SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT OF COUNCIL ON EDUCATION; BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH MUSEUM: CATALOGUE OF THE COLLECTION OF WORKS OF ART, LENT FOR EXHIBITION IN THE BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH OF THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM, BY SIR RICHARD WALLACE, JUNE 1872

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OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, SOUTH KENSINGTON.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH MUSEUM.

CATALOGUE

OF THE

COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS, PORCELAIN, BRONZES, DECORATIVE FURNITURE, AND OTHER WORKS OF ART,

LENT FOR EXHIBITION

IN THE

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH OF THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM,

BY SIR RICHARD WALLACE, BART.

June 1872.

BY C. C. BLACK, M.A.



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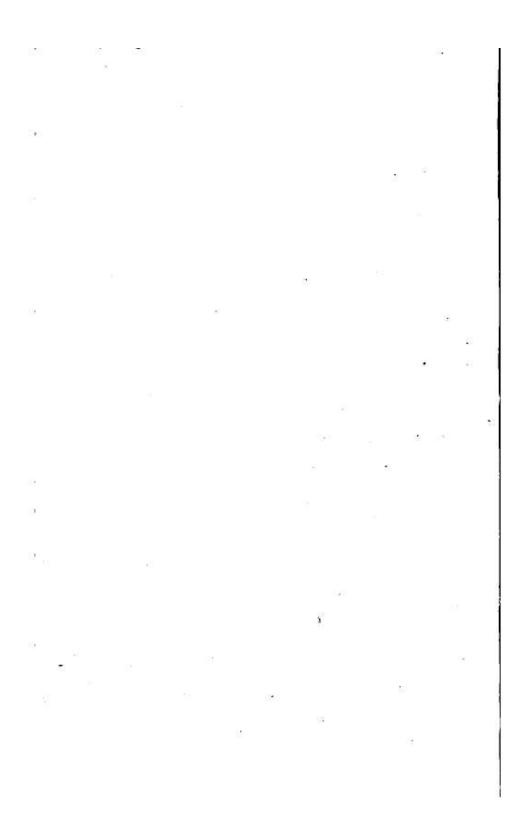


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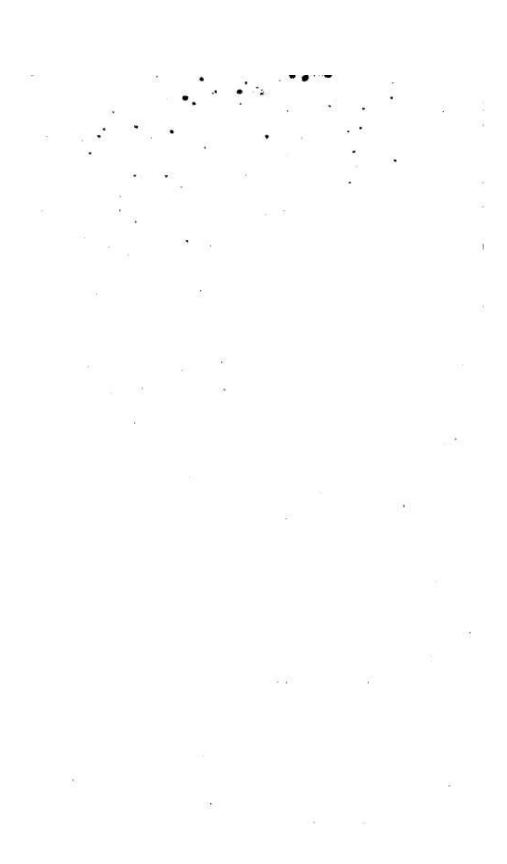
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THE BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH OF THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE LORDS OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL ON EDUCATION.

LORD PRESIDENT, THE MARQUESS OF RIPON, K.G. VICE-PRESIDENT THE RIGHT HON. W. E. FORSTER, M.P.

- I. In tracing the origin of the Branch Museum of Science and Art at Bethnal Green it will be necessary to refer, though briefly, to the early days of the parent institution, at South Kensington, from whence a considerable portion of the new edifice and of its contents have been derived.
- II. The South Kensington Museum stands on 12 acres of land, which were a portion of the estate purchased by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851, out of the surplus proceeds of that undertaking, and were acquired by the Government at a cost of 60,000l.

III. Here, in 1855, a spacious building was constructed, chiefly of iron and wood, under the superintendence of the late Sir William Cubitt, C.E., at a cost of 15,000*l*., intended to receive several miscellaneous collections of a scientific character mainly acquired from the Exhibition of 1851, and which had been temporarily housed in various places.

- IV. In addition to the collections already alluded to, the whole of the Fine Art collections which had been exhibited at Marlborough House since 1852 was also removed thither, and this was supplemented by numerous and valuable loans by Her Majesty the Queen and others.
- V. This building was opened on June 22nd, 1857, as THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM. Although in many respects well suited 29541.

to its purpose, this iron building was avowedly of a temporary character, and from the first it was intended to replace it by buildings of a more architectural character and of more substantial materials. The erection of these permanent buildings was commenced at once, and at the beginning of the year 1865 sufficient progress had been made to render the removal of the iron building necessary.

VI. It appeared to the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education that "this iron building might usefully be divided "into three portions, and that one of these portions might be offered to the proper authorities in the north, east, and south "of London respectively, at a nominal sum, in order to assist in the formation of district museums, security being required for the completion of each portion in a suitable manner, and for its permanent appropriation to public uses." After some correspondence with other Departments of the Government, it was decided that measures should be taken for carrying out this proposal.

VII. On May 6, 1865, a meeting of noblemen and gentlemen interested in the establishment of Suburban or Metropolitan District Museums was held at the South Kensington Museum, the Lord President of the Council, Earl Granville, being in the chair, at which the proposal was fully discussed, and a strong desire was expressed by the representatives of the various suburban districts of the north, east, and south of London to secure a share of this building, the great difficulty felt in each case being the providing of a suitable site. It was decided that after a period of six months each district should be at liberty to put in its claim to a portion of the iron building, and send its application to the Science and Art Department.

VIII. On March 7th in the following year (1866) Mr. now Sir Antonio Brady addressed the following letter to the Lord President of the Council:

Stratford, E., 7 March 1866.

May it please your Lordship, .

WHEN I and others acting with me had the honour of attending the meeting held under your Lordship's presidency, in the Lecture Room of South Kensington Museum, on the 6th May last, on the subject of Local Metropolitan Museums, I put in a plea on behalf of the million artisans inhabiting the densely populated manufacturing and labouring districts in the East of London and I pointed to a site most admirably placed in the very centre of the East-end, which I then hoped might be made available for the proposed museum.

The land in question, containing about 4½ acres, is close to Mile-end Station, one mile from Shoreditch on the Great Eastern Railway; it is near the junction of the Hackney and Cambridge Heath Roads, and is the centre of a network of railways, and omnibuses run in all directions, at twopenny and threepenny fares to and from all parts of London.

The site is about one mile and three quarters from the Bank of England, and two miles from the General Post Office, and taking the proposed site as a centre, within a radius of two miles are comprised a large portion of the following extensive districts, viz.: City of London, Shoreditch, Finsbury, St. Luke's, Old Street, Hoxton, Islington, De Beauvoir Town, Canonbury, Ball's Pond, Kingsland, Dalston, Clapton, Homerton, Hackney, Victoria Park, Old Ford, Bow, Stepney, Limehouse, Poplar (including West India Docks), parts of Rotherhithe and Bermondsey (including Surrey and Commercial Docks), Shadwell, Wapping, St. George's-in-the-East (including London and St. Katharine's Docks), Tower, Whitechapel, and Mile-end.

This circle of two miles radius embraces the N.E. and E. postal districts, part of the N. district, and parts of the E.C. and S.E. districts.

The land in question was bought as a gift to the poor in King James's reign, when this part of London was open fields, and the trustees, with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, have unanimously agreed to sell the land for the purposes of the proposed museum, and to invest the purchase-money, which has been conditionally offered and accepted.

I have now the pleasure of informing your Lordship that, if this site is acceptable to the Government, I am authorised, on the part of the committee acting with me, to guarantee to raise the purchase-money necessary to acquire the fee simple, and to offer this magnificent site to the Government for the purpose of erecting thereon a museum for the East-end of London.

The site is marked red in the accompanying maps, and is more particularly described in the plan hereunto annexed; it will be seen that it occupies a most commanding position. There is no other suitable spot unbuilt on, but if we had the choice of any ground in the Bast-end we should recommend the position of this site in preference to any other.

It is not my purpose to enter on the advantages of local museums. After what passed at the meeting at South Kensington, the value of institutions such as we wish to see established in the East-end is admitted on all hands; but what I desire respectfully to submit to your Lordship is the kind of museum which those acting with me would wish to see erected.

During the past year the subject of local museums has been much ventilated, and as the time has now arrived when it seems a necessity to