

A few years ago I found the following document whilst browsing through some old papers that someone had thrown out for the rubbish. I have no idea as to the age of the document. I have cleaned up the original document, but have left it virtually intact. The quality of the photographs are not too good due to the fact that they are scans of scans of scans - but they are viewable

*My thanks goes to the original authoress (Heather Thom) for all the work she put into making up the original document and hope that she will forgive my publication of it.
As I do not know who she is or where she is I cannot contact her to get her permission*

The only difference from the original is the placing of the photographs and a couple of small grammatical changes, otherwise it is exactly as the original including the dedication and acknowledgements.

FOR
GILLIAN, CAROLIN AND HAZEL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In gathering information about the history of the Peebles Hydro I have drawn upon the recollections of many people, some of whose memories date back as far as July 1905. In particular I wish to thank Mr. Charles Grant, Mrs. Moira Guild, Mrs. Laiolo and Miss Jean Massey. Material quoted from letters is acknowledged in the text. Information about hydropathics comes from *The Spas of England* by P.J. Neville Havins and *The Last World of the Spas* by Joseph Wechsberg. I have quoted from Brenda McBryde's excellent book *A Nurse's War*. I am grateful to Mr. Alistair Goldsmith of Strathclyde University, to Mr. Ralph Hyde of the Guildhall Library, London, to Mr. Douglas Lynd, M.B.E. of the Scottish Lawn Tennis Association and to Major General John Matheson, O.B.E F.R.C.S. My thanks also go to Mrs. Pauline Pemberton, Mr. Ian Pemberton and Mr. Pieter van Dijk for their help. Lastly I would like to thank my husband Graeme for all his encouragement.

A building does not need to be an ancient castle or a royal palace to have an interesting history. A building's story can be all the more fascinating if it is familiar. I hope that visitors to the Peebles Hydro will enjoy finding a new significance in the cliché "if these walls could speak". These walls now have the chance to do just that.

THE STORY OF PEEBLES HYDRO

Everyone calls it the Peebles Hydro but its full name is the "Peebles Hotel Hydropathic". It is in this rather curious name that the clue to its origins may be found. "Hydropathic" was a nineteenth century word for an establishment where people went to take a water cure. The origins of water cures go back further than the nineteenth century. The earliest record of a hydropathic cure in Britain may be traced back to a legend concerning the Celtic prince Bladud, son of King Hudibras.

Bladud contracted leprosy and, banished from court, earned his living as a swineherd. The pigs also had the disease, but one day the pigs went into the warm muddy pools in the valley and emerged cured. Bladud did likewise, and was also cured. He returned to his father's court, had the pools made into a spa and dedicated it to the Celtic goddess Sul. Later when the Romans arrived they named the place "Aquae Sulis" and they built baths round the hot springs. We know the town today as Bath. Aquae Sulis became famous in the Roman empire and visitors came from as far away as Gaul and Franconia to take the cure.

During the Medieval period holy wells and springs were to be found all over the country. They were usually dedicated to a saint, and were often the subject of various rituals. It seems likely that these were originally pagan Celtic rituals, which had been cloaked in Christianity to make them acceptable. The curative properties were then considered to derive from a particular Christian saint. A few of these wells became famous, as their waters were thought to have considerable medicinal value.

After the Reformation numerous springs with healing properties were discovered: at Harrogate in 1571, Tunbridge in 1606 and Epsom in 1618 to mention a few. In 1683 on the site of the famous London theatre Thomas Sadler discovered what came to be known as "Sadler's Wells". Royal patronage began to increase public awareness of water cures. Queen Henrietta Maria visited Tunbridge Wells in 1630, as did Charles II in 1665. James VII and II with his daughter Princess (later Queen) Anne took the waters there. Gradually the water cure became famous and fashionable. And, in the eighteenth century, for the famous and fashionable, taking the waters became a must, socially, if not medically.

Daniel Defoe, Garrick, Handel, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Richardson, Samuel Johnson, Boswell, Pope, Fanny Burney, Sheridan, Thomas Gainsborough, Sarah Siddons, Jane Austen - they all visited spas to take the waters. Beautiful houses were built to accommodate visitors and elaborate programmes of social events were organised, including dancing, music, drama, horse racing, gambling and promenading along specially planted avenues of trees.

Nor was Britain alone in this development. On the continent there was a similar growth in spa towns: Homberg, Baden Baden, Karlsbad and Aix-les-Bains were also becoming famous. The hydropathic movement was beginning in earnest.

There are several reasons for the demand for hydropathic establishments. One was doubtless the need for well-to-do city dwellers to escape from the smoke and pollution of the industrial revolution and enjoy the benefits of fresh air. As nineteenth century factories belched forth, black smoke virtually non-stop, city dwellers began for the first time to appreciate "the countryside". Indirectly, too, the Romantic movement had contributed. Poets like Wordsworth and Scott had made the middle classes aware of the beauty of nature and wild scenery.

Another factor must have been increased wealth. Although the industrial revolution brought many evils it made the middle classes richer. Coupled with a rise in the population, the result was that there were more people who could afford a holiday.

The development of the railways during the nineteenth century was of vital importance: it provided transport for the growing numbers of people to travel all over Britain at reasonable prices. To be situated close to a railway line was a very good thing for a hotel.

Lastly mention should be made of an increasing interest in and knowledge of medical science. Reading Victorian advertising material and exhibition catalogues a striking feature emerges: the Victorians had a great respect for anything scientific. The description "scientific" or an endorsement by a doctor of medicine seems to have sold anything to the Victorians, gramophones, chocolate, soap or snuff. If hydropathic cures had a sound "scientific" basis (whatever that might be), they must be good, and thoroughly worthwhile.

It was in 1842 that Dr. James Wilson and Dr. James Manby Gully set up the first British "hotel hydropathic" in Malvern. Both men had conventional medical training but both felt that much of the treatment offered to patients was positively harmful. Wilson had spent several months in Silesia at the establishment of the Austrian born Vincenz Priestnitz, a pioneer of the water cure. The new treatment proved to be very successful, not only with local people, but with the growing number of patients who came to Malvern specially for hydropathy. The word "hydropathic" first occurs in the English language in April of the year 1843 in Tait's Magazine: "When the cold-water cure was first heard of in this Country, we prophesied ... that there would forthwith be numerous Hydropathic Establishments..." These words were indeed prophetic.

The Peebles Hydro was one of many built in Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century. There were others not far away, at Moffat, Melrose and in Edinburgh. Originally the plan was to build a hydro round a spring at Innerleithen, but the plan was changed and a site in Peebles was chosen. Peebles was a happy choice for several reasons. It was close to the stations of not one, but two railway companies. Peebles West station was owned by the Caledonian and Peebles East by the London and North Eastern Railway Company, so the Hydro was accessible to visitors from all over Britain. The

Hydro was located in Scott country and this was a valuable asset at a time when the works of Sir Walter Scott were read, (and presumably loved), by all educated people. Special tours of Scott country were organised from the Hydro. The magnificent scenery must have attracted many visitors then as now. The site on the side of "Venlaw" is superb with the view across Peebles to the hills and sky, beyond. The site is on the southern slope of the hill so that the lawn and grounds always benefit from maximum light and sun. In this connection it is interesting to make a comparison with the old Edinburgh Hydropathic, now part of Napier College, built in 1880, and badly sited on the north side of a hill. Thanks to the writings of Siegfried Sassoon it has found a place in English literature as a building of darkness and gloom, and viewing it even today it is understandable.

The Peebles Hydropathic Company began building in 1878. The foundation stone was laid by Dr. William Chambers of Glenormiston, chairman of the directors. Work was completed early in 1881 at a cost of over £70,000. The architect was John Starforth (1828-1898), a pupil of David Bryce. Starforth, of 37 York Place, Edinburgh, designed a number of churches in the capital including one in 1874, which has been described as "all rather French". The style of the Hydro was French Renaissance and though it is perhaps a little heavy, its massive form is certainly impressive. The material used was the famous red "comcockle" sandstone from Dumfriesshire, and if visitors care to inspect the stonework at the back of the present hotel they will be able to identify sections of the original structure. The building, on five floors, had accommodation for two hundred guests, the first of whom began to arrive in 1881.

The guests were offered a wide choice of water cures and over the years more were added according to the latest "scientific" theories, or fads or fashion. The choice, however, was not left to the whim of the visitor or patient. This matter was in the hands of the doctor in charge of the medical department, Professor Petsky, who had a staff of trained assistants. He might prescribe any of the following baths: ***Russian, Turkish, peat, aromatic, medicated, sulphur, pine extract, eucalyptus, rain, spray, vapour, brine or nauheim.***

But what were these baths with their mysterious, even intimidating names?

Brine baths were made with specially prepared "*Droitwich*" brine crystals. They were given either in an ordinary bath or in what was known as a surge bath. A surge bath rocked "***like a cradle only in the opposite diameter***, and from its structure admits of much splashing, imitating the action of the surf in sea bathing." The ***Nauheim*** baths consisted of administering "a graduated course of effervescing baths", and was devised by the Drs. Schott of Nauheim for patients with heart conditions.

Then there was a range of douches: the Aix-fes-Bains, the Scotch, the Needle and the Vichy. (In the latter the patient lay down and was sprayed from above by numerous jets of water)

The doctor might prescribe one of several poultices or packs: The **mustard pack**, The **chili pack**, **Pistany** radio active mud pack, The **liver pack** or The **Fango**. The "**Fango di Battaglia**" or volcanic mud bath was prescribed in cases of gout, rheumatism and sciatica. Fango was a soft greyish brown substance with the texture of butter. It was odourless and could be washed off easily. It was heated to a temperature of 112'-115° F then applied to the body. It cooled extremely slowly, losing only about one degree in the first hour.

Baths, showers and poultices were not the only forms of treatment prescribed. The Peebles Hydro also boasted a fully equipped electro-therapeutic department, with "all the best Continental electric instruments and apparatus." In fact there was a separate circuit for the exclusive use of the medical department; the electricity was actually generated at the Hydro itself. Electrical treatments included the high frequency (the latest improvements of the former D'Arsonval), Dr. Alimoda's methods, (galvanism, faradism, leucodescent light), combined currents, electric light baths, static electricity, sinusoidal currents, radiant heat, Rontgen rays, electric vibration massage, the chromolight cure, ultra short waves, ultra violet rays, infra red rays and the Schnee 4-cell bath. This latter was a German invention which allowed the current to be applied in fifty different ways. Ionic medication, as practiced by Professor Leduc of Nantes, was also available.

The electric light bath at the Peebles Hydro was the first one in use in Britain. The apparatus was "like an octagon-shaped sheep-pen with a lid on it, standing in the centre of a large well ventilated apartment, lined throughout with plate glass mirrors". There was a revolving stool inside the cabinet so that the patient could sit, unclothed, with only his head visible through the snugly fitting hole in the lid. When the lights in the cabinet were switched on the patient experienced a pleasant sensation of increasing warmth like "the strongest concentration of sunlight." The patient would then perspire in a temperature of about 90°, and after half an hour would emerge, happy at the thought that harmful bacteria had been destroyed. A spray bath completed the treatment.

One visitor, Mrs. George Augustus Sala described "a strange looking apparatus, something like a huge turtle, ornamented with fan lantern bull's eyes and the whole machine revolving midway between ceiling and floor." Rays from the bull's eyes of various temperatures and colours were applied to different parts of the body affected by disease. "This comical looking electric merry-go-round," she reported, had "beneficial effects on my finger and arms swollen by rheumatism."

The Peebles Hydro also had a Dowsing radiant heat bath, invented by Mr. H. G. Dowsing, C.E. It seems that previous methods of producing hot dry air had resulted in air pollution from gas appliances, but the new system was clean, using electricity to heat the air. Radiant heat from lamps was reflected on to the patient by means of nickel-plated reflectors. After a few minutes a temperature of 300° F was registered and for local treatments it could go as

high as 400° F. Apparently such intense heat was possible because the patient's skin was very dry. Such a radiant heat bath would last about forty minutes and was helpful to patients with gout, rheumatism and arthritis.

Massage was available for both ladies and gentlemen. The Hydro employed a blind masseuse in accordance with "the well known fact that the blind apply massage with great delicacy." Vibration-massage, using the Barker electric vibrator, was available to patients with lumbago and sciatica.

To help the obese, the doctor might prescribe the **Oertel** or **Terrain** cure. Introduced by Professor Oertel of Munich in 1885 it claimed to help feeble circulation. The cure included diet with a restriction on fluid intake and frequent hot air or electric light baths. Gradually outdoor exercise was introduced, and slowly increased until the patient was able to climb hills. Visits to the Peebles Hydro "sun" bath would be included.

The sun and air bath at the Peebles Hydro was probably the first in Britain. It stood at the back of the Hydro, just below Glenfield Farm Road. The area of ground was divided into two sections to accommodate both ladies and gentlemen separately. It offered the patients the opportunity to sunbathe in a state of undress. The area of ground was surrounded by a high, wooden palisade, to protect the privacy of the bathers. The ground within was "covered with soft grass, in which the bathers may roll or walk as they like." The grass was later replaced with sand. There were also comfortable dressing rooms there. According to the Swiss physician, Dr. Rikli who developed the cure, it was best taken about 10 a.m. when the temperature was between 64°-68° F. If the bather took part in active exercise such as skipping with a rope, chopping sticks or sawing logs, the benefits would be greater. The Hydro thoughtfully supplied these accessories, as well as Indian clubs for "the younger patients" to swing.

But if fresh air was beneficial to patients it was always possible to improve even that. The Peebles Hydro installed a Nebulor or Atomising Apparatus, a machine of German origin. Its aim was to transform "medicaments useful in the treatment of disease of the lungs and air passages ... into gaseous form." The patient could inhale directly from the apparatus or, allowing the small treatment room to fill with the vapour, simply inhale the air of the room. The latter method was known as "cubicle inhalation." A special name was, of course, mandatory. The machine used not heat but pneumatic pressure to nebulise the drug, and by simply turning a tap, any one of the stock of nebulas could be applied: menthol, creosote, chloretone, cocaine, formaldehyde and others.

The doctor might allow a patient to eat normally, or he might prescribe a special diet such as "the skim milk cure" for obesity, Metchnikoffs sour milk treatment, the dry diet of Johann Schroth, the grape cure, the Koumiss cure or the Salisbury system. Fresh supplies of all approved diabetic foods were regularly obtained from a "well known manufacturer."

The ***Bourbon Lancy*** treatment, recommended by Glasgow physician Dr. McGregor Robertson, was available to patients. It included daily baths, douches and massage, but most important, it included drinking St. Ronan's water. After all taking the waters in the sense of drinking them was an all important part of the water cure.

St. Ronan's Well lies six miles to the east of Peebles and was the source of the water used to cure. St. Ronan's water belonged to the class of waters known as halothermals, the characteristic feature of which is that they contain common salt (sodium chloride). Unlike the strongly saline waters of certain other spas such as Droitwich and Nantwich, the water of St. Ronan's Well was only slightly salty. It also contained a fairly high -proportion of calcium chloride and ***magnesium chloride, with a small percentage of iron and a trace of iodine and bromine.*** The full analysis made by Dr. Stevenson Macadam is as follows:

Chloride of Sodium	247.36 grains per imperial gallon
Chloride of Calcium	149.24
Chloride of Magnesium	15.78
Carbonate of Lime	5.28
Carbonate of Magnesia	0.65
Chloride of Iron	0.22
Sulphate of Alumina	0.69
Chloride of Aluminium	1.46
Soluble Silica	0.16
Iodine and Bromine	present.
<u>Total matter</u>	<u>420.84 grains per imperial gallon</u>

The water issued from the spring at a temperature of 6°C, which is classed as a "cold water". It was prescribed for patients who had stomach and liver trouble, but was held to be generally beneficial to most patients insofar as it removed impurities and cleansed the system. Normally patients were advised to drink one or two glasses early in the morning, on awakening or while dressing - the glass should hold about eight fluid ounces. This was normally followed by a brisk walk to aid absorption. Half an hour was to be allowed between the last glass and breakfast. During the day further glasses could be drunk, forty-five minutes to one hour before meals. The water, which could be taken either hot or cold, was to be sipped slowly and not gulped. This rinsed the stomach in advance of the next meal and also stimulated the secretion of various digestive juices.

It was customary for the doctor in charge to give short lectures on health and hydropathy to the patients. The benefits of "the simple life" were emphasized, since clearly there was no point in spending two weeks purifying the system only to return to a life of overeating and over-drinking after the visit.

In fact the attitude of the patient himself was considered an important part of the cure. *Hopefulness on the part of the patient is most desirable, and cheerful outlook should always be encouraged. Patients who are continually worrying*

about their business or household matters are not likely to get well quickly. This is sound common sense, and the advice continues, "Mental excitement must be avoided, as well as the financial column in the newspaper by the business man, and correspondence of anything but alight and pleasant character absolutely vetoed." This would be equivalent in modern terms to a holiday without a telephone, radio or television - and all the demands and distressing news they inflict on the present day holidaymaker. The advice continues, "Discussing one's own or other people's particular ailments is a baneful habit, and must be on no account indulged in." It was good advice Of course not all visitors to the Peebles Hydro were invalids. Many visitors came simply for a rest cure, for a holiday in the modern sense. And whether they wanted to be active or inactive there was plenty to make the stay what one brochure of 1899 calls "a ripping holiday."

For the active holidaymaker there were several tennis courts. The number of courts increased over the years: by the outbreak of World War I there were twelve, between the wars this number rose to seventeen. The middle of what is now the front lawn was originally laid out for croquet, and the east end of the front lawn for tennis. The westernmost area of grass, in front of the green houses formed a quarter mile long oval cycle track. Guests could hire cycles from the Hydro at 1/- (5p) for the first hour and 6d (2½ p) an hour thereafter. Guests sometimes brought their own cycles, which could be accommodated in the basement corridor at the modest charge of 1/- per week. There was also a bowling green and a putting green.

Beyond the grounds of the Hydro guests could enjoy fishing for salmon in the Tweed, tickets obtainable at the hotel for half a guinea a month. Trout fishing was available, and of course the Tweed was not the only fishing river recommended to visitors: the Manor, the Eddleston Water and the Leithen were not far away. The earliest visitors to the Hydro did not have the luxury of a full sized golf course. Although the Peebles Golf Club was founded in 1892, (the eighteen hole course, at the west end of the town was not opened until 1908) They had, however, the opportunity to go shooting, and one early brochure even recommends otter hunting.

Various excursions from the Hydro could be made in a choice of vehicle: dog-cart, one horse carriage, two horse carriage, two horse waggonette to carry five to eight people or two horse "waggonette" to carry eight to twelve people. There was a fixed scale of charges which included both hire of vehicle and the driver's fee. There is a strange timelessness about the list of drives - it could be from this years tourist brochure. Only "Airing by the hour" in a one horse carriage, costing 4/- (20p) per hour, reminds the reader that the Hydro specialised in catering for invalids who needed to get fresh air. For those who were able to walk the management could truthfully boast that the visitor could take "a new walk every day in Pine-clad hills." The "pine ozone" as it was called, was beneficial to health as well as being simply very pleasant. And then, as now, visitors could sit in the garden sunning themselves enjoying doing nothing.

The sounds, however, were different then, since one visitor reports hearing the constant quacking of ducks from the nearby farm as she sat resting.

There was plenty for visitors to the Hydro to do indoors. Promenading along the corridors and along the one hundred foot long conservatory was recommended in wet weather. More vigorous exercise could be had in the swimming pool. Swimming lessons were given. For gentlemen there was a billiard room, which stayed open until 11 p.m. Here and in the smoking room gentlemen were allowed to indulge in tobacco. Smoking was not permitted anywhere else.

The recreation room, as the ballroom was originally called, was the focal point of indoor entertainment. It is well to recall that in the nineteenth century it was the norm for people to make their own entertainment. Perhaps the Second World War marks the dividing line between the way things are now and the way things were then, but there is no doubt that the ballroom stage was often used for musical and dramatic entertainments in which the guests participated. The Hydro employed a resident hostess, or mistress of ceremonies as she was called, whose duties included supervising these entertainments. Every third morning or so this lady held an "informal board meeting" with the leaders of amusement, the orchestra and guests, to decide the programme of entertainments for the next few days. One early brochure asks guests who play musical instruments to bring them with them -to the Hydro. Doubtless rehearsing the music provided much enjoyment for the participants as well as the actual performance. Dancing to the music of the Hydro's orchestra took place every evening, lasting about an hour. Every Saturday night there was a "ball, fancy or ordinary." The band also played during afternoon tea and during dinner. Singing and dramatic recitals were frequently on the programme too.

The reading room was where guests who wanted complete quiet could go to read or write. The drawing room was where they went to play cards and gossip. The drawing room, at the extreme west end of the building, was very spacious and could hold up to two hundred people. It was furnished with lots of sofas, and small tables ideal for card players. It is interesting to note how little mention is made of children in all the early brochures. Apart from three age-gradings of children in the tariff there are only two references to children in all. One recommends the brine bath at the Hydro as being a reassuring alternative to sea bathing for any timid or sickly child, whose nurse would also be present throughout the bathing. The other is an oblique reference to facilities recently installed by the manager Mr. Thiem shortly before 1899: "children's recreation rooms and nurseries." Unfortunately no further details are given, but presumably children of visitors were allocated space where they could play with their nannies. Nevertheless the impression remains that children were seen and not heard. They had, as yet, no purchasing power.

One of the delights of the present Peebles Hydro is the food. But what was the food like a hundred years ago? One early visitor admits to being apprehensive about dining in a Scottish Hydropathic. She expected a regime of porridge, stewed prunes and rice, "boiled mutton enveloped in an odious suet paste"

served with turnip "followed by huge rice puddings ... with a few swelled and bloated currants in their midst to afford us a gambol of hide and seek." But then she had stayed at other hydropathics, and her visit to the Peebles Hydro was to prove a pleasant surprise. She enjoyed duck and green peas, and was especially fond of partridge and cabbage with "their attendant army of fat little squared discs of bacon." The latter dish was frequently served in the autumn.

The kitchen garden supplied fruit, vegetables and herbs for the Hydro. Although the cabbage field is now part of the pitch and putt course some of the fruit trees remain and descendants of the herbs spring up as weeds in various parts of the grounds. These include borage to add to drinks, and lamb's lettuce, which may have been cultivated for winter salads.

The chef was apparently a German who formerly worked for "a mighty royal German duke." He had a staff of three or four assistants. The kitchen of the first hydro was located rather inconveniently at the north west corner of the building; the dining room was at the east end. This had two unfortunate consequences. It must have resulted in a certain loss of heat as food was transported across the building. It must also have meant that in a country with a prevailing westerly wind smoke would blow back towards the hotel more often than it blew away from it. It is no accident that most factories are situated at the east side of cities in this part of Europe. And this rather curious point is one, which was to prove the Achilles heel of the first Peebles Hydro.

Some time after six o'clock in the evening on **Friday 7th July 1905** someone noticed a smell of burning soot. In an age of coal fires this was a very common smell - everyone was used to it from time to time. Chimneys not infrequently went on fire, no matter how often they were swept. That was what happened in the kitchen chimney, at the north west corner of the Hydro. The fire was right at the top of the chimney and it must have made a lot of black smoke. A few people probably wrinkled their noses and went down to dinner.

The fire in the kitchen chimney persisted and the order was given to extinguish it with the hotel's own fire hose. Small soot fires usually burned themselves out quite quickly, but this one was fanned by a brisk, westerly breeze. The flames were blown on to the building and a wooden beam on the top floor ignited. The fire alarm bell was rung in the Hydro while someone telephoned the police-station. The time was seven thirty. The staff apologetically ushered the guests out of the dining room. There were about one hundred there at the time. Doubtless the usual courteous assurances were given as they assembled on the front lawn.

The Peebles fire brigade was a part time brigade, that is, the firemen had other main occupations and served as firemen as required, being paid a fee for each call-out. They quickly assembled and only a quarter of an hour after the telephone call the horse-drawn fire engine came rattling down the Innerleithen Road, and up the drive to the hotel. They turned left up the narrow path that curves round the back of the Hydro, very close to the fire. But it was awkward

for them to manoeuvre horses, machine and fire hoses here, because the ground was littered with planks and building materials, all part of the new northern extension that was being built. Lots of timber, wood shavings. and sawdust. lay everywhere.

Quickly hoses were run up through the wooded hillside to the Hydro's own reservoir, Shielgreen. Hotel staff had already used up the water from the swimming pool. The fire had taken hold on the top floor, but only on the top floor. And now a number of guests and staff had run back inside to salvage their belongings. Some staff began to lift down paintings from the walls of the main corridor and carry them out into the garden. Figures appeared at open windows and began to throw things out, clothes, watches, jewellery, pictures - even china which smashed on the ground. Soon the lawn was littered with goods.

Dr. Gunn, who had hurried from his house Lindores as soon as he noticed the blaze, came across one of his patients, a man of eighty four, lying on the terrace wrapped in blankets. His distraught wife asked Dr. Gunn if he could rescue their luggage. Their room was well away from the blaze, so Dr. Gunn agreed and made no fewer than four trips to their room to salvage their belongings. They included several gifts of solid gold, which had been presented to them only the previous day when they had celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Dr. Gunn and many others made repeated trips into the building, but the flames were spreading rapidly. Smoke was entering the corridors. The deafening between the floors was very thick, and it had been hoped that this would slow down the fire, but suddenly flames shot through the roof of the north turret sixty feet from the ground. Just after 8.30 p.m. the north turret fell with a noise like a thunderclap. Ten minutes later a second turret fell and the fire reached the centre turret.

An elderly lady begged Dr. Gunn to go to her room to rescue her black silk petticoat. She persisted, she pleaded, he agreed and ran along the smoke filled corridor to her room. After much rummaging he found it in a wardrobe and fled in triumph. She was delighted and from the voluminous folds of the petticoat she produced her watch, her purse, all her jewellery and a wad of bank notes.

On the front lawn an elderly gentleman in clerical garb was bemoaning the loss of a box containing £40 in his room. A lady was lamenting the loss of her entire wardrobe. Luggage had been bundled out of rooms and rolled down the grass slope. Many guests were wandering about in evening dress trying to identify their belongings. Servant maids stood around in small groups, many weeping. Some had lost all their worldly goods. All had lost their employment.

At nine o'clock the central turret fell with a great crash. The firemen must have known they were fighting a losing battle with their single steam-powered engine, but they fought on valiantly. Then the water supply gave out. Quickly the Firemaster, William Forsyth, ordered the hoses to be connected with a small reservoir just outside the Hydro grounds, probably the one near the entrance to the Venlaw Quarry. The fight resumed.

Suddenly the firemen themselves were in danger. The loose timber at the back of the hotel caught fire and the engine had

to be moved quickly back down the west side of the building. Rounding the bend the engine struck the rock face and, swerving, ran over the foot of fireman Thomas Wallace, the engineer. Fireman John Johnstone suffered abdominal bruising, and both men had to be given first aid by Dr. Gunn.

At the front of the hotel Superintendent Dickson and other police officers were watching over the very large but orderly crowd. Sightseers had come from Peebles and the surrounding area to watch. News of the fire had spread quickly through the district. When Mrs. Grant, the gamekeeper's wife heard, she took her four year old son, Charlie "Kiltie" Grant to watch. They brought a couple of chairs with them and went up the hill in King's Meadows Park. As they sat and watched young "Kiltie" remarked, "What a marvelous fire for making toast."

The flames licked their way into the centre of the building, still fanned by the west wind. "Flames twined and curled like live scorpions as they leaped from window to window and scattered myriads of ruddy sparks down among the leafy surroundings." The whole of the west wing was on fire and floor after floor began to give way.

Suddenly a train came thundering through the grounds. Passengers leaped from their seats and crowded round the windows with gasps of "Oh, look!" and exclamations of excitement. For a few brief moments they saw it - and then they had gone past. But the memory was to stay with them all, to recount to their children and to their grandchildren.

Superintendent Dickson told Mr. Charles Thiem, the assistant manager, that he was going to telephone for help from the Edinburgh fire brigade. But in Edinburgh, Firemaster Pordage said it was impossible to arrange relays of horses on the road, and the journey would take two and a half hours. However he immediately sent a steam fire engine down to the North British Railway Station. They galloped through the streets of Edinburgh to Waverley Station in the hope of chartering a special train to take fire engine and crew to Peebles. But when they got there they were told they were just twenty minutes too late, as the line from Hawthornden outwards had just been closed and the signalmen had all gone home for the night. Mr. Pordage telephoned the police in Peebles to say he could not help. He had done his best. If only they had a motor fire engine, which he had often requested, then he could have helped.

A message was telephoned to the manager Mr. Albert Thiem at the Windsor Hotel in Glasgow. He caught the 9.50 train to Edinburgh and travelled from there by car. Also on the road to Peebles that night, returning from their annual picnic at Roslin, was the choir of Innerleithen Congregational Church. No one on the front lawn of the Hydro even noticed the group who reined in the horses so they could watch for a while. They had had "a delightful outing and ... the fire was a pyrotechnic wind-up to a happy day."

By half past ten the fire had worked its way down to the main floor and the main staircase, which was of pitch pine, collapsed at about quarter past eleven.

Mr. Cowan the burgh inspector arranged for another supply of water from the town, and a hose was duly connected, passing through the Venlaw wood. It was dark now and arrangements had to be made to accommodate guests for the night in other hotels and large houses in Peebles.

The blazing building gave off tremendous heat and light. Venetian blinds at the windows looked like "fairy film, then sinking into the burning abyss in a golden shimmer ... the crackling yellow pine, the coloured smokes of valuable furnishings and the heat ... baffles descriptions." Then at 1.45 a.m. there was a sound like a roll of cannon and the eastern wing came crashing to the ground.

After the agony of the night the morning must have seemed very still. The ruins still smouldered and the air was heavy with the smell of burnt wood. The ground was soaking wet underfoot. A sinister wet blackness that was almost tangible clung to everything. Some cracked masonry fell, but there were police on duty to keep people away from the building and no one was in danger. The looting of the previous night had been discreet, and besides it didn't matter any more. To the Hydro the loss of a few spoons or teapots was insignificant now.

Visitors arrived, sightseeing visitors who came from all over the Borders and from Edinburgh. Photographers came and set up their cameras. They stood in various parts of the grounds with their tripods and black cloths, peering at the ruins. Children came on foot and on bicycle to gaze in awe and wonder, perhaps even glee. There is often a thrill in watching the fall of the mighty and the grand. To many observers the reaction was probably simple disbelief. Most people must have realised that the economy of the town of Peebles had been seriously damaged. The newsagent, the sweetie maker, the tweed manufacturer, who supplied the Hydro's guests, had lost a major customer, as had all the businesses, which supplied directly to the hotel. The newly founded Peebles Gas Company, for example, lost its biggest customer, worth £400 per annum. The loss to the town itself of the Hydro's rates would mean an increase of 3d in the pound to every ratepayer. One newspaper was quick to point out this disastrous consequence to the ratepayers, which could only be averted by the rebuilding of the Hydro. "Let us all hope to see another great hydro emerging from the ruin."

Possibly the only business the fire produced was the immediate production of several picture postcards of the disaster. The cards were on sale within seven days. Some were straightforward photographs of the ruins. Other purported to be photographs taken during the fire - they were in fact older photos, touched up with the addition of smoke and flames.

In the meantime there was work to be done. The manager of the Craiglockhart Hydro, Edinburgh offered immediate employment to many of the staff as well as accommodation to those guests who Wished it. Insurance claims had to be made on losses in the region of £70,000. A complicated legal situation had

arisen. At the time of the fire the Peebles Hydro had been in process of forming itself into a new company. Shares had been allocated at a meeting on 28th June 1905. When Mr. Albert M. Thiem met Mr. McGrigor the law agent in Glasgow on 12th July, he was informed that transfer of the company had not after all taken place. This was because the object for which the new company was formed had ceased to exist. The directors would therefore be obliged to return the subscription capital to the shareholders. So their money was returned to them - in full, Mr Thiem undertaking to pay all expenses incurred.

At an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders held in the Windsor Hotel, Glasgow at noon on August 17th 1905 Mr. Thiem offered for consideration his proposals to build a new hydropathic on the site of the old. They decided to adjourn the meeting for a fortnight's consideration of the idea. But an informal discussion after the meeting made it clear that the shareholders were enthusiastic about the new proposals. Plans prepared by Mr. Miller, an architect, were outlined, and-when Mr. Thiem called for a show of hands, unanimous support was given to the scheme. The legal formalities had still to be gone through, of course, but the decision had been made.

The plans handed out at this meeting had been completed only two days previously by the architect James Miller FRIBA, of 15 Blythswood Square, Glasgow. Miller (1860-1947) already had several important buildings in Glasgow to his credit: Belmont Parish Church, St. Epoch's underground station, Caledonian Chambers and St. Andrew's East Church. Indeed such was his reputation that Miller was sometimes given commissions in preference to Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Miller was later to design the Edinburgh Synagogue and the interior of ocean liners, including the Mauretania and the Lusitania. Miller's plan retained the entire foundations of the old hydro, while snaking the rebuilding an opportunity to modernise. The east wing had not been badly damaged and certain parts could be retained, including the large smoking room (now the bar) with its oak panelled dado and ceiling, some bedrooms, various kitchen stores and larders. The newly built billiard room could also be retained.

Mr. Thiem's hopes of an extension at the back of the building were to be realised, with forty-four bedrooms and, in the basement the boiler and engine house. The conservatory, built of iron and steel, was largely intact. A leading feature of the new plans was the "covered Balcony or Verandah, 8 feet wide, extending along the whole of the main front... In wet weather these balconies will be a great advantage in allowing visitors to sit outside and yet to be sheltered from the rain." The new recreation room (ballroom) measuring 102 feet by 37 feet fitted with a proscenium and stage was to have an elliptical roof with a glazed ceiling of lattice design extending its entire length. The similarity between the Peebles Hydro ballroom and the first class lounge of the Lusitania is very striking.

The external walls of the Hydro were to be built of stone, faced with cream

coloured roughcast. The roof tiles were to be red, the woodwork painted white. "The bright colour of the building will form a pleasing contrast to the deep green background of the wooded hills... making it a conspicuous feature in the landscape." Rough casting was chosen because it bypassed the need to have all the stone carefully dressed by hand. It also meant that the stone from the old Hydro could be used again, a tremendous saving in both cost of material and its carriage. The new building was to be fireproof throughout and all lighting was to be electrical. All together there would be one hundred and eighty bedrooms. Messrs. Wilkie and Sons, Measurers, of Glasgow, were the quantity surveyors who certified the plans as being satisfactory.

The cost was to be £37,000, a little over half the price of the original building. At first sight, this may surprise a generation, which had witnessed high inflation rates, but at this time inflation was much less. The purchase and transport of stone from Dumfriesshire had been a major expense originally, as had building the foundations in the solid rock of Venlaw. The original cost had included various lodges, stables and outbuildings. Work was soon under way. Early in the morning of October 4th certain parts of the ruin were blown up in a series of explosions. Fifteen pounds of detonating material were used. "After several terrific explosions the ruined skeleton collapsed," wrote Dr. Gunn, "amid the crash of shattered glass and the crumbling of sandstone ... so that a new building may arise, phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old."

So who was the man who had decided to rebuild, this Mr. Thiem? After all, if he had decided to cut his losses, there would be no Peebles Hydro today. Albert Max Thiem was born in Germany in 1849. He was married to a London-born lady two years his junior called Caroline. When he became manager of the Hydro about 1898 he already had considerable experience in the Scottish hotel industry. During the 1870s and '80s he had been owner of the Windsor Hotel at 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh. He then bought McLean's Hotel at 250 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, and renamed it the Windsor Hotel, managing both simultaneously. He sold the Edinburgh Windsor to Mr. Hunter and Co. when he bought the Hydro, but retained the Glasgow Windsor while managing the Hydro. As the years passed he was assisted by several of his six children: Amy, Bertie, Ernest, William, Walter and Carrie. Mr. Thiem appears to have been a very hard working manager, ever eager to develop the Hydro to its full potential, scrupulously honest in his business dealings and dedicated to the benefits of simple, healthy living.

Rebuilding the Hydro involved a lot of work for a lot of people. Messrs. Thaw and Campbell were the builders. A score of other firms were involved with contracts for ironwork, joinery, roof tiling, marble work, plumbing, plastering and electric lighting. Lifts, heating, cooking appliances, laundry machinery, painting, even fire grates all had to be attended to. Furniture had to be inspected and chosen. Linen was apparently "attended to by Mrs. Thiem who with the help of some Machinists had been busily employed for some months in making up the necessary bed and table linen, Curtains, Cushions, Towelling etc." Work continued, but on 22nd May 1906 Mr. Thiem reported that the

building contractors were behind with the reconstruction. He impressed on Mr. Miller the architect, the necessity of bringing his personal pressure to bear on them if the accommodation was to be ready for the show week in July. Before the fire the

Highland and Agricultural Society had planned to make the headquarters for their show in Peebles at the Hydro. Visitors to the show had also made bookings, and the management of the Hydro was determined to honour the bookings. In the event they managed. Despite the delays work did advance sufficiently for the directors to send all the shareholders a photograph of the Hydro taken in September, with the annual report at the end of 1906.

At last everything was ready. The new Peebles Hotel Hydropathic was opened on Friday 22nd March 1907. The celebration ball was a splendid Edwardian affair to which local dignitaries, and people with other connections were invited.

The chairman at the opening dinner was Sir Walter Thorburn. Mr. Thiem's designation for the occasion was croupier, a term used to denote assistant chairman. Mr. Thiem's family were present, as were James Miller the architect, Bailie Simons, Mr. Charles Carlton, Sheriff Fitzgerald, Sir Andrew Macdonald and William and Margaret Smith. Mr. Smith supplied lemonade to the Hydro from his factory at Milton Bridge, near Penicuik.

The menu consisted of:

Potage Tortue Clare
Saumon Sauce Mousseline
Cailles en Casserole aux Champignons frais

Quartier d'Agneau Sauce Menthe
Petits Pois Haricots ferts

Canetons au Cresson
Salade Pommes Nouvelles

Pouding Diplomate Poires a la Dauphine
Trifle a l'Omdurman

Glaces

Dessert

There then followed the toasts - to the King, to the Queen and members of the royal family, and to the Hydro. The architect, the ladies and the chairman were all toasted in turn. The guests were entertained with a programme of music, played by the Kay orchestra under the baton of J. Meredith Kay. The programme included a march "Hydropathetic" composed by a Mrs. Arundel, music which is apparently now lost. But the third piece of music, a waltz called "Dons le Hydro Peebles" specially composed by J. Meredith Kay has fortunately survived. It is a beautiful piece of music with all the elegant grace and swing of the Edwardian ballroom. It deserves to be played again.

The minute books of the Peebles Hydro show a remarkable flair for understatement. The fire was described by a single adjective: regrettable. But

such was the splendour of the opening dinner that even the minute book records "general satisfaction was freely expressed with the brilliant success which had attended the opening of the Hydropathic the preceding evening and Mr. Thiem was complimented on the perfection of his arrangements."

After the splendour of the grand opening came the daily routine of running a large hydropathic. The management had frequent meetings with lawyers and financial advisors. Money borrowed for the rebuilding had to be repaid and the original estimate for the rebuilding was proving to be very far below the actual cost.

In time for Easter 1908 the Hydro bought a motor charabanc to hold twenty-two people. They were then able to offer tours round the district at a fixed charge per person. At the same time the Hydro bought two cars, one red and one green, from the Argyll Company. These were for hiring out to guests. The vehicles appear to have been a popular attraction. It is tempting, when seeing Edwardian cars in museums, to assume that they were as reliable as they were beautiful. Such was certainly not the case with the three vehicles bought by the Hydro - they all suffered frequent mechanical failure despite equally frequent overhauling. After a couple of years the charabanc was sold and shortly afterwards the two Argylls were sold for £40.

At this time there was a great demand for motor accommodation for visitors' own cars. The garage had to be enlarged, given a concrete floor and one extra service pit built. There was a growing demand for hot water as well, and a new hot water tank had to be bought. The problem of keeping fresh fish cool in warm weather resulted in the building of a fish larder at the back of the building. And the question of whether or not to buy the so called 'Vienna' baking oven took up a lot of time for the management. In the end they decided not to buy one.

Mr. Thiem was also manager of the Grand National Panorama Building in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, where there was on show an enormous panorama of Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn. It had been painted in Munich by the German born artist Ernst Philipp Fleischer about 1888 and shipped to Glasgow. The canvas measured 300 ft x 30 ft. Mr. Thiem had bought it together with similar panoramas of the Battle of Omdurman and the Death of Nelson at Trafalgar. He may have planned to display them in the first Hydro, but in the event the Bannockburn picture was cut up and fixed to the walls of the Bruce Lounge (now the bar) and the Bannockburn room. He intended to put the Omdurman panorama on the walls of the ballroom. The Trafalgar picture, however, remained a touring exhibit, which nonetheless publicised the name of its owner wherever it was shown.

The cure department of the Hydro was proving to be rather troublesome. In particular the German Dr. Neu, who was in charge of it, was not fulfilling his duties as originally agreed. It had been customary for his predecessors to give the occasional short lecture on water cures and health to guests and also

members of the public in the Hydro. Dr. Neu refused to do this. He also proved "somewhat difficult to deal with" as far as his financial dealings were concerned, refusing to provide receipts and sending out bills privately to guests. After many unheeded warnings the managers sacked him. Mr. Thiem was then obliged to give the lecture himself, which was on the subject of diet and longevity. It was

favourably received in the press. At this time Mr. Thiem lamented the changing tastes and expectations of his guests. "Never have so many guests expected so much for so little" might be what many a hotel manager feels on looking back over forty years in business. This was the lament in 1908. Mr. Thiem paints an unexpectedly vivid picture of just such a hotel guest. It is unintentionally humorous, perhaps the more so when recounted by this sixty year old earnest German. Mr. Thiem reported "he had had the usual contingent of ladies of ample proportions with large wardrobes who refused to be accommodated in small rooms and to meet this, he thought it would be necessary, in the near future, to build twenty large sized rooms, 16 x 15 feet, above the Dining Room."

On Sunday August 4th 1914 war broke out between the United Kingdom and Germany. The night porter and the masseur at the Hydro were Germans. Both men were reservists, and on the outbreak of war one of them ran away to London, trying to make his way back to Germany. When this proved impossible he returned to the Hydro and continued with his work there. Shortly afterwards Sergeant Hodge and Constable McKenzie were instructed to go to the Hydro and place both men under arrest. The Germans showed no surprise or concern, it was what they had been expecting. They probably didn't realise it at the time, but they were to be spared the horrors of trench warfare. Perhaps it was best too that Albert Max Thiem had died in 1913. During the early years of the First World War the Hydro was allowed to continue as a hotel. At first there were few major problems. The war was remote, there was no conscription and life was little changed. But in February 1915 Germany proclaimed a submarine blockade of the British Isles. Within three months almost one hundred ships, allied. and neutral, had been destroyed by mines or U-boats. It was then that the shortage of food and other supplies began to be felt. Starvation threatened.

On 31st May 1916 the British and German fleets engaged in the biggest sea battle of the First World War. The Battle of Jutland resulted in terrible casualties: 5,241 British officers and men were killed. The Hydro was requisitioned as a convalescent home for naval officers. The men at Peebles were all on the road to recovery and were fairly mobile. They wore a uniform suit of pale blue, indicating that they were convalescents. In imitation of Admiral Sir David Beatty, schoolboys began to wear their caps at the "Beatty tingle". One wonders if the officers, going about Peebles, ever noticed.

The twenty years of peace between the world wars was a period of change and development for the Hydro. There was a new management and a new era was beginning. One change was the increase in the number of cars or the

roads although there was still an excellent rail service, motor transport was developing. Early cars, often unreliable, needed constant servicing. Service pits were provided at the Hydro. Originally visitors' cars had been accommodated in garages; this soon became impossible.

There were changes in the style of entertainment demanded by visitors. The music played by the resident orchestra reflected the changing fashions. The waltz remained ever popular, but to this were added the fox-trot, the quickstep and the tango. By the end of the 'thirties" the Hydro's resident five piece band under the direction of Mr. Billy Funge was including in its repertoire the Charleston and the latest outrageous American dances the black bottom, the turkey trot and the bunny hop.

Out of doors golf was growing in popularity and women, newly enfranchised, had taken up the game with as much enthusiasm as men. In November 1933 Peebles Town Council decided to spend £3,000 on alterations and improvements to the golf course. The Hydro was asked to make a contribution. This they duly did, at the same time bringing to the notice of the council "the question of providing facilities for golf on Sundays, as it has been found that there is an insistent demand there for by visitors to the Hydro."

But it was for tennis that the Hydro was most famous. Towards the end of the First World War the convalescent naval officers had organised informal tennis matches. A local man, Mr. Charles Grant, in cooperation with- the new manager, Mr Caiazel, organised tennis along more formal lines into a club. Matches were played on the front lawn in addition to numerous other courts. At one time there were no fewer than seventeen courts at the Hydro. With the spectators sitting on the grass slope the setting was ideal, and the Scottish Lowland Championships were held there. Then the Scottish Lawn Tennis Association chose the Hydro for their championship matches in 1930. The Australian Jack B. Crawford, victor on the courts of the Peebles Hydro went on to become champion at Wimbledon.

The afternoon teas at the Hydro also began to earn a, well deserved, reputation. For a mere half-crown visitors could enjoy sandwiches, muffins, cakes, scones, afternoon dainties, biscuits and cups of refreshing tea. Half a century later those who tasted them still remember them with delight and longing.

A hotel does not run itself. If the afternoon teas delighted guests it was only possible because there were people working hard behind the scenes. Mr. Gilles Alban Calazel had become manager on 22nd June 1922. He and his wife Margaret set about improving the hotel. For example there had been a number of complaints from visitors about the noise and smell of the gas engines used to generate electricity. It was therefore decided to construct a separate power house, among the trees at the end of the kitchen wing. It contained new boilers, engines, dynamos, boosters and switchboard.

In 1926 hot and cold water was installed in all the bedrooms. Several carpets were showing signs of wear and had to be replaced. The management decided to investigate the possibility of buying a crockery washing machine from the Staines Kitchen Equipment Company. They were given a one month free trial of the machine, found it satisfactory and decided to buy one. And there was of course a constant stream of things which needed repairing or replacing -curtains and lampshades imported from Paris, even motor oil storage tanks and vacuum cleaners.

The question of music copyright had to be dealt with, and the Hydro took out a license from the Performing Rights Society, paying an annual fee of 2% of expenditure on the orchestra and entertainers. A refrigerator was bought for the bar. This was of course, the heyday of the cocktail, and now drinks could be kept properly cold. What had been the billiard room was converted into "an American Bar Lounge to suit the modern taste."

In 1933 the swimming pool was enlarged. About the same time the Hydro arranged an additional water supply from the burgh of Peebles. Numerous enquiries had come in for bedrooms with private bathrooms, so in 1934 the for the dining room, brass ash trays, pottery ashboxes first five private bathrooms were installed on the first and second floors

Mr. and Mrs. Calazel had two daughters, Lucie, later Mrs. Davidson and Pauline, later Mrs. Pemberton. Both sisters helped to manage the Hydro at various times.

The cure department was under the direction of Dr. Thomas Luke M.D., FRCS. Ed. He had originally been appointed by Albert Thiem, who had described him as, "a prolific writer and a man of energy". A further recommendation had been his ability to produce numerous letters from doctors who promised to send him their patients. As time went by, however, he was to prove as fallible as his predecessor in the matter of money. There were allegations of overcharging: he attempted to apply "special surcharges" on all his patients, claiming that all his patients were special cases. It was discovered that when he met a patient in the corridor and said to them "How are you?" he charged them a consultation fee for the greeting.

Other colourful characters on the staff included Ernest Opliger the Swiss head waiter who was nicknamed "the penguin" because of his coat tails. Jimmy Aikman the barman and Miss Walker the hostess became known to a generation of visitors. Less well known to the visitors was the housekeeper Miss Mary Chisholm. To the young women on the staff, living away from home for the first time, she was friend and confidant. "She was like a mother to us. She made the Hydro a home."

Between the wars a number of famous guests stayed at the Hydro including Rudyard Kipling, and the celebrated Italian tenor Enrico Caruso. One day Caruso went to the kitchen to show the staff how to cook macaroni in the Italian way, without cheese. Mr. Calazel's daughter, Mrs. Lucie Davidson

recalled a visit to the Hydro by George Bernard Shaw and his wife. They created a stir by refusing to stay, after the dancing, for God Save the King. She remembered how the band tried to catch him out by playing the anthem earlier in the evening.

In these days dress was very formal. On one occasion a rather grand lady from Eastbourne came to stay with her son. One dinner time however, she could not find the youth. She swept down to the reception in her long evening gown, a tiara glittering on her head, and demanded that they find her son. A search of the building was made but without success. At last someone found him in Peebles, helping out at the circus. The lady was horrified - what she said to her son was never discovered. But the 1930s drew to a close. On September 3rd 1939 the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, reported on the wireless that a state of war existed between the United Kingdom and Germany. There were seventy-one guests staying at the Hydro that day; the next day, Monday, there were twenty-six, on the Tuesday only one. Throughout the country troops were being mobilised and reservists called up.

In Edinburgh territorials of the 2nd (Scottish) General Hospital had just returned from camp at Berwick on Tweed. That evening on the wireless came the order for all reservists to report to headquarters, in their case the dell hall in Gilmore Place. After spending an uncomfortable night trying to sleep on the floor of the hall the unit left Edinburgh marching along Princes Street to Waverley Station. Pipe major Hugh Fraser Robertson played the Black Bear and Caller Herring. The whole unit screamed at the pause in the drum beats, the crowds lining the pavements joined in applauding. The atmosphere was tense and emotional with anticipation. The newspaper headlines read, "Edinburgh Territorials leave for War Stations." The train took them south, past Peebles. The railway line to Galashiels ran through the Hydro grounds and it was here that the tram stopped, not in the station, in case there were any fifth columnists about. The war station was the Peebles Hydro.

The Hydro received a requisition order on 4th September from the Acting Command Land Agent, Scottish Command, Edinburgh, taking command of the Hydro "and the ground pertaining thereto." The troops, some one hundred and thirty in number were under the command of Col. J. S. Fulton. They marched up the avenue to the Hydro where they were divided into sections and ordered "to tear apart literally this lovely place, by stripping up magnificent carpets, dismantling beds, to be put in store. The ballroom floor was spread with some polish to prevent slipping," and filled with army hospital beds. The upper floor furnishings were left as officers' quarters.

One of the soldiers, Mr. J. H. Thornton recalls "My squad was detailed to pack all the silver for storage in the Royal Bank's vaults in Edinburgh. This was done under the eagle eye of a suspicious head waiter, who checked every item. If you had cause to leave the room you were searched by one of two military policeman on duty at the door."

The Hydro had great difficulty finding anywhere to store the furniture and furnishings. All available halls in the town of Peebles had already been requisitioned for war purposes. Finally the only storage accommodation that could be found was the Damcroft Mill and a wooden hut at the L.N.E.R. goods station, belonging to the railwaymen's recreation club. The work of removal continued until 23rd September.

It was arranged with the commanding officer that the Hydro chefs would cater for the troops until 18th September. "We ate like fighting cocks", reports one of the men, Mr. J. Bertram. "However the unit cooks took over, much to our dismay - one of the horrors of war." The stock of provisions and wines in the Hydro stores was disposed of by returning them to the suppliers from whom they were obtained.

There was a delay between sending away to storage the hotel beds and the arrival of the army beds. Soldiers finished their work at night, put on their army greatcoats and lay down on the bare boards. There were not even blankets as yet. The first days of the war brought the blackout, the issue of food ration books and petrol rationing. The carrying of gas masks and steel helmets became obligatory in the services. Underground shelters were built. Civilians began to attend first aid courses.

And so the Peebles Hydro was turned into a hospital, the 23rd (Scottish) General Hospital T.A. with 1200 beds. On the main floor the front lounge became a reception area for admissions. The open balcony had brick walls added to it. The ballroom became a surgical ward with four rows of beds. The x-ray department was in the west wing, opposite the operating theatre. Later the operating theatre was moved to the bridal suite. In the east wing were various offices. The Bruce Lounge, with its bar, billiard table and carpet, became the officers' mess. The officers' meals were served in the adjacent Bannockburn room. The hotel dining room became the mess hall for other ranks, and it was here also that church services were held, and the occasional concert.

The first and second floors of the Hydro were used as medical wards. One wing of the second floor was used to accommodate officers; nursing sisters had quarters on the top floors. The sisters' mess was initially located in a basement at the back of the hotel. The rest of the basement was used for the quartermasters' stores, medical, ordnance and rations, as well as for the accommodation of other ranks. The rest of the troops had to sleep in tents at the rear of the hotel.

"It was agony to go to bed on planks three inches off the ground and when eventually warm, it was worse getting up in the morning and trudging through the snow to ablutions and cookhouse."

Major General -John Matheson remembers the strangely changed atmosphere of the wartime Hydro. "The bare floors of the main corridor, front lounge, ballroom and dining room began to resound to the clatter of army boots, and

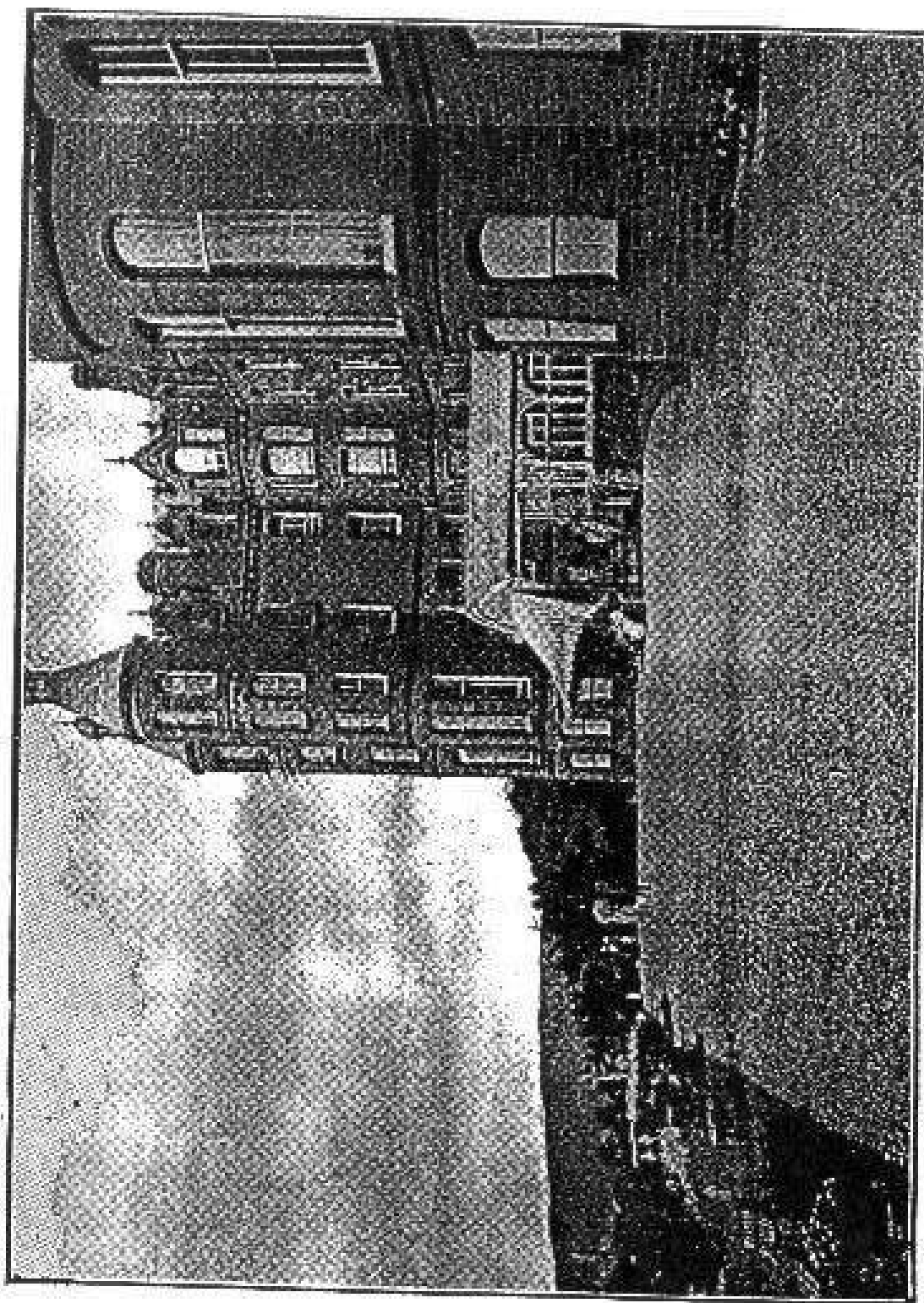
the dining hall became strangely stark when furniture was replaced by trestle tables and benches."

Four long marquees were erected on the front tennis lawn. They were used as wards and offices and one was an ordnance store. It was so cold during the first winter of the war that it was common for the ink in the inkwells in these tents to freeze overnight.

The first patients began to arrive in October 1939. There were three small ambulances and one hired commercial van available for transporting patients and stores. At this time the patients were not men wounded in battle - these were the days of the "phoney war" - they were soldiers who were suffering from a variety of ailments: influenza, pneumonia, appendicitis and so on. There were also patients with those minor maladies commonly associated with putting civilians into uniform and uprooting them from home: blisters from army boots, colds, tonsillitis and sepsis associated with inoculations. The so-called "effort syndrome" common among servicemen unaccustomed to physical exertions was dealt with by the aptly named Col. Hill who marched these men round and round the district for regular exercise.

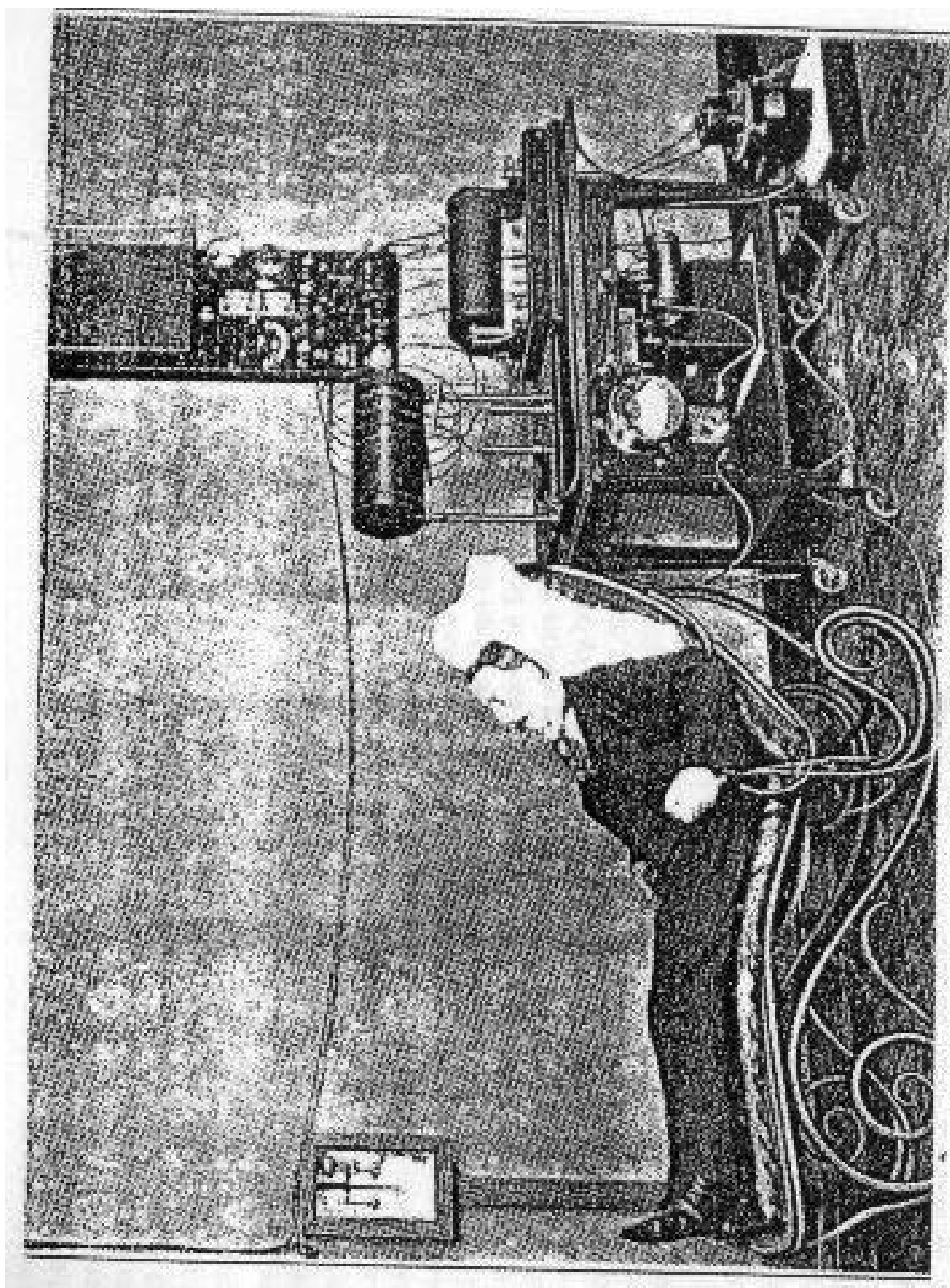
At night a guard was posted at the main gate. Each sentry did a two-hour stretch. Mr. J. H. Thornton recalls being on duty at the main gate. "Promptly at midnight rain, hail or snow a lady approached with a basket containing two huge flasks of coffee and said there would be enough for two cups each for the guard. Every two hours there was a different man, and she returned at 6 a.m. for the flasks. Never to this day did we find out who our angel was."

The nurses, accommodated on the top floor of the Hydro, also found it cold at night. "It was chilly, cheerless and grim," recalls one of the nurses, Mrs. Millie Bell, "especially up in the attics where we were billeted. To add some warmth and sparkle to our lot we gathered fir cones in our kit bags from the wood behind and kindled a good fire in a different bedroom each night. The difficulty was in getting the fuel up in the lift without coming face to face with the colonel, a holy terror." Remembering the autumn of 1942 she recalls how the flowers "had been dug out of the plots at the front entrance and replaced with beds of parsley. This we used as a filling for our breakfast roll, along with our daily butter ration, which was the size of a half crown (256d piece - or in the present day 12½ p). It was supposed to give us zest!

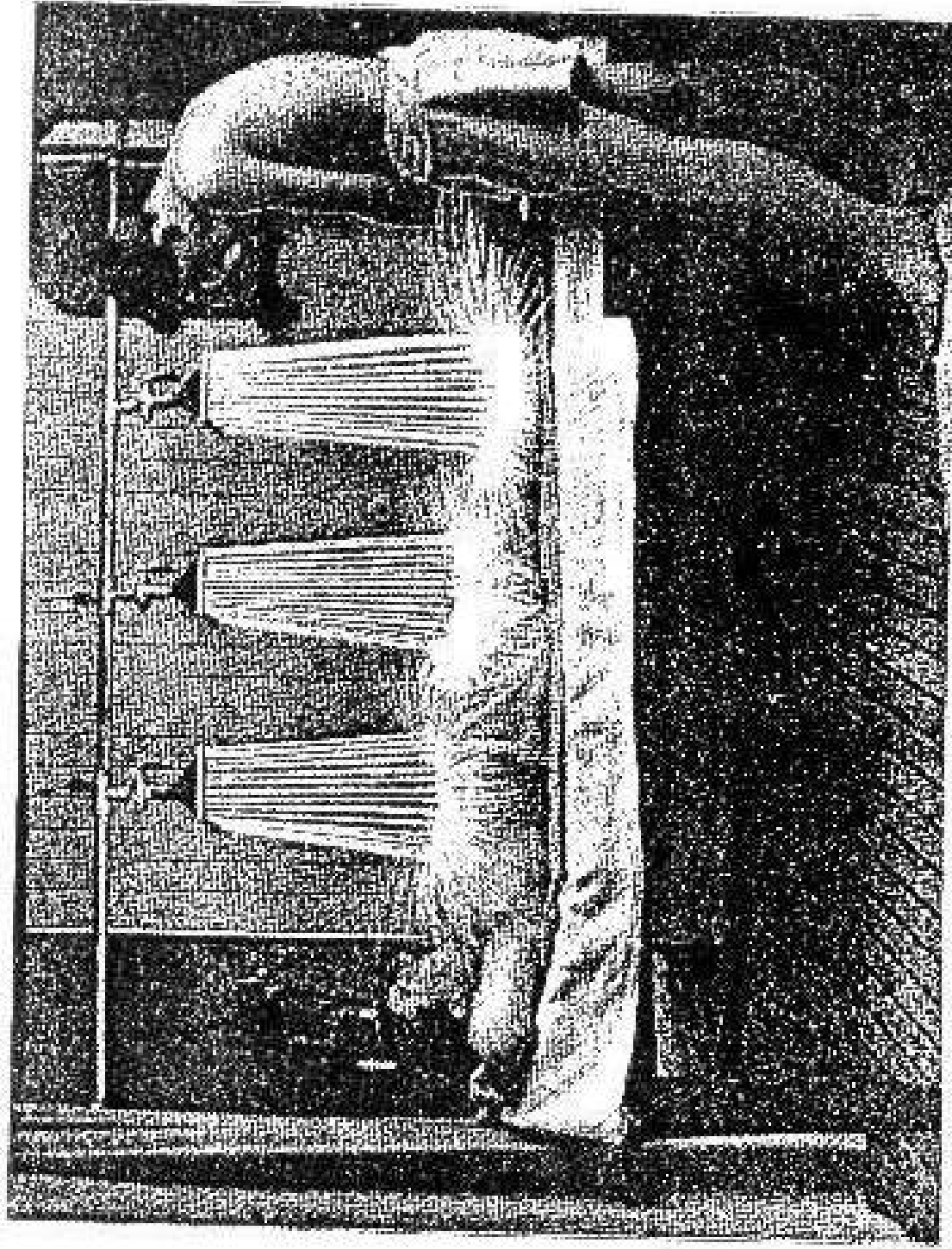


GRAND ENTRANCE

Grand Entrance

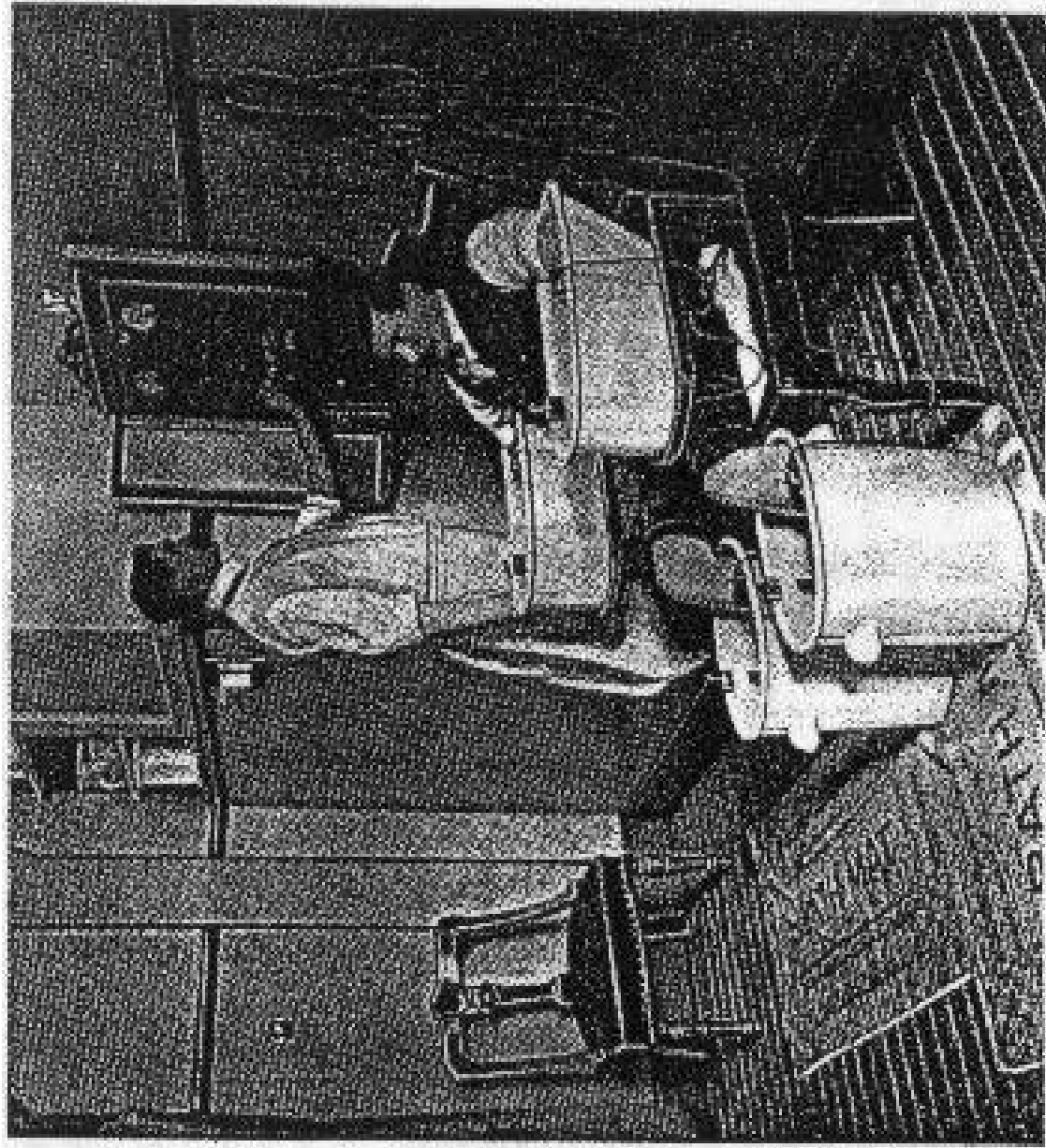


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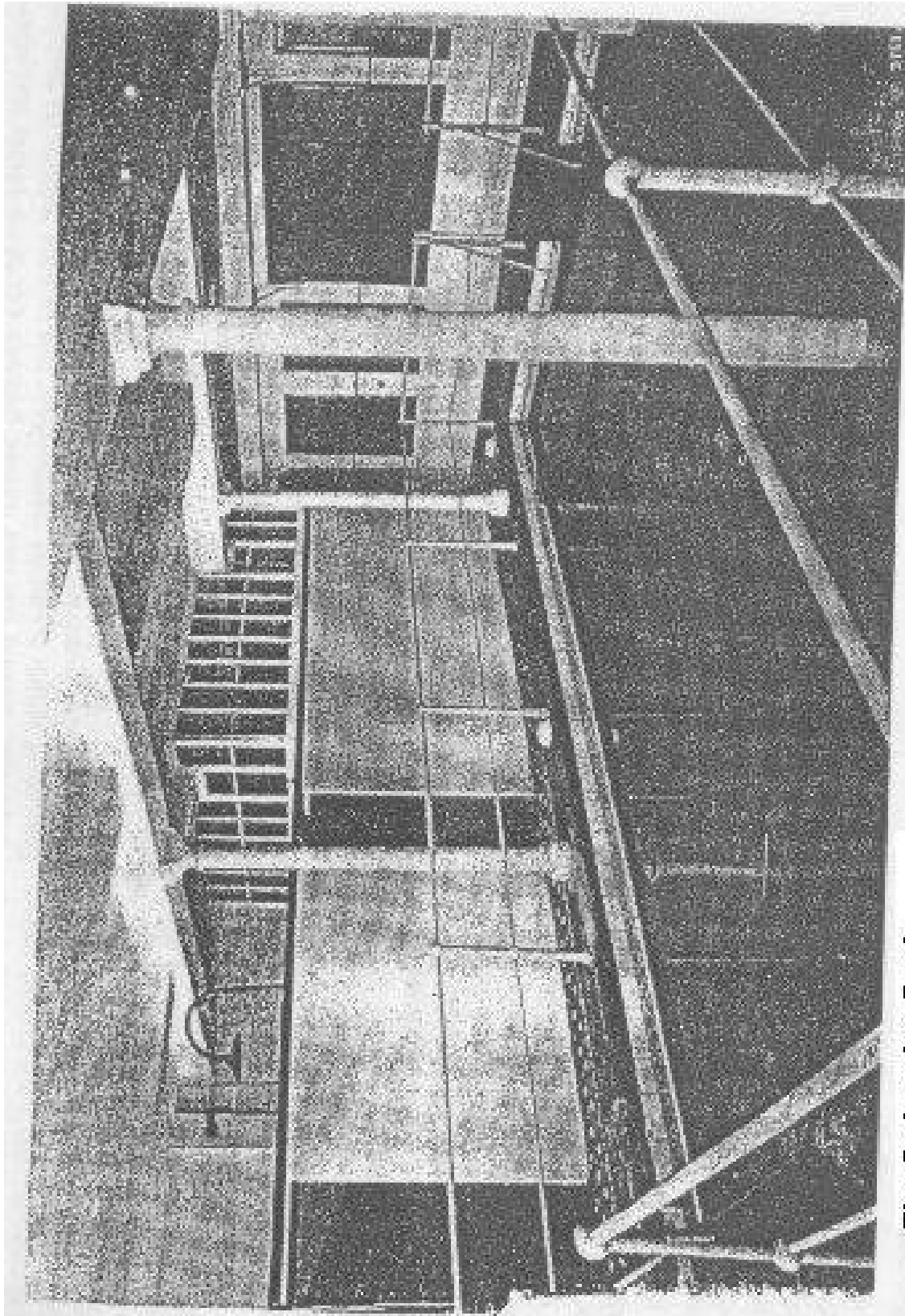


The VICHY DOUCHE

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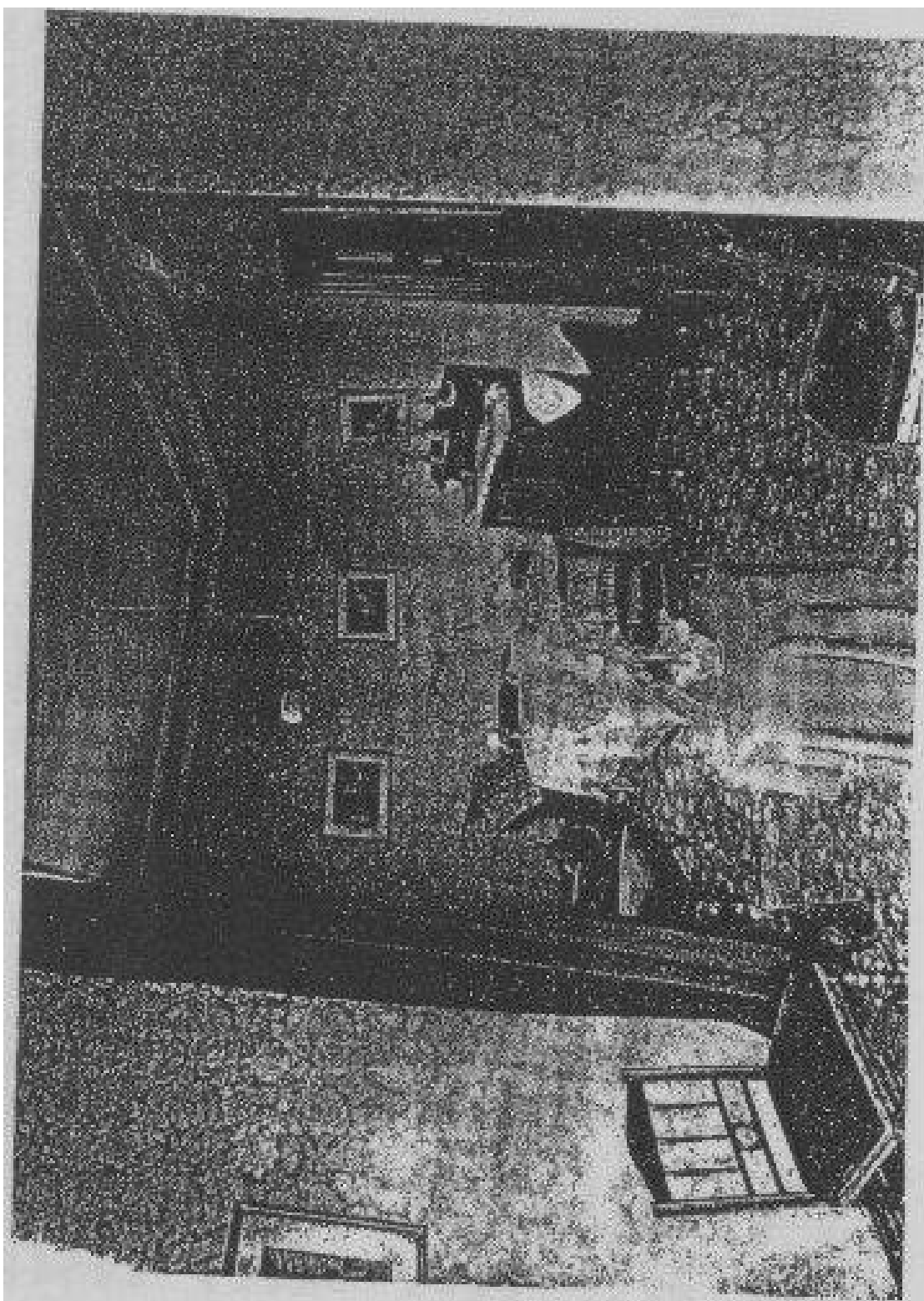


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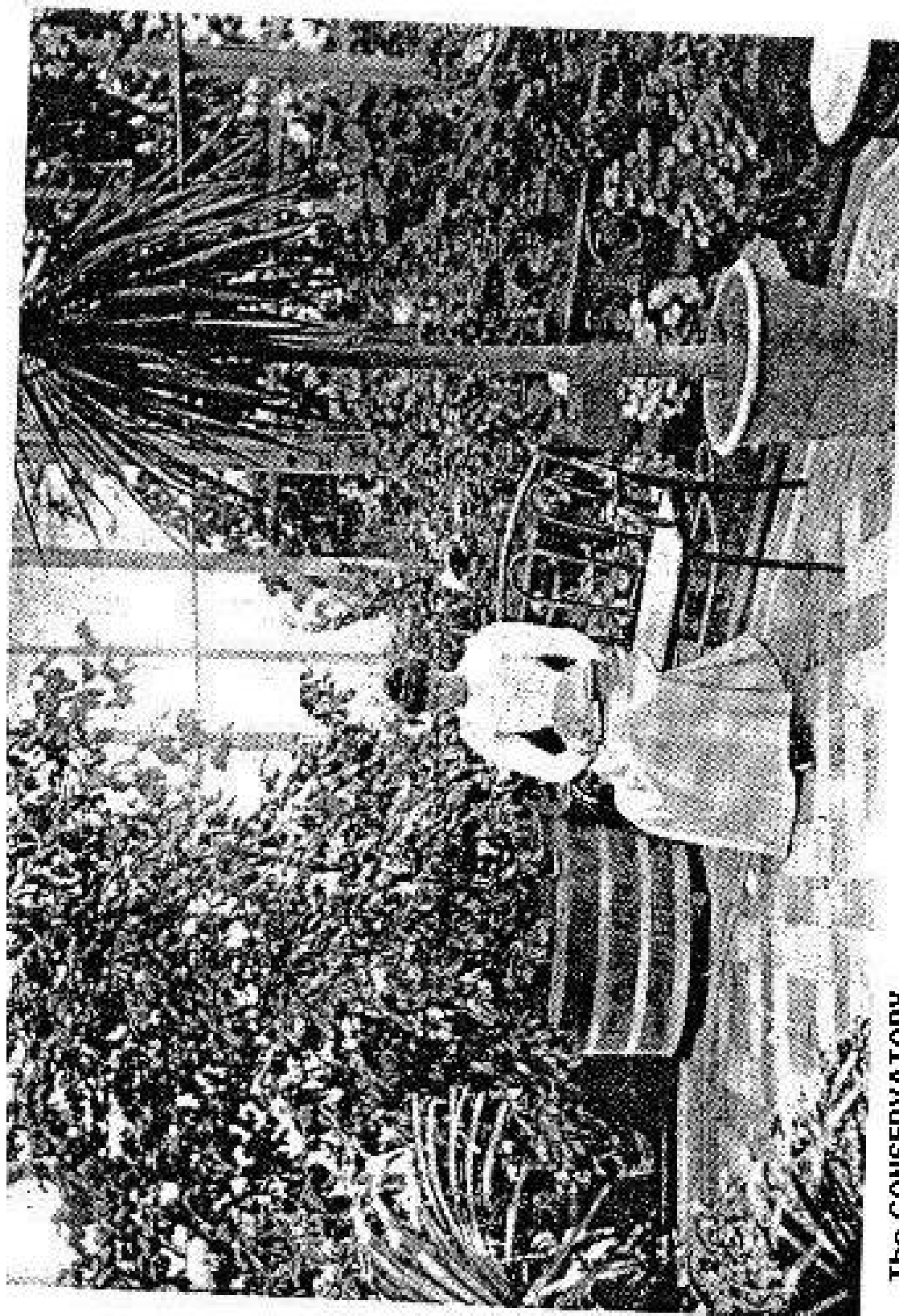
The Swimming Pool

THE SWIMMING POOL



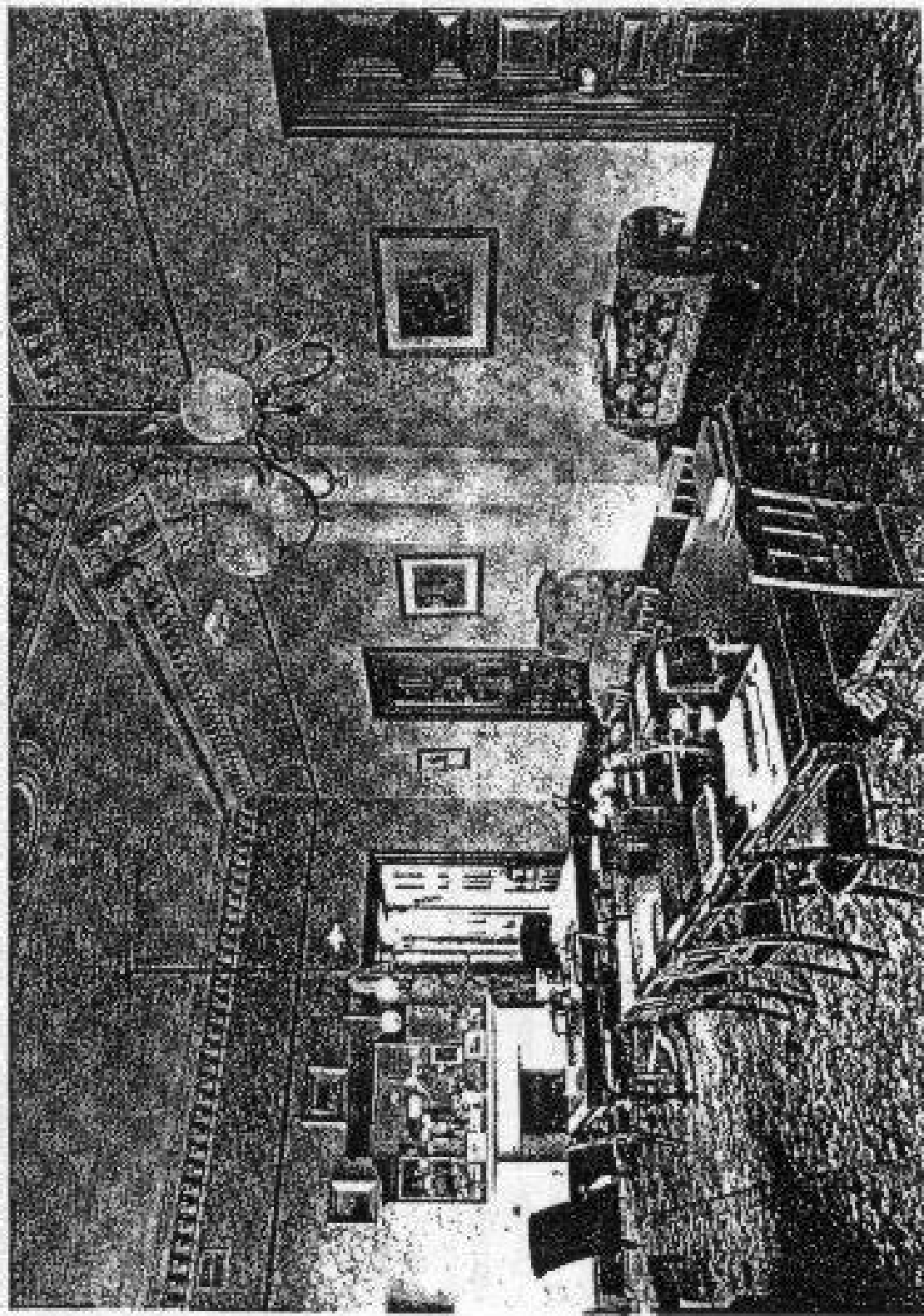
A BEDROOM

A Typical Bedroom

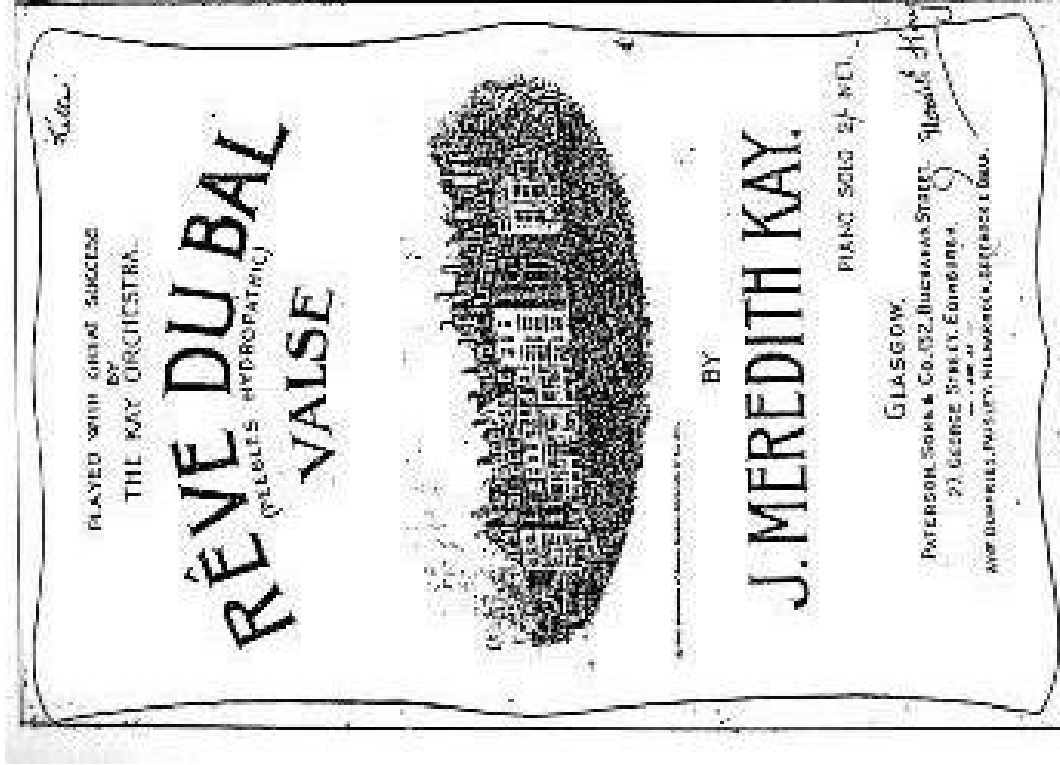


The CONSERVATORY

THE CONSERVATORY

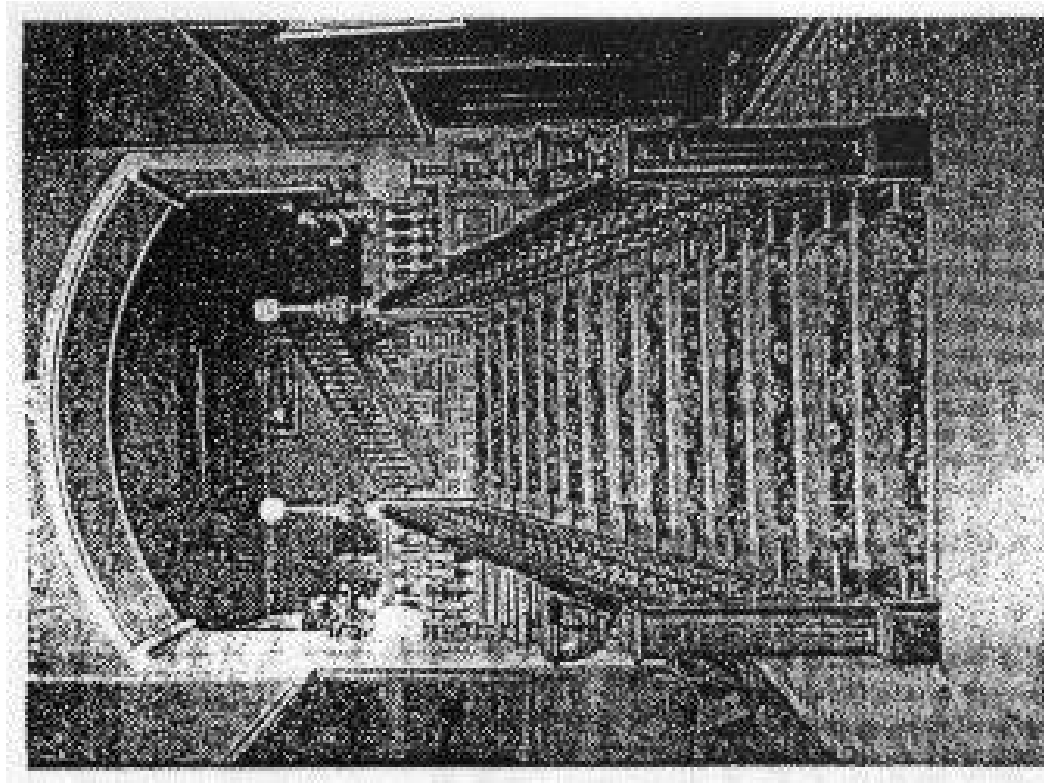


THE READING ROOM **The READING ROOM**



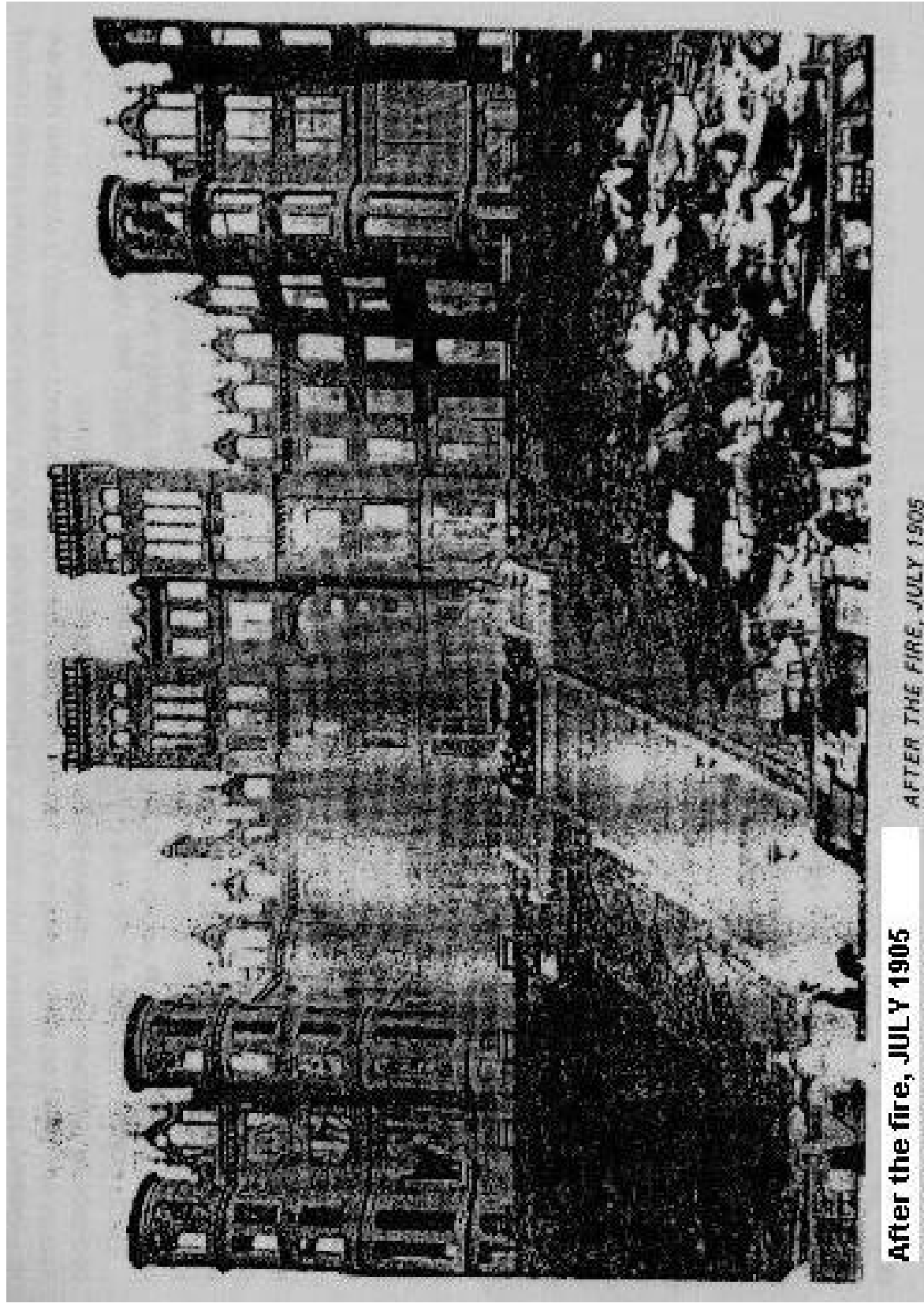
TITLE PAGE OF THE PEEBLES HYDRO WALTZ

Title Page of the PEEBLES HYDRO WALTZ



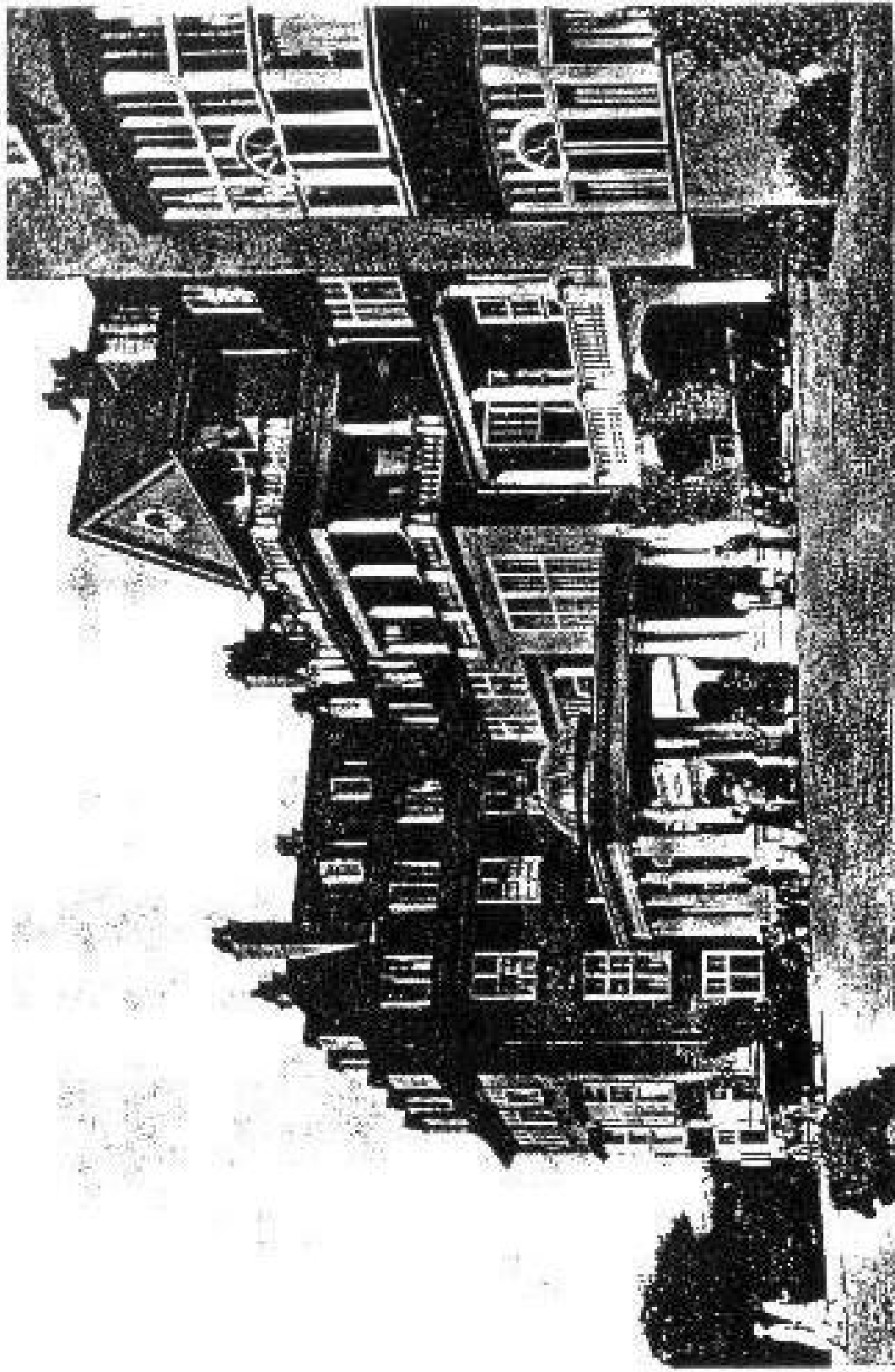
ENTRANCE HALL AND GRAND STAIRCASE

Entrance Hall and Grand Staircase



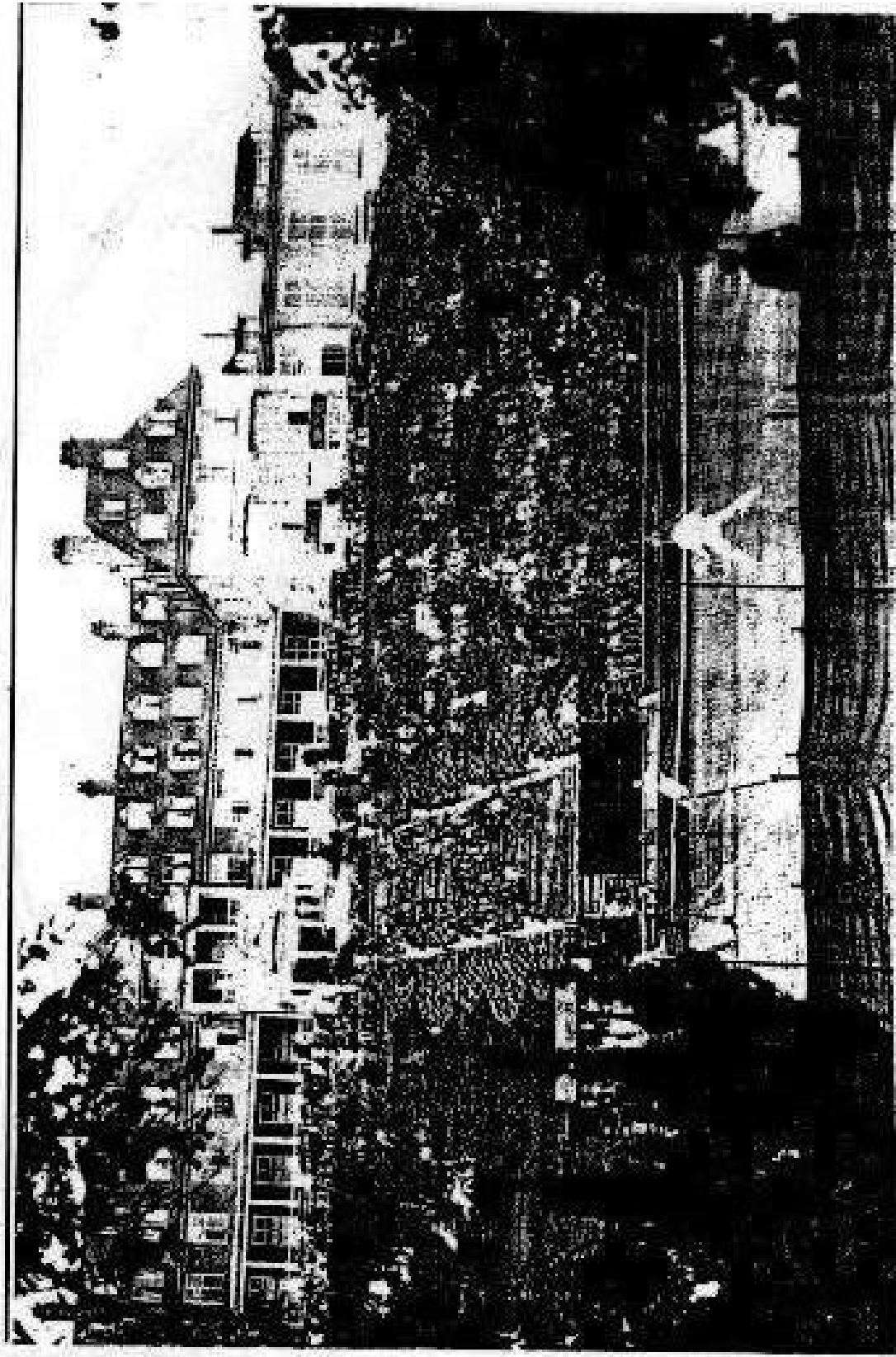
After the fire, JULY 1905

AFTER THE FIRE, JULY 1905



The HYDRO on the Twenties

THE HYDRO ON THE TWENTIES



A Tennis Match in the Thirties *A TENNIS MATCH IN THE THIRTIES*