Contemporary Writings about the Great Exhibition

Most of the following bibliographical items and their annotations have been taken from Charlotte Crack Green’s 1978 Ohio State University Ph.D. dissertation, “The Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Mid-Century Works of Dickens, Kingsley, and Carlyle.”

An Address to Foreigners Visiting the Great Exhibition of Arts in London 1851. The Scriptures and the Sabbath in England. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1851. This “12-page tract urges foreigners visiting the Exhibition to keep the Sabbath” and specifically to “avoid traveling or arriving on Sunday-schedule meals so as not to prevent waiters from attending services; avoid doing errands on Sunday.” Copy in British Library, London.

“All the World and His Wife; or, What Brought Everybody to London in 1851.” The New Monthly Magazine and Humorist. n.s. Serial beginning March 1851, p. 269. Copy in Ohio State University Library.

Alphabetical Epitome of the Great Exhibition, 1851. London, 1861. Introductory note states that, “The following Alphabetical Epitome of the principal events of the first Great Exhibition year, 1851, was written soon after their occurrence and was not intended for publication, but it is not without interest now that another Exhibition is in the course of formation after the interval of a Decade.” Copy in British Library, London.


Brother Jonathan’s epistle to his relations on both sides of the Atlantic, but chiefly to his father, John Bull, Brother Jonathan being a leetle riled by the remarks made by John Bull at his small wares displayed at the opening of the Grand Exhibition. Boston: White and Potter, Printers, 1852. The John Hay library for special collections at Brown University has a copy of this 25-page doggerel poem.

Burnet, Richard. To Her Majesty’s Commissioners For the Exhibition 1851. (Letters published in the Devonport Telegraph, 1841). London, 1850. To establish that the Devonport Mechanics Institute had conceived of such an exhibition 3 or 4 years before Mr. Scott Russell or Mr. Whishaw. Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum Library, London.
Chaff; or, The Yankee and Nigger at the Exhibition. A reading Farce in two Acts. London: Edward Stanford, 1853. A “nigger-hating” Yankee rents a room in London, only to discover that he is to share the room with Gumbo Jumbo, a black missionary fled from the South to the happy climate Exeter Hall. Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.


An Elegy for the Crystal Palace, Adapted from Gray. Supposed to be written in Hyde Park, 31st May, 1852. London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1852. A nine-page poem. According to the Preface: “The only apology for attempting to parody Gray’s beautiful Elegy, must be the anxious
desire of the Author to assist in preserving that useful and splendid building—The Crystal Palace, for the benefit of the public.” Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.

**Excelsior. The Dial of the World, 1851. London: Ward and Co., 1851.** A religious pamphlet in 26 pages, whose main argument is summed up in the sentence: “The Inexhibitible, then, must never be forgotten, amidst all the attractions and wonders of the Exhibited or Exhibitable.” Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.


**Fireside Pacts from the Great Exhibition. Object Lesson on the Food and Clothing [of] All Nations. Object Lessons from the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations. London, 1851.** The Introduction mentions that the same author wrote “Little Henry’s Holiday,” also about the Exhibition. Page 16 mentions “Pleasant Pages” by the same author. The book takes the form of a conversation between Papa and children—in which he explains displays in the Exhibition, asking them to figure out more facts and explanations by reasoning from what he tells them and from what they already know. Together they classify (for example) the types of food by climate (tropical, temperate, arctic) and by family (corn plants, spices, leguminous plants, meats, etc.). After each discussion a child summarizes all facts into an “Object lesson” to be memorized. This work demonstrates popular attitudes towards the educational role of the Exhibition. Copy in British Library, London.

**First Report of the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851, to Right Hon. Spencer Horatio Walpole, etc. etc., One of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State. London: Spicer Brothers, 1852.** Copy in British Library, London.

**Franklin, Robert. Wanderings In the Crystal Palace. London: Houlston and Stoneman, n.d.** A poem of 24 pages by an author from Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire. In preface, the author claims to be a “very humble working man” and craves the public’s indulgence for his “present effusions” which have been “written from the best and purest motives.” Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.

**O Ful, Tru, un Pertikler Okeawnt o Bwoth Wat Aw Seed un Wat Aw Yerd, We Gooin too Th’ Greyt Eggshibishun, e Lundun, Un o greyt deyle o Hinurmashun besoide, wele kalkilated fur to giv thoose foke o Gradely Hinset Hinto things, us Hassent ad Nothur Toime Nur Brass Fur to Goo un see fur thersels, be o Felley fro Rachde. 1851. 3rd Ed. Rachde: Wrigley un Son, 1856.** A story in 82 pp., entirely in phonetic spelling. As much about the trip to London as about the Exhibition. Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.

**Gascoyne, Mrs. M. Belgravia. A Poem. London: Charles Westerton, 1851.** A 79-page poem in high-style heroic couplet. Mostly about Belgravian life: the rise of the rich neighborhood; comparison of the gracious old gentry with the crass nouveau riche; satire about girls setting their fashionable caps for dukes and earls; a long panegyric against Popery as the priests invade the
secure English fold; the money-hungry renting out of rooms during the Exhibition year. Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.


**Exhibition 1851—Tickets, Songs, etc.** A scrapbook volume devoted to Exhibition material. A note on the first page, signed by Sir C. Wentworth Dilke, reads “A few more papers connected with the Exhibition of 1851.” 55 pages. Includes views of the Exhibition printed on transparent blue and red plastic cards; views printed on heavy paper cards; 9 different styles of stationery embossed with Crystal Palace designs; woven silk-like mementos of the Exhibition; and twenty different street ballads (some in 3 or 4 editions from different cities). Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.


**Industrial Exhibition Remembrancer. London, 1851.** A card, 2 7/8 x 4 inches, issued as a memento. Has a map of the ground plan of the Crystal Palace, noting stairs, entrances, and exits. On the reverse, it has space for noting lodging, traveling expenses; month and date of attendance; and articles which attracted the holder's particular attention. The same card is also represented in German and in French. Copy in British Library, London.


**Martin. The Exhibition Poem (published by the author at his residence, Rose Cottage, Grove St., Hackney).** Grandiose poem in twenty pages, in praise of the Exhibition. Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.

**Mayhew, Henry, and George Cruikshank. 1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family, Who Came up to London to "Enjoy Themselves," and to See the Great Exhibition. London: David Bogue Co., 1851.** Lively novel in 242 pages, with 9 engravings by George Cruikshank. A yeoman sheepfarmer from Cumberland reluctantly takes his wife and two children to London to see the Exhibition after discovering the difficulty of village life without any shopkeepers (all had gone off to London). He has every misadventure imaginable—catching wrong trains, losing tickets, falling victim to con men, losing money, lodging among shocking Frenchmen.
This is the best and most complete account of the Exhibition in fiction. Copy in Ohio State University Library.


Placards Exhibited in Conspicuous Places Within the Crystal Palace, designed to Forward one of the Grand Objects of the Royal Commission—Warmly Responded to by The Queen, and Suitable dwelt Upon by the Archbishop, viz:—“The Strengthening the Bonds of Peace and Friendship Among All Nations of the Earth.” London, 1851. Poems are unsigned, but the Catalogue of the British Library attributes them to John Harris. Copy in British Library, London.


Punch’s Comic Guide to the Exhibition, Showing how to see Everything that is in London, as well as a great deal that is not. An Immense number of Comic Engravings. London: W. S. Johnson, 1851. A comic take-off on history, filled with puns and with gibes at English ways. The book includes a guide to things to see in the city, along with satirical comment. Copy in British Library, London.

The Theology and Morality of the Great Exhibition, As Set Forth in Certain Leading Articles Which have Lately Appeared in “The Times” and “Record” Newspapers. By a Spiritual Watchman of the Church of England. London, 1851. A bound pamphlet of 18 pages, carrying as headnote the description of Vanity Fair from Bunyan’s Pilgrim's Progress. It describes the goods in the Crystal Palace as vanities, and complains that the “ware of Rome” is greatly promoted in this fair (particularly in the Medieval court). Copy in British Library, London.

The Trip to the Great Exhibition. (no publishing information). A story in 28 pages of the trip to the Exhibition made by Barnabas Blandydash, his wife, and daughter Leonora, in their pony cart—a journey of 70 miles. It is a satirical view of the proud country bumpkin/gentleman who came to the Exhibition, revealing his plans, his primping, his pride at taking his own cart rather than the railroad. It contains self-righteous ranting about Popery, and foreigners. Copy in Victoria and Albert Museum library, London.


