



Founder's Lecture 2016

Professor Sir Brian Harrison, FBA

'The history of the future'

THE HISTORY OF THE FUTURE

PHASE 1: THE AFTERLIFE AS INSPIRATION (c.1600-c.1800)

religion & politics inseparable
mercantilism enthroned

PHASE 2: SELF-HELP FACILITATES A 'HEAVEN BELOW' (c.1800-c.1900)

industrialization loosens up change in all areas
from mercantilism to free trade
Liberal Party 'opens windows'
respectability pursued
'making of the English middle class'

PHASE 3: FROM INDIVIDUALIST UTOPIA TO STATIST DYSTOPIA? (c.1900-c.2000)

urbanization & industrialization demand an expanding central state
growth of government expertise & personnel
utopian inspiration for early labour movement: Owen, Morris, Bellamy
help from projecting existing trends forward
BUT difficulties abound: hence crises of 1960s & 1970s
dystopias advance (Forster, Huxley, Orwell) as utopias retire
but dystopias have much in common with utopias
and politicians deserve to be defended against both

PHASE 4: AN ALL-ABSORBING PRESENT

accelerating media-driven preoccupation with the present
ongoing secularization of an earth-bound future
apologies for the past yoked to mortgaging of the future
science fiction and 'futures studies' no guide to the future
despite H.G.Wells's enthusiasm, they remain defensive in mood
like historians, they depend inevitably on documents from the past



'London street corner on Sunday morning'

1856 Illustrated London News

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The Savings Bank and the Losing Bank
J. W. Kirton 'Four Pillars of Temperance' (1865)

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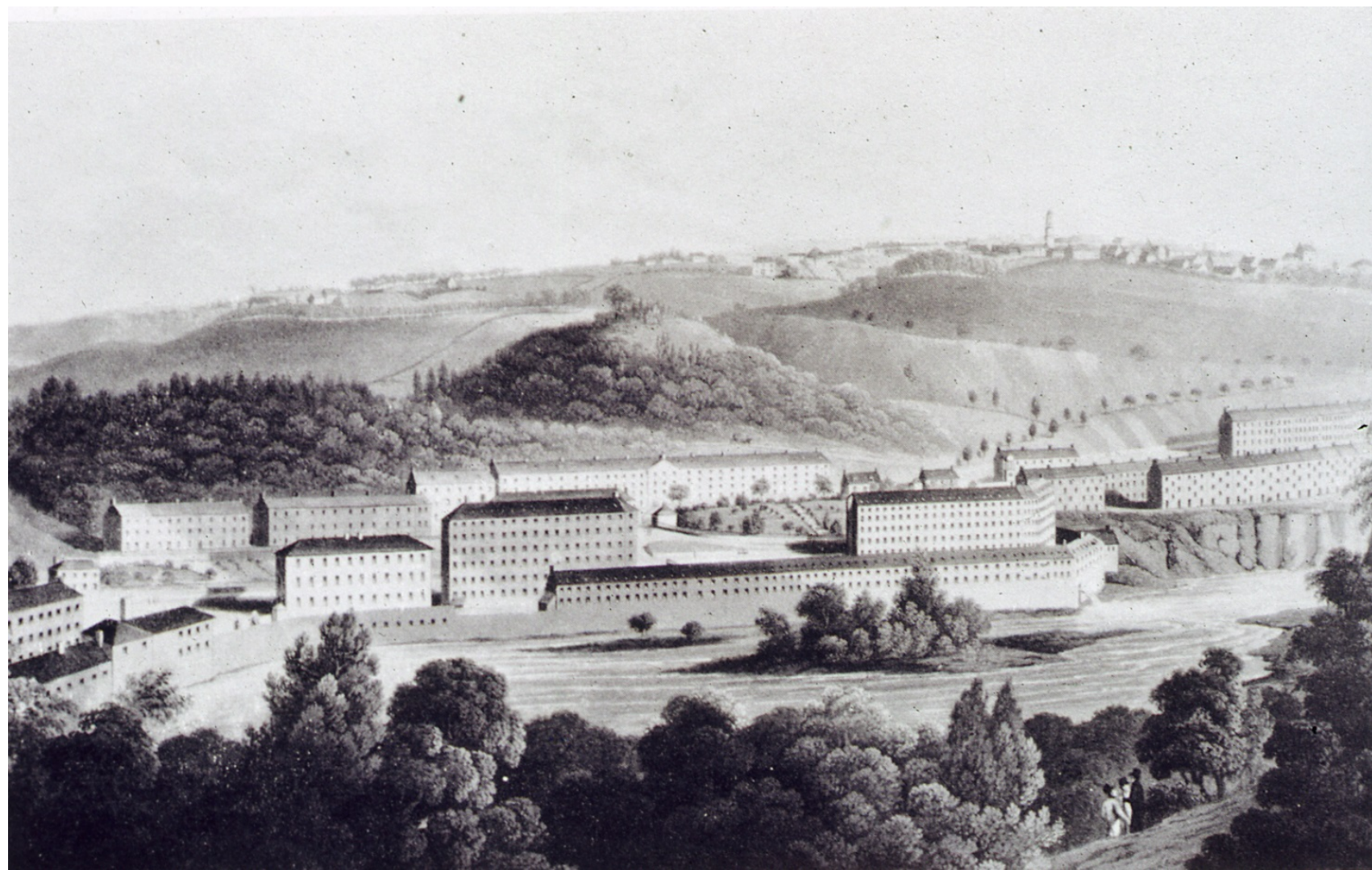
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'Is it all right now Henry?'
'Yes, not even scratched'

Daily Express November 1940

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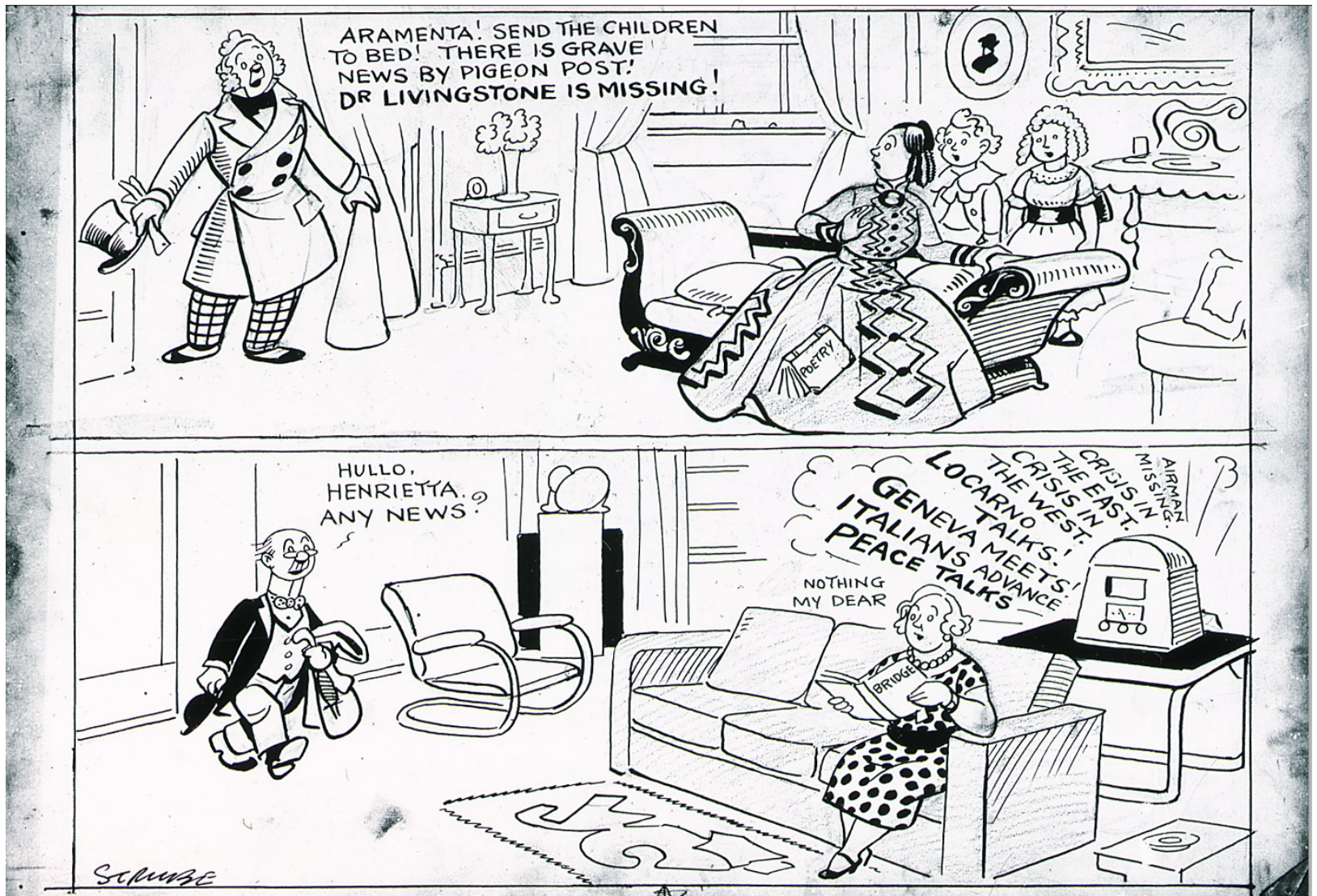
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16 April 1936

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