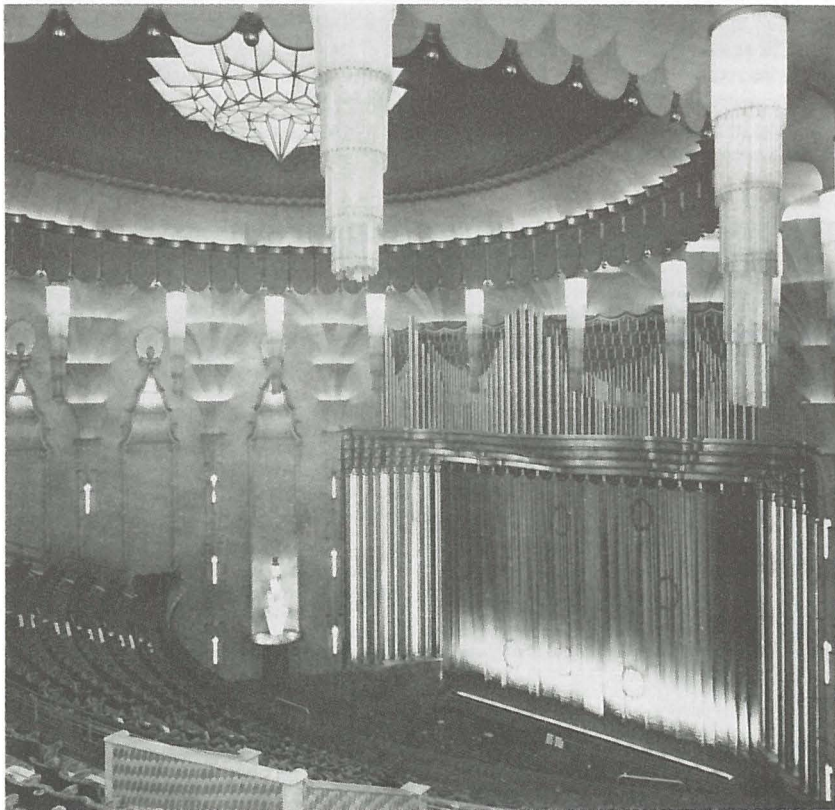




Picture 2.

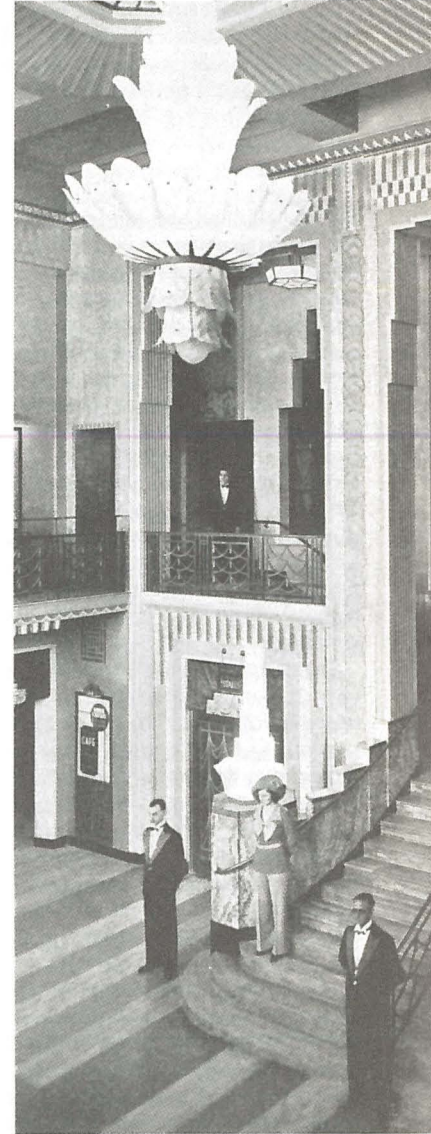


Picture 3.

goodness knows it is big enough? To my mind the answer to these questions is no! Let us take two other examples: the Titania Palast in Berlin and the Mermaid's Palace (otherwise New Victoria) in London. A glance at photographs 2 and 3 will confirm that call them what you may, it is 3 that really is a 'palace'. And yet both were designed and built in the late twenties. The truth is that whereas our own Wamsley Lewis was at home with the idea of fairies at the bottom of the garden or of the ocean; architects Schlöffler, Schönbach and Jacobi were not. The fact is that there is no word in the German language for 'fairy' — of the

Grimm context that is, of course! Here lies the secret of the recipe for a Palace; it has to belong to Fairyland or Ruritania. And both of these mean lots of tinsel, preferably of real gold, to sparkle and shine. The New Victoria has never been the same since the giant stalactite fittings around the dome were removed.

When one sees traces, or is told, of the lavish and colourful painting of our cathedrals in medieval times there is a sense of shock, of blasphemy. Even that 'pure' marble monument to classic architecture — the Parthenon — was, it is said, brightly painted and gilt. Are there no limits to



Picture 4.

which man (and persons too) can sink? Perhaps, we should put the question the other way round: What gave architects the idea that we *should* like large plain surfaces and the strict disciplines they impose? At the very time the owners and their architects were building the picture palaces which attracted the vast and regular audiences, a book was published whose author — P. Morton Shand — had not a good word to say for them. + And I agreed, then, with almost every word he wrote! His ideal was presented therein by a series of photographs mainly German and from Berlin. One of these is that of the Titania Palast used here. (2) The picture of the grand staircase at the head of this article (1) certainly did not come from his book.

I wonder what Mr. Shand would have said of the staircase at Buckingham Palace. Nickolas Pevsner + + declares that it is "one of the most impressive apartments in the palace". Of course, the buildings alone cannot make a palace, there must be flunkeys a-plenty. As the photo (4) of the art-deco Troxy in Stepney by George Coles proves such attendants were a feature in even the poorer parts of London's East End in 1933. In the days before the Talkies the staff of picture palaces also included a large