

## THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION IN GLASGOW

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Translated by Maria Artamonova

*NB Words printed in English in the original are italicised.*

‘What, another international exhibition?’ asks the reader, still impressed by last summer’s Paris Exhibition, its scale, diversity and abundance of all the departments. What new things are there to display that haven’t already been displayed in Paris?

However, industrial life moves fast and must always develop, evolve and seek innovation: it cannot repeat itself, for that will immediately cause a depression. This is well-known to our fair lady readers, who, as they perambulate the department stores, inquire first and foremost for novelties and methodically reject anything that comes even close to last year’s. No dear or pretty thing that was so much admired a year ago will find any demand, whereas the overstated latest fashions will be swept up as a novelty.

The past year did not bring about a revolution in the technology of any of the industries, but the steps forward are visible in each of them. This forward movement was especially prominent after the Paris Exhibition and mostly due to it, since it has enabled technologists from all over the world to test themselves and to learn a lot from one another.

The Paris Fair may have furnished a pretext for Glasgow to choose the exhibition format as one of the main festivities in the celebration of the multi-centenary anniversary of its famous University. Second-rate industrial centres with no aspirations for world dominance can only stage international exhibitions after the end of world events. Some of the valuable and grand exhibits which have awed and astonished the public and which have required years to produce – such special cases are moved from the world exhibition to an international one to form the core which attracts masses of viewers and creates the material success of an exhibition. And the less prominent exhibits, the state-of-the-art technologies, brought to an international exhibition from all over the globe, shall attract the attention of factory-owners, entrepreneurs, engineers and labourers who will observe them and learn a lesson of such import that it explains why industrial cities spare no expenses in their eagerness to snatch the opportunity of staging an international exhibition.

Such an exhibition is of special interest for England. This was the first country to organise a World Exhibition (London, 1851); but after staging the third one in London in 1862 (after Paris 1855), it decided not to organise any more. As a practical trading country, England clearly saw that the only successful exhibitions are those which combine the scientific and technical elements with the marketplace and entertainment ones, which means the English will always lag behind the French. But after refusing to host any more global exhibitions, England did not at all swear off hosting some international ones every now and then in one of its metropolitan or colonial cities. England in itself is, as it were, a huge international power; its colonies are scattered all over the world, they are numerous and as diverse in population as they are in their produce. Which is why, for political and economic reasons, England periodically needs to rally her colonies together, which can be accomplished in the most emphatic fashion with an exhibition. An exhibition can serve to demonstrate England’s power, the superiority of its industrialists over foreign ones, and the importance of the colonies’ local ties to their metropolis; exhibitions also provide an occasion for the

colonies to get to know one another, to reinforce and improve their commercial relations. The economic soil is especially conducive to close-knit and enduring political affinity.

All of these political considerations and the economic profit from holding an exhibition after Paris, together with the triumph of celebrating the enlightening activities of Glasgow University have brought about the Scottish exhibition.

Scotland is one of the most picturesque and characterful corners of Europe, which still sees regrettably few visitors from the European mainland, although its wild beauty, extolled by many a famous bard, is familiar to us all since childhood. Who has not revelled in Walter Scott's novels or shared in the hardships of his characters, the Scottish Highlanders? Scotland offers one of the most striking examples of the triumph of the human genius over nature. Not a hundred years ago it was still considered one of the most savage, uncouth and uncultivated lands in the entire Europe, and its people were among the poorest, worst educated and most superstitious. The highland population was roguish, their interests gripped by the squabbles between individual tribes and the endless infighting. But once the population had embraced peaceful life, its economic prosperity began to improve in leaps and bounds. But alas, just like in Ireland, India or Africa – as everywhere where the English foster a civilisation which has as its goal comfort rather than spiritual needs, the gains of culture and progress were only enjoyed by the minority, the rich landlords who immediately became anglicised. All of these blessings of civilisation: the fine cities, the wonderfully equipped harbours, the railway construction, the highways laid through places which had only been accessible to wild deer before, the beech woods planted on the hitherto desolate forest peaks, and the opulent castles in every picturesque spot – all of this was bought for a dear price of concentrating the land ownership in the hands of a handful of lords, bought by the tears of many thousands of families driven away from lands where their forefathers had lived, and by providing the rest of the population with miserable land plots only sufficient for meagre sustenance.

Scotland, with its rocks, forests, black lakes, waterfalls and endless fiords cutting deep into its shoreline, is very similar to its vis-a-vis, Norway. Similar features can be found in its population, equally honest, hard-working, devoted to its motherland and freedom-loving. The peoples of Northern Europe always attract one by the clear gaze of their deep thoughtful eyes, full of quiet sorrow, which is remarkably uniform in our Finns as well as in Swedes, Norwegians, and Scots. What does this gaze convey – the immobility and silence of the Northern landscapes with their clear and transparent air, or an unspoken reproach from these honest tribes, proud of their labours and their spiritual purity, to us, the carriers of modern civilisations with its triumph of Baal?

The Glasgow Exhibition opened on 1 May (18 April). The festivities were attended by the Duke and Duchess of Fife. The Duke is a native of Scotland, and that is why the Glaswegians considered it a special favour that the Fife couple was selected out of the entire Royal family to represent the King and the Queen. Europe, still mindful of its medieval heritage, still likes to stage striking theatrical pageants on every festive occasion. This was the kind of procession that Glasgow organised; it was attended by officials, City Council members, the Mayor, the Scottish Lords – all wearing their finery, amongst which the robes of the Councillors (long gowns with ermine capes) were especially eye-catching. The pageant participants proceeded to the railway station to greet the Duke and Duchess of Fife; as soon as the Duchess alighted from the train carriage, she was met by a little girl who presented her with a huge bouquet of flowers. Then everyone got into ceremonial carriages drawn by horses harnessed in single file, and proceeded along decorated streets towards the exhibition, escorted by the famous *Scotch Grey*, the Scottish Hussar regiment. On this day, all the shops and stores were closed, and crowds of people poured out along the ceremonial route, like a wide ribbon

encircling the rows of volunteers and schoolboys who formed the so-called *boys brigade* made up of several schools, with every pupil wearing a cap and a white belt and carrying a gun. Both the volunteers and the schoolboys have their own orchestras so that music was blaring uninterrupted along the entire route.

The exhibition opening ceremony itself was held in a large round formal hall and consisted of an address being read out and then its text being presented to the Duchess in a golden casket 'as a memento', the Duke's responding speech and finally the Duke declaring the exhibition open on behalf of the King. Everyone arose and followed the Ducal couple to the art department, stopping before a locked door. A key was brought to the Duchess on a gold cushion, and she unlocked the door with her own hands; the door opens and the exhibition is effectively open! The crowd of invitees disperses to admire its riches, while the Duke, the Duchess and the ceremony participants return to their carriages, have a ceremonial tour of the exhibition and proceed to the City Hall for a formal banquet.

At three o'clock, the entrance doors were flung open for the ordinary mortals, and the Glaswegians poured in en masse. On the very first day, the number of visitors reached the astronomical figure of 94,500 persons, which is 1/10 of the overall number of attendees of our Nizhny Novgorod exhibition.

The Glasgow Exhibition turned out to be very beautiful and as far as one can rely on the first impression, very informative. The tall monumental buildings in a restrained, not fairground style, a mass of greenery, a river winding through the entire exhibition give it an air of both respectability and vivacity (see image on p. 379). Nearly all the countries are taking part in the exhibition; the only absentees are England's two main trading rivals, Germany and the United States of N.A. It looks like their creative exhibitor energies were exhausted by the Paris Exhibition, the English remark caustically. The best-represented countries are Russia and France, the only states to participate officially, followed by Austria, Denmark, Japan, Persia, Morocco. The represented colonies include Canada, Queensland, Australia and less prominently, India, Ceylon, Rhodesia.

The Russian department has been designed with a completeness unheard of at our second-rate exhibitions. Suffice it to say that we have specially constructed three whole pavilions to house the exhibits in three major departments: agricultural produce and foodstuffs, mining, and forestry; only the industrial products were meant to be housed in the pavilion erected by the English exhibition administration. The pavilions were designed by the architect Schechtel and made of Russian materials and entirely built by Russian workers who have been living in Glasgow since January. We reproduce the sketch of two out of our three pavilions, the mining and the forestry (see image on this page), so the readers can see for themselves how imaginatively they are arranged. Built in the old Northern Russian style, the pavilions are not a copy of any of our ancient monuments but offer a skilful and artistic combination of the characteristic features of the most remarkable specimens. The main object of Russia's involvement in the Glasgow Exhibition is the development of trade ties between Russia and Great Britain; which is why the list of products admissible to the exhibition mainly included the products we export to England: for perishable produce such as meat, animals, butter, fruits it was decided to offer tasting opportunities throughout the exhibition. To this end, a restaurant was established which would serve exclusively the produce of the exhibitors, and to keep these products perpetually fresh, it was decided to organise continuous shipment by refrigerated steamers. The General Commissioner I.I. Ladyzhensky had liaised with a steamer company for this purpose.

However, it takes more than one step to get from the idea to the reality. The pavilions have been constructed, but the Russian department was unable to open at the same time as the rest because it was still empty: 50-60 crates which were only just being unpacked is all that a curious visitor will see when he manages to enter the Russian pavilions. But even when the late exhibits arrive, the department is unlikely to be complete, and in any case, it will fail to rise to the expectations. This can already be seen from the fact that the other day, one of the exhibition commissioners went to Moscow in order to plead with our prominent merchants to take part. But what is the problem? It is customary in such cases to look for someone to blame, and the people in the know are saying different things. Some believe that our entire exhibition system is to blame here. Foreign exhibitions do not yet serve for us as a vehicle for promoting exports; the exhibitor only takes part so that he can get a medal, not in order to facilitate competition with foreign products on foreign markets but to compete with his own compatriots on the internal Russian market. If they go to the exhibition on their own accord, it is solely to keep an eye on the expertise rather than to study the conditions of foreign markets and the modus operandi of foreign exporters. Our exhibition administration has the same attitude to the exhibition; once it is completed its task is over. At best, what follows is a report that no-one reads. In any case, no-one even considers taking steps to eliminate the disadvantages of our exports which were so evident at the exhibition. The foreign exhibition closes, and everything it brings to light is consigned to oblivion. In these conditions, who would want to go to Glasgow after Paris, where all the best sides got their medals? Moreover, they don't even issue medals in Glasgow – all they give out is certificates.

Of the other departments, the Canadian and Japanese ones are very good.

The Paris exhibition was a triumph of electricity, which powerfully highlighted its potential and its seemingly infinite future. But not a year has passed and at the Glasgow Exhibition, the greatest progress and success is demonstrated by the rivals of electricity: when it comes to lighting, it is condensed gas, and when it comes to locomotion, liquid air is becoming more and more prominent.