

Victoria's Representative Men at Home: Punch's Illustrated Interviews, by 'Lauderdale'

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Acquired 1987

The content of *Victoria's Representative Men at Home* originally appeared in the Melbourne *Punch* during 1903 and 1904 as illustrated interviews with the leading men of Melbourne – that is, those who had survived the blistering effects of the land boom and following depression of the 1890s. These men formed a new 'Establishment', with the ambition to reconcile the best traditional values with the surge of idealism arising from the federation of the Australian colonies. The public heard much about those ideals, but only rarely did it get an intimate glimpse into the homes and domestic lives of society's leaders. The 'snapshots' show how political, business and social leaders decorated their opulent homes and lived their domestic lives, leaving us to marvel, envy and perhaps to scorn.

The interviews were then published in book form by the Melbourne *Punch* office in 1904. Probably very few of the 50 copies issued remain in existence.¹ Printed on fine art paper by the old letterpress method from 'hot metal' linotype slugs and acid-etched zinc plates, the books were a high point of print production methods of the day.

About 40 years ago, before computers and electronic scanners became widely used, it seemed to me that the volume deserved a facsimile edition, similar to the large-format facsimiles of the *Australasian Sketcher* I had already produced. The main drawback was the high cost of commercially produced same-size lithographic film negatives necessary for offset printing.

I decided to buy a second-hand process camera to do this part of the work myself, and my son created a make-shift photographer's darkroom for me in an old timber shed at home. I borrowed a rare copy of the original book from its owners, John and Mary Wilbur-Ham, and night after night I 'shot' the pages and retouched the resulting images, and finally had the negatives ready for the printer. This large-format facsimile was published in 1977, the first part of a two-volume set titled *Australia's Upper Middle Class in the Edwardian Age*. The second volume in this set, *Our Beautiful Homes – NSW*,² is probably even rarer than *Victoria's Representative Men*.

The 500 sets of these volumes sold out. If there had been a book called *Australia's Representative Women* I would have reissued that, too, but those were different times.

Victoria's Representative Men at Home.

No. 1.—His Excellency the State Governor.

THE HONOURABLE GEORGE WYNDHAM, ESQUIRE, M.A., F.R.S., "STURMONTON" HOUSE.

THE HOUSE OF THE GOVERNOR is the most imposing residence in the colony... The Governor's residence is a large and imposing building... The Governor's residence is a large and imposing building...



"STURMONTON" HOUSE, THE STATE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE.



A CORNER OF THE DRAWING ROOM.



THE STUDY AND LIBRARY.

The Governor's residence is a large and imposing building... The Governor's residence is a large and imposing building... The Governor's residence is a large and imposing building...