrace.



Source: [TuckDB](#)

The University Arms Hotel appropriately faced Parker's Piece cricket grounds shown in this 1905 Raphael Tuck silver tone postcard.

Did Goodwin—who loved sports—accompany Swamiji to Cambridge? An account of the dinner was written for the *Indian Mirror* and reprinted in other newspapers across India such as the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* below. The *Indian Magazine and Review* reported:

“On November 21 the Cambridge “Indian Majlis” gave a complimentary dinner, at the University Arms Hotel, to Prince Ranjitsinhji and Mr. Atul Chandra Chatterjee. Mr. Hafiz G. Sarwar, of St. John’s College, presided, and a most enthusiastic reception was given to the two distinguished guests. About fifty Indians were present, and also a few Englishmen. Swami Vivekananda was among the speakers.”

Swami Vivekananda rose next to respond amidst loud and deafening cheers. The Swami began by saying that he did not know exactly why he should be chosen to respond to the toast unless it be for the reason that he in physical bulk bore a striking resemblance to the national animal of India (laughter). He desired to congratulate the guests of the evening and to he took the statement which the Chairman had made that Mr. Chatterjee was going to correct the mistakes of past historians of India, to be literally true. For out of the past the future must come, and he knew no greater and more permanent foundation for the future than a true knowledge of what had preceded before. The present is the effect of the infinity of causes which represent the past. They had many things to learn from the Europeans but their past, the glory of India which had passed away, should constitute even a still greater source of inspiration and instruction. Things rise and things decay, there is rise and fall everywhere in the world. And though India is fallen to-day she will assuredly rise again (loud cheers). There was a time when India produced great philosophers and still greater prophets and preachers. The memory of those days ought to fill them with hope and confidence. This was not the first time in the history of India that they were so low. Periods of depression and degradation had occurred before this but India had always triumphed in the long run and so would she once again in the future.

Source: Amrita Bazar Patrika 18 December 1896

Swamiji had previous experience as a banquet speaker and toastmaster. Not only did he mark the occasion with light and witty banter, but he boosted the students' mood of hope and confidence in the future glory of India. See these previous posts for his banquet experiences in America: [Realtors Banquet](#) ; [V Club](#) ; [Manufacturers Banquet](#) .



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

There is an 1897 film fragment of Ranjitsinhji batting on [YouTube](#), said to be the oldest surviving cricket film in existence. This Hall of Fame postcard is published by the [England and Wales Cricket Board](#).



Source: [TuckDB](#)

[Ranjitsinhji](#) brought real style to the sport. His fame as a cricket player was so ubiquitous that Lance Thackeray had no need to name him in this 1904 Raphael Tuck postcard.

By 21 November Swamiji's steamer ticket to Ceylon had been booked to depart from Naples in December. He would travel to Italy with Captain and Mrs. Sevier—see the previous posts about their [Christmas Eve](#) and [Christmas Day](#) in Rome.

Then on 28 November Swamiji wrote a letter to Mary and Harriet Hale back in Chicago. Thursday 26 November had been the American Thanksgiving holiday which Chicagoans had celebrated by listening to sermons, feasting on roast turkey, and watching football. Even the inmates of the Cook County jail were treated to a fine dinner. Fond as he was of his loyal American friends, Swamiji's mind was filled with plans for his future ashram in the Himalayan foothills and he could hardly contain his anticipation to see India again.

19 July 1896 London to Paris to Geneva

Summer Tour on the Continent



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

On the afternoon of Sunday 19 July 1896 several friends of Swami Vivekananda gathered, probably at Victoria Station, to say farewell—or rather, bon voyage—to Swamiji and his disciples: Captain James Henry Sevier, his wife Charlotte, and Miss Henrietta Muller. They were embarking upon a Continental holiday and the first leg of the journey would have been aboard the [London Chatham & Dover Railway](#).



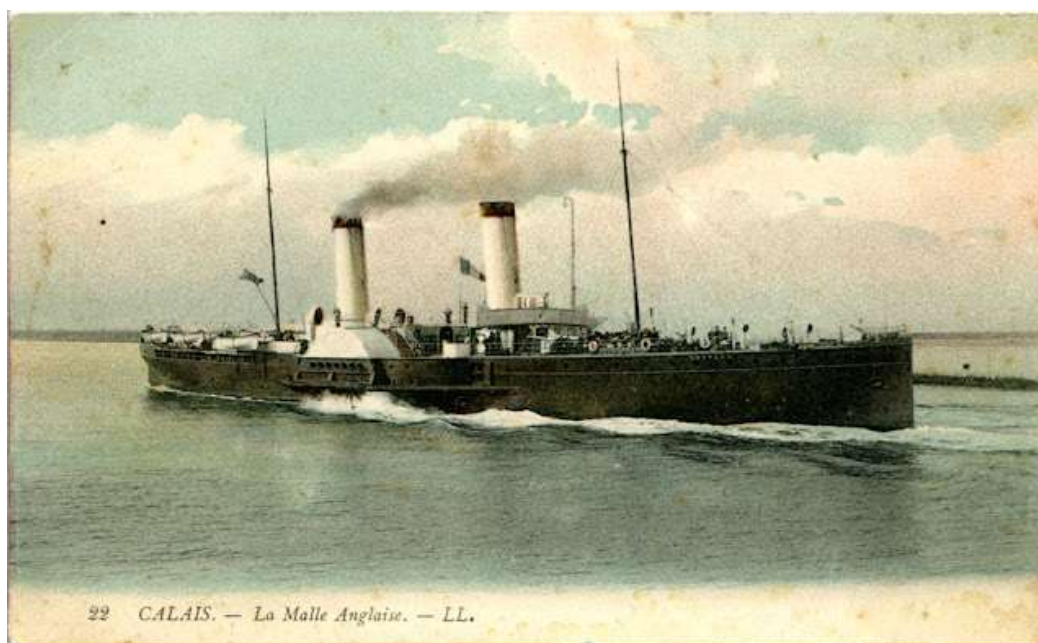
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Their train went through: Greenwich, Dartford, Gravesend, Strood/Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham, Sittingbourne, Faversham, and Canterbury to Admiralty Pier, Dover. From Dover they crossed the English Channel to Calais, France.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The shipping line for the LCDR employed paddle boats. As can be seen from the postcard, the train went right out on [Admiralty Pier](#). The name of the vessel they traveled on is not known.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

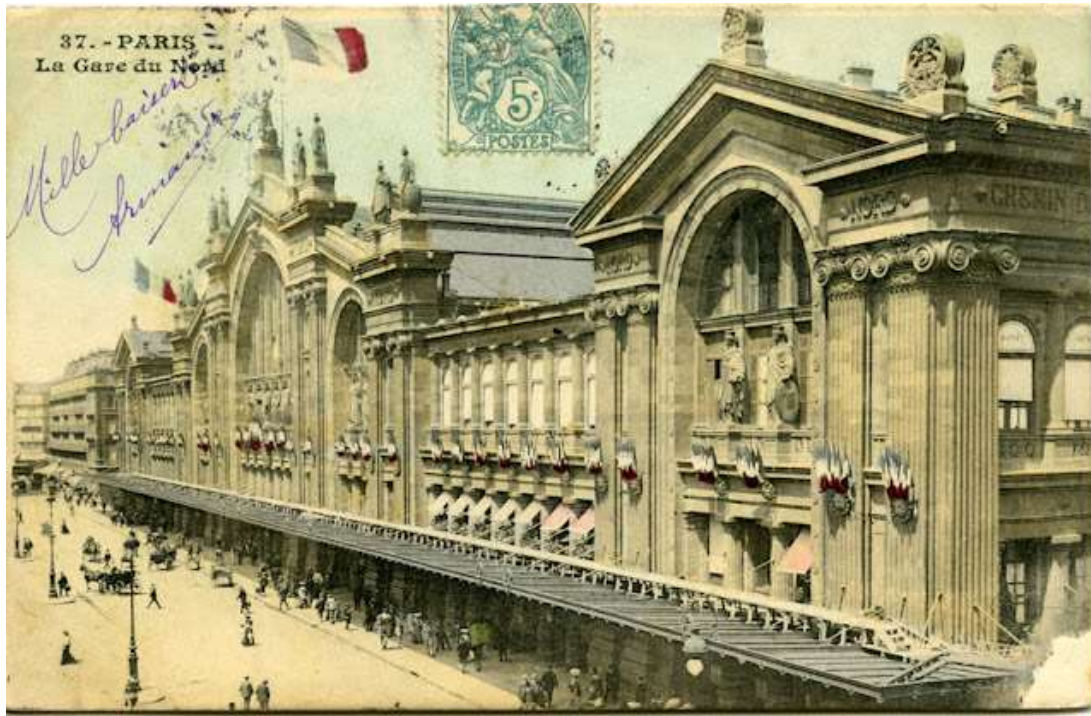
This French postcard shows an English paddle boat bound for Calais. According to the 1914 biography of Swami Vivekananda, the Channel waters were calm the day that they crossed. This detail was no doubt supplied by Charlotte Sevier, who was living in India when the *Life* was compiled.

The primary sources of information about Swamiji's summer tour come from his letters and the narrative in the 1914 *Life of the Swami Vivekananda* by Swami Virajananda. In the decade between 1967 and 1977 [Swami Vidyatmananda](#), then assistant minister at the Centre Vedantique in Gretz, France, wrote several well-researched articles for *PrabuddhaBharata* on Swamiji's travels in Europe. Thanks to his careful itinerary, it is really Swami Vidyatmananda who serves as our travel guide for Swamiji's trip to France, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Transport was equally convenient on the other side of the Channel, as the paddle steamer would have docked right at the railway station—la gare maritime—where they boarded a train that would take them to Paris.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Trains from Calais arrived in Paris at la [Gare du Nord](#). The party spent the night at an unknown hotel in the city.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

The next day they took a train to Geneva. To go to Geneva, then as now,

they would have departed from la [Gare de Lyon](#), Boulevard Diderot 20. The train station shown on the postcard, however, was built in 1900. Baedeker's 1896 Guide to Paris and its Environs stated, "This station is to be rebuilt." Therefore Swamiji would have seen a previous incarnation of the Gare de Lyon.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Arriving in Geneva at la Gare de Cornavin, Swamiji, the Seviars and Muller found a hotel overlooking Lac Lemman.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This tri-fold panoramic postcard of Geneva—scanned in three sections—looks at the city across La Rade, the harbor of Lac Léman, from the Rotonde du Mont Blanc. Swamiji’s party stayed in one of the many hotels overlooking the lake.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

When Swami Vidyatmananda was in Geneva some fifty years ago, he found two out of seven better-class lakeside hotels listed in Baedeker's 1895 travel guide still in business: [Hotel des Bergues](#) and [l'Hotel Beau Rivage](#).



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

Of course there is no known record of the hotel where Swamiji stayed in Geneva. While he and the Seviars would have been content with more modest accommodations, it may be guessed that it was Miss Henrietta

Muller who made the reservations, since out of the four travelers, she was arguably the most picky regarding her lodging.

South Hampstead, London 7 October 1896

To and from **Waveney Mansions**



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

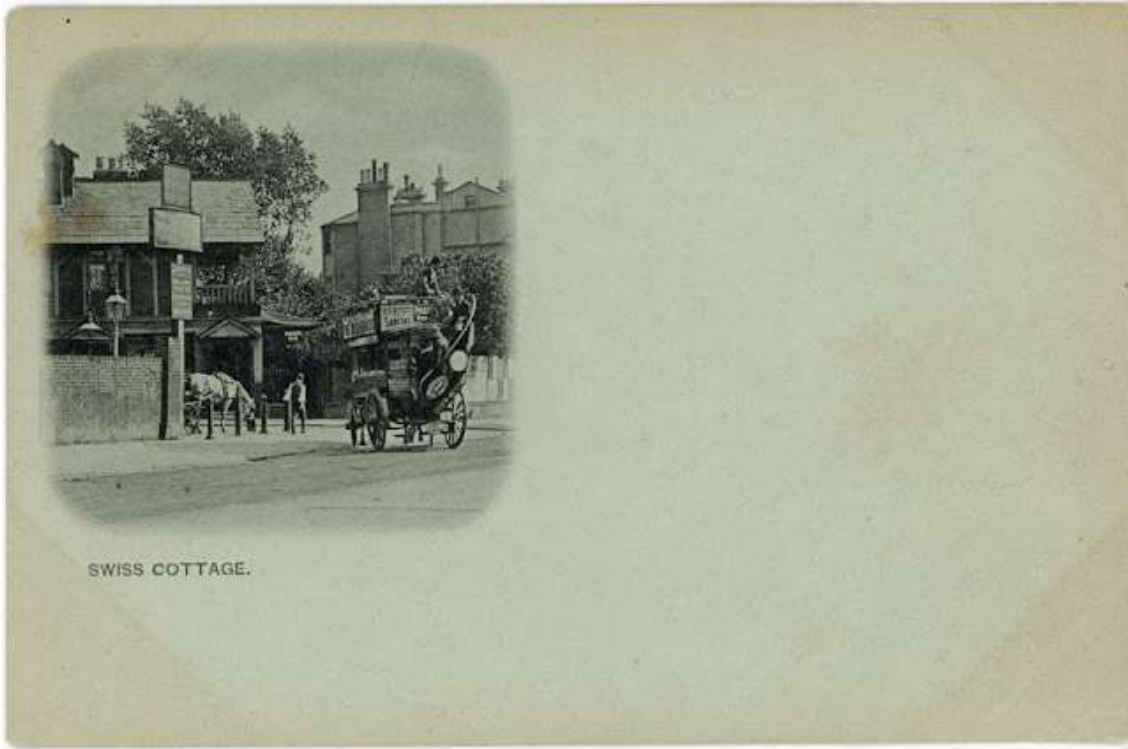
In the last post, Swami Vivekananda with his friends, Capt. and Mrs Sevier and Prof. Deussen, endured a rather rough night crossing from Hoek van Holland. They arrived at Liverpool Street Station, London on the morning of 17 September. At what point did the travellers go their separate ways?

The 1915 *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda* states:

Having reached London, Professor Deussen made his home with friends in St. John's Wood, while the Swami accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to their home in Hampstead, both places being suburbs of London.

Historian Marie Louise Burke thought that Swamiji may have parted company with the Seviers and headed off to Wimbledon where he was expected to be the guest of Henrietta Muller. Miss Muller was a "take charge" sort of person, so she may well have been there at the station to greet them. From Wimbledon, Swamiji wrote a letter begun on 17 September stating "Today I reached London." Much further down in this lengthy letter he wrote that Prof.Deussen "and I travelled together to England and today came together to see my friend here with whom I am to stop for the rest of my stay in England." Such was the nature of transatlantic correspondence then that long letters may have been written over a few days. So there may have been a gap in time between writing "today" twice. In any case, he told Mary that she could continue to write to him at Airlie Lodge, Wimbledon until he left for India.

Meanwhile, the Seviers and possibly Prof.Deussen would have continued on to South Hampstead. The most expedient way there was by the underground. The [Metropolitan Line](#) would have taken them from Liverpool Street to [Finchley Road](#). Since Prof.Deussen was staying with friends in St John's Wood, they may have bid him adieu at the former stations of either Marlborough Road or Swiss Cottage.



SWISS COTTAGE.

Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

It has been suggested that the Seviars disembarked from the Swiss Cottage Metropolitan Line Rail Station, but surely it was a shorter distance home to take the train one stop further north to Finchley Road.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

It was a direct journey on the Metropolitan Line from the 1875 Liverpool Street Station to the 1879 Finchley Road Station.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Finchley Road was the main commercial thoroughfare near the South Hampstead housing development where the Seviars lived.



NLS

Above is the South Hampstead section of the 1893-95 Ordnance Survey map of London. The streets depicted in the postcards below are highlighted in yellow. A red dot marks the Sevier's residence at 66 Waveney Mansions.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The following Charles Martin postcards show adjacent streets in the Sevier's neighborhood. Broadhurst Gardens is the furthest north.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Next, Compayne Gardens runs parallel between Broadhurst and Greencroft Gardens.



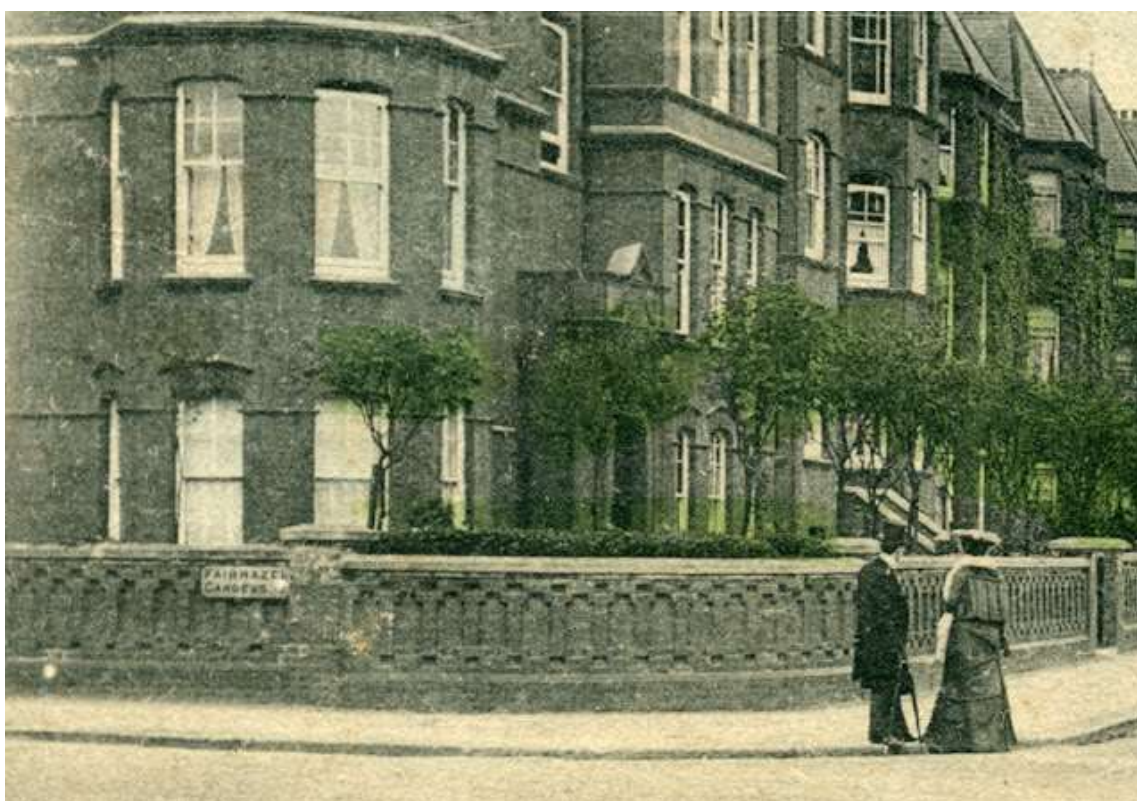
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Greencroft Gardens runs parallel one block north of Canfield Gardens.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This Charles Martin postcard of the intersection of Canfield Gardens with Fairhazel Gardens looks down Canfield Gardens towards Finchley Road. Martin did publish a postcard titled Fairhazel Gardens, but it did not show the block containing Waveney Mansions.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

An enlarged detail reveals the street sign for Fairhazel Gardens. Capt. and Mrs. Sevier can be imagined standing on the corner.

For Londoners of the 1890s, a street with the suffix of "Gardens" meant a long continuous wall of multistory brick dwellings fronted by a very small green or hardscape fenced yard. The suffix of "Mansions" in the address signified a block of better quality flats.



Google Maps

Here is the same street corner, today, looking up Fairhazel Gardens towards Waveney Mansions on the right.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

If Swamiji did not go home with the Seviers on 17 September, it is known from his letters that he stayed with them on the night of 7 October. On the 7th he wrote to Josephine MacLeod that he had missed seeing her cheerful face among those who had come to his opening class. He added a postscript: "Mrs. & Mr. Sevier in whose house (flat) I am writing now, send their kindest regards." On the 8th he wrote to Ellen Waldo, "The London classes were resumed, and today is the opening lecture." Also on the 8th he wrote to Sara Bull ". . . from today the classes are resumed again."

Evidently 7 October was the launch of Swamiji's autumn season of classes on Vedanta philosophy at the new rented premises at 39 Victoria Street. Burke thought that the season had probably begun with a reception. We can imagine Swamiji introducing Swami Abhedananda to his well-wishers, and saying a few informal words about his summer on the Continent, etc. After it was over, he and the Seviers may have taken the tube back to Hampstead.

The huge, 600-suite [St Ermin's Hotel](#) makes a convenient postcard landmark because it stood next to the St James's Park underground station

which was a just short walk north of 39 Victoria Street where Swamiji taught.



Wikipedia

It may have been quite convenient for some of Swamiji's friends like the Seviers to commute to his classes via the underground. St James's Park underground station on the District Line connected with the Metropolitan Line at South Kensington and Kensington High Street. The Finchley Road trains turned north at Baker Street. The photo above shows a platform of the Kensington High Street station in 1892.

Trains run on the main line (inner circle) in both directions from 6 a.m. to nearly midnight, at intervals of 5-10 min. during the day, and of 15 min. before 8 a.m. or after 8 p.m.

The stations generally occupy open sites, and are lighted from above, many of them being roofed with glass. At night some of them are lighted by electricity. The carriages are lighted with gas. The booking-office is generally on a level with the street, at the top of the flight of stairs leading down to the railway. The official who checks the tickets points out the right platform, while the tickets themselves are marked with a large red O or I (for 'outer' and 'inner' line of rails), corresponding with notices in the stations. After reaching the platform the traveller had better enquire whether the train for his destination is the first that comes up or one of those that follow, or consult the somewhat inconspicuous telegraph-board on which the destination of the 'next train' is indicated. It may, however, be useful to know that the trains of the 'inner circle' have one white light on the engine; trains between Hammersmith and New Cross have two smaller white lights to the right in front of the engine, between Hammersmith and Aldgate two white lights to the left in front, and between Richmond and Aldgate two large white lights. The terminus towards which the train is travelling is also generally placarded on the front of the engine. Above the platforms hang boards indicating the points at which the different classes of carriage are drawn up; the first-class carriages are in the middle of the train. The names of the stations are called out by the porters, and are always painted at different parts of the platform and on the lamps and benches, though frequently difficult to distinguish from the surrounding advertisements. As the stoppages are extremely brief, no time should be lost either in taking seats or alighting. Passengers leave the platform by the 'Way Out', where their tickets are given up. Those who are travelling with through-tickets to a station situated on one of the branch-lines show their tickets at the junction where carriages are changed, and where the officials will indicate the proper train. — Comp. the time-tables of the companies.

The fares are extremely moderate, seldom exceeding a shilling even for considerable distances. Return-tickets are issued at a fare and a half. At first, in order to make himself acquainted with the Metropolis, the stranger will naturally prefer to make use of omnibuses and cabs, but when his first curiosity is satisfied he will probably often avail himself of the easy, rapid, and economical mode of travelling afforded by the Underground Railway.

Baedeker's Guide to London and its Environs 1896

The London Underground was the premiere underground metro rail system in Europe. Most of the lines built between 1868 to 1890 were only partially underground. The first deep tunnel train lines opened in 1890. Travel on the Underground was still a new experience for many visitors to London, so *Baedeker's Guide* needed to explain the system in some detail. How to buy tickets, how to find the right platform, and how to know if the train arriving at the platform was the one you needed to get on? These questions were as vital to the gaslight era as they are today.



Wikipedia

Above is the first comprehensive map made of the London Underground in 1908. Granted there were many changes made to the system in the decade following Swamiji's 1896 London season, but this map is relevant because it has a prominent red circle around the St James's Park station advertising the Army and Navy store. St James's Park was the tube station that Swamiji would have used most. I added a red arrow at the bottom left to show how Swamiji might have commuted to Wimbledon on the District Line via Earls Court. The Wimbledon extension was completed in 1889.

Ridgway Gardens, Wimbledon 6 October 1896

Airlie Lodge



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

After returning from the Continent, Swami Vivekananda lived briefly at Airlie Lodge, the leased home of Miss Henrietta Muller in Wimbledon. There he delivered two lectures, one on Tuesday 6 October, and the report appeared in the 9 October *Wimbledon Post*. It is reprinted in Vol. 1 of the *Complete Works* as “[Vedanta as a Factor in Civilisation](#)” He also gave eight classes on succeeding Monday afternoons. The 1915 biography, *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda* stated:

"With the exception of a few days spent with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in Hampstead, the Swami commenced his work by giving two drawing-room lectures within the first two weeks at Airlie Lodge, Ridgway-gardens, the residence of Miss Muller at Wimbledon."

The *Wimbledon Post* journalist wrote that the audience consisted of "some 30 or 40 residents, nearly all ladies." I think the key word here is

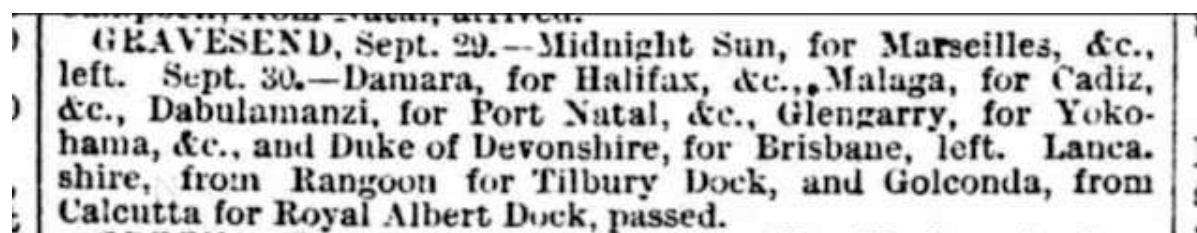
"residents." Swamiji's auditors were local. Henrietta Muller had left Lucerne about 26 August 1896 to return to London. Since she moved to Wimbledon, she had been making new friends and canvassing support for Swamiji. The talk was introduced by J F Schwann, J P, a magistrate for the Wimbledon Urban District Council.

Miss Muller was politically connected with social activists and suffragettes. Long before so-called "suburban housewives" had the vote, they were expanding their horizons and developing collective power for social change in a variety of fields.



A few months earlier, on 26 June, Swami Saradananda who had been with Swamiji since April, had sailed for Boston along with Swamiji's disciple and stenographer, J.J. Goodwin—see the [previous post](#). Swamiji was keen to recruit another one of his *gurubhais* to take up the work of teaching Vedanta in the West. On 3 July Swamiji had written to India requesting that Kali, Swami Abhedananda, join him in London ASAP.

According to J.J. Goodwin, after weeks of wondering when Swami Abhedananda's ship would arrive in London, one day he quite unexpectedly knocked at the door of Airlie Lodge. Due to a miscommunication no one had been at the docks to meet him! Fortunately, he met a Bengali gentleman at the docks who directed him to the house of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee who had attended some of Swamiji's lectures. Swami Abhedananda's biographer, Moni Bagchi, stated that Bonnerjee directed him to 14 Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster. This creates a problem with the timeline, because to the best of our knowledge, as of 30 September when Swami Abhedananda's ship arrived, Swamiji was not yet residing at Grey Coat Gardens.



GRAVESEND, Sept. 29.—Midnight Sun, for Marseilles, &c., left. Sept. 30.—Damara, for Halifax, &c., Malaga, for Cadiz, &c., Dabulamanzi, for Port Natal, &c., Glengarry, for Yokohama, &c., and Duke of Devonshire, for Brisbane, left. Lanca-shire, from Rangoon for Tilbury Dock, and Golconda, from Calcutta for Royal Albert Dock, passed.

Morning Post 1 October 1896

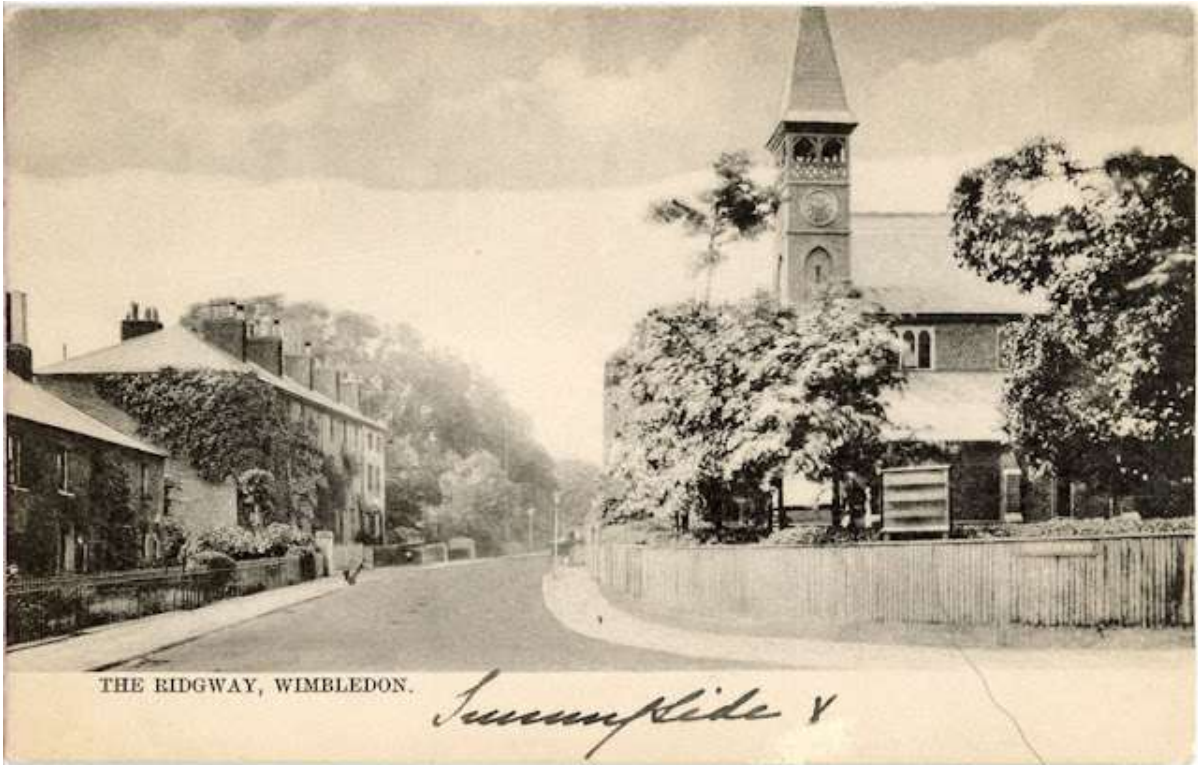
On 25 August Swami Abhedananda had sailed from Calcutta on the BISN *Golconda*, the same ship that Swamiji and Sister Nivedita would take in 1899. It arrived at the Royal Albert Docks in North Woolwich on 30 September. The *Golconda* was a slow boat. It had “liberty to call at ports in the English Channel and Mediterranean” in addition to scheduled stops at Madras, Colombo, and Naples. Perhaps for that reason, its fares were affordable. Historian Marie Louise Burke assumed that since Swamiji wrote on 3 July requesting Abhedananda to come, he would have hopped on the next ship, but things did not happen that quickly in India.

The exact date when Swamiji moved into Grey Coat Gardens is not known. We can only piece together some clues from letters. On 3 October E. T. Sturdy had written to Josephine MacLeod confirming that he had rented the rooms on Victoria Street. Swamiji lectured in Wimbledon on 6 October and at 39 Victoria Street the next day. On 8 October Swamiji wrote to Sara Bull from Wimbledon mentioning "The other Swami who is here . . ." So did Swami Abhedananda accompany Swamiji to the Sevier's flat in South Hampstead on 7 October—see the [previous post](#)—to discuss finding accommodation closer to Victoria Street? Perhaps Abhedananda spent only a week at Airlie Lodge before Swamiji decided that living in Wimbledon and commuting to London was not going to work. Or perhaps that decision had been reached earlier because of the amount of time that Swamiji was spending in London with Prof. Paul Deussen.



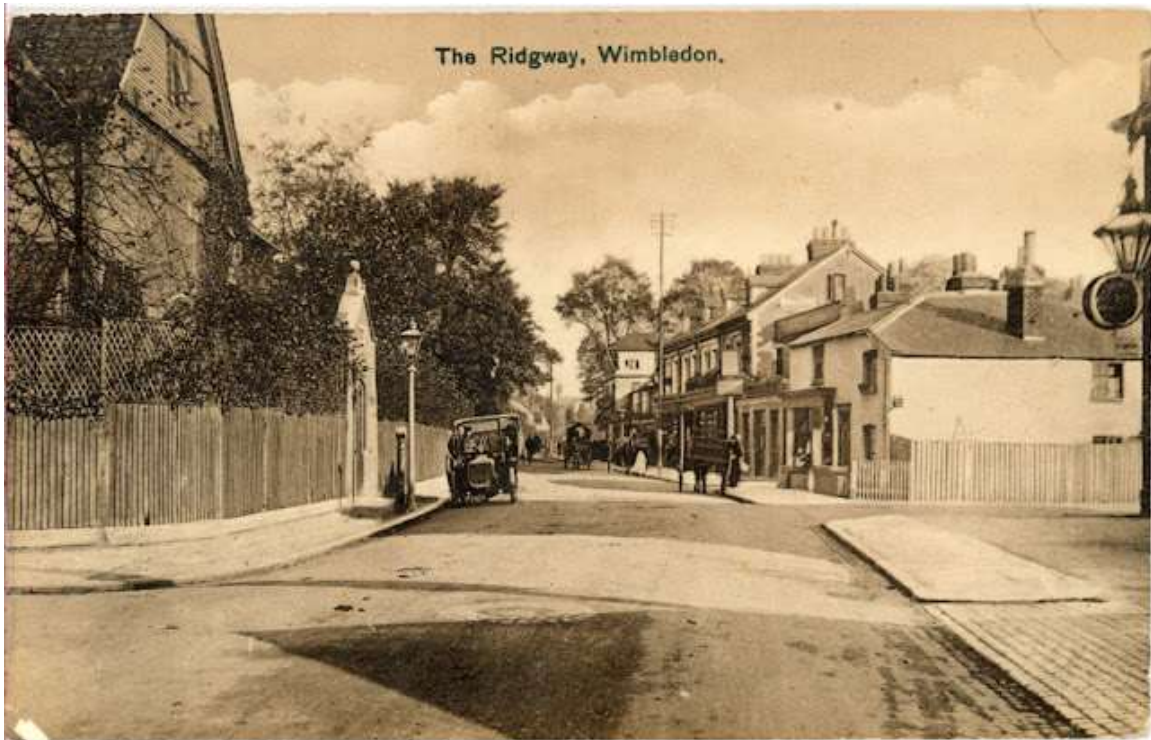
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

On their journeys to Airlie Lodge from the railway station, both Swamiji and Swami Abhedananda would have taken a hansom cab past these postcard landmarks. Wimbledon Library, just a short distance north up the hill from the railway station, was opened in 1887.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Turning west along The Ridgway—that is Ridgway spelled without an "e"—they passed the Emmanuel Church of England.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Down the road a bit were some shops between Thornton road and Hillside street. Swamiji's good friends, Eric and Nell Hammond, also lived in Wimbledon.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Airlie Lodge was located on Ridgway Gardens, a short street that branched off The Ridgway and led to the rear of Wimbledon College. The main entrance to the school was one block further west on Edge Hill. This postcard may show the T intersection with Edge Hill because on the left there is a partially obscured sign that reads "College" and "School".

Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) taught at Kingsley Gate School, a Froebel kindergarten, at 10 Berkeley Place, just off The Ridgway one block east of Airlie Lodge.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Marie Louise Burke wrote *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries* in six masterful volumes in the late 1960s. She was very good at setting the scene. She imagined Swamiji and Swami Abhedananda taking walks through Wimbledon Common and she mentioned Queensmere Pond. However Queensmere Pond was a two mile walk to the northern part of Wimbledon Common. The pond in the Common that was closest to The Ridgway was Rushmere Pond, a half-mile walk.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Rushmere Pond is the oldest pond on the Common. Perhaps Swamiji fed the swans there.

Rarely do I ever question M. L. Burke's research, but I am skeptical about her identification of Airlie Lodge as being the same house that is now No. 4 on Ridgway Gardens.

The problem of which house on Ridgway Gardens was formerly called Airlie Lodge lies with one of the idiosyncrasies of the Royal Mail which permits giving some houses names instead of street numbers. Naming a house is a bit like getting vanity license plates for cars. Unfortunately the Royal Mail does not keep postal address names from 125 years ago. See the [previous post](#) about the difficulty of locating E.T. Sturdy's residence, named High View, in Caversham.



NLS Maps

Here is a section from the 1894-96 Ordnance Survey map showing only one house on Ridgeway Gardens. This street was so new that it was as yet unnamed, so I added it in green. The actual map surveying was done in 1894 and 1895, and published in 1896. It is conceivable that the surveyors would not have drawn houses still under construction. I outlined what I believe to be the original Airlie Lodge in pink and No. 4, which was not on the 1894 map, is outlined in yellow.



NLS/Bing Maps

Here is a current satellite map of the exact same section from the 1894-96 Ordnance Survey map. The former site of the building I believe to be the original Airlie Lodge is outlined in pink and No. 4 is outlined in yellow.



Google Maps

The large house drawn on the 1894-96 Ordnance Survey map at the corner of The Ridgway and Ridgway Gardens no longer exists. A modern block of flats, shown above, now stands on its site. On the left, next to the flats in this Google street view is 107 Ridgway, a house that Swamiji passed by multiple times in 1896.



Google Maps

Around the corner from the flats is No. 1 Ridgway Gardens. Wimbledon Council's annual report for April 1894 to March 1895 shows that one detached house was built in Ridgway Gardens in that year. I presume that this would be one house in addition to the one already drawn in 1894 on the Ordnance Survey map.

No. 1 Ridgway Gardens is different in style from the other houses on the street. Features such as corbels under the soffits, narrow sash windows, an elaborate chimney with more flues, and skilled decorative brickwork are older in fashion than the style of Numbers 2, 3, and 4, and the similar houses on the opposite side of the street.



Google Maps

It would be useful to examine the Wimbledon Council's records for housing development, but in the interim I think that important clues to the location of Airlie Lodge can be reasonably determined by observing style and class. So, for the moment I have to leave Swamiji's story and consider previous and subsequent occupants of Airlie Lodge for clues to its location.

In 1893, Mr. and Mrs. Oswald R. Mounsey lived at 44 Clarges Street in upscale Mayfair, London. Their baby daughter born on 17 June sadly lived only seven days. In the wake of this loss they moved to the greener suburbs presumably for some peace and quiet.

In January 1894 Mr. Mounsey became a founding director of the Derby Tea Company, Ltd. with £37,000 capital in a tea plantation in Cachar, Assam. In September 1895 Mr. O. R. Mounsey was pursuing the life of a gentleman, playing golf at the Royal Wimbledon Club. He later became involved in the expensive business of breeding champion horses.

Notices appeared in *The Times* and the *Morning Post* on 7 August 1895, with the additionally sad news that a stillborn daughter was delivered to Mrs. Oswald R. Mounsey at Airlie Lodge, Ridgway Gardens on 4 August.



Google Maps

When Mr. Mounsey moved his wife and household to Airlie Lodge, probably sometime in 1894, the house was already built, and therefore it must have been the large house drawn on the Ordnance Survey map on the corner of The Ridgway and Ridgway Gardens. The Mounseys no doubt required a house as substantial and stylish as their Mayfair residence.

Comparing the size of the foundations drawn on the Ordnance Survey map, Airlie Lodge may have resembled the large, older houses on the opposite side of The Ridgway. Pictured above is No. 66. It originally had a fashionable semi-circular front drive for carriages. Guests entered by the stairs in the center. Tradesmen knocked below stairs where the kitchens and servants quarters were. Large houses such as these were divided into flats many decades ago, and their former floor plans have been altered. By contrast, the houses built on Ridgway Gardens around the turn of the century seem more like cottages.



Google Maps

Burke described Airlie Lodge as standing “at the end of a one-block street named Ridgway Gardens”. Did she search for the house based on a

phrase in someone's diary or letter stating that it was “at the end” of the street? Perhaps “the end” did not mean, as it does to Americans, a “dead end,” a point one cannot go beyond, but rather whoever first wrote it meant the *other* end of the street where it opened into The Ridgway. At least, that is my theory.

When she saw it, Burke described the house as “a plain medium-sized residence” “unremarkable, almost indistinguishable from other houses on the block.” Nice as it is today, the house at No. 4 Ridgway Gardens is a bit too ordinary to serve the likes of Oswald R. Mounsey, Esq., tea-importer and horse-breeder. No, Airlie Lodge would have been much grander.

LADY highly RECOMMENDS Gentlewoman (29) as LADY-NURSE or NURSERY GOVERNESS, to teach and take entire charge of young children; really fond of and accustomed to them; good needlewoman.—Miss Grey, Airlie Lodge, Ridgway-gardens, Wimbledon.

Morning Post 3 June 1896

AS BUTLER or Thorough INDOOR SERVANT; Swiss; 24; able to valet gentleman; 18 months' good personal character.—T. S., Airlie Lodge, Ridgway-gardens, Wimbledon.

Morning Post 24 June 1896

In June 1896 advertisements in the “Situations Required” and “Want Places” columns in the *Morning Post* suggest major household changes at Airlie Lodge. Were the Mounseys moving away?

These ads suggest that Airlie Lodge was an elegant and commodious house requiring multiple servants. Unlike the Mounseys, Miss Muller certainly did not require the services of a gentleman's valet or nursery governess, but she probably had to hire a new cook—see the [previous](#)

post. If the Mounsey's cook was any good they would have taken her with them.

While she was still in Switzerland Henrietta Muller must have been planning to let a house in London with rooms large enough to accommodate audiences for lectures and classes by Swami Vivekananda. A house that large in a good neighborhood in the center of the city would have been much too expensive, so she looked to the suburbs in places where Swamiji already had some friends. One of them may have notified her in June or July that Airlie Lodge, a long-established property, was soon to be vacant.

Presumably Miss Muller rented Airlie Lodge not only because its large rooms would accommodate Swamiji's classes, but because it was a property previously occupied by respectable people with social connections. The size of the house at No. 4 does not seem to have been large enough to persuade her to rent it for the purpose of holding sizable gatherings. If No. 4 was newly built in 1895-96, the plaster would have barely been dry when Miss Muller moved in. Would the Mounseys really have lived here?

After 1897, John F Kane lived in Airlie Lodge. He was an Irish cattle breeder whose polo-playing son was an officer in the British Army.

Victoria Street, London 7 October—10 December 1896

A voice on Victoria Street



TuckDB

Victoria Street, one of the London streets that Swami Vivekananda knew well, has changed vastly in the past century. I put two red dots at the west and east ends of Victoria Street on this 1908 Raphael Tuck postcard map marking Swamiji's main lecture venues there.

Swamiji's stenographer J.J. Goodwin wrote to Sara Bull that Victoria Street, just south of Buckingham Palace, was "one of the best thoroughfares in London." It was a modern street in 1896, lined with upscale apartment complexes, shops, offices, hotels and a big department store. The street led west toward Grosvenor Garden and Belgravia and it led east toward Westminster Abbey.



David Rumsey Maps

This 1893-1895 Ordnance Survey map accurately documents Victoria Street as Swami Vivekananda knew it. The red dots mark the Sesame Club at No. 171 and Swamiji's lecture rooms at No. 39. The green dot marks 14

Grey Coat Street. St James's Park underground station at top right and the underground at Victoria Station at lower left are also depicted.



TuckDB

At the far western end of Victoria Street is the [Grosvenor Hotel](#). It was built in 1862 and was the first building in London to feature a hydraulic powered elevator.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Behind Grosvenor Hotel is [Victoria Station](#), which was actually two terminals for two separate companies. The [London, Brighton and South Coast Railway](#) is shown here with its old facade. Swamiji probably used this terminal to go to West Croydon. Swamiji would have departed from the terminal on the far left for Dover to cross the English Channel to France via the [London, Dover, and Chatham Railway](#).



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This view of Victoria Station turns around from the previous postcard and looks toward the Wilton Road entrance. The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway is shown on the right.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Across from the railway station on Victoria Street was the Royal Standard Theatre, a music hall.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

In 1911 the Royal Standard Theatre was replaced by the Royal Palace Theatre, which is still a working theatre today. Across the street on the right of this postcard were the rooms of the Sesame Club at 171 Victoria

Street, where Swami Vivekananda lectured on 12 May 1895—see the [previous post](#)—and on 20 October and 6 December 1896. No. 171 was near the corner of Victoria and Carlisle Place.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This postcard looks east on Victoria Street, probably from the junction with Buckingham Palace Road. The Cathedral bell-tower was not yet built in 1896. The American Embassy was located at 123 Victoria Street.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The view in this Charles Martin postcard of Victoria Street moves down to street level from the rooftop view above. On the right, under the awning is

the entrance to the Underground Station. Swamiji would have departed from the St James's Park Underground station, and passed through Victoria Underground station heading for Earls Court where the train turned south to Wimbledon.

No. 171 is on the corner aligned with the Cathedral campanile.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This L.L. Levy French postcard of Victoria Street, brings us about fifty yards closer at street level from the previous postcard. *Baedeker's Guide to London and its Environs* 1896 advised:

"A considerable degree of caution and presence of mind is often requisite in crossing a crowded thoroughfare, and in entering or alighting from a train or omnibus. The 'rule of the road' for foot-passengers in busy streets is to keep to the right."



[TuckDB](#)

The Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral just off Victoria Street was under construction in 1896. The Cathedral was not finished until 1903, so Swamiji probably did not see the campanile at its full height of 284 feet.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

There would have been a lot of traffic on Victoria Street, with horse-drawn buses, delivery wagons, and hansom cabs. On the right is the Army and Navy Store.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Swamiji probably did not shop at the huge [Army and Navy Store](#) at 105 Victoria Street, as it was a membership cooperative for military families at that time. Now the store, but not this building, survives on Victoria Street as House of Fraser.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

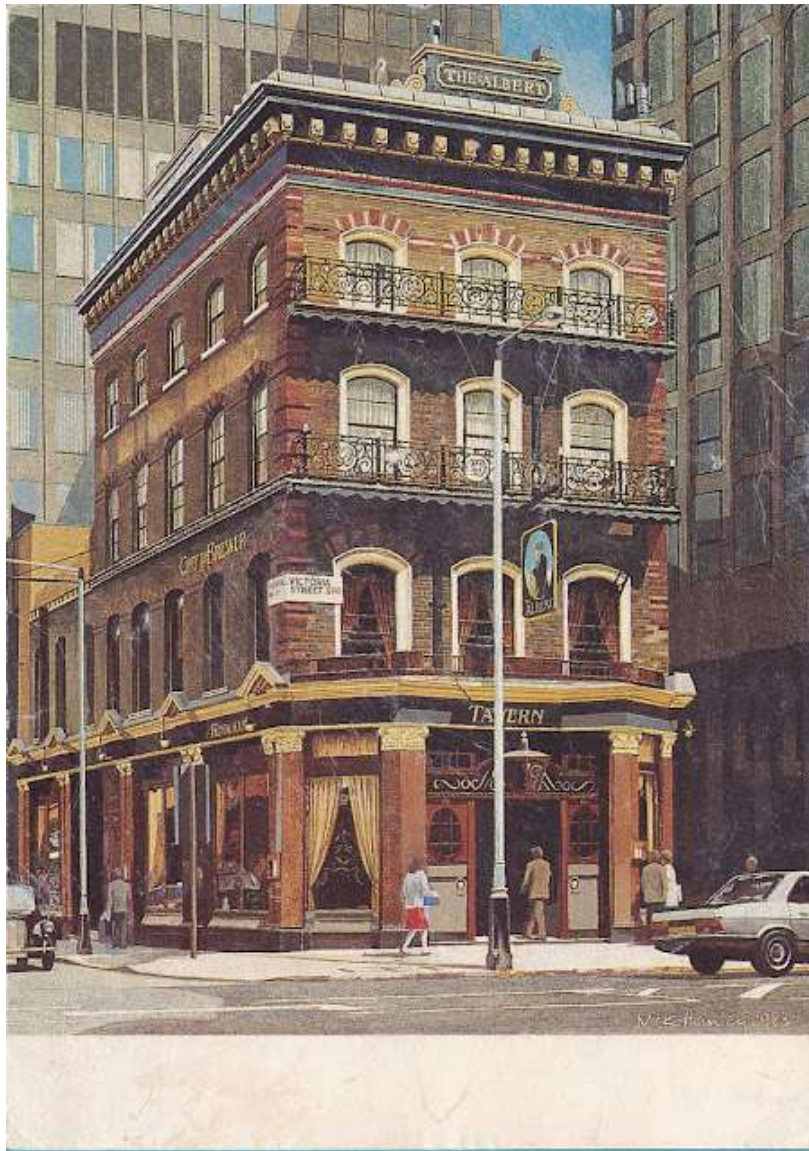
Artillery Mansions, 75 Victoria Street, were new luxury flats in 1895, with an inner circular drive and a fountain in the courtyard. After a long period of decline, the flats are once again upscale properties.



[TuckDB](#)

In June 1896 a new organization, Our Dumb Friends League, was established to campaign for animal rights. The office of the Secretary was at 56 Victoria Street. The League, which evolved into the Blue Cross, put out a set of Raphael Tuck postcards in the 1930s. Above, a coal delivery wagon is a reminder that long before central heating radiators were installed, London residences and offices burned bituminous coal in their hearths, which emitted considerable smoke.

Historian M. L. Burke reported that when Swamiji “wore his turban and his brilliant robe, street urchins would, to his amusement, hoot at him; an alarmed and irate coal-cart driver once, with fortunately poor aim, hurled a lump of coal at his head.” Perhaps the coal man thought that Swamiji’s “safety-orange” cloth might frighten his horse.



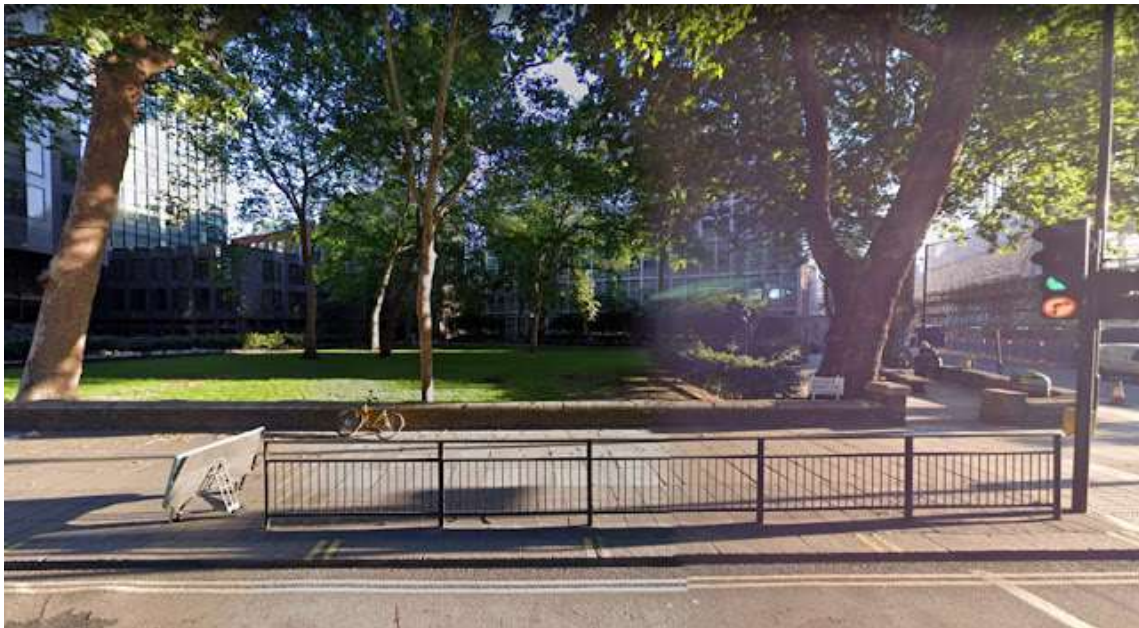
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The Albert public house, built in 1862, still stands on Victoria Street opposite Artillery Mansions.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Next to The Albert on Victoria Street stood the 1888 Windsor House. It had leafy views of a churchyard from its dining room windows. A new Windsor Tower stands in its place.



Google Maps

Swamiji could walk easily from his flat at 14 Greycoat Street to his rented lecture rooms. As he entered Victoria Street from Strutton Ground he could see a little square of green with trees across the street. This was an old cemetery which had belonged to St Margarets Church next to Westminster Abbey, but in the nineteenth-century it served as the churchyard for Christ Church on Broadway, the street shown above on the far right. Christ Church was bombed in 1941 during the Blitz. A post office now stands on its site. For a look at the church Swamiji would have glimpsed through the

trees, go to [Know Your London](#). The St James Park underground station was two blocks north of Victoria Street up Broadway, or Great Chapel Street as it was named then—see the [previous post](#) about traveling on the underground.



Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries V3

The building at 39 Victoria Street where Swami Vivekananda lectured no longer exists. It has been replaced with a new, ten-story, 98,000 sq. ft. office building housing the Department of Health.

The 1915 biography, [The Life of the Swami Vivekananda](#) explained:

"In order to grant the general public an opportunity of hearing the Swami Mr. E. T. Sturdy had engaged a large room at 39, Victoria Street with ample accommodation. Close by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had taken a flat, at 14, Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster, for the Swami and his Gurubhai, the Swami Abhedananda, who had just arrived from India."

In Vol 4 of *Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries* Marie Louise Burke transcribed a detailed letter about the new premises written 3 October from E. T. Sturdy to Josephine MacLeod:

"After a good deal of searching I have taken a room, or rather three rooms, knocked into one, at 39 Victoria Street.

It is on the sixth floor but quiet and has plenty of light and a good lift. The rent is £80 a year; laying fires and cleaning 6/- a week.

The whole block consists of business premises—offices etc., so that it is entirely closed on Sunday. It was impossible therefore to arrange for using the room on that day.

The difficulty in finding a large room is so great and the rents so excessive that there was no alternative.

In the ordinary course the lift ceases running at 7 pm. but it is arranged that the lift shall be at our service until 10:30 p.m for any two nights in the week by paying something, not yet decided upon, to the porter for his attendance."

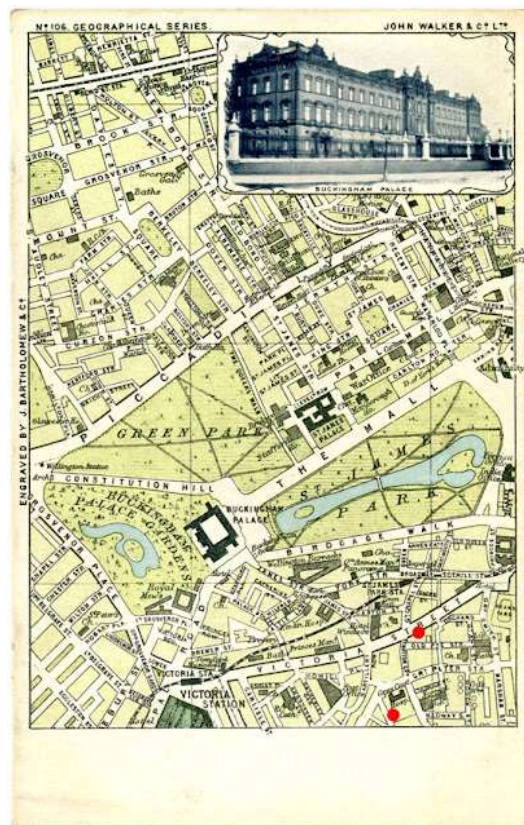
Swamiji was pleased with the lecture space. He wrote that it could seat about 200 people, and all his old friends came. "That is cheering," he told Jo MacLeod.



The eastern end of Victoria Street terminated with the triangular [Westminster Palace Hotel](#). The India Office once occupied a 140 room wing of this hotel, although by 1896 it had its own premises in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Whitehall by the Horse Guards. In 1909 Mohandas Gandhi lived in a room in this hotel.

City of Westminster, London October-December 1896

Grey, grey, Grey Coat Gardens



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

While Swami Vivekananda was lecturing in London during October and November 1896 he lived in a flat at 14 Grey Coat Gardens on Grey Coat Street. There were no gardens. “Gardens” was merely the name of the apartment building. Most of the apartment complexes on Victoria Street were “Mansions”. I put two red dots on the John Walker & Co., Ltd. No. 106 Geographical Series postcard above to show the distance between Swamiji’s flat and his lecture rooms on Victoria Street.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

A bit of greenery was visible just around the corner from Swamiji's flat, in front of the [Grey Coat Hospital](#). Despite its name, this institution was not a hospital at all. It was a girls school. See a [previous post](#) connecting Grey Coat Hospital to the neighborhood where Swamiji stayed in Caversham.



NLS Maps

Grey Coat Gardens was newly built. The building was not drawn on the 1893 Ordnance Survey Map of London. It was probably finished in 1895, the same time that Artillery Mansions, on the next block north, was completed. Artillery Mansions was also not drawn on the 1893 map.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Swamiji's flat was in the basement, so it had no window view of the green yard behind Grey Coat Hospital. Hopefully he could hear cheerful children's voices while they were playing games. His flat was off to the left of this postcard view.



Google Maps

The red arrow locates the flat where Swamiji lived along with Swami Abhedananda and J.J. Goodwin. The whitish roofs left of center belong to the Grey Coat Hospital. The 1915 biography, *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda* explained:

In order to grant the general public an opportunity of hearing the Swami Mr. E. T. Sturdy had engaged a large room at 39, Victoria Street with ample accommodation. Close by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had taken a flat, at 14, Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster, for the Swami

and his Gurubhai, the Swami Abhedananda, who had just arrived from India.

Historian Marie Louise Burke pointed out that although *The Life* credits the Seviers with taking the flat, Swamiji himself said that E.T. Sturdy was responsible. It is quite possible that Sturdy found the property, but the Seviers paid the rent. One reason Sturdy probably searched for a flat was because Swamiji may have come to stay with him while Prof. Deussen was in London. Paul Deussen had come to London to be with Swamiji, but he was staying with friends in St. Johns Wood. If Swamiji was staying ten miles away at Airlie Lodge in Wimbledon, the commute would be over an hour each way. Sturdy had rented a house at 25 Holland Villas Road—less than four miles from St. Johns Wood. He would have been keen to follow the conversations between Swamiji and Deussen, and so he may have invited Swamiji to stay with him for two weeks. It seems that Mrs. Sturdy did not appreciate Swamiji as much as her husband did, hence, he found the flat in Grey Coat Gardens.

On 22 October, J.J. Goodwin wrote to Sara Bull in Massachusetts:

“We have a flat—in the basement—but comfortable, & respectable, which are the two great requisites. It has dining room—three bedrooms, kitchen, bath room, & a janitor. It is within 2 minutes of his lecture room —39 Victoria St. . . .

We have a woman in for three hours in the evening; but otherwise I am in charge—do the cooking, &c. In this way we are at our own mercy with regard to cleanliness, a distinct advantage.”



Google Maps

Here on street level is the front door shared by the flats in Swamiji's building. In Vol 3 of *Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries* M. L. Burke printed a floor plan of the flat. Swamiji wrote to Alasinga Perumal from Grey Coat Gardens “about three weeks” after he returned from the Continent:

“I was living with her [Henrietta Muller] over there [Wimbledon] for the last few weeks. But the London work cannot go on without my living in London. As such I have changed quarters. I am sorry it has chagrined Miss Müller a bit. Cannot help.”

Miss Muller was not best pleased when Swamiji moved out of Airlie Lodge in Wimbledon. She was a “take charge” person and felt that she had anticipated Swamiji’s needs correctly when she leased the large house—see the [previous post](#). However, after Swami Abhedananda arrived things started to fall apart. Swamiji evidently felt strongly that they needed to be in the city at all hours. He still commuted to Wimbledon every Monday afternoon to give a class there.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Across from the north end of Grey Coat Street, on Rochester Row, stands the distinctive Townsend House. It was not yet built in 1896. However, the shops on the far left, outlined by the red rectangle, would have been seen by Swamiji every time he walked around the corner toward Victoria Street.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

As mentioned earlier, Artillery Mansions on Victoria Street was built nearly the same time as Grey Coat Gardens. Note the date 1895 above the entrance. Much of the West End of London was new and considered modern in the 1890s. This postcard shows that the style of upscale modern architecture in Swamiji's day was ornate and embellished.



TuckDB

Some time later, Swamiji would refer to the flat in Grey Coat Street as “the black-hole of London.” His living quarters were nice enough, but the windows let in little daylight, and the autumn days were getting shorter. For someone who longs for big open skies and high views, London can feel awfully closed in—even more so when coal smoke was belching from a million chimneys.

ENGLAND'S jealousy of the United States was exhibited Saturday when London was plunged in the first yellow fog of the season. This was done undoubtedly in order to anticipate the yellow fog scheduled in America for Tuesday and which will break all yellow fog records.

Chicago Tribune 2 November 1896

What is yellow but makes the world seem grey? A yellow fog, of course. London lay in semi-darkness and the dense fog made street traffic dangerous. Swamiji's memories of London were blackened by coal smoke and fog.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

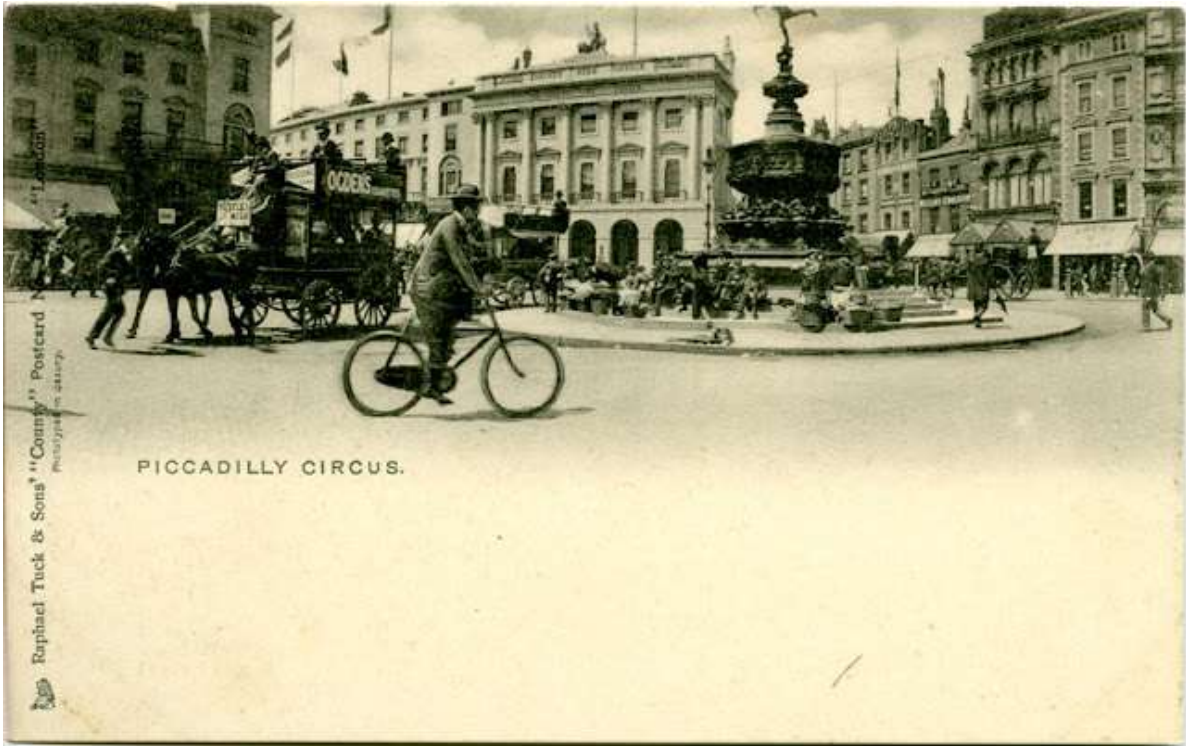
Swami Abhedananda wrote that Sturdy used to bicycle from his house at 25 Holland Villas Road to Greycoat Gardens in the morning and then he and Swamiji would go out riding. If so, whose bicycle did Swamiji ride? Perhaps the bike belonged to Goodwin, who was keen on sports.

Cycling was definitely a major sport in the 1890s. The distance from Sturdy's house to Grey Coat Street was just under five miles. It would have taken him less than thirty minutes. When I lived in London, I rode my bike to school about that same distance every day.



[TuckDB](#)

In this celebrity postcard [W S Penley](#) is showing off his bicycle. Penley was the actor who played the title role in *Charley's Aunt*, the theatre farce that Swamiji had enjoyed enormously in Chicago—see [that post](#). He would see the play again on 18 November with Swami Abhedananda and Goodwin.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

It was less than two miles from Grey Coat Street to Piccadilly Circus, but Swamiji would have taken the horse drawn omnibus—at left—instead of riding a bike like the fellow above. See the [previous post](#) about Swamiji's lecture at 191 Piccadilly in the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours.

Hampton Court, London 26 September 1896

Hampton Court Palace



TuckDB

Swami Vivekananda wrote an invitation to John Fox, in London, who copied it and sent to J.J. Goodwin, then still in America, who forwarded it in a letter dated 4 October 1896 to Josephine MacLeod:

“This is from a letter from Swami Vivekananda to Fox —“I will be very glad to see you, and am really anxious to see you before you start for U.S. Tomorrow Prof. Deussen, myself, Miss Muller and some other friends are going to have a little picnic at Hampton Court Castle Hotel at 12:30. You are very welcome. There you will meet us all. Deussen and we have become great friends; we travelled together from Germany to London.”

Although it took letters to America a week to cross the Atlantic, the Royal Mail was delivered six times a day in London in 1896, so Fox had time to RSVP Swamiji's invitation. This outing to Hampton Court may have been a reciprocal gesture for the hospitality that Dr. Paul Deussen showed him when he visited Kiel, Germany. See the [previous post](#) about Swamiji's visit to Kiel.

The 1902 postcard of [Hampton Court Palace](#), above, is by Raphael Tuck & Sons. Hampton Court Castle is actually a different place, in Herefordshire. In Swamiji's day the distinction was not an issue since the Herefordshire Hampton Court was a private estate then.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

[Baedeker's Guide to London and Its Environs](#) 1896 said that upon arriving at Hampton Court visitors “cross the bridge over the Thames, which commands a charming view of the river, and follow the broad road to the Palace on the right.”

My main concern about Swamiji's picnic plan was its date, which hopefully was on the weekend. Hampton Court Palace was open daily, so possibly Saturday 26 September? If so, then Margaret Noble [Sister Nivedita], who worked at a kindergarten, might have attended. It is not certain who Swamiji's "other friends" were. Swami Abhedananda's ship did not arrive until 30 September—see the [previous post](#). Probably E.T. Sturdy was included. Fox was a graduate of Harvard and well versed in philosophy. Naturally Swamiji would have invited congenial persons having some commonality with Prof. Deussen.

Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale in Chicago on 17 September 1896:

"I had a pleasant visit with Prof. Deussen in Germany. I am sure you have heard of him as the greatest living German philosopher. He and I travelled together to England and today came together to see my friend here with whom I am to stop for the rest of my stay in England. He (Deussen) is very fond of talking Sanskrit and is the only Sanskrit scholar in the West who can talk in it. As he wants to get a practice, he never talks to me in any other language but Sanskrit. I have come over here amongst my friends, shall work for a few weeks, and then go back to India in the winter."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Visitors entered the Palace grounds through the Trophy Gates. About 250,000 tourists visited the Palace annually in the nineteenth century.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

They crossed the Barracks Yard going toward the Great Gate House which had been recently restored. The building of Hampton Court Palace began in 1514 and ended in 1694.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

People still lived at Hampton Court. Baedeker's Guide informed: "Since the time of George II, Hampton Court has ceased to be a royal residence, and over 800 of its 1000 rooms are now occupied in suites by aristocratic pensioners of the Crown." They were known as "grace and favor" residents.



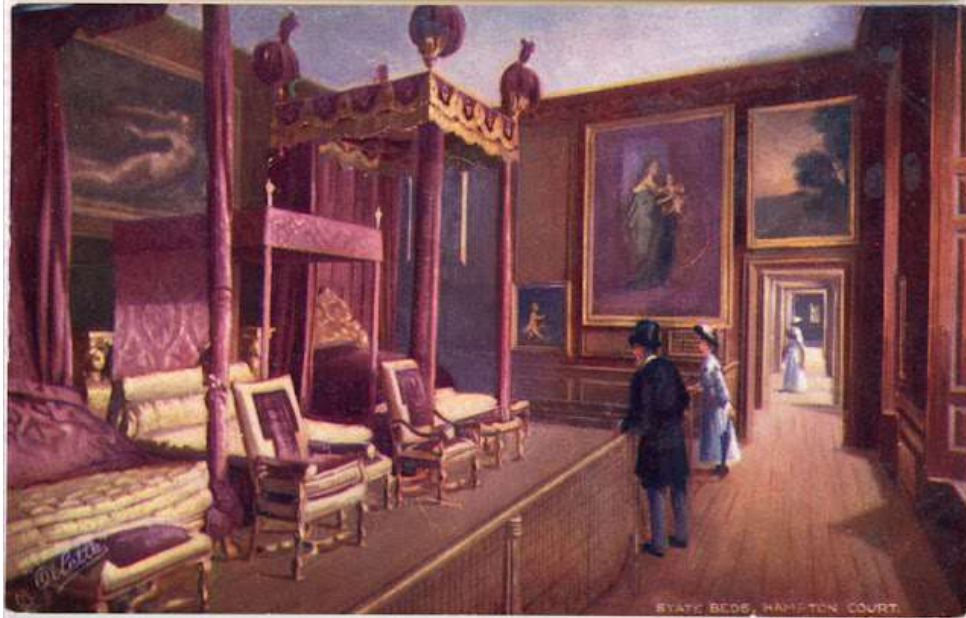
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Baedeker's Guide stated: "Visitors are required to pass from room to room in one direction only." Assuming that Swamiji and his friends followed the general pattern for tourists, they passed through Anne Boleyn's Gateway, ascended some stairs and entered the Great Hall.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Next, passing through Henry VIII's Great Watching Chamber, visitors descended to the kitchens.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Baedeker's Guide gave a detailed description of all the paintings hanging in the State Rooms, even insisting that some of the artworks were mislabeled and that only Baedeker's attributions were correct.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The pre-Copernican Astronomical Clock, originally made for Henry VIII in 1540, was once again keeping time after a restoration.



TuckDB

After touring the State Rooms visitors descended the Queens Staircase and entered the Fountain Court.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The gardens were laid out in the French style, embellished with flower beds and fountains in imitation of Versailles.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Hampton Court was actually two palaces. The original had belonged to Cardinal Wolsey who gifted it to Henry VIII. When William and Mary came to power in the seventeenth century they tore down half of Henry's Tudor palace and built their own Baroque quarters designed by Christopher Wren.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

In addition to Queen Mary's Bower pictured here, the gardens included a Maze, which Baedeker's Guide gave directions to, and the Great Vine planted in 1769, which still bears grapes today.



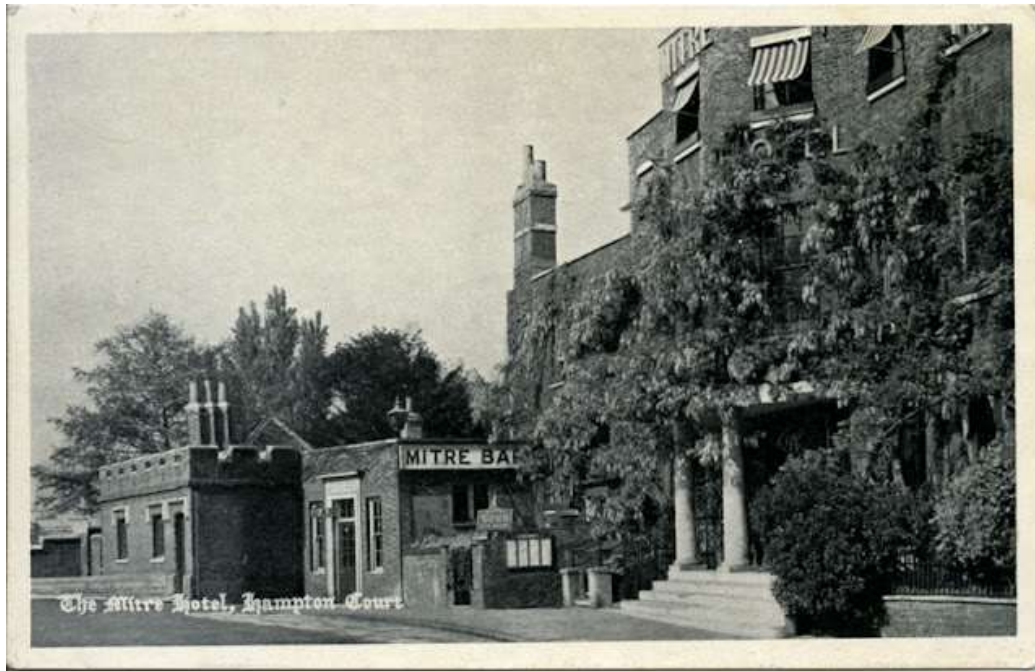
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Visitors exited the Palace grounds and Bushey Park through the Lion Gates which were commissioned by Queen Anne.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Did they actually bring a picnic hamper with them from Wimbledon or did they dine at a local restaurant? Swamiji's letter said that their "picnic" would be at a hotel. Baedeker's Guide mentioned the King's Arms Hotel next to the Lion Gates, above, and, below, the Mitre Hotel which was just across the Thames bridge.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Presumably the London guests had to depart at the station while Swamiji and Miss Muller and perhaps Miss Noble returned to Wimbledon. It is hoped that a pleasant time was had by all. Deussen wrote in his diary:

“In England we [Vivekananda and I] lived separately but met every day and did many things together. Vivekananda introduced me to his protectors, Mr. Sturdy and Miss Muller, whom I found interesting.”



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The first hotel that Baedeker's Guide mentioned was the *Thames*. It was near the station and by the river. It had boats and electric launches for hire. In the postcard, the white awning on the right, also part of the Thames Hotel, is the tea terrace where diners could eat in the fresh air. Its sign proclaimed "Luncheon Dining and Tea Saloon." Perhaps this was Miss Muller's idea of a picnic.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

There actually was a Hampton Court Castle Hotel. It was across the street from the Thames Hotel and can be seen at the foot of the bridge in this copy of an LL Levy postcard. The sign for the Castle Hotel advertises Luncheon, Dinner and Billiards. I think Miss Muller might rather have preferred the terrace at the Thames Hotel, glimpsed again on the far right.

The 1915 biography, *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda* concluded:
Professor Deussen often visited the Swami, discussing with him the principles of the Vedanta and gaining from him a much clearer insight into the whole body of Vedanta statement.

Bloomsbury Square, London 27 October 1896

A new voice for Vedanta



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Swami Vivekananda had ambitious plans for his *gurubhai*, Swami Abhedananda, when he summoned him to London in the fall of 1896. He knew that Kali (Abhedananda's pre-monastic name) had the makings of a fine lecturer. No doubt there was a good deal of practice and coaching going on in their flat in Grey Coat Gardens—see the [previous post](#). Still, Abhedananda had some trepidation and at the last minute he hesitated. Swamiji's brother, Mahendra, recalled this legendary conversation:

"You know, Naren, I don't think I will speak this afternoon. Some other time. . . ." And Swamiji who was a good deal more strongly built than Swami Abhedananda, replied fiercely, "Kali, you must speak, or I will throw you out that window!"

Of course, Swamiji meant no violence. He was just expressing his determination that Kali should not let him down. Destiny could not be detained by momentary nervousness.

The house where Swami Abhedananda gave his maiden speech was 33 Bloomsbury Square, located about where the hansom cab is parked by the curb in the J. Beagles & Company postcard above.

A NEW THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

A new theosophical society has been constituted under the title of the Christo-Theosophical Society. It is denied that the new society is in the slightest degree in any way an opposition to the existing association, but seeks to cover ground which that society as yet does not cover. It appeals to those who, while feeling how crude the ordinary interpretation given of Christian doctrine in sermons and theological writings often is, yet are sure that there is an interpretation of Christian truth which is in harmony both with reason and intuition. The society meets every Thursday, at a quarter-past four P.M., in the drawing-room of the St. Nicholas Club, 81A, Queen Victoria-street (close to the Mansion House station). Papers are read, and followed by discussion.

Pall Mall Gazette 17 February 1890

Swami Abhedananda gave his first public speech to the Christo-Theosophical Society founded by Rev G. W. Allen in 1890. By 1896 the Society was meeting in the home of Mr. Richard Stapley, a wealthy businessman who had been elected to Parliament in 1892. It is possible that Henrietta Muller had arranged this lecture through her brother-in-law, [Walter Stowe Bright McLaren, MP](#) since they were both members of the Liberal Party.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Hart Street ran along the southern end of Bloomsbury Square. The Kingsley Hotel would have been one of the large buildings the two swamis passed as they rode in the upper deck of a horse-drawn omnibus on the way to Mr. Stapley's house. Mahendra recalled that "Sturdy and Swamiji sat in front while Swami Abhedananda, Goodwin and I sat behind."



33 Bloomsbury Square was demolished for the construction of Victoria House. This building now occupies the entire block between east Bloomsbury Square and Southampton Row. Mahendra gave some fascinating details about Mr. Stapley's house.

"The house was extremely well-appointed. On the stairway was a stuffed bearskin and a statue. The rooms had gas lanterns. On one side of the first floor a mountain and waterfall had been created with ferns and rocks and moss. One could see that the master of the house was very fashionable."

Mahendra's account also tells us that the Society members and their guests were seated informally about the room. This was not the sort of lecture where the speaker stood at a podium and the audience sat in rows of chairs.

"Swami Abhedananda and I sat on a sofa at one side. In the middle of the side of a table sat Swamiji, Sturdy and several other people. And in various places around the room people were seated in chairs. Swami Abhedananda began his lecture; he was not accustomed to it, especially before English people, and after a few minutes became a bit self-conscious. His words seemed to get stuck. I touched his knee and whispered, "It's going fine. Carry on." Then the rest came out well. His subject was the book [Panchadasi](#)."



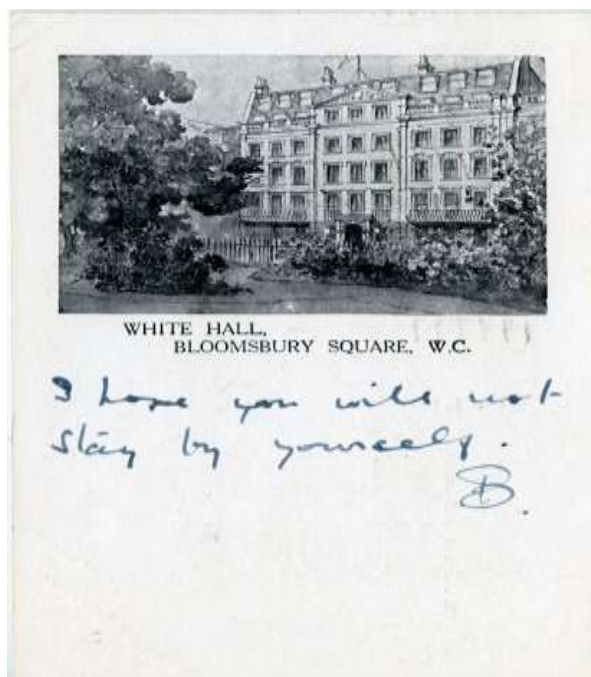
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This real photo postcard of Bloomsbury Square by Charles Skilton looks north at the back of the 1816 statue of [Charles James Fox](#).

Mahendra continued:

"A question period followed. As the younger Swami was new and unfamiliar, Swami Vivekananda undertook to answer the questions. Anyway the lecture was well-attended and everyone was well pleased. When it broke up in the evening people came down to the outer door.

Goodwin was almost dancing with joy, that Swami Abhedananda's lecture had been successful."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

White Hall stands on the west side of Bloomsbury Square. Dr Robert Willan, a pioneering dermatologist, lived here from 1800 to 1812.

Eric Hammond was also in the audience. He observed Vivekananda's reaction to Abhedananda's talk:

"An overwhelming joy was noticeable in the Swami in his scholar's success. Joy compelled him to put at least some of itself into words that rang with delight unalloyed. It was the joy of a spiritual father over the achievement of a well-beloved son, a successful and brilliant student."

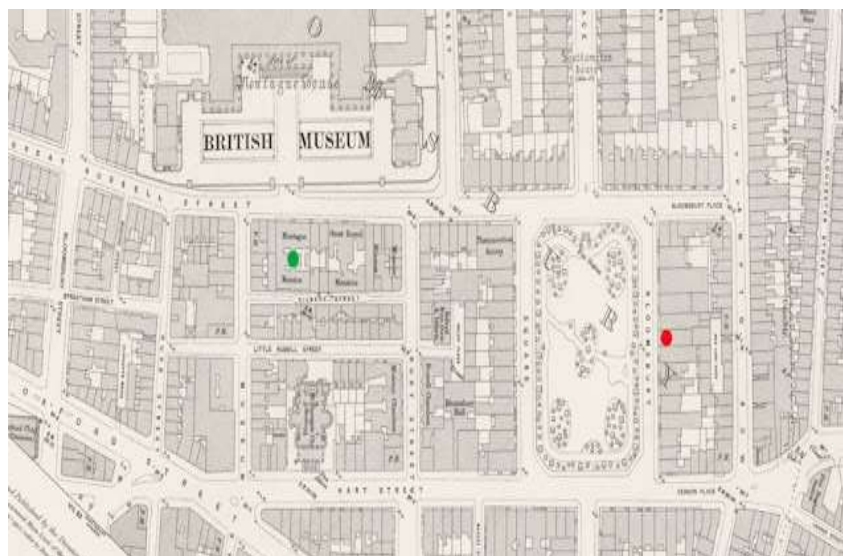
Then Swamiji teased Abhedananda a bit about being nervous, knowing all too well how intimidated he had felt the first time he addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Swamiji had attended many, many lectures and sermons given by speakers of diverse ability, and so he commented:

"Kali, why were you nervous about lecturing in England? They too often get stage-fright; they make a lot of noise, and say things like 'you see, you see.' Your lecture was very good."



TuckDB

On the Raphael Tuck London map postcard above a red dot marks 33 Bloomsbury Square.



NLS

On the 1895 Ordnance Survey map a red dot again marks 33 Bloomsbury Square. The green dot marks Montague Mansions where Swamiji had presided over a meeting of the London Hindu Association in July—see the [previous post](#).



[Wikipedia](#)

Sir Richard Stapley (1842-1920) was knighted in 1908 for service to the Liberal Party. He was twice elected to Parliament, Justice of the Peace, a Member of Council of the City of London, and a past Master of the Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers Company (Guild), which is a prestigious charitable fraternity founded by James I in 1623. His clothing business was Smith & Stapley of London Wall. He was active in supporting many social justice causes. In 1919 he founded the [Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust](#)

TO LINE UP SCIENCE

Congress of Creeds Will Attempt Big Job—Paris Scene of Meet.

Paris, July 7.—Among the most interesting events arranged for next month is the international congress of philosophers and churchmen, who will meet in an effort to reconcile science with religion.

The French philosopher and academician Emile Boutroux, who was an intimate friend of the late William James, the pragmatist, will preside over the convention. Among the more prominent delegates are Professor Broeltsch of Heidelberg, Rabbi Cesar Seligmann of Frankfort, Sir Richard Stapley of London, the Pundit Sivanath Sastri of Calcutta, Sant Altar Singh of the Punjab, Abdul Schure, the theosophist, author of "The Great Initiated," which work has been translated into every European and many Asiatic tongues. Representatives of Buddhists from Ceylon and China and of all sects of Mohammedans will also be present.

Philadelphia Times (OH) 7 July 1913

The potent seeds of Vedanta sown in Bloomsbury Square by the two swamis were not forgotten. Sir Richard carried on his liberal agenda with the harmony of world religions and their interface with modern philosophy and science. In Paris in 1913 he would have met the Sadharan Brahma Samaj preacher Sivanath Shastri, yet another person who had known Sri Ramakrishna—the guru of Swamis Vivekananda and Abhedananda.

Whitehall, London 23 October 1896

United Services Museum



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

While he was sharing a flat with Swami Vivekananda and Swami Abhedananda, J.J. Goodwin wrote letters to Sara Bull back in Massachusetts that furnish interesting details about Swamiji's extracurricular activities in London. On 23 October he wrote: "today I took both [Swamis] to the United Services Museum & the aquarium."

The United Services Museum was just across the street from the Horse Guards in Whitehall, shown in the postcard above.



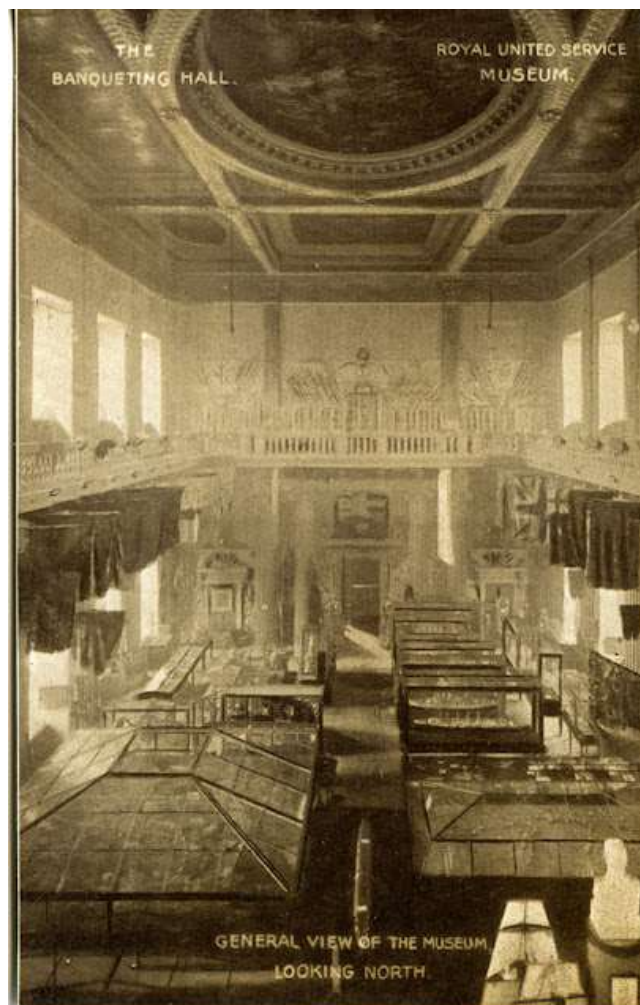
TuckDB

The United Services Museum was a new attraction. It had recently been created by Queen Victoria as a different use for the [Banqueting House](#), which was all that remained of the former Whitehall Palace built in 1622. Banqueting House was designed in the Palladian style by Inigo Jones for James I.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Turning around from the previous postcard view, the United Services Museum is on the far right.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This interior postcard view shows the United Services Museum as it appeared when Vivekananda visited.



Royal United Service Museum.
THE OLD BANQUETING HALL OF WHITEHALL PALACE.

Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Coming down from the balcony to the opposite end of the main floor, this postcard view shows some of the exhibits Swamiji would have seen inside the museum. He was an admirer of Napoleon. One of the exhibits was a model of the battle of Waterloo with 190,000 miniature figures. Most of the items displayed pertained to the military. There was an Asiatic Armoury with Indian guns and armour. There were also relics from John Franklin's doomed Arctic expedition in 1845. See a [previous post](#) about the possibility that Swamiji may have seen an exhibit about a fateful Dutch polar expedition.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This modern postcard shows Banqueting House as it appears today. King Charles I walked through this hall on his way to his execution in 1649. He had commissioned the prestigious Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens to paint the ceiling panels; the centre oval is the Apotheosis of James I commemorating, ironically, the moment of Charles's father's ascension to heaven. A scaffold had been erected in front of the Banqueting House. There proud Charles I met his end in the street.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Still in a military mood, Swamiji may have paused to view the changing of the guard. As this 1902 Raphael Tuck postcard shows, the Horse Guards were posted at the street below the Admiralty. [Baedeker's Guide to London and Its Environs](#) 1896 stated: "Two mounted life-guards are posted as

sentinels every day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the operation of relieving guard, which takes place hourly, is interesting.”



TuckDB

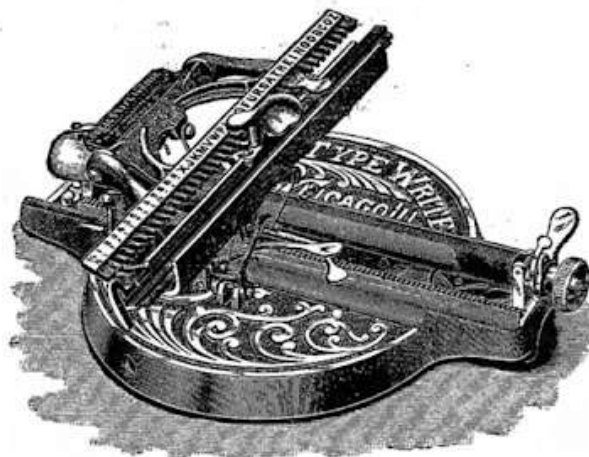
Baedeker’s Guide continued: “At 11 a.m. the troop of 40 Life Guards on duty is relieved by another troop, when a good opportunity is afforded of seeing a number of these fine soldiers together.”

A MARVEL

OF SPEED AND PERFECTION.

THE ODELL

\$20.



\$20.

A PERFECT TYPEWRITER AT A LOW PRICE.

WE GUARANTEE—it will do the work of any \$100 machine. We challenge comparison of results with any typewriter.

The Railroad Telegrapher 1 July 1895

Another gleaning from Goodwin's letters reported by M.L. Burke was his news that he had bought "a new kind of typewriter—very cheap" at the United Services Museum when he took the two swamis there. Goodwin may have been referring to the ODell typewriter, which had been invented in 1891. It was a fraction of the price of a regular keyboard typewriter such as a Munson. ODells were advertised in London as costing only one guinea, but I suspect that price was too low to be true.

Even so, it is novel to picture Goodwin happily typing Swamiji's lectures on this odd gadget.

On second thought, Goodwin's letter must have been misinterpreted by Burke. It makes no sense for him to have purchased a typewriter at a military history museum. But it makes perfect sense for him to have purchased the typewriter at the Royal Aquarium—see the [next post](#).



NLS

The United Services Museum is outlined in red on this 1895 Ordnance Survey map of Whitehall. Swamiji, Abhedananda and Goodwin may have continued to walk down Whitehall.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

On the way, they passed the huge Foreign & Colonial Office. The largest quarter of this complex housed the India Office, which faced the St James Park side of the building. One wonders what Swamiji may have said in Bengali to Abhedananda as they passed this ornate facade which masked the rooms where so many imperial decisions about his homeland were made. Today the Cenotaph war memorial divides Whitehall in front of this building.



TuckDB

They may have continued down Parliament Street, in the opposite direction from this 1904 Raphael Tuck postcard view, which looks back towards Nelson's Column.



TuckDB

This 1904 Raphael Tuck postcard view shows the Houses of Parliament and the iconic Big Ben clock tower. The postcard title states *from* Westminster Bridge but actually it looks *toward* Westminster Bridge from Parliament Square garden, where a statue of Mahatma Gandhi now stands.

Next, Goodwin accompanied Swamiji, and Swami Abhedananda to the Royal Aquarium.

Westminster, London 23 October 1896

An aquarium sans l'eau



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

After their tour of the United Services Museum in Whitehall, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Abhedananda and J.J. Goodwin visited the Royal Aquarium in Westminster. The Royal Aquarium, built in 1876, was neither officially royal nor much of an aquarium. [Baedeker's Guide to London and Its Environs](#) 1896 reported that it had "a few fish tanks." As can be seen from the print above, it was a distinctive glass-roofed structure. It originally housed thirteen large aquarium tanks that stood empty because the system devised to supply the tanks with both fresh and salt water was too expensive and complicated to operate. Most of the large tanks were never stocked with fish and their emptiness became a standing joke.



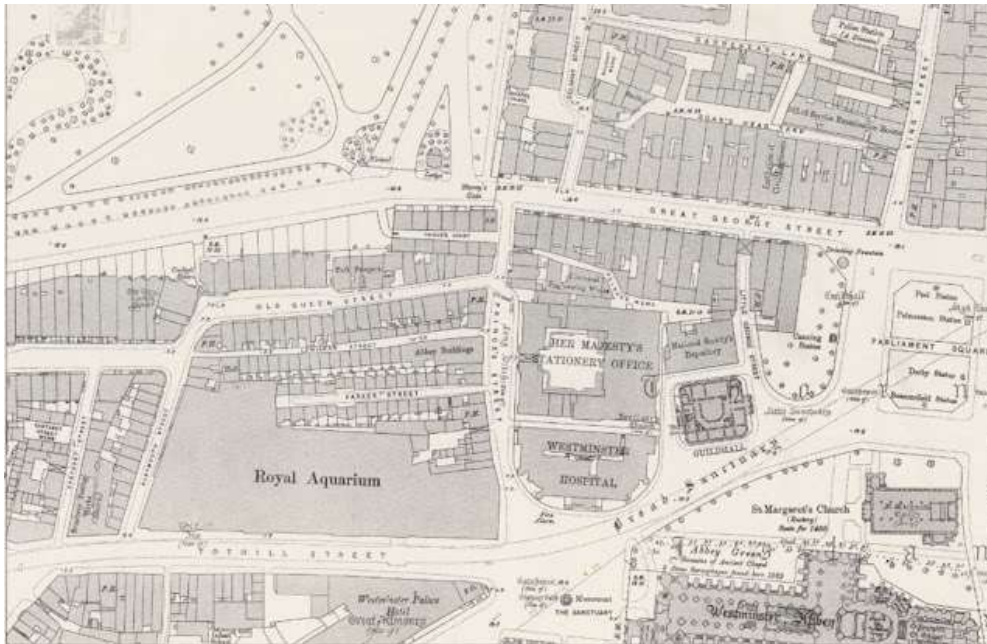
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Across Tothill Street from the Royal Aquarium was the Westminster Palace Hotel. The other side of this triangular hotel, pictured in this postcard, faced Victoria Street.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

East of the Royal Aquarium across Prince's Street was the Westminster Hospital, founded in 1719. By 1896 it contained beds for 205 patients.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The Royal Aquarium was quite near Swamiji's lecture rooms at 39 Victoria Street—see the [previous post](#). On this 1895 Ordnance Survey map the Royal Aquarium is clearly marked. In the bottom right corner is Westminster Abbey. This was an area of London that Swamiji knew well.

ROYAL AQUARIUM.
NATIONAL CHRYSANTHEMUM SOCIETY'S JUBILEE FESTIVAL. TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, and FRIDAY NEXT, November 3, 4, 5, and 6. The MOST STUPENDOUS EXHIBITION OF CHRYSANTHEMUMS EVER HELD. All the latest novelties and MAGNIFICENT FRUIT and VEGETABLES from all parts of the Empire. TWO GREAT EXHIBITIONS in four days—the first on Tuesday and Wednesday, and the second on Thursday and Friday. No one should miss seeing the MOST ATTRACTIVE FLOWER SHOW EVER HELD in LONDON. No Extra Charge, and all Entertainments as usual.

ROYAL AQUARIUM.
COUNTESS X. PERFORMS, mounted, in a DEN of FURIOUS full-grown forest-bred LIONS at about 3 and 4 Daily. The beautiful LIONESSES and BABY CUBS (not born Oct. 11) and all the LIONS are on view from 11 noon to 11.0 p.m.

ROYAL AQUARIUM.
THE WORLD'S GREAT SHOW at 2.30 and 7.30. Over 20 Artists and 100 Varieties, including a new series of LOVELY LIVING PICTURES. Performing ELEPHANTS, DOGS, &c. Wet or fine, thousands can witness this MOST MARVELLOUS ENTERTAINMENT. All Free.

ROYAL AQUARIUM.
CONJURING AND VENTRILOQUAL ENTERTAINMENTS and AMUSING VARIETIES, from 10.45 a.m. to 1.0 p.m. ORGAN RECITALS, Conjuring, &c. 1.0 to 2.15. **THE WORLD'S GREATEST SHOW.** 2.30. Organ Recitals, Ballad Vocalists, Conjuring, &c. 3.0 to 7.15. **THE WORLD'S GREATEST SHOW.** 7.30. All inclusive, 1s. Children 6d.

ROYAL AQUARIUM.
MAGNIFICENT LIVING PICTURES: 30 Tableaux by ARTISTS' LIVING MODELS. A series of Lovely Paintings mounted with human grace and beauty. All Free in the **WORLD'S GREAT SHOW.**

ROYAL AQUARIUM.
WONDERFUL SIGHTS.—The HUMAN HORSE "ALPHA" and the MUSICAL PONY "BETA" appear twice daily. Both animals have been marvelously trained and play musical instruments—the Harmonium and Bell. In addition to which they perform a number of really extraordinary feats, and exact a grant little costly stench. See TATTOOING and the TATTOOED LADY and the TATTOOED LION. See YOUR OWN BONES by the Roentgen "X" Rays. See the BABY LIONS. See the GRAND SWIMMING PERFORMANCES and ROYAL MAN Angling Contests, the Life-sized ANIMATED PHOTOGRAPHS the IDOL WORSHIPPER, &c., &c.

The Graphic 31 October 1896

The Royal Aquarium may have lacked fish, but it did not lack popular attractions. According to newspaper ads, it was a veritable circus side-show. The flower show did not open until 3 November, so what did Swamiji see on 23 October? Was it performing lions and elephants, or a tableau of living pictures, or did he view his own bones in a Roentgen X-ray?



[Look and Learn](#)

There was plenty for the casual visitor to see without paying for a performance. Around the main hall were rooms for eating, smoking, reading and playing chess, as well as an art gallery, and a skating rink. Under the glass and iron roof in the main hall were fountains, palm trees and sculptures. Unfortunately, by the 1890s the Aquarium had purportedly acquired a risqué reputation. It was reported that unaccompanied ladies were promenading through the hall in search of male companionship.



Royal Aquarium.

London

78

Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The ambience of the Royal Aquarium offered a bit of relief from dull weather. The 23 October *Morning Post* stated that after a rainy start “the weather brightened up” and temperatures ranged from 37°F to 49°F. The *Standard* stated: “Amount of bright sunshine registered at Westminster to-day, 1.3 hour.”

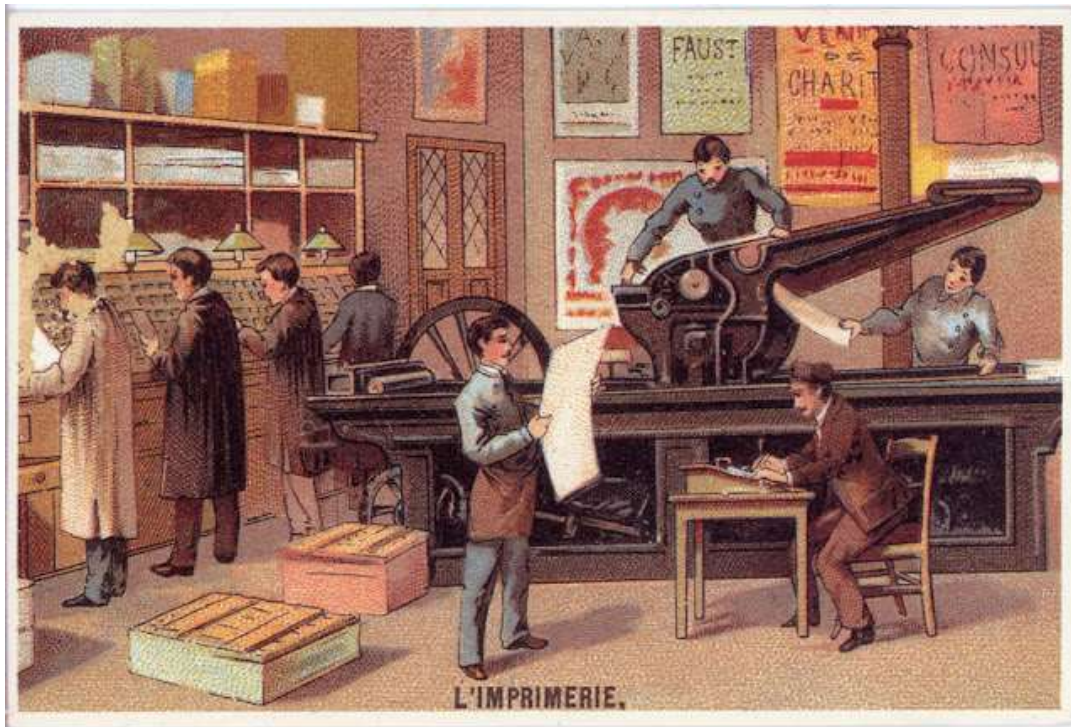
The Royal Aquarium was also known for its Winter Garden. When he was in New York in 1894 Swamiji expressed his admiration for conservatories and the cultivation of tropical plants—see the [previous post](#). The pleasant green odor of large plants combined with the sound of splashing water echoing from the fountains plus the solar warmth felt through the glass skylights made the Royal Aquarium an oasis from London's noise and smog. Ambience notwithstanding, I doubt that Swamiji went to the Royal Aquarium just to hang out.

BOOK AND NEWS TRADES EXHIBITION AT THE AQUARIUM.

Besides its own numerous and varied entertainments, the Aquarium is now holding what ought to become one of the most popular of annual exhibitions—the book, news, stationery, fancy, and printing trades. Some seventy different wholesale firms exhibit, and the display has been carefully organized and arranged by Messrs. G. W. Reeves and S. H. E. Foxwell. The uninitiated public, who generally have a craving to see how it is all done, have plenty of sightseeing here to whet their curiosity. They see how the blocks are prepared by “process” engraving for the illustrated papers; how that marvel of invention, colour printing, is worked, linotype machines at work, and a model of a newspaper office, designed by our enterprising contemporary, the *Sun*, which, besides showing the method and paraphernalia of the press labourer, issues hourly a miniature sheet of the latest news. There are, further, collections of cards for the forthcoming Christmas season, and the original drawings of plates that are to form the supplements to the illustrated journals. A large stock of the various apparatus required by the printing and allied trades, and visitors will find that they will spend many bright and instructive hours at the Aquarium before they exhaust their interest.

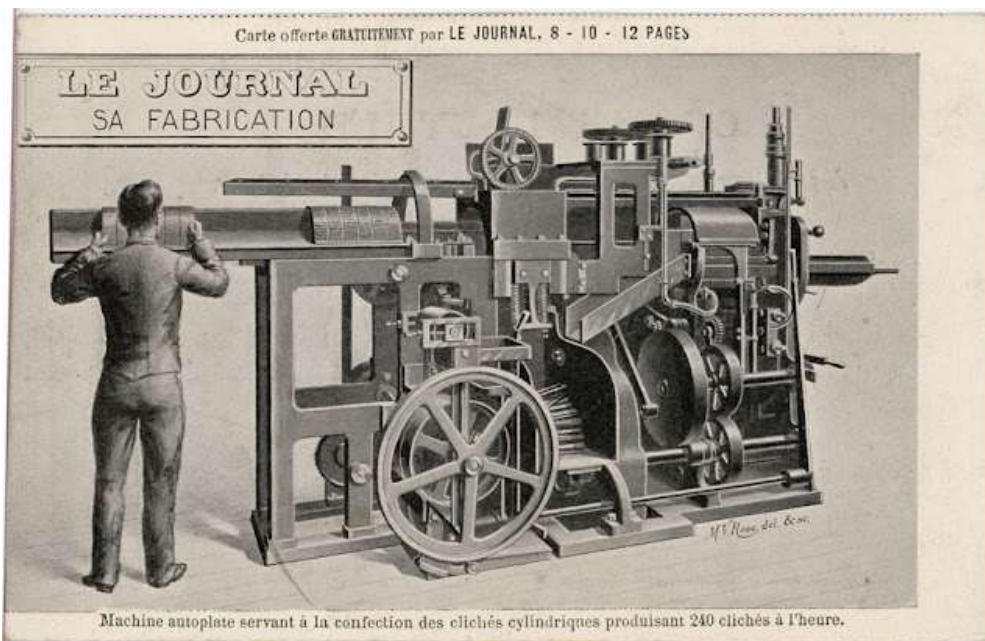
Reynolds Newspaper 18 October 1896

So why did Goodwin guide the two swamis to the Royal Aquarium? No doubt he wanted them to see the Book and News, Stationery, Fancy and Printing Trades Exhibition. Publishing was Goodwin's dream. On 23 October he bought a new portable typewriter to transcribe Swamiji's lectures with—see the preceding post about the [United Services Museum](#). Logically, Goodwin's new mini typewriter would have been for sale at the printing trade show, along with an array of novelty souvenir merchandise.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Now it all makes sense. The swamis went to the Royal Aquarium to see a trade show demonstrating the latest printing technology.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Printers ink was in Goodwin's blood. His invalid father had been editor for the *Bath and West of England Society Journal* and after he died, young J.J. had briefly published the *Bath and County Weekly News* and invested in a trendy London cycling magazine. But his business partner died and he went bankrupt in 1893—see the [post on Bath](#).



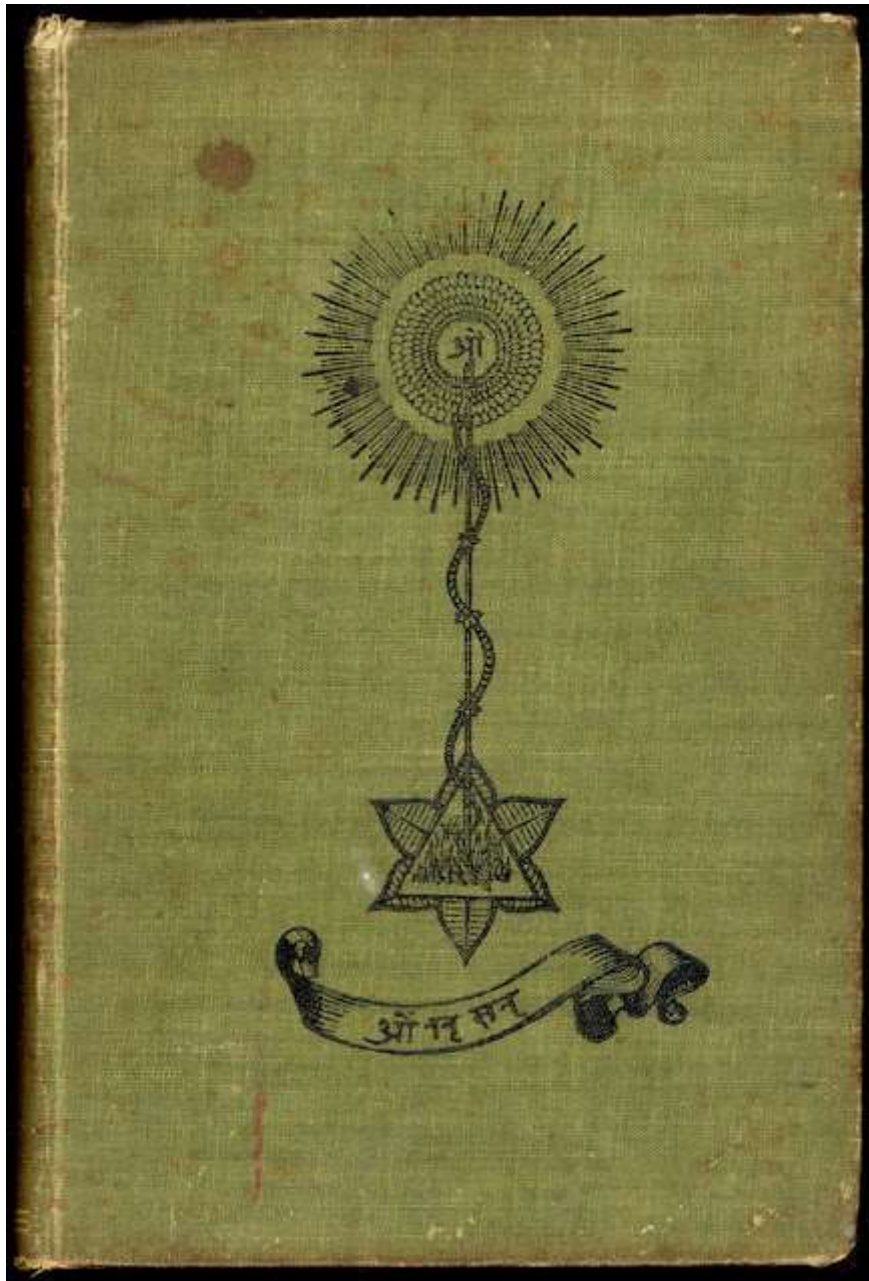
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Goodwin of course knew how earnestly Swamiji encouraged the publication venture by [Alasinga Perumal](#), editor of the new *Brahmavadin* journal in Madras. Just the sight of so many printing presses on this advertising postcard must have been mind-boggling for Goodwin. Surely he who had the most printed pages ruled the world.



[Wikimedia Commons](#)

Goodwin may have gazed with admiration at the Linotype machines being demonstrated at the Aquarium trade show. They were the acme of high-tech. The historic newspaper and magazine articles about Swamiji in America and England were composed on the wonderful [Linotype machine](#).



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Swamiji was now a published author. E.T. Sturdy had arranged for the first edition of *Raja Yoga* through Longmans, Green & Company. Historian Marie Louise Burke laid out the intricate transAtlantic negotiations behind the publication of this book and the triangulated disagreements it led to between Boston, New York and London. Swamiji had attempted to remain detached from this factionalism. Goodwin was well acquainted with the arguments on all sides. He probably tried to brief Abhedananda on the détente of this publishing dilemma. The following year, 1897, Swami Abhedananda would assist in preparing the first American edition of *Raja Yoga*, shown above, and his lectures were also printed in the *Brahmavadin*.

quired for the hospital.

A "YOGI" AT ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

It is not everybody, excepting people like Professor Max Müller and Mrs. Annie Besant, who has heard of the Yoga philosophy. This is a creed of asceticism, the devotees of which do all sorts of extraordinary feats of endurance and suffering, which altogether puts into the shade our own "fast days" and self-denial weeks for the sake of religion and the gods. A Yogi is an aristocratic priest of India—or, as he is otherwise called, a Brahmin—who differs in caste from our own upper circles in the circumstance that he is poor, devout, given to fasting and all sorts of bodily torture. He is a follower of this Yoga philosophy from which the illegitimate Theosophy of these days is largely descended. Such a Brahmin going through the most marvellous contortions of the human body which the medical men at St. George's Hospital cannot even theoretically account for or explain was on exhibition at the hospital the other day. He was under the charge of Mr. Wilkinson of the Royal Aquarium, and now that he has baffled the doctors the public will have the opportunity of wondering at one phase of nature's oddity. The Brahmin will for some time to come perform his devotions at the Aquarium.

Reynolds Newspaper 29 November 1896

A sidebar to Swamiji's visit to the Aquarium: in late November a Hatha Yoga practitioner who had been performing at the [India Exhibition in Earls Court](#) was persuaded to display his "contortions" [asanas] at the Royal Aquarium. There were many "scientific" articles about him in the newspapers, all for the sake of drumming up business. The Hatha Yogi encapsulated the general public's knowledge of Yoga and demonstrated that Swami Vivekananda had an uphill battle expounding the real philosophy behind the four Yogas.

"Raja Yoga, or Conquering the Internal Nature."
By the SWAMI VIVEKANANDA. (London: Longmans,
Green & Co.).

THIS book is a series of lectures given in New York on Yoga philosophy, and the author is safe in saying that this system can only be learned by direct contact with a teacher, for certainly we get bewildered with all the numerous mystical rites and their bearing on the following out of this religion, in which the fundamental keynote is that "God is in us, and is everywhere," each soul being potentially divine. The aim of Yoga is to manifest this divinity by controlling Nature externally and internally, which, from this book, appears a long and wearisome process. We admit it is impossible for an outsider to fully comprehend this creed, with its complex method of training, and its various stages of instruction regarding the regulations affecting the ritual, which consists of peculiar posturing, sitting upright and intently gazing at the tip of one's nose, &c. (the latter operation strongly suggesting an ultimate ending in insanity). To go through all these elaborate performances one would require the extra accommodation of more than one lifetime; but, however, stripped of all grotesque ritual, the chief principles of Raja Yoga to ennoble and purify remain unshaken and pre-eminent.

The Colonies & India 12 September 1896

The Colonies & India was not a newspaper friendly to Swami Vivekananda. Reviewing his book was an opportunity to seed skeptical scorn. After lancing the book with cynical commentary and insinuations of "grotesque ritual" the reviewer conceded that "the chief principles of Raja Yoga to ennoble and purify remain unshaken and pre-eminent."

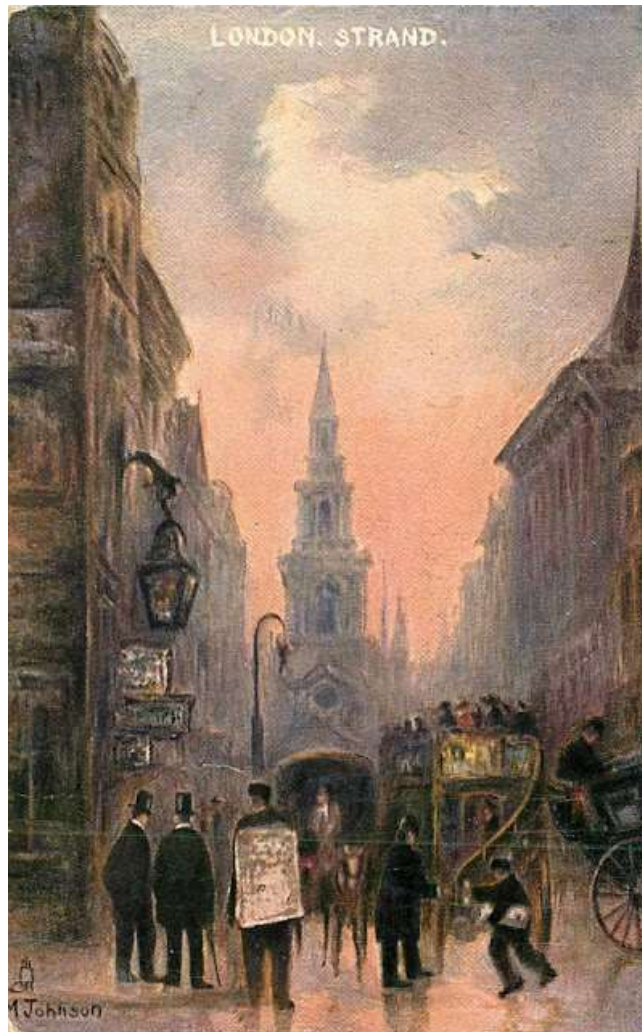


WESLEYAN CENTRAL CHURCH WESTMINSTER, LONDON
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The Royal Aquarium was sold in 1903 to the Methodist church and demolished. In 1911 the Wesleyan Central Church was built on the site.

New Globe Theatre, London, England 18 November 1896

An encore of *Charley's Aunt*



Source: TuckDB

Swami Vivekananda, Swami Abhedananda and J.J. Goodwin went to see the stage play, *Charley's Aunt*, at the [New Globe Theatre](#) on 18 November. To get there, they would have taken an omnibus to the [Strand](#) shown above in a 1904 Raphael Tuck postcard. Swamiji first saw the play on [9 June 1894](#) in Chicago at Hooley's Theatre.

When Goodwin wrote to Jo MacLeod on Friday 20 November about their excursion to the theatre, he also mentioned that Swamiji had seen the Shakespearian play *Cymbeline*, but that he did not care for Sir Henry Irving's performance as Iachimo, the villain. Goodwin had not been invited to see *Cymbeline*. As if to brighten Swamiji's critical opinion, Goodwin proposed an outing to see a different theatrical genre. To put it in a nutshell, *Cymbeline* was highbrow art for high society and *Charley's Aunt* was sitcom for, well, everyone.



Source: TuckDB

On the way to the New Globe Theatre they would have passed [Somerset House](#) on the right, and [St Mary le Strand](#) on the left.



Source: NLS

St Mary le Strand is the island in the Strand on the lower left in this 1895 Ordnance Survey map. Turning left just past the church, is Newcastle Street and the next intersection, on the right, is Wych Street.

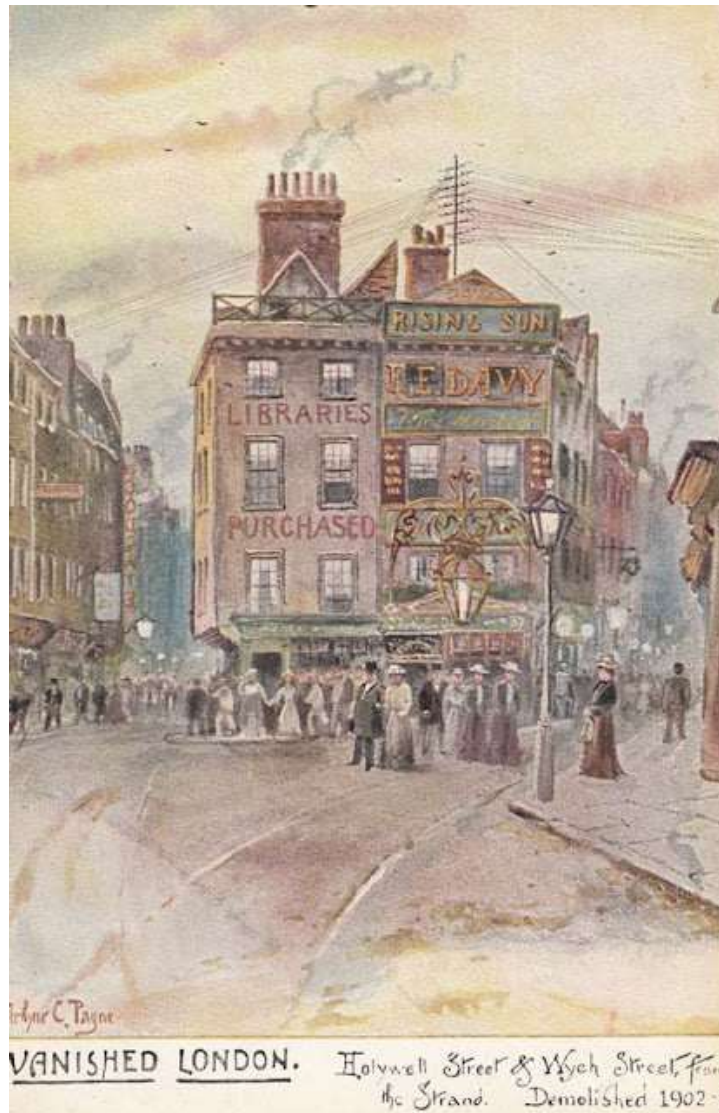
the results we have now to examine.

The New Globe Theatre, then, stands at the western extremity of the block of ruinous old dens of iniquity which runs between Wych-street and Holywell-street, a portion of it occupying part of the site of old Lyon's Inn. Its principal front is in Newcastle-street, about a dozen yards from the Strand, and from this entrance a long and elegant lobby leads direct to the dress circle, which is on a level with the street, an exceedingly convenient arrangement, doing away with the necessity for any of those long flights of stairs which are such a nuisance in entering a theatre, and, in these days of trailing skirts, so much greater a nuisance in leaving it. The other entrances, for pit, gallery, and stage, are in Wych-street, where, also, is a special entrance to the Royal box, a prominent feature in all modern buildings of this kind. Leading from the principal entrance is a very handsome saloon and refreshment room, besides which there is another, somewhat smaller, but equally elegant and commodious, entirely set apart for the accommodation of ladies. This is, we believe, a feature peculiar to the new theatre, and one which will doubtless be in many respects of very great convenience.

The audience portion of the theatre, though larger than some of the West-end houses, is not of any very great dimensions, affording seated accommodation for between fourteen and fifteen hundred persons. Of these the dress circle will contain about 150, the gallery 500, and the pit 600, besides 100 roomy and comfortable stalls of the latest and most luxurious pattern. There are also ten good-sized private boxes. It has been carefully provided that each one of these 1500 spectators shall have a full view of the entire stage; and there will

The Standard 3 November 1896

The New Globe Theatre no longer exists, so its description in the 3 November 1896 *Standard* is very helpful. To sit in the gallery, Swamiji, Abhedananda and Goodwin would have entered from Wych Street.

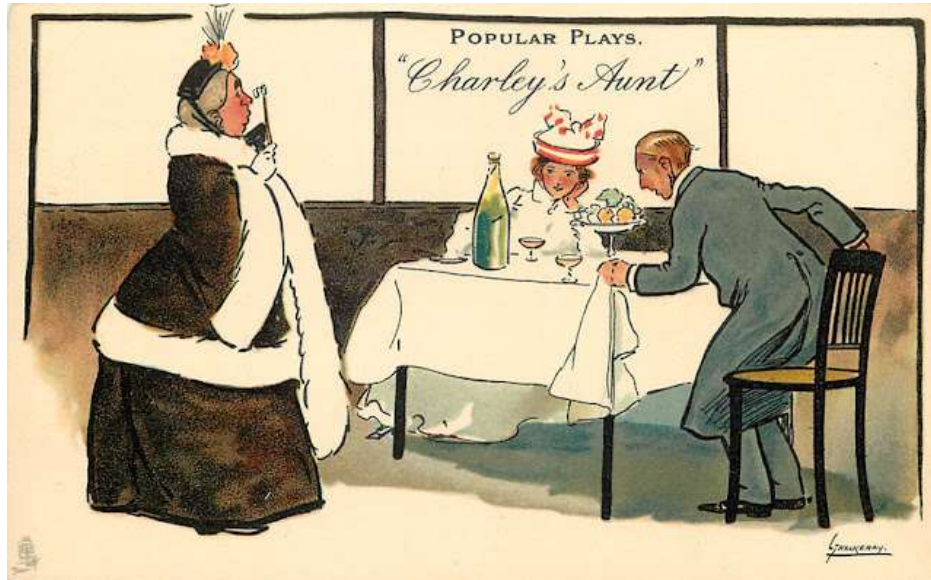


Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

This postcard from a series called Vanished London shows the eastern end of “the block of ruinous old dens of iniquity,” so described by the Standard, at the junction of Holywell and Wych Streets. This street and the New Globe Theatre were demolished in 1902 as part of the Strand Improvement Scheme. Aldwych Street was constructed and [Bush House](#) now stands on the former site of the theatre where Swamiji queued for cheap gallery tickets.

Swami Abhedananda noted in his diary: “Another night, Swamiji, together with Mr. Goodwin and Swami Abhedananda, went to see a comedy called *Charley’s Aunt*. Swamiji waited a long time in line to get inexpensive gallery tickets. [He] was smiling and saying, “You can’t make friends here without knowing their customs, behavior, politics. You have to know the manners of the rich, the cultured and the poor.”

It sounds like someone struck up a conversation with Swamiji while they were waiting in the queue. The evening performance began at 9.



Source: TuckDB

Charley's Aunt is a comedy in three acts written by Brandon Thomas. This hugely popular farce opened in London in February 1892 and was still going strong in 1896. The comedic plot was about switching identities to gain time in romantic pursuits. The character Lord Fancourt Babberly impersonates Dona Luisa d'Alvadorez, the mysterious Brazilian aunt of Charley Wyckeham.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

[W.S. Penley](#) was the original actor to perform the title role of *Charley's Aunt*. Farce was his métier. He maintained its phenomenal success for 1466 performances. When Swamiji saw the play in Chicago, New York actor [Etienne Giradot](#) performed the role.



Source: Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2019

In 1896 there was talk of W.S. Penley ending his long run with *Charley's Aunt*, but the play had such enduring success that it became a fixture of London theatre. This ca. 1908 postcard by artist John Hassall portrays an imaginary conversation between the perennial puppet Punch (of [Punch and Judy](#)) and Charley's Aunt.

Punch: "Still running my dear, but you haven't beaten me yet!"
Charley's Aunt: "But then I'm so young, you know."



Source: TuckDB

Punch and Judy shows can be dated back to 1662, and the popular puppets still perform at parties and outdoor fetes. Likewise, *Charley's Aunt* is still performed, mostly in amateur theatre, in many countries.



Source: TuckDB

This Raphael Tuck postcard shows a policeman halting traffic in the Strand. Swamiji, Swami Abhedananda and Goodwin would have gone by omnibus to see *Charley's Aunt*. But a few days earlier—or later?—when Swamiji went to see *Cymbeline*, he would have gone by hansom cab with Miss Souter.

As previously mentioned, Goodwin wrote to Jo MacLeod, who was in America, about his night out with the two swamis: "I took him the other evening to see *Charley's Aunt*, and I am sorry to say the Swami laughed most at the wicked parts."

Actually he was probably not sorry. Probably both of them laughed.



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Somehow *Charley's Aunt* served as a release valve for Swamiji. He was so adept in English and so astute in society, that it is easy for us to forget that when you are living in a foreign land, speaking a foreign language, constantly meeting new people, it takes vigilance to interpret social cues correctly. *Charley's Aunt* gleefully mangles and misconstrues those social cues, but everything turns out all right in the end. In this way, it was understandably an escape for Swamiji.

Ignorance of foreign lands was part of the humor woven into *Charley's Aunt*. There was a joke about British dread of Bengal which probably amused Swamiji, and Charley's fictional aunt supposedly came from Brazil, "where the nuts come from."

In the winter of 1895 when he was living at 54 West 33rd Street in New York City, *Charley's Aunt* was playing at the Grand Opera House, on the northwest corner of Eighth Avenue and 23rd Street, shown above as it appeared in 1895. I wonder if Swamiji and Leon Landsberg went there as fellow foreigners for a bit of relief from their new foreign life in America.

Lyceum Theatre, London 20 November 1896

Top Hats at the Lyceum



TuckDB

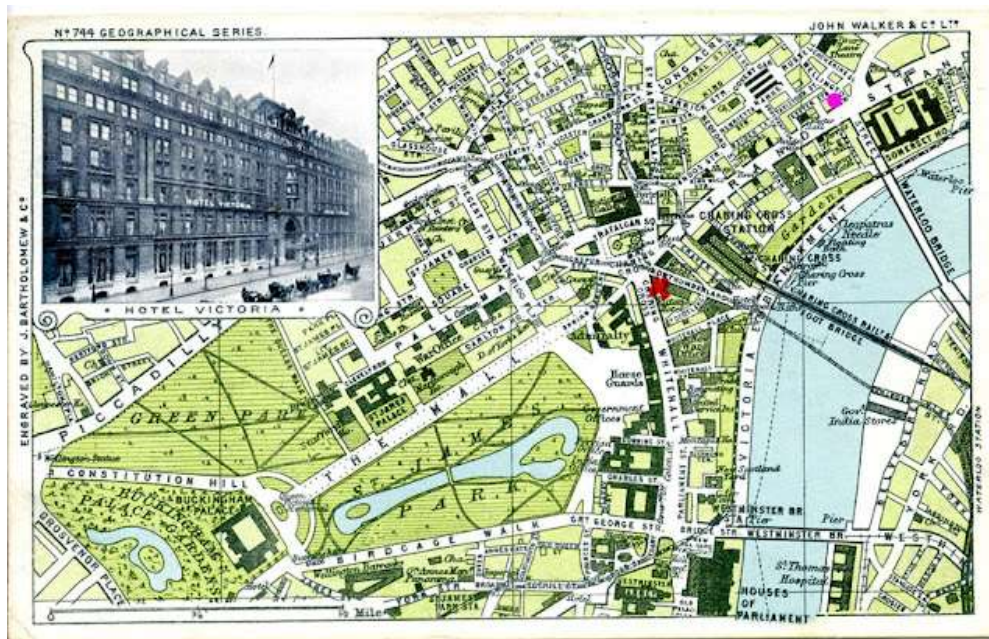
Swami Vivekananda's experience of going to see the play *Cymbeline* was as patrician as his experience of *Charley's Aunt* had been plebeian. Historian M. L. Burke mentioned that in London he sometimes wore a top hat. In the 1890s this was simply the headgear that gentlemen wore for most social occasions in the city. Swamiji probably did not wear his turban as much in England as he had done in America. In America, regrettably due to racism, the turban protected him somewhat by identifying him as a foreigner rather than as an African American. There were many upper-class Indians in London, and their presence was accepted so Swamiji did not have to take the time to wrap his turban when he went out. As Goodwin noted, he simply grabbed his hat and his cane and went off for a walk. He also sometimes wore a kalo topi—see a [previous post](#) about his first lecture in London.

Swamiji was invited to the performance at the Lyceum Theatre by Miss Emmeline Souter. Also in the party were Captain and Mrs. Sevier, Swami Abhedananda and E.T. Sturdy. Apparently J.J. Goodwin was not invited. Souter must have considered him to be merely Swamiji's secretary. They would have travelled to the theatre by carriage and may have sat in a private box.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Sir Henry Irving's production of *Cymbeline* was much anticipated. He and Ellen Terry had just returned from a highly accoladed two-year tour of America. The classic Greek facade of the Lyceum can be seen in the center of this 1902 postcard of Wellington Street.

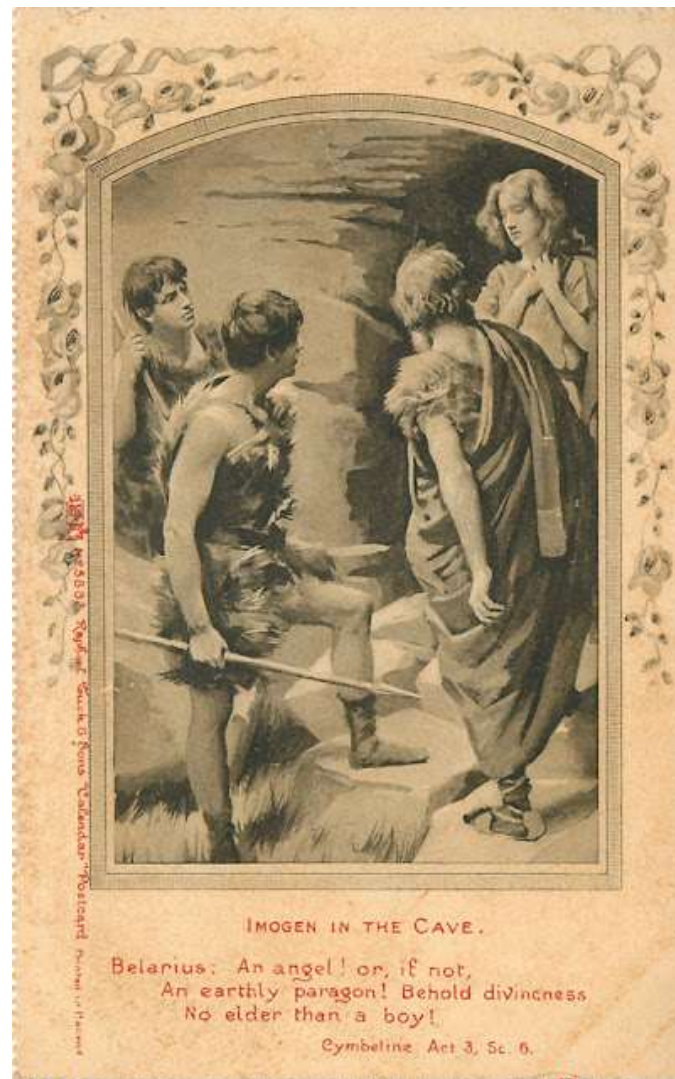


Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

I put a bright pink dot on this map postcard of London from the John Walker & Co. Geographical Series to mark the Lyceum Theatre. The red mark is original to the postcard, marking the Hotel Victoria pictured in the inset.

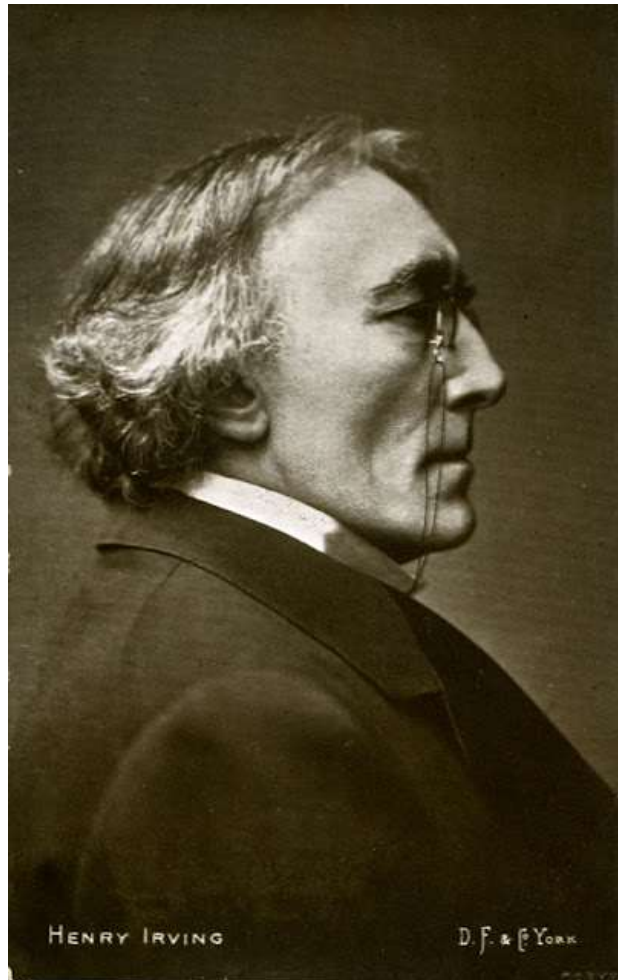
Cymbeline was one of Shakespeare's works that was less frequently produced. The audience expected a lavish, high-art performance for the opening night of 22 September. The *Leicester Chronicle* and *Leicestershire Mercury* wrote in its London Letter on 26 September:

To the student of Shakespeare “Cymbeline” will appear the most impossible to place upon the stage. It is rather a series of scenes than a coherent narrative, and such is the wealth of Shakespeare’s imagination (contributed to, it is true, by Boccaccio) that there is not room on the stage or time at a single sitting to present them all. Sir Henry Irving has essayed the task, and has accomplished it with marvelous skill. “Cymbeline” is so ruthlessly, yet artistically, cut down as to permit the announcement on the programs that the curtain rising at eight o’clock, “carriages may be ordered for 10:45.”



TuckDB

The celebrated artist, [Lawrence Alma-Tadema](#), (he was not knighted until 1899) did the stage sets and costume design. The play is set in first century Britain, on the cusp of the Roman invasion, when Britain was a vassal state paying tribute to the Roman Empire. It must have been interesting to Swamiji to observe how the English rewrote their history. Show business lives for spectacle. A critic declared: “It is too much to believe that in the first century either Britons or Romans were arrayed in such splendid apparel as on Tuesday night.”



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Goodwin wrote to Jo MacLeod Friday 20 November: "The Swami saw Irving the other evening in *Cymbeline*. He did not like him, but thought Ellen Terry very good."

The *Morning Post* reviewed *Cymbeline* twice. First, after the opening night, and second, on 7 October. On 23 September the *Post* said, "In spite of his elocution and delivery, Sir Henry presented a fine and thoroughly thought out interpretation of the part he has chosen [Iachimo]. . . . His bearing in the last scene was also admirable, though here again his voice played him false." This was an actor's worst nightmare, Irving had been hoarse.

In the second review, the critic took the revised script to task. Irving cut Shakespeare's play down to eighteen scenes. The *Post* said the play was "a well-organized spectacle but it fails to awaken any profound emotion. . . . A play which does not open the floodgates of emotion cannot be pronounced a success." The reviewer returned to the Bard's original script and quoted many passages key to character development that Irving had omitted, and then accused him of having Bowdlerized the play. The *Westminster Budget* of 25 September said much the same thing about Irving's adaptation of the script. "Cymbeline" has but few strokes of humour—they were welcomed boisterously—and is not strongly dramatic."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The *Morning Post* was kind to Miss Terry. "That Miss Ellen Terry's Imogen will live in the memory needs hardly be said."



The *Leicester Chronicle and Leistershire Mercury* also praised her:

“Ellen Terry is fitted with the part of one of the most charming of Shakespeare’s women. The gaiety and the pathos of Imogen, her light-heartedness and her broken-heartedness, find sympathetic expression in every look, gesture, and tone of voice of the actress. Watching her, one sometimes almost forgets Miss Terry is no longer eighteen.”



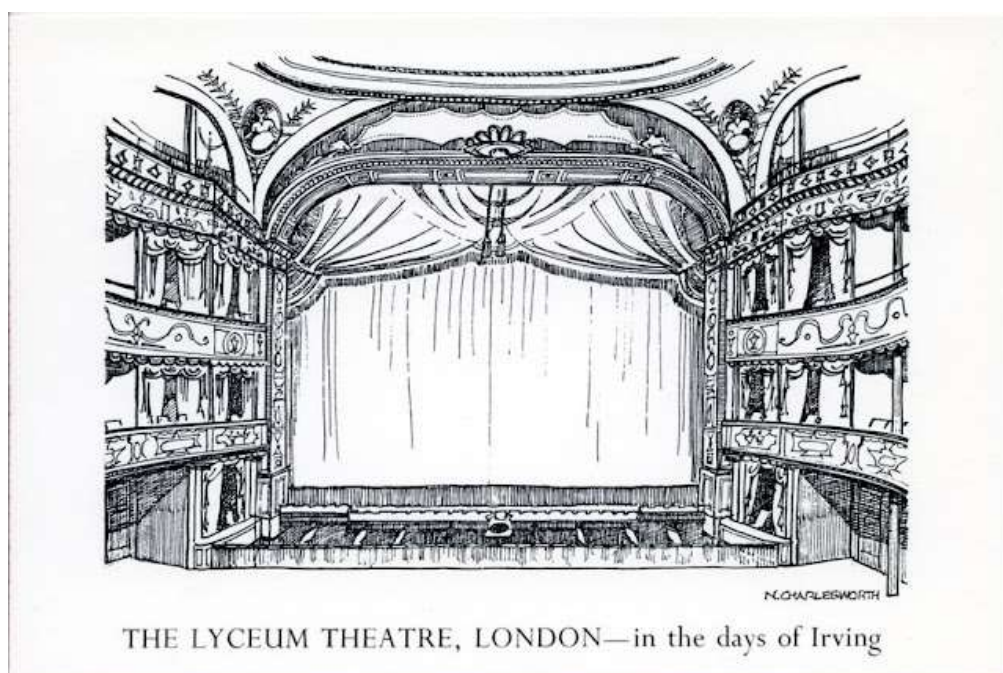
As for Irving, the *Leicester Chronicle and Leistershire Mercury* wrote:

“In the wily, unscrupulous Italian Iachimo, Irving also has a part admirably suited to him, and makes the most of it. But it is not a pleasant part. Iago [the villain in “Othello”] is quite a Christian gentleman compared with Iachimo. Moreover, Irving’s appearance in the play is but fitful, and he does not succeed in obtaining that ascendancy over the mind of the audience he is accustomed to enjoy.”



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

The present [Lyceum Theatre](#) bears a facade designed by Samuel Beazley. It was opened as an opera house in 1834. Over the years, the theatre which stands on Wellington Street just off the Strand, has hosted a variety of entertainment genres. The interior has been recently adapted to present large musical theatre productions.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

This modern postcard features a drawing by Nicholas Charlesworth for the British Music Hall Society of the historic interior of the Lyceum Theatre in the 1890s.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2020

Swami Abhedananda noted in his diary: “The Prince of Wales was also at the Theatre that night. . . .” The Prince was crowned [Edward VII](#), King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of India on 22 January 1901.

West Croydon, London 8 November 1896

The Coming Day



TuckDB

Historian Marie Louise Burke determined that while Swami Vivekananda was living in London in 1896, he spoke five times at the Free Christian Church in West Croydon upon the dates of November 8, 15, 22, 29 and 6 December. She reprinted a lengthy article about Swamiji from the 31 October 1896 *London Daily Graphic* containing this excerpt:

“Who shall deny the Swami’s fame when it is added that he is to occupy the pulpit of Mr. Page Hopps, and that he has already been the object of one of Mr. Haweis’s sermons?”

Additionally, she found a letter that J.J. Goodwin had written to Sara Bull about the first lecture he had given to Rev. Page Hopps’s West Croydon congregation:

“[The Swami] preached a most excellent sermon last Sunday . . . & has sermons for the next four Sundays. . . . The [first] Croydon sermon is being printed by [the Unitarian Church].”

Burke presumed that Goodwin had given Page Hopps his shorthand notes of Swamiji’s 8 November sermon for publication. Since she could not find evidence of such publication, she thought that records were lost when the church was bombed during the war.

To get to the Free Christian Church, Swamiji would have taken the train from Victoria Station to the West Croydon railway station, which is the building on the right showing four peaked gables in this Raphael Tuck postcard.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Victoria Station had two terminals in 1896. To get to West Croydon, Swamiji would have taken a train headed for Epsom on the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Croydon was a thriving, progressive town in the 1890s, governed by its own County Borough. In 1965 the local government became part of Greater London. Croydon Town Hall, a fine example of late Victorian architecture, stands in Katherine Street about a ten minute walk from the West Croydon

railway station. The Prince and Princess of Wales came to Croydon to officially open the Town Hall 19 May 1896.



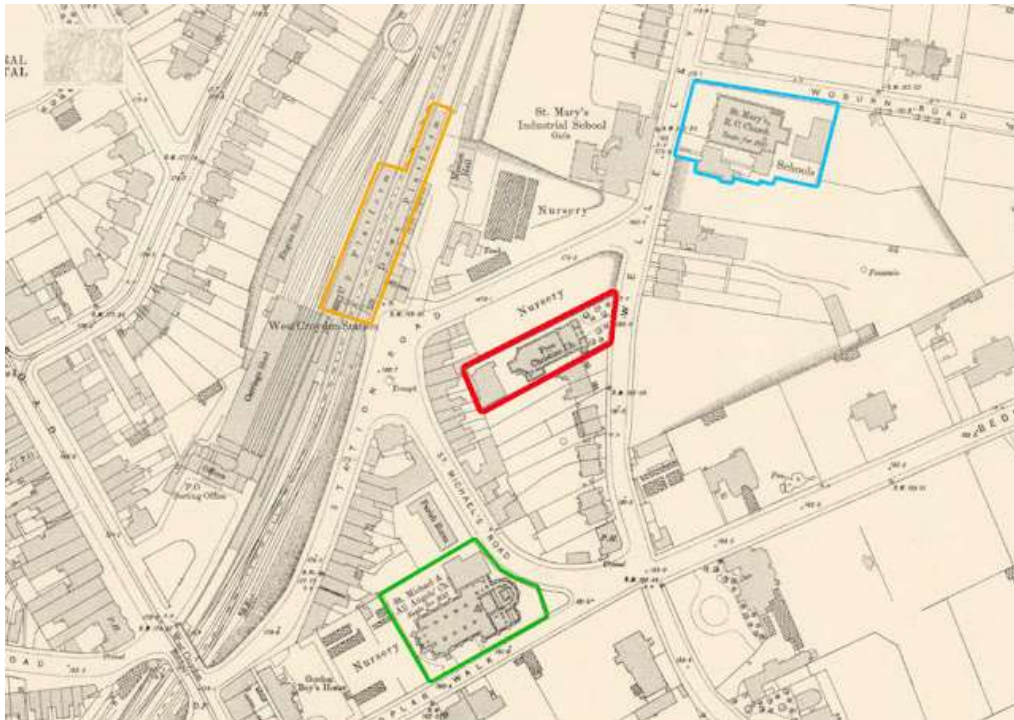
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

North End is a busy commercial street in central Croydon. Going north from the Town Hall, Katherine Street connects to the High Street which links to North End and the West Croydon railway station. North End is now a pedestrian shopping district, closed to vehicle traffic.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The Old Fox & Hounds pub seen on the left of this postcard, still stands at the corner of London Road with Derby Road. The short brick walls on both sides of the foreground in the postcard mark the railway bridge leading to Station Road.



NLS

On this section of the 1895 Ordnance Survey map the West Croydon railway station is outlined in orange. The Free Christian Church is outlined in red. St Mary's Catholic Church, still extant, is outlined in blue and St Michael's Church, still extant, is outlined in green.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

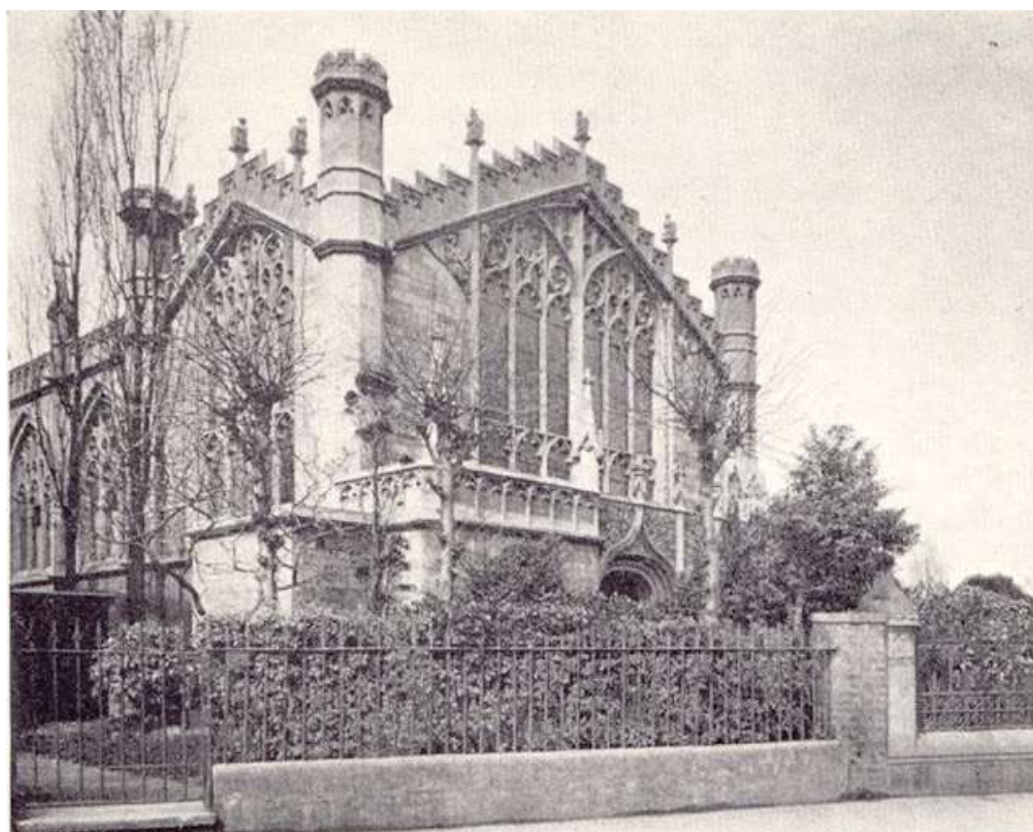
As far as I know, there are no postcards of the Free Christian Church, so I have "bookended" it with vintage postcards of the churches just north and south of its former location because they were landmarks that Swamiji would have seen. Here is a real photo postcard of St Michael and All

Angels Church, which opened in 1895, at the junction of Poplar Walk and St Michael's Road.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

St Mary's Catholic Church at 70 Wellesley Road was built in 1863.



Croydon Unitarians

The site of the Free Christian Church on Wellesley Road where Swami Vivekananda spoke is now occupied by Delta Point, a high rise housing estate. It was quite a beautiful church, but it was damaged during World War II and by the time the congregation restored it, the Croydon corporation requisitioned the property for urban development.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CROYDON.

LAYING THE MEMORIAL STONE OF A NEW BUILDING.

THE memorial stone of a new Free Christian Church in Wellesley-road, Croydon, was laid on Friday, the 20th inst., by T. Chatfeild Clarke, Esq. The church is being erected on the site of an iron church in which the congregation have worshipped since 1870, which was removed, American fashion, on rollers, to a piece of ground whereon it now stands, and in which the congregation still meet. The new church, which is of the later gothic style, was designed by Mr. J. W. Cannon, architect, of Leeds, and it will accommodate about 400 persons. It will be faced in front with Bath stone, and the cost will be about £5000, the greater portion of which has been already subscribed.

Prayer having been offered by the Rev. E. M. Geldart, M.A., the minister of the church, a bottle, in which were enclosed a copy of the trust-deed and a history of the church in manuscript, was placed in the cavity under the stone, after which Mr. Clarke laid the stone with the usual ceremony. Then addressing the friends assembled, of whom there were a goodly number, he said the trust-deed, he was happy to say, contained no provision which would hamper their religious freedom, and he trusted that the future of the church would be one of great success, and that the character of those who worshipped therein would be that of deep and reverent earnestness. The Rev. P. H. Wicksteed pronounced the benediction.

The Christian Life Vol. 9 26 April 1883

The Free Christian Church where Swamiji spoke was dedicated 24 November 1883. This clipping from *The Christian Life* about the laying of its foundation stone the previous April contains an interesting fact about the first church on this site, the Iron Church, which the congregation had been using since 1870. It was moved "American fashion, on rollers" to the rear of the property.

Having witnessed Victorian buildings being moved "American fashion," I found this information intriguing. In a previous post I presented maps showing that the building where Swamiji spoke in [Medford, Massachusetts](#) had been moved down the street.

The outlines of the Iron Church can be seen on the Ordnance Survey map. It was the Iron Church that was completely destroyed by a bomb in April 1941. The 1883 stone church was damaged, but the main reason the

congregation had to meet elsewhere until 1949 was because its gas furnace needed repair. In the 1950s town planners exercised eminent domain on that section of Wellesley Road. A new Unitarian church was built further south in Croydon in 1959.



Courtesy of the Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society

The unconventional minister who invited Swamiji to speak to his congregation was John Page Hopps. He served the Croydon Unitarian Church from 1892 to 1903. Page Hopps was interested in spiritualism, Irish freedom, and the secularization of state schools. After Swamiji left, Page Hopps maintained an acquaintance with Swami Abhedananda. Later he supported independence for India.



Croydon Unitarians

The Free Christian Church seated 400 persons. This photo reveals a well lit and beautifully paneled interior. The pews were ergonomic and the floor gently sloped toward the raised dais supporting the pulpit, the choir and the organ.



VSStL

In 2012 Asim Chaudhuri inquired at the Croydon Unitarian Church for any record of Swamiji's sermons. In their earliest bound collection of church bulletins, this announcement was discovered:

The Hindoo, Swami Vivekananda will speak in the Church on Sunday morning November 8th. Asked for his subject, the reply is: "You say

that on the 1st you will speak on the saying in the Old Testament—‘As I live, saith the Lord God, all souls are mine.’ I will produce the same text from the Sanskrit, and speak upon it, and also upon the universality of the idea.”

Rev. Page Hopps’s scripture selection seems to be a condensation of two verses, Ezekiel 18:3-4 KJV:

“As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

Swamiji was well acquainted with the Christian tradition of scriptural readings. He began his sermon at the Free Christian Church with a quote from the Bhagavad Gita, [4.11]

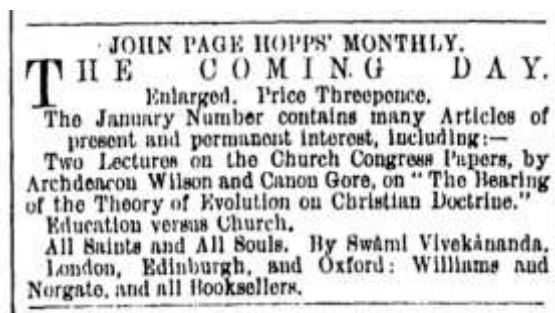
‘They all are coming through my path, O Arjuna; none can go beyond that, for I am the Lord.’

He paraphrased this verse in different lectures, such as “Krishna” given in California on 1 April 1900:

“None can go a day out of my path. All have to come to me. Whosoever wants to worship in whatsoever form, I give him faith in that form, and through that I meet him. ...”

Swamiji then followed the Gita text with a verse from the Shiva Mahimna Stotra, which he quoted countless times:

“As various rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running straight or crooked, at last come unto the ocean, so all these various sects, taking their start from different points of view, at last come unto Thee.”

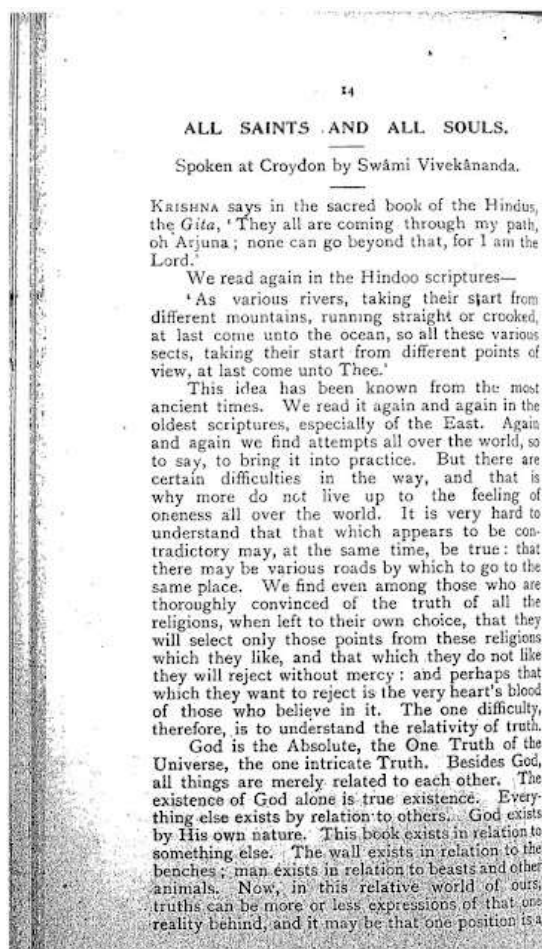


The Guardian 3 December 1896

Rev. Page Hopps published a monthly periodical called *The Coming Day*. This newspaper ad announces the article about Swamiji’s sermon, called “All Saints and All Souls.” The title was probably invented by Page Hopps. Considering the make-ready time needed to produce a monthly periodical, the 3 December date of the ad confirms Goodwin’s statement that Swamiji’s 8 November sermon was going to be published.

Below, without interruption, are the photocopied pages of Swamiji's inspiring sermon, "All Saints and All Souls", as they appeared in January 1897. This talk is not in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. I

found it in August 2016. It was re-printed in the December 2016 *Prabuddha Bharata*.



The Coming Day January 1897

little weaker than the other. It may be that one is the childhood of truth, the other the youth, and the other the old age. But just as the child, the young man and the old man are but different manifestations of the one phenomenon of manhood, so these religions are different expressions, related to each other and to that one great truth. This is to be understood.

Generally, we find men become horrified at hearing of others doing that which they do not do. This is so all over the world. It requires a good deal of education, and a greater amount of personal experience, to understand what is meant by sympathising with each other. That has been the ideal for thousands of years; centuries before the birth of the Christian era, centuries before the birth of the Hebrew or the Buddhistic religion, the idea was working in the world, and yet, down to the present time, we have not approached very much towards it. There is another and a deeper reason behind, and that is in the very cause of religions being, not only the relation between man and man, but in an intenser sense, the relation between man and God. The more one goes to the external, the more must be the variation, and the deeper we go to the internal, the more we approach the one-ness. The more we go towards the leaves and the branches, the number will increase; and the more we go towards the root the more we approach unity. God is that Unity of all existence. The nearer we are to Him, the nearer we are to each other; and the farther we are from Him the farther we are from each other. That being the fact, the only way to come to this unity of things is by approaching God. You may call God by various names; there is no use in quarreling about names. You may call Him 'The Personal God;' you may call Him 'The Almighty,' if you please; you may call Him 'The Ideal,' if you please; or 'The Absolute,' if you please; or, as in later days scientific theorists call Him, 'The Matter of the Universe,' or 'The Force of the Universe.' Names do not signify much after all. But the fact is, He is the Unity, the basis behind everything, the background of the phenomena of nature, and the more we approach to that, the more shall we

understand each other, and the nearer we shall be to each other.

This is what is meant by realisation of religion. Here is a fact, that although there have been so many quarrels between religions and sects, so much heart-burning and jealousy, and abusing of each other, in the different religions of the world, although this earth of ours has been deluged in blood again and again in the name of religion, and although we know that in the hearts of the best of us this fanaticism never dies out—the tiger living inside us, the demon coming up in the name of religion to deluge the earth in blood—yet even in these very religions, even the sects which delight in blood, which delight in persecuting and burning those who do not believe with them, we find persons—solitary examples they may have been—real souls, trying to realise God in their own hearts, and their words come down to us, and we find that they have been singularly unanimous, whether the monk from India, or the mystic from the forests of India, or the saint from the Roman Catholic monastery, or from the monastery of Thibet, we find, wherever these men are, all believe in the manifestation of God in everything, we find that wonderful thought existing all along among them. They are as one in declaring that the same God exists everywhere, that all religions were inspired by Him, that His inspiration did not stop at some past time, nor that there ever will come a time when it will stop. They also declare that persons to whom these messages are given are not even a few. It is a state of things, a place to which all of us must rise. They have declared that religion not only consists in doing good to our fellow beings, in building hospitals, in doing charitable works, but, over and above all these, religion consists in feeling, seeing God.

It has been said that out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. But it is also true that out of the fulness of the heart the hands work, the feet move, and the whole organisation of the body works. It is the mind that works the body. We shall have to feel first, nay, something higher—see. If there is any truth in religion, we shall here find agreement between all the religions of the world.

The Coming Day January 1897

How do you know the truth of this thing you preach? All of them declare they saw. Paul says he saw Christ, and that was his authority. Christ says *he saw God, and that was his authority.* Moses said he saw God, and that was his authority. So do all the prophets and preachers of the world. Only those who try to follow them in after years, attempt to build a wall between the prophets and the taught, just as I have heard some modern Christians say, that only those who have written these books can come in contact with God, and the rest of us never can. The Roman Catholics preach that the miracles which have been worked can only be done through their church. If it is outside it is of the devil. So with all religions, excepting, perhaps, in India. There this doctrine is understood, I believe, much better than anywhere else, for there the first step in religion is to understand that it does not mean that some peculiarly constituted men had some particular *or peculiar messages for the world, and there it stopped, but religion consists in everyone of you becoming prophets, and until you become that you are not religious.* No amount of argumentation, no amount of hair-splitting, no amount of scientific discussion, no amount of reasoning, and no amount of secondary evidence, will ever satisfy you about the truths of religion until you see them *for yourselves direct, until you are conscious of God, until you are conscious of your own soul.* And, until you have that, there is no distinction between you or me and the atheist—none at all. All this talk of ours against atheism is all nonsense, simply superstition on our part, and nothing more. The same question will be asked of you as of every other man, and every other prophet in the world:—If you preach God, have you seen Him?

When I was a child that thought struck me first. I used to go to different places, and heard men preach the most beautiful sermons, and when they came down I would ask them, 'Have you seen God?' 'No one can see God.' 'Then how dare you delude mankind? How dare you lead mankind into hazy things?' If there is a God, He should be realisable more than this table before me. He through whom we exist, how much

more must He exist than our feelings, or our senses? That is the one question we have to ask for ourselves, and we have to remember that there is no difference whatsoever between the rankest Materialist and ourselves, until the difference is made by perception, actual realisation. If there is any difference it is in this, that the Materialist is sincere; he confesses what he feels, and we are hypocrites, bound down by our own superstition. Born cowards we are, dare not speak the truth. And therefore it is necessary that we must struggle and try for that realisation, and we shall find that the more we go towards that the less will be the fight. Dogmas and doctrines will vanish, churches will crumble in the dust, old creeds and sanctions living inside old creeds will vanish into the air, and we shall begin to approach our freedom and true religion. The soul will find that there is truth in religion apart from priests, apart from ceremonies, apart from creeds and dogmas. Not only so, it will find that religion was calling upon us all the time, and we would not hear its voice, because we had built a wall between God's voice and ourselves, because we had built a wall in the form of dogmas, and creeds, and organisations, and intricate ceremonies, and all that. These are all walls between us and God's voice; and we shall learn, when we have pulled these aside, to stand apart, brave, free; there shall be nothing between my God and me. The ever present entity in the human soul will be realised, and with that realisation will come realisation, in the true sense of the word, of the brotherhood of mankind.

We hear so much talk in these days about the brotherhood of mankind, without a God. It has been taken for granted by many persons that there is no use for a God, that the brotherhood of mankind is sufficient. We are going about with each other; that is enough. They do not know. How can you have a brotherhood of mankind excepting from that Unity? How can I feel any sympathy with you until I know that you and I are one? I am a dark man, you are white. You dress one way and I dress another. You speak one language and I another. Our food, dress, every thing is different from yours. Where is this unity?

The Coming Day January 1897

then? Not in man! In brotherhood of man you do not find the unity. As soon as you say 'man' there is no brotherhood; you must go deeper to find it, and that Unity is God. And when we have reached that it is only in and through God that we find brotherhood. Leave God aside and man has become your enemy, not your brother. Therefore the one ideal which we should never forget is that in and through God alone we can see the reality of the universe, the reality of mankind; our love, our sympathy, everything will be true only in and through God. Leave God aside and the whole building falls to the ground, crumbles into pieces, and, in spite of the little sentimentalism of certain modern philosophers, for which they have never advanced any reason,—reason will make their theories vanish into the air,—there will be no more a brotherhood of mankind; for, if there is no God, there is no Oneness,—because you must remember that is what I mean by God. The essential idea is that we are all one, human beings and animals; every particle of matter, every atom, is like a point at one end of the radii, and, as you go along, all these radii converge and meet at one centre, the heart, the soul of this universe, the soul of this world, the soul of our souls, the soul of your soul and my soul. Just as the body finds its unity—the body is a changing mass containing different parts which are constantly changing; yet there is something behind it where there is unity, and that is the soul of man. Again, all these souls are various changing quantities, the world of thought going on revolving day and night, good succeeding bad, and bad succeeding good. Yet behind all these different souls there is another unity which never changes, the never dying, the never decaying, the almighty, the omniscient, and that unity is God, the soul of your soul, and of my soul. And, as such, we are one.

If you take away that centre, the keystone of the arch, the arch falls to pieces, and you cannot establish a brotherhood of man. You have no plea for sympathy or love, no plea for helping each other. The only way would be to follow the dictates of nature, cheating each other, which un-

fortunately the large proportion of mankind follow. Thus, from the Eastern books, the West may well take up that one ideal, that the ideal of brotherhood, the ideals of sympathy and love and help, can only be gained first by feeling the ideal of freedom.

You have just heard read from your own gospel, 'He dwells not in a temple made with hands,' and that is all true. We have to take that in its truest significance, that the only temple in which He lives is the human soul and nothing else. Light is everywhere; we know that the vibrations of light somehow or other, to a certain extent, exist in the darkest places. Yet for us human beings we can see it only in the lamps, and nowhere else. So we know that God is omnipresent, but in mankind He can only be seen in the human soul and nowhere else. It is very good to say we can see God in the sun, and moon, and stars, and everywhere else, but that is afterwards. The beauty of seeing God in nature is only possible to the man who has first seen Him in his own heart, and not before. If God were visible in nature, always, then this book would see God, but we know it cannot, for it has not a soul. It is through the soul we see Him first, and then in nature. It is the human soul, therefore, that is the only temple, and here we have to go to worship the true God. Churches and ceremonies may help the childhood of mankind, but we must grow. It is very good to be born in a church, but it is very bad to die in a church. That shows there has been no growth for the man, no growth towards liberty. Born with limitations, cramped all through life, he dies in limitations. Let us bless all the churches and temples and forms that ever existed as good for our childhood, let them be there, but we have to pass beyond them, and the sooner the better, because we know that the realisation of God can only be in the soul of man.

To look for God anywhere else, even in the heavens, would be useless. We cannot see Him in heaven, for heaven, if it exists at all, cannot be omnipresent. Here, therefore, in the temple of all temples, which was never built by human hands, the temple as eternal as its object of wor-

ship, the eternal God Himself; the temple without beginning and without end; the temple which is pure by its nature; the temple of which immortality is the birthright, the human soul, let us try to see the Lord, and then we shall see Him everywhere, not only in the good places of nature, but in the bad places too. We shall be able to see Him not only in the merciful man, but in the most diabolical man. We shall be able to see Him not only in the innocent dove, but also in the ferocious tiger, for the heart of all hearts will have opened unto us. These veils that are keeping us from the full realisation of God will have vanished, everything, as it were, will have explained its mystery. Then alone nature will have given up her secret, towards which we are only working bit by bit through the various sciences,—and that is, that this very nature is merely a veil, and behind that is the eternal, the ever pure, the ever blissful, the ever intelligent Almighty God of this universe.

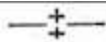
RIGHTEOUSNESS OVER-MUCH.

'Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?'—Ecclesiastes vii. 16-17.

To a certain extent, this Book of Ecclesiastes is a doubter's book, a sceptic's book, a pessimist's book, a cynic's book. The writer of it likes to shew his blasé contempt for the world with its baby love of pleasure, its feverish ambition, its hot haste for this or that object of desire: he half mocks, half sighs as he looks out on the game of life, and sees how the puppets dance: he is melancholy, bitter, satirical, pathetic, and you are never quite sure what he is or what mood he is in, or how much he believes, or how far he means what he says.

Occasionally, however, we get a glimpse of the genuine philosopher, and of the rock on which the whole thing is based.

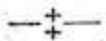
The Coming Day January 1897



The Rev. J. Page Hopps, in the *Coming Day*, has a cheery word about Christmas which may very well be quoted here:

Cheer up, man! Why, what was Christmas sent for, if not to put a little life into the face of care? What if you are not as rich as you were a year ago? If you have kept your good name, you are not yet a real loser. What if the tide is going against you? If you have done your best, you have done your duty; and the greatest man could do no more. What if the honest gains of years are slowly melting away like the snow beneath the subtle gales of spring? The best part of a man's fortune is not what he *has*, but what he *is*. Come! shake hands with Misfortune, and laugh at Care! Smooth out the wrinkles, and straighten the bent back; and give Old Christmas a blithe and happy welcome to *yourself*."

Sound and much-needed advice, certainly.



The Westminster Budget 24 December 1896

Swamiji left England for India on 16 December, and he spent [Christmas in Rome](#) with James and Charlotte Sevier. On Christmas Eve, *The*

Westminster Budget reprinted this Christmas message from Rev. Page Hopps which mirrors his upbeat personality. Today, Rev. Page Hopps's rugged individualism sounds dissonant, considering the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Attitudes have changed. In nineteenth-century Europe and America outbreaks of smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid, and cholera were common. Many people doubted that a smallpox vaccine would work—and thought it might even cause harm. Tuberculosis was rampant and there was no cure. In India, in 1896 over a million people perished from famine.

While Swamiji may have concurred with Page Hopps's advice concerning himself, as a *sadhu*, his heart went out to his countrymen who were suffering *en masse* through no fault of their own. He sent money to a famine relief fund being collected by the *Indian Mirror*, and encouraged some of his wealthier London friends to donate to famine relief as well.

Islington, London 11 December 1896

Out and about in London



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

J.J. Goodwin took Swami Vivekananda and Swami Abhedananda to the Smithfield Club Cattle Show at the [Royal Agricultural Hall](#), Islington, about four miles northeast of their flat in Grey Coat Street, Westminster. The caption for an 1895 print of the Cattle Show, shown below, began:

Many Londoners never realise that Christmas is at hand until the Smithfield Club's annual Show of fat beasts is opened at the Agricultural Hall, Islington.

This outing was probably Goodwin's idea. His father had been Secretary for the Bath and West of England Society, which was an institution for the promotion and improvement of agriculture. No doubt young J.J. had been taken to many county shows to see prize horses, poultry, pigs, cattle, sheep, dogs and horticulture. Swamiji was learning something about livestock farming methods in the West from Goodwin.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

This postcard of the Agricultural Hall shows horse-drawn trams and a poster advertising "Tibet: the land of mystery". Swami Abhedananda would travel to Tibet in 1922.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

This photograph was taken of the Cattle Show at the Royal Agricultural Hall, Islington in 1895. Like Goodwin, I was taken to livestock shows by my parents. Even so, it seems strange to me to praise, admire, and even pet the living animals that would soon be slaughtered for feasting, but this contradictory state of affairs is as old as the human race. About the picture:

Our view was taken after the judging was completed, and on the notices above the exhibits are recorded the awards won, the weights, and the names of the butchers who had purchased the beasts for Christmas beef. The splendid creature partitioned off in the foreground of the picture, the observed of all observers, was the champion of the whole show, a Shorthorn heifer bred by her Majesty at the Prince Consort's farm near Windsor. Beneath the galleries, which are laden with agricultural implements, are pens of sheep, and in annexes pigs and dead poultry are exhibited.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The Hereford bull and cow seem docile enough on this postcard. England was still a mostly agrarian land in 1896, and it was not uncommon for country ramblers crossing pastures to occasionally encounter bovines with strong territorial feelings. See a [previous post](#) about the story of Swamiji facing down a charging bull.

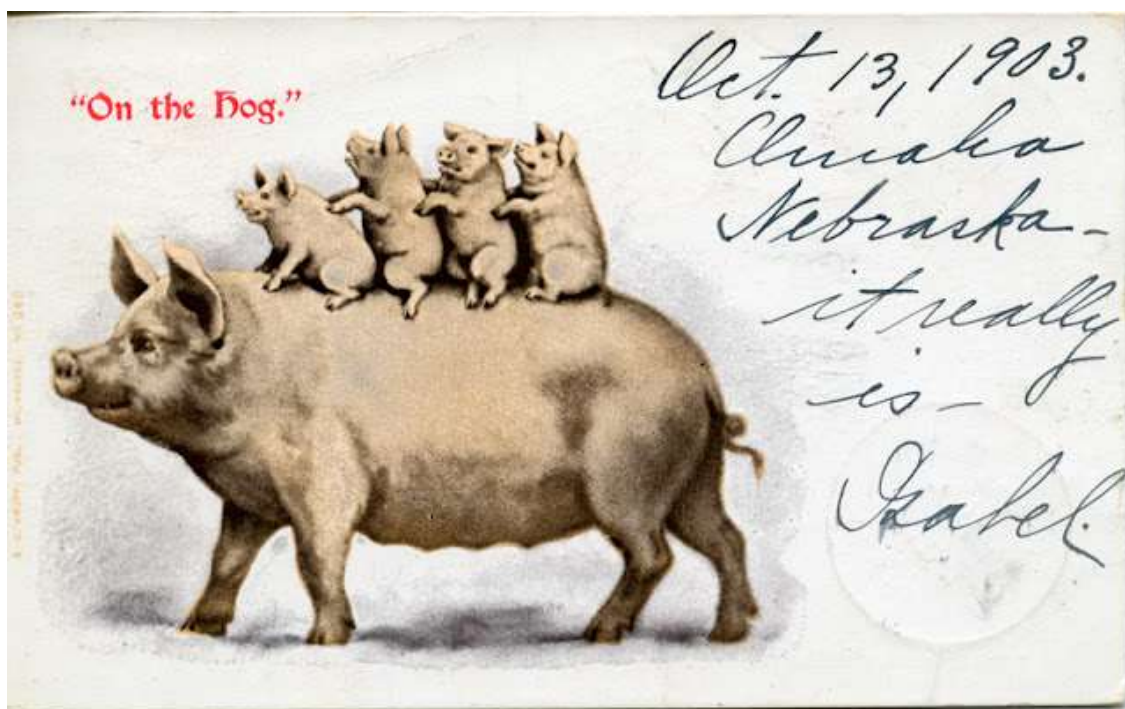


[Look and Learn](#)

Goodwin wrote to Sara Bull back in Massachusetts about their 11 December outing to Islington:

"I took the two Swamis to see the Smithfield Club Cattle show this morning. Our Swami was very anxious to see the very fat pigs of which he has been told."

This print of pigs was published for the centenary of the Smithfield Club Cattle Show in 1897.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The American expression "High on the hog" refers to living an affluent life.

Swamiji sometimes ate meat. His guru, Ramakrishna, had assured him that in his case, it was not spiritually harmful. Some progressive Hindus of the Victorian era believed that their country had become weak because they did not eat beef like British soldiers. Others attacked Swamiji because he ate meat. Curiously, Goodwin, who enthusiastically explained all aspects of animal husbandry to Swamiji, was a dedicated vegetarian.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Almost a fortnight earlier, Goodwin had written to Sara Bull on 29 November:

"A very pretty incident happened the other day. The Swami was walking to a Ry Station when a little raggamuffin caught hold of his arm & began rubbing his head against it. The Swami did not remember him at first, but the child said "You remember me, you gave me a penny the other day." It turned out that the Swami saw this boy & another fighting, and after stopping them gave each of them a penny, & this was the boy's way of showing his affection."

The schoolboys in this postcard are better dressed than Swamiji's street urchin would have been, but playing rough was common.



[HathiTrust Digital Library](#)

Speaking of “little raggamuffins,” this 1895 soap ad shows that every social class and circumstance is exploitable for advertising.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

An excerpt translated from Swami Abhedananda's diary:

Swami Vivekananda would visit various parts of the city of London. . . . accompanied by Swami Abhedananda. One day Swamiji said, “Let's go see what an English market is like.” And they went to see a weekly farmers' market in the poorer section of town. They did not see many of the tropical vegetables common in Bengal, but even then, there was a wide variety of greens and fruits.



Life in London.
FRUIT STALLS, FARRINGTON STREET.

[TuckDB](#)

There were many weekly outdoor markets in London, but it is possible that Swamiji may have gone to the one on Farringdon Street not far from the historic Smithfield meat market.



A Fruit Stall, Northern India.

[TuckDB](#)

This Raphael Tuck postcard of a fresh produce market in Northern India is not that different from the way fresh produce was sold in street stalls in England. There must have been dinner table discussion at 14 Grey Coat Street about where to obtain the best cooking ingredients. Therefore Swamiji and Goodwin escorted Swami Abhedananda to various markets to make sure he would survive in London by himself after they left for India.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The excerpt translated from Swami Abhedananda's diary continued:

Seeing oysters and clams being sold, Swamiji exclaimed, "See, they eat crabs, clams and oysters like Bengalees!"

There were any number of fish-monger's shops that the two swamis might have looked into, but the most entertaining sights were at the great fish market of Billingsgate in Lower Thames Street near London Bridge. Perhaps they went down to the quayside in the early morning. [Baedeker's Guide to London and Its Environs](#) 1896 said:

"Along the quay lie fishing-boats, whence the fish are laid in baskets, and sold first to the wholesale, and afterwards to the retail dealers. Oysters and other shell-fish are sold by measure, salmon by weight, and other fish by number."



[TuckDB](#)

Billingsgate was a busy place with workers schlepping crates, sellers hawking, and buyers bidding. Baedeker's Guide to London continued:

"Large quantities of fish are also conveyed to Billingsgate daily by railway; salmon from Scotland, cod and turbot from the Doggerbank, lobsters from Norway, soles from the German Ocean, eels from Holland, and oysters from the mouth of the Thames and the English Channel."

I wonder if Swamiji told Abhedananda about the New England clambake he had attended in [August 1894](#).



[TuckDB](#)

Another place that Goodwin, Swamiji, and Abhedananda might have ventured was [Petticoat Lane](#) in the City. It was an unregulated "poor man's bazaar" selling sundry second-hand goods, clothing, food, poultry, you-name-it. It was also a place where many languages other than English were heard. The pogroms in Russia during the 1880s had brought in a large influx of Jewish immigrants. For Swamiji, this area may have reminded him of parts of New York City which he must have visited with Leon Landsberg.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

"Shine, Sir?" There is a well known incident involving a [shoeshiner](#) when Swamiji was in San Francisco on 25 March 1900. He was late for an afternoon lecture and Thomas Allen went out on the street to wait for him. When he saw Swamiji striding up the street, he approached him to plead haste. Allen's exigency was to no avail. Swamiji spotted an out-of-work shoeshine boy and stopped to have his shoes polished. So it stands to reason that while he was strolling about London, Swamiji observed the hard life of shoeblacks who were hustling to survive on city streets. When possible, I'm sure he gladly paid them to shine his shoes.

Earls Court, London October 1896

The Empire of India in Earls Court



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

In his informative letter of 23 October to Sara Bull, J.J. Goodwin reported not only that he, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Abhedananda had toured the [United Services Museum](#) and the [Royal Aquarium](#), but also: “I took Swami Abhedananda to the Indian Exhibition the other evg.” The fact that Goodwin took only Abhedananda to the Empire of India Exhibition indicates that Swamiji had already seen it.



[HathiTrust Digital Library](#)

It is just possible that Swamiji may have seen the Empire of India Exhibition in 1895. He arrived in England on 10 September. The Exhibition's first season closed on 26 October. As far as is known, Swamiji stayed in

Berkshire until mid-October, first as a guest of E.T. Sturdy and next as a guest of Henrietta Muller. Then he had his own digs in Chelsea, London until 26 November. However, Swamiji could have been invited for a day out in London at almost any time while the Exhibition was open.

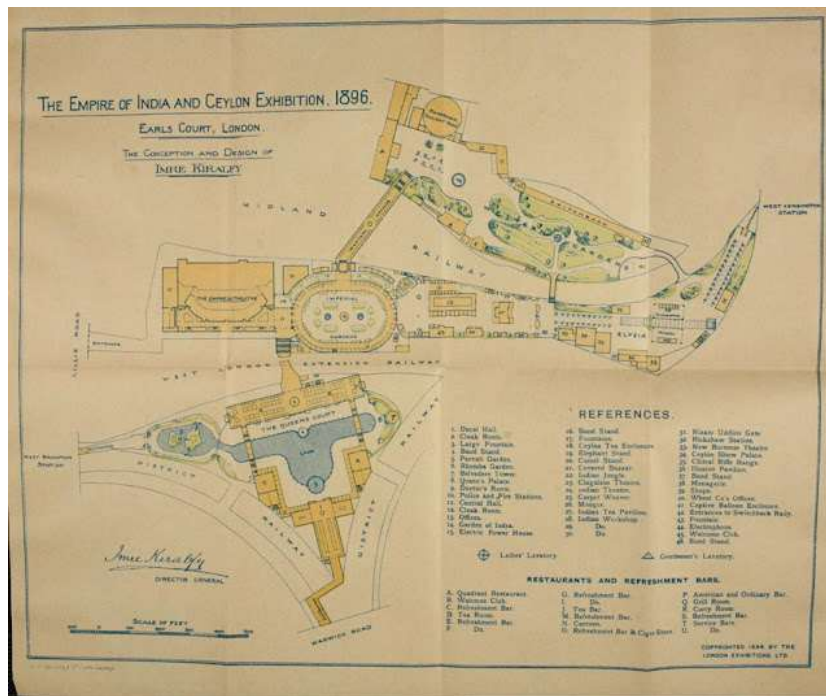
If Swamiji had been shown the cover of the official programme, above, it might have sparked his interest. The cover illustration shows the magnificent northern Torana at the Great Stupa of Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh. It was built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE and re-discovered—for the West—by [Alexander Cunningham](#) in 1851.

One visit to the Exhibition, however, no doubt would have reminded Swamiji of the Midway Plaisance at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago which he had seen in August 1893.



[HathiTrust Digital Library](#)

An expanded Empire of India and Ceylon Exhibition re-opened in May 1896. There is a striking difference in the two programme covers. The 1895 cover is about the glory of ancient India, but the 1896 cover is about Western hegemony of India and southeast Asia. Fair Britain, the patron, is magnanimously presenting the fairgrounds to the docile allegorical figures of India and Sri Lanka.



HathiTrust Digital Library

In 1894 the Hungarian impresario **Imre Kiralfy** obtained a lease to redevelop a twenty-four acre former fairground in Earl's Court, West London. For his project on the theme of India he enlisted the sponsorship of four Maharajas, four Rajas, plus the Gaekwar of Baroda and a host of notables and aristocrats in England.



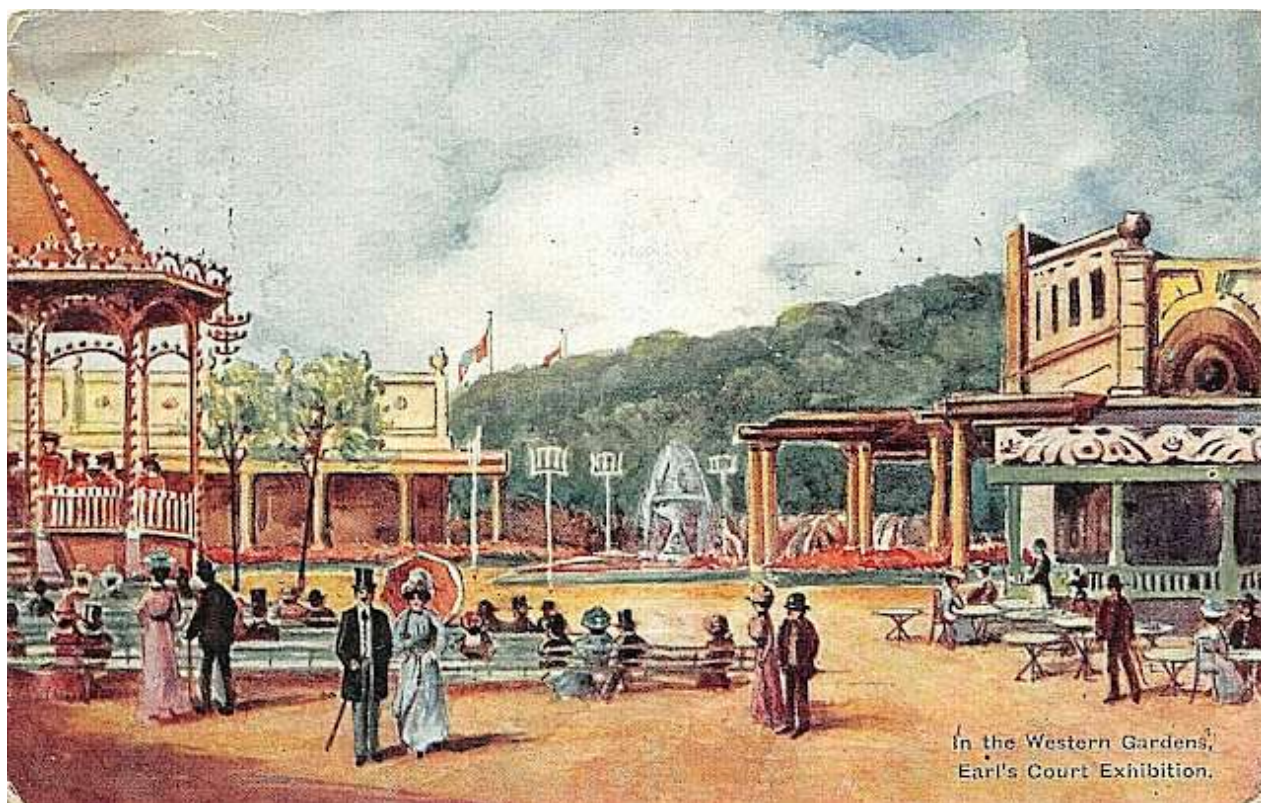
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

One of the main selling points for Kiralfy's Exhibition plan was to outdo, by a few feet, the marvelous Ferris Wheel of the 1893 Chicago Exposition. The Ferris Wheel had been America's answer to the amazing Eiffel Tower

built for the 1889 Paris Exposition. Of course, after Chicago's success London must have its own Great Wheel.

Swamiji referred to the Ferris Wheel in his lecture to the Metaphysical League of Brooklyn on **Friday 17 January 1896**, and this was incorporated into Chapter 8 of Jnana Yoga.

You have seen the big Ferris wheel in Chicago. The wheel revolves, and the little rooms in the wheel are regularly coming one after another; one set of persons gets into these, and after they have gone round the circle, they get out, and a fresh batch of people gets in. Each one of these batches is like one of these manifestations, from the lowest animals to the highest man. Nature is like the chain of the Ferris wheel, endless and infinite, and these little carriages are the bodies or forms in which fresh batches of souls are riding, going up higher and higher until they become perfect and come out of the wheel. But the wheel goes on.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The famous White City of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago had been built in the Beaux Arts architectural style. The buildings for the Earls Court Exhibition Grounds were designed in a Mughal Indian style.



[HathiTrust Digital Library](#)

One of the theatrical extravaganzas performed for the 1895 and 1896 seasons was 'India: A Grand Historical Spectacle', written and directed by Kiralfy and staged in the 6000 seat Empress Theatre. The spectacle first opened in July, two months after the main Exhibition. It presented the history of India, from the first century CE to 1895, in dance, mime and songs.



Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

Kiralfy was a seasoned impresario. In 1892 he had presented a similar extravaganza about Columbus and the Discovery of America in Madison Square Garden in New York. His next spectacle, "America," was being performed at the Auditorium in Chicago while the Parliament of Religions was proceeding in September 1893.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17th, 1896.
THE EMPRESS BAND
 CONDUCTOR: ... MUSICIAN: YEMANEL

Programme.
 IN THE QUEEN'S COURT from 7.30 to 9 p.m.

1.—MARCH	"Edna"	Le Fichte
2.—OVERTURE	"La Gazza Ladra"	Bozzini
3.—WALTZ	"Musette"	Waldteufel
4.—SELECTION	"The Mikado"	Sullivan
5.—SONG	"The First Kiss"	Abrégé de Cavalli
6.—MARCH	"Justitia"	Suppe

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Panorama of Ancient Rome.
 This magnificent painting—54 ft. high, 194 ft. in circumference, and covering 1038 square feet of canvas—represents the Eternal City as it appeared in 312 A.D., when the victorious Constantine made his triumphal entry through her gates. It is considered by all who have seen it as being the most remarkable work of the kind ever put on view.

The New Rontgen X Rays.
 The Greatest Discovery of the Age. Penetrating flesh, wood, stone, &c., and rendering the skeleton absolutely visible.

The Theatrograph.
 In the WESTERN GARDENS.
 Living Photographs in Colour. THE LATEST SENSATION.

Cingalese Artists.
 In the CINGALESE THEATRE, BUDAPEST CITY.
 A troupe of Native Devil Dancers, Musicians, Tamil Actors, and Nanch Girls will give performances of a refined and interesting nature.

Indian Performers
 Will be seen in the INDIAN MAHAL.
 They include a wonderful Contortionist, a Native Club Swinger, Nanch Dancers, Singers, and Acrobats, and their performances are novel and unique.

Indian Jungle.
 Mr. Rowland Ward will show in his reconstructed Jungle thousands of specimens of Beasts, Birds, Reptiles, and Insect life, arranged and grouped in a life-like manner. This is the largest collection of Indian animals and birds ever seen.

[HathiTrust Digital Library](http://www.hathitrust.org)

While it is possible that Swamiji saw the India Exhibition in 1895, theoretically he had more opportunity to see it during the summer of 1896. At least we have a record that Swami Abhedananda saw the Empire of India and Ceylon Exhibition. Goodwin's casual note about it suggests that it was an expected sight to see while in London.

We learn from the programme that one of the top features of the 1896 India Exhibition was—naturally, what else?—a panorama of ancient Rome. In several previous posts I wondered if Swamiji had seen a panorama. They were extremely popular and atmospheric paintings approaching virtual reality.

Did Goodwin and Abhedananda watch the demonstration of the Rontgen X-rays? These demos were presented not as film images, but as live, dramatically lit, displays of living skeletons. One suspects that the trusting young ladies who repeatedly exposed their bones to radiation for the audiences did not live long lives.

There were no living animals in the Indian Jungle. It was an extension of the nineteenth-century craze for taxidermy.



INDIAN YOGA.

[The Sketch V15 16 September 1896](#)

Unlike the jungle animals, the "wonderful Contortionist" advertised in the programme was certainly alive and confounding. After the 1896 India Exhibition season concluded in November, this Hatha Yogi was employed as an entertainer at the Royal Aquarium.

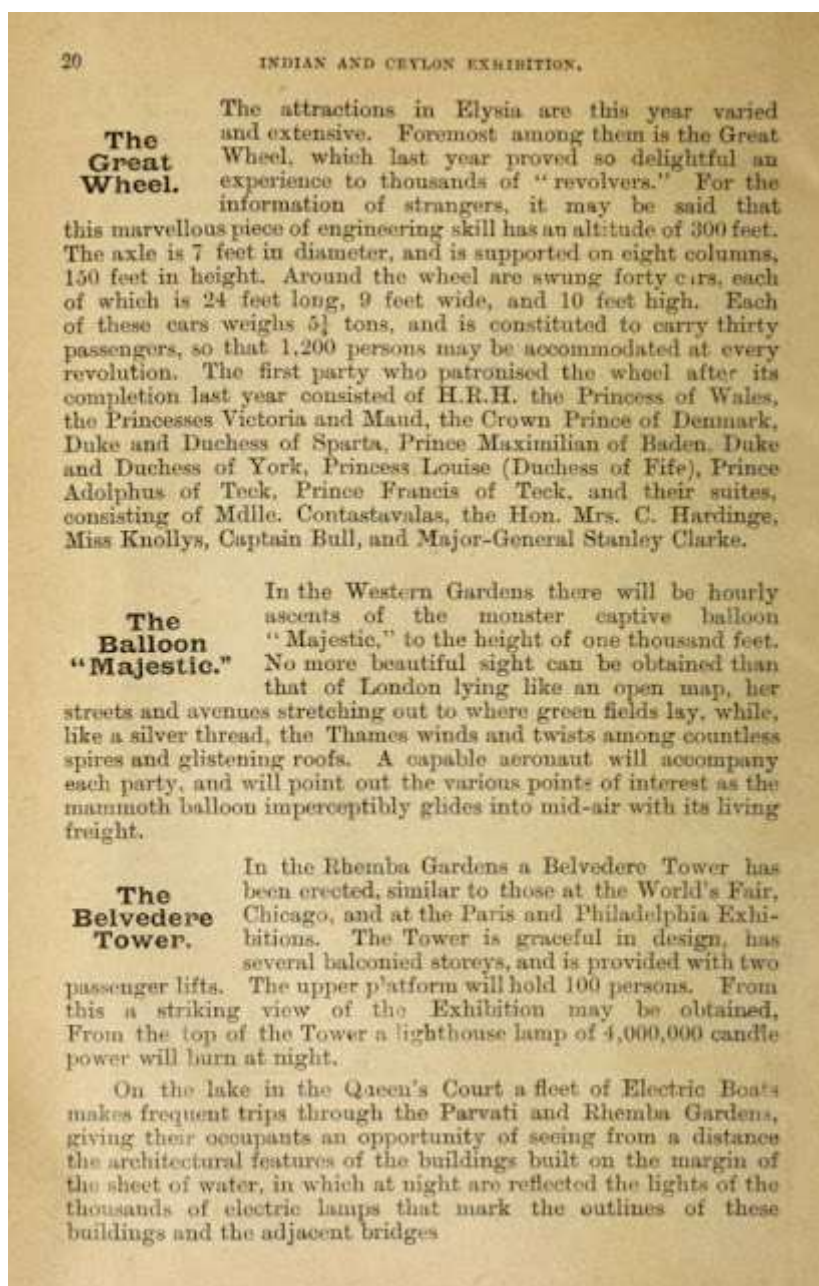
Prior to that, Swamiji went to the Royal Aquarium on 23 October to see a printing trade exhibition.



INDIAN YOGA AT THE INDIAN EXHIBITION.

[The Sketch V15 16 September 1896](#)

Mind-boggling contortions by professional entertainers spawned a new craze in the early twentieth century for real photo postcards of persons—including my grandfather—who demonstrated their own amateur pretzel postures.



HathiTrust Digital Library

In addition to the Great Wheel, the 1896 India Exhibition featured a captive balloon. Swamiji enjoyed immensely his ride in a captive balloon at the [Exposition Nationale Suisse](#) in Geneva on 21 July 1896. If he had ridden the captive balloon at Earls Court only a month or so before, surely Charlotte Sevier would have included that fact in her memoir.



The Graphic 25 July 1896

In the previous post about the [Exposition Nationale Suisse](#), I speculated that someone had told Swamiji about the captive balloon that existed briefly at the 1893 Exposition in Chicago. It is equally possible that someone had ridden the "monster balloon Majestic" at Earls Court and lived to tell him their tale.



The Graphic 26 September 1896

An unusual feature of the circular passenger basket for the Earl's Court balloon was its "donut hole" for vertiginous aerial viewing. It must have been rather expensive to ride the captive balloon, as it could not carry many passengers. By contrast, the Great Wheel had forty cars and each could carry thirty passengers. It was making lots of money for Kiralfy.



THE BALLOON AT EARL'S COURT.

[The Sketch V15 30 September 1896](#)

A more bizarre aspect of the "monster balloon Majestic" was its bird face decoration. Like the captive balloon in Chicago, the Earls Court balloon perished in a strong gust of wind. According to *The Sketch* of 30 September, the "gorgeous wide-eyed monster . . . longed for freedom . . . and battered itself to pieces." The waggish reporter concluded: "Moral: Limited usefulness is better than undefined aspiration."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The [Great Wheel](#) of London opened on 8 July 1895 and it operated seasonally in Earls Court until 1906, having carried over 2,500,000 passengers. Other European cities followed suit. Vienna built its Wiener Riesenrad in 1897, and Paris erected its Grande Roue for the Exposition Universelle in 1900.

Ferris Wheels remain popular. The new millennium seemed to spawn a building spree of ever taller wheels worldwide. The 443 ft tall [London Eye](#) opened in the year 2000 on the South Bank of the Thames. It carries about three million passengers per year.



[TuckDB](#)

Back in 1895 the London public had to be reassured that a ride on the Great Wheel would not cause any unpleasant sensations. The height of its view was compared to that of [The Monument](#). The column designed by Sir Christopher Wren known simply as The Monument commemorates the 1666 Great Fire of London. A clever reporter for the *Pall Mall Gazette* pointed out on 7 August 1895 that visitors had to exert themselves to climb 320 steps to the viewing platform of The Monument, but riders of the Great Wheel could rise to three hundred feet in ease and comfort and see much more of London.



TuckDB

A legendary view of London could supposedly be had from the top of St Paul's Cathedral. The reporter for the *Pall Mall Gazette* also stated for comparison that one had to climb six hundred steps to see London from the [Golden Gallery](#) of St Paul's, and claimed that if someone wanted to see the sunrise at 4:30 a.m. from the top of St Paul's, they needed to start at 11:30 p.m. In conclusion he recommended, "a trip on the Great Wheel in any weather is an experience worth having."

The Raphael Tuck postcard of St Paul's from the Thames shows the London skyline and river traffic as Swamiji would have seen it.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

I am inclined to think that someone probably took Swamiji to ride the Great Wheel in Earl's Court, and when he was in Paris in 1900 he may have taken a revolution in the Grande Roue as well. Swamiji had already experienced the novelty of the Ferris Wheel in Chicago, so riding on the

Great Wheel in London or Paris would have been for the sake of sharing a social experience with his friends.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Electric lighting was still an innovative medium in 1896. The scene of dancers waltzing around the Earl's Court illuminated bandstand in this postcard may be compared to a rock concert laser light show today.

There were two interesting newspaper articles in 1896 about being at the top of the Great Wheel overnight. One disgruntled group was stuck up there by a mechanical fault, and the other group did it (with permission) for fun. All publicity is good, apparently. The article about the unwilling participants appeared in the *Westminster Budget* on 29 May at the beginning of the season. Their main complaint had been going without food for twelve hours. After their rescue, the man said to his wife:

“We must put on an air as if we did this sort of feat every week and twice on Bank Holidays.”

On 19 October at the end of the season, the *Pall Mall Gazette* wrote an article about “Mr. Upward,” an aspiring poet, who spent the night at the top of the Great Wheel with friends and food:

When the fairground “lamps were extinguished the lights o’ London presented a not unattractive spectacle. It gave one a grand idea of the immense size of London, for you could see tiny lamps stretching away all round you for mile upon mile. It was curious, too, to notice the variety and natural succession of sounds. At first there was the noise of traffic and the hum of humanity, and when these had gradually died away the rumble of heavy cargo trains came booming up to us. You get a wonderful idea of the restlessness of London,”

Piccadilly, London 13 December 1896

Farewell Reception



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

This newsboy in Piccadilly Circus might be imagined shouting the news in December 1896 that Swami Vivekananda was about to leave London. His departure for India was not front page news, of course, but many people were sad to see him go, and they wanted to express their appreciation for the way his teachings had affected their lives.

Swamiji's steamer ticket had been bought by mid-November. On 3 December he wrote to Alberta Sturges, who was in Rome, and in those days long before copy machines, he forwarded a precious handwritten letter from a cousin of hers:

Dear Alberta,

Herewith I enclose a letter of Mabel to Joe Joe to you. I have enjoyed the news in it very much and so I am sure you will.

I am to start from here for India on the 16th and to take the steamer at Naples. I will, therefore, be in Italy for some days and in Rome for three or four days. I will be very happy to look in to say good-bye to you.

Capt. and Mrs. Sevier from England are going to India with me, and they will be with me in Italy of course. You saw them last summer.

I intend to return to the U.S. and to Europe thence in about a year.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Piccadilly Circus is one of the most "postcarded" places on the planet. Although the historic buildings and the [Eros fountain](#) remain constant, the ever-changing traffic entertains the eyes. On this particular day, 13 December, the streets were not commercially busy. Eric Hammond wrote:

It was Sunday in London, when shops were shut, business at a standstill, and the city streets silenced for a while from some at least of the rattle and the rumble of their heavier traffic. . . . This afternoon the friends of Swamiji were to say "Goodbye" to him whose coming had meant so much to them.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Considerable planning must have gone into Swamiji's farewell reception held at 191 Piccadilly. There was a printed program containing this formal resolution:

"At a large meeting of the Swami Vivekananda's Friends and Sympathisers held at the Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, Piccadilly, London, on 13th December 1896, the Chairman E.T. Sturdy Esq. was requested to present the following Address to the Swami on the motion of H.B.M. Buchanan Esq. B.A. (Cantab.). Seconded by Mrs. G.C. Ashton-Jonson and unanimously supported:"

Additional Letters of Appreciation were read from devotees in Detroit, New York City—both Brooklyn and Manhattan—and Cambridge, Mass. The Cambridge Conferences letter was signed by [Lewis Janes](#), [Charles Carroll Everett](#), [William James](#), [Josiah Royce](#) and [John Henry Wright](#).

J.J. Goodwin wrote to Sara Bull in Massachusetts that the event had been a "triumphant success". "There were over 500 there, & the Swami was in his very best style."

Mary Phillips of New York City summed up Vivekananda's legacy most concisely:

"He has made us feel that we are all of one kin, and all expressions of that One Existence which is the background of the Universe."



The venue for the reception was the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours where Swamiji had lectured over the summer—see the [previous post](#). The watercolorists had their exhibition during the summer, and another organization, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, held their exhibition there in the winter. The main galleries on the top floor would have had skylights. Eric Hammond took note of the paintings:

In the hall of meeting, dedicated to the use of the artists, paintings hung upon the walls; palms, flowers, and ferns decorated the platform from which Swamiji would utter his final speech in England's great metropolis to the British people. All sorts and conditions of men were there, but all alike were filled by one desire; to see him, to hear him even if may be to touch his garment once again.

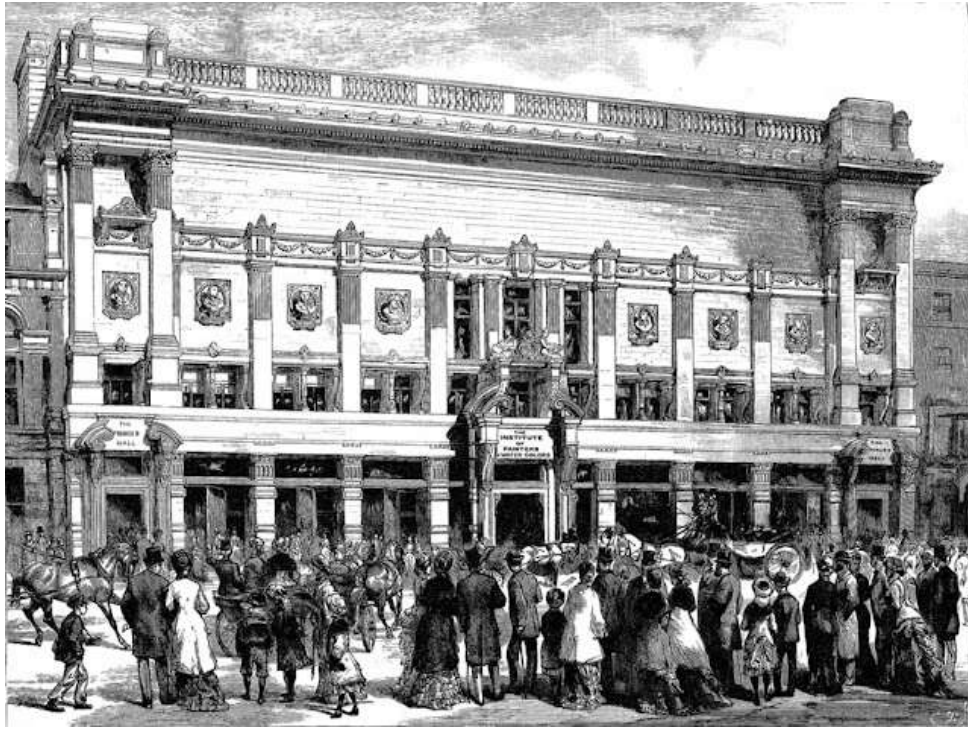


Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries V4

Historian Marie Louise Burke found this photograph of the central gallery at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours. There were two long galleries on either side. One of the galleries was set up with chairs and a speaker's platform. Eric Hammond described the emotional tone of the program:

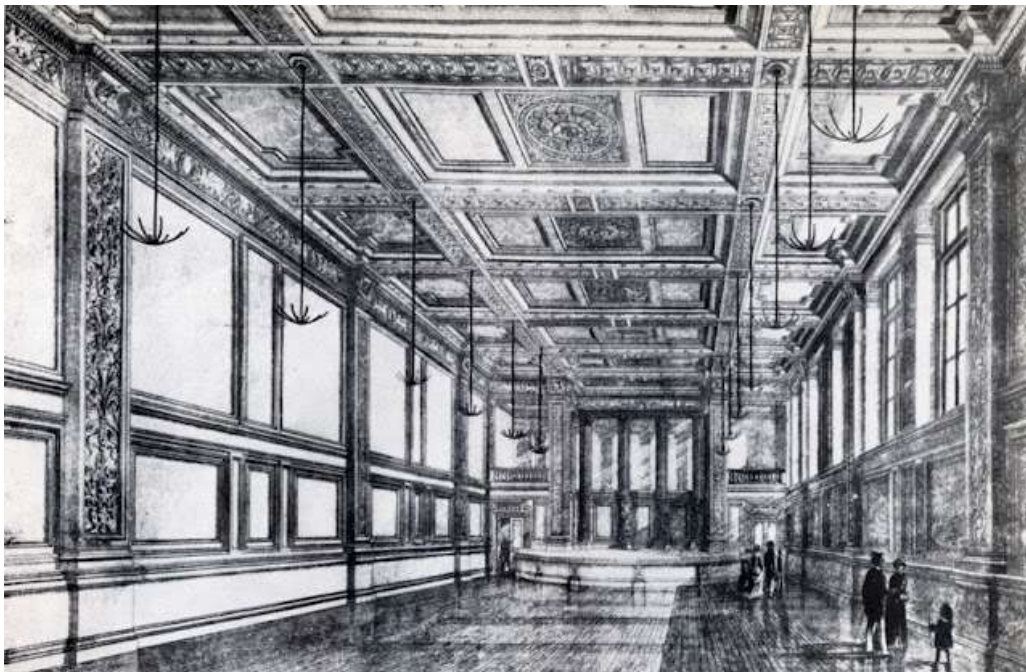
On the platform musicians and singers at stated intervals “discoursed sweet sounds”. Speeches illustrating the esteem and affection which Swamiji had won, were made by men and by women. Salvoes of applause punctuated and followed them. Many were silent, tongue-tied, and sad at heart. Tears were very near to some eyes.

Swamiji responded with a speech. Wrote Goodwin of Swamiji: “He was evidently a good deal affected, because the people here as well as in America have been exceedingly kind to him.”



The Graphic 27 January 1883

The 1883 engraving of the dedication of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours shows, in addition to the main entrance in the center, signed entrances on both ends leading directly to Princes Hall, where Swamiji spoke in 1895.



The Builder 28 April 1883 from ND V3

This architect's rendering of Princes' Hall is our only record of the hall as it was when Swamiji spoke there 22 October 1895—[see that post](#). The next day, on 23 October the *Morning Post* had written of Swamiji's lecture at Princes' Hall:

In the course of his address last night he declared that there were indications in these closing days of the 19th century that the pendulum of scientific thought was swinging back, for men all over the world were rummaging in the pages of ancient records and ancient religious forms were again coming to the fore. To many this seemed to be a case of degeneration, while others regarded it as one of those outbursts of superstition which periodically visited society, but to the scientific student there was in the present state of things a prognostication of grand future benefit.

THE PRINCES' RESTAURANT.—The magnificent hall underneath the galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, hitherto known as the Princes' Hall, has been converted into a restaurant on Parisian lines, and will be opened to the public on Monday. The hall itself, which has been in constant request for concerts, public meetings, and Sunday orations, and which was notable for its severely chaste, not to say plain and bare, style of decoration, has been entirely metamorphosed, and is now resplendent with mirrors, gilding, and tapestry, while the lofty curtained windows look out upon a scene of flowers and foliage where before was an arid waste. Structural alterations of the most extensive character have been effected, by which the old hall has been converted into a central saloon with subsidiary rooms for private parties, and the basement has been enlarged and remodelled for the convenience of the cuisine and service. The chief saloon is an apartment of which London may be proud: and so far as dimensions and decorations are concerned it need not fear comparison with any establishment in Paris or Vienna. The originator of the scheme, M. Benoist, has for many years been domiciled in this country, and has had ample opportunities of discovering the secret of pleasing the British taste in the matter of dining. The company formed to carry out his views has at its head Sir Alfred Jephson, whose successful engineering of the Naval Exhibition augurs well for the success of the present venture. Under the direction of M. Fourault, M. Azema (a former chef of the Café Anglais, Paris), M. Laurent, and M. Diette (of the Hôtel du Palais, Biarritz), the Princes' Restaurant enters upon its career under auspices that should ensure the most gratifying results. An inaugural banquet was held last night, at which Sir Alfred Jephson presided, and among the 200 guests present were Lord Suffield, Sir Francis Knollys, Sir J. D. Linton, Sir M. Eyre Shaw, Alderman Faudel Phillips, Colonel Mitchell, Colonel Edye, Captain Earleley Wilmot, R.N., Captain R. Stewart, Captain Pitt, R.N., Major Roper Parkington, Mr. Baneroff, Mr. John Hollingshead, Mr. E. M. Wimperis, Mr. Gofton Salmond, Mr. G. B. Levenson, and Mr. T. Arthur Highton (secretary). Lord Suffield proposed the toast of "Prosperity to the Princes' Restaurant," for which, under the careful guidance of the Chairman, Sir Alfred Jephson, he prognosticated a very great success.

Morning Post 16 May 1896

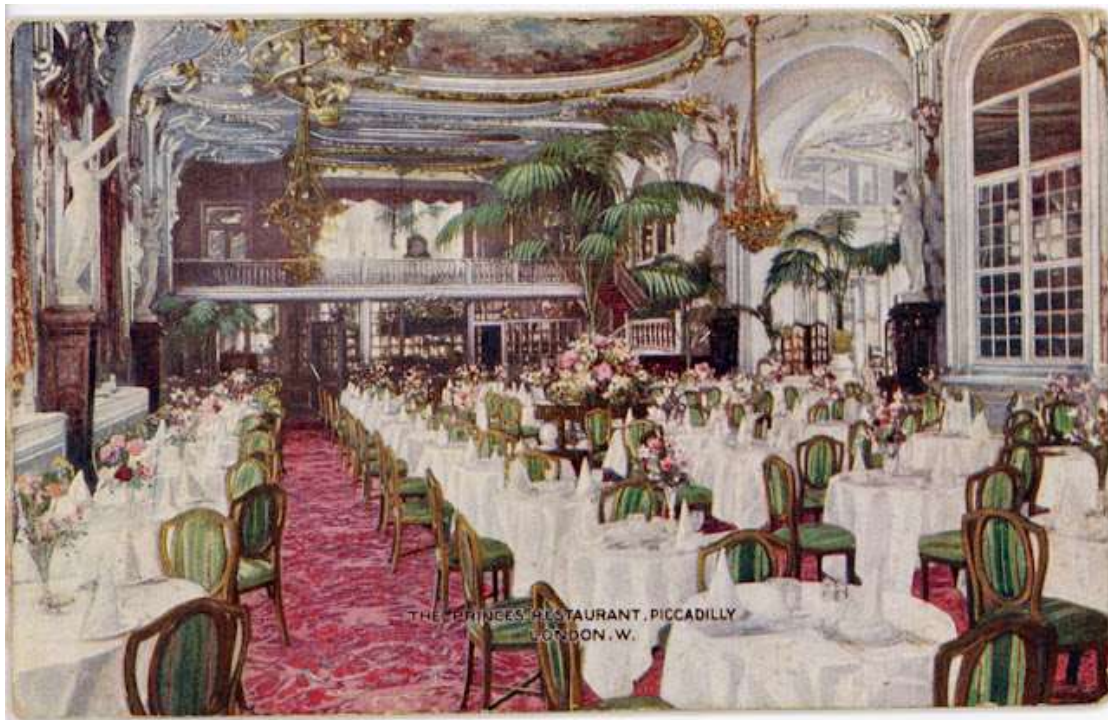
Places where artists and trend-setting intellectuals gather often attract, in their wake, persons ambitious to make money, which is the gist of the article above. The 16 May 1896 *Morning Post* described the transformation from the old hall into the new restaurant:

The hall itself, which has been in constant request for concerts, public meetings, and Sunday orations, and which was notable for its severely chaste, not to say plain and bare, style of decoration, has been entirely metamorphosed, and is now resplendent with mirrors, gilding, and tapestry, while the lofty curtained windows look out upon a scene of flowers and foliage where before was an arid waste.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

In May 1896 a new Parisian style restaurant opened at 191 Piccadilly. Princes' Hall had been transformed into Princes' Restaurant. The postcard is evidence that it was "now resplendent with mirrors, gilding, and tapestry."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Swamiji gave six lectures at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours during June and July 1896. After the lecture, surely some of Swamiji's fashionable friends invited him to dine in this restaurant on at least one occasion.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

By the time the ceremonies concluded it was surely dark outside. This novelty hold-to-light postcard of Piccadilly Circus captures the scene. Eric Hammond concluded:

Grey and gloom without were intensified and deepened by grey and gloom within. One form, one figure, fought and triumphed over sorrow; arrayed in garments glistening as of amber, Swamiji passed among the people like a living shaft of sunshine.

Marylebone to Chelsea, London October to December 1896

Conversazione



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

During the autumn of 1896 Swami Vivekananda made some visits in the Marylebone district of London.

The Marylebone crest on this "Ja-Ja" 1905 Heraldic Series postcard was created for Saint Mary-le-bourne with the motto: *Fiat secundum Verbum Tuum*, "Let it be done according to Thy Word."

Madame Tussauds remains a major landmark on Marylebone Road, but there is no account suggesting that Swamiji ever went there.



TuckDB

On 22 October, Swamiji, Swami Abhedananda and JJ Goodwin attended a luncheon at Miss Emmeline Souter's house in Marylebone. Among the other guests were Rev. Hugh Reginald Haweis and Rev. Samuel Thornton, Bishop of Ballarat, Australia, who was in England for the Shrewsbury Church Congress.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Mr. Haweis, shown here in his study at Queens House, Chelsea, had met Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. As of 1896 he had held the Incumbency of St. James's Westmoreland Street, Marylebone for 28 years. When Swamiji lived around the corner on Oakley Street during the fall of 1895, Rev. and Mrs. Haweis had honored him by giving a reception in their home on 16 November attended by about 150 guests—see the [previous post](#).



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

In 1859, immediately after graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge, Haweis had gone to Italy. At Naples he saw [Giuseppe Garibaldi](#) (1807-1882). Haweis loved to reminisce about meeting the great Italian freedom fighter and patriot. No doubt as soon as he heard that his friend, Swamiji, intended to go through Italy on his way to India, Mr. Haweis had plenty to say about the hero of his youth. He recalled Garibaldi in an interview in March 1896:

“There he stood, the peasant patriot, in his coarse red shirt, grey trousers, a plain sword in an iron scabbard by his side, and a thick steel watch-chain dangling from his breast pocket. His head was bare, and the russet hair was much streaked with grey; his figure too, was bent, though he was but fifty-three; but his brow looked calm and imperious as ever, and his small piercing eyes let nothing escape them. He looked grave, good, and gentle, and smiled wearily as the crowd pressed upon him, some to touch his red shirt, others his battered sword, and many to cover his hands with kisses, or to kneel at his feet. What struck me most was that his power was so absolute and yet apparently unsought.”



[Wikipedia](#)

Haweis was hardly alone in his admiration for Garibaldi. The *Illustrated London News*, 23 April 1864 depicts Garibaldi's enthusiastic welcome at Charing-Cross, London. Garibaldi was incredibly popular in England. He was a champion of the working man and spoke openly against the Pope. Garibaldi objected to the Papal Army in Rome being supported by the Bourbon French Army. Politics, though, is a two-edged sword. Unfortunately for Irish Catholics working in England, Garibaldi's stance was an excuse for major anti-Catholic riots perpetrated in his name across Britain in 1862.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

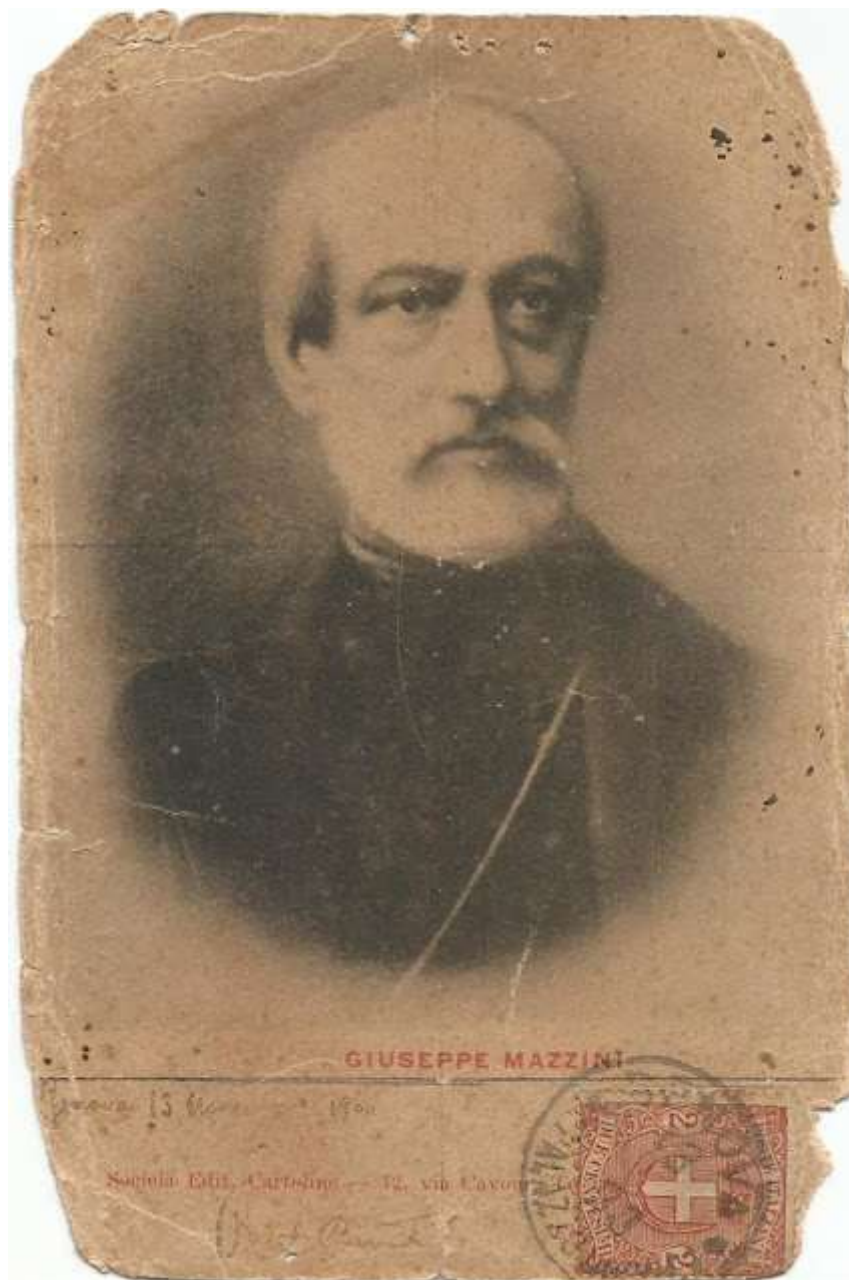
It would not be a stretch to imagine that Mr. Haweis may have invited Swamiji to his house to talk about traveling in Italy, and about the glory days of fighting for Italian national unification. The Albert Bridge could be seen from Haweis's residence in Chelsea.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The drawing room at Queen's House, 16 Cheyne Walk, decorated with cabinet curiosities collected around the world, makes a fascinating setting for animated conversation between Swamiji and the Reverend not only about the art, music and literature of Italy, but especially about freedom and national determination.

Swamiji might have been surprised—even intrigued—by British enthusiasm for the Italian struggle for independence. Was it nostalgia? Did Swamiji witness a curious dichotomy of opinion in this regard? Did he encounter some English who praised the independence of Italy, but ridiculed the idea of independence for Ireland or India?



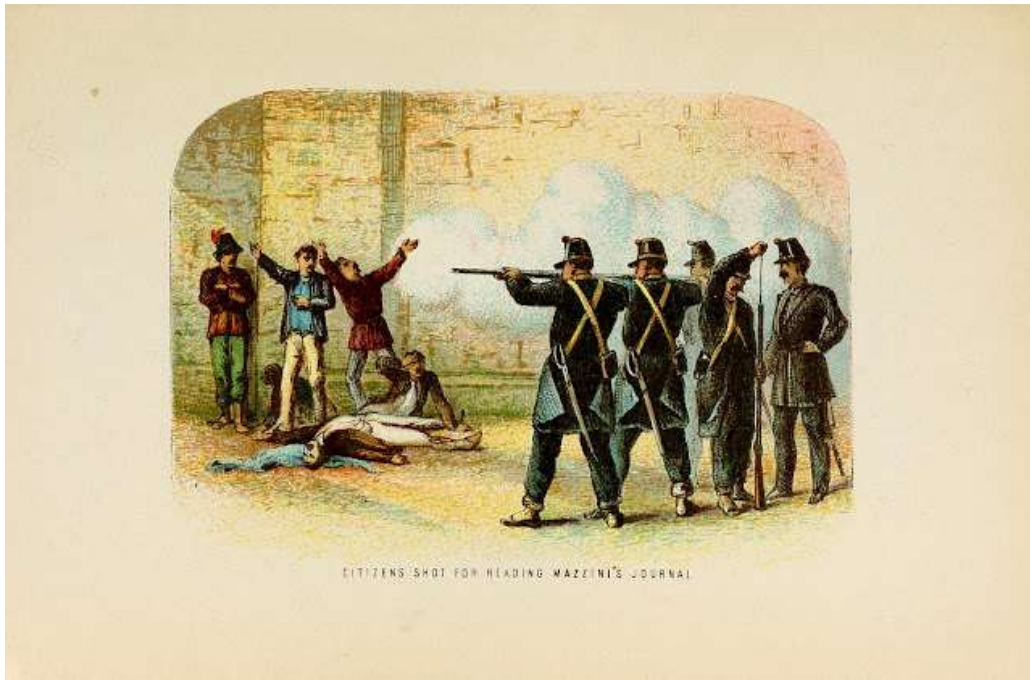
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Another Italian political activist, and a compatriot of Garibaldi, who may have figured in their conversations was [Giuseppe Mazzini](#) (1805-1872). Mazzini endured numerous failures and setbacks and spent time in exile in London. The dogeared postcard above, postmarked 1900, symbolizes the rough course of his career. Mazzini's literary output was considerable; he was a master of Italian, French and English literature. He was an able commentator on wide-ranging topics including Dante, philosophy, religious and political works. Haweis probably had works by Mazzini in his library.

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On the 10th of March, 1872, "The Daily News," announcing the death of Joseph Mazzini, rendered loving homage to the "Apostle of Italian unity," and it must have been a satisfaction to its writers that they had not waited to "garland the tombstone when they had not crowned the brow," "to pay that homage to the ashes which they had denied to the living man" —the greater part of whose life had been spent in London, whose few personal joys had been derived from English friends, who now gratefully acknowledge that many of their notions on social duties to their country and humanity were due to Mazzini's teachings and practice.

London Daily News 21 January 1896

Twenty years after Mazzini's death, books and articles about him were still appearing in the London press. *Reynolds Newspaper* 1 March 1896 quoted Mazzini: "We cannot logically declare the children of God to be equal before God and unequal before men. . . .We protest against all inequality, against all oppression wheresoever it is practised for we acknowledge no foreigners." Modern Indian leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have acknowledged Mazzini's influence. It seems, from a comment made by Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita), that Vivekananda also found Mazzini inspiring.



[Wikipedia](#)

In 1831, while he was in exile in France, Mazzini founded a political movement for youth called Young Italy. Members pledged an oath to make Italy a united, free, independent, republican nation, where every man would be considered equal. They were considered seditious. The caption of the print above is "Citizens shot for reading Mazzini's Journal."

After his passing, Swamiji's writings were influential in India's freedom movement, inspiring such disparate patriots as Subhas Chandra Bose, a proponent of armed struggle, and Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated non-violence. While he was incarcerated in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo claimed he was visited by Swamiji's spirit:

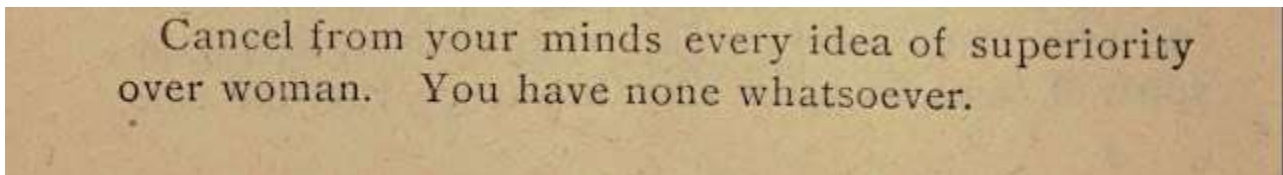
"It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence."

Or he might wander as far afield as Italy, that "greatest of the countries of Europe, land of religion and of art ; alike of imperial organization and of Mazzini ;—mother of ideas, of culture, and of freedom !"

[Notes of Some Wanderings](#)

The quote above is taken from *Notes of Some Wanderings* by Sister Nivedita about her experiences with Swamiji. During the summer of 1898 Sister Nivedita recalled how Italy, and particularly Mazzini, had inspired Swamiji. No doubt many of the progressive women that Swamiji met in England had read "[Duties of Man](#)" by Mazzini, in which he called for recognition of women's rights. Wikipedia states:

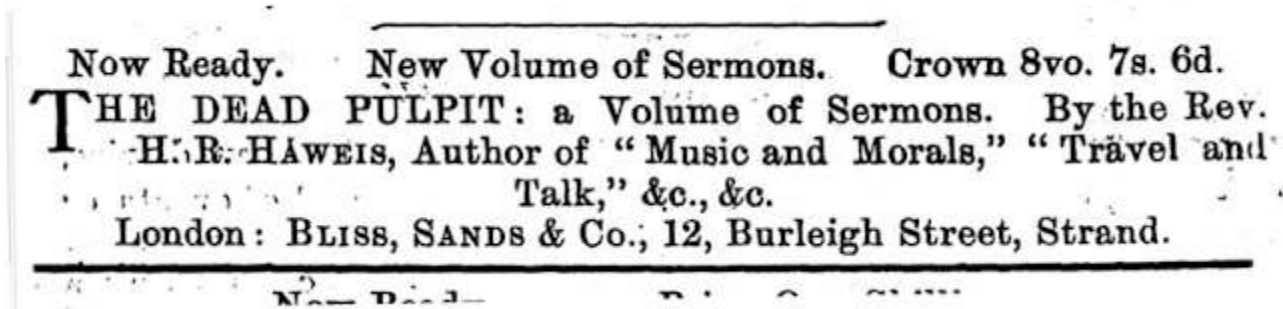
"After his many encounters with political philosophers in England, France and across Europe, Mazzini had decided that the principle of equality between men and women was fundamental to building a truly democratic Italian nation. He called for the end of women's social and judicial subordination to men. . . . He helped intellectuals see women's rights not merely as a peripheral topic, but rather as a fundamental goal necessary for the regeneration of old nations and the rebirth of new ones."



Cancel from your minds every idea of superiority over woman. You have none whatsoever.

[Library of Congress](#)

Swamiji had already come to this point of view through his experiences in America, but when it was first written in 1844/58, Mazzini's "Duties of Man" essay, including this quote from page 68 above, was truly radical.



Now Ready. New Volume of Sermons. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d.
THE DEAD PULPIT: a Volume of Sermons. By the Rev.
H. R. HAWEIS, Author of "Music and Morals," "Travel and
Talk," &c., &c.
London: BLISS, SANDS & Co., 12, Burleigh Street, Strand.

Book World 2 November 1896

[Bipin Chandra Pal](#) wrote the following from London to *The Indian Mirror* on 15 February 1898 citing "Vivekanandism" as a trendy term that Mr. Haweis had coined in his latest book *The Dead Pulpit*:

"Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has

opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu Scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from "The Dead Pulpit" by Mr. Haweis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity.

In his Prologue, Mr. Haweis referred to "Vivekanandism" as one of the "living currents" of truth in London which were "stealing Anglican congregations," and whose truths ought to be incorporated into the Anglican fold so that the church could "modify statements grown inoperative within the fold, and re-state—re-state until it can formulate something which, if not irresistibly convincing, sounds at least probable." Swamiji was, at the very least, "irresistibly convincing".



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Madame Tussauds on Marylebone Road was one block east from the intersection with Baker Street where Miss Souter arranged for six photographs to be taken of Swamiji.



Vedanta Society of St Louis

Ellis & Walery photographed everyone who was anyone, from Her Majesty the Queen to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and so on. There are many examples of their work at the National Portrait Gallery. Swamiji had been photographed by Walery in 1895—see the [previous post](#) about his London debut. This faded original cabinet card of Swami Vivekananda is stamped Alfred Ellis 51 Baker Street.

Ellis specialized in theatrical photography; and he carefully arranged costumes and backgrounds in his studio to capture the essence of his sitter. Today, we have a cheapened view of publicity photos and might be tempted to regard Swamiji's meditation pose—assumed for the photograph—as a sort of performance. However it is necessary to look at the larger context of portraiture. Nineteenth-century photography dovetailed into a long tradition of portrait painting, in which all the accoutrements that conveyed the character and accomplishments of the sitter were rendered.



Vedanta Society of St Louis

When Swamiji returned to India, his photograph was taken at a photo studio in Madras with similar staging. Swamiji's expression is resolute. His head is shaved, he is wearing gerrua, on the left is a traditional gourd kamandalu water pot, his walking staff lies on the carpet and a book representing scriptural scholarship is on the right. All these accoutrements signified to Indians that he was a holy man.

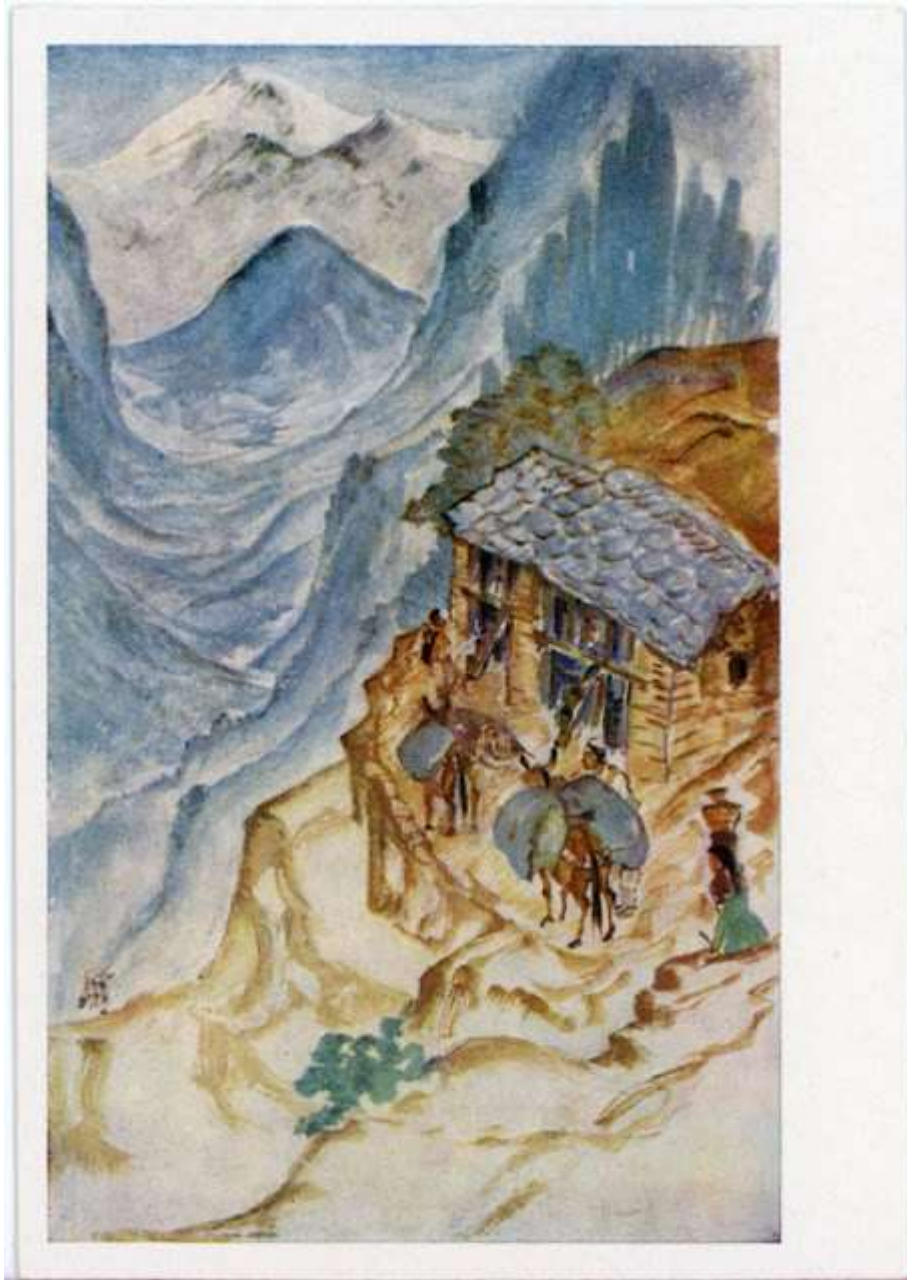


Vedanta Society of St Louis

Two prints exist of the Madras photo session. They are almost exactly alike, the difference being that in the upper photo Swamiji does not wear a rosary and his expression is unfazed. In this photo he appears with a rudraksha bead rosary—which was uncharacteristic for him. I can imagine that the person who arranged this photo insisted on adding the rosary and Swamiji looks a little annoyed at such fussiness.

London to Milan 16 December 1896

Going home



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

On 16 December 1896 Swami Vivekananda and his disciples James and Charlotte Sevier began an approximately 11,000 mile journey by ship, rail and pony from London to Mayawati, Uttarakhand, India. To send them on their way is a modern postcard of a painting by [Nandalal Bose](#) titled "Way to Mayawati." Nandalal went to Mayawati in the 1920s and met with the swamis then residing at the ashram that Swamiji and the Seviers would eventually establish in May 1899.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Swamiji and his companions departed from Victoria Station, London aboard the [London, Chatham & Dover Railway](#). Swamiji declared to Capt. and Mrs. Sevier, "Now I have but one thought, and that is India. I am looking forwards to India — to India !"



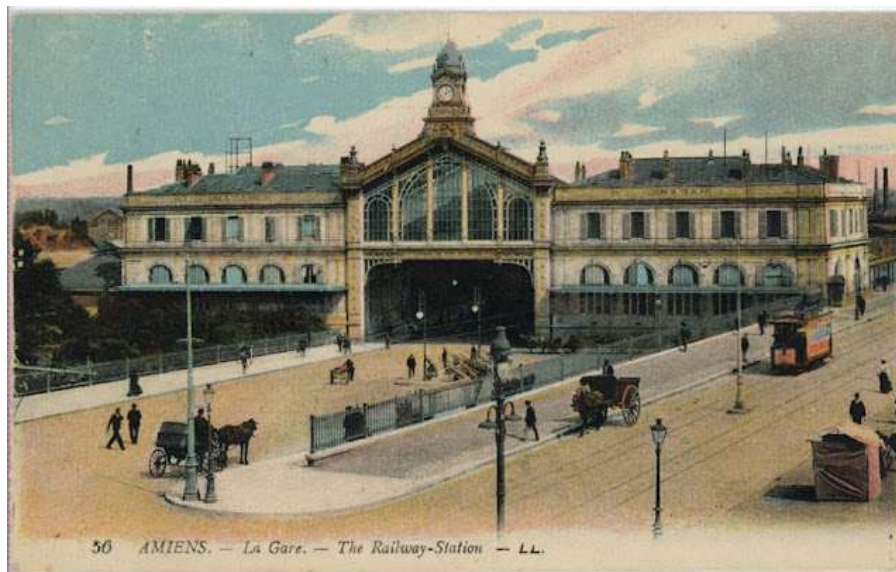
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

[The Life of the Swami Vivekananda](#) 1915 gives the bare essentials of their travel plan. "The party travelled directly to Milan, via Dover, Calais and Mont Cenis." Swamiji had crossed the English Channel from Dover to Calais before. The train went right out on Admiralty Pier so passengers could board their ships conveniently.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

This postcard shows the paddle steamer Calais-Douvres, which was one of about a dozen ships used by the LC&D Rly. The new maritime train station was on the landing pier in Calais. They went directly to Paris.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The train for Paris passed through Amiens. The name may have prompted Swamiji to speak of the [Treaty of Amiens](#) negotiated by the British with Napoleon on 27 March 1802. One consequence of the treaty was that England governed Ceylon.

Another topic possibly prompted by passing Amiens might have been the Franco-Prussian War, which retired Captain James Sevier had probably studied. It had been twenty-five years since the [Battle of Amiens](#) was fought on 27 November 1870 in which the Prussians defeated the French. Swamiji wrote in his *Memoirs of European Travel*: "In an evil hour, did France suffer defeat from Germany."



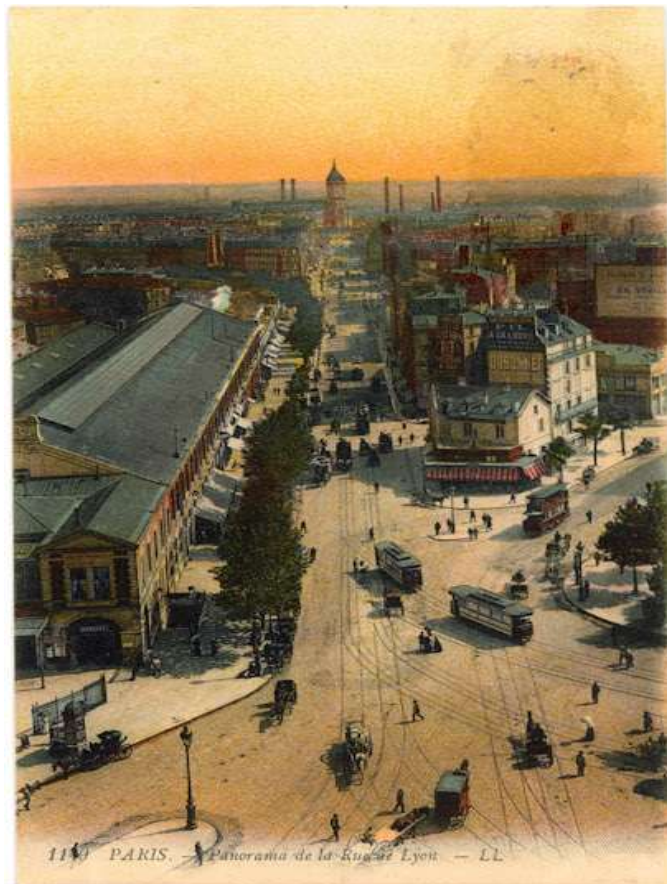
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Swamiji and the Seviars would have disembarked at Gare du Nord and made their way across Paris to Gare de Lyon.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

La Place de la République was near the center of their crosstown journey. When your eyes are set upon far horizons, busy city life seems almost insular.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Parts of the Gare de Lyon were under construction in 1896. The tower of the new station—which would open for the Exposition Universelle in 1900—can be seen at the end of the Rue de Lyon in this postcard. Swamiji would attend the Exposition Universelle in Paris after his second tour of America.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

From Paris, Swamiji and the Seviars would travel 348 miles to Culoz. When they entered Savoie, the landscape became increasingly dramatic. An advertising postcard from the map series Les Départements de France shows Savoie which was annexed by France in 1860. The Chocolaterie d'Aiguebelle was run by monks. Roads are in red and the railway line is in black. The 1915 *Life* observed:

The Swami who was in his happiest mood, made the long hours pass rapidly, and the journey, a delight. His mind was full of plans for his country, and of thoughts of the crowded hours of public life he would probably have on reaching there. Railroad travelling generally fatigued him, but on this occasion he seemed to enjoy it. He was like a boy, pleased with everything, and keenly observing the varied scenes through which he passed.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Their train crossed the Rhone at Culoz. Swamiji and the Seviars had been to the glacial source of the Rhone six months earlier—see the [previous post](#).



Wikimedia Commons

The railway followed the eastern shore of Lac du Bourget and went through three tunnels near Grésine, just before Aix-le-Bains. The express mail from London to India used to travel this route.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

According to [Baedeker's Northern Italy Handbook for Travellers](#) 1895, one of the main attractions on Lac du Bourget opposite the railway was the Cistercian monastery of Hautecombe. Like many medieval ruins that Swamiji had seen along the Rhine, the former abbey had been reconstructed in a Gothic-Romantic style in 1824. During the nineteenth century this abbey was restored to the Cistercian Order. Perhaps in homage to the medieval monastery, the railway tunnels that Swamiji's train passed through had their portals fortified with castle-like crenelated towers.



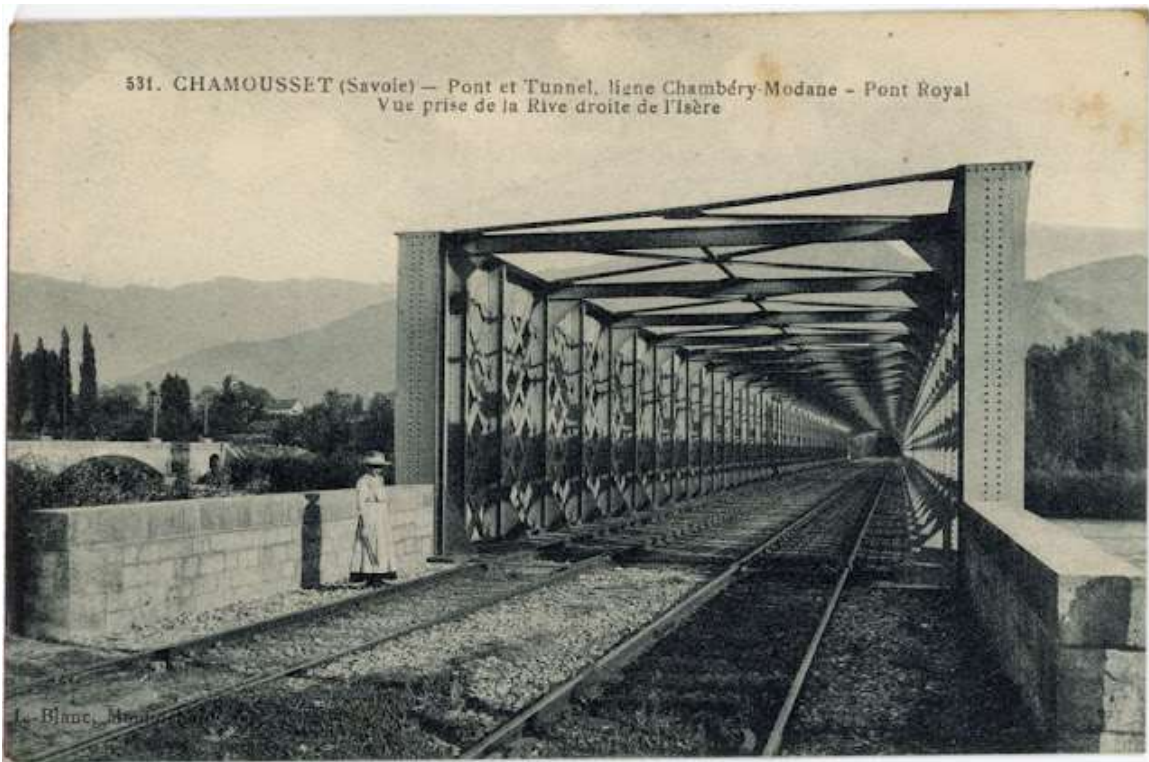
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

As their train approached Chambéry, they went through through a trench blasted out of solid rock in 1853. This postcard shows the entrance to the Chambéry station.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

At Saint Pierre d' Albigny Swamiji could look up and see le Dent de l'Arclusaz. This postcard shows the entrance to the St. Pierre d' Albigny station. Their train now turned east.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

At Chamousset the railway line crossed the river Isère. On the far left is the pont Royal and just beyond that is the confluence with the river Arc. The train traversed the valley of the river Arc.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

From this level crossing at Aiguebelle the railway line follows a valley flanked by glorious snow-covered mountains.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

High in the Rhone-Alps, they passed through Saint-Jean de Maurienne. The landscape must have been snow-covered in December.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Just before Modane, Swamiji's train passed through the small village of Saint-Michel de Maurienne.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Now Swamiji and the Seviars were once again surrounded by the Alps. From the postcard above of a view from Mont Cenis in winter, one can imagine how Swamiji's mind soared while gazing at the rugged, pristine white landscape.



[Wikipedia](#)

They were now about 45 miles directly south of the Hospice du Petit St Bernard where they had been the previous summer—[see that post](#). It states in *The Life* that on this trip Swamiji entertained the Seviers with many tales from Roman history which he had learned in school—and elsewhere. At that time it was believed that either the Col du Petit St Bernard or the Col du Mont Cenis was the route taken by Hannibal and his army in 219 BC. In 1891 the distinguished American military historian, [Theodore Ayrault Dodge](#), published *Hannibal*, one of twelve volumes in his series *A History of the Art of War* in which he argued that Hannibal led his army through the Col du Petit St Bernard:

“The passage of the Alps by Hannibal, while one of the most wonderful operations in military history, was but a step in his gigantic conception of the invasion of Italy. Infinitely greater as a feat than Napoleon’s passage of the Great St. Bernard in 1800, it was yet, like Napoleon’s, but a part of one superb plan. As a wonderful thing to do, it is equaled only by Alexander’s crossing of the Hindu-Koosh.”

I can well imagine Swamiji reading Dodge's entire series including *Alexander*, *Caesar* and *Napoleon*. Under Swamiji's spell I'm sure Capt. and Mrs. Sevier would have gladly pictured elephants in these snowy mountains.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The night before they left London, one of Swamiji's English friends had asked him:

“Swami, how do you like now your motherland after four years’ experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West ?” His significant reply was, “India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha !

The sight of the French Alps must have made Swamiji even more eager to share with the Seviars his love for the holy places of the Himalayas. While they were all breathing alpine air in Switzerland during the summer, it had been easy for James and Charlotte Sevier to feel inspired about starting an ashram in the Himalayas. Back in London, Swamiji continued to explore this proposal with them and no doubt to communicate his own experiences in the mountains.

His companions entered heartily into his enthusiastic moods and plans of work, for they too were eagerly looking forward with anticipations to their Indian experience. They entertained high hopes of what they should do in India in helping the Swami to establish the proposed Himalayan Ashrama. Times were when he would narrate stories of Indian folklore to his companions, until they built, in imagination, a whole Indian world, peopling it with the fancies and the realities with which the Swami enriched his conversation.

I wondered if I could find pictures in the media of his day that illustrated holy places Swamiji had been to in Northern India. Above is an engraving of the [Shivling peak at Gangotri](#) from *Universal Geography: The Earth and Its Inhabitants, 1878-94* by [Élisée Reclus](#). Josephine MacLeod reported that Swamiji read *The Earth and Its Inhabitants* while relaxing in Mrs. Blodgett's garden in Los Angeles.

Swamiji visited Gangotri, the source of the Ganges, during his pilgrimage to the Northern Tirthas in 1891. Shivling is just around the bend, so to speak, from the tip of the [Gangotri Glacier](#). As of 1896, this peak was believed unclimbable.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The view in this postcard looks down upon the train station in Modane. At various points during their journey Swamiji's conversation must have alternated from ashrams in the Himalayas to the Punic Wars to the marvels of railroad engineering.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Reaching the border between France and Italy, Swamiji had now travelled 84 miles on the [Culoz–Modane railway](#) through 18 bridges and 26 tunnels. The locomotives labored over inclines from two to three percent. This was the most intensively engineered stretch of railway that Swamiji had travelled since he passed through [British Columbia](#) in July 1893—see the [previous posts](#) on Canada.



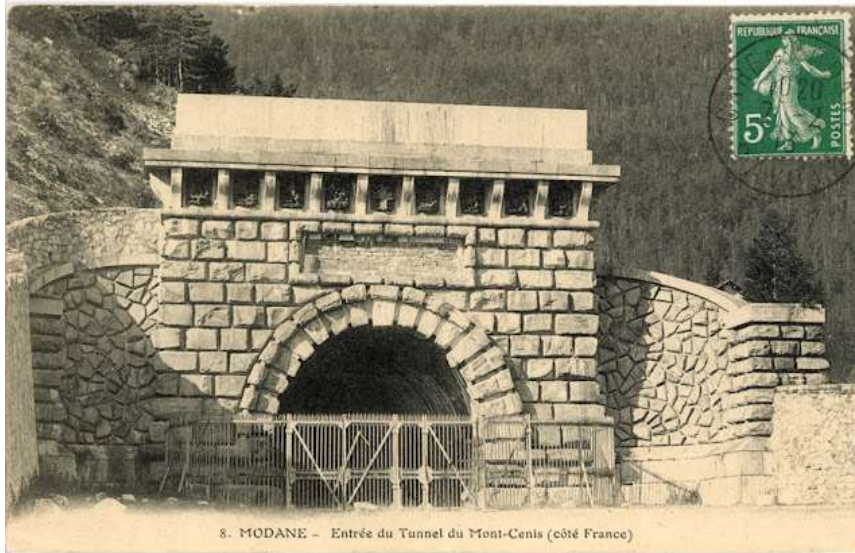
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Their train passed through two short tunnels before entering the [Tunnel de Fréjus](#), that went eight miles from France to Italy. It was one of the greatest engineering achievements of the nineteenth-century.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The Tunnel de Fréjus through Mont Cenis had been completed in September 1871. By 1896 the entrance had been reconstructed to prevent rockslides. This postcard shows the entrance Swamiji's train would have passed through.

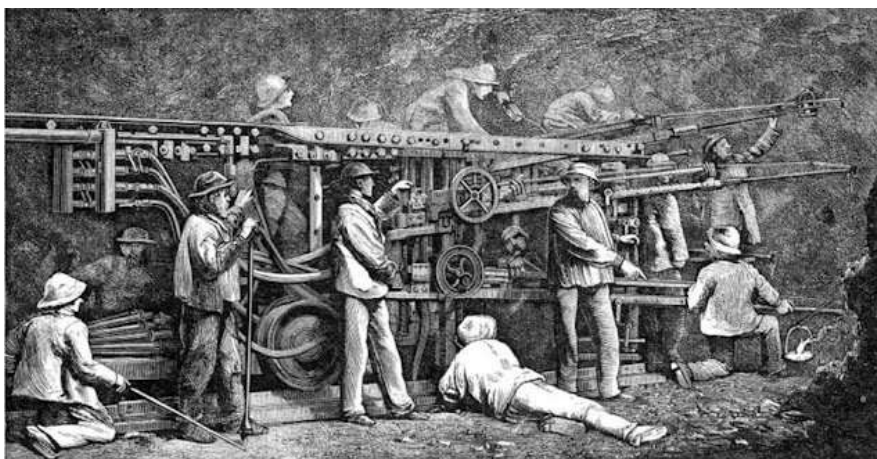


Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

This postcard shows the 1871 entrance to the Tunnel de Fréjus which had been bypassed in 1881 and preserved as a historic monument. The tunnel was the brainchild of Giuseppe Medail, a merchant, contractor, and customs official in Bardonecchia, Italy. He was not an engineer, but he made shrewd cartographic measurements. In 1840 he presented his plan for a tunnel under Mont Cenis to an indifferent King Carlo Alberto and there the idea languished for a decade.

Fortunately Medail also sent a copy of his plan to a military engineer who presented it to a Congress of Scientists. Then other engineers, notably [Germaine Sommeiller](#), took up the idea. The tunnel project was sponsored by King Victor Emmanuel II.

For the first three years of construction on the tunnel, drilling was done by hand, and it was projected to take 40 years to bore from France to Italy, but technical advances shortened the duration of this ambitious project to 13 years. I'm sure Swamiji would have taken this story as an encouraging sign to not fear tackling a big, big, project.



[Harpers Magazine July 1871](#)

Harpers Magazine July 1871 reported the long anticipated completion of the Mont Cenis Tunnel. Its grand importance was curiously explained to Americans as a shorter route between London and India—although its actual purpose was to facilitate commercial transit between France and Italy.

Apart from describing some arduous, purportedly faster routes to India, the article in *Harpers* concentrated on the technology of pneumatic drilling through rock. The machine illustrated, called the *affusto* (*artillery carriage*), could “strike eighteen hundred blows a minute, while it would take one hundred and eighty men, with hammer and drill, to do the same labor.” The drilling machine was invented by Giovanni Battista Piatti but patented by Sommeiller.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The tunnel must have been very dark and smoke-filled. There were lanterns every 500 meters and passengers were advised to keep the windows closed. From the Tunnel de Fréjus, Swamiji's train emerged in Bardonnechia, Italy.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Swamiji and the Seviars continued through more mountainous landscape in Italy crossing more rivers and tunnels. After Bardonecchia they passed through Susa.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

The first major Italian city their train passed was Torino. *The Life* continued:

Through France, across the Alps, the train travelled on. As it approached the city of Milan the Swami recalled the Italian historic experience. Yes, he was now in Italy, that great theatre of action which he had inhabited, in his mind, in those days of early life when he had mastered the history of the Roman Empire.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2021

Finally, after traveling about 48 hours, Swamiji and the Seviars disembarked at the Stazione Centrale in Milano.

Port Said to London 16 -31 July 1899

Across the Mediterranean



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Aboard the BISN Golconda, Swami Vivekananda and his traveling companions, Swami Turiyananda, Sister Nivedita, and Swami Saradananda's brother Satischandra Chakravarti, traversed the Suez Canal to Port Said on 16 July 1899. On this voyage Swamiji wrote Part 1 of his Memoirs of European Travel in Bengali. This document is alleged to have upended Bengali literature in the same way that Mark Twain's humorous colloquial style upset American literature. Swamiji's article was also documentary and he marked the significance of passing Port Said:

“Now comes the Mediterranean. There is no more memorable region than this, outside India. It marks the end of Asia, Africa, and of ancient civilisation. One type of manners and customs and modes of living ends here and another type of features and temperament, food and dress, customs and habits begins — we enter Europe.”

Suez Canal, July 16.—The Golconda, from Calcutta for London, has left Port Said. The Karlsruhe, from Bremen for Australia, has sailed from Suez. July 17.—The Hispania, from Bombay for Liverpool and Glasgow; the Sibiria, from Singapore; the General, from Delagoa Bay for Hamburg; and the Collegian, from Calcutta for London, have arrived at Suez.

Bristol Mercury 18 July 1899

English newspapers tracked the progress of ships all over the globe by telegraph as the fortunes of the British Empire relied upon shipping. These shipping notices help chart Swamiji's progress across the globe because much of his biography is pieced together from sometimes inexact dates on his letters. Swamiji himself wrote—in protest of keeping a travel diary—"I do not remember the dates etc., at all; you must do me the favour to fill these up yourselves." The Royal Mail, although delivered more often in those days, was hardly instant. Just before they set out for England, Nivedita, who was a dedicated letter writer, wrote on 18 June 1899: "Have I been leaving my letters undated? If so, the mails make certain dates approximately certain."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

The comparatively peaceful waters of the Mediterranean provided a welcome respite from the Asian monsoons. Life on deck became more pleasant. The Hamburg-Amerika Line published a series of postcards depicting the amenities of sea travel. Facilities aboard a smaller vessel like the Golconda were probably more rudimentary.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Swamiji wrote entertainingly to Jo MacLeod about exercising with dumb bells while on the ship. "I have recovered quite a bit by the voyage. It was brought about by the exercise on the dumb-bells and monsoon storms tumbling the steamer about the waves."

This postcard of sailors on the HMS St. Vincent working out on deck with dumb-bells appears to confirm the popularity of Swamiji's choice of exercise. Judging by the wooden deck, this scene was probably on the third HMS St. Vincent built in 1815 and used as a naval training ship between 1862 to 1906.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

In those days there was no perceived contradiction with healthy exercise being advertised by cigarettes. Nivedita wrote that Swamiji seldom smoked on this voyage.

In America, Swamiji had been friends with Thomas Wentworth Higginson who had written in 1863: "the dumb-bell remains the one available form of home or office exercise: it is a whole athletic apparatus packed up in the smallest space; . . . a man may exercise nearly every muscle in his body in half an hour, if he has sufficient ingenuity in positions."



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Meanwhile the ship progressed across the Mediterranean. Nivedita wrote in [The Master As I Saw Him](#):

It was dark when we approached Sicily, and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami, while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light. "Messina must thank me" he said, "It is I who give her all her beauty!"



[Wikimedia Commons](#)

In Greek mythology the Strait of Messina is the treacherous strait recounted by Homer where Odysseus's ship passed between the sea monsters Scylla and Charybdis. Swamiji revealed his fascination with the new scholarship of archaeology:

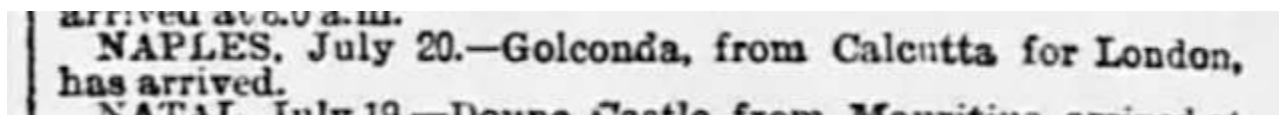
“Well, Swami, you have had enough of countries, and rivers, and mountains, and seas — now listen to a little of ancient history. Most wonderful are these annals of ancient days; not fiction, but truth — the true history of the human race. These ancient countries were almost buried in oblivion for eternity — the little that people knew of them consisted almost exclusively of the curiously fictitious compositions of the ancient Greek historians, or the miraculous descriptions of the Jewish mythology called the Bible. Now the inscriptions on ancient stones, buildings, rooms, and tiles, and linguistic analysis are voluble in their narration of the history of those countries. This recounting has but just commenced, but even now it has unearthed most wonderful

tales, and who knows what more it will do in future? Great scholars of all countries are puzzling their heads day and night over a bit of rock inscription or a broken utensil, a building or a tile, and discovering the tales of ancient days sunk in oblivion.”



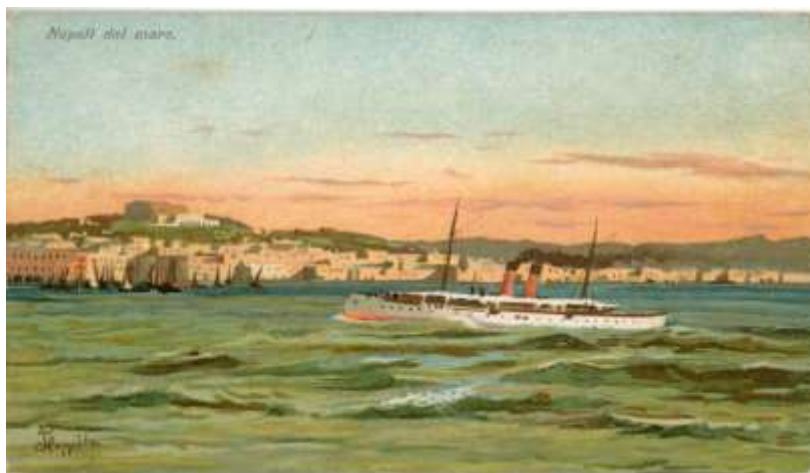
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

A smoke plume from Mt. Vesuvius provided their first glimpse of the port of Naples. Swamiji no doubt told Swami Turiyananda about his trek to the edge of the volcano crater—see the [previous post](#).



The Standard 21 July 1899

The Golconda arrived in Naples on 20 July. By now the plague quarantine regulations imposed in India had expired.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

The Golconda departed Naples the next day. Nivedita recalled:

“As we passed up the coast of Italy, we talked of the Church. As we went through the Straits of Bonifacio, and sat looking at the south coast of Corsica, he spoke in a hushed voice of "this land of the birth of the War-Lord, [Napoleon].”



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

A glimpse of the island prison fortress Chateau d'If alerted passengers to the ship's impending arrival at Marseille. Swamiji probably knew that this prison was featured in the novel, [The Count of Monte Cristo](#) by Alexandre Dumas.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Sister Christine had sent a telegram from London to the Golconda and Swamiji replied in a letter dated 23 July from Marseille explaining:

"We are a party of four: myself, another Sannyasin, a Calcutta boy going to study in America, and Miss [Margaret] Noble. Miss Noble is a young lady from Wimbledon, near London, who has been working in India on the education of girls. Our stay in England will not be long, I am afraid, as this is neither the season nor am I in fit condition to work much. Anyhow, we will be in London a few weeks—at least myself—then go to the U.S. We will talk over all this and infinite things besides when we meet."



Library of Congress

Swamiji might have looked around from the deck of the ship in the harbor and glimpsed the golden statue of the Virgin Mary atop the basilica of [Notre-Dame de la Garde](#). The Old Port of Marseille has been in use since 600 BCE.

Marseilles, July 24 —The Britannia, from New York the Golconda, from Calcutta; the Sanuki Maru, from Kobo; and the Alexandre Bixio, from Colon, have arrived.

Bristol Mercury 25 July 1899

The Golconda departed Marseille on 24 July.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

The Golconda passed through the [Strait of Gibraltar](#) separating the Mediterranean from the Atlantic, and Europe from Africa.

If the Golconda had entered the harbor of Gibraltar, then Swamiji could have seen, halfway up the hill, the crenelated tower of the medieval fortification known as the [Moorish Castle](#). Swamiji regarded Gibraltar not as an outpost of the British Empire, but as the site of the Umayyad invasion of Europe in 711 CE. Nivedita wrote:

“As I came on deck, on the morning of our passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, he met me with the words "Have you seen them? Have you seen them? Landing there and crying 'Din! Din! The Faith! The Faith!' "And for half-an-hour I was swept away into his dramatisation of the Moorish invasions of Spain.”



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Swamiji's reverie on the [Muslim conquest of Hispania](#) was probably inspired by the sight of the coast of Morrocco across the Strait. The Golconda passed [Europa Point Lighthouse](#) at the southern tip of the Territory of Gibraltar on the Iberian Peninsula. In 1894 the lanterns of the Gibraltar lighthouse had been upgraded to increase brilliance dramatically.

has passed.
GIBRALTAR, July 25.—Orotava, for Sydney, left at 10.0 a.m. Malta, from London for Calcutta, has arrived. Golconda, from Calcutta for London, has passed.
GRAVESEND, July 26.—Itanri for Calcutta has left

The Standard 27 July 1899

The London papers noted that the Golconda passed Gibraltar on 26 July.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Now they were in the turbulent Atlantic Ocean. Peniche, Portugal is a rocky peninsula north of Lisbon. The postcard depicts the Nau dos Corvos landmark near the [Cabo Carvoeiro lighthouse](#).

in Pacific Company's steamer Cuban arrived.
ed Peniche, Thursday.—Golconda, Calcutta for
10 London, passed.
Diamond, Friday, Denmark, South America
Liverpool Mercury 28 July 1899

It was about 300 nautical miles from Gibraltar to Lisbon. The Golconda passed Peniche, Portugal on 27 July. There had been an outbreak of plague in Porto in northern Portugal that June, but quick enforcement to shut down the city for four months contained the disease with only 132 deaths.



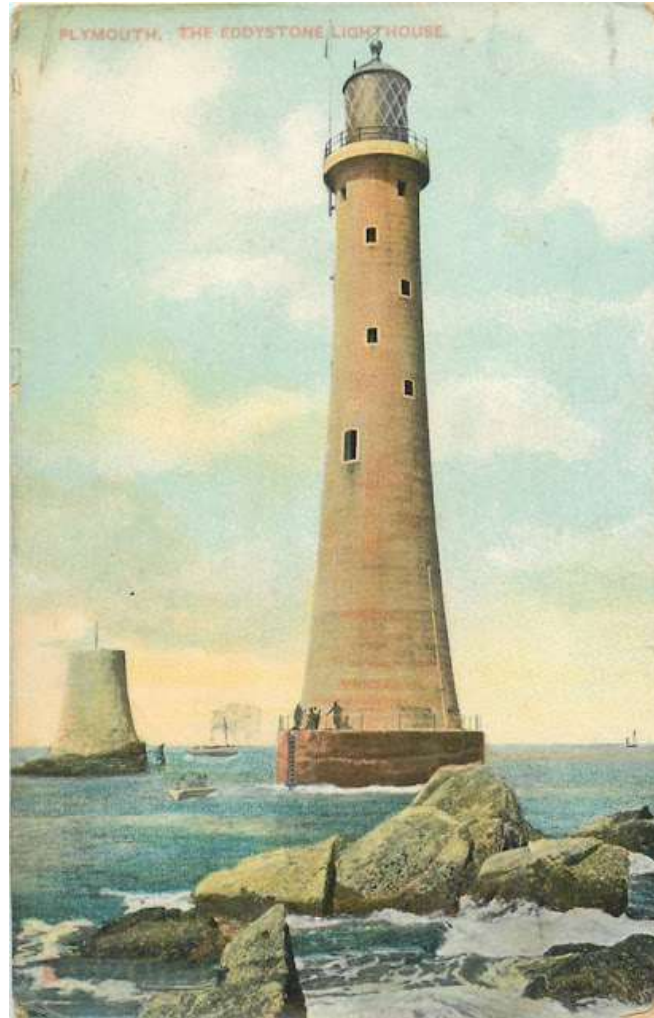
Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

The French island of Ouessant, also called Ushant, off the coast of Bretagne marks the southern entrance to the English Channel. The lighthouse, [Phare du Creac'h](#), stands opposite the lighthouse on Lands End, Cornwall at the northern entrance to the Channel.

USHANT, July 29.—Palmas, from the West Coast of Africa,
Gulf of Taranto, from Brisbane for London, Paraguassu, from
Hamburg for Brazil, and Golconda, from Calcutta for London,
passed.
THE MORNING POST 31 JULY 1899

The Morning Post 31 July 1899

The Golconda passed Ushant on 29 July. Ushant was the last part of France that Napoleon saw as he was taken aboard the HMS Bellerophon to his final exile on the island of St. Helena.



TuckDB

Twelve miles from Plymouth Sound, the vital [Eddystone Lighthouse](#) warns ships of the hazardous Eddystone rocks. The Raphael Tuck postcard shows Douglass's tower, the fourth incarnation of the lighthouse, built in 1882.



TuckDB

An earlier version of the Eddystone lighthouse, Smeaton's Tower, was rebuilt upon an outlook known as Plymouth Hoe overlooking Plymouth Sound. The promenade pier, below, was built in 1884, bombed in 1941, and demolished in 1953.

Venencia s. from Liverpool; Santoburn, from Runcorn.
Plymouth—Argo, from Soderhamn; Juno s. from Odessa
for St. Petersburg; Golconda s. from Calcutta for London.
Portland — Giasol s. from London for Aberdeen.

Liverpool Mercury 1 August 1899

Two newspapers, Liverpool Mercury and Bristol Mercury, stated that the Golconda called at Plymouth on its way to London. Nivedita had written to Jo MacLeod from the Red Sea: "We still have to stop at Naples, Marseille, and Plymouth—after Egypt."



TuckDB

[St. Catherine's Lighthouse](#), called the Pepperpot, on the Isle of Wight had a red sector light and a compressed air siren that sounded every two minutes. This is the oldest location for a lighthouse on the English Channel, first built in 1253.

at 2.0 a.m., and proceeded at 7.10 a.m. for Bremen.
ST. CATHERINES POINT, July 30.—Golconda, from Calcutta for London has passed.
ST. MICHAEL'S, July 30.—Canada, from Havre for West

The Standard 31 July 1899

The Golconda passed St. Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight on 30 July.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

The Golconda continued through the English Channel, around the SE corner of the island to the Thames estuary at the top edge of this chrome postcard.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

This postcard titled Estuary of the Thames quotes Thomas Campbell, addressing Ye Mariners of England: "The spirits of your fathers, Shall start from every wave." In its entirety it was a stirring, catchy poem, with a repeating couplet of "While the battle rages loud and long, And the stormy winds do blow." Poetry played a much larger role in everyday life of the nineteenth century than it does today.

At the outset of their voyage—see the [previous post](#)—Swamiji may have found the moment when the English passengers spontaneously burst into a chorus of "Brittania rule the waves" ludicrously incongruous with Swami Turiyananda's first attack of seasickness, but he loved poetry, and now as they reached their destination, perhaps he thought of some verses of his own.



[TuckDB](#)

Although the *Life of the Swami Vivekananda* and *New Discoveries Vol. 5* state that his ship docked at Tilbury on his return to England in 1899, Swamiji himself had written to Christine Greenstidel with instructions to meet him on his arrival: "By next Sunday we arrive in London, Albert Dock." Then Swamiji corrected his day of arrival to Monday 6 a.m. with a telegram to Sister Christine.

Tilbury, on the north side of the Thames, was opposite Gravesend. Gravesend was the point regularly cited by newspapers to verify the ships that passed on their way to and from London. This Raphael Tuck postcard shows the Thames and Tilbury seen from Gravesend.

at 10.00 a.m. (Mauritius) at 9 a.m. on Sunday.
The British India Company's s. GOLCONDA, from
Calcutta, passed Gravesend yesterday morning for
Royal Albert Dock.

The Times 1 August 1899

The Royal Albert Docks, where the BISN Golconda actually stopped were about 17 miles west from Tilbury. Early in the morning of 31 July they were met by Nivedita's mother, Mary, her sister, May, a Miss Paston, Christine Greenstidel and Mrs. Mary Caroline Funke.



TuckDB

Royal Albert Docks are located where the Woolwich ferry crosses the Thames, shown in this Raphael Tuck postcard. While Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda would find their way to Wimbledon on the south side of the Thames in a day or so, they first continued west into the City accompanied by Christine Greenstidel and Mary Funke on the north side of the river by rail, probably by the Great Eastern Railway to its terminal at Liverpool Street Station.

Brixton, London 31 July to 1 August 1899

Briefly in Brixton



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Early in the morning of 31 July 1899 Swami Vivekananda and his traveling companions, Swami Turiyananda, Sister Nivedita, and Swami Saradananda's brother, Satischandra Chakravarti, arrived in London at Royal Albert Docks near Woolwich. As stated in the previous post, they were met by Nivedita's mother, Mary, her sister, May, a Miss Paston, and two of Swamiji's American disciples, Christine Greenstidel and Mrs. Mary Caroline Funke, who had come all the way from Detroit just to see him again.

Tower Bridge is, of course, an icon of London and in this context the postcard represents entering the City from the Thames. The bridge, however, was about eight miles upriver, as the crow flies, from the Royal Albert Docks. This view is from the south side of the Thames, and Swamiji would have travelled by train into the city on the north side.

This is a court-sized postcard, measuring 4.75 x 3.5 inches. Court cards were published in England from 1894 to 1902—although they were printed in Germany.



[TuckDB](#)

It is possible, though, that Swamiji and his friends might have had a glimpse of St Pauls from the train as they travelled into the city.



[Wikipedia](#)

Not much is known of this Miss Paston who came to greet Swamiji at the docks. There was a Miss May Paston, a ballet dancer, who appeared regularly at the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square during the 1895 and 1896 seasons. Perhaps she had attended Swamiji's London classes. Hopefully she was blessed for her singular response to the news of his arrival in London at the height of summer when everyone else, apparently, was away on holiday. See the [previous post](#) about Swamiji's farewell reception at the close of 1896, attended by 500.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

While Swamiji was on the Golconda, he received a telegram from Sister Christine and Mary Funke when the ship reached Marseille. He wired his reply to the address of 23 Crowhurst Road, Angell Road, Brixton. Presumably this is where the two Americans were staying while they were in London. Brixton is a district in the Borough of Lambeth. This postcard view is from the corner of Gresham Road with Brixton Road looking south towards the [1877 Bon Marche](#) department store.



NLS

It is not quite clear if the two street address of "23 Crowhurst Road, Angell Road, Brixton" indicated the junction of Crowhurst Road with Angell Road marked by a red ? on this 1895 Ordnance Survey map, or did it simply mean that Crowhurst Road was in [Angell Town](#)? This part of Brixton was completely reconstructed into a housing estate in the 1970s. Crowhurst Road no longer exists.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Sister Christine and Mary Funke would have come down Brixton Road to get to their lodgings. This Stengel postcard view looks north towards the church at 364 Brixton Road, just a little south of Crowhurst Road. An electric tram is in the middle of the street. South London Trams were in the process of electrification in 1899. The fare for the tram or omnibus was a ha'penny.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Angell Road branched off Brixton Road at a bus stop known as White Horse Corner, named for the Old White Horse pub behind it in this postcard. If they continued to stay at the address given on their telegram while they were waiting for Swamiji's ship to arrive, then Sister

Christine and Mary Funke would have passed this way often during their stay in Brixton.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

For at least a day, Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda remained in London, presumably staying at the same guest house as Sister Christine and Mary Funke. If so, then they probably travelled via horse-drawn omnibus from White Horse Corner. Since Swamiji had shown Swami Abhedananda many parts of London in 1896, it might be assumed that he would want to show Swami Turiyananda and Satischandra Chakravarti a bit of the city. However, London's coal-smokey air may have triggered a return of Swamiji's asthma. The decision was made to go to Wimbledon, a greener and quieter place. Nivedita wrote:

"The King spent Monday in Town with these friends, meaning to take rooms near these friends. But he turned up here early on Tuesday morning thinking Wimbledon best after all,"

The native press is not responsible, nor is the Congress, according to "Dhiren Pal." The native cares for neither and pays heed to neither, they attend the Congress for fun. They follow a leader so long as that leader satisfies their vanity by praising their school ideals, the ancient Hindus, and by abusing their school hatreds, the Englishmen. Thus did they once follow Keshab Chander Sen and Dayanand Saraswati. But soon casting them off, they veered round the orthodox banner that Srikrishna Prassano Sen and others raised. They were next seen running at the heel of Madame H. P. B.; but she was soon left to find her way back to Europe, unwept and unmourned. Swami Vivekanand suddenly found himself famous one morning, but, to his utter dismay, saw himself nobody the very next. They are now making much of Mrs. Besant, but as certain as the sun rises in the east she will meet the same fate as that of her illustrious predecessors. The history of the religious movements in India, especially of the fate of their leaders since the day of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, is an interesting study. All the leaders found to their cost that their so-called followers were not religiously bent at all, but they were mere wrong-headed patriots in religious guise. Thus leaders after leaders rise and pass away, leaving behind them only firebrands and fanatics, discontent and disaffection. Thus the feeling of unrest is created, fanned, and spread. Thus is it daily growing in volume and sure to end in great disaster. This once brought in cow riots; sure to bring in something more serious in the future. It has undoubtedly retarded all future advancement, put obstacles to all real social, moral, or economic progress, and has become the standing-block to the future regeneration of India. Where all this will end lies only in the womb of futurity. But the thoughtful and the sensible amongst the Indian people should "pause and ponder."

The Guardian 4 August 1899

Swamiji's name appeared in the newspaper soon after he arrived, but the mention had nothing to do with his actual presence in London. The *Guardian* printed a full column titled "Unrest in India: A Loyal Native's Diagnosis." According to one "Dhiren Pal":

The natives "follow a leader so long as that leader satisfies their vanity by praising their school ideals, the ancient Hindus, and abusing their school hatreds, the Englishmen. Thus they did once follow Keshab Chander Sen and Dayanand Saraswati. But soon casting them off, they veered round the orthodox banner that Srikrishna Prasanna Sen and others raised. They were next seen running at the heels of Madame H.P.B.; but she was soon left to find her way back to Europe, unwept and unmourned. Swami Vivekanand suddenly found himself famous one morning, but, to his utter dismay, saw himself nobody the very next. They are now making much of

Mrs. Besant, but as certain as the sun rises in the east she will meet the same fate as her illustrious predecessors."

If Nivedita had read this report, she might have been indignant, but it surely contained no surprises for Swamiji. Such attitudes were already too familiar to him.



Vivekananda Abroad Collection © 2022

Wimbledon Park Station preceded Wimbledon Station where Swamiji, Swami Turiyananda, and Satischandra Chakravarti would come to visit Nivedita's family on Tuesd

Wimbledon, England 1 to 16 August 1899

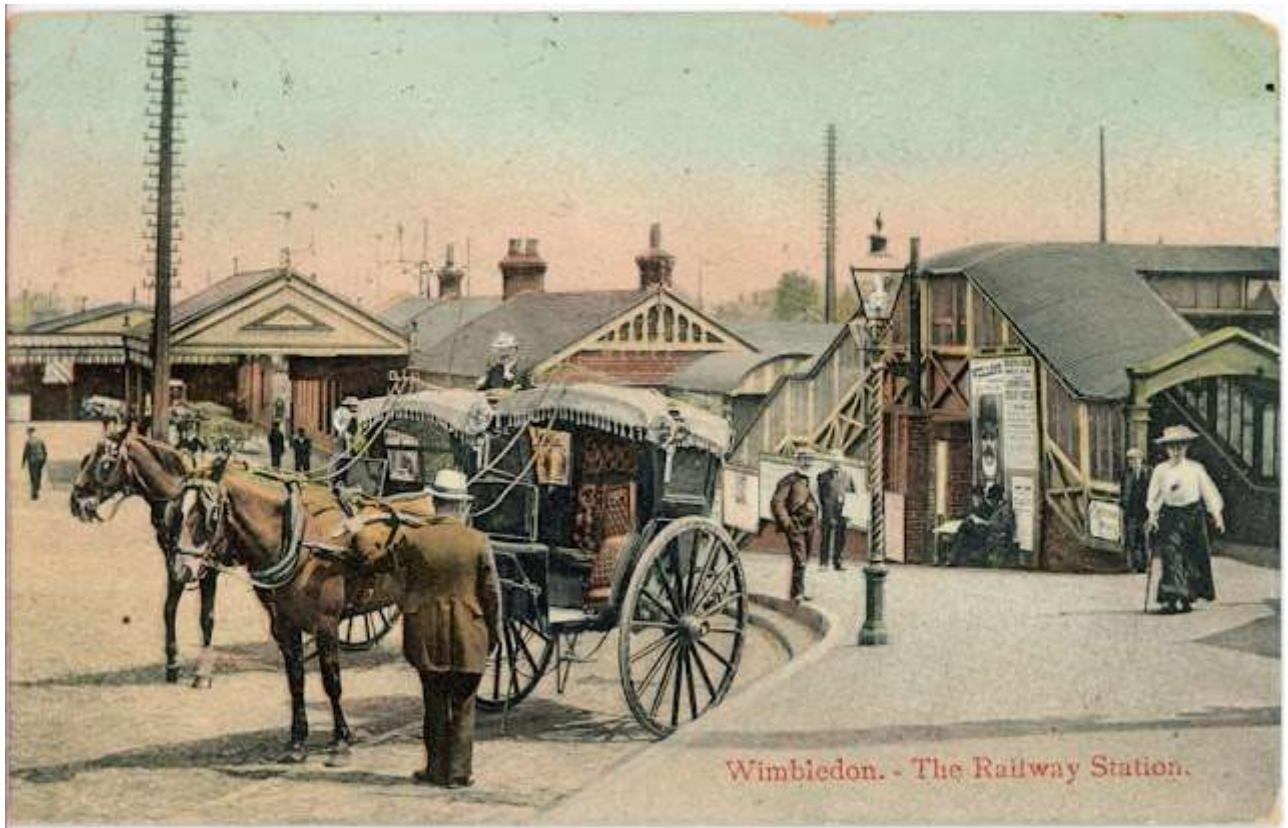
A fortnight in Wimbledon



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When Swami Vivekananda landed in London on 31 July 1899, he, Swami Turiyananda and Satishchandra Chakravati went to stay in the city—probably in Brixton—with Christine Greenstidel and Mary Funke, but this arrangement only lasted a day. Nivedita wrote: "The King spent Monday in Town with these friends, meaning to take rooms near these friends. But he turned up here early on Tuesday morning thinking Wimbledon best after all." May Noble, Nivedita's sister, had probably told Swamiji about the lodging vacancy she found in Wimbledon, and after 24 hours in Brixton, he came to see the rooms for himself.

Satishchandra Chakravarti, Swami Saradananda's brother, stayed with the Noble family for about a week before departing for Boston, where arrangements had been made for him to attend college.



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Swamiji, of course, had commuted to Wimbledon regularly during 1896. Wimbledon Railway Station was a familiar sight.



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From the station Swamiji and his companions went up Hill Road.



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The village library still stands at the corner of Hill Road and St. Mark's Place about a block from the railway station. Two streets after the library, Swamiji would turn right onto Woodside road to get to his new digs, but first, they went on up the hill to the High Street.



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When he was teaching classes at Airlie Lodge in 1896, Swamiji had usually turned left further up Hill Road onto The Ridgway—see the [previous post](#).



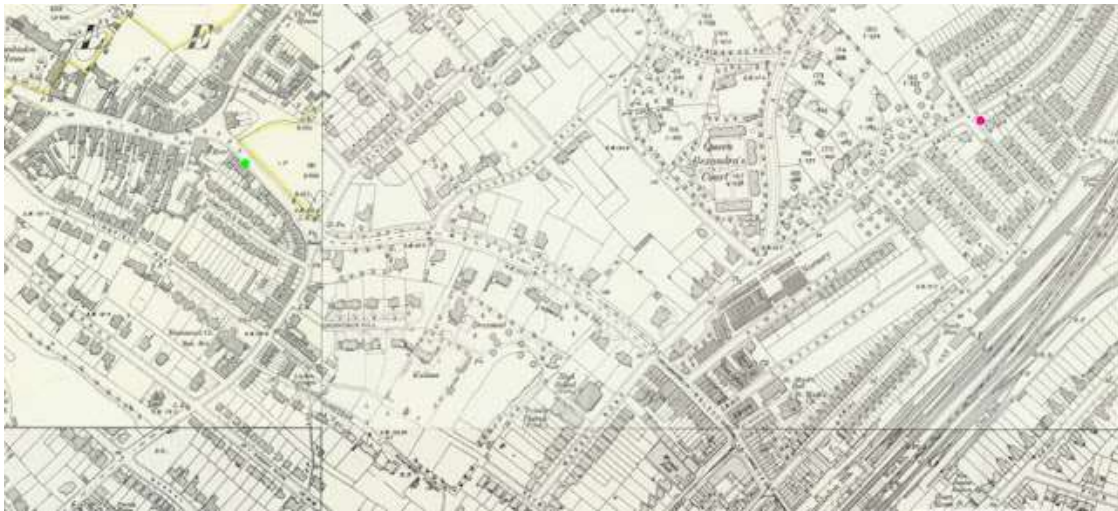
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Sister Nivedita's family lived at 21A High Street, marked by a pink arrow on this postcard. Her mother, Mary Noble, was a widow. Her sister, May (Min) was engaged to be married in September. Her brother Richmond was about was about twenty-five years old.



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Another view of the High Street from a 1950s real photo postcard again shows 21A further down the street on the left.



NLS

On this section from an 1896 Ordnance Survey map, 21A High Street is marked with a green dot on the left, and Swamiji's new lodgings at 35 Woodside are marked with a red dot on the right. The railway station is at the bottom edge of the map.



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The place that May Noble had found for the two swamis was a rooming house called The Lymes, at No. 35 on the corner of Woodside with Springfield road. The building has since been razed and replaced with modern flats. Nivedita noted that the weekly rent was 35/- (one pound and fifteen shillings). As of 31 May 1899, Dame Helena Teresa Kershaw, widow of the recently deceased Chief Justice of Bombay, lived there.

The brick gateposts on the left in the postcard below are consistent in style with those still remaining at Woodside and Lake road.



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While he was in India Swamiji had been diagnosed, according to the medical knowledge of his day, with diabetes. Persons with diabetes are more susceptible to asthma. Swamiji did not do his lungs any favors by smoking, but regrettably the health risks of tobacco use were not well understood then. While he was on board the ship, his breathing had improved during the monsoon and Swamiji thought this was curiously inexplicable. The highly reputed health benefits of sea air are still debated. When he first landed at Royal Albert Docks, Mary Funke observed: “He had grown very slim and looked and acted like a boy.”

Unfortunately Swamiji’s newfound energy soon evaporated, possibly due to the smoggy air of London, polluted as it was with coal smoke. On Sunday 6 August Nivedita wrote to Jo MacLeod:

“The king is in this morning far from well. He went to see Miss Souter yesterday, and came home late—but he panted so hard that it took half an hour from the station to his rooms—a walk of 4 to 5 minutes.”



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A few of Swamiji's London friends did not react sympathetically to news of his breakdown in health. Ethel Forsyth Ashton Jonson wrote: "I do not feel that the highest consciousness can ever demand a diseased body in which to manifest."

Mrs. Ashton Jonson had been one of Swamiji's socially prominent supporters in 1896. Incredibly, she archly attributed her own good health to her personal will-power: "I have demonstrated & firmly believe in the power of manifesting God-consciousness to a greater degree than is generally thought possible as regards disease." She explained her lack of empathy with a boast: "I do not myself employ doctors nor have I any need to use drugs or other remedies."

A cursory glance at "manifestations of the highest consciousness" in Christian history points to the lives of the saints. For the most part, it appears that saints were revered for healing the sick, but when the saints themselves suffered, it was usually by martyrdom, i.e., external, political causes. However, in the late nineteenth century many Protestants and Anglicans were attracted to the joyous, fervent personality of St. Francis of

Assisi through the biography, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, published in 1893 by the French Protestant theologian Paul Sabatier.

Mrs. Ashton Jonson, who moved in avant garde literary circles, ignored the shining example of "highest consciousness" in Sabatier's portrait of St. Francis—a saint whose suffering from chronic illness increased with his holiness. Years before Francis received the stigmata, he suffered from trachoma infection in his eyes, rendering him nearly blind. Francis stoically endured barbaric medical treatments such as cauterizing his forehead which was as ineffective as it was brutal.

In the fourteenth century altar painting above, from the Franciscan Sanctuary of Greccio, St. Francis dabs his weeping eyes.



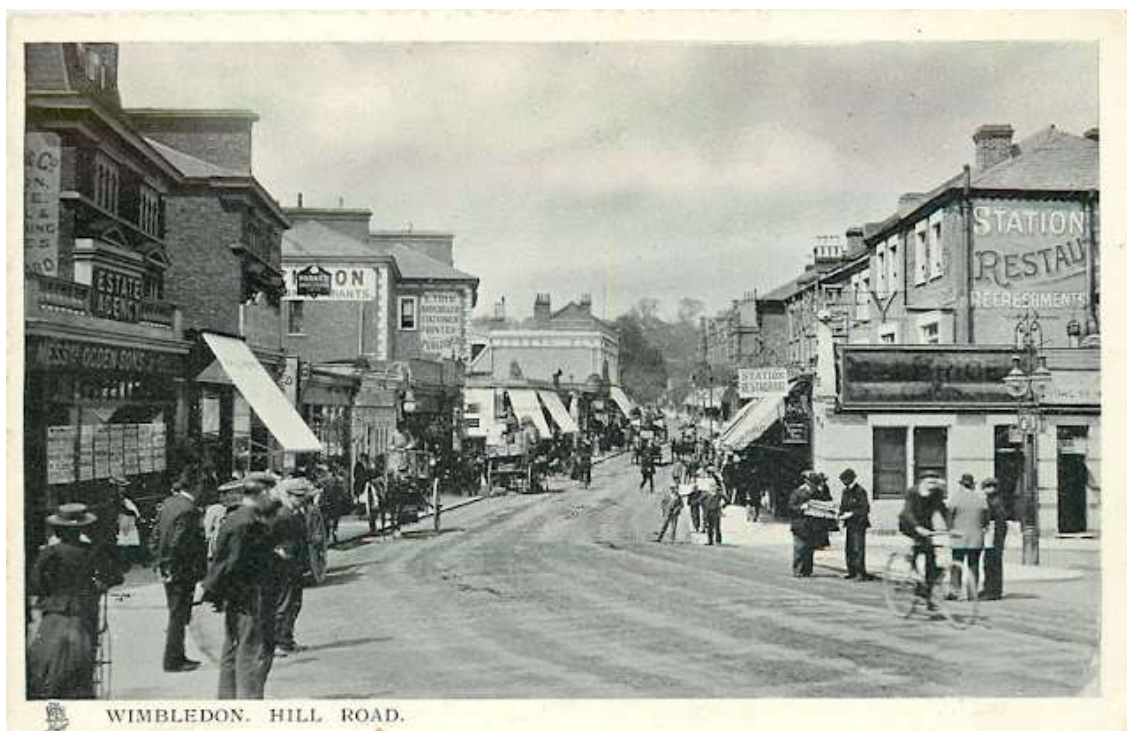
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Swamiji had seen for himself manifestations of states of divine consciousness—far higher than Mrs. Ashton Jonson could comprehend—in his guru [Sri Ramakrishna](#) while he was suffering from throat cancer. Ramakrishna died 16 August 1886, but in his final days his spiritual joy and his detachment from the suffering of his feeble body was profoundly manifested to many onlookers. In spite of this evidence, Swamiji knew there were persons in Calcutta who stubbornly believed that a real yogi should not succumb to illness.

Modern saints such as Ramakrishna and [Ramana Maharshi](#) have transformed our ideas about the role spirituality plays in elevating the health of the mind, despite disease decimating the health of the body.

Swamiji wrote to Marie Halboister from 21A High Street, Wimbledon, saying:

"I fervently wish no misery ever came near anyone; yet it is that alone that gives us an insight into the depths of our lives, does it not? In our moments of anguish, gates barred for ever seem to open and let in many a flood of light."



[TuckDB](#)

On a lighter note, while he was in Wimbledon Swamiji took Nivedita's younger brother Richmond out to eat—exactly where they went is not known, but the sign for the Station Restaurant shown on the right of this Raphael Tuck postcard points to one establishment that was nearby.

Apparently Nivedita had zealously criticized eating beef. Swamiji sympathized with the lad, saying, "So she has been laying down the law, has she!" He took Richmond to a local cafe and ordered a well cooked steak for him. Richmond was confounded, but Swamiji said with amusement, "I am giving you back what your sister has taken from you." Religion was a matter of the heart—not rules and regulations. Not only did Swamiji win Richmond's admiration, the young man gained more respect for his sister's religious choices as well. Following in his grandfather's and father's footsteps, Richmond would be ordained a minister in 1902.