

In Memoriam.

**SAMUEL PERKINS PICK,**

**F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.**

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In Mr. Samuel Perkins Pick, who died on 23 May 1919, our Society has lost a member who devoted much attention to its service and to the work of enlarging its influence in directions where its activity might be beneficial. Mr. Pick, born at Kettering, where his father was a veterinary surgeon, in 1859, and educated at Kibworth Grammar School, passed the greater part of his life in Leicester; and, although he earned in his profession a reputation which extended far beyond the town and its neighbourhood, it was in the Leicester district that the greater part of his work was done, while it is with the promotion of architecture and of artistic education in Leicester that his name will be most closely associated.

In 1888 he entered into partnership as an architect with Mr. J. B. Everard, on whose retirement he became the head of the firm of Pick, Everard and Keay. As is well known, the special work of this firm has been connected with public undertakings. Among several contracts of the same kind, it has been responsible for the Leicester portion of the scheme by which the Derwent valley has been utilised for waterworks, including the construction of drainage works and bridges. In planning and designing hospitals, its merits have been widely recognised. In addition to the Borough Mental Hospital at Leicester and the County Mental Hospital at Narborough, the Royal Infirmary and the 5th Northern General Hospital (military) at Leicester, its work is found in the Coppice Hospital at Nottingham, the Royal Hampshire County Hospital at Winchester and the alterations and additions to Addenbrooke's Hospital at Cambridge. Mr. Pick was also the architect of two of the most prominent modern buildings in Leicester, Parr's Bank and the Technical and Art Schools in the Newarke. Among his other designs may be mentioned two churches, St. Philip's, Leicester, and St. Michael and All Angels, Knighton Fields, and the new buildings of the Midland Agricultural and Dairy College at Kingston-on-Soar.

Mr. Pick's work as an architect was marked by a strong individuality, guided by practical common-sense. With him, the first object of a building was to fulfil the purpose for which it was intended: with wastefulness and pretentiousness, and with the sacrifice of plan to a would-be striking elevation, he had no sympathy. Those whose daily work lies in his buildings bear warm testimony to the practical convenience of their arrangement. Mr. B. J. Fletcher, the head-master of the School of Art, calls attention to the qualities of excellent lighting and disposition of rooms

which make it a very easy building to work in and manage, and to the combination of simplicity of plan with provision for the most complex requirements and for future development. At the same time general effect was not overlooked, and the building has a large spaciousness which is not so much a matter of actual size as a result of the architect's individual spirit manifested in his work.

In designing hospitals Mr. Pick spared no pains to consult with the doctors in charge and adapt his plans to their suggestions. He was accustomed to express himself forcibly upon the illogical regulations with which he found himself in conflict. His opinions upon bye-laws with regard to building formed the subject of one of his papers read before the Leicestershire Society of Architects, and more recently he gave expert evidence upon this point before a select committee of the House of Commons. Further, with this keen sense of the practical side of architecture he combined devotion to it as an art. His artistic taste was quickened in early years at Kibworth by his friendship with the Leicester artist, Harry Ward; and later on, at Leicester, he was in close association with Ward and the late John Fulleylove, R.I., whose water-colour paintings are amongst the most charming of recent times. The three made many excursions together in rural parts of England, during which Mr. Pick gained a singularly wide and thorough knowledge of English architecture in districts where it has suffered least from the hand of the restorer. It was difficult to mention any building, for example, in the Cotswolds, East Anglia or Shropshire which he had not visited, and his remembrance of its details, constantly recorded in sketches of great ability, was always accompanied by appreciation of its natural surroundings. The accuracy and picturesqueness of his architectural sketches are well illustrated by a drawing of Rushton Hall, Northants, which, with others, was reproduced in *The Builder*, and by the little pen-and-ink drawings which he contributed to the late George Wise's *Rockingham Castle and the Watsons*.

The qualities which he strove successfully to express in his architectural practice were in no small degree the outcome of the lessons which he learned in these journeys. The local architecture of such districts is the natural fruit of its environment, the work of local hands trained in the manipulation of local material and producing effects of simple dignity and beauty without conscious effect or affectation. The recognition of this fact, with its consequent bearing upon the architectural conditions of our own day, we owe to teachers of genius, chief among them William Morris, who, by their enthusiastic insistence upon fundamental precepts, have done much to redeem art from stagnancy and lift it from the dead level that prevailed during most of the nineteenth century. Much<sup>er</sup> however, remains to be done; and work of this kind cannot be effected without the stimulating presence in large centres of population of men who, by their teaching and practice, keep sound ideals constantly before the public. Mr. Pick devoted his influence

in Leicester to this end. Deriving continual suggestions from the old buildings which he studied with strong appreciation, he avoided the merely imitative and artificial conception of architecture. He learned from the past to work in the present, and saw clearly that, for purposes of modern expression, a mere copy of the terms of a bygone language is inadequate. Thus, for the best and most scholarly work of the Gothic revival and for those architects who impressed their individuality upon the mediaeval forms they used he had a profound respect, and the present writer remembers a warm tribute which he paid in conversation to the most remarkable of them all; but he realised none the less that, with the rank and file, the Gothic revival was a false start and led nowhere, and that it was responsible for much poor and unprogressive work on wrong principles. He also combated the superstition that English architecture ceased at the end of the middle ages and the neglect of its later phases. Of the architecture and craftsmanship of the later Stewart and the Georgian periods he was an accomplished student and admirer. His bank in Leicester, which shows his powers of design at their best, bears testimony to his assimilation of developed Renaissance architecture and to his power of expressing its principles in terms of his own. This originality of accent marks all he did. A striking instance, in a quite different style, is the front of the Marquis Wellington inn in London Road, an object-lesson in the resourceful invention which plays freely with its models and creates from them something new.

His services to the cause of artistic craftsmanship in its relation to architecture cannot be over-rated. Here, again, the close acquaintance with the history of such work which he gained in his favourite sketching-grounds stimulated his zeal for its revival. His recognition of beauties of detail and ornament led him to make an intimate study of one forgotten branch of art, the results of which can be seen in Leicestershire and the neighbouring counties. A paper upon slate head-stones, with their imaginative ornament and fine lettering, which he read before the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, was printed several years ago with illustrations contrasting them with the melancholy monotony of cemetery art of more recent days. This subject remained an abiding passion with him; and only last year he lectured upon it to our Society, at a time when the growing interest in War memorials gave special point to his discourse. Such study was more to him than an interesting excursion into the past: it had its practical application to modern times. Craftsmanship in the historic spirit, freed from the bonds which debase art into a branch of trade, won his support and encouragement. Few things can have given him more satisfaction than the activity of the Art Schools which he designed in Leicester in educating artist-craftsmen of first-rate quality, whose names are known to all lovers of applied art.

Mr. Pick's habitual study of bygone architecture gave him sympathy with the objects of the Leicestershire Archaeological

Society. For what is rather loosely known as 'archaeology,' a science whose votaries are occasionally prone to revere antiquities because they are old rather than for any other reason, he had little time or taste: his energies, as has been said, were concentrated upon applying all that the past could give by way of pattern and suggestion to the vital needs of our own day. How skilfully, however, he could analyse and tell the history of an ancient building may be seen in the notes which he contributed to the Society's Leicester excursion in 1916. Moreover, the sentiment which enabled him to read the spirit of such buildings and learn its lessons taught him the futility and mischief of wanton restoration, with its inevitable consequence in the obliteration of historic landmarks. An age which spends its time in restoring ancient fabrics to their 'original condition,' in re-carving old capitals, removing old furniture, and eking out perished portions by facsimiles of mediaeval work, destroys what should be its own sources of inspiration and has nothing itself to leave to the future. Mr. Pick was vigilant in the by no means grateful task of calling attention to injudicious projects of this kind. He was for many years a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and did valuable service on the committee of our own Society in promoting its influence for good where expostulation or protest was needful. His practical knowledge of architecture was always at the service of the committee, and by none of the societies to which he belonged will he be more seriously missed.

He was more than once president of the Leicestershire Society of Architects, and in 1905 was president of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society. The reputation which he enjoyed outside Leicester gained him the honour of serving for a time as a vice-president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, of which he was a Fellow. In 1918, about a year before his death, he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Young architects found in Mr. Pick a friend who was ready to give helpful advice, criticism and sympathy. He was keen to detect signs of promise and to encourage their development, and, never ceasing to be a learner himself, he kept easily in touch with all who showed a genuine desire to learn. His last activities were spent in the congenial work of discovering architectural talent and endeavouring to put it to the best uses. In January 1919 he was nominated by the Royal Institute of British Architects to do honorary work upon the Civilian Advisory Board at Cologne. During his four weeks of work there, he interviewed and gave advice to some two thousand officers awaiting demobilisation, for the most part architects and architectural students whose careers had been interrupted by the war. Although he enjoyed the task, it was a great strain upon his health, which had not thoroughly thrown off the effects of an illness in the previous November; and long motor-drives from place to place in bitterly cold weather tried him severely. He arrived home in a state of physical pain and exhaustion from

which he never recovered, and died thirteen weeks later.

There are many who can speak much more intimately of Mr. Pick than the present writer, but it is hoped that this summary of his life and work will at any rate recall to them those points in his character which gained him their regard. His personal candour and sincerity, his single-minded devotion to his art, his jealousy for its honour, and his liberal conception of its scope, were obvious to all who knew him. To his smallest as well as to large undertakings he gave the same pains and attention: whether he was engaged in designing a large building or a mural tablet, he was bent upon doing his best, and it may be said in passing that there are few more satisfactory modern examples of the second kind than the tablets which he designed for the Watson chapel in Rockingham church. At the meeting of our Society, a few days after his death, Major Freer briefly expressed the affection and esteem in which he was held by his friends. Our loss is great, and we can only trust that in the future the ideals which he strove to impress upon us as inseparably connected with our work will be remembered and kept in view by the Society as a whole.

In 1882 Mr. Pick was married at Rushton church to Miss Barbara Beadman, his cousin, who survives him and by whom he leaves a son and daughter. The writer is indebted to Mrs. Pick for several details in this account of her husband's career, and Mr. S. H. Skillington and Mr. William Keay have also afforded much kind help.

A.H.T.

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