



**ADVENTURES
IN
LONDON**

JAMES DOUGLAS

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8 H P. to A & B,

with all my love

ADVENTURES IN LONDON



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PORTRAIT BY PORTER HIGGINS

Yours sincerely
James Douglas

ADVENTURES IN LONDON

By
JAMES DOUGLAS



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TO
MY WIFE

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT the whale was to Jonah, London is to the Londoner. When I first set foot in London I felt as Jonah felt when he first set foot in his whale. I felt the sensation of being splendidly swallowed. For many years I have been walking up and down in my whale, feeling its sombre sides, groping along its gloomy ribs, and desperately trying to imagine what it is doing or dreaming as it voyages through the seas of time. After all my fumbling and stumbling I know as little about my London as Jonah knew about his whale. I have achieved a comfortable familiarity with a few of its streets and a few of its passions, but my familiarity is not tinged with contempt. It is the familiarity of fear.

Jonah may have despised the whale after he crawled out of its belly, but while he lived in its belly the whale was his universe. Its back to him was more awful than the spacious firmament on high. Its head and its tail to him were more majestic than the ends of the earth. What must have broken Jonah's heart was the august indifference of the whale. The whale did not know Jonah was there. He did not give the whale even an attack of indigestion. London is like that. It does not know you are there. It swallows and digests you as it swallows and digests millions of other small fry. Jonah may have beaten the whale with his fists and stamped upon it with his feet. He may have cursed it. Just so have many men beaten London and stamped on London and cursed

London as they writhed in its belly. But London is too huge to be hurt by a pigmy rage or a puny wrath; it can hardly feel a riot; it would scarcely notice an insurrection; it would ignore an earthquake.

London is so gigantic that she can see herself and feel herself only in fragments. Other towns know their own business, but London lives on vague rumours about herself. If she heard that a mile of her had been burnt, she would not trouble to go and look at her own ashes. She would send a New Zealander to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's from a broken arch of London Bridge. If she were told that the House of Commons had been blown into the Thames, she would not miss it from her oblivious heart. The insensibility of London is more dreadful than the insensibility of the sea. The indifference of London is more dire than the indifference of the Sahara. The sea is made out of drops of salt water, but London is made out of human tears. The Sahara is made out of blown grains of sand, but London is made out of the blown souls of men. The impassivity of dead matter is a very horrible thing, so horrible that you would go mad if you thought steadily about the stars. But the impassivity of the living millions of living London is infinitely more horrible. It is the tragedy of a dead soul in a quick body. You can touch the living body of London that lies stretched out from one horizon to another, you can hear the beating of its heart of hearts, you can see the sulphurous breath of its smoke-blackened lungs, but you cannot feel its soul, for it is a city without a soul, a nation without a nationality, an energy without a will.

There is a flower called London Pride, but where is the Pride of London? In vain do visionaries strive to lash London into a civic vitality. London maintains her stony lethargy.

Against her granite vastness our visions break into spray, and our dreams are shattered into vapour on her league-long bastions. No passion is powerful enough to fuse her massed towns into a glowing glory of faith and purpose. She is a mighty city made out of many mean cities, an imperial metropolis made out of petty parishes. Her greatness is a chaos of trifles, and her immensity is a welter of splendid vulgarities. She is a kaleidoscope of broken glass and diamond-dust and powdered jewels, gorgeous as a whole, but squalid when they are spilt on the ground. She afflicts the imagination with a nightmare of smoking stone surging wearily against the sky, breaking sadly in grey billows over the shores of the inundated earth. No angel stands up out of the heaving waste of architecture to cry aloud its import and its aim, its grandeur and its grace.

London is too great to possess her soul. She means so much and so many things that she is meaningless. She is a Town of Towns, a City of Cities, an amorphous monster whose whole is greater than its parts, and yet not great enough to be unipersonal. A citizen of London is a citizen of Nowhere. A citizen of Bayswater or Battersea is a citizen of Nothing. London is too formlessly huge to love or to be loved, too vaguely vast to inspire devotion or to give allegiance. Her immeasurable girth baffles our affection and evades our caress. She is too big to belong to us and we are too small to belong to her. She is a wilderness without a conscience, a desert without an ideal, a solitude without a soul. What she needs is a dream large enough to strike along her brain and flush her limbs with passionate life, a colossal dream that would transcend her material necessities and weld her millions into one spiritual will. Dreamers have often dreamed that dream, dreamed it in an agony of pity and sympathy and yearning as they sat gazing down on the sorrowfully inarticu-

late city as Christ gazed down on Jerusalem. Dreams of social equality, dreams of brotherhood, dreams of beauty, dreams of tolerance, dreams of service and sacrifice—they rise and fade over London like her wreaths of smoke, they are coloured and discoloured like her clouds, they are beautiful in their rash unreality, lovely in their daring fragility. But some day the dreams of the generations of dreamers will come true, and the soul of London will be born.

In the meanwhile, we can but watch the enduring passion of London, with its titanic farce rising into a titanic comedy, and its titanic comedy rising into a titanic tragedy that defeats every analysis and defies every synthesis. No brush can paint the passion of London. All the bewildered spectator can do is to make little monuments of little moments. The great show hurries by and sheds only a faint image on the mirror of the mind, a blurred breath on the polished steel of the imagination. These adventures of mine are only a masque of driven shadows and ghostly mists. They are the footprints of forgotten sensations. They are the drops that the storm of London flings against the window-pane. They are tiny sparks blown out of the roaring furnace of her life, with its turmoil of work and pleasure, its tumult of hope and despair, its chorus of laughter and tears, its chant of delight and despair, its clamour of anger and resignation, its riot of terror and wonder, its war of wisdom and folly, its clash of men and things. They are the adventures of a vagrant wandering in a labyrinth of sensations, some of them ephemeral, but most of them a part of the ordinary life of the ordinary Londoner. What I have felt in my way most Londoners have felt in theirs, for the life of London is made out of my feelings and yours, and the passion of London is merely the passion of one man multiplied by six millions. The spectacle is bewildering, but I see it as

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you see it, darkly and dimly, and what I see I try to say. The movement of London may be meaningless, but at least it is amusing and at least it moves. There is some inscrutable energy behind the gestures of London, whether they are the gestures of the statesman on the platform or the gestures of the actor on the stage, whether they are the gestures of the hungry man who begs for bread or the gestures of the athlete striving for victory. Time is a gesture of eternity, and life is a gesture of time, and these little gestures of London are a part of the great gesticulation which is the universe.

MAINLY ABOUT MIST

ADVENTURES IN LONDON

IN THE FOG

I LOVE fog. I hate the Smoke Abatement Society. They want to rob the poor poet of his visions and the poor painter of his dreams. They are ready to sacrifice the whimsies of six mystics to the comfort of six millions. It is an outrage. A Whistler symphony is cheaply purchased at the price of six million sneezes. Fog costs London five millions a year. Is not a sonnet in smoke worth fifty millions? Is not a madrigal in mist worth a crore of rupees?

Let us sally forth into the fog that is blindfolding London. Yes, London is playing a gigantic game of Blindman's Buff. With one foot planted on the south side of the Thames, and the other on the north side, her left hand gropes round the Crystal Palace and her right hand fumbles at Harrow-on-the-Hill. Her broad, fair brows are bound with fog-wreaths. She is a ghostly maiden whose limbs shimmer through soft tissues of vaporous silver.

Let us walk up Fleet Street. It is fognoon. The newspaper offices are muffled to the eyes, and the Griffin at Temple Bar flaps its wings in the porous gloom. It is the Genius of Fog, breathing sulphurous breath up Ludgate Hill into the face of St. Paul's, choking the lawyers in Chancery-lane and the Temple, stifling Justice in the Law Courts, and turning everything into a dim fantasy.

The fog sprite is the only wizard left us. His enchantments defy the march of reason. He laughs at science. The Law Courts yesterday were new, hard, and hideous. Now they seem to be as old as the Tower, and they peer through

the mist like palaces of dream. Going down the Strand we see two great battleships plunging through the fog wall in single line ahead. They are the churches of St. Clement Danes and St. Mary le Strand. There is the stern wraith of Gladstone walking on waves of vapour, a violent sword gesticulating at his feet. In Aldwych there is a vast chasm of fog fenced with hoardings. The courtyard of Somerset House is a cauldron of boiling fumes and tormented phantoms that were statues once. The Gaiety Theatre looks gigantic in its mantle of mist. Its curves seem to stretch into infinity.

Waterloo-bridge is like the mouth of Hades spewing out of its formless lips a groaning multitude of vehicles, coming out of nowhere through nothing into nowhere. In an alcove a man is roasting chestnuts. He seems absurdly solid compared to these phantoms of men and horses. The bridge is like the bridge of Mirza, for the ghosts seem to fall through broken arches into the river that seems to be a fog moving under a fog, as one cloud moves under another.

Down the greasy steps we dive, and wander along the Embankment. Leaning over the parapet we see the flat surface of the water sliding stealthily along. It is caked and crusted with the breath of the fog, for the fog breathes on it as you breathe on a polished mirror, filming its fluent shield with slimy whorls and trails and spirals. Through the fog a sea-gull flies like a shadow, and in the blurred water casts a shadow of a shadow. But for the rough, cold, hard granite under our elbows we should doubt the reality of the bird and its shadow, and of the river that seems to be the shadow of the fog.

Life is very vague here. Cleopatra's Needle floats elusively in the grey like a spectre on the wharves of Acheron. Its sphinxlets smile their bland satiric smile, and protrude their malignantly placid paws. A green, iridescent sheen shifts in the hollows of their brazen haunches. They look like evil monsters that have crept out of the curdling leprosy of the Stygian stream below.

But a band of sparrows dispels our vision, and our eyes

rest with delight on a white sea-mew nestling on the water, its snowy plumage unsoiled by watery fog or foggy water. It is a symbol of humanity drifting through the fog of life along the river of death.

Up the steps we climb and we walk along to Hungerford-bridge. We meet the Witch of Endor, an old woman in a rusty cloak, bent double on two crutches, and carrying three leathern wallets that are doubtless full of spells and charms, love philtres and potions, poisons and talismans, waxen men and candles made of human fat. Only in the fog shall you encounter such.

Again the sombre water draws us into a dream. Without a ripple it flows under the fading arches, flecked with flotsam and jetsam, sullenly dreering its weird in a sad silence that is shattered now and then by the stroke of a distant hammer, by faint fog-signals, sounding against the background of the muted traffic-moan of London. Suddenly a dog barks incongruously, and then through the grey vagueness a grotesque lion appears, as if some giant had cut it with great scissors out of the fog. For a moment we stare at it in stupefaction, and then we remember the lion on the roof of the Brewery. Griffins, sphinxlets, dogs, and lions are strange beasts when you meet them in a mist.

But now Charon himself breaks through the gloom. He is standing in the bows of his shadowy barge, pulling two gigantic oars that dip with a soft plash in the phantom river. But the Ferryman has no passengers; his face is pink, and a white collar gleams coldly under his chin. Does Charon wear a collar? Look! What is that shadowy shallop shooting out of the arch? It is a Thames police boat, patrolling in the fog for casual suicides. Are there many? A fog-bound policeman tells us that there are few suicides in winter. The water is colder than life!

Back across the bridge we go, down the steps, past the Playhouse and Charing-cross station, up Northumberland Avenue into a Trafalgar Square that is peopled with ghosts of kings and generals. Charles I. on his long-tailed charger

and Gordon with his folded arms seem to be listening to the music of the invisible fountains. The National Gallery looks like a cardboard toy. The Nelson column is strangely unsubstantial, a shaft of shadow without beginning or end, base or apex, a mere slit in the curtain of fog.

In Leicester Square the leafless trees are sharply silhouetted against the grey, and the Mauresque façade of the Alhambra glimmers romantically through the fog-rack. In Piccadilly Circus Gilbert's Mercury seems to be hurrying over the clouds with a billet-doux to Leda. Frail, fragile, and filmy seem the hansoms and omnibuses that stumble along Regent Street. The finger of the fog dissolves the most solid realities. Even the London policeman it turns into a faint, wan phantom, a belted ghost.

STORM BEFORE SUNRISE

BED is the safest place except the grave. When you are in bed you know that you cannot be killed by a motor-car. Therefore as a rule your mind is at rest when you are in bed. The only peril which threatens you in bed is lightning. The other night I was roused out of my slumbers by lightning of the most intrusive brand. I tried to ignore it for some minutes, but at last I found it was useless to pretend any longer that I was asleep; so I opened my eyes and watched the lightning.

I have seen all sorts of lightning in all sorts of places. I have seen lightning on the top of a mountain. I have seen lightning at sea. But this lightning was the most vicious lightning I ever saw. It seemed to light up my brain as well as the sky. It seemed to trickle along my nerves and down my spine. Perhaps I was in a supersensitive state of mind and soul, but I confess the lightning worried me and vexed me and irritated me.

At last I could bear it no longer, so I got up and watched the pranks of the lightning. From my window I could see a vast tract of sky. The lightning was busy all over it. Sometimes it swept over the sky in a soft wash of shining flame, making all the clouds seem as solid as houses. Tidal lightning is not terrifying. It wears a benignant and benevolent aspect, as if some good-humoured electrician were manipulating a gigantic limelight in the clouds. The thunder was dim and distant. It rolled and rumbled lazily, and to the ear it seemed like a misty range of remote mountains, dark peaks and ridges rising and falling in a continuous rhythm of muffled sound.

But gradually the reverberating ranges came nearer, the noise grew sharper and clearer. Then the lightning began to fork itself. Jagged spurts of yellow fire began to blaze in

all directions. The blackness of the night was roughly torn into horrible rents of darting flame. The silence seemed to thicken until it became almost a tangible thing, a kind of coarse texture that was split by the thunder. The thunder began to lose its soft, musical drum-note. It began to rip and crack, and I felt that it was exploding rather than booming. The lightning seemed to grow angrier, and the flashes gradually grew malignant and malevolent. There was a vehement caprice in their headlong riot. The space between the flashes grew less until they became continuous. The whole sky was alive with every variety of irregular fulguration. There were long flashes that seemed to run from the very height of heaven down to the chimney-pots that stood out against the sky. There were short fierce jabs of fire that looked like furious thrusts delivered by invisible swordsmen ambushed in banks of cloud.

As I watched the interplay of the flashes it seemed as if there were an army of giants waging an Armageddon in the air. The giants were fighting with swords a mile long, and as their great blades crossed and clashed the lightning sprang like sparks from steel. It was like a duel of gods. The lightnings were the swords of the gods and the thunder was the voice of their artillery. The clamour and tumult seemed strangely inhuman. I felt that man was not concerned in the conflict that raged in the firmament. The combatants were engaged in a combat which made the combats of men seem trivial and unimportant. The whole business of life appeared to be a little thing. Our civilization and its affairs were suddenly dwarfed and belittled by the savage forces let loose in the night.

As the lightning crept closer and closer I felt the presence of invisible danger. My eyes grew weary of the blinding illumination. I longed for the cool dark and the cool silence. The swift flame with its sharp speed seemed to brush my flesh as it plunged down the dizzy sky. The thunder seemed to split over my head, with a rasping, tearing violence that shook my nerves and made my heart sick with faintness. The din appeared to make the windows rattle and the very walls round me seemed to reel and totter. I began to wonder what I should

feel if the lightning struck me. I tried to argue against the possibility of being struck. I assured myself that death by lightning is a rare sort of death, and that the odds against my death by lightning were enormously great. But in spite of the reasonings of reason I felt a sharp terror creeping through my brain. Surely all that pageantry of peril could not be utterly innocuous. Surely somebody was being slain by some of those cruel spears of death. Although I knew that I was safe I felt horribly unsafe. The crashing of the thunder out-argued me. Mere noise is a thing against which reason is useless.

The thunder grew steadily noisier. It seemed more and more menacing, and as it roared in my ears my courage oozed away. I was indignant with myself for feeling afraid. I denounced myself as a coward. But nevertheless my cowardice grew, and I became feverishly impatient. I wished that the whole thing would stop. "How much longer is it going on?" I asked. I built up a great grievance in my soul. Why all this pother about nothing? Why could not the thunder thunder and the lightning lighten somewhere else, and let me alone? I actually resented the thing. I took it as a personal affront.

Then the rain came, and I welcomed the rain as if it were a friend. It fell like a lake edgeways in great silver showers through which the lightning played hide-and-seek. Amid my terror I found room for delight in the beauty of the illuminated rain that glittered like diamonds on fire. Slowly the rain seemed to sponge the lightning out of the sky. The thunder retreated sulkily and sullenly. Then a great darkness and a great silence crept across the sky. I felt the blackness and the stillness like the touch of a hand in the night. After a while the darkness began to whiten into dawn. The sky gradually paled and cleared, and an ineffable peace came lapping and lipping the roofs. The London sparrows began to twitter sleepily, and their twitterings sounded strangely soft and gentle and companionable after all the rattle and racket and riot of the storm.

Creeping back to bed, I felt utterly worn and weary. My head ached with noise and my eyes were hard and dry with the glare. My flesh was tired as if it had been beaten with rods. At last I fell asleep. Next morning I eagerly read the newspapers to see what damage had been done by the rioters of heaven. Nothing! All that row had been meaningless. Really, thunder and lightning are theatrical impostors. They overdo their business. The storm, after all, was only a storm in a teacup.

IN NUBIBUS

O! it is pleasant, with a heart at ease,
Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,
Or let the easily persuaded eyes
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould
Of a friend's fancy; or with head bent low
And cheek aslant see rivers flow of gold
'Twixt crimson banks; and then, a traveller, go
From mount to mount through Cloudland, gorgeous land!

THE roof of London is the loveliest in the world, yet few of our six million Londoners have ever seen it. They walk along the streets without lifting up their eyes to the most gorgeously painted ceiling that ever glorified mortal dreams and desires.

The sky is the only unexplored and unexploited region of the earth. The pageantry of sea and land has been lavishly painted by poets and prosemen, but the sky has been scurvily treated as a casual quarry for similists and metaphoricians. Now that the age of the airship has dawned, and man has tardily embarked upon the conquest of the kingdom of the clouds, it is time to protest against this immemorial ostracism. Wordsworth rediscovered the lyrical loveliness of the land. Swinburne rediscovered the lyrical loveliness of the sea. The world now waits for the advent of a great bard who shall rediscover the lyrical loveliness of the sky. If Swinburne had not dedicated his music to the sea, he might have been the laureate of the sky, but it is not given to even our prince of poets to become regent of the moving roof as well as regent of the moving floor.

The changeful splendours of the London sky are wrought out of the breath of her body, for her breath is smoke. Out of the myriad chambers in her great lungs she sends forth a mystery of wreathing shapes that are transfigured into innumerable fantasies by the light of the sun and moon and stars.

I marvel that a painter like Sir William Richmond should lead the vandals who long to banish the gnomes of smoke and the elves of fog, and who would cover London with a harsh canopy of steely blue, as blatantly brilliant as the roof of Paris and the ceiling of Rome. Let us worship our Lady of Smoke, our divinely grimy London, who scatters every day before our windows her largesse of filmy glory.

I hate the Philistines who seek to rob the London poet of the one realm which consoles him for the loss of the windy vistas of dale and valley, moor and mountain, hill and heather, shining river and flaw-roughened sea. I loathe a pure and vacant sky, a depopulated inane. The empty horror of the smokeless ether affrights me. I shrink from the bare, inhospitable wastes wherein the stars go voyaging in lonely splendour. Give me the homely curls and whorls of human smoke, the cursive vocabulary of mortal hearths, warm with the comedy and tragedy of men and women. I can decipher in these dissolving runes and melting hieroglyphs the chronicles of a million firesides, the abstracts and biographies of loves innumerable, of pathetic labouring souls, dark with failure or bright with obscure patience. Often our London sky flames like an old missal, illuminated with all the colours of the human comedy, and engrossed with the scripture of life.

It is this companionable friendship of the humanised sky that I love beyond the alien austerities of the smokeless air. It takes you with a tender embrace as you return from a sojourn amid the inhuman grandeurs of untempered Nature. The married comradeship of these chimnied and steepled clouds lessens your dread of the illimitable spaces that deride your little dreams. They shelter you from the irony of the stars. Eternity is broken into tolerable fragments by the assaulting towers and storming spires of London; and the upward surge of her billowing stones drowns the thunder of infinity. This celestial impermanence poised upon human permanence, heavenly change balanced upon mortal immutability, can calm and fortify the spirit troubled by its own unstable state, and the spectacle of enduring streets with hoary names

silhouetted against the vanishing brevity of skyey thoroughfares steadies the dizzy imagination.

The sense of beauty does not starve in London, for at any moment its hunger may be appeased by an upward glance at the travelling procession of atmospheric angels trailing their many-coloured robes from east to west. The vexed heart can escape from its prison of toil and pleasure in the twinkling of an eye. The fretted brain can set a tiny nerve in motion and soothe its lassitude with fairy shapes and hues beyond the divinest dreams of man. For London is the supreme alchemist of beauty who can transmute the heavy lead of reality into the filigree gold of romance.

Can the average sensual man see these aerial epics? Well, I think we all underrate the romantic spark in ourselves and in others. We conceal our wonder and mask our imagination. It is habitude. We are wont to keep our eyes low. We do not welcome the spiritual surprise of the white Alps that soar above the Strand, the unclimbed peaks that look down upon Pall Mall. We do not bathe in the Mediterranean waters whose foam-flecked blue washes Saffron Hill and the straits of Little Italy. But these delights are ours if we look up between the gorges and ravines of brick and stone into the unsoilable heavens.

For most of us sunrises are luxuries. Have you ever seen a London sunrise? Have you walked through the streets during a long summer dawn? Have you seen London sloughing the night, her lamps paling slowly in the pearly, luminous whiteness that creeps out of the grey like an angel out of the arms of a ghost? Have you overheard the colourless silences that seem to fall like invisible snowflakes of soundless sound on the roofs of the sleeping houses and the dust of the desolate streets?

Well, perhaps these ecstasies are for the few. But the sunsets of London are for us all. There are many ways of seeing them. I like to watch them from any of the bridges across the Thames between Richmond and the Tower. The Serpentine bridge is also an ideal haunt for the lover of sun-

sets, for you can watch the clouds over a tender foreground of water and trees and roofs. But it is best to let the London sunset ravish you unawares, on foot, at a window, in a train, or on the top of a 'bus. Perhaps the 'bus is the best of all. I love the 'bus. If the hansom is the London gondola, the 'bus is the London galleon. Do not travel inside a 'bus. Outside is the place, and I like it better than the box-seat on a coach. Seated high above the crawling traffic, you can breathe the bracing air and see the wonderful clouds from the Bank to the World's End. Many a magical sunset may be seen from the 'bus going westward along Holborn and Oxford Street, along Piccadilly and the Knightsbridge Road, violent conflagrations of the sky roaring and seething strangely above the familiar jingling of hansom bells, the clear clatter of iron-shod hoofs, the rattle of harness, the hoot of motor horns, the cries of news-boys, and the dumb-show of pedestrians.

MAINLY ABOUT HOLIDAYS

HAMPSTEAD HEATH

Come, come, come and make eyes at me,
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.
Come, come, drink some port wine with me,
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.
Hear the little German Band,
Just let me hold your hand,
De-e-e-ar!
Do, do, come and have a drink or two.
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.

SING hey for Whit Monday on Hampstead Heath! Here is your true Bartholomew Fair, the fat humour of jolly London rolling between green leaves and green grass, richly tickled with the great cockney joke of being alive.

Hard by Jack Straw's Castle the holiday harlequinade is at its hottest, and we are bewildered by the grotesquery of this cauldron boiling and bubbling over with variegated faces; health jostling disease, filth elbowing freshness; maids in snowy muslin beside hags in rags; rosy, high-collared clerks; new-shaven workmen; natty, bepowdered shopgirls; greasy knaves and grimy rogues; nursemaids in fragrant butcher's blue with stainless children, and trollops trailing muddy urchins. Heartily Dame Nature stirs this broth-pot of humanity, and as she lets its multifarious odour steam into the nostrils of the sun, the Gargantuan paunch of St. Paul's at our feet seems to shake with laughter, and the far under-growl of London mellows into a gigantic chuckle.

Grotesque is the multitude, and still more grotesque its food and drink. No roast oxen, no boar's head, no fountains spouting wine, but a chaos of comic comestibles, jaundiced plumcake, bananas, oranges, hunks of bread, torrents of sickly biscuits, glass tubs of amber lemonade siphoned sweating into tumblers, forged ales, and terrible tea; ghastly sweetmeats,

and fearful shellfish fainting in the dust and heat; American maizypop, livid ices, and that good democratic champagne, ginger beer.

Grotesque, too, are our amusements. Paramount is the hairy cocoanut, astonished target of many missiles. Like a gibbet rises the Strengthometer, luring Thor to wield the hammer and ring the bell that registers 1,760 units of virility. "The Game of Fair Play" is seductive. Eight skittles encircle a pillar from whose crest hangs a ball. You set the ball swinging round the pillar. It curls and uncurls itself, and "every time you hit the 8 you get a penny." Has anybody ever hit the "8"? Behold the noble game of "Hand Billiards!" There, too, is the pigeon-hole game. Round a horizontal nest of pigeon-holes ramps an orgy of felonious delf and criminal crockery. If you can pot a ball, you can choose a crime. A wisp of a man is bowling with the craft of a Bosanquet. He does the hat trick, and promptly sells his three prizes to the dejected proprietress for eighteenpence and three balls. Footer, too, is possible. You kick a tethered football through a hole in a screen. Fiercest is the fun round the living target, a grinning black face thrust through a hole in a white sheet, at which you may hurl three balls for a penny.

But all these delights shrivel as you reach the heart and hub of the lusty carnival. Towering high above a swaying tide of heads are three polychromatic booths "ranged in royal rank a-row." One is the Palace of Pugilism, where you may see "The Hero of Two Hundred Fights," and sigh over the vanished splendour of the Ring.

Beside the last of the bruisers is the latest tremor of modernity, the cinematograph. We pay our twopence and plunge into the dark tent. ("Don't!") A battlefield shivers on the sheet. ("How dare you?") The wounded are neatly arranged in rows—"Oh-h-h!"—and over each man bends a neat nurse in spotless uniform—(*Disturbance*)—her cap streamers fluttering in the breeze. (*Loud Kisses.*)

All this is humorous, but the highest flight of comedy is the gaudy menagerie, with its thunder-throated steam organ,

whose iron cadences batter out of hearing all rival bales and blasts of sound. On the platform stands the showman; mole-skin jacket with leopard skin collar; oiled curls; saw-voice tearingly vociferous. A rouged girl dances absently, her physical agility colliding violently with her inert and weary gaze. Her bespangled skirt of flaming plush shows a thready fringe of lamentable lingerie, and she wears white buckskin boots laced nearly knee-high. On each side of her are living gargoyles, down whose cheeks run rivers of grease-paint. One clown belabours a drum, and between the drum and the steam-organ stands on one leg a dirty stuffed pelican which crowns the incongruity of all this violently exploding movement and colour and sound.

I mount the steps, and as I pass the stuffed bird I start. It is not stuffed. It is alive. Its small, cold, round eye is open, and as I stare it winks. For me the whole bacchanal is focussed in the pelican's impassive eye. The organ shrieks, the drum blatters, the crowd sways and sweats; yet this abominable dusty bird stands on its webbed foot immovably aloof, imperturbably disdainful, stiff and still as stone, an image of carven scorn.

And so into the menagerie, where I find the pelican's haughty indifference duplicated in every cage. Two doleful dromedaries gaze at us in velvet-eyed contempt flecked with pity. A row of seedy waxworks glare with glassy curiosity, making us wonder whether they have paid twopence to see us. Monkeys lounge and loll beside a dingo dog; a mournful half-bald lion blinks blearily behind his bars; a blasé bear wobbles rhythmically like a furry pendulum; a wan and weary wolf yawns at a bored hyena. Also, behind a curtain, "The Giant Rat and the Bloodsucker"—a luscious pennyworth of horror.

But enough! It is time to obey the call chorussed in our ears all day. Let us go to "the old Bull and Bush." We trudge along the Spaniards Road, meeting melodious mænads, with arms interlaced, dancing four abreast. We pass performing soldier-dogs, one, with grey moustache, ludicrously

like "Bobs." Here a sturdy fellow, with beer-glazed eyes, marches along playing a mouth-organ.

Now the riot and the revel smite ear and eye amain. It is the "Bull and Bush." An organ-grinder is grinding out the "Come, Come" chorus, and inside a packed ring (like the quadrille rings in Paris) four laughing girls are dancing daintily. Their hats feathered from brow to ear; their hair stuffed out in huge rolls over either cheek; their velvet gowns delicately lifted to show the stiff starched white petticoat; round their plump throats massy pearl necklaces; in their ears ponderous earrings; their young faces flushed, their eyes bright with gaiety; their tiny feet delicately shod, toes pointed, heels high and curved—they are the fairest and freshest of naiads and dryads. Under the tightening cambric bodice the young bosom swells as the lithe young body sways back in a wild cake-walk. "Go on, Annie!" cries a cockney youth. The dancers shriek and laugh and sing. The wine of life is on their rosy lips. In them we see the rhythmic undulation of all the passions in the world. We catch the old ecstasy that is always young. As for me, my eyes fill with hot tears, my flesh tingles with wonder. I see the eternal romance of eternal life while the organ gurgles into a languid waltz, and the couples swing and sway with half-closed eyes.

As I depart I see a poor hunchback under a dusty tree. He is teasing a tethered donkey. Oh, my brethren, the mad pity and the wild beauty of you and me!

RECOVERING FROM WHITSUNTIDE

WHITSUNTIDE is over, and at this moment several million hearts are bowed down. If I were asked to say what is the most miserable in the life of a man, I should reply that it is the mood in which a man comes back from a brief holiday. It is easy to return to the desk after a long holiday. You have tired yourself out with amusement, and you feel a blithe relief at the prospect of flinging yourself into your daily round and common task. Work has become almost a novelty to your sated soul. The long days on the beach or the moor have grown wearisome, and the strain of protracted idleness has become unbearable. You yearn to escape from the monotony of indolence and the perpetual proximity of your friends. The holiday appetite does not grow with eating. It is glutted with frivolity and cloyed with piers and Pierrots. But the Whitsuntide holiday is not long enough to satiate the pleasure-seeker. He has not had time to turn away with disgust from the feast of liberty. He is torn from the joy of doing nothing before he has begun to fret and fume at the bore of having nothing to do. He is a slave who has not discovered the tedium of freedom. For a few jolly days he has tried to forget the existence of his chain, but just as he is beginning to succeed it is suddenly tightened, and the tyrant of duty drags him back from the sea-front, the golf-links, or the trout-stream. With a groan he returns, and unpacks his portmanteau with a bilious frown.

It is of no avail at this crisis to preach to him the gospel of work. He has tasted the bread of idleness, and he declines to listen patiently to your homily on the beauty of industry. The primal curse blackens his spirit. The greyness of life wounds him. Work is a habit, and he has got out of it. He finds it as hard to get into it as a diver who is getting into a

diving-suit for the first time. The blessing of habit is that it prevents you from seeing the trivial details of life. It narcotises your critical faculty. It keeps you from brooding over the ridiculous absurdity of the necessary unnecessary. It bathes you in oblivion. But a short holiday opens your eyes to everything. You have stayed at a hotel where the routine of life is different from the routine of home. You get up at a different hour in a different bedroom. You shave before a different glass. You splash in a different bath. You drink different coffee out of a different cup. You eat your dinner off different plates with different knives and forks. You see different faces. You feel a new man in a new world. You do not catch the same old train in the morning and the same old train in the evening. You do not eat the same old lunch in the same old restaurant. You do not wear that horrible old top-hat and those too familiar patent boots. You are in tweeds or flannels, and probably you have half a dozen new ties. You read a new newspaper and you doze over a new novel. You do not see the same old London sky leaning on the same old London roofs. You do not smell the same old motor-buses, trailing their noisome clouds of vapour along the City asphalt. Your eyes open wide as you gaze at blue clouds that do not stink and at sky that is not decorated with telephone wires and chimney-cowls.

It is bitterly hard to come back to all the old things that you had never noticed before you went away. You are filled with hatred of your very doormat and hallstand. Your umbrella annoys you, and the patient aspect of your furniture infuriates you. The chairs in your dining-room stand as if they had no desire to do anything else but stand for ever. The clock ticks as if it had no ambition to achieve anything higher than ticking. The pictures hang on the wall as if they cared for nothing but hanging. The old wall-paper is content to stick to the old wall in the old way. The old carpet is resigned to its lot. It does not ask to be a wall-paper any more than the wall-paper asks to be a carpet. The ornaments on the mantelpiece show no symptoms of rebellion. The stair-

rods on the stairs are cheerfully doing what they have always done. Everything save you is sunk in acceptance of fate. The stupendous patience of inanimate objects maddens you. Must you be even as they? Must you school yourself to emulate the fortitude of your fender, and the phlegm of your coal-scuttle? Must you lead the uneventful life of your door-knocker? Ah, it is too much. Your soul sickens within you as you stare down a vista of duplicated days. Your habits howl at you like a ring of wild beasts watching a man who is nodding over a fire. By and by you will fall asleep, and they will devour you.

How long does the post-holiday gloom last? It depends upon your temperament. The first day is usually the worst. Everything goes wrong. When you open your eyes in the morning you forget that you have come back, until the things in the bedroom begin to talk. They chuckle over your discomfiture. "My boy," they say, "we have got you again." It is no use grumbling. They have got you. Everything has got you, from the postman's knock to the breakfast bell. Your bacon and eggs have got you. Heavens! How often have you eaten that rasher, and yet here it is again, not in the least fatigued with being eaten. Here, too, is the marmalade. Good gracious! You must have swallowed seas of marmalade. The assault of the usual rages all day with unabated fury. Your office stool does not betray the faintest spasm of surprise when you sit down on it. Little it recks of holidays. It is a passionless creature. It does not care whether you sit on it or not. It is complacently happy or unhappy, or whatever it is the nature of office stools to be. Your pens are callously calm, and your ink-pot allows you to take off its hinged hat without comment. There is a little dust on the collar of your office coat, but if you ask it how it spent Whitsuntide, it will give your soul a dusty answer. Perhaps it is unreasonable to look for solace from a round ebony ruler or a pincushion. But your coat is an old friend to whom you naturally look for sympathy and consolation. What your body is to your soul your coat is to your body. You have grown to fit it and it has

grown to fit you. It is a rough mould of your torso, and as you slip your arms into the sleeves you feel the years that the locust has eaten in the lining. It is a part of your hopes and fears, your exultations and despairs. To it you will turn in your dejection. Surely its old buttons will whisper a word of comfort. It is a fond delusion. Your old coat is as indifferent as your blotting-pad. It is not moved by your sorrows. It would not feel a pang if you never wiped your pen on it again. It is at ease on its peg. It has no more heart than your nail-brush.

Fortunately, the bloom of the holiday wears off very quickly. You rapidly repetrify yourself. Perchance you stay your desolate soul with a game of chess or draughts or dominoes in an A. B. C. or a Mecca. The Double Six, the Knight, and the Bishop are always ready to obey your orders. The King and the Queen are your very humble and most obedient servants. In your hour of need you can fall back with confidence upon your Castle. Wonderful are the gentle devices wherewith the hungry spirit appeases its passion for variety. A game of billiards quells many a revolt against the heavy irony of life. It does not matter very much what you do so long as you do something else. The sense of escape is cheaply purchased. Even street accidents are useful, and a horse never falls without breaking the monotony of existence for a small crowd. When all else fails you can read the newspaper, which reveals every day the existence of strange beings who are privileged to murder or be murdered, to marry or to be divorced, to steal hatfuls of diamonds in Hatton Garden, to own racehorses or theatres, to live in Mayfair and die in motor smashes. Thus, by slow degrees, you forget your temporary nostalgia, and regain your customary affection for the usually usual and the as-you-were-ness-of-as-you-are. You button your braces without regret and lace your boots without remorse. The fairyland, where men always do what they please and are always pleased by what they do, fades far away like the song of the nightingale, and you become your good grey self. You are like Thackeray's retired captain who "surveyed the storm

RECOVERING FROM WHITSUNTIDE 25

as being another gentleman's business." You cease to make overdrafts on the bank of life. Your imagination turns over and goes asleep. You do your duty without knowing it, and you no longer feel the spur of incongruity. It is upon honest fellows like you that the stability of the State is based. You are a part of the gyroscope that keeps civilisation running on its mono-rail. There is a great faculty of patience in you, in spite of your Whitsuntide insurrection. Deep is the divine contentment of the serene lamp-post and the imperturbable pillar-box, but after all it is not deeper or more divine than yours. For they are never called upon to recover from a holiday, while you perform that miracle at least four times in the year.

HALF A MILLION

A GOOD newspaper might be made every day out of the things that are not in the newspapers. We are so accustomed to take the news in our newspapers for granted that we forget that the news depends to a great extent upon the news-gatherers. News is like the manna in the wilderness. It must be gathered. If it is not gathered it melts away. Newspapers are always empty on Bank holidays, not because the supply of news has failed, but because the newsmakers are idle. There are some events which report themselves. There are others which must be excavated by trained excavators. The appetite for news is quite modern. Like all other appetites it grows with what it feeds on. The supply increases the demand. It is a curious fact that the collection of news depends upon the activity of a very small class. The ordinary man does not send news to newspapers.

I happened to be in town on Bank Holiday, and it occurred to me that it would be interesting and exciting to go to the Exhibition to see the holiday crowd. If it had not been a Bank Holiday the newspapers would have photographed and described the stupendous multitude. The mobilisation of nearly half a million people in one spot is a sensational occurrence. I doubt whether it has ever been seen in London before. But it was baldly and briefly dismissed for the simple reason that journalists, like other people, like to take a holiday when they can. Such a spectacle as I saw will not be seen again for many a year.

When I entered the Exhibition in the afternoon I found it in a submerged condition. The White City was blotted out with human beings. The walls were visible, but no more. The broad avenues and spacious courts were covered with

dense, sluggishly heaving masses of humanity. The density of the moving multitude was extraordinary, It was not a motionless density, but a thick, clotted, treacly fluid that seemed to be stirred heavily round and round by an unseen giant spoon wielded by an unseen giant. Round and round the viscous rivers of humanity turned and twisted. There was no sane or coherent plan or purpose in their movement. They swirled and eddied to and fro, back and forth, up and down, across and along.

Viewed as a whole, the multitude looked like a flowing and ebbing tide, troubled and tormented by some mysterious force that drew it hither and thither. The vague vastness of it stunned the mind. One felt that this was the appearance of mankind as an aggregate, not a lovely apparition, but a dull, oppressive, drowsy monster, wallowing and groping and fumbling and stumbling in a dream.

The sun beat down with sullen fierceness upon the moving acres of humanity. The lungs of the strange, writhing creature seemed to suck the clean air out of the small cup of hot blue sky laid against its enormous mouth. It may sound incredible, but the air in the vast White City was as foul as the air in a theatre or a doss-house. It tasted bad, as if it had been breathed and rebreathed for hours by hundreds of thousands. The pure air above could not force its way down into that huge hollow dish of human beings. The polluted air in the dish could not force its way out or up. By some freak of the atmospheric conditions the multitude was stifled with its own breath. There was no relief and no alleviation.

As there were only a few seats, the multitude could not sit down. It was compelled to move, and as it moved wearily it sweated in the sickening sunlight. The human smell was overpowering, overwhelming, almost appalling. It penetrated the Garden Club. It saturated Paillard's. It hung like a damp pall over the waterways. It rose to the height of the Flip-Flap. I have smelled all sorts of crowds, from the Cup crowd at the Crystal Palace to the Derby crowd. But the odour of this crowd was quite different. It was not the

odour of the unwashed, but simply the concentrated odour of humanity, a sharp, salt, pungent odour as distinctive as the odour of cows in a byre or of horses in a stable or of dogs in a kennel. It struck me as strange that humanity should have an odour of its own, though I have no doubt animals are familiar with it.

The multitude was infinitely weary, horribly tired. I do not know how many people fainted, but I do know that I saw ambulances being hurried to and fro by anxious policemen. Before my own eyes a strong young man suddenly fell like a poleaxed ox. He was lifted to his feet. An ambulance man came up, felt his pulse, and without a second's hesitation slung him across his shoulders like a sack of flour, his head and hands dangling down over his right shoulder, his trunk resting on his shoulder-blades, and his legs dangling over his left shoulder. With wonderful skill the ambulance man ran through the parting crowd with his heavy burden. The man carrying the man—was he not a symbol of civilisation, in which every man is carrying another man on his shoulders?

The longer I studied that immense multitude the more keenly I felt its pathos. It was composed of very simple folk, capable of only the simplest moods and emotions. Their silence and their sobriety amazed me. I did not see one drunken man or one drunken woman. Nay, I failed to detect even the vaguest vestige of intoxication. The decorum of the people was touching. Their gentle acquiescence was in a way almost tragic.

It suggested the patience—the divine patience—the resignation—the sublime resignation—of humanity. There were many pale mothers carrying fatigued infants, whose thin pendant legs told the old tale of malnutrition. As I watched these weary mothers I wondered why the poor consent to carry on the business of providing citizens for the State. Then I thought of the scanty pleasures of the poor, and marvelled at their fortitude and their forbearance. Those mild, meek masses, moving heavily hour after hour, were only a projection of the immeasurable bulk of humanity whose days are

grey with toil. Behind the white towers I could see in a vision the innumerable host of common, drab, obscure men and women and children winding round the world. The pity of it was unbearable, because they were unconscious of the pity. Humanity would be less tragic if it were less ignorant. The crowning touch of tragedy was the music. They drank it as dry soil drinks rain. And they all went home with a beautifully patient gentleness. Half a million of them!

THE CHRISTMAS CURMUDGEON

ARE you a curmudgeon? If so, you are out of season. Curmudging cannot be tolerated in London at Christmas. Let them curmudge all the year round, but there must be no curmudging at Yuletide. The curmudgeon, like Toussaint L'Ouverture, is "the most unhappy man of men." He has a full purse and an empty heart. I am always sorry for the poor curmudgeon at this time of the year. Father Christmas is very hard on him. He robs him right and left. He makes his money run out at the heels of his boots. He prises open his closed fists with a red-hot chisel. He cuts holes in his pockets. He drags him into toy-shops and forces him to buy expensive gifts for his nephews and nieces. And the more the curmudgeon spends the more miserable he becomes. It is not always more blessed to give than to receive. The curmudgeon is generous without joy. He neither eats his cake nor has it. His gifts leave an open wound in his heart. He is too mean to taste the flavour of gratitude. He cannot feel the joy of anticipated joy. We need a word to express the emotion of the true gift-giver before and after he gives his gift. His frame of mind is enviable. It is good-nature gazing at itself in the glass, and revelling in the happiness it is about to create. It is more than magnanimity. It is Yulanimity. It is Yuleficence. It is Yulevolence. Let us all be unani-mously Yulanimous, and Yuleficent, and Yulevolent.

There are many kinds of curmudgeons. There is the old-fashioned curmudgeon that Dickens drew in his "Christmas Carol." I like the old-fashioned curmudgeon. Scrooge's bark was worse than his bite. "If I could work my will," he said, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding with a stake of holly in his heart." A glorious death! How could a man

die better? But, bless my soul, Scrooge was only pretending to curmudge. He was only playing up to Dickens. He knew all the time that he was going to buy that prize turkey, and raise Bob Cratchit's salary, and be a second father to Tiny Tim.

I wish we had more curmudgeons like Mr. Scrooge. But Dickens is dead and Scrooge is no more. Those fierce old screws who suddenly burst into a shower of Christmas boxes are obsolete. Dead and gone are all those quixotic misers and extravagant skinflints. I drink to their memory. I sigh for their stingy prodigality and genial ferocity. They were all Father Christmases in disguise.

The modern curmudgeon does not play up to Dickens. He sneers at him. He has a heart like a dried pea. His nose is not pointed, his cheek is not shrivelled, his lips are not blue, and there is no frosty rime on his head. He is plump and sleek. He does not pinch and scrape. He spends his money freely—on himself. He is a very superior person. He thinks that the humour of Dickens is low and his sentiment maudlin. He regards Christmas as a vulgar bore. His delicate taste is offended by the corpses of cows that garland with scarlet and ivory the aisles of Smithfield Market. He shudders as he passes a butcher's shop. He pooh-poohs the gospel of good cheer. He gibes at the good old times. He says that holly is a middle-class shrub, and he regards the mistletoe as a badge of Philistia.

He curmudges against Christmas fare. He is an epicure who shudders at roast beef and plum-pudding. He prefers plovers' eggs and ortolans, caviare and quails. He is eaten up with selfishness. He is covertly insolent to his host and his hostess. He is rude to women who are not rich or young or pretty. He has no use for the obscure or the poor. He worships success and tramples on failure. He declaims against indiscriminate charity. He does not subscribe to the Charity Organisation Society, but he approves of its frigid principles. He hates organ-grinders, crossing-sweepers, newsboys, itinerant musicians, beggars, and blind men with dogs. He loathes the practice of tipping, and writes to the "Times"

to denounce dustmen and postmen who dare to ask him for a Christmas box. He has never a good word for a cabman or a railway porter or a waiter.

He detests carol-singers. They spoil his appetite. He does his best to kill everything that is picturesquely unreasonable and romantically illogical. A merry rout of boys with their Guy on the Fifth of November provokes his wrath. He never flings a copper to a cab-tout or a messenger-boy. He accepts little services without acknowledgment. Three ghosts sufficed to soften the heart of Scrooge, but three hundred ghosts would not mollify the selfishness of the modern curmudgeon. It would be a pity not to pity him.

The modern curmudgeon at his worst is a literary prig. He is incapable of simple happiness. He smiles with lofty disdain upon domestic joys. "There is no place like home," he says, "and a good job, too." He sneers at the husband who does not neglect his wife. He informs you that relatives are a nuisance. He has no Lares and no Penates. To him the fireside is a symbol of ennui. He will tell you that children are little savages. He calls them brats. All the year round he can keep the children in their place, but when Christmas comes the children overwhelm him. Christmas is Child-mas. The tyranny of life is for a while suspended. The chains are shaken off the rosy limbs, and the gags taken out of the rosy mouths. From a hundred thousand schools the boys and girls come laughing and leaping, their eyes bright with hope, their hearts bounding with expectation. I can see these jolly regiments of infantry marching gaily through merrie England. They are blowing tin trumpets and beating tiny drums. They are waving flags. They have broken out of gaol, and they are moving in long, glittering, undulating columns to the conquest of Toyland, Candyland, Pieland, and Fairyland. Father Christmas is striding at the head of this frolicsome army. He is cracking jokes with his young Field Marshals and his baby Brigadiers, his toddling Colonels and his creeping Captains. The literary curmudgeon hears the rhythmical tramp of this great host. His heart sinks.

He curses. He flies to Monte Carlo, and is plucked cleaner than the turkey he did not send to his poor relations.

But I hope there are not many of these curmudgeons, after all. I wish the Census would throw some light upon the point. The worst of the Census is that it tells you everything that you do not want to know. It is silent on all the furiously interesting subjects. I beg the Registrar-General to rule a column in his next Census paper, and put at the head of it this question: "Are you a curmudgeon?" The Americans, in their charmingly childish way, have made a bright start in this branch of sociology. They ask their guests to answer exciting riddles, such as "Are you a Polygamist?" "Are you an Anarchist?" "Are you a Mormon?" These are genuine, old-fashioned Christmas riddles. They are modelled on the clown's poser, "Do you still beat your wife?" And, by the way, let me plead for a renaissance of the riddle. A Christmas without riddles is a starveling affair. The charm of a riddle is that it fills a Christmas gathering with the spirit of nonsense. Children are ecstatically right in their love of nonsense, and we ought to emulate them. It is very sad to see a merry boy vainly imploring a fish-eyed, over-fed uncle to tell him a story or ask him a riddle. The fat-minded old fool cannot think of a silly tale or a foolish riddle. His imagination is clotted. Heaven help him!

There is another old joy of which children ought not to be robbed—the joy of games. I grieve over the decadence of our old Christmas games. They are fast fading from our memory. The modern father and mother do not play with their children. They leave the lonely youngsters to the nurse, who, as a rule, has no lore of nursery rhymes or nursery games. It is not enough to fill the nursery with dolls and dolls' houses, rocking-horses, steam-engines, and woolly bears. More precious than all these mechanical toys is the human toy. It ought to be the ambition of every man and every woman to be a worthy toy for some imperious child. A real father with real hair and a real beard is much more amusing than a Jack-in-the-box or a Golliwog or a monkey. And, in spite of her un-

wieldy size, a mother has eyes that open and shut more satisfactorily than a doll's. At Christmas we ought to allow our children to play with us as roughly as they like. If you are a true man you will not object to have your nose pulled or your beard uprooted.

Try to get rid of your sense of superiority. You are not really superior to a child. You are only a little nearer death. It will do the children good to play with you, but it will do you more good. It will freshen any youth you have left in you. It will start the withered pulse of wonder throbbing in your stodgy mind. It will lead you back into the clime of miracles. It is not easy to invent pleasure for grown-ups, but it is very easy to invent pleasure for children, and you feel a rarer delight in pleasing a child. There is no gross motive in your cajoleries. You can serve without being servile, and kneel without being abject. Every town ought to have a Toy Fund. Nay, every Board School ought to be a distributing agency for Santa Claus. I went on a toy-buying expedition the other day. I worked steadily through all the toy-shops from Holborn Circus to Oxford Circus, and glued against every window I found crowds of ragged children, their envious breath steaming on the plate-glass, their eyes sparkling with wonder and desire. My heart ached for these tiny outcasts, tantalised by an unattainable Paradise. I fancied that the glass eyes of the dolls grew dim with tears as they gazed at these small London Rachels, weeping for their children, and yearning in vain to take them in their arms and hush them to sleep. The doll without a child-mother is a pitiful sight, but it is not more pitiful than the child without a doll-daughter. Have compassion, good folk, on the motherless doll and the childless child. Fill those little empty arms. Comfort those little lonely hearts. Shall their treasure of tenderness be wasted on a knotted towel? Give them golden tow and waxen cheeks, a body with a squeak and fat jointed limbs, and clothes that can be taken off. Perhaps you will be rewarded on Christmas Eve with a heavenly vision of a sleeping angel with a one-and-elevenpenny infant clasped to her passionate breast.

THE KING OF THE JEHUS

It is a mistake to suppose that the Lord Mayor is the most important figure in the Lord Mayor's Show. I do not wish to belittle the sublimity of the Lord Mayor. I do not desire to speak disrespectfully of him. London without the Lord Mayor would be a wren in a wilderness. No other city in the world has a Lord Mayor who is worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as the Lord Mayor of London. But while I recognise the grandeur and the greatness of the Lord Mayor, I cannot admit that he is the true hero of the Lord Mayor's Show. The true hero of the Lord Mayor's Show is the Lord Mayor's Coachman. He is the crown and culmination of all the pomp and pageantry which disorganises the traffic of London so gloriously once a year. It is for his sake, and for his sake alone, that torrents of vehicles are dammed. It is in his honour, and in his honour alone, that our men of business utter their annual imprecations. He, and he only, can lift a magnificent hand to arrest the rolling of a million wheels and to silence the thunder of a million hoofs. His voice, and his voice alone, can say to the tides of traffic, "Thus far, and no farther!" He is greater than King Canute.

The Lord Mayor's Coachman is the prop and stay of the Lord Mayor. Without him the Lord Mayor could not defy the claws of time. It is he who sheds upon the Lord Mayor the glamour of romance. There are many Lord Mayors, but there is only one Lord Mayor's Coachman. The Lord Mayors come and go, but he goes on for ever. They are but transient and embarrassed phantoms, but he is a solid and indestructible monument of flesh, compared to which St. Paul's Cathedral is a bride cake, the Tower of London an ice pudding, and Nelson's Pillar a stick of barley sugar.

The Lord Mayor is a dignity and a function, but the Lord Mayor's Coachman is more. He is a Man. He is a Personality. He is an Exalted Personage. Anybody could be a Lord Mayor, but is there one person in the world who could take the place of the Lord Mayor's Coachman? Speaking for myself, I should not shrink with terror from the task of being Lord Mayor. I can calmly contemplate a vista of eating and drinking steadily from November to November. I can bear the thought of having Kings and Prime Ministers as my guests. But I could not face the awful responsibilities of the Lord Mayor's Coachman. It may be that I am a coward, but I suspect that our best and our bravest would tremble if they were invited to take the reins of governance from those majestic hands.

The splendour of the Lord Mayor's Coach demands a Coachman of heroic dimensions. The Coach is vast, but the Coachman must be vaster still. I have never seen any man so vast as the Lord Mayor's Coachman. He is built out of innumerable generations of roast beef. The eye dwells joyously on his illimitable features, rolling and undulating like a rich landscape. His is not a haggard face. There is no care or anxiety in its gentle downs and benignant slopes. It is the face of a man who has achieved the summit of his ambition, and who possesses his soul in peace. Such a countenance, I imagine, was the countenance of Jove, what time he sat upon Olympus, gods and mortals trembling at his nod. But, with all due respect, I may be permitted to doubt whether the legs of Jove were as sublime as the peerless legs which London salutes once a year. There are many kinds of calf in this wonderful world, but there are no calves like the calves of the Lord Mayor's Coachman. At the risk of offending Mr. Caine I declare they transcend the glories of the Calf of Man. They restore our confidence in England. They assure us that we are a nation yet. Upon these pillars of Hercules the British Empire is securely based.

It may seem impious, but I am tempted to wonder whether the Lord Mayor's Coachman has a private life. Does he

ever doff that resplendent livery? Does he ever unbuckle those effulgent shoes? Does he ever denude his legs of those voluptuous silk stockings? Does he ever take off that tremendous hat? Does he ever brush the powder from that Olympian head? Alas! It is to be feared he does, but, even when he is clothed in the vulgar garb of civilisation, I am sure he preserves his imperial dignity. I like to think of him in the act of unbending, bestowing a tolerant smile upon those who have the privilege of being his friends. One may even figure him as condescending to smoke a pipe. It would, of course, be a pure churchwarden with a giant bowl and a sweeping shank. A cigarette in those titanic lips were inconceivable. It is not easy to decide what liquid is worthy of flowing down that regal, that more than regal throat, but perhaps the amber grandeur of Audit Ale would not altogether desecrate it.

If I may without irreverence go further, I should like to know something about the soul of the Lord Mayor's Coachman. His views of life would be profoundly interesting. I think he is an optimist, for there is no tinge of pessimism in his rubicund visage. There is no cynicism in that great heart which beats in harmony with the genial order of nature. I think the Lord Mayor's Coachman is a philosopher who belongs to the school of Falstaff and Rabelais, for I am sure he believes that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

SEEING THE SIGHTS

It is hard to realize that there was a time in the history of mankind when there were no sights to be seen and no sight-seers to see them. There were no guides or guide-books in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve were not compelled to solve the problem of holidays. Indeed, they appear to have been perfectly satisfied with their garden. They did not leave it until they were driven out, and apparently it was necessary to adopt elaborate precautions to prevent their return. They were probably the only persons who were never bitten by the asp of travel. They did not go to theatres in the evening; they never yearned for supper at the Carlton or at the Savoy. They did not feel the necessity of inspecting ancient churches, crumbling ruins, or houses of famous men. They gave no dinner parties or dances, and what they did with their evenings it is difficult to imagine. They had positively no relatives whatever, and neither of them had a mother-in-law. Some people maintain that marriage without a mother-in-law is like beef without mustard, salad without vinegar, or pancakes without lemon. It certainly does seem that marriage without the advice and admonition of a scarred veteran must have been somewhat monotonous. But Adam and Eve appear to have lived the simplest life that has ever been lived on this earth without yearning for a week-end on the river or an afternoon in Westminster Abbey. They do not appear to have hungered for a week in lovely Lucerne or a month in Aix-les-Bains. They managed to rub along without a visit to Venice or Ostend, and they died without seeing Mr. Hall Caine's Eternal City. It is sad to think how much they missed, and one is tempted to wonder how they contrived to bear up.

Modern life is somewhat different from life in the Garden

of Eden. We have discovered the virtue of variety, and the charm of change. We are everywhere by turns and nowhere long. We have turned toil into pleasure and pleasure into toil. No one works so hard as the pleasure-seeker. London is invaded every year by an army of sightseers whose feats of endurance would make Hercules look like a statue of indolence. It is easy to recognise a sightseer, for he always wears a careworn, haggard, hungry look. He is fighting against time and space. He is pursuing the past with nervous anxiety. He is afraid to gaze too long at St. Paul's lest he should not be able to see every stone in the Tower. He hurries hysterically from the mummies in the British Museum to the waxen phantoms in Madame Tussaud's. In the morning he eats shrimps at Greenwich, and in the afternoon he munches watercress at Kew. He can hardly masticate the delights of the Crystal Palace for thinking of the raptures that await him in the Zoo. Wherever he is he wishes to be somewhere else, and he is always tortured by the double fear of leaving too soon and arriving too late. His feverish parsimony of time leads him to telescope his meals, with the result that he is invariably racked by indigestion when he is not famished. He is a boon and a blessing to the bun-shop. There is no doubt that the Bath bun was invented for sightseers.

It is a mistake to suppose that sightseers do not enjoy sightseeing. They enjoy it after it is over. The pleasure of seeing monuments and tombs is based upon the curious passion of human beings for being superior to their fellow creatures. The mere act of gazing at the regalia in the Tower is not thrilling, but the gazer looks forward to the joy of telling his friends who have never seen the regalia that he has seen them. He knows that they will envy him, and the consciousness of their future envy compensates him for the toil and trouble. A being who has seen something which you have not seen can give himself airs, even if the thing which he has seen is not worth seeing at all. The worst of it is that the world now contains more things than can be seen comfortably by the most industrious sightseer. We have lost the habit of blotting out cities

and destroying sepulchres and pulling down cathedrals. We preserve everything. The consequence is that the world is being choked with historical lumber. Before long we shall not have room to move about, and the trail of famous men will be over every brick. We have lost the gift of forgetfulness, and Oblivion finds her occupation gone.

Americans are probably the most laborious sightseers in the world. They have a capacity for detail which arouses my reverence. They do Europe as it has never been done by any other race. As a rule a Londoner knows nothing whatever about London, and I often blush with shame when an American friend demonstrates that he has seen more of London in a week than I have seen in a lifetime. It is humiliating to be obliged to confess that you do not know the best way to unearth Hampton Court or the Mint. The truth is, London is a gigantic mistake. Its sights are too far apart. It usually takes half a day to reach one of them, and half a day to get back. The sights of London ought to be concentrated. It would be a public boon if the Government were to bring in a bill for the collection of sights into some accessible spot. Hyde Park would probably be the best piece of waste ground for the purpose. No doubt the expense involved in the transportation of all the London sights to Hyde Park would be considerable, but think of the saving of time, not only for our visitors, but also for their conductors. St. Paul's would look very well at the Marble Arch; beside it the Tower might be placed, together with Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. There would be room along the banks of the Serpentine for the British Museum and the National Gallery, together with a few trifles like the Guildhall, Cleopatra's Needle, the Nelson Monument, and the Crystal Palace. There would be plenty of room for the Zoo in Kensington Gardens, and Madame Tussaud's would add to the attractions of Rotten Row. Electric trams might run round the circuit of the sights, and in this way it would be possible to do them all in an afternoon, thus leaving the sightseer a margin for the pursuit of pleasure.

I do not know whether there would be any space left after this desirable improvement had been carried out, but if possible an endeavour ought to be made to shift Stratford-on-Avon nearer London. It would be very convenient for American visitors in a hurry if Shakespeare's birthplace could be removed to St. James's Park, together with Ann Hathaway's cottage and any other equally authentic relics. Room might also be found for a few of the stately homes of England, such as Chatsworth and Haddon Hall. Edinburgh might be induced to part with Holyrood Palace for a consideration, and it is possible that Ireland might be persuaded to give up Dublin Castle, together with a few yards of the Giant's Causeway. In this way the strain of a visit to the old country might be materially lessened.

Unless something of this kind is done, and done at once, I fear there is a danger that Americans may give up the habit of sightseeing. I know one American who has crossed the Atlantic thirteen times and visited London for thirteen successive years without seeing a single sight. He spends his life in his hotel, in theatres, in music-halls, and in restaurants. The other day I reproached him bitterly for neglecting his opportunities, but he flippantly replied that he preferred death to Westminster Abbey. He pointed out that Nelson and other great Englishmen did not go to Westminster Abbey until they died, and added that what was good enough for Nelson was good enough for him. Thereupon I asked him why he took the trouble to come to London at all, seeing that he lives exactly the same life as he lives in New York. He retorted that he came to London to see our bad plays, but I reminded him that he could see them later in New York. As to our hotels and restaurants, he was obliged to admit that they successfully reproduce the American atmosphere, and that when he sat down to dinner or supper in London he felt quite at home. Even the "Cheshire Cheese" was full of the American accent when he visited it, as is his agreeable custom during his stay in London. I told him that the "Cheshire Cheese" had become quite an American institution, but he

said he was sorry to find that the Japanese were beginning to frequent it. I was surprised to find him rather sore on this point. He was astonished to learn that the Japanese are almost as popular in this country as Americans. He said that Americans regarded the Japanese as coloured folk, and predicted that it would be necessary to give them a licking like the Spaniards. He said that it was a bad sign to see so many Japanese in London. He complained because he had met them in theatres, in restaurants, at Ranelagh, at Hurlingham, and at Henley.

"At any rate," said I, "it was plucky of them to go to a wet Henley." But he shook his head grimly and declared that the Japanese ought to stick to Japan. I suggested that the Americans would be offended if advised to stick to America.

"Not at all," said he. "Europe is only an American summer resort."

"Well," said I, "so long as you do not make it a winter resort, we will not complain."

MAINLY ABOUT DANCING

AT A COVENT GARDEN BALL

I AM a serious person, but I am like Dr. Johnson's friend who said, "I, too, have tried to be a philosopher, but cheerfulness was always breaking in." Cheerfulness, I am glad to say, breaks into my honest gravity at least once a year. I forget my solemn self, and for a few hours I yield to what the Young Man with the Cream Tarts calls "the spirit of mockery." I indulge in a "harebrain humour." Like Prince Florizel, when I fall into low spirits, I sally out into the wilds of Bohemia in search of adventures. The genius of whim enters into me without premeditation. "Go to," he says, "let us be foolish, and fool ourselves to the top of our bent." It is not easy to be whimsical in London, for there is no night there. Half an hour after midnight the restaurants close, and the rest is silence. There is only one palace of mockery which shelters the homeless hours between twelve and four—the Covent Garden Fancy Dress Ball. But you must not go there in cold blood. You must not "make up a party." You must go without knowing that you are going. You must surprise yourself into the frolic.

The spirit of mockery ordains caprice. You must not know one moment what you are to do the next. To be deliberate is to be lost. You must not look before you leap. There were six of us. We had dined at the Carlton, and Chicot had whirled us off to the Alhambra. Chicot is a young man whose life is a procession of graceful absurdities. He is the perfect fool, for he is droll without being ridiculous, and there is no vulgarity in his wildest farce. His gaiety is mad, but his gay madness looks like a sublime sanity. His airy impropriety throws doubt upon your propriety. He makes you ashamed of your dignity and self-control. He inverts life.

He stands convention on its head. He turns wisdom into folly and folly into wisdom. He is the King of Topsy-turvydom, that realm where nothing is itself and everything is something else. With the help of the magical mockery of the ballet, and the magical mockery of Gaby Deslys, Chicot breathed the spirit of mockery into us. We felt our cold British souls thawing, and with bells of laughter ringing in our throats we packed ourselves into a growler and set out for Romano's. Romano's was filled with music and laughter, and somehow or other we all knew in our bones that our supper would be deliriously gay, and that there would be wit in the wine and wine in the wit. It is charming when the talk flashes like lightning, and jest after jest flowers and fades instantly, making room on the stem of fun for its successor. We were all witty, and all beautiful, and all debonair. We turned everything to frolic and fantasy. We were six when we took our seats at the round table, but in a trice we were seven, for we called in the Merry Widow. Do you know the Widow Clicquot? She has a dainty golden head and delicately sloping shoulders. The southern sun sparkles in her eyes, and when she kisses your lips you are swept out of the land of things as they are into the land of things as they are not. Hail! *Veuve Clicquot!* Widow of Widows! Thou art spring in mid-winter, and April in December. Thy winking and sparkling smiles make the old young again, and the dullness of life cannot live in thy bubbling mirth. Thou art immortal, for the eternal sunlight feeds thy veins, and the everlasting joy of the earth is in thy soul. Thou givest thy ecstasy to the heavy heart and thy rapture to the melancholy mind. Thou art the frivolity of the serious and the joy of the lugubrious. Thy tears are the diamonds of joy. Thy breath is the fragrance of folly. O, maddest and merriest of widows, I salute thee!

The lights go out one by one. "Past time! gentlemen, please! Past time!" Chicot raises his glass to the weary waiter. "It is our Pastime, garçon! It is the Pastime of Pastimes. Ohé! Ohé!" But the weary waiter has no palate

for puns, and at last we emerge by a back door into a narrow passage that leads into the Strand. "Whither away, good folk; whither away?" cries Chicot. "Home? Home at one o'clock in the morning! The proposal is outrageous. No, we will go to Covent Garden. Has anybody six guineas in his pocket?" Yes, by some miracle, there is a Rockefeller with a pocketful of jingling golden sovereigns. In a chariot of laughter we descend on Covent Garden. The vestibule is like a green-room, for it is a seething turmoil of costumes, all the centuries jostling each other—powder and patch, doublet and hose, incroyable and macaroni, crusader and cavalier, velvet and bright iron, broadcloth and brocade, steel and starch. "Ho! varlet! Masks for the fair!"

Reader, have you ever tied a mask on a laughing face? It is a pleasant labour, and one that need not be curtailed by the judicious. A woman, when she puts on a mask, is a woman with a new temperament. There is a fresh audacity in her eyes and a novel defiance in her smiles. Her glance means more and means less. She can let her gaiety caper free from the curb of custom, for she knows that the mask covers a multitude of sins against the code of manners. There is an imp of elfish roguery in every pretty woman, and the mask lets it loose. There is a world of difference between the unveiled face and the face with a few inches of white lace or black satin over eyes or mouth. All women are coquettes in the dark, and the mask is a kind of artificial darkness, a sort of half-night. The coquetry of the mask is a game with precise rules. The game must be played blithely and boldly, without prudery or priggishness. If for one moment you play it timorously or unctuously, it is spoiled. The philosophy of the mask is based on the understanding that nothing counts after the game is over. While you play the game you forget to remember, and after the game is over you remember to forget. It is the nearest thing in life to stage love. We are mimes for an hour, without solemn hearts and without sagacious heads. We are not real persons. We are radiant shadows dancing with radiant shadows. If a laughing shadow should

kiss a laughing shadow, what matter? If the arm of a shadow should steal round the waist of a shadow, what harm? It is only the ghost of a kiss, only the wraith of a caress. Our Lady of the Mask knows that the ghosts of kisses and the wraiths of caresses melt away at dawn. Pierrot is a dream and Pierrette is a dream, and to-morrow is the tomb of dreams. He is only playing at half a love with half a lover. It is touch and go in this fairyland of the moth and the butterfly, and you must not brush the faint powder off the filmy wings.

In order to be joyous at Covent Garden you must forget that you are in England. You must be "hatched over again and hatched different." You must not take anything seriously. You must not be stiff, and straitlaced, and stupid. You must be gaily fantastic. The Englishman is apt to mistake rowdiness for revelry, and horse-play for humour, but I think he is improving. There is now more grace in his gaiety. Chicot, for example, was as fastidiously whimsical as an Italian at a battle of flowers, as prodigiously flamboyant as a Parisian student in a carnival. He improvised nonsense without end. He stood on a seat behind the orchestra and conducted it with superb gravity, parodying Sousa, and Richter, and Strauss until the musicians wondered why the dancers were laughing at them. He solemnly danced a cake-walk with curved spine and dangling hands and a pompous face of wood. He burlesqued Tortajada with a table-cloth for a shawl and a knife and fork for castanets. He made love like George Alexander, and gave good advice like Sir Charles Wyndham. He swaggered like Lewis Waller, and lolled on a divan like Mr. Balfour. He borrowed a false nose and caricatured Coquelin's Cyrano until his impromptu Roxane became hysterical. Then he fell madly in love with a dainty divinity in a short blue dress and long black stockings, playing Paolo to her Francesca and Romeo to her Juliet. After that, he mimicked Tetrizzini's Lucia, making the mad scene uproariously mad. He wound up in a box with a parody of Punch and Judy, which was so droll that we all begged for mercy, being worn out and side-sore with laughter.

Suddenly the band struck up the National Anthem, and we indignantly discovered that it was four o'clock. Now, surely, we must all go home. And so we went to bed, as the silver-paly dawn was turning the sky into mother-of-pearl over the tops of the trees in the park, to sleep the sleep of the unjust, to snore the clock round, to dream the spirit of mockery out of our harebrain, harum-scarum harlequinade. When we woke, the bells of elfland were still faintly ringing in our ears, and we gloried in the thought that for once we had laughed life out of countenance. There was no aftermath of repentance, for we had laced our folly with wisdom, we had revelled wisely but not too well. And we knew that we could not recapture that first, fine careless rapture, and that our good time was only an oasis of nonsense in the desert of common sense. We are all respectable humdrummers once more, but for years shall we exult in the memory of our foray into the wilds of disrespectability. Alfred de Musset, after he had entered the Cenacle and had declaimed his verses before Victor Hugo and Sainte-Beuve, proudly cried, "I also am a poet." So we can boast, as we pay our rent on quarter-day, "I also have been in Bohemia." But Bohemia is a place to visit, not to live in.

BEHIND THE SCENES

OUR hansom jingles out of Piccadilly Circus, past the Haymarket, into Leicester Square through a maelstrom of feverish lights and tangled vehicles and hurrying faces. The pulse of pleasure is beating fast. Through the trees flames the many-windowed Alhambra, its Moorish façade soaring like a phantom palace into the sky, its pallid minarets and fiery crescent moons crowning ghostly walls of ivory and gold. The stars, peering through the violet gloom, seem to be a part of the delicate fabric. It is a torch brandished by London in the night, the torch of passion in the night of dreams.

We go through the alcoved corridors past the tall janisseries, into the promenade. It is a seraglio where man is a sultan and woman a *hourî*. It is aglow with dim lamps, soft with the *sûsurrus* of silks, languorous with subtle perfumes. Miles away below us the ballet languishes in its golden frame. We are in Lotus-land. The world dissolves in a swoon of delight. Life is a sunshot cloud. Black care is forgotten. In a trance we descend the stairs and sink into a luxurious stall made for the postprandial Nirvana that muffles the soul. Lolling lazily in its depths, you let your charmed fancy float along the ballet's voluptuous stream of living music and moving sound.

The vast theatre is tapestried with faces. The air is aromatic with the fragrance of innumerable cigars. It is a temple of fumes. The pungent odour saturates you. You are a leaf in the heart of a giant cheroot. The glittering dome is full of ascending wreaths of smoke. Even the ballet is a ballet of tobacco, "My Lady Nicotine." It is a fragile fantasy of melting curves and woven hues and iridescent cadences, sound and movement and colour kaleidoscoping into a mist

of painting and music, sculpture and poetry, that shadows forth the vague irregular rhythm of visionary life. The eye is sated with silent colour and the ear with coloured sound. The dancers are syllables in a visible song, vowels in a breathing lyric, rhymes in a laughing villanelle. They are the gestures of an artificial femininity. The civilised woman is always artificial, but here her artificiality is multiplied. A woman is natural only when she is alone. She wears the armour of artifice in public, and the aim of the ballet is to generalise her artificiality. It submerges her in a long undulation of fluent femininity. As you gaze at the ballet you see life responding to your desires. Your every-day self fades into a paradise of ethereal rapture where the moments fall like rose-leaves into the lap of time.

Let us go behind the scenes and walk in this fairyland. An iron door swings open, and we stand beside the ballet-mistress in a tiny nook between the edge of the proscenium and the painted side-scene. There is a spy-hole in the projecting wing. Through it we see a fragment of the ballet in profile. It shatters the illusion which we carried with us from the stalls. It is like looking at an oil painting with your nose on the canvas. You see the dancers in isolated patches. Their *maquillage* is fantastic. The rouged lips, the painted cheeks, the pencilled eyebrows, the bistrated eyes, the blackened eyelashes, the pearl powder, the gaudy skirts, the stretched texture of tights, the threads of hose, the tired mechanical air, the anxious solemnity of effort, the sidelong glances, the little slips and hitches, the unsubstantial scenery trembling like a house of cards, the muttered admonitions of the ballet-mistress, the cryptic activities of the stage-manager and his underlings, the groups of dancers waiting for their cue, the wisps of French and Italian chatter, the human grotesquery of the dancer who is Death on the stage and Signor Rossi off it, the jumble of mimic and real life—all this upsets your centre of levity and plunges you into a brief insanity. You begin to doubt your own reality. You lose your sense of values. You are in Topsy-turvyland. Anything might happen here.

You might turn into a coryphée and dive into these advancing and retreating files whose limbs are flickering and wavering in a meaningless maze.

Where is the magic flown? Where is the enchantment? Where is the romance? Here is nothing but whimsical reality. These dancers are not conscious of the witchery which haunted you in the halls. They are only the shining shuttles and the gleaming yarns. There is no gaiety in their eyes. They are toiling in a labyrinth of rhythms. As they swing round in faultless files their eyes turn anxiously to the ballet-mistress. She whispers "Go!" and the poised limbs sweep forward, line after line. A little sprite loses her place in the whirlpool. Her frightened eyes flash timidly towards the spyhole. She hears the low rebuke, murmurs a shy appeal, and eddies off again into the spray and foam of flying feet. She is a dancer lost in the delirium of the dance. It is a shock to go behind the scenes. It is like meeting a poet at a dinner party. Your dream cracks. Here beauty is business, and business is beauty. And the oddest thing is your own incongruity. You are ashamed of your dress clothes. These dancers in short skirts are absolutely unconscious. They are as natural as schoolgirls in bathing-costumes, as nonchalant as babies. They are at ease in their convention. Probably they blush when they don the garb of the outer world.

But let us sift our impressions. First of all, note that the conventional idea of what goes on behind the scenes is false. All the sensuousness is before the footlights. There is none behind them. Here one finds nothing but cold order and frigid discipline. Where are the gilded youth? There is no room for them. Where is the fabled immodesty in these tired girls who are earning their bread? They have been rehearsing all day, and one of them is sulking because she cannot get a half-holiday to-morrow! Pathos, if you like, but no lubricity. These little painted angels are but the colours on your palette, but the threads in your woven dream. Think kindly of them, and remember that evil is a maggot in the imagination.

Charity never errs. While we watch, a great humility takes hold of us. We, too, are in the ballet of life. We, too, are dancers moving to a tune played by an invisible orchestra led by an unknown conductor. What essential difference is there between these figurantes and our philosophers, our statesmen, our soldiers, our lawyers, our doctors, our poets, and our kings? Alas, there is none. For us all the curtain will be rung down and the footlights will go out. For us all the empty theatre and the silence and the going home through the night. And who watches us from the wings through the peephole of destiny? Who pays us our wages after our dance is done? As we pass through the iron door the humour of life is salt on our lips, for we taste our own tears. Well, there is some solace in being able to be sorry for yourself. Man, alone among the animals, has the gift of self-pity and self-derision. He is both actor and spectator. He can see his own absurdity. Yet perhaps the subtlest jest in the comedy is the humour of humour, and the richest joke of all may be the joke of seeing the joke. But there may be something higher than the humour and something deeper than the joke! Perhaps the ballet of this world is real, after all.

ADELINE GENÉE

ART is the austerity of joy. Adeline Genée is a joyous austerity. She is not bewilderingly beautiful. She is devoid of sensuous charm or voluptuous appeal. You would pass her in the street without suspecting her genius. She is an artist who expresses herself only in the dance. As she stands in the wings the strange romantic change begins to steal over her, and the magic that is stored in her brain and her blood pulses into her limbs. Then a birdlike swoop and she passes out of prose into poetry. As she flickers like a butterfly into the limelight she flashes into enchanting life. She ceases to be an ordinary woman and becomes the embodiment of idyllic joy. All the innocent gaiety of the sunlight sparkles in her eyes. All the fresh freedom of the wind and the leaves trembles in her gestures. All the careless fragrance of a wild flower seems to flow from her wavering fingers. She is cool vitality without passion, sweet grace without innuendo, elfish mirth without ribaldry. There is a great gulf between her and such dancers as Otéro and Tortajada. They are the animal appetites, the hot senses, the fierce desires. They mimic the swift fury of sensual delight. She is a serene sentiment, a clear fantasy, an untroubled dream. Her coquetry is roguishly pure and impishly chaste. She is a virginal romp with the bright energy of Diana and the fleet witchery of Atalanta. She has the uncorrupted archness of Rosalind and the mischievous fun of Lady Teazle. Her dancing is an ebullience of unsaddened youth, a spontaneous riot of girlish excitement woven into a lovely pattern of merry pirouettes and flowing arabesques, rounded limbs and airy attitudes, light leaps and sallies and twinkling *entrechats*. The intricate notes of her dancing melt into a visible music as the waves melt into the sea. Her tech-

nical skill conceals itself in her temperament, for she uses her temperament to express her health and her hope and her high spirits, her delight in being alive, her exultation in things as they are and in herself as she is.

The charm of Genée is more than the charm of rhythmical movement. It is the charm of life that is at one with life, of happiness that is happy, of contentment that is content. From her laughing curls that toss round her laughing face to the tips of her laughing fingers and the tips of her laughing toes she is an image of joy. Her laughing face is a mask of joy, and when I see it I always think of her as the living spirit of comedy, so airy is the joy that laughs in her laughing blue eyes and her laughing teeth and her laughing lips. Hers is a contagious joy that catches you by the hand and whirls you off into a romantic world where there is no stupidity and no weariness, no tears of conscience and no sighs of memory. You escape with her from the cry of the flesh as well as from the cry of the soul. You are alive with life and young with youth and in love with love in the land east of the sun and west of the moon where all you would be you are for one breathless moment. You feel her calling you out of the slough of existence, and you stumble clumsily after her, fascinated by her candid, laughing eyes and her candid, laughing mouth, and her laughing valiancy of candid grace. The music seems to flow under her feet like the water under the wings of a skimming swallow. It echoes her swift speed and darting lightness. It follows her like a shadow. It is part of her and she is part of it, and when it ceases you feel that she too should fade slowly into an invisible silence, dying with the music and living with it, as a shadow dies and lives with the sun.

Genée is a great mime as well as a great dancer. She is an artist in poetic silence as well as an artist in poetic movement. Her face is a dancing mask of moods, changing gaily with the music and interpreting all its thistledown whims and cobweb caprices. Her mouth can pout deliciously and her eyebrows can frown adorably, but the pout and the frown go as lightly as they come, for her anger and her disdain are

only little parodies and tiny burlesques of passion, made but to be unmade, blown into being but to be broken like bubbles in the sun. Her features play pranks with life, weaving its ambitions into a fairy gossamer of unreality, and mocking its tragic passions with an irreverent impudence. Nothing seems to matter in her travesty of human solemnity. Love turns into a dreamy game as she imitates its hopes and fears and yearnings and regrets in a revel of physical badinage. There is a merry irony in her rapture and in her despair, and she eludes the burden of pleasure as featly as the burden of pain. All the emotions are fugitive in her face, and she fills you with a sense of spiritual escape. The chains of time fall from your soul and you glide into a vague trance of liberty that is like a waking dream. It is the trance of poetry in which the thorns of fact and event and environment no longer wound you, for you forget that you are caught in the thicket of life. For a moment you are mixed with the music of things. You are free from the tyranny of thought and the cruelty of knowledge. Her permanent smile is like a prolonged moment of bliss. It seems for a brief while to hold life at bay and fate at arm's length. She is a symbol of joy that triumphs over the dulness of duty and the boredom of routine. She is mockingly different and her mocking difference is reflected dimly in you. With a laughing gesture she dismisses the universe and all its wisdom and all its folly, and you accept her laughing gesture in the rare mood of Christopher Sly. "Let the world slide!" Let the puzzles and the problems go. Let the enigmas of the heart and the riddles of the soul fade into a vapour. Let the torment of desire wane with the torture of regret. Let the will to live and the will to die melt into a gay acceptance of everything that is and everything that is not. "Let the world slide!"

The art of Genée is based upon austerity. She is the antithesis of the popular conception of a dancer. Her art governs her life. Her beauty of gesture and grace conceals itself under a robe of sackcloth. She is ascetic and severe. She is always in arduous training. She practises for hours every day in a

room walled with mirrors. She is a rigid teetotaler. She dines frugally at three in the afternoon, and starves till midnight, allowing herself only a cup of coffee at six. That life of martyrdom is the price she pays for her strength and her grace. Her skill is made out of infinite self-denial. This miracle of laughing joy is the product of bitter toil and iron renunciation. Behind her radiant ecstasy of light gestures and postures is the stern hardship of an athlete and the passionless devotion of a nun. It is the paradox of the artist, for only through absolute singleness of aim can supreme mastery be achieved. In order to get one great thing you must give up all the little things.

Here is another paradox. Genée is never tired when she dances, and she dances best in summer. While she is dancing her feet never blister, but if she takes a holiday, and foregoes her daily practice they are blistered in a few days. She cannot dance in a ballroom, for she grows giddy after a few turns in a waltz. Dancing is the only gymnastic exercise she can safely indulge in, for golf or cycling or tennis would harden the muscles and destroy the soft suppleness of the arms. She detests long skirts because they conceal the complicated pattern of the dance. She hates high heels because they destroy the delicate flexibility of the ankle and the instep. For her the dance is the vehicle of all delight. Her little feet are lyrical. They sing in a language of their own. It is the song of the throbbing lark that beats its wings in cloudland between the earth and the sky. "Let the world slide!"

LILY ELSIE

ONE of the most popular actresses of the hour is Lily Elsie. She is the star of stars in the changing firmament of musical comedy. Yesterday she was hardly known, but when she appeared as "The Merry Widow" she stepped straight into fame. The rumour of her charm spread magically from mouth to mouth in that mysterious fashion which makes the fortune of a player. It is not the newspaper that creates popularity. The newspaper registers popularity: it does not make it. I have seen many attempts to boom an actor into fame, but the public is as obstinate as a mule. It will not be dragooned into admiration. The only real popularity is that which is based upon private talk. It is what men and women are saying to each other in idle gossip that makes or mars the fate of a player. Mr. George Edwardes is a marvellous judge of these invisible currents of opinion. He can put his finger on the pulse of the public and count its beats. I have been told that he often sits in front among the audience and studies its symptoms. If anything or anybody appears to bore or tire or weary the audience he ruthlessly eliminates the offence or the offender. He makes the play and the players play up to the delicate mood of the pleasure-seekers who come to the theatre to be amused. That is the sole secret of his success. He is in touch with the world before the footlights as well as with the world behind them. His gift of selective insight enables him to fit the part to the player and the player to the part. Lily Elsie is a case in point. She is more than the Sonia of the opera. She is the whole opera. She is the incarnation of its brightness and lightness, its amorous grace, its joyous sentiment, and its slumbering passion. She appeals to the erotic romance that is hidden in the heart of every playgoer,

even when it is bruised by life and battered by business, coarsened by experience and withered by adventure. Hers is the glamour of beauty that fades and the pathos of youth that flies.

I think it was Walter Pater who said that romance is the quality of strangeness in beauty. The beauty of Lily Elsie has this strangeness. I know a leather-hearted old cynic who haunts Daly's in order to feast on her troubling fascination. He tells me that she keeps him young. He confesses that he cries tears of joy over her. She revives his lost youth and all his forgotten illusions. She helps him to remember the brave days when he could fall recklessly and desperately in love. She enables him to escape from the harshness and hardness, the coldness and dulness of life. She turns the grey sky of his mind into a blue dream of tender devotion and yearning adoration. The rows on rows of people who sit rapturously watching Lily Elsie night after night are like my old cynic. They are all melting into this delightful mood. You can feel the stirring of romance in the amorous audience. It is rising like a tide in every heart, and blossoming like a rose in every cheek, and sparkling like a diamond in every eye. It fills the whole theatre like a perfumed tornado. Its presence is felt by the most callous and most indifferent spectator. It overwhelms you like a drilled whisper or an organised sigh. You cannot resist it. You are forced to yield to its vague enchantment. The whole house is one vast Tupman dissolving in one vast desire, the desire to love and to be beloved, to kiss and to be kissed, to embrace and to be embraced, to adore and to be adored.

Lily Elsie is love in full blast, for her Sonia is a very amorous young lady who is wooing a very disdainful young man. As a rule, love in the theatre is the other way round. It is usually the amorous young man who woos the disdainful young lady. The change is welcome. It is pleasant to watch Joseph Coyne struggling against the undulating charms of Lily Elsie, for it is obvious that he is resisting the irresistible. No mortal man could hold out for ever against the

lure of her eyes and the wiles of her smiles and the invitation of her lips. The angry coyness of Danilo is heroic. He is always trembling on the brink of a kiss, and always shying from the verge of a caress. His lips are perpetually a hair's-breadth from hers, but in the nick of time he tears his mouth away with an explosive "No!" Everybody in the house is a Tupman waiting for the kiss deferred that maketh the heart sick. Everybody in the house is a Tupman longing for the surrender of the persecuted man to the persecuting woman. The theatre is saturated with Tupmanity. Every heart throbs and thumps. There are all sorts of hearts throbbing and thumping behind all sorts of corsets and shirt-fronts, but they are all throbbing and thumping to the same tune, the old tune of love. Many of these hearts are superannuated warriors who are on the retired list. They are scarred and bemedalled veterans who have fought their last campaign. But they like to feel their old wounds opening. They are glad to feel the old ecstatic pain squirming feebly somewhere behind their whalebone and their starch. Then there are the conscript hearts of young girls, the blithe innocents that are only beginning to throb and thump to the oldest music in the world. Lily Elsie is the embodiment of their timid dreams. One day they will be like Sonia, desirable, desiring, and desired, languishing and languorous, coquettish and bewitching, slender and supple and graceful in a wistful swoon of sentiment and a dreamy waltz of romance.

This is the age of slim and slender nymphs. Lily Elsie is the last word in willowy gracility. There was a time when exuberance of flesh was the fashion, but to-day a woman must be a bending wisp, without obtrusive curves and emphatic contours. Venus is no longer voluptuous. She can hardly be too thin to please her Paris. Her grace must be ethereal and her wiles must be spiritual. Lily Elsie is a perfect type of the current ideal. Her fragile body is the climax of that frail evanescence which is now the vogue. Her delicate face is like a poppy trembling on a slender stalk. When she swings in the waltz with Danilo's hand supporting her waist, you are

afraid she will break in two. When she sways with his hand upholding the nape of her neck, you shudder lest her head should come off. She looks like a white rose whose petals would fall in a shower if they were rudely shaken. Her dream-like evanescence seems to float along the music like a lotus along an indolent stream. There is no violence or vehemence in her lazy charm. The slumbering passion in her lovely eyes is like the visionary passion of some impossible damozel bending over the gold bar of some impossible heaven. She is not a creature of solid flesh and blood, but a mythical fairy fashioned out of the stuff of dreams. She is womanhood melting into the mist of poetry and the vapour of romance. The long curves of her lips and her limbs recall the languid dream women of Rossetti and the swooning sylphs of Burne-Jones. The gliding undulations of her dancing lull the senses into a brooding reverie peopled with tender reminiscences and delicious recollections of all the fair women in song and story. She is a symbol of unearthly fascination and unworldly enchantment, an image of desire that hovers for ever over the abyss of fulfilment, of passion that is poised for ever on the precipice of disillusion. She is the mirage of unattained rapture and the miracle of unachieved delight sung by Keats:

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve,
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

That is the secret of the charm of the waltz that has run like wildfire through the world, and that is the secret of the ephemeral charm of Lily Elsie. She expresses the impossible love of all the impossible lovers, the hopeless quest of the human heart for a happiness that seems always within its grasp and is always out of reach. She is the laughing will-o'-the-wisp of life that Tracy Tupman follows till he loses it in the grave.

FLEUR DESLYS

THERE are many nuances of gaiety in this vale of tears, and one of the most delicate is the nuance you taste at the Alhambra. The Alhambra has a temperament of its own, and it is not in the least British, for it is free from solemnity and heavy deliberation. It has the wild grace of gaiety and the laughing spirit of fastidious extravagance. There is nothing so tragic as joy in its soul, for joy is a serious and sober thing which keeps a firm foothold on the surface of reality.

The Alhambra bans reality, and breathes fantasy from the very porch. When you step over its enchanted threshold you leave life behind you, and you forget that you are what you are. The Oriental lassitudes and languors of the corridors charm you out of your workaday mood, and as you sink back into your stall you sigh yourself into a mood of indolent benignity.

The Alhambra stall is a symbol of the place. It is half an easy chair and half a divan. Some day I mean to beg the Alhambra to give me one of these masterpieces of upholstery, for if I had one by my fire I should always find the secret of laziness at my elbow. It is really very hard to be lazy unless you have a lazy chair. The Alhambra stall is the laziest seat on earth.

Well, having adjusted your bones so that your body ceases to bore your luxurious mind, you light a long Ramon Allones, with all the fragrance of Havana in its tender brown slimness, and as the first puff curls and drifts languidly away, you feel the sea of deep content submerging you. That charming creature by your side seems to be more charming than ever. A few years ago men did not dare to take their womenfolk to the Alhambra. They sat alone in sultanic majesty, contemplating the witcheries of the ballet. We have changed all that. You

may now take your wife or your sister, or even your mother or your grandmother.

There is a fascinating old lady two rows away from us, and it is pleasant to watch the glow of youth in her ancient eyes and to see the light shimmering in her silver hair. The art of being a merry grandmother is a modern discovery. People of all ages seem to be in the same mood of deep, indolent content, and this spirit of unanimity reacts on you, as you lie back absorbing the placid peace of the place.

But there is a quiver of expectancy in the heart of all this indolent satisfaction with things. We are all waiting for Number 9. Who is Number 9? Who but Mlle. Gaby Deslys? Not too soon or too late she comes, but precisely at the culmination of the feast, at twenty-five minutes to ten. The curtain goes up, and you feel the little thrill of suspense pulsing from the floor to the roof.

For a moment the scene is empty, then a miraculously dainty ecstasy flashes out of the wings, and it is filled to the brim with airy, bubbling, sparkling gaiety. She is like a glass alive with cool, winking champagne, which a thousand lips are sipping together. Yes, Deslys is champagne. She is the quintessence of the sun and the summer, and the warm light of Provençal vineyards is in her wonderful eyes. There are few eyes which possess the mysterious charm of hers. They are large, oval things, and their largeness is audaciously exaggerated by the art of the pencil. But their secret is not in their size, but in their clear vehemence of troubling naïveté.

They are the eyes of a child who knows nothing veiling the soul of a woman who knows everything. Their distracting appeal is a mixture of incompatibles and contradictions, the song of innocence melting into the song of experience, like the light of a lamp dying in the light of the dawn. Their bewildering glamour is a conflagration of childish wonder—ignorance in flames and innocence on fire—in a word, *Flagrant Deslys!*

This childish paradox is inconceivably fragile in every feature and every limb. She looks as if she would break into little pieces, like a Dresden shepherdess, if you let her fall.

Her mouth is as tremulously sensitive as the petals of a rose, and yet its blushing curves are as ripe as a September grape. When it laughs you see the lights of Paris, for Deslys is the triple extract of the Boulevards, and her smile has all the conscious grace of Cheret or Willette.

The illusion of infantile sweetness is intensified by her physical tininess. She is tiny from the tip of her nose to the tips of her fingers and the tips of her toes. Rather, she seems tiny, not because she is minute, but because she is fashioned so daintily that she seems to be a miniature. In reality she is rather tall, but she is as slim as a silver birch, and as evanescent. Her feet are irresistibly and impossibly tiny, and I am sure Paragot's phrase is the only phrase that is worthy of them—"ces petits pieds si adorés." Yes, we are all adoring the little feet that touch the boards so lightly. The whole theatre is breathless with adoration.

Deslys is an adorable poupée, and it is like a poupée that she laughs and dances and sings. She is "The Magic Toy," and "The Magic Toy" is a doll in an Easter egg, and such a doll! If only one could buy dolls like Deslys in the shops for one's little nieces! Everybody would want to buy Deslys and keep her on the mantelpiece. Other actresses grow quickly out of the doll stage, but Deslys is still in it, and she has the true unreality of the doll in every limb.

Her eyes stare a delightfully inhuman stare, and her wooden grace is like expensive wax turning into flesh or flesh turning into expensive wax.

Her voice is the voice of a doll, a tinkling, tiny stream of clear music, without any passion or emotion—nothing but merry, unconscious life, and vivacious sprightliness.

But I have one fault to find with the delicious Deslys. Why does she sing an English song? Why is she throwing away her natural disadvantages? Is she to go the way of all Parisian singers who become Anglicised? She is an *article de Paris*. I implore her to keep her Parisian *gaminerie* and *diablerie* untarnished and uncoarsened by our London fogs.

At the Alhambra you always get a bizarre clash of sen-

sations. It is a far cry from the flower-soft French fragility of Deslys to the Anglo-Saxon brutality of the prize-fight between Tommy Burns and Gunner Moir. It is like eating roast beef after the tongues of nightingales. The cinematograph seems to deepen the brutality of the ring. You have all the realism of the real thing without its atmosphere and environment. You are passive and dispassionate. In cold blood you watch these two pugilists with a shudder, for they appear to be fighting in cold, cold blood. It is like a silent battle between two ghosts. You miss the roar of the hoarse cheers, the shuffle of the feet, and the thud of the gloves on the warm, shining flesh. And the blood on Moir's face is black, not red. And the American is very sinister, very lithe, very slim, and very imperturbable. And the contrast between Burns and Moir and Deslys is so appalling that you leave the theatre with your heart bruised and battered as if Burns had been slugging at it.

MAINLY ABOUT EATING

IN DEPTFORD MARKET

LONDON is a monster with six million mouths, six million throats, and six million stomachs. This monster has the largest appetite on earth. It is always hungry and it is always eating. At every moment of every hour of every day its teeth are grinding. Try to conjure up an image of this million-mouthed creature. Think of its oceans of gastric juice, its enormous machinery of digestion. Figure it as one immense man, with one vast mouth, and one gigantic dinner-plate. Then try to imagine the Mississippi of meat which rolls ceaselessly down his gullet.

The thing is a nightmare. The fairy tales which tell you of the giant who drank oceans and ate continents are less astounding. For this is a real giant. He takes a slice of roast beef as large as Hyde Park, and each mouthful weighs a ton. He masticates meadows of mutton. He swallows Atlantic cables of sausage. He picks his teeth with an Alp. His finger-bowl is the Black Sea. His serviette is Switzerland. His cigar is the Nelson pillar. His coffee cup is the dome of St. Paul's.

The titanic process of filling London's belly is too complicated for any pen. I might stun you with statistics. I might daze you with tonnages. But figures beyond a certain point cease to stir the imagination. It is better to surprise the tide of food at some strategic stage of its advance, to stand above the surge of victuals, and watch its waves before they pour into the bottomless pit of hunger.

Where shall we go? Well, let us choose the Foreign Cattle Market at Deptford. London eats more foreign meat than any other city in the world. When you chew your steak you fondly imagine that it is home-grown. Five times out

of ten you are eating beef that has crossed the Atlantic in a cattle-boat compared to which the Ark was a cockleshell. All the bullocks that come across the sea to London walk ashore at Deptford. Not one of them is allowed to leave the lairs alive. The procession of beasts is perpetual. They march in regiments up to the mouth of London, and London eats them in brigades.

It costs about thirty shillings to bring a bullock from New York to London. It costs more to bring a Scotch steer to Islington. You cannot carry a beast from Norwich to London for less than ten shillings. In Smithfield they say that a bullock arrives from America in better condition than a home-bred animal. Our railways do not employ cattlemen. The beasts are left to the unskilled hands of the ordinary porters.

From Cannon Street we crawl to New Cross, where we find a string of hooded flies waiting in the rain. Flies, not growlers. This is one of the topographical whimsies which London flaunts at every turn. Under railway arches and along squalid streets we go to the market gates. We pass the policeman, and enter a strange land. Here aforesaid stood the shipbuilding yard in which Peter the Great served his apprenticeship. The slips are now slaughterhouses and the workshops are lairs. Instead of the multitudinous clang of the shipwright's hammer there is the multitudinous roar of thousands of fat kine. Our ears are filled with the lowing and bellowing of oxen. We wander in a labyrinth of sheds, a maze of low buildings.

At every step we encounter grotesque men. There are drovers carrying rough cudgels. There are dandiacal salesmen with diamond breastpins and beringed hands. There are men with great wrinkled sea-boots that reach their thighs, men with white coats dabbled with scarlet stains, men with canvas rags bound round their trousers. They come and go silently. Their step is brisk, their air crisp and precise. We vaguely wonder at their activity. We grope after a key to their haste. We feel incongruous. We are caught in the cogs of a mysterious machine.

What is behind those closed doors? Refrigerating-chambers crammed with carcasses ready for London's dinner. We stare at a vast empty shed criss-crossed with thousands of wooden cat's-cradles, which are cattle-pens, with drinking-troughs and fodder-racks. The building is like a chapel without the congregation. In another shed we find a vast concourse of shaggy red bullocks standing still, their soft eyes gazing at you with that pathetic patience which is the personality of brutes. They are blessedly free from foreknowledge.

Suddenly our nostrils are assaulted by an acrid odour which overpowers the familiar farmyard smell of the lairs. It invades our senses. It permeates our clothes. It is a damp, sharp, stinging breath, sickly yet poignant, clammy but keen. It has the clinging porousness of a sponge and the hard, clean, thin precision of a razor-edge. Its pungency recalls the reek of peat or the smarting savour of the sea after a storm. What is it?

Blood.

It is a new smell. It comes from a hundred abattoirs. It makes us giddy and faint. We gasp for breath, but even in the open the air is saturated with this terrible perfume. For a river of blood is flowing steadily, quietly, perpetually. As we walk along the thresholds we see red, we hear red, we taste red, we touch red, we smell red. It is a red world.

On one side are the living beasts. Midway are the dying beasts. On the other side are the crimson and ivory sides of dressed beasts. We catch glimpses of men skinning steaming carcasses, of hoofs gesticulating in the air. Here are great piles of horned hides. Here is a carcass hung by the heels, a white-coated man chopping it gently with a cleaver. Here is a lorry laden with iron cauldrons brimming with creamy fat. Here is a man pushing a huge carcass, hanging from a travelling pulley, into a shed aisled with gleaming flesh.

There are two weapons of slaughter, the Christian poleaxe and the Jewish knife. If the poleaxe is the swifter, the knife is the surer. The poleaxe falls, and the beast collapses like a punctured tyre. A thin cane is inserted in the hole, and

thrust along the spinal column, as a ramrod is thrust along the gun-barrel. There is a convulsive tremor, and then—death. But if the blow be not skilful, there may be bungling. The Jewish Shochet never bungles. The edge of his long knife is keener than any razor. It must be absolutely notchless. The beast is gently thrown by pulleyed heel-ropes upon a soft india rubber pad, its head is pulled back, and its throat cut as you cut a tense string. There is a misty explosion of sanguine steam, a crimson torrent of blood, a terrible fit of coughing, and then—death. The process lasts about twenty-five seconds, and it is inexpressibly dreadful. It stuns you with horror. You set your teeth with terror. You feel sick for days at the memory of it. No skill can make a slaughter-house perfectly humane.

After the Shochet, the Bodech. He “searches” the carcass. That is to say, he examines it for traces of disease. He inflates the lungs, and if there is the slightest defect, he condemns the meat. If the meat is pure, he seals it. The seal is a tab of leather fastened by a rivet of lead. The punch which closes the lead disc also stamps it with the date and the word “Kosher” in Hebrew. The meat is then “Kosher,” namely, fit. There is no doubt that the Jewish ritual is the more effective preventive against the sale of diseased meat. The Gentile gourmet says that Kosher meat, being bled white, is consequently tough, but the Jewish gourmet repels that aspersion.

I am not a vegetarian, but I admit that the vegetarian case is unanswerable. After my visit to the Deptford shambles I feel that I ought to live for the rest of my life on lentils and pulses, nuts and apples. But London is hungry, and its mouth demands flesh. The march of the red bullocks goes on ceaselessly, and will go on until the West attains the wisdom of the East, or our cold climate ceases to make a flesh diet desirable.

THE CATTLE SHOW

TWO-PENN'ORTH of velocity in the Twopenny Tube to the Bank. Then through a white-tiled pea-shooter to the mouth of the pipe that leads from the Bank to the Angel. Three-ha'porth of speed in the single-barrelled fowling-piece that fires cartridges of humanity into Islington. Then into a square box up into the grey paste which Cockneys call air.

As I wade through the grey paste I am wounded by the ugliness of everything. It is the ugliest maelstrom in London. The shops are down-hearted and down at heel. Cheapness gnashes its teeth at you from every window. The very 'buses have lost their swaggering joviality. The pavements are greasily despondent. A choir of gramophones is wheezing in a cave of harmony called "Funland." There is an allusion to the Cattle Show in the window of a sweet-shop which is decorated with fat sugar-pigs. There was a time when I could have eaten a sugar-pig with Elian gusto. *Eheu, fugaces labuntur anni!*

Now the sidewalks grow bucolic. Apple-cheeked farmers with leathern leggings and strange dialects go by. The Agricultural Hall is a shock to the imagination. Paris would have graced this cathedral of cattle with bovine portals and heroic statues of yeomen. She would have carved horned heads of mighty bulls on its gigantic façade. London disdains such symbolism. There is not even a colossal butcher wielding a poleaxe to stir the fancy of the spectator.

As I go through the turnstiles I hear a gruff voice, and my hand is grasped by a broad-backed, broad-shouldered, broad-faced giant. With aching fingers I stare at the man.

"Don't you know me?" he roared. "I'm the Angel. Come along and see my fatlings."

I had never seen the Angel before, and I confess I was surprised at his appearance. I had imagined that the Angel at Islington was a public-house, and I said so with some heat. He bellowed out laughter that drowned the plunkety-plunk of the gas-engines.

"Me a pub!" he guffawed. "Bless your soul, I'm a farmer!" And with that he clapped me on the back with a hand as big as a barn-door. While my heart jangled like a pendulum in an earthquake, he strode ahead into a vast hall, filled with enormous oxen.

"Throw away your cigarette, my boy," he grunted. "I can't let you poison my beauties with your filthy smoke. They are used to the honest air of the downs and the hills. Tobacco is good enough for you Londoners who don't know the flavour of a breeze. My beasts know better. Look at that chap! Bred and fed as not one of you whey-faced streetlings ever was!"

I blushed as I surveyed the massive masterpiece of breeding and feeding.

"Who is he?" I stammered.

"Who is he?" growled the Angel derisively. "You may well ask. Take off your hat, sir, to His Majesty. The best beast in the show, sir. Bred and fed by the King at the Royal Farms, Windsor. His royal sire was Royal Duke, his royal dam was Jenny Lind B, and his royal grandsire was Steadfast. There's breeding and feeding for you, young man!" Humbly I took off my hat, and bowed low to the august potentate.

"Sire," said I, "accept my loyal congratulations."

The son of Royal Duke gazed tolerantly at me out of a mild and magnificent eye. He was inured to homage and habituated to adulation. Silently I contemplated his immeasurable bulk. His back was as vast as Table Mountain, and his stupendous sides bulged outward like a Scotch boiler. He was a Himalaya of beef. No upholsterer ever stuffed a Chesterfield so tight with horsehair as this paragon has been stuffed with solid meat. A plasterer could not plaster another ounce on his bulging obesity. It seems to me impossible that this

monarch can have eaten himself into such a glory of fat in two years eleven months and two weeks. I see visions of broad acres cropped close by those insatiable teeth. Is there any grass left in Windsor Park? He must have devoured pyramids of oil-cake and drunk oceans of mash. What chewings of cud he must have exulted in! What feats of digestion!

I fell to wondering whether His Majesty is conscious of his greatness. In his obscure babyhood did he conceive a noble resolution to masticate his way to the pinnacle of bovine fame? Did he foresee his future sublimity as he grazed? Had he moments of presaging exultation? Did he day by day view his growing girth mirrored in some limpid pond as he drank his draught at dawn or sundown? Was he ever haunted with doubts and fears? These are mysteries which baffle the curious mind.

But the Angel dragged me out of my reverie of adoration. He gravely presented me to steers and heifers of the noblest lineage, proud Devons and haughty Herefords, lolling Shorthorns and shaggy Galloways, dainty Kerrys and Dexters, Highland lads and lassies, fierce chieftains from the Welsh hills, crossbred dignitaries in scarlet and ermine, and red-polled cardinals.

"Thousands of Christmas dinners here!" chuckled the Angel. "They will all be roasted before they are much older. Come along and see the sheep!"

The sheep are very sheepish, and their wool is very woolly. They are absurdly clean. Their backs are impossibly flat. They look wisely at me with eyes framed in fluff. No carpet ever had a pile so profoundly deep and soft as these Leicesters and Cotswolds, Southdowns and Suffolks, Shropshires and Cheviots. Vainly I search for their buried bones: they are made of fat and wool. Their silver ears gleam like mother-o'-pearl. Their shelly horns curl extravagantly. It is sad to think that they will soon be mutton.

"And now for the pigs," said the Angel. "Do you hear them singing?"

The pigs are the comedians of the Cattle Show. The

oxen seldom low and the sheep do not often bleat, but the pigs grunt and squeak and squeal perpetual defiance at the crowd. I fear they are teased and tormented shamefully. Everybody pokes them with sticks and umbrellas. Their ears are pulled by the passer-by. The ladies giggle at their dilated snouts. A pig's face is one of Nature's wildest jests. There is no decorum or dignity in it.

One seraphic monster amused me vastly. He was a smiler. His mouth was slit preposterously far back, and his closed lips curved upward in a gorgeous grin that was half human. Is a pig's smile unconscious? Does he see the humour of himself? Or is it possible that he smiles at us? I suspect that he is tickled by the grotesque countenance of man. He despises its unporcine contours. I am sure that he regards himself as the type of beauty. He is proud of his wiggly tail and his shining bristles. After all, what right have we to impose upon him our convention of grace? Nature made both pigs and men. It is only an accident that enables the one to turn the other into rashers. I can conceive a world in which pigs should breakfast off human sausages. Let us be humble, my brothers.

"Well," said the Angel, as I shook hands with him, "I wish you a merry Christmas. Come again next year."

"I will," said I. "Do you think they will be fatter than ever?"

"They will, my lad, they will."

But I am sure they won't, for they can't.

DINNER

DINNER is doomed! The axe is laid at the root of the Mahogany Tree. The empire of the stomach is overthrown. I set the trumpet to my lips and blow. The night is broken westward. The cooks are cowering. The chefs are shuddering. The wine merchants are moaning. The florists are sore stricken. The fishmongers are afraid. The butchers are in despair. Dinner is doomed!

The downfall of dinner has not been heralded by the newspapers. The revolution has stolen upon us shod with wool. It has not been compassed by leagues and societies. It is the product of dim, silent forces. The gnomes of change have been working craftily in the digestive machinery of man. The vastest transformation in all the annals of humanity has been wrought into being like snow or dawn. To-day I salute the first faint shafts of the dinnerless day. I proclaim the triumph of the brain over the teeth, the victory of the soul over the palate.

Dinner is doomed! It is dead of dulness and indigestion. Our rude Victorian forefathers would turn in their tombs if they were to hear the awful news. But we are a breed of iconoclasts. We are idol-breakers. We are in full revolt against the paunch of the past. Ehud is slaying Eglon. Eglon, as you know, "was a very fat man. Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly." Our Eglon is Dinner, and behold our lord is fallen down dead on the earth.

Lives there a man who will lay his hand on his stomach and deny this gospel? It is true that the corpse of King Eglon

still encumbers the dining-rooms of Mayfair and Belgravia, of Bloomsbury and Bayswater, of Hampstead and Kensington. But the brute is moribund, the cadaver is cold. Customs survive long after their desuetude. We still wear two buttons at the back of our dress-coats. We still tolerate the tabs on our boots. Our restaurants still serve toothpicks. Quill pens may still be seen at Westminster, at the Law Courts, and other medieval haunts. In the same spirit of reverence for mouldy use and mossy wont we give and receive invitations to dinner parties. But do we eat the dinner? Do we drink the wines? No. We leave that to our menials. Dinners are no longer eaten in the dining-room. They are eaten in the housekeeper's room and the servants' hall.

The other evening I dined with Lucullus. The ancient ritual was solemnly maintained. The corpulent butler and the slim footmen ministered unto us as of old. Two by two we marched majestically out of the dimly magnificent drawing-room down to the dimly magnificent dining-room. Twenty-four of us, and not an appetite among us. We sat meek as martyrs before a procession of elaborately disguised negations, a banquet of cryptograms. Nature or the dentist had furnished our twenty-four mouths with ferocious ivories, but they were as idle as the molars of Triangle Camp. Mastication? Where have I heard that word? Teeth we have, but they chew not. Palates we possess, but they taste not. Throats we have, but they drink not.

Our plutocratic host led the van. He toyed with his silver and steel. The dishes filed past him inviolate. I avow that I mourned over their virginity. The humiliation of fish and flesh and fowl moved me to tears. The woe of the unquaffed wines made me sad. Sherry, hock, champagne, claret, port, and liqueurs wove their wanton wiles in vain. These whilom conquerors were vanquished by plebeian waters with alien patronymics and parvenu genealogies.

Lazarus used to starve on the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Nowadays it is Dives who starves, and the crumbs in his crumb-tray would make even Gargantua

replete. His heeltaps would distend Falstaff himself. As for Pantagruel, he lives in Poplar.

With the decease of dinner, the art of conversation has expired. The hungry dyspeptic inflated with Apollinaris or Perrier is a dolorous raconteur. It is well that Christopher North is bonedust. There are no Noctes Ambrosianæ now. Haggis went out with nightmares, rack punch, and the Caves of Harmony. The interlude after the ladies leave the dining-room is now a ghost of its former self. We no longer smoke cigars a foot long. A whiff of the cigarette, a chestnut or two, and then we stride into the drawing-room, break up the feminine session, politely bore each other, and are politely bored. Then a flat and jejune farewell, and so home, empty, to our hungry bed.

Dinner is dead. We are all teetotalers now, although we do not choose to have it known. The glass-blowers are bankrupt and the makers of decanters are extinct. The Tantalus no longer tantalisises. Port has gone. Champagne has gone. Claret is going. Whisky is on its last legs. Can mighty ale survive? Can beer, glorious beer, stem the flowing tide of mineral waters? Can even that eloquent intemperance lecturer, Mr. Chesterton, dam the ocean of abstinence?

What can take the place of dinner? Tea? Alas, tea too is *in articulo mortis*. Most of us are teetotalers. Shall we kill alcohol to make tannin king? Coffee also is on the index expurgatorius. Chocolate and cocoa are for the digestive giant. We must eke out a tenuous life on Byron's diet, soda-water and biscuits, ameliorated by Igmandi and other radioactive beverages. Ere long the stomach of man will wither into annihilation. He will be merely a peripatetic brain, feeding on chemical emanations. He will breakfast on powders, lunch on tabloids, and dine on pilules. Knives and forks will be as obsolete as swords and daggers. The butler will share the fate of the seneschal, and culinary implements will be exhibited in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. A silver grill will be a curio, and saucepans will be as bizarre as warming-pans. Dilettanti will collect Ed-

wardian cooking-ranges and soup-tureens. Finger-bowls will be regarded as quaint relics of the Twentieth Century.

Yes, dinner is doomed. "Good cheer" already is a phrase with a romantically archaic air, and Dickens looms like a greasy cannibal. Soon we shall shudder at the thought of munching a haunch of venison, a shoulder of lamb, or a leg of mutton. Rump steak, ribs of beef, and marrow-bones will conjure up visions of the mortuary. Imagination is starving us to death. Why prolong the farce? Let us give up the dinner-party as well as dinner, and die, if we cannot live, like men.

A TRAGEDY IN PORRIDGE

I LOVE Cranks. It is to me an ecstasy to discover a new Fad and a new Faddist. Cranks and Fads are to human nature what the hills and the clouds are to physical nature. They relieve its monotony. If men were all conventional, the world would be as dull as ditchwater.

My friend Lentilius is the Perfect Crank, the Absolute Faddist. His soul is a disagreement, and his brain is a controversy. He is happy only when he is unhappy, and he is glad only when he is sad. His pastime is misery, and his pleasure is self-mortification. He lusts after unprofitable martyrdoms and sterile abnegations.

His chief dread is lest he should exhaust his capacity for quarrelling with life. "The good God," said Heine, "will forgive me. It is His business." The business of Lentilius is never to forgive anybody, and never to pardon anything. He eats the bread of intolerance and drinks the water of enmity. But his intolerance is beautiful and his enmity is gracious. His discontent is a game which helps him to endure the ironies of existence. If he were afflicted with contentment for a day he would die.

The other day he came to me with large tears in his frenetic eyes, and deep furrows of melancholy in his sorrowful countenance. I knew he had discovered a fresh grievance, and I congratulated him upon the splendour of his despondency.

"Lentilius," said I, "what dewy wrong have you unearthed in the desert of joy?"

He groaned a groan of agonised delight, and grasped my hand with a spasm of funereal bliss.

"My Palace of Famine is closed," he sobbed. "My Vegetarian Restaurant is shut up." Whereat he burst into tears.

It is terrible to see a strong man in the grip of tragic emotion. Lentilius had for many years found in his Vegetarian Restaurant a refuge from the gross pleasures of life. It was, I think, the first Palace of Famine which the high priests of starvation erected in London. Lentilius had devoted the best years of his life to its farinaceous ideals. On the altar of its marble-topped tables he had sacrificed his digestion. Within its gloomy walls for many a famished lustrum he had worshipped the Goddess of Dyspepsia. Everything he ate in what he called "The Vedge" disagreed with him, and he disagreed with everything he ate. Thrice daily he found in its doleful dishes the solace of complaint and the anodyne of querulousness. Now his staff of grief was broken and his prop of sorrow shattered.

"Sit down," said I, "and tell me all about it."

"It had been going down for years," he moaned. "They were too hard on the weaker brethren. They imagined that a Vegetarian would eat anything for the good of the Cause. It was a mistake. The spirit is willing, but sometimes the flesh is weak. Even the Vegetarian grows weary of well-doing and tired of Welsh Rarebit. They did not give us enough variety."

"Surely," said I, "variety is the soul of Vegetarianism?"

"It is," he sighed, "it is. They ought to have changed the names of the dishes. The name's the thing. Even if the same ingredients are used, it is a pity to call the dishes by the same name. I fear the brethren grew weary of the monotony. They fell away one by one. At last I only was left. But I stood by 'The Vedge' to the end."

"Could nothing have been done?" I asked. "A new nut-cake, for instance, or mutton made out of macaroni?"

"They tried to attract corpse-eaters by introducing fish-dinners. That was fatal. The old guard of Vegetarians fled. They saw the cloven hoof in the sole, and the thin end of the wedge in the whiting."

"You mean the thin end of the 'Vedge,' surely?" said I, with feeble facetiousness. He stared at me gloomily.

"It was the end of everything. The brokers have been in for a week, and the food has been getting worse and worse. They tried to make us eat up the old stock. We did our best, but it was hard, very hard. Last night, while I was eating a very tough Welsh Rarebit, the Gas Company cut off the gas. To-day the shutters are up, and I am heart-broken."

"Cheer up!" said I. "There are other 'Vedges.'"

"They are not the same," he sobbed. "I hate their leaded panes, their white paint, their false gaiety, and their merry waitresses. There is no place left where I can get the mournful Porridge which was the joy of my life."

"Can't you live without Porridge?"

"Live without Porridge? Why insult me? Porridge is the only food which I can eat without gratifying my baser appetites. Porridge is the only food which I can eat without pleasure. Porridge is the only food which I can never digest without pain. Porridge is the food of the martyrs."

"Why not try Rice Pudding?" I ventured.

"Rice Pudding!" he shrieked. "Why, I like Rice Pudding. It agrees with me."

"I am sorry for it," said I. "What about Bananas?"

A slow smile of meditative woe lighted up his haggard face.

"Ah!" he murmured. "There is something to be said for Bananas. I have always loathed Bananas. They are almost as beautifully repulsive as Porridge."

"And Tomatoes?" I suggested.

"Yes," he said. "Since I was a child I have detested Tomatoes. They are divinely nauseous. Henceforth I will live on Bananas and Tomatoes."

"It will be the 'Simple Life.'"

"Yes, it will be the 'Simple Life.' Only one thing worries me."

"What is that?" said I.

"I am afraid I may grow fond of Bananas and Tomatoes."

"In that case," said I, "you can change their names. You can call them Tomanas and Banatoes."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEER

"I HATE to go home," said my friend Falstaff, as we left the Empire. "The night has not cut its first tooth yet. Let us sup."

"Supper!" said I, scornfully. "I hate supper. It means listening to music you don't want to hear, looking at people you don't want to see, and paying for food you don't want to eat. The man who has dined well cannot sup well. A good dinner does not need a supper and a bad dinner does not deserve one."

"Degenerate weakling!" snorted Falstaff. "Supper is the coping-stone of dinner. A supperless stomach is a temple without a roof."

"You are an over-eater, my friend. Hence your hogs-head girth."

"It is one of the great fallacies of our time," said Falstaff solemnly, "to suppose that a man can eat too much. I can prove that it is physically impossible to eat more than enough. As my friend Blake says, 'You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.'"

"Well," said I, "it would be inhuman to send you to bed on a fasting stomach. Take me somewhere cheap, where there is no band and no cheap snobs and no dear food. You shall feed and I shall watch you."

Grasping my arm, he dragged me out of Leicester Square towards Piccadilly Circus. As we walked along Coventry Street, he took off his vast soft hat and swept the pavement with a magnificent gesture of salutation.

"Who is the lady?" said I.

"The Spirit of Joy," he cried. "Don't you see her? She is in the click and clatter of hoofs, the whirl of wheels, the

flicker of winking electric advertisements, the flare of torches on the roofs of theatres, the glowing tip of a cigar, the bright eyes that are the lamps of the hansom, the cry of the newsboy, the muffled Mercury of the fountain."

"Falstaff," said I, "you grow lyrical."

"Nay, I am a lyric. Know, my sober friend, that you are in Paris. This is the only spot in London that sparkles with Lutetian gaiety. A handful of kiosks and sawdust and marble-topped tables, with a mellow moan of 'So-o-ir,' and it would be as bright as the terrasse of the Café de la Paix."

Passing the Monico, he dived into the solitude of Glasshouse Street. Pointing to a lantern over a narrow door, he cried:

"À Berlin!"

"Berlin here," said I, "and Paris round the corner? You are absurdly fantastic to-night."

He pushed into a room, dim with smoke and crowded with men and women sitting at huddled tables. Falstaff seemed to know everybody, for as he led me through the maze he sent salutes in all directions. His path was paved with laughter. At last he flung himself into a seat, and throwing his sombrero on the table, he seized a stone beer-mug and rapped a postman's knock with the metal lid. A waiter, whose face was slit with a wide grin, hurried up.

"Varlet," shouted Falstaff, as he smote the table with his clenched fist, "let there be beer!" And there was beer. For a moment his tongue ceased to wag, while he buried his nose in the pale amber flood. Then he banged the lid amain, and cried, "Varlet, let there be more beer!" And there was more beer.

"Now," he said in a calmer voice, "let us sup." Seizing a huge sheet, covered with a bewildering catalogue of German delicacies, he began to descant upon the glories of Teutonic cookery.

"My son," said he, "the Germans alone know how to create an unquenchable thirst. Every dish emblazoned on this document is salt. What is salt for? It is for the stimu-

lation of the divine drought that demands an ocean of beer. You eat in order to drink."

"Your palate," said I, "is perverted. I decline to eat and I decline to drink."

"Abject! I despise you. But I will eat for you and drink for you."

"And he did. I stared in stupefaction as he devoured Westphalian ham, Frankfort sausages, pig's knuckles, and sauerkraut. I looked round me and I saw scores of jolly fat men, who were pickling their throats in the same heroic fashion. The very sight made me thirsty. Round the walls of this briny temple were horns innumerable—horns of the goat, the elk, the buffalo, the deer, the ram, the sheep. Little horns. Big horns.

The lid clicked musically on the stone lip, and Falstaff lay back at last in Gargantuan ease, his golden beard bedewed with golden beardrops.

"When I was in Heidelberg," he began dreamily, "there was a fair-haired girl, with forget-me-not eyes, and . . ."

"And what?" said I.

"Ah," said he, "and what?"

He gazed sternly at me, straightened his back, squared his broad shoulders, and pointed proudly to a faint scar on his left cheek.

"And that," said he. "I drink to her rosy lips." He dashed away a tear, and, stretching forth his hand to a tumbler, took a long crooked cigar, with a straw sticking out of the thin end. He lighted it, blew a mighty volume of smoke up to the ceiling, and, turning to me, put his huge paw on my shoulder.

"My son," said he, with immense gravity, "the Germans are the only true philosophers. They see life through a sea of beer. Beer is the drink of philosophers."

"I have heard of Bass and Guinness."

"Bah!" said Falstaff. "They pall. Give me the brew that keeps oblivion at bay, that nourishes thirst while it quells it. The nation that can drink without being drunk is invincible. Germany is that nation."

"I perceive," said I sneeringly, "that you are a sot." A flush of anger mantled his clear brow.

"Creature," said he, "a sot is not a philosopher. I am a philosopher. I sit at the centre of life and watch it going round with the contentment of contempt. It amuses me. It tickles me. It arrides me. I tolerate everything—even you. Yes, my son, I find a reason for the meanest of the mean. Your chill sobriety pleases me. It is a bubble of contrast."

"Drink," said I, "is a curse."

"Shall we put out the sun because shallow-pates die of sunstroke? Fie upon you! Look at these good cits with their buxom wives. Would you begrudge them their little Paradise?"

"It is artificial."

"Is there any Paradise that is not artificial? My son, read Heine and Kant and Hegel and Haeckel and Nietzsche and Spencer and Shaw, and then tell me if all their wisdom is not folly. I drown them in a draught."

With that he emptied his stone tankard, and swallowed all the wise men of the West in a gulp. As the waiter collected his pile of papier-mâché discs, and reckoned up his bill, Falstaff smiled happily.

"Beer," said he, "is wisdom, and wisdom is beer."

When we emerged, Piccadilly Circus was dark and silent.

"See," said Falstaff, "Paris has fled. London is back again. The lights are out, and the strayed revellers are in Vine Street—Vine Street! You take the symbol?"

He doffed his gigantic hat, and once more swept the pavement with a gorgeous gesture of salutation.

"Who is the lady now?" said I.

He pointed to the stars that winked in the blue above the white curve of Regent Street.

"The Spirit of Joy!" he bellowed. "I salute the universe!"

But he went home in a Vanguard omnibus like a woolly lamb.

TEA

At any moment in London you can dive into a new world. Consider, for example, how many ways of drinking tea there are in London. I could write a book about them, beginning with afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace, and gradually working down to afternoon tea at Lockhart's.

Now and then I like to be tempted to drink tea at the Carlton. I dare not venture to go alone. There are some places where a man needs the protection of a petticoat, and this is one of them.

If I were to find myself solitary among those palms and waiters, I should feel like a thief in Scotland Yard. How could I sit at a lonely table and pretend to wait for an imaginary fair? It would be obtaining tea by false pretences.

Besides, I should present the sorry spectacle of a slighted Lothario, the dupe of a broken assignation.

In order to attain the mood of unruffled observation a man must be chaperoned. It is an absurd error of convention that provides chaperons for fearless young girls who do not need them and leaves unprotected the trembling men who do.

Man is a shy creature who takes refuge in clubs. If he were sure of an escort, he would come out of his shell.

This is the great secret of marriage. Most men get married in order to have a chaperon who can lead them safely through the pitfalls and snares of society.

But the chaperon has higher uses. She not only protects you, she also teaches you the art of social vision. The natural man is blind. He does not see the minute humours of life until a woman opens his eyes.

A woman can see everything without looking at anything. She can listen to a hundred different conversations while you

are proposing to her. Her interest in you is never so passionate that it excludes her interest in other people. Therefore, even if you feel brave enough to storm the Carlton alone, I advise you to get yourself taken there by an experienced woman. She will show you more fun in ten minutes than you could see for yourself in ten years.

Be sure to engage a table in advance. She will never forgive you if you rashly expose her to pot-luck.

If you are acutely interested in her and she is acutely interested in you, I can recommend the secluded nook on the left at the top of the steps. It is nicely umbrageous. Avoid the tables on the right, for the band is cynical, and, moreover, there is a continual coming and going on that side. There are times when one does not yearn to see or to be seen by one's dearest friends.

But if she is wearing a new hat or a new frock (and she generally is), be sure to choose a table on the ground floor, not too near the wall. Women like to be conspicuous. It is well to humour them, and to mortify your masculine modesty.

If she is an actress, the choice of a table must depend partly upon her caprice and partly upon her genre. A picturesque actress fresh from a musical comedy will naturally desire the centre of the stage, which is the table at the top of the steps. Here she can see everybody and everybody can see her. I believe it is called the Gibson Girl Table. The orchestra is hard by. There are, of course, no footlights.

One afternoon I was pleased by the vivacity of a very charming girl for whom this table had been engaged by a glittering young man. She was an arch rogue. She looked prettier off the stage than on it, for the stage coarsens refined features and refines coarse features.

Oh her face she wore her natural white and red, or, rather, I should say, her natural ivory and pink. Her eyes seemed to be clear pools of innocence, and her eyelashes had a knack of accomplished bewilderment. I wonder how women learn these things. Do they practise demureness before a mirror?

The little lady had also a gift of sudden wistfulness. I know it was not connected with any inner mood, for she turned it on with the technical regularity of an electric sky-sign. She ate her muffin with dreamy passion, and she took a lump of sugar with melting melancholy.

Her hat was a perfect face-frame. It floated on the nape of her neck, a vast halo of straw and ostrich plumes. One of the plumes swept past the curve of her cheek over her shoulder.

It was pleasant to see all the other women staring at her. She seemed (I say seemed) to be quite unconscious of this, and she acted quite naturally. A woman who knows her business does not need to verify her effects. She breathes them.

One little detail would have escaped my attention if my chaperon had not noted it. She pointed out that the divinity's hands were dirty. She added that all actresses have dirty hands. (I indignantly denied this monstrous libel.)

"He has just told her . . . She is putting on her gloves."

I confess that this feat of deduction paralysed me. I remonstrated. I argued that no man (except, possibly, a husband) would say such a thing to a lady.

"Well," said my chaperon, "perhaps she thought of it herself."

I teased her by rejoicing that she would not have, in that case, taken off her gloves at all.

"If she thought of it herself," retorted my chaperon, "it was not her hands she thought about. She remembered that the green in her gown made her arms look sallow." At that I gave in.

Just then a very tall lady came in, with a very short man in tow. She searched vainly for a table. Then she ascended the steps, surveyed the chattering crowd, hesitated, and finally vanished behind the orchestra, followed by her docile rear-guard.

"They've given it up," said I.

"Not at all," said my chaperon. "She does not want to come back down the steps, so she is going round."

And so she was, for in a minute she appeared below, and skilfully unearthed two vacant chairs.

"She means to wait for a table," said my chaperon.

Presently a waiter capitulated, and brought a table for our tactician, planting it before her right in the crowded aisle.

"Why did she not go straight back down the steps?" said I.

"Well, she's middle-aged, and her husband is awkward, and she's badly dressed," said my chaperon. I ventured to praise her psychology. She smiled.

"You men *are* simple. Why, that's nothing!"

She then began to tell me everything she had noticed. Many of the ladies were habitués. How did she know? Because the waiters knew them. Had I not seen the band smiling at the little actress? Then she asked me if I had seen Mr. So-and-so? I had not. Why had she not told me? She knew he did not wish to be seen, and that he thought he had not been seen, and if she had told me, I would have looked, and he would have seen that he had been seen.

"Fancy!" she mused, "his wife is dead only six weeks." Then she added irrelevantly, "I wonder how that woman got a Pom to match her gown? I suppose she dyed him."

"Good gracious!" I cried, "they don't dye dogs."

"Don't they?" said she, as she rose; "in Paris they dye their husbands."

"And what about their lovers?"

"Oh, they match them!"

MAINLY ABOUT MIMES

DON COQUELIN*

NATURE in a capricious mood said, "I will make a man who cannot possibly be an actor. I will make him ridiculous in face, mean in physique, ludicrous in voice. He will be the incarnation of the ordinary, the embodiment of the commonplace. Anything but an actor he may be—a Politician or a Poet, a General or a Judge, a Cardinal or a Cabman—anything but an actor." Having made him she set him free. Straightway he defied her, and became—Coquelin.

For Nature made one mistake. She forgot the great soul in the little body. "A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man," but a great soul bears up the corpse of Coquelin.

Look! The curtain rises on the first act of "Cyrano de Bergerac." The tiny stage is a world too small for the Hôtel de Bourgogne, for the stage within a stage, the play within a play. The *Précieuses* are stuck like chemists' bottles on a shelf, and a tall man could place one hand on the table of the *Distributrice* and the other on the head of *Montfleury*. The marquises, cadets, pickpockets, citizens, pages, and lackeys are glued together. All is chaos until a funny little man with a silly nose leaps on a chair, and in an instant the crowd is shaken into coherence like iron filings round a magnet. It is Coquelin. He is the most trivial figure on the stage, yet he immediately detaches himself from his neighbours.

Coquelin's *Cyrano* is a study of the spiritual grotesque. The master irony of life is the contrast between our spiritual and our physical nature, between our soul and our body. There is somewhere in our physical consciousness a dim passion which we call ourselves. It flickers behind innumerable veils. There are many names for these veils, but they can

* This impression was written before the death of M. Coquelin.

all be defined as the things that are not ourselves. These things lie round us in concentric layers, from the cloth of flesh to the cloth of stars. We are swaddled in blood and bones, clothes and constellations. Poetry is the cry of the soul smothered in its infinite shroud.

Cyrano is more than a comic lover with a comic nose. He is a symbol of man's spiritual rebellion against the physical grotesquery of life. His nose typifies the failure of life to live up to man. We are greater than ourselves. There is no dream that is not larger than its fulfilment.

Love is the finest dream of man, for love is the only dream that can never come wholly true. Great lovers are the lovers who have lost. Tennyson sang:

'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.

But that is only the trite half of the truth. The whole truth is a far sublimer thing:

'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than ever to have loved and won.

For in love gain is loss and loss is gain. And the subtlety of love is this—the beginning of gain is the beginning of loss, and the beginning of loss is the beginning of gain. Dante loved Beatrice because she died before he won her, and Rossetti loved his wife better after he lost her. The explanation is that the body devours the dreams of the soul.

The splendour of Cyrano is the splendour of successful failure in love. His love for Roxane is the perfect gain of perfect loss. His spiritual despair is never sullied with physical hope, for his only hope is a perpetual despair. He knows that his body caricatures his soul. He is content to express his soul through the body of his friend, joyously divorcing himself from his own flesh, and loving Roxane in a disembodied ecstasy. He loves only his dream, and Roxane loves only hers. As their dreams are never broken by physical reality their love endures. They love by proxy.

The poetry of Cyrano, like all great poetry, is iridescent.

Just as Hamlet is more to one imagination than he is to another, so Cyrano is more. He delights the prosaic mind that sees the play of light and colour on the surface. He also delights the poet who sees deep in the depths of the jewel an image of life. The genius of Coquelin shows itself in his presentment of the simple as well as the subtle in Cyrano. He can gasconade superbly. He can D'Artagnanise divinely. He can fling before you Dumas as well as Cervantes. But it is in the sad humour of Don Cyrano that he touches me most. I do not know anything more pathetic than his gentle acquiescence in life's absurdity, his serene acceptance of love's ridicule, unless it be his unconquerable contempt for death, his high scorn of compromise, his proud hatred of policy, his fearless fidelity of friendship, and his self-sufficing defiance of the world's derision.

Coquelin does more than interpret Cyrano. He recreates him. He makes out of his own ludicrous flesh the very gestures of the man, so that as the play unrolls we see him in a series of attitudes that are more vivid than the poet's imaginations. The real Cyrano could not have been so sublimely grotesque as this mimic shadow. As Rostand created Cyrano out of Don Quixote, so Coquelin, in his turn, creates Don Quixote out of Cyrano. The infinite tenderness of Cervantes is poured into his transmigrated soul, and we see in him the very quintessence of Spanish pride, that wistful grandeur of the spirit which transfigures humanity with the humour of clear pity and the irony of serene knowledge.

There is a rare quality in the comic genius of Coquelin which soars far above the common art of the actor. It is a kind of visible imagination. The imagination of the great poet expresses itself in verbal rhythms. The imagination of the great actor expresses itself in physical rhythms. He makes the body express the soul. Coquelin's physical poetry is infinitely rich. His dramatic humour is born before our eyes, and while we watch its birth we see its death. The eye and the ear are poor chroniclers. I can hardly see one of those gestures and postures that passed in a dazzling procession

across the stage. The feet that stood so defiantly, the hand on the sword-hilt, the arrogantly poised head, the mocking bow, the vain simplicity of the flattered smile, the air of gorgeous *empanachement*, the yearning timbre of the voice, the glance that depicts a whole mood—where are these? Coquelin can paint the air with passions, but swiftly they fade, and eyes and ears forget. It is the tragedy of the actor. His work is undone in the doing.

The pathos of Coquelin is strangely mixed with the pathos of Cyrano during the balcony scene. Coquelin has been prompting Christian in the wooing of Roxane. But when he begins to impersonate Christian, the mimic prompter is prompted by the real prompter in the prompter's box. Coquelin breaks down. Real emotion invades his mimic emotion. He trembles more violently. His hands shake more passionately. His knees knock together. He stands in an agony within an agony. We share his double distress. We feel the double anguish of the baffled lover and the baffled actor. Hours seem to pass. We long to shout or stamp, and so break the tension. Then the loud whisper of the prompter is heard, and we see a long, unpremeditated reverberation of the prompting scene that Coquelin has just played. I wonder what is the precise state of Coquelin's mind during this ordeal. Is he Don Coquelin or Don Cyrano? Or both? Or neither?

SIR JOHN HARE

SIR JOHN HARE is still in the heyday of his first farewell and the bloom of his first good-bye. His threat of retirement is a promise of return. He must prolong his departure, and make the end of one career the beginning of another. Goldsmith said that Garrick acted only when he was off, but Hare acts only when he is on, and while he lives he can never be permanently off. He does not exist except in his characters, for he is what they are. Without him they never could have been, and without him they never can be again.

Hare is the Dickens of acting. What Dickens did with his words he has done with his own flesh. He has made his lean little body dance itself into our imagination and into our memory. He has clothed his meagre frailty with all kinds of queer humours and quaint foibles. You taste the flavour of Dickens in every Dickensian character, and you taste the flavour of Hare in every part he plays. The flavour of Hare is a rich blend of pathos and humour, brewed by squeezing tears out of smiles and smiles out of tears.

When Hare was made nothing was wasted. He could not be thinner without becoming invisible. There is no padding in either his body or his soul. He is sharpened and whittled down almost to the verge of annihilation. It is his nature to be thin, just as it is the nature of Mr. Bouchier to be fat. You cannot think of a fat Hare or a thin Bouchier. They are contradictions in terms. Hare is spare because he is eaten up with nervous energy and restless eagerness. He is like a steam gimlet or an electric bradawl. There is a keen edge and a fine point on everything he says and everything he does. His voice is a razor and his glance a spear. His gestures are needles and his smiles are lances. The sharpness

of his genius is almost painful, but it cuts you so clean that you do not feel the wound until you see the blood. His violent alertness alarms you, for it makes you feel that you are half awake, and that the other actors on the stage are half asleep. Everything he does is eager and quick and impatient. His briskness is almost morbid. He is as lively as a squib and as nimble as a shrimp. Ten or fifteen years ago in "Diplomacy" I saw him sniffing about his desk for traces of perfume. I can see him sniffing now, like an excitable fox terrier. I have forgotten everything else, but I can never forget his sniffs.

Hare is a master of lightning effects. He talks like lightning. He smiles like lightning in flashes that light up his face and leave it instantly. His elocution is a kind of forked lightning. The words leap and dart and zigzag out of his teeth. They appear to be released rather than uttered. If he did not keep them in order, they would fall over each other and trample on each other and crush each other to death. I could listen to Hare for ever out of pure delight in his staccato diction. The charm of his voice is hard to define. It is charming because it expresses his temperament. If you try, you will find that you can think of his voice as if it were a thing apart from himself. No doubt every actor, and, indeed, every human being, has a different voice from every other actor and every other human being. Just as there are no two leaves that are absolutely alike, so there are no two voices that are absolutely alike. But as a rule it is necessary to hear the voice in order to recognize it. Only a few voices have a separate existence. But when you think of Hare you think first and foremost of that crisp, irritable, nervous, peevish, querulous voice. It is like the voice of a man who is suffering from perpetual toothache or inveterate gout. Even when he is genial it is exasperated, and there is vinegar in its good humour. If you heard his voice in the dark you would mutter, "I know that voice."

Hare is a master of whimsical humour. By a grimace, a tone of the voice, and a flick of the fingers he can make you

see into the soul of a character, laying bare its eccentricity, revealing with an airy twist its point of view and its frame of mind. His best parts are delicate caricatures and dainty grotesques. He can exaggerate life without making it inhuman, he can turn a crude sketch into a breathing portrait. His most famous part is Benjamin Goldfinch in "A Pair of Spectacles." Without Hare the character is a dull puppet, and the play is a lifeless machine. He has turned Benjamin Goldfinch into a figure as lovable as Mr. Pickwick, and as adorable as Uncle Toby. We love Mr. Pickwick and his spectacles because he is a divine fool. We adore Uncle Toby because he is an inspired simpleton. Benjamin Goldfinch is both a divine fool and an inspired simpleton. Hare shows us in him the charm of a man who has the heart of a child. He reveals the fascination of an unworldly credulity and the beauty of an indiscriminate benignity. His charity is insane, but it is delightful. His gentle folly is preposterous, but it is good for the soul. When I see Hare as Benjamin Goldfinch my heart softens, and I think tenderly of Oliver Goldsmith and Don Quixote, of Mr. Pickwick and Uncle Toby, and of all the wise fools in the world.

Humanity is a belief in human nature. Hare touches the very quick of humanity in this loving study of fatuous pity and blind compassion. He shows us a man who is happy only when he is deluded and miserable only when his delusions are taken away. We know he is deceived, but we love him because he is deceived, and we wish we could deceive ourselves. When he mimics the cynical worldliness of Gregory, we are spiritually hurt. It is as if we saw an angel taking a mud bath. But the actor makes us feel that the worldly mood is not real, and when the good man recovers his illusions and his spectacles we are glad. Hare helps us to forget the creaking apparatus of the play, and to see nothing but the goodness of being good and the kindness of being kind. It is the soft philosophy of Shakespeare and Cervantes, Sterne, and Dickens. No other actor could have wrought this magical spell, for no other actor possesses the Hare touch that

prevents the sentiment from melting into mawkishness, and the humour from declining into burlesque.

Hare acts with every part of his body, for he expresses character by gesture. His hands are his chief mannerisms. If he were to thrust his hand through a hole in the curtain and snap his fingers, the whole house would say, "I know that hand." Nobody can snap fingers like Hare. The whole man is in that electric snap, all his dry vitality and all his parched vivacity. Another mannerism is the long, lean, white minatory forefinger. There never was such an index. It seems to lengthen as it points. If it were to point long enough it would pierce the walls of the Garrick, pass the lions in Trafalgar Square, cross the Thames, and enter the House of Commons. The Speaker would say, "I know that finger." He would name it. Then there is the steely eye, like the eye of a ferret, that stabs in all directions like a rapier. If it were to look at you through a keyhole, you would say, "I know that eye."

Hare paints character as Dickens paints it. He makes men live on the stage, as they live in life, by means of their oddities and their eccentricities. He exaggerates us as nature exaggerates us. Character acting is now almost obsolete. The rage for natural acting is only underacting, which means being monotonous in every part. Life is various, and Sir John Hare imitates the variety of life.

SIR CHARLES WYNDHAM

SIR CHARLES WYNDHAM was born at Liverpool on March 23, 1837, became stage-struck shortly afterwards, and in order to kill his craving for the theatre he became a doctor. He served as a surgeon with the Federal Army in the American Civil War. Tiring of the theatre of war, he tried his luck as an actor in New York with John Wilkes Booth, the actor, who subsequently assassinated President Lincoln. Having been dismissed for incompetency by the future murderer, he went back to the army in 1864. Next winter he joined Mrs. John Wood's company at the Olympic Theatre, New York. It is curious that one of those long speeches for the delivery of which in later years he became so famous brought about his downfall. It tormented and tortured the young actor, making his days miserable and his nights sleepless. He was playing a hero who was desperately in love with the heroine, and who apologised for his infatuation in an interminable utterance which commenced with the words, "I am drunk with love and enthusiasm." Paralysed by stage fright, he broke down. "I am drunk," he stammered, and there he stuck, while the audience tittered. Again the young actor was dismissed for incompetency, but, just as Disraeli avenged himself upon the House of Commons for laughing at his maiden speech, so Wyndham persevered in the teeth of his second failure.

He came back to England in 1865, and obtained an engagement at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in "Her Ladyship's Guardian," Madge Robertson (now Mrs. Kendal) playing the heroine. His Irish brogue in "Arrah-na-Pogue" was declared to be bad enough to justify a Fenian rising. He toured with Miss Herbert in old English comedy, playing Charles Surface to Henry Irving's Joseph. He first appeared

in London in 1866 as Sir Arthur Lascelles in "All That Glitters Is Not Gold." He made a hit as Hatchett in Burnand's burlesque of "Black-eyed Susan." At that time he was a wonderful dancer. Then he played in "Idalia" at the St. James's, Irving being the heavy villain, and a very charming heavy villain, it seems. His next success was as Captain Hawksley in "Still Waters Run Deep," with Ellen Terry as Mrs. Mildmay. In 1867 Irving joined the company, being followed by John L. Toole the year after. It must have been a company of angels, for, in addition to Irving, Wyndham, and Toole, it included John Clayton, Lionel Brough, and Henrietta Hodson (Mrs. Labouchere). In 1869 Wyndham played Charles Surface in New York, and toured in "Caste," with Louisa Moore as Esther and George Giddens as Sam Gerridge. In 1873 he was back at the St. James's, afterwards touring with the Bancrofts. But his first real triumph was won in 1874, at the old Court Theatre, in "Brighton," where he created the part of Bob Sackett. "Brighton" was the forerunner of that long procession of rollicking farces which made Charles Wyndham famous as the lightest of light comedians. It ran for a year at the Court, was transferred to the St. James's, and went to Berlin in 1875, where Wyndham played Bob Sackett in German. The Criterion Theatre had long been an unlucky house, but it brought luck to Wyndham. It had suddenly closed after a fiasco, but Wyndham undertook to open it in three days with "Brighton," and open it he did on Boxing Day, 1875, inaugurating then and there a succession of triumphs which lasted for more than twenty-three years. He made the Criterion a palace of laughter. He took most of his plays from the Palais Royal, and they were all merry farces crammed with risky situations, and packed with audacious dialogue. "The Great Divorce Case" and "Hot Water," in 1876, paved the way for "Pink Dominoes" in 1877. But it was not the plays which made the reputation of the Criterion for fast and furious fun. It was the mercurial acting of Wyndham.

Wyndham had not knocked about the provinces for ten years in stock companies for nothing. He had perfected his

comic manner. He had, it is true, roughened and hoarsened his fine voice by incessant rehearsing and perpetual playing, but what his voice lost in tone it had gained in flexibility. He could do anything with it. He had mastered the art of natural gesture. He had practised patiently before a mirror and before all sorts of audiences, aiming always at being natural. His scapegrace husbands and gay dogs may not have been morally edifying, but they were irresistibly entertaining. He redeemed vice from dulness and wickedness from monotony. His touch was as light as a feather, and he flew like a bird over the thinnest ice. His debonair gaiety was exquisitely irresponsible, and his daring wit was delicately nimble. He made his faithless spouses seem to be fascinating creatures from an artificial paradise, where morals were nothing and manners everything. Charles Lamb's defence of the Restoration dramatists might be applied to the old Criterion farce. Nobody took those laughing scapegraces seriously. They were merely vehicles for after-dinner laughter, excuses for postprandial merriment. Wyndham's light-hearted grace covered their wildest misdoings, and veiled their maddest improprieties. But after ten years of "Pink Dominoes" and "Betsy" and "Wild Oats," the actor sighed for higher themes, and in a happy moment he hit upon his greatest part in his greatest play, "David Garrick." He has played "David Garrick" thousands of times in England and America. It ran at the first go-off for over two years, and it has been revived over and over again. The public never wearies of it, and the actor never tires of it. Sir Charles has played it at Sandringham and at Windsor, in Berlin, in St. Petersburg, and in Moscow. "David Garrick" is to Wyndham what "Rip Van Winkle" was to Jefferson. When all Wyndham's other parts are forgotten, his David Garrick will be remembered.

The Garrick period was followed by the Jones period. Sir Charles Wyndham has produced a long series of comedies by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, including "The Bauble Shop," "The Case of Rebellious Susan," "The Physician," and "The Liars." His success in modern comedy was as great as in

Palais Royal farce, for he developed a delightful vein of humorous sentiment that gave body to the famous Wyndham charm. He revels in the unravelling of a hopelessly entangled situation which enables him to air his gift of worldly tenderness and philosophic cynicism and humorous wisdom. He is at his best when things are at their worst, and his powers of gentle persuasion have triumphed over the most insuperable obstacles and the most appalling difficulties. The propensity of young lovers for getting themselves into an "awful mess" provides him with opportunities for exercising his genius for soothing and smoothing and straightening out and coaxing and cajoling. You realize that anybody would do anything on earth to oblige that winning smile, those persuasive eyes, that poetic mass of iron-grey hair flung picturesquely across that broad, amiable brow, and those low, confidential syllables that rise and fall without a touch of monotony during a long expostulation or a labyrinthine exposition. No matter what the play may be, whether it is "The Tyranny of Tears" or "The Mollusc," the Wyndham charm is always the same and always different. Everything goes down before it, players and playgoers, author and audience. The deep, husky voice, with its high, feminine, plaintive notes, vanquishes us all, and we are willing to be anything and do anything it pleases. The charm of Wyndham is like the charm of Gladstone. It convinces us even against our will. It is as easy to explain the charm of Wyndham as it is to explain the charm of Gladstone. That is to say, it is impossible. Like Father O'Flynn, Sir Charles Wyndham has a wonderful way with him, and there's an end on't.

BEERBOHM TREE

I HOPE Mr. Tree will always provoke violent blame as well as vehement praise. It is only the man of genius who can goad the Philistine out of his indifference to art. Whether the Philistine fawns or fumes, the value of his voice is the same. Whether the artist draws from him execration or adulation, he is doing only what was done by Disraeli in the world of politics and by Whistler in the world of paint. The Philistine fails to understand Mr. Tree completely, just as he failed to understand the other artists completely, but he is fascinated by Mr. Tree much as he was fascinated by them. His admiration of Mr. Tree is tinged with terror. His eye, as he watches Mr. Tree, is full of respectful suspicion and distrustful admiration. The Philistine fears the caprice and the contempt of the artist, for every artist is born with a gift of wild caprice and a talent of ungovernable contempt.

Mr. Tree is one of the most absolute artists who ever lost themselves in Philistia or found themselves in Bohemia. He lives in a fine frenzy of impassioned contemplation. His vision is perpetually fixed on something faint and far and unearthly. Although our friendship has bred in us both an affectionate irreverence for each other, I can never talk to him without feeling as if I were intruding on a private conversation. He may not be a haunted man, but he always seems to me to go about with a retinue of importunate ghosts. I **am** sure they are always whispering to him when he is not whispering to them. Who are these ghosts? I think I know. They are the characters he has played, and the characters he intends to play. They are the emanations of his brain, the vapours of his personality, and I fancy he is often so bemused and bewildered by their silent voices that he does not know whether they are

more real than he, or whether he is more real than they. He gives so much of his soul to his pet vampires that he must now and then feel himself fading away into a dim nothingness.

The effect of Mr. Tree upon me is nearly as dreadful as the effect of his ghosts upon him. He makes me feel that I am not a real person. He switches me on and off, as if I were a human limelight. When he is drowning in his dreams, I gasp in a swoon of sympathetic negation until he comes to the surface again, and then, as we exchange greetings, I also come back to the self-credulity of self-consciousness. There is something very bizarre in Mr. Tree's power of mental isolation. He is always marooning himself on some enchanted isle, and he is always being rescued by the practical mariners who cruise in the offing. I could not live more than a few hours in his company. I am sure in a day he would drain me of belief in my own past, and in a week he would convince me that I had no future. The explanation is simple. The world outside the theatre does not exist for Mr. Tree. As I am a part of that world, I do not exist for him, and if I were to let him have his way, I should not exist for myself. The world outside the theatre may sometimes disturb his sleep, but it never disturbs his dreams, for he is the most incorrigible dreamer who ever dreamed dreams with his eyes wide open. He acts in a dream, walks in a dream, talks in a dream, eats in a dream, drinks in a dream, and smokes in a dream. He is what Mr. Hall Caine would call "The Dreamster." Once he got into a cab. "Where to, sir?" quoth the cabman. "Home!" he murmured, waving his hand vaguely towards the setting sun. He expected the cabman to know that His Majesty's Theatre is his home, and that his home is His Majesty's Theatre.

There are some actors who look out of place on the stage, and there are some actors who look out of place everywhere. Mr. Tree never looks out of place, for wherever he is he creates his own atmosphere. He makes the whole earth a background, and all the world a stage. I have seen him making a real funeral look like a stage funeral, and transforming a real cemetery into a set scene. It is only the great actor who can make the

real life of men appear artificial. The more completely he creates illusion when he is on the stage, the more completely he destroys it when he is off the stage.

The wonderful art of Mr. Tree in creating Shylock is shown by the fact that his Jew reminds you of all the Jews you have ever known. His Shylock is more than one Jew, more than a generalisation of the various types of Jew. He is every Jew in turn. He is mean in one mood and noble in another. Sometimes he is a monster of unclean avarice and foul greed, but in a moment he soars into Hebrew poetry and becomes a prophet and a seer. He seems to writhe out of one nuance of passion into another, as the actor shows you the dim soul squirming in the flesh like a serpent in a sack, now falling into the fiendishness of vile maleficence, now rising into the majesty of defiant martyrdom. Loathsome and leprous as his Shylock is, he never becomes inhuman, and his prophetic pride never degenerates into rhetorical sentiment. You abhor him, even while you pity him, for you see in his blind agony a representation of the blind agony that turns every human soul into a house of sorrow and a place of pain. Shylock is thus made universal. He is a man as well as a Jew.

It is in the trial scene that Mr. Tree's Shylock attains its sublimest height of imaginative splendour. The broad simplicity of the acting helps you to forget the crudities of the plot. You forget the bigotry of Shakespeare, and you see nothing but the tragic symbolism of the character, with all its chill craft, and all its cold cunning of malevolent ecstasy. The most appalling thing in the character is the cruel malignity of Shylock's hungry eyes. By some wizardry of make-up, Mr. Tree fashions out of his own eyes the eyes of a devil. They appear to be coloured a repulsively greenish grey, and one sickens as one watches their baleful glances. It is not easy to describe the horrible abomination of their malignity, but it sits in them like a slimy snake. It is not the make-up that fills the eyes with the light of unspeakable evil. The actor puts the unspeakable evil into his eyes by compelling himself to feel as Shylock feels. He communicates to the spectator a sense

of evil, which makes Shylock not merely credible or plausible, but which makes him real. No mere external mimicry could achieve this illusion. Mr. Tree is making his flesh feel what his soul feels. I am sure he is for the moment capable of any crime. I should not care to play Antonio to his Shylock.

The fact that Mr. Tree "goes" for everything in the whole range of human emotions which Shakespeare calls Shylock, makes his triumph all the more tremendous. He compels us to tremble where other actors would compel us to laugh. He knows that when Shylock is not terrible he is grotesque, and he makes him a wonderful mixture of the terrible and the grotesque. He makes him grotesque without making him ridiculous. He makes him terrible without making him grandiloquent. His Shylock has dignity without pomp, sublimity without magnanimity. Irving's Shylock was inconceivably august and impossibly austere. Tree's Shylock is a Shylock of the Ghetto. You can smell him across the footlights. Yet his moral squalor is never vulgar, for the racial fury in him is always lifting him far above his mean mind. He is half a god and half a dog.

Another fine thing is Mr. Tree's caricature of the Jewish voice. It is not the voice of the actor you hear, but the husky servility of centuries, for the woes of the ages have made the voice of the Jew an echo of his anguish. There is for me something awful in this ancestral voice, which issues out of the throat of every Jew in the world, whatsoever language he may speak and howsoever earnestly he may strive to acquire the intonation of the Gentile. It always lashes me like a knout when I hear it, for it calls up all the moans of all the persecutions that defile across the wilderness of history. Just as you catch the murmur of the seven seas in the shell at your ear, so you can hear the sighs of all the tribes of Israel in every word uttered by every Jewish mouth. The tragedy of this cry lies in its unconsciousness. It will never be silenced until the last Jewish mother cries the last cry of travail.

The Jewish voice of Shylock is not more characteristic than the Jewish gait and the Jewish gestures. Mr. Tree not

only talks like a Jew, but he also walks like one. He moves with that dreadfully furtive shuffle which the Jew has never forgotten since he hung the first harp on the first willow by the waters of the first Babylon. It is the shambling shuffle of the serf and the slave. It is the slithering motion of feet that have learned the horrible art of going delicately in dangerous paths. The bent back, the recoiling elbows, the deprecative hands, the flabby suppleness of the beseeching knees—all the physical helotry of the Jew is found in this marvellous portrait. And behind it all is the deathless insolence, the indomitable hate, and the unconquerable vision, which have made the Jew in all ages a poet, a painter, and an artist. Yes, Mr. Tree's Shylock has in him a spark of the artist who is, after all, the eternal outcast. He is an epitome of the rebel soul at war with things as they are.

GEORGE ALEXANDER

LONDON is no longer a metropolis. It is a cosmopolis. Foreign faces are seen everywhere. The Englishman has ceased to be the rule: he is almost the exception. The contrast between him and the other races of the earth is perpetually forced upon the observant eye. We see him more clearly now that his characteristics do not dominate the London scene. He used to be so inevitable that we took him for granted. He was the solid background against which we saw the American, the Frenchman, the German, the Italian, the Spaniard, the Russian, and the Japanese. Now he has ceased to be the background. We see him against a solid background of other races.

John Bull has been dead for many a long day, in spite of the efforts of the caricaturists to pretend that he is still alive. That pathetic old fellow is now a phantom. George Alexander has killed him. He has discarded the whole paraphernalia of top-boots and irascibility, rural simplicity, and short temper. He has created a new John Bull. Year after year he has perfected his portrait of the Englishman, until now it is a life-like presentment. If you desire to see what other nations conceive to be the typical Englishman, you must study George Alexander. The whole Englishman is there, immaculate body and immaculate soul, immaculate mind and immaculate clothes, immaculate taste and immaculate trousers, immaculate heart and immaculate waistcoat. The actor has crept inside the immaculate skin of the immaculate Englishman. He shows you his triumphant elimination of the vulgarities of life, his gift of universal uniformity. The ambition of the Englishman is to suppress every evidence of personality and every symptom of temperament. He toils to be like his

fellows, and his fellows toil to be like each other. Where he fails to achieve this ideal Mr. Alexander succeeds. On the stage he displays in play after play the flawless Englishman who never deviates from the unwritten laws of conduct and deportment, of passion and emotion, of garb and grace. He is the apostle of good taste, the evangelist of good form, the arbiter of good breeding.

There is no blemish of rude humanity in him. He is exquisitely colourless and delicately drab. He crushes his own vitality in order to interpret the cold, hard, impassive propriety of the ordinary man you meet in the club and in the House of Commons, in the pavilion at Lord's and at Church Parade. He is not by nature a conventional man. His art is a victory over his own vivid personality. His magnificent head is violently carved and vehemently chiselled. It rebels against the smooth conformity of fashion. It is as rough and rude as a rock in its heavy angles and its massive strength. Its stack of grey hair is always in insurrection against effeminate compromise. His face is robustly square, with its granite brow and adamant jaw and iron mouth and its hammered virile surface. His body is ruggedly masculine, grim in its geometrical rigidity, almost uncouth in its harsh vigour. There is no suppleness or subservience in his limbs. His whole frame is a protest against trivial plasticity and petty compliance. But he knows that art is the enemy of nature, and he mercilessly polishes his physical roughness. He tailors himself out of existence. He planes away his crags and cliffs into a decent commonplace of masculine propriety. He makes the actor trample on the man. After innumerable experiments he has evolved the average Englishman, the wonderful being who is only himself when he is like everybody else.

The Englishman has a passionate fear of being conspicuous or salient or odd or original. That is to say, he fears to be what the theatre demands him to be. Mr. Alexander is the only actor who has the courage to act up to what the Englishman lives up to. In every situation he is resolutely correct and obstinately well-bred. The consequence is that he appears

to be impeccably natural in every part. He behaves as the perfect Englishman behaves. It is not easy to conceive the possibility of the perfect Englishman floundering in the frenzy of love. Good form is the antithesis of passion, for passion is essentially eccentric and wayward and violent and picturesque. Mr. Alexander shows that it is possible to make love like a gentleman. He puts love into its proper place, treating it as a subsidiary department in the business of propriety. The plain truth is that love is antagonistic to the English temperament, for love makes a man look ridiculous. The unknown jester who invented love took care to invest it with every sort of absurdity. The lover ought really to have a planet to himself, for he cannot expect other people to sympathise with his state. Love is not a passion that appeals to the spectator. It is purely an affair for the person concerned. At most it is bilateral, but the spectacle of two persons in love with each other is even more droll than the spectacle of one person in love with another. The healthy Englishman realises the comic figure he cuts when he is in love, and he tones down the public aspect of his condition. Mr. Alexander does likewise. He tones love down.

There is a great gulf fixed between the love-making of Mr. Alexander and the love-making of Signor Grasso. The sight of an Italian actor or a French actor in love is apt to disgust the polite Englishman, if it does not send him into convulsions of laughter. Mr. Alexander knows that it is necessary to refine the whole thing and to make it proper and presentable. He is careful to make love dignified, even at the risk of making it tepid. He prefers to be cold rather than comic. It is delightful to watch him handling passion as if it were egg-shell china. It is inspiring to see how delicately he walks through the débris of erotic rhetoric and amorous eloquence. One feels that he is giving all lovers a wholesome lesson in tactful moderation and courteous reserve. He demonstrates the possibility of robbing love of its fatuity and passion of its stupidity. He makes it clear that you can woo and win without sacrificing your self-possession. He proves that you can gain

a lady's hand without losing your head. He tempts one to hope that civilisation will soon complete the transformation of love out of an insane absurdity into an elegant and almost majestic commonplace.

But love is not the only passion which Mr. Alexander has improved out of existence. He reforms nature all round. He has taught us how to be politely furious and tastefully indignant. He has shown us that it is a pleasant thing to be in a rage. He has revealed to us the nice side of anger. He has caught the modern gift of treating life with indulgent tolerance and bland amusement. His smile is the keynote of his method. It is a contracted smile, the twisted sidelong smile of the discreet man of the world who takes the tragic enormities of romance very lightly. His eyes match his smile, for they, too, are fond of narrow sidelong glances at the immaterial comedy of life. Too seldom does Mr. Alexander break out of life into literature, but he has always at all risks broken out whenever our dramatists gave him a chance. He has no prejudice against culture and no grudge against imagination. He is not afraid of poetry, and his fastidious temper often leads him to encourage men of genius. The better the play the better he plays, and, when he gets a character with red blood in it, he throws off his disguise and lets himself go. He revels in the violence of Bernstein and the vigour of Sutro. He is superb in the romantic sentiment of Anthony Hope. He has unearthed many fine plays, but his immortal achievement was the production of the greatest comedy written in English since the humour of Goldsmith and the wit of Sheridan went out. He it was who persuaded Oscar Wilde to write "The Importance of Being Earnest." Another great artistic feat stands to his credit, the production of "Paolo and Francesca." The literary drama owes him so much already that I hope it will soon owe him more.

LEWIS WALLER

WHETHER he swaggers in coat and trousers or swashbuckles in sword and cape, Lewis Waller is the curled darling of robustious romance. When I am tired of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole, I always turn to him, and he never fails to restore my sense of disproportion. When I grow utterly weary of the world as it is, he triumphantly shows me the world as it ought to be. He shovels the grey facts of existence into the gutter and puts into their places a glittering array of impossible dreams. He charges my soul with sentiment as Mr. Idris charges his siphons with soda-water. He cures me of the disease of common sense and he delivers me from the tyranny of reason. He drags me neck and crop out of the world I know into a world that nobody ever knew and that nobody will ever know. It is a world in which love is a tornado and manhood is a typhoon. There martyrdom is the chief business of life and self-sacrifice is the ruling passion. There for ever roars and rages the unfathomable ocean of everlasting despair. There heroic hearts are regularly broken to the sound of slow music. There beauty is more beautiful and manly valour is more valiant, sobs and sighs are more sorrowful, tears are more tremendous, indignation is more indignant, scorn is more scornful, wrath is more wrathful, and gestures are more sublime. It is the realm of the romantic hero, and of that realm Lewis the Well-beloved is the uncrowned king.

No mortal man was ever so manly and so masculine as Lewis Waller. He revives one's faith in one's sex. He makes one feel that, in spite of the Suffragettes, there is something to be said for Man. In real life the manly man is rare. It would be well if our decaying and degenerate sex were to take lessons in virility at the feet of Mr. Waller. His virility

terrifies our conquerors into adoration. When his voice thunders on the stage you can hear the heart of Woman thumping in the stalls in an ecstasy of fascinated fright. I am not naturally a timid being, but I confess that the spectacle of Mr. Waller tearing a passion to tatters makes me tremble in my boots. I know he is not angry with me, but I feel that it is not safe even to behold his anger or to be under the same roof as his fury. If he were to leap across the footlights, I am sure the whole audience would be plunged into a panic, so dreadful is the clang of his rhetoric. I maintain that his passions ought to be regulated by the County Council. But what safety curtain could defend inflammable girlhood against his fire? All the water in all the hoses of the world could not extinguish his flames.

The worst of Mr. Waller is his capacity for breaking all the records in love. There never has been such a lover on this earth. After beholding his prowess the most accomplished amorist realises that he is a bungling amateur. He makes you feel that it is a blasphemous impertinence for an ordinary mortal to fall in love. Even a millionaire with a lifetime of leisure on his hands can never hope to suffer as Mr. Waller suffers every night of the week, not to mention matinées. He has been suffering for as long as I can remember. Indeed, I believe he has been suffering for exactly a quarter of a century. Yet the quality of his suffering does not deteriorate. On the contrary, it seems to improve every year, and I have no doubt that Mr. Waller will go on suffering for another quarter of a century if the cruel and relentless fates should not deign to relieve him. There is a certain grandeur in the noble joy and sublime alacrity with which Mr. Waller treads his path of pain. He does not grumble over his melancholy lot. He never rebels against his interminable misfortunes. He is always ready to be misunderstood and to be betrayed. He carries his trampled heart from one cruel heroine to another, and the more brutally it is trodden on, the better he is pleased. Over and over again romance has tried to break his heart, but it has consistently failed. I begin to fear that he has broken

the heart of romance. He has exhausted its possibilities. It cannot provide him with any new form of anguish or any new variety of agony. He has worn out romance, and his eagle eye is sweeping the world in the hopeless quest of a new idea in martyrdom or a fresh notion in renunciation.

It is not easy to fit Mr. Waller with a part which he will not smash to pieces the moment he expands his lungs. It takes a Hotspur or a King Henry to hold him. He is at his best in the armour-plated rhetoric of the eye of Agincourt. The words explode in his mouth like shells. The martial resonance of his brazen eloquence sends electric shivers down your spine and makes your heart grow hot and your eyeballs bulge with patriotic pride and pugnacious fury. You long to go straight out into the street and slay somebody for the pure pleasure of living up to the emotions that he has roused. The explosive magnetism of the man is quite irresistible. It brings a lump into your throat and tears into your eyes. I am by profession a cynic, but I am not Waller-proof. He can make me weep bitterly even while I am jeering at him. He can make my heart sit on my head.

I like Mr. Waller best in costume, for he is as elegant as he is heroic. His manhood is polished, and he knows how to be graceful without being effeminate, to be a dandy without being a coxcomb. There is always a magnificent dignity in his grief and a careless majesty in his woe. The more deeply he is wronged, the more godlike he becomes. His attitudes look like romantic illustrations. Every posture is perfectly thought out and absolutely flawless in his outline. To see him in a play is to see every movement in the gymnastics of romance. Whether he stands in profile or with his fine features facing the limelight, every limb is in place and every eyelash is in order. All his gestures are finely filed and neatly fitted to the phrase and the situation. His superb eyes are admirably trained. They flash with the rhythmical regularity of a lighthouse. I think my favourite movement is the sidelong glance which comes into action as a rule in moments of intense passion and appalling danger. The whites of the eyes scintillate and coruscate.

You can see their lightnings plunging deep into the heaving breast of the heroine or into the false heart of the villain.

Mr. Waller is an artist in scowls. He has been scowling for the greater part of his life. When he knits his brows you feel his strong and silent strength of character. I am sure the trade of romantic hero is good for the soul. I am convinced that the habit of being magnanimous and noble gradually affects the lineaments. I do not think Mr. Waller could possibly have been born with features so gloriously heroic as those he now wears. I have no doubt that every hero he plays increases the haughty grandeur of his countenance and the cold fury of his resolution. He gives me great pleasure when he moves his jaw to one side and looks diabolical. Then I know that he is becoming really dangerous. I am also fond of him when he fights a duel. I love him when he is desperately, but not mortally, wounded. I adore him when he is taking snuff. I cringe before him when he takes off his plumed hat with a gesture that brushes the flies off the horizon. I envy him when he displays his glorious calves clad in black silk stockings with golden clocks. I sigh over his inimitably romantic feet shod in black shoes with silver buckles. I am jealous when I behold him kneeling at the feet of a ravishingly lovely lady, making love to her in a voice that would melt the heart of a stone. But my envy is appeased and my jealousy is allayed by the solemn thought that Lewis the Well-beloved is a father. Nay, he is a father-in-law.

FORBES-ROBERTSON

MR. FORBES-ROBERTSON is the most romantic actor of our time. By romance I do not mean wig and patch, sword and cape, velvet and bright iron. I mean the spirit of beauty, the soul of loveliness, the ghost of grace. There are many pseudo-romantic actors who can interpret the tawdry banalities of pseudo-romance. But Forbes-Robertson alone can interpret the deeper mysteries of the higher romance, the romance of the poets, the romance of the mystics, the romance of the dreamers. He alone has a face that is a mirror of the soul troubled with

the dreams the drowsy gods
Breathe on the burnished mirror of the world
And then smooth out with ivory hands and sigh.

His voice vibrates with the mysteries of spiritual knowledge and the secrets of imaginative experience. His eyes are filled with the light that never was on sea or land. His lonely nobility makes you think of mighty poets in their misery dead, of Shelley and Keats and Rossetti and Francis Thompson, for he is the incarnation of romantic poetry, the embodiment of gentle fantasy, the image of visionary mystery. In all other actors there is a taint of worldliness. Forbes-Robertson is not only unworldly, he is unearthly. He is a supernatural being, an angel masquerading as a man. If an angel were to impersonate an actor, he would look exactly like Forbes-Robertson in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." He could not look more beatific, more benignant, more ineffable, more celestial. Indeed, I doubt whether any angel could possibly be so angelical. Some critics cavil at his automatic conversion of automatic sinners. I find it wholly convincing. Who could resist that beautiful smile, that ravishing voice,

that enchanting gaze? It is possible that he failed to convert the critics, but I know he converted me. I left the St. James's Theatre feeling impossibly virtuous, inconceivably innocent, and incredibly good.

We have many handsome actors, but as a rule the handsome actor has no soul. The beauty of William Terriss was resonantly empty. The beauty of Forbes-Robertson is more than a physical endowment. All the variety of life moves behind the noble mask, and you are enraptured by what Mr. Henry James calls its "strange irregular rhythm." It steals through you like odorous music, awakening dim echoes of vanquished aspirations and defeated aims, abashing everything in you that is mean and low and little. The temperament of the man permeates the technique of the actor, saturating his look, his voice, his gestures and his whole corporeal presence with a vague charm that is the living poetry of the flesh, and forcing upon you a vision of human nature that transcends the ordinary aspect of mortality. The temper of our time is cynically hard and metallically material. We are born and bred to deny and to disbelieve, to doubt and to deride. We shiver in an atmosphere of chilly contempt for the nobleness of life. Coming out of that polar clime we are shocked by the serenity and simplicity and reverence of an actor whose sole ideal is the quest of gracious nobility and delicious beauty. That is why Forbes-Robertson is an anachronism. That is why his golden voice is a voice crying in the wilderness. That is why he roams through the provinces casting his pearls before playgoers who are not so viciously vulgarised as the playgoers of London.

I would rather see Forbes-Robertson in a bad play than another actor in a good one, for no part can destroy his high seriousness and his poetic glamour. I never weary of looking at his wonderful face, of basking in his wonderful smile, of listening to his wonderful voice. When he was a young man, Rossetti painted him as the youthful Dante, as Love speaking to Beatrice. To-day he is more Dantesque than ever. The years have not coarsened his ethereal lineaments. They

have only enriched his rather effeminate sweetness with austerity and glorified his womanly tenderness with melancholy. There is no bitterness in the trenches Time has dug in his forehead and his cheeks. There is no malevolence in the shadows that have gathered round his eyes. His appealing spirituality has grown more masculine without losing its exquisite plasticity. Life has added a beseeching dignity to his solemn fascination and an imploring pathos to his plaintive charm. His eyes haunt you with a rarer passion, for they seem to suggest more and more subtly the cruelly baffling complexity of life. As a rule, one is not acutely conscious of an actor's eyes. They do not dominate the whole field of physical emotion. But the eyes of Forbes-Robertson follow your thought, emphasizing hints and shades of meaning too delicate for the voice and too intangible for the flesh. He acts with his eyes, letting the tide of his own imagination flow out of them in an irresistible rush of spiritual energy. This is rare even in real life, for men lack the candour and the simplicity which can prevent a film of reserve or hypocrisy from forming like a cataract over the windows of the soul. Sometimes you find this clear spiritual transparency in the eyes of a child, and in certain moods it afflicts you with a sense of loss and bereavement, as if you had caught a glimpse of what you might have been if life had not pillaged and plundered you. You find it also in the eyes of animals, notably in the eyes of a faithful dog. Rossetti bought a white bull because it had eyes like Janie Morris's. I would buy a crocodile if it had eyes like Forbes-Robertson's.

I cannot describe the voice of Forbes-Robertson. It is a voice that ought to be jealously reserved for splendid poetry and sublime prose. Its tremulous fastidiousness plays on words as the bow of a great violinist plays on the strings of a Stradivarius. Whatever it touches it turns into sweet music. It has echoing deeps in it like velvet darkness where the syllables move like soft plumes of sound. Its modulations are innumerable, and it can pick its way through every mood and emotion with unflinching felicity. The gift of tenderness is very precious,

for in order to speak tenderly it is necessary to pour sincere feeling into all the tones and cadences. Forbes-Robertson is miraculously sincere, and his voice is the utterance of his emotional sincerity. He can breathe a glow of reality into pinchbeck and a gleam of truth into paste. His impassioned whisper can transmute sham sentiment into the very cry of love. His voice is not detached from his soul. You can feel the shaping caress of his spirit on the dead words as they come alive on his lips. You can hear him creating beauty out of ugly phrases as a poet builds his lofty rhymes out of the débris of language. The miracle is wrought in your ears as you listen, without apparent effort or artifice. The lovely edifice of sound is raised like a dream, and before it melts away its site is covered with a new palace, whose towers and pinnacles are made of dying reverberations. The thing is sheer magic. It is the romance of the voice. As you listen you fall into a drowsy reverie, and you fade away from the play and the player into a visionary trance until you forget "the weariness, the fever, and the fret," the ugliness and the squalor of life. Afterwards you wonder whether it was "a vision or a waking dream," and mixed with your memory of the wonderful voice is your memory of the wonderful eyes and the wonderful smile.

MARIE TEMPEST

THERE are no dull moments in Marie Tempest, for she seems to have been made without melancholy. Born in London the day before yesterday, her maiden name was Etherington. She was educated in a Belgian convent school, where she may have picked up her perfect French accent but not her Parisian sparkle. In some respects her career resembles that of Lady Bancroft, for Marie Tempest is really a modern Marie Wilton. Macready saw Marie Wilton when, as a child of five, she played her first part. Lifting her on to his knee, he said, "I suppose you want to become a great actress?" "Yes, sir," said Marie. "And what part do you want to play?" "Juliet," said the child. Macready burst out laughing. "Then," said he, "you'll have to change those eyes of yours." Marie Tempest is like Marie Wilton, for she can never change those eyes of hers. Her eyes are her life and soul. When you think of Marie Tempest you think of the incomparable eyes in which all the imps of humour and all the gnomes of mischief are always dancing. The Americans call her "Dresden China," and George Meredith would call her "a dainty rogue in porcelain." She is a Puck in petticoats, and an Ariel in stockings. She has the heart of a tomboy with the brain of a coquette. She is all impulse and impudence, lightness and levity, insouciance and elegance, frolic and fun. She can be gracefully gauche and wittily vulgar. She is a bundle of fascinating contradictions and charming incongruities. Her maddest whims are never coarse, and her wildest pranks never degenerate into tomfoolery, for she is an artist to the tip of the adorable little tip-tilted nose which is always turning itself up at everything in this solemn old humbug of a world.

But let me try to describe what the Irish would call the

“divilment” in her eyes. There is no other word for it. They are full of pure “divilment” even in the mock repose of gravity, when she is holding back the lightnings of laughter that are ready to flash in all directions. Her bottled fun is always bursting to break loose. You can see the drollery struggling behind her half-shut eyelids. You wait breathlessly for something to give and to go. As you watch her, you anticipate the explosion of humour before it explodes somewhere in the world of comedy behind her eyes. You see it coming long before it comes. A little ripple of fun wavers over her eyes like a flicker of light on still water. Then the ripple breaks into waves and the waves break into a surging foam of merriment. The eyebrows go up and up and up, and the eyelids crinkle and twist and crumple into a thousand twinkling twinkles, till the summer storm of humour turns into a summer tempest of roguishness. Marie Tempest’s eyes are merrily droll. You cannot resist their irresistible onslaught. Their charging laughter takes you off your feet and whirls you into a delirious stampede of joyous emotions and capering moods and irresponsible frivolities and gay audacities.

Her mouth collaborates with her eyes. It is the very mouth of comedy. It is an instrument on which she plays the whole scale of mockery with subtle variations. Most mimes have a stock smile which they turn on and off like gas. Marie Tempest has many smiles, from the strangled smile that plays peekaboo in the corners of her lips to the jolly smile that broadens from ear to ear. Her pet smile ties her mouth in a knot, as if her lips were trying to screw themselves up as tight as her eyes. Her smile contracts and expands, passing through tones and shades of humour which correspond with their moods.

Her humour runs lightly and swiftly along her lips, as the fingers of a pianist run along the keyboard of a piano. She is an artist in smiles, for her grins and grimaces are spontaneous and her volleying laughter rings true. This is the secret of her freshness, for she bathes her acting in personality. Her own radiant temperament breaks through all the theatrical

barriers. You do not think of her as an actress, for she is like a schoolgirl playing a boisterous game and not a part.

She has the eyes of comedy and the mouth of comedy. She has also the voice of comedy. Her diction is vividly clear and quick. Nobody can talk more rapidly than Marie Tempest. The words trip over each other on her tongue. In this she resembles the French, but I would back her against even them. Her volubility is bewildering. It leaves you, but not her, breathless. The velocity of her talk is due to the velocity of her brain. She thinks faster than the play. She hustles the words and the gestures until all the other players seem half asleep. She is exuberantly alive. She has a picturesque knack of vocal caricature. She croaks and grunts, and squeaks and squeals, and shrieks and screams and squawks in a hundred different ways. There are hordes of little devils in her voice, all trying various tunes of cackling derision and chuckling mockery. Sometimes she is Granier and Coquelin rolled into one. The breadth of her comedy is almost masculine. Her gestures are her own, for her quick personality dances in every limb. Her very fingers talk, and she can carry off a mood with a flourish of her arms or a toss of her head or a shrug of her shoulders or a wriggle of her hips. There is always human emotion in her comedy. She keeps derisively in touch with life. When she is most grotesque there is in her fun a faint appeal for sympathy. Her humour is imperceptibly flavoured with pathos, and her drollery has in it a spoonful of cracked sentiment.

Marie Tempest is the last cry in the comedy of feminine artifice. Eve would stare and gasp at her frocks. What she does not know about hats and frocks is not knowledge. It is very easy to buy clothes, but it is not very easy to put them on. English actresses can clothe themselves, but very few of them can dress. The art of dressing usually comes late in life. The older a woman grows the better she dresses. This is a tragedy, for it is hard to live down a dowdy youth. Marie Tempest is ineffably artificial and divinely meretricious, from the jaunty hat on her saucy head to the red-gold wave-

lets of her hair; from the naughty ruff round her naughty ears to the tempestuous hang of her tempestuous skirt. She belongs to her clothes, whereas your clothes, dear lady, barely belong to you. It is not enough to own your hat: your hat must own you. A hat does not begin to be a hat until it becomes a part of you and you become a part of it. Otherwise it is merely a heap of things hung on your head. Marie Tempest is a blend of Longchamps and the Rue de la Paix, of Trouville and Monte Carlo, of Dieppe and Dinard. She adds a new terror to simplicity. She makes every woman in the theatre feel a frump. Her polished brightness is inhuman, for she has improved nature out of existence. Her brilliant sureness kills your last lingering belief in the physical superiority of man. No man was ever turned out like that. No man ever harnessed his soul to his body so accurately, for she is an absolute amalgamation of the body and the soul, a miraculous union of all the senses, everything in working order, from the first hair to the last eyelash, a continual, effervescing triumph of calculated harmony and sharp design and flawless symmetry.

But this is not all. There is dancing life in the depths of the diamond. And what life! The wayward force of it plays on the play and the players and the spectators in a sparkling stream of personality. The darting brilliance of it blinds you and dazzles you. You forget the wheezing mechanism of the plot. You forget the puppetry of the puppets. You forget the pinchbeck glitter of the wit. You forget that the thing before you is a wooden doll, for Marie Tempest can make a marionette come alive when she gets inside it. She can turn farce into comedy, horseplay into laughter, and sawdust into blood.

MARTIN HARVEY

MR. MARTIN HARVEY knows that "nothing is so dainty sweet as melancholy." He has established a monopoly in misery and a corner in sorrow. It is a mistake to imagine that gloom is unpopular, and that pathos is unprofitable. Sadness is a great theatrical asset. There is something in human nature that is gratified by a powerful display of grief. The pleasure caused by tears is quite as real as the pleasure caused by laughter. I have no doubt that Martin Harvey and Harry Lauder work on the same nerve, and fiddle on the same string. The one makes you feel funnily uncomfortable, and the other makes you feel uncomfortably funny. It is probable that sorrow is simply joy walking backwards. We all know people who are happy only when they are unhappy. They have crape souls. They are the sots of sorrow. But the healthy man desires misery only in his hours of ease. He is melancholy only in his amusement. He goes to the theatre in order to escape from the monotonous gaiety of life.

There is a good deal of real trouble in the world, but there is also a good deal of real happiness. It is a pity that there is not enough real trouble to go round. Many of us are fobbed off with artificial tribulation. Our days caper cheerfully along without any first-class anguish. Our digestions are prosaically good. We have enough money to pay our butcher and our barber. As we cannot manufacture moral spasms, spiritual aches, and sentimental pains, we are compelled to buy them. We are so hopelessly contented that we are forced to hire a little discontent to relieve the cheerful sameness of our cosy existence. As most playgoers belong to the sorrowless classes, it is easy to understand why Martin Harvey is popular. He is a purveyor of woe for the woeless, of tears for the tearless, of sighs

for the sighless, of moans for the moanless. He flushes tear-passages which would otherwise be blocked with dry bliss. How many happy persons owe to him the rapture of second-hand desolation. He has saved multitudes from the doom of dying without having shed a tear. He helps us to forget the carking carelessness we leave behind us at home. He saddens our joy-worn faces and smoothes away our smiles. He relieves our minds from the pressure of pleasure. He takes us into a world where happiness is not compulsory and where misery is not an idle dream. If we have not enough imagination to be melancholy, he can saturate us with it. He is a mill of misery, filled with roaring looms of lamentation. It is good that we can fly to him from a world devastated by bliss. If you wish to escape for a whole evening from all the joys that flesh is heir to, I advise you to go and see Martin Harvey.

I dote on Martin Harvey. He is an artist in romantic melancholy. He learned all the tricks of the trade during the thirteen years which he spent with Irving. But the melancholy of Irving was barbed with irony. It was an intellectual melancholy. The melancholy of Martin Harvey is emotional. He is a handsome tear. When an ugly man is melancholy he is ridiculous. Martin Harvey is not an ugly man. He is beautiful with a Byronic beauty. His sable locks and his sable eyes match his sable voice. It is curious that all sorrowful souls are sombre. You cannot conceive the possibility of a sorrowful blonde. It is necessary to be black in order to be blue. The blackness of Martin Harvey is more than characteristic; it is a property. Fair hair and blue eyes would ruin him. Black hair is sometimes cheerful. Now and then it is comic. Dan Leno's hair was black. But there is blackness and blackness. There is the blackness of a well-varnished boot, and there is the blackness of a hearse. There is the blackness of a top-hat, and there is the blackness of a coffin. But the blackness of Martin Harvey is different from all these. It is the blackness of romantic dejection and poetic despair. It is the blackness of art.

I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of Martin Harvey's hair. I do not desire to say that its blackness is to him what blacking is to Day and Martin. I do not suggest that he is like Samson, whose strength was in his hair. But I am as sure that he could not act without his hair as I am sure that his hair could not act without him. The hair is the man. The state of his hair betrays the state of his soul, just as the barometer betrays the state of the weather. His hair is very sensitive, for it feels every breath of the stormy emotions that blow across his brow. It always rises to the occasion, and it expresses every shade of grief and terror, rage and despair, wrath and rhapsody. It is capable of everything that is within the compass of hair. It can do anything that hair can do. Nothing could be more disorderly than its disorder. Nothing could be more riotous than its riot. It outrages the finest instincts of the hairdresser. It laughs at the brush and gibbers at the comb. It is the last word in the unkempt.

But the hair of Martin Harvey is not his only virtue. His eyes are even more soulful. It is his soul that blackens his hair, and it is his soul that blackens his eyes. The ebony sorrow of his soul brims over in his eyes. They are Cimmerian pools of gloom. They are the dark deltas of an inky Amazon of grief. When you see these raven orbs gazing into the depths of eternity, you know that all is for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds. You are soothed by the thought that the reservoirs of misery are inexhaustible and that the pipe lines of woe are infinite. You feel that you can face once more the levity of life and the frivolity of work, for the memory of the unfathomable melancholy in those lustrous moons will assuage your mirth and alleviate your gladness.

The mortuary grace of Martin Harvey is based on whiteness as well as blackness. His black hair and his black eyes are the antithesis of his white face. He is all black and white, like a mourning envelope. I do not know why a white face with a border of black hair should be mournful and why a black face with a border of white hair should be comical. I

do not know why a red face should be ridiculous and why a white face should be romantic. They are conventions due to the fact that we have been taught to regard niggers and drunkards as drolleries. If the civilised majority of men had black faces, then men with white faces would be grotesque. Mr. Kipling would not talk about "The White Man's Burden." He would talk about "The Black Man's Burden." It is all an accident of colour, a freak of Nature's paint-pot. If we were all born with red faces and alcohol turned our noses white, then we should laugh at a man with a white nose. If sorrow painted our cheeks purple instead of making them pale, then purple faces would be poetic, and Martin Harvey would be a lion comique. But a corpse-like pallor is romantic, and Sydney Carton is the only serious rival of the Corsican Brothers. Even the snow is romantic. The duel in the snow would be spoiled if Nature had not decided to make snow white instead of black. After all, there is no earthly reason why snow should be white. Nature could have made black snow if she had chosen. She might have given us white coal and black snow. But Nature thought of Christmas and Martin Harvey, for Nature is a melodramatist. She knew that white snow would go well with Martin Harvey's white face and white shirt, making a romantic background for his black hair and his black eyes, to say nothing of his black voice, with its dark, funereal rhythm, his black smile with its sorrowful undulations, and his sombre soul with its bottomless sea of inky agony.

EVELYN MILLARD

MISS EVELYN MILLARD has been our idol ever since we fell in love with her Ursula and her Flavia. She will always be our idol. Like Ephraim, we are fond of idols, and it would be well if all our idols were as lovely and as gracious and as sweet as she. We do not care a straw what part she plays, for to us she is always the idolised idol we all love on the other side of idolatry. We are simple, honest, plain folk, and we are not ashamed of our enslavement. We do not worship Evelyn Millard merely as an actress. No: we worship her as a woman. We worship her, as we worshipped Mary Anderson and Lily Langtry, because she is our ideal Englishwoman. She gathers up into her stately and majestic person all the traditional charms of all our traditional charmers.

They say she is the daughter of Professor John Millard, the elocutionist. She is nothing of the sort. She is a daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair. You will find her in all the poems of Tennyson. She is that very Maud whose lover in one mood implored her to come into the garden and in another mood denounced her as being faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null. You will find her in the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, Jane Austen and George Eliot, Meredith and Hardy. She smiles her placid smile in the pictures of Millais and Marcus Stone. Bless my soul! she crops up wherever you choose to look for her in our drama, our poetry, our fiction, and our painting.

Evelyn Millard is as delightfully English as Sarah Bernhardt is delightfully French. You cannot think of a British Bernhardt or a French Millard. The gulf between the English actress and the French actress is profound. After her marriage, Miss Millard threw up her part in a play by Mr. Henry

Arthur Jones, because certain lines in it seemed to her to be indecorous in the mouth of a bride. That point of view would be impossible across the Channel, but here the woman is more important than the actress, and we prefer to think of the woman first and the actress afterwards. Where the dignity of a woman clashes with the dignity of dramatic art, it is dramatic art that must give way. The charm of Sarah Bernhardt is her incorrigible artifice, but the charm of Evelyn Millard is her incorrigible innocence. After eighteen years of stage traffic, she is utterly unspoiled and absolutely unsophisticated. The girl still holds the woman at arm's length. She obstinately refuses to grow up. She indignantly declines to mature. She satisfies our conservative instincts, and we rejoice in the certainty that there is at least one national institution which cannot be destroyed.

It is good to know that we can renew our first thrill every time we see her. We may change, but she does not. Her Flavian smiles and her Flavian tears are undimmed and undammed by time. The wine of Anthony Hope grows drier and drier in its bin, but his Flavia grows sweeter and sweeter in an age that urges womanhood to grow sourer and sourer. There are many melancholy young men among us who have never seen a womanly woman. I advise them to go and behold Evelyn Millard displaying triumphantly the bewildering fascinations of that extinct creature. They are lucky to have the chance, for there will never be another specimen so bewitching of the wonderful darlings our happy ancestors adored.

There is nothing that is not lovable in Evelyn Millard. Her lofty beauty is free from the fashionable taint of fierce masculinity. Her face has the surrendering softness that infuriates Mr. Bernard Shaw. There is no battling arrogance in her large, beseeching eyes. There is no pugnacious defiance in the delicate curves of her caressing mouth. Her lips do not suggest the platform and the polling-booth. She is frankly and shamelessly unmanly. She flaunts her helpless loveliness and rejoices in her clinging fragility. She exults in her tender

inadequacy. She is not in the least humiliated by the frailty of her sex. On the contrary, she likes to exaggerate its tremulous fears, its delicate sighs, and its beautiful anxieties. She is a flower that does not pretend to be a rock, and she realises that it is as much the duty of the flower to be flower-like as it is the duty of a rock to be rocky.

The prevalent type of womanhood is the cat. As a rule it is the wild cat and not the domestic cat. There is no cattishness in Evelyn Millard. I am not sure that we deserve her, for she is almost too sweet and good for human nature's daily food. Her kindness is too mellifluously kind. Her gentleness is too cloyingly gentle. She makes real men dissatisfied with real women. She sets an impossible example to her harsher sisters. It is all very well for her to arouse wild hopes of a reasserted sovereignty in the male breast, but it is rather hard on the strong, silent women who have to live up to her swooning weakness and fainting gracility. How on earth can they vie with her beaming virtue after they leave the theatre? To do them justice, they do not try, for no ordinary woman could scale the Alps of amiability over which she trips like a fairy martyr.

There is no doubt that the profession of martyr agrees with Evelyn Millard. She is at her best when the male is at his worst. She revels in being wronged by a lover, and she thrives upon masculine misunderstanding. Like an April day, she sparkles most irresistibly when she is dressed in tears. When she is heartbroken her voice fills us with a sacred joy, and we forgive her male tormentors for the sake of her sweet and sugary grief. The more she suffers the more we enjoy ourselves. We would not flinch if she sobbed continuously through three acts. Yet we are not callous brutes. Off the stage the spectacle of a weeping woman unmans us, but we gloat like emotional fiends over the vibrating agonies of our champion Niobe.

Her liquid moans fill us with holy rapture and her fluent sobs plunge us into an ecstasy of celestial delight. Can you explain this paradox? Why do we shudder at real tears and

exult in sham tears? Are we monsters? Why do we extract æsthetic pleasure from the anguish of our beloved Evelyn? She cannot suffer enough to sate our thirst for suffering. What is stranger still, we not only like to see her weeping Niagaras of woe, but we also like to weep with her, until the theatre is damp with her tears and ours.

In most modern plays love is an ugly passion. Evelyn Millard reminds us that love was once a romantic sentiment. Her innocence almost amounts to ignorance. She helps us to remember the good old times when even a stage woman was an angel transfigured by a spiritual devotion. She compels us to believe in her goodness, for she exhibits an imagination that is clear and pure and radiant. Her heroines not only do no evil—they think no evil. They are glowingly stainless and brightly serene. They are morally healthy without being cold, valiantly amorous without being sensuous. They fall in love without losing their dignity. They give their hearts without losing their souls. There is a fine reserve in their affection, like ice in the sunlight. Even when they melt they are cool, and their tenderest kisses are fresh with reluctance. In a word, they are English heroines, loving with their spirit more than with their blood, and apter at loyalty than at allurements. There is a noble beauty in their fidelity. They move like sorrowful queens who are glad to suffer and endure rather than to exact and extort. They are careless of their rights and they glory in their wrongs. Their throne is the hearth and their kingdom is the home.

HARRY LAUDER

WHAT is the secret of Harry Lauder? An astute expert who has his finger on the pulse of the public tells me that it is in his Scots blood. Wherever he sings, Scotsmen rally round him, and the rest follow like sheep. This may be a part of the truth, for the clannishness of Scotsmen is a tremendous force. It counts for much in literature, as everybody knows. But it is not sufficient to account for the vogue of Harry Lauder. Other Scottish comedians have failed to charm the fickle taste of the music-halls. Indeed, when Lauder first appeared in London he was laughed at. He was forced to fight against anti-Scottish prejudice. I heard him at the Tivoli nine or ten years ago. He came on as an extra turn. He was absolutely unknown, and although his comic power was then overwhelming, it was unrecognised by the audience. I was instantly impressed by his genius and was disappointed when I was told that he was a singer of no importance. I found it was not easy even to learn his name. Since then he has sung himself into the hearts of the people. What is the meaning of it?

Well, in the first place, it is the man's personality. He possesses that strange quality which Mr. Barrie calls "bloom." Just as the charm of a woman may be called the bloom on her, so the charm of Harry Lauder may be called the bloom on him. You feel the bloom on him as soon as he comes on the stage. He is queerly different from other comedians, just as Dan Leno was queerly different. He has the something more which distinguishes the great artist from the small artist. Other singers have the technical gifts, the voice, the gestures, the eccentricities of dress and make-up, but they lack the indefinable magic that transfigures them out of the commonplace.

Other singers can achieve grotesquery, extravagance, caricature, drollery, whimsicality, mannerism, but they miss the strange beauty which fills these superficial artifices with meaning. There is a power in Harry Lauder which resembles the power you find in Albert Chevalier. But it cuts deeper than Chevalier's genius. Lauder lacks the plastic variety of Chevalier, the wonderful gift of painting character in various ways. But in some way he is more intensely human. He rouses in you deeper emotions. He utters a more moving heart-cry.

There is in the art of Chevalier at its very root a touch of staginess. His effects are cunningly veiled, but you feel that they are skilfully prepared. Lauder is simpler and more spontaneous. His effects are produced by a kind of natural vitality of the emotions. He makes you feel his feelings. He fills you with a fresh sense of reality. He puts you into touch with life. There is the secret. He is poignantly human. There is in his features and in his voice the common tumult of the common heart, the vague, homely disturbance and trouble and tears and laughter of the ordinary man, with his ordinary work and his ordinary affections and his ordinary failings. Harry Lauder comes straight from the people, and he sings the rough feelings of the people straight out of his heart. It is a mistake to imagine that the people are vulgar. Vulgarity is not the vice of poverty; it is the vice of wealth. I find more vulgarity in our theatres than in our music-halls. The rich man can hardly help being vulgar; the poor man can hardly be vulgar if he tries. There is no vulgarity in the art of Harry Lauder, although he sings in the vulgar tongue about the vulgar joys and sorrows of the vulgar. In a very profound sense he is too vulgar to descend to vulgarity. He is the crowd bursting into song.

He might serve as a model for the great, rough, genial, good-humoured multitude. He is the epitome of homeliness. His face is large and loose-featured, every part of it clumsily exaggerated, and yet heavily balanced and harmonised with the other parts. There is no stupid beauty in it, no symmetry, no softness. It is the face of a peasant or a labourer, with the

robust rudeness of the earth in its uncouth angles and corners. In this way rocks and hills are made with a magnificent carelessness and brutal extravagance. His face is ludicrously original, like the faces of peasants. You feel the horseplay of life in it. You know that it is not a copy but an original sketch, left unfinished and unsophisticated by the vigorous hand of nature. The features are quite primitive in their enormous simplicity of huge protuberances and fleshy wastes. The nose is more than a nose: it is a headland. The mouth is more than a mouth: it is an abyss. The cheeks are more than cheeks: they are prairies that laugh in a thousand furrows. The eyes are also built on a large scale, and the wrinkles of laughter radiate from them in an explosion of drollery. The ordinary face is small, and timid, and toned down. His face is gigantically shameless, immensely naked, uproariously nude. It offers itself boldly to the eye. When it smiles it smiles like a county or a hippopotamus. It is hard to resist a smile that rolls across acres, that billows over miles of creased flesh. The joviality of the earth breaks loose and comes out in it. The roaring fun of the eternal jest of life sounds in its convulsions. As you watch Harry Lauder you feel something rising inside you that warms you, and exhilarates you, and mellows you. It is the very sap of good humour which is the milk and honey, the sweetness and the light of life. It is the jolly force that makes the lambs gambol, and the kids frisk, and the colts scamper, and the puppies play the fool. It is humanity in touch with human nature, man in touch with life.

Harry Lauder paints life as a jolly business. There is not a breath of cynicism in his body. He sings the elemental simplicities with tremendous vigour—love, friendship, and conviviality. His hold on the people is based chiefly upon his homely, clean sentiment. His most popular song, "I love a Lassie," is a song that has not a taint of sensuality in it. It is a lyric of homely love, the love of the peasant lad for the peasant lass, fresh and clear as the wind that blows across the bonny purple heather, "pure as the lily in the dell." The music-halls adore this simple love song, for they are sworn

worshippers of youth and the ideals of youth. They are children with a childish innocence of heart which eagerly responds to a picture of innocent love and romantic sentiment. They joyously turn from lower thoughts to the sweet image of "Mary, my Scotch Bluebell," which the singer has put into their hearts by some magic witchery of music. Harry Lauder has a wonderful gift of wistfulness. He can breathe a gentle yearning tenderness into the smoke-laden air of the tawdriest music-hall.

His humour and his tenderness are blended in a very curious way. Take, for instance, his song, "He was very kind to me." He appears dressed as a poor Scots widow, grotesque in her bonnet and shawl. He paints her character to the life, and shows you her grief in the arms of her absurdity. There is no mawkish or maudlin sentiment in this queer creature, but somehow or other he fills her with the pathos and the humour of life. "He was very, very, very, very, very, very kind to me." Into each "very" he slips a new note of pathetic reminiscence, infinitely compassionate and delicate, until you do not know whether to laugh or to cry, and end in doing both. The subtlety with which he draws out of the commonest and tritest words a deeper meaning is extraordinary. It is the perfection of emotional art. At bottom Harry Lauder is a gentle humorist who coaxes the squalid facts of life into something beautiful. His laughter laughs with human nature, not at it. He makes you feel that life is queer but good, grotesque but glorious.

ALBERT CHEVALIER

ALBERT ONÉSIME BRITANNICUS GWATHVEOED LOUIS CHEVALIER—that is the real name of Albert Chevalier. It is a magnificent name. It is even more magnificent than the great rolling name of Paragot—Berzélius Nibbidard Polydore Pradel Paragot. It suggests the polychromatic genius of the many-coloured coster mime who has French and Italian and Welsh blood in his veins. Albert Chevalier was born in 1862 in Notting Hill. His father was a French master in the Kensington Grammar School. He began his theatrical adventures as a boy of eight when he recited a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the Cornwall Hall, Notting Hill. Henry Compton, smoking a long clay pipe, heard the boy reciting in his house in Kensington Square, patted him on the back, and said, "Very good! Come and see me again when your voice breaks!" His voice broke in due time, and he has been making us laugh and cry with that broken voice for nearly twenty years. His long drill and discipline would have broken many a smaller man's heart as well as his voice, for he learned his magical art in the old, hard school that produced Sir Charles Wyndham and Sir John Hare, and many another great actor. His voice to-day is as richly broken as Wyndham's. You can hear thirty years of touring in it. It is the true, rich fruity actor's voice.

He has played—where has he not played? To begin with, he played in the old Prince of Wales's Theatre, the "Dust-hole," with the Kendals and John Clayton. There he and Fred Storey were boys together. In those early days he was "Mr. Knight" on the playbills—Knight being the English equivalent of Chevalier. Later he reverted to his own name, and he won his histrionic spurs as Albert Chevalier. From

1878 to 1887 he played in town and country with the Kendals, with Hare, with George Alexander, with Willie Edouin, and with Toole. He played all sorts of parts, from Mazzette in "Don Giovanni" to the Frenchman in "The Magistrate." He played in Robertson comedy, in Pinero farce, in burlesque, in grand opera and in comic opera. It was in the burlesque of "Aladdin" at the Strand that he sang his first coster song, "The 'Armonic Club." At the Avenue he took the place of Arthur Roberts for two years. It seemed that he would always be an actor of the good old type, ready to play any part that turned up. Luckily for him and for us he found himself "out of a shop," and by a happy accident tried his coster songs on a famous night in 1891 at the Pavilion. He was afraid that his delicate art would not please the fidgety music-hall audience, but the Pavilion leapt at it, and after singing "The Coster's Serenade" he was overwhelmed with rapturous applause. That song is now a Cockney classic.

I say it is a classic, and classics also are many of the great songs of Chevalier, such as "The Future Mrs. 'Awkins," "Wot cher!" "The Coster's Courtship," "The Nipper," "My Old Dutch," "Wot's the Good of Hanyfink? Why, Nuffink," "Tick Tock," "The Fallen Star," and "Wot Fur Do Ee Luv Oi?" They are part of the permanent folk-songs of the language. They come straight from the homely joys and sorrows of the people; for Chevalier has quarried them out of the hearts of the London poor, shaped the words with beautifully naïve and simple art, and married pathetic and plaintive cockney music to the words. Sometimes the tune is his own; sometimes it is by his brother and manager, Auguste (known as "Charles Ingle"); sometimes it is by John Crook, and sometimes it is by some other composer. But the real maker of both the words and the tune is Chevalier, the artist who can make London cry and laugh over her own tears and laughter.

Yes, Chevalier is an artist, for he is a poet as well as a comedian, a humorist as well as a mime. In the exquisite beauty and delicacy of his sentiment and his humour you can see the French and Italian and Celtic strain. But there is

an English breadth in his comic force. The mixture of qualities makes him a marvellous artist who can show you the depths as well as the surface of human nature. There has never been a music-hall singer so fastidiously refined and at the same time so vividly realistic. He is the Hogarth of the music-halls, but he is free from the bitter Hogarthian brutality. He loves his characters, and that is why they are so miraculously alive with the very life of life. One night while he was singing "My Old Dutch" in an East End hall, an old fellow flung his arms round his old wife's neck and gave her a kiss that was heard over the whole house. The homely pathos of the song is heartbreaking. Indeed, there is in Chevalier's simple coster songs something that recalls the lyric cry of Burns. You feel the ache and pain of the human heart in them. You cannot harden yourself against their dramatic magic. They carry your soul by storm, and before you have had time to think you are in tears. The tears that Chevalier makes you shed are not maudlin tears. They are tears that make your soul wiser and nobler, and purer and tenderer, for they are the product of honest, direct, and unsophisticated emotion. This magician makes you see the eternal simplicity of human nature, the brave goodness of common lives, and the queer lovable-ness of humble love. There is no mean malice in his mimicry and his caricature, for all he does is steeped in pity and sympathy and compassion.

The dramatic humour of Chevalier is a very wonderful thing. He makes you see the very soul of the type he represents, and not merely the external physical mannerisms. His imitators can imitate his physical mannerisms and parody his technical brilliancy, but they cannot steal his spiritual magic. Gus Elen and Alec Hurley are only the husks of his genius. The dramatic humour of Chevalier is a mystery, for it comes from the man behind the actor. It is an imaginative force that breaks through conventions. I saw Chevalier the other day in a very conventional part, that of an old French actor in a dramatic sketch called "Behind the Scenes." But he made me laugh and cry over the pathetic human simplicity

of the character. He created Achille Talma Dufard in the magical way that Dickens created Micawber and Dick Swiveller and Mr. Pickwick. And indeed there is a rich Dickensian quality in Chevalier's art, a strange touching power of making eccentricity and extravagance appear more tearfully and more laughably human than humanity. What is this power? It is the glamour of emotional sincerity, the magic of feeling the human soul so honestly that others also feel it honestly. Dickens made us love his fantastic caricatures because he made us wince at their simple human reality. Chevalier makes us wince in the same way. Below his facial drollery, his comic gestures, and his vocal mockery there is the living movement of the living soul that is your soul and my soul and everybody's soul. We are what he sings and what he says, and as we are transfigured into the common life of common humanity we find ourselves melting into a passionate sympathy of human smiles and human tears. That is dramatic genius, for it makes us alive with the life of our queer human brotherhood, freeing us from our sense of personal isolation, merging our cold egoism in the warm flood of human nature. Dickens does that and Burns does it, and Chevalier does it, and we feel better for their doing of it. An hour with Chevalier is a release of the soul, an expansion of the spirits, an enlarging of the good, broad, human humour that is the very breath in our lungs, and the very blood in our hearts. Dickens is dead, but the characters of Dickens are alive, and will always be alive. It is otherwise with the cockney masterpieces of Chevalier. They will die with him, for, although his songs will survive him, without his voice they are only the shadows of themselves. They shrink when other singers sing them into ghosts and phantoms, for they lack the final touch of artistry that makes poetry everlasting. Yet their sobbing humour is a very durable thing, and it will endure long after the coster and the cockney have been slain by the schoolmaster and the newspaper.

ADA REEVE

ADA REEVE is a mime to the manner born. Her father was an actor of the old school who played with Irving and the Kendals, with Toole, and Sothern, and Phelps. In the early seventies her mother was a popular soubrette. Ada was only six when she faced the footlights for the first time at Dewsbury. At twelve she was a mature comic singer and dancer. She was a child-actress at the Pavilion Theatre, Mile End, where she played the lachrymose Little Willie in "East Lynne," and the lachrymose Eva in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It was at the Pavilion she learned from Mr. Isaac Cohen that art of speaking distinctly which most English actresses never learn at all. At fourteen she was famous in the music-halls as one of the "Sisters Reeve," and soon afterwards she was singing and dancing in single harness, making hit after hit at the Pavilion, the Alhambra, the Tivoli, the Royal, and the Oxford, with tomboy songs such as "What Do I Care?" "The Little Puritan," "I'm a little too young to know, you know." I believe she claims to have been the first actress to turn a catherine-wheel on the music-hall stage. It was at the Cambridge, and the delighted audience used to yell every night at her, "Over, Ada!" She was the perfect tomboy that the cockney humorist adores. In many ways she resembles that darling of the gallery boys, Nellie Farren, for, in addition to her gift of boisterous fun, she has the queer little streak of homely pathos that the people of London love. It was this streak of pathos which made Mile End sob over her Little Willie, and her dying Eva, and her forlorn waif in "The Crimes of Paris." She brought tears into the eyes of the sentimental music-hall audiences when she sang "Only a Penny." This odd mixture of wild drollery and naïve sentiment is a cock-

ney product, and Ada Reeve mixed the mixture almost as cleverly as Nellie Farren. By this great cockney mixture she won the great cockney heart.

In 1894 the vigilant eye of Mr. George Edwardes saw the cockney genius of Ada Reeve, and with his usual insight he stole her from the music-halls, giving her the chief part in "The Shop Girl," which ran for two years. Then she was Julie Bon-Bon in "The Gay Parisienne." Since then she has oscillated vigorously between musical comedy and the music-halls, now and again touring in America, Australia, and South Africa. For a long time she was the bright particular star of the Palace. She was at her very best with Mr. Arthur Roberts. To see Ada Reeve and Arthur Roberts playing together was almost as delightful as it was to see Nellie Farren and Fred Leslie. Their spontaneous drolleries fed each other and made it very hard for playgoers to bear the physical pain of incessant laughter. In those days we were almost compelled to cry for mercy. It was not easy to endure the muscular toil of laughing for a whole evening. I remember one night when Ada and Arthur were both in their maddest and merriest mood, and I went home absolutely worn out and sore with laughter. Ada laughed at Arthur, and Arthur laughed at Ada, and we all laughed at both of them, and both of them laughed at us. So continuously did we laugh that the play could hardly get on, and, in fact, it did not get on except when Ada and Arthur went off the stage. There was one moment when Ada Reeve was paralysed by her sense of humour. The gags and antics of Arthur Roberts had reduced her to impotence. The more she laughed at him the more absurdly absurd he became. I fear there is no such laughing nowadays.

Mr. Barrie has told us that woman was made, not out of man's rib, but out of man's funnybone. Ada Reeve is a living proof of this theory. There are some people who say that women have no sense of humour, but they have never seen Ada Reeve. She cannot help herself. She is not an artificial humorist. Her humour is quite natural. It flows out of her temperament. She is incorrigibly hoydenish, and her

high spirits never flag. She seems to be quite free from the vice of self-consciousness, and she can let herself go in a whirl of rollicking gaiety that is irresistibly infectious. She is not preoccupied with her own femininity. She is able to forget herself in the riot of audacious mirth. There are some actresses whose self-approbation makes you forget their acting. They are too pretty to act. Ada Reeve trusts to her brains rather than to her looks. She is not afraid to burlesque herself, and to turn to account her physical eccentricities. In this vein she is as daring as Marie Tempest. She has the abandon of the male comedian as well as the charm of the feminine droll. She does not hesitate to make herself grotesque, and ungainly, and ludicrous, parodying her own voice, caricaturing her own face, and lampooning her own figure. She shoots out her jaw and stretches out her neck in a romp of self-derision. There is no stiff dignity in her gestures. She throws herself into any attitude that suggests her mood, treating her limbs with ironical contempt, and flinging them about in a jointless revel of physical recklessness. Her fun is the perfection of careless impudence. It is pure cockney fun, the fun that treats the body as a splendid joke, and caricatures every feature of the face and every curve of the flesh. The mobility of Ada Reeve's face is extraordinary. Liveliest of all are her amazing eyes. Her drollery rampages in those comical orbs. They are very large and very protuberant. The ordinary eyes hide behind the eyelids, but hers come right out across the footlights. They bulge with a defiantly rolling sparkle. You can see them sideways. Her eye in profile is as prominent as her nose. And how she uses her eyes! She puts into their gyrations all her archness and all her innuendo, all her piquancy and all her insolence. You cannot think of her with her eyes shut. She is all eyes, just as Marie Lloyd is all teeth. She deliberately exaggerates her eyes, making them devour her face, until you half expect to see her head turning into two rolling and rollicking globes of fun. She throws her eyes at you like footballs. They grow on you until they look like balloons.

Just as Niobe was all tears, so Ada Reeve is all smiles. Her mouth is the only serious rival of her eyes. It is a generous mouth, prodigally stocked with laughing teeth. Her smile is illimitable. It begins with a tiny pout, and it slowly expands until it touches each of the wings, and finally disappears behind the scenes, ending on the one side somewhere near the Tottenham Court Road, and on the other somewhere near Piccadilly, leaving her teeth gleaming alone in a blinding palisade of laughter. Ada Reeve is not afraid to smile, and, when she smiles, the whole house smiles too. Every long face grows broad, and every pursed-up mouth stretches itself sideways in an india-rubber imitation and emulation of the smile that has no end. An Ada Reeve audience is an orgy of smiles, neatly arranged in ranks from the first row of the stalls to the last row of the gallery. The other night at the Apollo I watched the whole ascending scale of smiles in the crowded house. There was not a break in it until the last smile vanished in the roof. The theatre was decorated with smiles while she was making preposterous love to Podmore, driving him distracted, and driving us distracted, with her harum-scarum endearments and impish coquetries. It is a pity that good songs are so rare, for it as a *disease* that Ada Reeve is inimitable. She has that Parisian mastery of diction which enables her to combine the art of talk with the art of song. She can talk and sing at the same time, making every syllable tell, and every point go home. She can work such wonders with a pointless song, that one rages to hear her sing a song that bristles with points. She can extract so much humour from humourless songs that one asks in a kind of fury why nobody writes humorous songs for her. The songs in "Butterflies" make me sigh for a song like "Tact." But good songs are scarcer than good singers, just as good plays are scarcer than good actors. The result is that Ada Reeve, like Forbes-Robertson, is compelled to make bricks without straw. Why on earth does she not offer a prize for a singable song?

SEYMOUR HICKS

MR. SEYMOUR HICKS is more than versatile; he is universal. His universality frightens me. He is so clever in so many ways that he paralyses the nerves of astonishment and the muscles of admiration. He is still a young man, but he has already packed into his life a long series of careers, one inside the other, like a Japanese nest of boxes. It would be impossible to get at the last box, which contains the real man, for the process of taking him to pieces would last several years, and long before it was completed he would have enveloped himself in new feats and fresh exploits of actorship, authorship, and managership. Seymour Hicks is a syndicate masquerading as a mercurial boy. There is one side of him which is a feverish George Edwardes. There is another side of him which is a popular version of Mr. J. M. Barrie. He is also a nervous incarnation or caricature of Fred Leslie, with a dash of William Terriss, a whiff of Arthur Roberts, a flash of Charles Brookfield, a spice of Sims and Pettitt, to say nothing of a frantic reminiscence of "Augustus Druriolanus." He is everybody by turns and nobody long. If he had been born a chameleon, he would have burst himself years ago. His terrifying restlessness haunts the British theatre. His theatrical energy makes other men of energy look like torpid tortoises. It is a blessing that he is not a politician, like Mr. Winston Churchill, or a President, like Mr. Roosevelt, for he would blow the world to pieces with his volcanic vehemence and violence.

He broke loose very young, for he was only sixteen when he played with Willard at the old Olympic. After touring for two years in the provinces, he went to America with the Kendals, where his natural volatility and volubility and excitability and risibility and capability were dangerously intensified. What

he needed was a sleeping draught. America gave him a stimulant. Compared to him, the American hustler is a lame and lethargic lobster. If he had not been a brilliant actor-author-manager, he would have been a brilliant journalist. He has a diabolical knowledge of the popular taste. He can tickle the public palate with infallible skill. He is almost hysterically sensitive and almost neurotically responsive to the whims and caprices of the playgoer. He can ferret out what the pleasure-seeker likes, and can give it to him with both hands and with both feet.

His dashing knowingness and swaggering humour and electrical dancing have made him an after-dinner favourite. Into his musical pieces he puts his appalling vitality and merciless vivacity. He not only makes himself go, but he makes everybody else go. He floods the stage with light and colour and music and movement. He invented, I believe, the illustrative chorus. He forced the stolid rows of show girls to galvanise themselves into explosive life. He even electrified the stage properties, and compelled the very scenery to join the dance. He is a master of scenic tricks and artifices. He transforms the stage carpenter, and compels him to startle the audience with mechanical jokes and jests. Impish restlessness is the keynote of his stage-management as well as of his acting. He is a man of business in every sense of the word. He has a mania for interpreting and expounding and emphasising and embroidering and exaggerating and underlining every phrase and every song and every dance.

His personality is magnetic, or, rather, it is electric. He shocks you with laughter. He explodes sensations like mines under your feet. He can cater for a dozen different publics, from the public of childhood that doted on "Bluebell in Fairy-Land" to the public of patriots that gloated over "One of the Best." He can purvey any brand of theatrical food, and he has even dreamed of naturalising the Passion Play. "I'm a Catholic," he once said, "and don't you think, that being so, I realise the fact that there are better things than singing 'A Gay Old Bird'?" One of his best feats of character-acting

is Scrooge, and I should not be surprised to hear that he means to play Hamlet and Romeo before he dies. But I hope he will never carry out his threat of being serious, for he is inimitable as an irresponsible light comedian who blazes and sparkles in a tornado of gags and topical sallies and impudent burlesques. His high spirits are higher than anybody else's, and he is full of irrepressible fun and gaiety and merry audacity. His vivacity is always at full pressure, and yet it seems spontaneous. His motto is: "Pallas, take thine owl away, and let us have a lark instead."

Just as his wife, Ellaline Terriss, is the everlasting girl, so he is the everlasting boy. His thousand and one theatrical adventures have not taken the steam out of his amazing boyishness. His shrewd sagacity in judging the taste of the public has not soured or shrivelled his youthful eagerness and enterprise. Although he has a hundred irons in the theatrical fire, he preserves his frisky juvenility. Although he builds theatres by the dozen and launches touring companies by the score, he is not withered by work or staled by success. His ebullient frivolity remains untarnished and unchastened. Yet there is a serious facet in his glittering pushfulness. He has done the State some service. He has rushed to the rescue of the British Constitution. He has breathed new life into the lungs of the House of Lords. He has injected fresh blood into the veins of our old nobility. He has provided an inexhaustible supply of healthy and handsome mothers for our future aristocracy. No longer need the eldest sons of our peers turn to America for worthy mates and stalwart wives. He is the universal provider of matrimonial beauty for our belted earls. His show girls are the salvation of our anæmic peerage. How he discovers them is a mystery, for the supply never fails. It must be heartrending for Mr. Hicks to see his majestic ladies carried off by heartless young lords, but he never murmurs, he never complains. He resigns them without a sigh, for he feels that he is performing a public duty and a patriotic service. He knows that he is regenerating a decaying institution, and revivifying a dying class. He is not hurt because

the House of Lords has callously neglected to pass a resolution thanking him for his self-abnegation. He is content with the applause of his own conscience. He looks for no reward but the silent gratitude of his country. I hope he will persevere in his patriotic labours.

LITTLE TICH

I LOVE my Little Tich nearly as well as I used to love my Dan Leno. He helps me to bear the loss of Dan Leno. When I saw Dan Leno I always felt the sadness of his drollery, for Dan was droll in a wistful way. You knew that his humour sprang from a melancholy soul. It was like a well bubbling out of the sand. There was a sense of tears in Dan's voice, a hint of unutterable woe in his smile. Little Tich is Dan Leno without his tragic earnestness and his beseeching seriousness. Dan was comically intense, grotesquely grave. Life broke through his absurdity. Little Tich is drollery without any sense of reality. There is no high seriousness in his humour. He is the world turned into a jest. He makes you forget that there is anything that matters. He is the epitome of London levity. The true spirit of London is Little Tich, with his careless irreverence and impudent irresponsibility. London is the street arab of cities. It is cheeky, fickle, and capricious. It does not care about great, grave things. It chuckles over the broad fun of existence. It laughs at everything. Its face wears a perpetual grin. London is a gigantic caricature of Little Tich. Many years ago I saw Little Tich in Paris at the Folies-Bergères. Paris raved about Le Petit Tich, for Paris loves a droll; but in Paris Little Tich was out of place. Only in London is he at home, for he understands London, and London understands him.

I saw him the other night at the Tivoli. It was a sweltering, sultry evening, and we were all limp and languid and lethargic. But when he bounced upon the stage our limpness and languor and lethargy vanished. We sat up. We peered round the enormous hats of the ladies. We found strength to laugh all together until the Tivoli was roaring with laughter.

We could not resist Little Tich, for he was in his tichest mood. You see, I have been forced to coin a word in order to express the quality and quiddity of his humour. It is pure tichness. Tichness is simply the art of being yourself, for Tich is solely himself, and nothing but himself. He enjoys being himself, and you enjoy his enjoyment. He accepts himself as a joke, and you accept his acceptance. He takes you into his confidence, and admits that he is just what he is—a living jest. Other comedians are made. Tich is born. Mr. Dunville and Mr. Robey are very fearfully and wonderfully made. They are droll by art. Little Tich is droll by nature. Mr. Dunville might have turned himself into a Bishop. Mr. Robey might have made himself a Cabinet Minister. Little Tich could not be anything but what he is, an imp of grotesque drollery that lets loose all the laughter in you. He cannot help being laughable, and you cannot help laughing at him. He is a natural caricature of that noble animal, man, and he glories in being a caricature. He makes you see the broad comedy of the human being. He shows you man from the point of view of the other animals. In the eyes of a horse, or a dog, or a cat, or a parrot, a man must seem a very droll creature, with a queer face, queer eyes, queer eyebrows, queer nose, queer mouth, queer arms, queer hands, queer body, queer legs, and queer feet. Little Tich underlines the queerness of the human body. He makes this odd old animal look intolerably absurd. He also makes it enjoy its own absurdity. He compels it to hold its sides at its own incongruity. When you laugh at Little Tich, you are laughing at yourself, for he is only yourself with a touch of grotesque exaggeration.

Little Tich is a droll, because he is like you in an absurd way. His littleness is droll, because he is two or three feet shorter than you are. The size of man is only a fashion. We all happen to stand between five and six feet in our stocking soles. That is only a whim of evolution. We might have been designed as tall as the giraffe, or as fat as the elephant, or as ungainly as the goose. The giraffe and the elephant and the goose are droll, because they are not designed like

us. Little Tich is droll because he is a little bit out of drawing. If we were all like him, he would not be droll. His tichness is mainly a matter of tininess. Enlarge him a shade, and he would not be funnier than we are. He has the wit to insist on his tininess. He makes the most of his inches by clothing himself in a Brobdingnagian dress-coat, a Brobdingnagian waistcoat, a Brobdingnagian shirt front, Brobdingnagian trousers and Brobdingnagian boots. He is a philosophic humorist, for he heightens the humour of his body by wrapping it up in wildly incongruous garments. Clothes that don't fit are always droll. Clothes that are made for somebody else are always comic. Little Tich makes you feel that he is a joke clad in a joke. He is the fun of the flesh in the fun of the tailor.

Nature has exaggerated him backwards, and he exaggerates himself forwards. His tichest stroke of exaggeration is seen in his exaggerated feet. A boot is a comic thing, because it covers a comic thing. If you pause after you get out of your bath and seriously consider your feet, you will realise that your feet are the funniest part of your body. They are so helplessly stupid and so fatuously silly. You can do so little with them. You cannot write with them, or play the piano with them, or shake hands with them, or eat with them, or take off your hat with them. All you can do is to walk with them. Put your socks on, and the absurdity of your feet is enhanced, for you have hidden the toes that in some way relate feet to fingers. Now, put on your boots and sit down and meditate upon your boots until you see their absurdity. The socked foot is a feeble imitation of the naked foot, but the booted foot is a frantic burlesque of both. Look at Little Tich's boots. They are insane caricatures of your own. The soles are flabby, and they flap like the feet of a duck. They are no longer human boots. They are the boots of a madman in a mad dream. They do everything that boots ought not to do. They bend and wobble.

Little Tich is all exaggeration. His eyes are exaggerated, for they are ridiculously ridiculous. They do not look at

you. They grimace at you. They invite you to laugh with them at the laughableness of life. They see the fun of their conspicuous position in that droll face, every feature of which is a different freak of drollery. Behind their sharp, keen stare you can detect the tremendous force of the comic nonsense that is working its way out of them and out of every pore of the skin that is stretched over those grotesque limbs. Little Tich breathes nonsense. His queer, worn voice is the very spirit of nonsense. His confidential cockney chuckle is like live sandpaper. His laugh is a quaint, dry cackle, something between the parched bleat of a sheep and the dusty gargle of a goat. It is the quintessence of eager frivolity and merry, mad, irresponsible folly. It is man seeing the joke of humanity.

ETHEL IRVING

It is a mistake to imagine that in this world we all get our deserts. It is not always enough to deserve success, for it is better to be born lucky than deserving. Chance plays a great part in every life, and fame is often an accident of an accident. In the theatre chance is king. An actor or an actress may have the magical grace of genius, but until that strange grace sets the public alight it counts for nothing. The blaze must come before the dead indifference of the playgoer is burnt up. This is the tragedy of the player's art, and it is not surprising that mimes are more superstitious than any other artists. They know that sickness of the heart which may last until the hair whitens and the freshness of youth fades. The agony of waiting is terrible in the case of a man, but it is infinitely more terrible in the case of a woman. The process of growing old is always dreadful for a woman. She fights against the army of years with desperate stratagems, waging her lonely battle day after day in an awful silence of the soul. The more beautiful she is, the more tragic is her battle against time. She may delude others, but she cannot delude herself. Her face is a territory which she maps out and surveys with minute precision. She knows the history of every line and the passion of every wrinkle. She marks every stage in the war between her and her eternal enemy. Her vision of herself is clear and pitiless. Her imagination gives her beauty no quarter. The little defeats and repulses are all registered and recorded. Ever before her is the cold certainty that in the end she will be vanquished, and the nearer the hour of her conquest approaches the more grimly she fights her pathetic fight.

In the life of the actress there is a new element of tragedy.

For the ordinary woman the battle is secret. She fights her fight in a private shelter of friendship, and it may be of love. She is not exposed to the fierce light of the public eye. But the actress fights her fight before the whole world. There is not much ruth or compassion in the climate of the theatre. The playgoer is a cynic, and he does not see the pathos of the pitiful struggle to win his favour. He is a monster who cares only for his own pleasure. He devours the luckless ones who miss the mark of his whims and the target of his foibles. He does not guess the anguish raging in the hearts of the mimes who feel that they are getting the worst of the bitter battle for his smile. He does not divine the tempests of jealousy and envy and hate and resentment and rebellion that sweep through every dressing-room. There are some actresses who are dowered with beauty and talent, and nevertheless they fail year after year to step out of the icy twilight of mediocrity into the sunshine of triumph. Nobody knows why they hover on the chilly borderline that divides failure from success. Everybody feels that they ought to arrive: yet somehow or other the years go by and they do not clamber over the little space that separates them from victory.

There was a time when I feared that Miss Ethel Irving might be one of these wronged and injured actresses of genius. I saw her many years ago in a pantomime, and I was so keenly aware of her charm and brilliancy that I felt a sense of injury at the spectacle of her wasted powers. I knew she was an original, creative artist, and I rebelled against what seemed to be a perversity of chance. It seemed for a while that her delicate gifts would not surmount the stupidity of things. Then I saw her in musical comedy, and I could have wept to see her fine qualities squandered on trivialities so unworthy of them. The years went by and I began to wonder whether she would ever escape from the labyrinth of futility. At last by some strange freak of fortune she played a tragic part in a play prohibited by the Censor, "*Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont.*" It was an English adaptation produced by the Stage Society in that grotesque hall in Covent Garden dedicated to

the National Sporting Club. For me and for most of those who saw Ethel Irving in that almost ludicrous environment the occasion was unforgettable. She revealed herself suddenly as a great tragedy actress. In the culminating scene of that gloomy tragedy she rose to the sublimest tragic heights, sweeping through our souls with a tremendous abandonment of spiritual passion and anguish and despair, shaking our senses with the extreme pain of a woman in ungoverned grief and uncontrollable agony. She lost all the coldness and all the artifice of the actress in the tumult and storm of emotion. Her hair streamed in tangled disorder, her features were distorted with real physical suffering, her voice was torn with the madness of her torment, she cried out her misery in fierce, hoarse tones that were half the utterance of art and half the utterance of nature. She shed real tears. She writhed in the grip of passions that seemed too intolerable for the endurance of mortal flesh. She terrified the audience out of its reserve and its self-control, making us all suffer with her sufferings, and leaving us aching and bruised and exhausted with sympathetic pangs of the body and the soul. No tragic actress of our time ever moved me more deeply, and I think no audience of our time was ever moved more deeply than the awed and silent and tearful audience which sat that afternoon in that old, incongruous building with its musty memories of pugilism and pugilists. Even now at this distance of time I feel the tragic mood then roused by Ethel Irving, and I marvel that she is not to-day acclaimed as one of our greatest tragic actresses.

But King Chance is a whimsical monarch, and he forbade what seemed for a moment to be the inevitable outcome of a memorable feat of tragic portraiture. For some years I heard little of Ethel Irving, and I began to feel resigned to the stupidity of things theatrical. Then suddenly King Chance repented, and he permitted Ethel Irving to show the indifferent public her powers as a comic actress in "Lady Frederick." In a way the part of Lady Frederick is an epitome of the tragedy of womanhood, for it shows a beautiful woman on the

threshold of physical ruin. A boy has fallen in love with her, but she knows that the beauty which fascinates him is only the mirage of simulated youth. She knows he is the victim of a tragic illusion. The loveliness that enchants him is a fabricated loveliness. The charm that enthral's him is a meretricious charm. He is in love with tresses that are a masterpiece of the perruquier's art. He adores a cheek whose bloom is the counterfeit of youth, a thing of subtle cosmetics, an achievement in paint and powder. He worships rosy lips whose colour is a beautiful forgery. He is enslaved by the sparkle of eyes which are cunningly brightened and softened by feminine devices. In order to slay his passionate delusion she forces him to see her as she really is in the cold light of morning, haggard and dishevelled. With bitter irony and mirthless humour she compels him to watch her as she works the daily miracle which so many women work every morning before they venture to face the gaze of the world. He sees his divinity in the act of becoming divine. He beholds his dream as it is being manufactured. Ethel Irving puts into this terrible scene all her pathos and all her humour, mingling the pity of womanhood with its courage, its light fortitude with its grievous tenderness. With infinite delicacy she depicts the secret sorrow of fading beauty and the hidden misery of waning youth. And through the whole awful process she never falters, but keeps her valour unbroken and her spirit unhumbled. There is no flow of mawkishness in her comedy. The jest of life that laughs at its own dreary futility and rises far above its own defects rings in her pathetic derision and her twisted resignation. Every woman in the audience sees herself in the woman she strips and lays bare. The tragedy of brittle beauty stabs every feminine heart. You feel the suppressed emotion of womanhood. It is all round you, for every woman in the theatre recognises her own fate in the fate of Lady Frederick. There is tragedy behind the comedy, and Ethel Irving makes you feel the disaster of youth as a living, throbbing reality. You go home sorry for the tragi-comic thing that every beautiful woman is fated to be.

THE NEW KNOWLES

THE lecture is an American institution. For some reason or other Americans are fond of lecturing and being lectured. They have an unquenchable passion for knowledge, and they like to get it in capsules and tabloids. America is the land of tabloids, and the lecture is tabloid knowledge. It is culture in a capsule. Mr. R. G. Knowles is an American comedian who has made us laugh for nearly twenty years. He has suddenly determined to give up making us laugh. He has made up his mind to reform himself and to become a serious and solemn person, a lecturer. The other night I laughed at him in the Palace Theatre. He was then a comedian. He wore his familiar tall hat, his familiar white collar, his familiar black necktie, and his familiar white trousers. We know that uniform by heart. We laugh at it because it is an old friend. It awakens memories of forgotten laughter.

We are all getting old. We were young when we first laughed at Mr. Knowles. It is sad to think how long it is since we heard his hoarse voice singing "Girlie, Girlie." How he gurgled out the "r" and the "l" in "Gu-r-rlie," in "Cu-r-rlly," and in "Ea-r-rlly!" Nobody could gurgle so lusciously and so glutinously as Mr. Knowles. When he came to the chorus we all gurgled an accompaniment, and the hoarse chant of our voices rose up to the roof in a gigantic gurgle. It was like a song sung by a choir of nutmeg-graters. How it rasped and grated! How it swelled huskily in gutturals that scraped and screeched through the smoke and glitter of the music-hall.

We were never tired in those days of "Girlie, Girlie." We liked it because it was Knowles and because Knowles was it. It seemed to express his strange charm. It disengaged his quaint humour. It was pure nonsense, and he was pure non-

sense, and as pure nonsense is the rarest thing in this wise world we clung to it and to him. We knew that as soon as he began to gurgle in that ruined voice we should forget the dreadful solemnity of life and become delightfully absurd and deliciously foolish. There was no taint of reason in the humour of Knowles. It was sheer nonsense. The charm of it was its apparent intensity, its simulated passion, its sham vehemence.

We chuckled over the breathlessness of Knowles. I think he invented breathlessness. There never was a comedian so divinely breathless. He sang like a man who was being strangled. We loved his strangled voice with its despairing gasps and frenzied spasms. No comedian was a more consummate master of the insane art of lightning patter. Arthur Roberts could patter at breakneck speed, but he often became unintelligible. Now Knowles was never unintelligible, even at his swiftest. The words came out of his thin lips like a volley of duckshot, but every pellet was plain and clear. He never gave you time to think.

Another quality of his humour was its good nature. There was always a lovable element in it. Knowles was a sunny humorist. He made you feel that life was a jolly affair, and that the world was a pleasant residence. His smile was a tonic. It flashed rarely, but when it flashed it lighted up his sombre face with a kind of warm glow. Like all humorists Knowles has a melancholy face, full of dark shadows and haunted with sadness. He looks like an undertaker. The contrast between his jests and his face is monstrous. His eyes are immensely mournful. They are vast dark orbs desolate with unknown sorrows and doleful with mysterious woes. It is pleasant to see drollery coming out of a man like a grave. I wonder whether it is his melancholy that makes him humorous or his humour that makes him melancholy. Perhaps it is the instinct of the artist which provides a funereal background against which his fun is silhouetted.

From the Comedian to the Lecturer is a far cry. Knowles the Comedian is not the same man as Knowles the Lecturer. To begin with, the Lecturer does not wear white trousers.

It is a shock to see Mr. Knowles in respectable trousers. A glory has departed from him. It is heartbreaking to see him without his tall hat. It is perfect pain to listen to him talking without a band and without limelight. I sighed as I surveyed Mr. Knowles in the garb and guise of conventional civilisation. But as he began his "Picture-Chats," I realised that he was a transformed and transfigured Knowles. He spoke with the dignified solemnity of a moral philosopher. He was an antiquary and an archæologist, a historian, and a topographer. He fed us with facts and figures. He drenched us with pious moralisings and pathetic sentiments. He told us beautiful traveller's tales. We saw the true man for the first time. We beheld the naked personality which the anecdotist had concealed.

I had conceived him as a cynic who looked upon life as a jest. He unveiled his heart, and lo! it was the heart of a child, delighting in ancient castles and picturesque costumes, in time-worn cathedrals and weather-stained churches. I wept with him over the desecrated grave of William the Conqueror. I sighed with him over the ashes of Joan of Arc. A man of feeling is Mr. Knowles, and a man of sentiment. There is no flippancy or levity in his reverent attitude of admiration for old unhappy far-off things. He is a learned professor whom harsh fate had condemned to buffoonery for the best part of his life, and who is now revenging himself upon his destiny. Soon I become accustomed to the new Knowles. I am awestruck by his erudition. I am humiliated by his voracious memory.

It was with a horrid jar and an aching jerk that I watched him as he turned himself once more out of a Lecturer into a Comedian. The picture faded off the screen, the lights went up, and he stood out against the huge white sheet, looking dreadfully unnatural without his make-up, without his tall hat, and without his white trousers. He told us tales, but they were not the tales he told behind the band in the limelight. He told them slowly, and we yearned for the gasping patter, for the hurried walk up and down the stage. They were the same tales, but virtue had gone out of them. It was not my

Knowles. It was a Knowles I knew not. It was the Knowles that is known in private life—Knowles the respectable, Knowles the correct. I was bewildered by the conflict between my old friend and this new friend who was and was not the same. I felt that I had lost more than I gained. I was hurt by the effort to reconcile the old love with the new. I was furtively embarrassed and I think my old friend was furtively embarrassed too. He seemed to be a kind of forgery, the Comedian impersonating himself. Perhaps the Comedian is the real man; perhaps the Lecturer is only a myth. I will not allow the image of the Lecturer to obliterate the image of the Comedian. I cling to the quaint grotesque with the tongue of lightning and the battered voice, hoarse with years of husky patter and bronchial anecdote. This Lecturer is a usurper. I implore him to go away. I entreat him to give me back what he has stolen from me, the gurgling voice, the express gabble, the tall hat, the white trousers, and the dog-trot between the wings.

CHARLES HAWTREY

IN this chaotic world it is a pleasure to find a man who can do one thing supremely well. It does not matter what he does, so long as he does it better than anybody else. In his own domain he is monarch of all he surveys. It is not necessary to be a very great man in order to attain a position of pre-eminence in one particular sphere. Indeed, it is your small man who as a rule is able to bring all his being to bear on one special form of activity. The greater the specialist, the smaller the man. The great man is too many-sided and too myriad-minded to go into a groove. Specialism may be described as the small end of nothing sharpened to a point. Mr. Algernon Ashton is an example of this. He has made himself famous by sharpening the small end of nothing. Nothing could be more microscopic than his passion for writing letters to the newspapers, and yet in a few years it made him illustrious.

But perhaps a still more gorgeous specimen of triumphant specialism is Mr. Charles Hawtreay. Mr. Hawtreay is the greatest liar on earth—I mean Mr. Hawtreay, the actor, not Mr. Hawtreay, the man. I have no doubt that, in private life, Mr. Hawtreay is a George Washington. Truth to him must be a recreation, nay, it must be almost a dissipation, for, after lying for six nights and two afternoons a week in "Dear Old Charlie" at the Vaudeville, he must be dog-tired of falsehood. He must take to verity as other men take to drink. Truth, I am sure, to him is an intoxicant.

Other men work hard at truth, he works hard at lying. He makes his living by telling lies. Therefore, for him truth is a change of occupation. What exquisite pleasure he must feel when he refreshes his weary mind in a bath of veracity. I do not know whether he has any particular friends upon

whom he pours out the vials of his verity, but I am sure it is a privilege to hear him letting himself go. It is a pity that Mr. Hawtreys could not be a politician in his hours of leisure. It would be so easy for him to say what all the others think. He might also be a wonderful journalist in his spare time. Try to imagine what a newspaper edited by Mr. Hawtreys would be like. There are some newspapers (not, of course, in this country) which contain only one truth a day, and that is the date line—sometimes even that strays from the strict path of terminological exactitude. But if Mr. Hawtreys were to edit a newspaper for a week, what things he could say.

In praising Mr. Hawtreys's fluent falsehood on the stage I do not mean to disparage his rivals in real life. They do their best. It would be cruel to blame them for their clumsy crudity. Mr. Hawtreys, it must be remembered, has devoted his whole life to the perfection of the fine art of lying. It is, as Voltaire said about somebody else, his *métier*. I do not think any real liar could possibly lie so well as Mr. Hawtreys. A lie is not in ordinary men a beautiful thing, but he makes it as delicate as a daffodil and as dreamy as a sunset. He forces you to fall half in love with easeful lying and indolent falsehood. It is not easy to tell a lie and it is not pleasant to tell a lie, but Mr. Hawtreys makes the thing look both easy and pleasant. He has what I may, without offence, call the stage liar's face. Nature has endowed him with a smooth and polished suavity of feature which is irresistibly fascinating. The sleek plausibility of his sudden smile would deceive a money-lender. Touching is the careful pathos of his look when for a second his veracity is challenged by some bewildered dupe. Then, when one of his lies is tottering, it is piquant to watch the thin cloud of anguish which flits across his face, to be followed instantly by a smiling flash of white teeth under a trim black moustache.

As I sat watching Mr. Hawtreys lying his way through three acts, I fell to wondering whether there were many undiscovered liars like him in real life. It is a sad and serious thought that there may be men who are so proficient in the art of lying that they go through life without being detected. Perhaps

some of these men may be eminent. They may have the divine gift and grace of never being found out. They may dine with you and borrow your money, and yet never allow you to suspect the truth. I am sure I could never catch Mr. Hawtrey napping if I met him in society. He would inspire me with the most powerful trust and the most desperate confidence. If he were to tell me that I myself am a liar I should believe him.

What I like most about Mr. Hawtrey is his silky tongue. He can talk so alluringly that you feel it would be wicked to doubt him. The quality of his voice is caressingly persuasive. It unhinges your judgment. I am not sure that it is right to allow Mr. Hawtrey to act as a public expositor of falsehood, for as one listens to his lyrical lying, one feels that truth is a rather dull and stupid thing. I am afraid that Mr. Hawtrey must exercise a very evil influence on the young and the innocent. His daring adventures in darkest falsity must inspire in the breast of unsophisticated youth a wild desire to imitate him. Like all great games, lying satisfies the human craving for danger. It is as keen a stimulus as Alpine climbing, or tight-rope dancing, or hunting. The really fine liar is always on the edge of disaster, but he manages to save himself at the last moment. It must be glorious to feel that at any moment you may be found out. Compared with the joy of lying the joy of telling the truth is crude and coarse. It is very easy to tell the plain truth, but it is very hard to tell a decorative lie, a lie dyed in fast colours and warranted unshrinkable.

I often amuse myself by trying to pick out the liars who are public men and the public men who are liars. It is really not very difficult, because the public liar sooner or later gives himself away. In the exuberance of his mendacity he makes some statement which somebody can disembowel. Oddly enough, one lie is not enough to ruin a statesman. Indeed, I doubt whether two lies would destroy the reputation of a Front Bencher. For some reason or other in politics a certain moral latitude is allowed. Your statesman is permitted a rivulet of truth meandering through a meadow of falsehood.

Indeed, I doubt whether any man ever reached the highest heights of politics without doing some damage to mathematical accuracy. The politician who hesitates to lie is lost.

There is one thing which I admire in Mr. Hawtreys. He seems to enjoy his work. All really great liars are artists. They lie for the lie's sake. They yearn after the pure and perfect beauty of the ideal falsehood. They strive after a flawless perfection of form in their falsehoods, chiselling them as a sculptor chisels a block of marble. I am sure that the heroic liar does not lie for mean and sordid ends. He wishes to express himself just as a poet wishes to express himself, to pour forth his soul in profuse strains of premeditated artfulness. Often he lies awake in the watches of the night thinking about new flights of fancy, new curves of imagination. Often with rapt face he gazes at the stars, hungering for the solace of some lie that will shake the universe. And I grieve to say that falsehood is not nearly so decrepit as it is the fashion to assume. Truth is great, and it does prevail—sometimes; but falsehood is one of the big facts in life. Historians know that it is as absurd to say that truth makes history as to say that history makes truth. I am sure that falsehood has made nearly as much history as truth. The worst of it is that lies are more destructive than truth.

If you want to pay a woman a compliment, you tell her a lie, for the essence of a compliment is its insincerity. If it were sincere it would not be a compliment. Why a woman should like a man to tell her a lie is one of those things which I cannot understand. She knows it is a lie, and you know it is a lie. Why, then, tell it? For instance, a woman always likes to believe a man when he says he loves her. If he tells her that he does not love her, she does not respect him for telling her the truth. She hates him for it. "When I was young," said an old man, "if I paid a woman a compliment, she took it for a declaration, but now that I am old if I make her a declaration she takes it for a compliment." The social relations between men and women are honeycombed with lies. It is a part of the great game of sex. Why it should be so is

puzzling, for it is hard to understand why love is a liar. I suppose it is due to the fact that men and women are humiliated by the discovery that their moods and emotions are not fixed and unchangeable. Rather than admit the possibility of any variation in their frame of mind, they lie. Mr. Hawtrey is a model liar who might with advantage be studied by all your diseased idealists whose souls are moth-eaten with mouldy chivalry and prehistoric sentiment. He will teach you how to make your lies sound in wind and limb. The only person who will know you are a liar is yourself.

THE NEW LYCEUM

THE other night I enjoyed myself vastly at the Lyceum Theatre. It was my first visit to it since the days of Irving. Do not imagine that I was greatly shocked by the change in the bill of fare, for when I first came to London and paid my first visit to the Lyceum, the play that I saw was "The Dead Heart." It is not a very far cry from "The Dead Heart" to "The Midnight Wedding." Virtue in the latter may be a little more virtuous, and vice may be a little more vicious, but after all it is a difference without a distinction. The real change in the Lyceum is in its decorations. The old Lyceum was very dim and very dingy; the new Lyceum is almost hysterically gaudy and almost explosively gay. It is riotously gilt from its eyebrows to its heels, and its skirts are flounced with mirrors.

The audience has been transformed as completely as the auditorium. The stalls have been democratised by the reduction of the price from half a guinea to five shillings, with the result that Tom in tweeds rubs shoulders with Dick in evening dress. There is a magnificent orchestra which supplies slow music while the curtain is up and merry music while it is down. The note of the new Lyceum is a genial informality. The audience is simply a happy family composed of the worshippers of truth and the upholders of poetical justice. We all weep together, we all laugh together, and we all hiss together.

I had not been in my seat ten minutes when I felt that I was a member of a happy family. The hero was a young gentleman with an air of sulky carelessness, tumbled black locks, and a couple of remarkably fine eyes which blazed volleys of pathos across the footlights. A dark mystery veiled his birth, but we were all pleased when he turned out to be

the morganatic son of the dashing Crown Prince of Savonia, who had cruelly cast away his wife for a crown. All through the play the Crown Prince ladles out remorse, which the hero invariably rejects with majestic scorn. We cheer his scorn; we glory in his renunciation. It is comforting to know that renunciation is still popular in our family. We may not practise it extensively ourselves, but we adore it in our hero. The more he gives up the better we like him. A good story is told of that famous manufacturer of melodramas, the late Mr. Pettitt. He was conducting Mr. Frohman over his magnificent country house. With a sweeping gesture he cried, "All built out of self-sacrifice." I think that is a beautiful story. It is not the men who appeal to the mean and ignoble passions of humanity who amass great fortunes. No! It is the men who glorify impossible virtues and unattainable ideals, and who teach us that self-sacrifice is a good thing in itself, even when it is gorgeously irrelevant and splendidly unnecessary.

In these days when all the villains of history have been whitewashed, and when Mr. Campbell has taught us to disbelieve even in sin, it is encouraging to find that melodrama is not on the down-grade. The moral law, having been driven out of the Church, has taken refuge in the Theatre. The villain in "The Midnight Wedding" is steeped to the lips in villainy. He has a very black moustache and a very black heart. He has also very black eyes and very white teeth, which are always on parade. His pursuit of the heroine is as devilish and as dastardly as the heart of man could desire. We do not pity him, and we do not palliate his crime. We do not ascribe his depravity to heredity, although we know that every villain is descended from another villain, and that the blood of the first villain flows in the veins of the last. We do not Lombrosoize his criminality. No, we hate him with all our heart, and we hiss him with all our strength. When he climbs up the wall into the heroine's bed-room, heavens! how we hiss! When the hero climbs up after him (using the same footholes), heavens! how we cheer! We go mad with joy when the hero throttles him, throws him on the floor, and puts a revolver to

his head. When at last, after three acts of variegated infamy, he is impaled squirming on the hero's sword, our cup of bliss is full, and we are grateful to the hand which keeps his corpse balanced on its side till the curtain falls, so that we may contemplate the fate of the wicked. Our family may not be wholly composed of saints, but at least we do not palter with sin, or shed maudlin tears on the carcass of the sinner.

Dearly as we love the hero, and venomously as we hate the villain, I think the heroine fills a larger place in our hearts. It is she who opens wide the sluices of our grief. It is she who wades through seas of suffering in order to stimulate our sympathetic tears. She is a princess, and in our family the sorrows of a princess are more moving than any others. Her voice thrills us, for it vibrates with no ordinary emotions, and it is enriched by the gurgling undulations of agonised rhetoric. It rings and clangs and sighs and trembles with unflagging intensity. Its tremendous music is accompanied by a vast host of gestures and postures, bitter smiles, piercing glances, clenched fists, stamping feet, tossings of the head, dishevelled hair, wringing of the hands, moans and groans and wails, to say nothing of sumptuous robes and a perfect dream of a night-gown. Our heroine is plucky withal. Disguised in a military uniform she vows to shed the last d-e-r-r-rop of her b-b-blood in order to save the manly hero from the diabolical machinations of the demoniacal villain. When the villain rushes upon her with flashing sword a spasm of horror shudders through our whole family, and it is with difficulty that we restrain ourselves from rushing over the orchestra to her rescue.

The elocution of the heroine delights us. We love her trick of beginning a sentence with a gulp and ending it with a gasp. We dote on her guttural vowels and her unctuously oily r's. When she cries "D-e-a-r!" shivers of cold joy trickle down our spines. Her "No!" is more than a negative; it is an annihilation. Her tears are not drops; they are Niagaras. Her sigh is a roaring gale, and her sob is a tornado. At times her hoarse passion roughens her vocal cords, and her voice

seems to be ploughing furrows in her throat. She is indeed something like a heroine, and we are all ready to die for her.

In our family we do not care for the fine shades of character or the meagre ambiguities of emotion. We are plain, blunt men, and we like plain, blunt passions. We do not care to be titillated by evasive hints and vague suggestions. We prefer to be thumped on the back and smitten on the chest. We like our humour as well as our pathos hot and strong, and our jokes cannot be rubbed in too well. Nobody can rub in a joke more vigorously than our family melodramatist. When he goes in for comic relief he relieves you over and over again. Heavens! how we laugh! It is well that the Lyceum has a sliding roof, for our laughter would blow any ordinary roof into the sky. In our family we are not ashamed to laugh. We know that laughter is good for us, and we let it roar itself out of our lungs without any morbid affectation. We laugh till we double up and hold our sides. We laugh the bugles off our bonnets and the feathers out of our boas and the chocolates out of our cheeks.

That is why we go home happy, for our Katharsis has been complete. We have been purged with pity and terror, with tears, hisses, and laughter.

DRURY LANE

LONDON is not Paris, and a general repetition at Drury Lane is vastly different from a *répétition générale* at a Parisian theatre. To begin with, Paris could not produce a playwright like our own Mr. Hall Caine, or a play like "The Bondman." In saying this I do not mean to disparage Paris. It is not her fault. She likes art in her immorality: we like morality in our art.

Cynics may sneer at our simplicity. They may even libel it or label it hypocrisy. But that need not abash us. For our love of the austere moral virtues is the salt of our literature and our life. When that decays England will no longer be England. The popularity of Mr. Hall Caine is a guarantee of its vigour. It is a certificate of its national health. In all his novels he has upheld the good and the true. He has never swerved from his loyalty to high principles and Christian ideals. Hence his vogue. Hence also his power at Drury Lane.

Drury Lane is our national theatre. It is homely. There is a deep truth in the simple song which Patti has sung all over the world. In a profound sense "there is no place like home." Drury Lane is the theatre of home, and there is no place like Drury Lane. It is the refuge of the homely virtues. It is home at home. That is why we love it. No matter how fiercely the storms of decadence rage elsewhere, Drury Lane is faithful to the English ideal of simple goodness. Its moral tone is uncorrupted by meretricious modernity. It is impervious alike to the blandishments of wit and the seductions of irony. It denies the insolent demands of moral realism and irreverent humour. It holds high in a cynical age the banner of the ideal.

Drury Lane has not always been lucky enough to secure the services of men of genius like Mr. Hall Caine, men who combine the technique of morality with the conviction of it. The Drury Lane dramatist has not always been sincere. His head has sometimes been better than his heart. Mr. Caine has the head as well as the heart. In this he is unique. If Drury Lane was not built for him, at least he was built for Drury Lane. He has the rare power of handling moral passion in large masses, of moving it about as Napoleon moved his armies, of launching it with terrific force against the legions of evil. His characters are moral Titans, convulsed with huge emotions, torn by gigantic sorrows, scarred by immense hates, and aureoled with infinite loves.

By coming to Drury Lane Mr. Hall Caine came to his own. His *répétition générale* is really an enormous At Home rather than a dress rehearsal. It is a national tribute to the inspired interpreter of our national ideals—the ideals of domestic honour, simple fidelity, and brotherly love. It is on these ideals that the sweetness of home has been founded. There is no word in French or in any other language which can translate the meaning of the English word home.

As I look round old Drury this afternoon I rejoice over the defeat of the little cynics and satirists who have for so long sneered at the healthy sentiments of the simple. Where is the hectic morbidity of Blank to-day? Where is Dashe? Where is Thingumabob? Gone. Dead. Forgotten. The heart of the English people is sound at the core. I can hear it beating to-day in Drury Lane. It throbs in sympathy with Jason, as it sees in him the triumph of the Christian ideal of forgiveness over the Pagan ideal of revenge.

It may be fantastic, but I discern in the stupendous realism of the sulphur-mine a divine symbol of vanquished evil and victorious good. It is a moral fumigation. The fumes of the sulphur have slain the microbes of immorality which have been eating the heart out of our national drama. In the stalls men and women are weeping. Tears fall from the gallery. There are sobs in the pit and the dress circle. Even the critics

are awed by this solfatara of wholesome sentiment. A great actress is sitting behind me. Claspings her daughter in her arms, she cries hysterically, "I can't bear it! I can't bear it." Few dramatists could win a finer tribute than that. I doubt if even Shakespeare himself has ever torn such a cry from the human heart. Even Euripides, the human, with his droppings of warm tears, could not extract a testimony more sincere.

What is more notable than the intensity of this nerve-tempest is its quality. This great audience is no ordinary mob. It is the cream and flower of English rank, commerce, and culture. Men and women who have grown grey in the various professions sit humbly in obscure corners. Even actor-managers and members of Parliament do not disdain to sink their fame in the sea of admiration. Great novelists and men of letters, scholars and aristocrats rub shoulders with fallen or forgotten stars of the stage. For Drury Lane is democratic. Even the voice of a baby is heard at intervals, and although the superior person may smile, I think that the presence of a little child is the crown and climax of a scene that can never be forgotten by those who are privileged to play even a humble part in it. For is it not true that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings praise may be ordained? Home is naught without infant prattle, and I think the cry of the little one is the homeliest touch of all. It strikes the note of English pathos and simplicity. Could that note be struck in Paris?

Drury Lane is the children's theatre. Its old walls are tapestried with their laughter. By a happy chance the gracious perfume of childhood is also wafted over the footlights. The sight of the little boy and girl saying their evening prayer at Mrs. Patrick Campbell's knees touches the hardest heart. Every woman, whether she belongs to the "smart set" or to the theatrical profession, feels a spasm of sweet pain as she hears the little girl talking to her dolly: "I kiss you—you not cry." Not one of us but would like to kiss the girlie on the spot.

It is little touches of this sort that reveal the great dramatist. What pure memories are not called up by the music of the

church bells, by the sound of the Harvest Hymn? Compared to these delicate fragilities of sentiment, even the real cows, the real haystack, and the real pump seem crude, although they, too, play their part in the homely idyll of kind hearts and simple faith.

AT THE OPERA

THE season was singing its top-note. Fashion had not yet grown feeble with dinners and dances, luncheons and garden parties, theatres and concerts, races and regattas, polo and tennis, croquet and cricket. Everywhere everything, everybody everywhere. The wheel of pleasure spinning at its maddest. The jejune boredom of July still far off. Digestions not yet dilapidated. Dowagers fabricating marriages and debutantes neck-deep in flirtations. Every afternoon a block in Piccadilly. Bond Street wearing its most expensive smile. The tea-rooms and the restaurants doing a roaring trade. In fine, the great mundane movement going at its highest speed. Little London rotating furiously. What is Little London? It is the golden hub round which the huge wheel of Great London revolves.

What is the diamond centre of the golden hub? Well, I suppose it is the Opera. There you may see the rabble of the rich, the mob of society, the rag-tag and bob-tail of be-paraphrased men and women. There are divers ways of going to the Opera, and each provides you with a different point of view. If you go to the gallery you will hear the music better than anywhere else, for there it is not garrotted by gabble. The more you pay for your seat the less you hear. The gallery has another advantage. The opera there is singer-proof and fashion-proof. Punch and Judy on the stage and in the boxes become marionettes. Judy's tiara gleams with the desultory glitter of broken glass on a brick wall. Judy's shoulders are quite remote. The opulent charms in boxes and stalls are as unreal as waxworks.

In the stalls your point of view changes. You are distracted by the proximity of imaginary greatness and fabled

loveliness. Don Juan in a box is more thrilling than Don Juan on the stage. If you are schooled in scandal, you are more anxious to fit the cap of gossip than to follow the score. How pale is the artificial sin and virtue behind the footlights compared to the real sin and the real virtue behind ropes of pearls and cascades of diamonds.

But if you are in one of the boxes you have yet another point of view. To-night Dives has lent us his Box. Let us play at being Dives for a few hours. Our cab is one of the joints in the crocodile of vehicles which crawls slowly round Long Acre into Bow Street. Outside the Opera House, that vast coal-scuttle, we are waved aside by a policeman's fat white glove. Alighting, we dive between the tail of a brougham and the head of a horse. In the vestibule we wait for our friends. Others are waiting. We watch the great doors swinging open, and we note that there is no janitor to open them. The daintiest beauty must push her way in. One pretty girl narrowly escapes a blow on her fair brow as the door swings back. The smart men are all carrying canes with round knobs of coloured stone.

Our Box is in the Grand Tier. As we walk round the corridor we read the august names on the doors of the boxes. Our Box is a stage Box, and we seem to walk miles before we reach it. The attendant opens the door. We find ourselves in a tiny room containing four armchairs and a sofa. Below us is the orchestra, a long, deep, dark trench full of wind and brass, grotesque with tangled faces and sawing arms. Instead of seeing M. Messenger's back, we see his keen face, with its curved moustache, serious, vigilant, absorbed. We are too close to the stage. We see it stripped of all illusion. So close are we that we can almost shake hands with Caruso. If you place a book too near your eyes you cannot read. So it is with the stage. Propinquity smears the glamour, blurs the mirage. The lines do not flow into each other. The spectacle jerks. The physical effort of the singers is obtrusive. We watch their lungs working like bellows. We see them standing in the wings, waiting for their cue. We catch glimpses of

the stage-manager through a secret panel that opens and shuts in the scenery. We detect asides, by-play, whisperings, *œillades* among the chorus. The grease-paint is too palpable. Lips are too red. Eyebrows and eyelashes are too black. We see the feet of the players with absurd distinctness. Only one mime retains his glamour unimpaired. It is the Commander. Is the Statue alive? We cannot tell? His face is as immobile and as expressionless as any face in the audience.

But the best way to see and hear the opera in a box is not to look at the stage at all. On the wall of our box facing the stage is a large mirror. Lean back lazily in your chair and look at the procession of images in this mirror that is like the magical mirror of the Lady of Shalott:

And moving through a mirror clear
Shadows of the world appear.

The coarse, meretricious pretences of stageland are transformed by this enchanted shield. The breath of romance is blown upon them. They infect our imagination with a sense of fantasy. As the web of gestures is woven, we seem to behold the show of shadows that is life. The music no longer appears too passionate for prosaic flesh decorated by perruquier and costumier. The solidity of torso and tights evanishes in this soft, clear well, and in its place we gaze upon airy phantoms who are carried by the music on its crest. Gazing, we dream. Time and place slip away from our souls, and we lose our very egoism in a charmed bemusement. Don Giovanni pursues Zerlina, and we see the jest of sex running like a scarlet thread through the pearls of years that are the rosary of time. He defies the Commander, and we see the eternal rebellion of the eternal rebel from Prometheus to Satan, from Borgia to Byron. Donna Anna and Donna Elvira weep, and we hear the tears of all the women in the world. But if we turn our head and look across the footlights, artifice ridicules our sentiment. Caruso's golden voice loses its subtle echoes of far mysteries. All is jarred and marred. Why does nobody build a mirror-theatre in which the actors are neither heard

nor seen directly? We should have mirror-plays which would enable us to recapture our lost illusions. Life at the third instead of the second remove!

As we gaze on the play in the mirror a thought arises. How many shadows have stolen across its polished surface? All the operas have stepped silently over it, and yet they have left no trace of footfall, no print of finger, no blur of sigh or laughter. Even as these are we. We, too, pass across the mirror of life, and are as if we had never been. Which is the less real—the audience or the play? Ah, let us look at the audience. The curtain falls, the lights blaze up. Suddenly all the glory of the great opera house glitters in our eyes. We see it as the singer sees it, waves upon waves of gleaming throats and marble arms, rolling in long white lines from the far roof down the balcony into the stalls, and breaking into foam of flesh against the footlights. The marionettes in the boxes are like painted spectators at a painted tourney. How stiff and straight the women sit! I am always puzzled by this ability of the fragile fair. By-and-by, we grow self-conscious under the converging fire of lorgnettes. What are we? Who shall we be? It is but an edict of humour. Shall I be an earl? Will you be a marchioness? Nay, we are. Let us rake the house. Let us receive our friends. Let us be great for ten minutes. For life is only an opera, and we can cast ourselves for any part we please. Let us ennoble ourselves like these mimes, and demonstrate the vanity of rank by donning and doffing it like a glove. In the end the mirror of Dives will be as vacant as the mirror of Lazarus. We are all shadows of shadows, images of images, ghosts of ghosts.

AMONG THE PHILISTINES

I AM a naïf. I am an innocent. I am easily taken in by myself and by other people, by my own emotions and by other people's emotions. I can enjoy the most preposterous nonsense and the most ridiculous humbug. Vainly I struggle against my innate conventionality. Hopelessly I strive to conquer my ingrained Philistinism. It is useless. I am a simple soul, addicted to platitude and inured to commonplace. I am utterly unable to see through the shams of life. I am duped by everything and everybody. I am as trustful as a child and as credulous as a heathen. I bow down to wood and stone every day of my life.

For instance, I know I ought to despise the Opera. My best friends despise it, and they try to teach me to look down with lofty contempt on its infantile follies and banal puerilities. They implore me to regard it as one of the shams of society. They beg me to boycott it in the name of art and in the name of democracy. I smile feebly at their entreaties, and I weakly protest that I like the Opera. I confess my fatuity. I acknowledge my stupidity. But I cannot help myself. I like the Opera. It amuses me. It is all they say it is, no doubt, but its grace and its glamour and its glitter and its garishness delight my foolish eyes. I fear I cannot sneer well. I am a native of Vanity Fair, and I cannot tune my fiddle to the high pitch of Tolstoy. I cannot soar to the moral altitudes of Shaw.

The other night I went to see Tetrzzini in "Traviata," or "Traviata" in Tetrzzini. We were four, two brave men and two fair women. We were in a box in the pit tier. Now let me say candidly that when I go to the Opera I am a snob.

It is the only frame of mind which enables you to enjoy the Opera. The charm of sitting in a box at the Opera is due entirely to your conscious superiority to your neighbours. You can indulge in the luxury of believing they believe you are a person of importance. You can gloat over their envious glance and their reverent regard. You are magnificent by position. The man who opens the box for you treats you as if you were an American millionaire or a German princelet or an Italian count. Being a very humble and obscure person, this illicit pride fills me with a secret ecstasy. I begin to wish I had been born great. I assure myself that I should have cut a fine dash as a king or a grand duke. It is easy to dramatise yourself when you are in the right place among the right people. I like to look across the stalls at the other great ones in the other boxes. Perhaps they are the genuine article. Perhaps their blood is blue. Perhaps they came over with the Conqueror or crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower. Perhaps they hobnob with Burke and play bridge with Debrett. Even if they are bogus, like myself, they do not look bogus. They have the air of aristocracy. Whether they have any right to it does not matter.

What about Tetrizzini? Have I forgotten her? Bless my soul! I fear I have. But let me pull myself together. I must pretend to know "Traviata" by heart. I must assume familiarity with every note of the music. For you see I am a musical snob. I should be ashamed to admit that I do not know a word of Italian. I should blush to own that I am unmoved by the anguish of Tetrizzini or the agony of Alfredo and his admirable father. I therefore pump up my emotions and stir up my admiration. I conceal my secret conviction that the supper party is dull. I stifle my amazement at the robust vigour of the dying soprano. I choke my vulgar sense of humour and my low instinct of derision. Ah! how pathetic it all is! How natural! How realistic!

But my transports of counterfeit rapture are frozen by the cynical brutality of my friend. Our pet name for him is the Butterfly, but he is a Butterfly with a sting. He is a hybrid

Butterfly, a cross between a Butterfly and a Wasp. He laughs at Alfredo.

“What a get-up!” he whispers.

“Shame!” I retort. “A most romantic costume.”

The Butterfly sneers.

“He looks like a Byronic Lara got up for riding rabbits!”

I abuse the Butterfly. I tell him he has no imagination. I pity him. But he is obdurate. He even mocks at the ballet. He avows his preference for the Alhambra and the Empire. He sighs for ten minutes of Maud Allan, or five minutes of Guerrero, or two minutes of Dorgère.

“You are sound-deaf and music-blind,” I cry.

“I am,” he replies. “I hate music. It bores me to death. Why should I pretend to like what I dislike?”

You perceive that the Butterfly is also a snob. He is afraid to adopt the tastes of others. He revels in his own defects. He glories in being impervious to the vocal gymnastics of Tetrazzini. But I drink her notes as I drink the notes of the lark and the nightingale. To me she is a human singing bird. I like to watch her throwing her notes up to the roof one after the other until the air is glittering with beautiful noises. I can see the notes chasing each other like swallows, darting and curving and circling and swooping. She is like a juggler who tosses coloured clubs into the air. I do not know what is the meaning of the dancing sounds, but I amuse myself by matching them with moods. Whether I make the moods for the music or whether the music makes the moods for me is a matter of no moment. It is pleasant to be gay and amorous and wistful and tender and sorrowful and despairing and heartbroken by turns.

Then the audience is very nice to look at. That girl who sits in a mist of white chiffon and filmy tulle looks as if she were a living lump of Turkish delight. That fat lady in red is delightful, although the Butterfly calls her his *Bête Rouge*. And between the acts it is jolly to listen to the subdued murmur of voices. It is silky and soft, like the wash of the waves or the frou-frou of the leaves. The voices are the cultivated

voices of well-bred people. They blend like the instruments of the orchestra. The sharp sword of a violin cuts into the low susurrus as the lights are lowered. The glowing riot of colour dislimns into shadowy vagueness, broken here and there by a white shoulder or a glowing tiara. I like the twilight of the gods. It is as delicate as a sunset. Why should we refuse to appreciate the light of artifice as amiably as we appreciate the light of nature? The Opera, after all, is as real as moonshine, for it is a phase of the life we live.

MAINLY ABOUT THE RIVER

IN ROTTEN ROW

THERE is a Rotten Row in Hyde Park. There is also a Rotten Row in the Isle of Dogs. It is a Dock for dying ships, a marine hospital, where the bones of old sea-pacers rest, wearily waiting for the knacker.

It is a fine morning. A fresh easterly wind is blowing up the Thames. All sorts of craft are coming up on the racing tide that is carrying with it faint rumours of the salt sea. Sprit-sail barges with tall masts and wind-worn, brown canvas are heeling over as they tack smartly through the traffic, the yellow water curling into creamy fountains round their bows. Here and there a moored barge tosses a mist of spars and cordage into the air. The Council steamboats buzz from pier to pier like bees. A waterman sculls about the front door of a dock, ready to pick up the ropes of a steamer just in from the River Plate, with crates of fruit from Las Palmas piled up dizzily on her deck. His neat wherry is bepainted with a score of flags. He blows a whistle. Is he calling a hansom? No, he is signalling to the pilot. Hard by, a stout white-bearded little man, with the letters "L. I. D." on his peaked cap, is waiting to superintend the opening of the dock gates, and the scraping and warping of the home-comer into her berth. Strings of lighters laden to the lips are being towed by dirty little tugs. Stray dinghys are crawling about. There goes one with three customs-searchers in their dark blue livery. In all directions there is bustle and fuss, hoot of sirens, clatter of cranes, rattle of derricks, shriek of steam whistles.

But we are bound for Rotten Row. Leaving the waltzing river craft behind us, we plunge into the labyrinth of the docks. Soon we are hopelessly lost in the tangle of sheds and square sheets of water with their smooth sills, their bewildering vistas

of warehouses, roofs, slender mast-heads, fat funnels, and church spires. In this queer jumble of land and water everything seems mixed into an amphibious nightmare. We wander round and round, and after an hour find ourselves where we started. To the landlubber all ships seem the same, but gradually we clutch at dim discrepancies. The President, for instance, is like nothing else in this aquarium. She reminds one of Noah's Ark. She is half a house and half a ship. The old President was captured from the Americans during the War of Independence. Her figurehead, a jolly white-haired old gentleman, was stuck on the gunboat Garnet, and now stares blandly at the Naval Reserve men who come for their annual drill. A queer craft she looks, a corrugated iron shed glued on the top of her slim flanks, quick-firers nosing out of a Humphrey iron chapel, a rough gangway running along the roof, with the Union flag at one end and the white ensign at the other. Inside, raw Naval Reserve officers are drilling raw Naval Reserve gun crews, stolid petty officers whispering hints with a sly twinkle in their eyes.

A few steps, and we reach Rotten Row at last. It is a desolate oblong, silent, melancholy, forlorn. It seems to be miles from the busy wharves. In a dejected row, huddled close together like lepers, lie all sorts of lost ships, waiting dismally for the end. Here are the Thames steamers which once carried many a merry mob of trippers to Greenwich and to Kew. They are rust-eaten and grimy. Their decks are warped, their plates are peeling, yet here they loll, eating dock dues day by day. They are like the unwashed, unshaven dock loafers who lounge round The Blue Post, and whom no man hires and no man pities. On the other side of Rotten Row a spanking American steam yacht mocks their misery. She is the toy of some New York multi-millionaire, and every inch of her gleams and glistens with paint and polish. She is burnished like an Exhibition model, and her white sides flash in the sun. No muslined beauty in the real Rotten Row is daintier than this fine lady, her very anchor chains galvanised into a golden glory.

The ironic antithesis is too cruel, so we turn sadly away in quest of docks less eloquent of decadence. Alas! we find only empty squares of deserted water. Where is the hum of trade? We walk wearily along empty sheds, and meet only drowsy policemen and shabby loiterers. In South Dock our spirits revive. The lonely silence here is touched with romance, for snuggling in a corner we find a forest of tall masts, criss-crossed cordage, and tapering spars. Here are the last of the wind-jammers. As we walk along the quay under the jib-booms, we are assailed by the pathos of the moribund. These iron fairies are also within hail of Rotten Row. They, too, are waiting for the "dead-launch" that is the doom of the sailing-ship. Their topsails will take the Trades no more. They are dying game, for they have nailed the shark's tail to their jib-booms. They have caught their sharks on the Line, but the shark of steam is stalking them, and soon they will be swallowed by its insatiable maw. A knot of men are talking under the Wiscombe Park, under her mocking motto, *Absque Labore Nihil*. We edge into the yarn. They are seamen looking for a berth on one of the clippers. Presently a doleful sailor joins them. He has seen the "old man." He shakes his head. She has been sold to the Italians. The new owners want no British hands. A drizzle of mournful gossip drops from the dreary group. They are an epitome of our mercantile marine. One is an old West Indian negro, skin of shining mahogany, squat nose, toothless, his crinkled wool a sooty white. Another is a Swede, voluble in broken English. There is also a bald old tar who talks of a famous owner, one John Allen. Nobody like John Allen. He would come down in his snuff-coloured coat with his lunch in his pocket, and scatter largesse along the quays. But he is gone, and his fleet of sailing-ships is sold. White Jack and Black Peter weep over John Allen. A cynical seaman jeers at these praises of past times. "Why do the owners prefer foreigners? Because they don't strike or drink or play Old Harry. You're cursing now. Wait till the turbines come in!"

His eyes rest on men who are crawling like flies along a

topsail yard. He laughs bitterly. "Well," we say, "at any rate the riggers are busy." He laughs again and spits derisively. "Riggers! Them ain't riggers; them's the crew. What do the riggers do, hey? Why, walks about like the rest of us. That's the only trade left in the Port o' London."

Is it quite so bad? Alas! everywhere the same dolorous tale is told. We trudge from dock to dock, and the shipless water glares at us with its glassy eye. The few vessels we see are waiting for freights that tarry. Dock officials, thirty years in the service, are glum and gloomy. Nothing doing. Wharfingers and dock companies cutting each other's throats. Suddenly it dawns upon me that Rotten Row is stretching all along the river from basin to basin, wharf to wharf, quay to quay. The rusting penny steamers are only one end of a chain of decay. These docks are but dead lagoons mirroring a phantom past. The Port of London is choking, not with argosies of commerce, but with barnacled monopolies and out-of-date methods. The fate of Tyre and Sidon is overtaking her. Nothing can repeople her once populous waterside. Her docks will ere long be lonely reservoirs visited only by the barren tides. Her sceptre will pass to Liverpool and Southampton and Antwerp. Ichabod will be written on the Tower Bridge. When Macaulay's New Zealander explores the wilderness of Millwall and Poplar and Wapping, he will perhaps find boys sailing toy boats in the basins, and old palsied patriarchs, with the letters "L. I. D." on their caps, dismally looking on. *Absque Labore Nihil*. Nothing without work. Without work—nothing. Is that the epitaph of the Port of London?

LOVE UNDER THE LEAVES

IN a London June it is well to be lazily young. It is also well to be lazily in love. Youth in love and love in youth is life's acme. This Sunday morning as I stand on the platform at Paddington I slide into a golden mood of sentiment, for the grey station is fragrantly aglow with laughing romance in cool white ducks and fresh white serge. Trysting lovers are scattering smiles in all directions. It is a parliament of joys. I catch the contagion of tenderness. My heart melts. I pity the cab horses and the porters, and the stuffed dog in his lonely grave of glass. Why cannot youth be in love for ever and love be always young? I hear the leafy Thames whispering across the miles to the dusty-souled Londoner, whispering with the sun and the wind and the water and the green rustle of dipping branches and "the dreamy drip of oars" in his ancient voice. And as I obey the call I sorrow for the millions I leave behind in the hot and desolate City, for pity is half a pleasure's pleasure. The joy of life is woven out of compassion for the dead. The best cure for despondency is a walk in Kensal Green. There are no suicides in cemeteries.

At Slough we see the towers and turrets of Windsor Castle like a grey hole neatly cut out of the blue skirt of the sky. A fluttering flag solidifies the vague pattern. The King is there. What is he doing at this moment? Is he as happy as we are? It is hard to think of a king apart from his treadmill of ceremonial toils. Our mental image of him is a confused jumble of coronations, marriages, foundation-stones, bows, and hat-liftings. What is his private mood? Has he time to feel, and ability to be? . . . But we are at Taplow, and as we flash past we see the glittering river thrust through the trees

like the shining shield of a warrior in ambush. The gleaming glimpse thrills us. We expect.

At Maidenhead the platform turns suddenly white with frocks and flannels, and down the stairs we go, filling the dingy tunnel with the scented swish of petticoats. Then some of us whirr off in a motor, some in a natty dogcart, some in a sober fly, and some on foot. But we all wend riverward. It is a long, dull mile through Maidenhead to the water's edge, and for the pedestrian the walk to Bray is lovelier. Only the frumps and the fogeys condescend to the dreary prose of the hired launch. For youth in love and love in youth there is only one vessel—the punt. Even the eggshell shallop that leaps at each oarstroke is a kind of ferry, fit only for your Charon. As for the canoe, it is a misogynistic craft, imposing a dreadful decorum and an inhuman immobility upon its rigid passengers. The gondola is a bizarre anomaly, meet only for cloaked and hooded moonlight, sharp, dense shadows, and over-peering palaces. The dinghy is a squat platitude planned for matrimonial indifference. Love in a dinghy is unimaginable. You can go errands in it, waylaying the butcher and the baker on the towing-path, but it is not fit for wreathed smiles.

The perfect lover must be a perfect punter. The art of punting is nearly as complex as the art of love. It must be learned in dark secrecy, for the novice is lamentably ludicrous, and to be ludicrous in love is to be lost. There is a double dose of feminine perversity in the punt. She loathes to move in a parallel line with the bank. She likes to sprawl across the stream. She resents violence. She must be gently beguiled with caressing touches. If you are brutal, she spins derisively, blocking the traffic, and drawing down on you the cold, ironical stare of scorn. Public opinion on the River is intolerably pitiless. It scourges physical clumsiness with scorpions of contempt. It is strange that men are more bitterly humiliated by manual than by mental incompetence. I do not sweat with shame when I write a slovenly sentence. I do sweat with shame when I am rebuked by a lock-keeper for some breach of the River code. There is no spiritual igno-

miny so deep as the fleshly ignominy of the wretch who gets his punt askew at the lock's mouth or who inadvertently spears a lady with his pole.

The most dreadful anguish of the soul is as nothing compared to the agony of the man whose pole sticks in the Thames mud, and who clings to it the millionth fraction of a second too long. Then comes the triumph of the punt. She softly glides away, making the acute angle of pole and man horribly obtuse. For a wild spasm of time the law of equilibrium shudders, then the immaculate martyr flops with his pole into the silver flood. Does she ever forgive him? A woman can face fearful sorrows for the sake of him she loves. But this crime no woman can pardon. Mental or moral turpitude she can nobly extenuate; for physical shortcomings she has no pity. I suppose she is still haunted by atavistic memories. There is a drop of the Sabine in every woman's blood.

The River Girl is a type. She is the product of the punt. She is an athletic indolence, a lithe laziness, a coquettish vigour. She is Diana with a dash of Aphrodite. She uses the punt alternately as a couch and as a stage. Her seductions are infinite. I do not know whether she is more alluring in action or in repose. Do you see that young Sultan lying luxuriously on empurpled cushions, smoking the pipe of deep content? His half-closed eyes gaze dreamingly past his toes at the rhythmic girl wielding the rhythmic pole. She is a white glamour of fluent curves. Her bare, dimpled arms show warm against her gown, and her body whips and bends like a fishing-rod. Standing straight as a reed, she plunges her pole vertically into the breast of the Thames, then grasping it high above her head she pushes the earth behind her well-poised feet, as she slowly bends into a swelling line of melting grace, a bent bow whose string is the pole. Then she is erect again, and the pole comes trailing aslant through the water till it is vertical once more. The drops glisten in the sun as they drip from her fingers, but they fall clear away from her dress. She is an artist, a wonder of delicate girlhood, a blend of strength and beauty, cool and pure and gracile as Artemis or Atalanta.

Another picture. Two sisters are punting under the hanging woods of Cliveden. They are silhouetted snowily against the green curtain. They move in faultless time like mowers swinging scythes. Their poles are always parallel. Their points strike the stream at the same moment. It is a delicious duet of girlhood, every limb in tune.

The River Girl in repose is more sensuous. She lies undulating on her cushions like Goya's Maja, a Japanese parasol shielding her subtle face from the sun. She, too, is an artist, cosmetically groomed, a tinted Venus. Her champagne-coloured shoes and slim ankles veiled with cobweb silk are as daintily unreal as the faint flush on her cheek and the dull bronze sheen on her carefully-rippled hair. The boy punting at her feet is languidly supple, elegantly alert. His oiled hair shines, not a lock awry. His broad-striped shirt, his leather belt, his spotless ducks, his starched collar, and his buckskin shoes vie with his clear, tanned skin in polished propriety. It is a duet of the sexes. The wise river slides smoothly under this and many another mated pair, and with it slide the hours from noon till sundown. The trees are choral with invisible birds. Here and there dense groves of monkey-flower burst into flame and hawthorns scatter milky perfume. In the silent backwaters where the trees dip their green branches in the stream the hidden punts nestle against the bank, and as you pass bright eyes look out dreamily under a superfluous parasol. Was that a muffled kiss or the blurred whistle of a throstle? Only a churl would press the question. On and on we glide, until we come upon a browsing ass in a clover-field. His long ears are mirrored in the unwrinkled water. He is Nature's comment on life and youth and love. For in his own way he also is happy.

MAINLY ABOUT POLITICS

A STUDY IN ICE

THE Prime Minister is a man of ice and iron. From my perch in the Gallery I peer down at him sideways. On my left hand "F. C. G." is busy sketching somebody. His fierce, hairy face is curiously unlike his blandly amiable caricatures. As I glance from his ferocious eyebrows down to Mr. Asquith's polished steel mask, I wonder whether it also is discrepant. What is the real Asquith?

The Asquith I look down upon is a thundercloud with a silver lining; his face the thundercloud, and his white hair the silver lining. White hair softens the features of other men, but it hardens his. It lies chill and severe on his temples. He is a man of snow with a marble mouth and a jaw of steel, a man of ice with frozen eyes and a frozen voice. A frost-bitten man with a wintry mind and an Arctic soul. A lonely man with a bitterly desolate face, and a rare smile like glacial sunshine.

My eyes wander from the cold Prime Minister to his fiery followers. The contrast between the leader and the led is absolute. The Prime Minister is an iceberg sitting on a volcano. The ice-cold phrases fall icily from the icy lips. They are beautiful phrases, beautiful as the crystals on the window-pane in winter; the best words in the best order, gleaming and glittering translucently like Polar icicles. There is no redundancy in this laconic utterance, no pleonasm, no hesitance, no frayed ends of speech, no hemming or hawing, no groping after reluctant felicities. His phrases are disdainfully faultless. You can see his mind working behind his words like a show engine working behind clear glass, working without strain or stress, fret or friction, a perfect machine, automatically lubricated, exquisitely balanced, a miracle of bright, smooth

mechanism. The voice is pure, cold perfection, passionlessly resonant, heartlessly melodious. It never falters or wavers, but rolls out its precise cadences in measured lengths. Its articulations are unerringly accurate, every vowel and every consonant cut clean, as if the keen lips were sharp knives and the keen tongue a guillotine.

Almost inhuman is this curving cascade of unadorned eloquence, falling upon the silent strand of listeners, without a break and without a pause, poignantly isolated, seeking no sustenance of sympathy, and fearing no repugnance of antagonism. Other orators appeal for replying applause, but he disdains appeal as coldly as he disdains defiance. He is enough for himself, and his power is a pitiless solitude. His primacy is painful, for not one man behind him or beside him or before him contests his iron dominion. His hard virility makes the tense, attentive faces around him look like uneasy shadows. The most vivid personalities grow pale and vague before his arrogant imperiousness. The cowed Opposition visibly shrivels away as he plunges a phrase like a dagger into its heart. The fight is unequal, and in vain his sword searches for a blade to bite or a shield to dint. Contempt grows on his tongue as he feels the line of adversaries falling back out of range. Now and then a ragged volley of interruption spurts forth, and he bites it into silence. The terrible swordsman is playing with his victims now, and as he flicks their flesh daintily, an acid smile hovers on his lips and a chill gleam of derision lights his wary eye. He presses hard on their flying disorder, pins them in a corner, and then with a mocking flourish leaves them gasping. His followers look on half afraid to cheer and half afraid to hold their silence. Now and then he wheels round and looks at his soldiery with a glance of haughty generalship, menacingly confident, sternly self-reliant. He is a leader who compels fear as well as faith, obedience as well as fidelity, respect as well as a kind of awed affection.

No man ever cultivated his defects more vehemently. "Max" has caricatured him in the act of "acquiring personal

magnetism," but Mr. Asquith would rather die than be other than he is. He is a leader whom the led must take or leave. He will not hatch himself over again and hatch himself different. He scorns the arts of ingratiation and opportunism. "I am I," he seems to say, and he coldly declines to alter or alleviate his frigid temperament. What he is he is, and others must conform to him, not he to them. He will neither bend nor break. He will not be cajoled or coerced. There is no suppleness in his rigid spine. There he stands like a grey rock, the antithesis of his party, with its wild poetry of sentiment and sympathy, its quixotries of idealism, its gallant chivalry of adventure, its love of forlorn hopes, its loyalty to lost causes, its fine frenzy of pity for the weak and the poor and the oppressed. His Liberalism is governed by pure reason. He chains up his feelings as if they were wild beasts. He habitually feels more than he says, and he habitually says less than he feels.

But there is passion under his ice and fire beneath his iron; and at times his austere loneliness is touched with a faint wistfulness and his storm-beaten isolation with an unwilling tenderness. For this hard, cold intellect is simple, and whatever is simple is sincere. The secret of Asquith is that he is a shy, proud Englishman, moulded by Balliol and the Bar. His shyness is a kind of pride. He is armoured with reserve and cased with reticence. He understates and underacts because he believes that the fear of gush is the beginning of wisdom. He would rather repel than rhapsodise. For him truth is a form of good form.

A STUDY IN VELVET

PLACE: Queen's Hall. Time: eight P.M. The building is packed. The floor is snowy with white shoulders and white shirts gleaming together. Round the balcony are battle-cries: "We fight to win." "On our record we stand." There is no fiscal motto, but the name of Chamberlain is hung up beside the names of Balfour and Lansdowne, Beaconsfield and Salisbury. The platform is crowded with a motley gathering, ranging from Lord Hugh Cecil to Mr. Fred Horner. Obscurely wedged among the congested nonentities on the right is Sir Edward Clarke, fierce-eyed, his stern lips grinding together like millstones.

Suddenly a tall, lithe, lean man glides into view. It is Mr. Balfour. There are heavy pouches under his dark eyes. Dark pouches. They make the eyes sombrely mournful and delicately sad. I think of Hamlet. Yes, Mr. Balfour is Hamlet. As he floats by like a shadow in a frock coat, I long to see him in doublet and hose, talking to the skull of Yorick instead of to Sir Edward Clarke. He has the Hamlet temperament, the subtle mind playing in the subtle face, intellect shifting in features that are carved into a tenuous preciseness of contour. The contrast between the visage of Sir Edward Clarke and the visage of Mr. Balfour is violent: it is the lily and the lion, the rapier and the rock.

The cheers light his face with a boyish smile that shows the white teeth under the silken moustache. Hamlet becomes Prince Charming. I long to see him in pantomime. How exquisitely he would kiss the sleeping beauty! Stay, he is Romeo and Paolo, Pelleas and Tristan, Launcelot and Lohengrin. A romantic hero! He ought to wear armour and live in perpetual limelight. He is too fragile, too fine, too sweetly

nice for the platform. Lord Randolph Churchill called him Postlethwaite. He is Postlethwaite. Even this polite mob shocks his fastidious senses. He ought to live under a rose-hung pergola, singing songs to his guitar. Darnley, Rizzio, and Chastelard—why does Mr. Balfour's face fill my mind with images of romantic phantoms and ineffectual angels? He is a grizzled Rossetti lover, a weary Burne-Jones knight, a fatigued figure in a Morris tapestry.

Slowly he uncoils his long legs, and we yield to his languid glamour. While he speaks, my thoughts roam in the Italian Renaissance among the Medicis and the Borgias. Is this man modern? Is he a twentieth-century reincarnation of some suave and supple Florentine? The infinitely crafty face is moulded and modelled into bland, polished surfaces and fluently blended curves. The whole man is sinuous. His brindled hair is pomaded sleekly down to the nape of the neck in waves that end in rippling undulations. His face is oval, and the line of the jaw from ear to chin is a flowing swerve. The chin is daintily rounded, and the slender, tapering fingers love to fondle its shaven surface. The forehead is broad and slopes slightly back into the thinned hair parted neatly in the middle. The ear is very small, very graceful, very delicate. The nose is sensitively meagre, neurotically sharp and thin, almost shrewish in its acridly keen outline. The skin is a clear olive, a warm glow of colour under its fine texture. The head is small, feminine in its shape and size, but the broad forehead redeems the effeminacy of the lower part of the face. It is an intellectual head, with pensive imagination in the meditative eyes, gently tinged with faint, elusive scorn and reticent derision. Amiable mockery is the dominant expression. Analytic in temper, the man sucks amusement from the human comedy. He is Harlequin to himself, finding humour in his own emotions and farce in his own beliefs. Politics he deems a crude game, but it is the subtlest game that is played on the card-table of the world, and it serves.

Naturally indolent, he holds himself up by grasping the lapels of his frock coat. Though intensely self-conscious, he

is no dandy, and looks old-fashioned in his low-cut Shakespeare collar and prim, clerical black tie. His gestures are casual and irrelevant, being mainly contrivances for the arrangement of his hands. They seldom hammer home a point, though now and then he rubs in a sneer with a scratching finger on cheek or chin, and stands like an expectant comedian waiting for an overdue laugh.

He is fond of the actor's pose. His oratory is theatrical, studded with tricks of voice and eye. He has no fund of genuine passion. His wrath is rhetorical, factitious, fictitious. He is best in piano persiflage and meticulously modulated sarcasm. His bravura passages are forced. He is indignant with an effort, and you feel he could argue against his own arguments. He is literary in his phrasing, and polishes his periods in the air. His utterance is hesitant. He stammers fluently, picking and pecking at his words, refining his refinements, splitting his split hairs. He is fastidious in his gibes, gloating over his pinpricks of irony, but he is bored with his simulations of emotion. He sees the absurdity latent in his own opinions, and he can laugh at his friends as well as at his foes.

His foible is superiority to foibles. His affectations are those of the artist, the dilettante, the aristocrat. He prefers to avert his eyes from his audience, and he would like to play to a pit of sophists. He has a trick of rolling his eyes towards the roof before an epigram, though sometimes he picks a *mot* off his boots, at which he is fond of staring. His voice is good in the lower register, but often it soars into a sour falsetto, and in pursuit of anger it is apt to crack.

He never fully clenches his fist. He merely bends his long fingers back to the palm, and lays his long thumb gently along the forefinger. He is a half-clenched man. He hates to be downright, forthright, outright. He dotes upon ambiguity and casuistry. He delights in syllogisms and labyrinthine dialectical displays. He has a sure instinct of evasion and a deceptive air of candour. He can stoop to claptrap and fustian and empty rhetoric in order to stuff out the conven-

tional oration. He waits artistically for applause and sips water during the cheers. He can be artfully naïf, and his injured innocence is admirable. He is a stickler for deportment and a purist in style. He has magnanimity and tolerance and he delivers himself like a man of this world. His perorations are artificial, involved, meandering, unimpassioned. He begins and ends very clumsily. His diction is good, though he says "idear" for idea. He lives in an atmosphere of genial condescension, and he regards enthusiasm as a vulgarity practised by Irishmen and Nonconformists.

A STUDY IN HOMESPUN

“WHAT is ‘C.-B.’ like?” Let us go to the Albert Hall to-night and see for ourselves. One thing is certain—he is not like the portrait which hangs in the Illiberal mind—a fussy, feeble old fellow who is half-ogre, half-idiot, combining the knavery of the knave with the foolery of the fool, the malignity of Machiavelli with the silliness of Simple Simon, monster and nincompoop, bogey and buffoon, scourge and scarecrow.

Let us see the man with our own eyes, forgetting the eulogies of eulogists and the detraction of detractors. As he walks past his brand-new Cabinet Ministers a thunderstorm of cheers breaks over his grey head. He is neither elate nor aloof. Where are his horns and arrow-headed tail? Alack, he is neither a demigod nor a demidevil. As he stands up on the right of the British water-bottle he looks the incarnation of British homeliness. A homely body with a homely face, homely physique, homely voice, homely eyes, homely smile, homely gestures, homely manner, homely phrases—the acme and culmination of homeliness. “Home, Sweet Home” on its legs and talking with a Scotch accent.

The middle classes rule England. They make and break our Governments. We are a middle-class republic disguised as a monarchy, just as France is a middle-class monarchy disguised as a republic. M. Loubet is a French “C.-B.” and “C.-B.” is a British Loubet. The bourgeoisie is the modern state. It is composed of men who oscillate between reform and reaction, between democracy and aristocracy. It is the pendulum of the social clock.

The secret of “C.-B.” is this. He is the middleman of the middle class. The Albert Hall is a middle-class congress.

As I look from arena to balcony, from balcony to gallery, I find it hard to say where the middle class ends and the working class begins. They overlap. Every workman carries a frock coat in his tool-bag. His social ideal is middle-class respectability. The frock coat, the starched shirt, and the top hat are his ambitions. He is a homely dreamer who dreams of a homely home. That is why "C.-B." pleases him.

The passions of the middle classes are not spectacular. They are homely passions. Superior beings sneer at them, just as they sneer at "C.-B." But homeliness wears well. The frock coat is tougher than armour, the shirt front is stronger than a steel breastplate, and the top hat more invincible than a sword-proof casque.

Unheroically heroic is the middle-class temper. Chivalry is its business. It does fine things in a humdrum way. It is paradox disguised as platitude. Look at the man who has stricken with terror the legions of his enemies. He is elaborately unpicturesque. Where are the gestures of the victor who has marched through deserts of derision? Where are the self-conscious arts of the orator? Where is the pose of power? He has no gestures, no arts, no pose. He is all homespun homeliness. His personality is a scheme of neutral tints. No flamboyancy. No orchidaceousness. No braggadocio. No florid sentiment. No hysteria. Nothing but linsey-woolsey simplicity, drab integrity, grey honesty.

"C.-B." is the cartoonist's despair. How can you caricature a man who has no angles, no corners, no eccentricities? He eludes you. His good humour baffles you. His genial rotundity is unseizable. Mr. Chamberlain's lean and hungry physiognomy silhouettes itself against any background. "C.-B.'s" features are jovially averaged. They blend in jolly curves and convexes, converging into the homely smile that plays round the homely moustache. It is a peace-and-good-will Christmas face, void of malice, smallness, meanness. It is a neat face, compact, orderly arranged, the grey hair cropped close, the moustache sprucely trimmed: the face of a British man of business. The nose is fine, small, nervous,

sensitive—a Celtic nose, hinting at hot temper and quick emotion. But the dominant features are the square, strong, sharp, outjutting brows, under which, like torches in a cave, glow far-sunken dark eyes, alive with unflickering fire that reveals the hidden passion and the veiled romance of the man behind. “C.-B.’s” photographs are all full-face, not in profile. That is why they fail to present the real “C.-B.” whose side-face bristles with saliences of character. The forehead is trenchantly massive, suggesting the obstinate spirit that looks out of the humorous eyes. The nostrils are delicately carved, and the deep furrow, ploughed from nose to lip and lip to jaw, indicates the wilfulness under the amiable suavity of his features. His will is strong, but it acts through persuasion rather than aggression. It is the diplomatic will that concentrates on essentials and melts resistance in detail as the sun melts an iceberg. The profile of the head is long. “C.-B.” is long-headed, prudent, patient, imperturbable. He has staying power. He can wait. His calm fortitude is very British. He does not waste his nerves on futile violences. He is taciturn, knowing the virtue of silence. He abhors ostentation. He is not greatly moved by applause or execration. He can discount both. He is incapable of rancour or venom. He is an optimist, apt to think well of the world. He is a lovable man, full of sentiment and sensibility. His good humour is inexhaustible. He has the Scottish gift of distinguishing between measures and men, between principles and partisans. His conscience is forthright. He sees straight to the heart of things, and is free from refinements and casuistries.

His balanced judgment is shown by the absence of abrupt contrasts in his features. He is slow in counsel. He likes time to deliberate. He is not easily hustled, and an awkward man to bully. He makes up his mind cautiously, and he changes it reluctantly. He delights in the golden mean and the golden rule. Moderation is his foible. He would be the Mirabeau of a revolution. He lacks pugnacity, and loves the quiet life. He is no demagogue. He could face a mob, but he could not lead one. He is no rhetorician. He does not

simulate emotions. He loves an understatement, and glories in conciliation. Hence his gift of generalship. He is unselfish, empty of envy, and has craft without craftiness. He disdains the wiles of popularity. His simple candour looks like naïveté, and his lack of artifice like artlessness. But his plain tale tells, and his veracity outlasts mendacity. His use of truth is direct. He wields it like Ithuriel's spear against the sophist.

"C.-B." is no cynic. He has simple faith in simple things and simple men. He knows right when he sees it, and when he sees it he cleaves to it in scorn of consequence. He cannot tack or trim, quibble or equivocate. He is proof against both bluff and blandishment, cajolery and coercion. He has mulishness in his good nature. Now and then his lower jaw is thrust out and his lower lip clenched over his upper lip, revealing a native resolution undaunted and immovable when provoked. He shines in adversity and fights best with his back to the wall. No tonguester, his oratory is character, seasoned with dry humour and racy phrase. His best speech is himself. He is the simple life of politics. He spells rest after delirium, repose after turmoil, peace after war, reality after sham, wisdom after waste, and stability after storm. He is a sedative and a tonic for a neurotic time.

A NIGHT WITH BURNS

WHERE is the General Election? That is the question which dwellers in the West End of London are asking. It is in the newspapers, but elsewhere it is invisible. London is so large that a General Election loses itself. How can I find it? It is like hunting for a pin in the Sahara.

But I am determined to discover the General Election. I want to get nearer to it than the tape-machines. What mysterious force is driving those fussy little wheels that whizz and wheeze out white ribbons lettered with victory and disaster? Let us track it down. Let us surprise the democracy that is making another new heaven and another new earth.

Where? In Battersea. I step into the train at Victoria. Leaving behind the world of palaces and pleasure-houses, I alight at Battersea Park. The night is wild with rain and wind. There are no hansoms. But there are Council trams. and for a halfpenny I am carried swiftly to Latchmere Road. Thence through the deluge along dark streets, under railway bridges, to Clapham Junction. Everywhere are silent groups of men and women, huddling in doorways, against walls, under arches. They are waiting for the declaration of the poll. At the Town Hall a dumb multitude is standing patiently under the drumming downpour. Their silence is eloquently tense. It is rainproof. It is a disciplined crowd, its front ranks beautifully dressed by hundreds of policemen whose heavy leathern capes glisten moistly in the white electric glare. Acres of pale faces are turned towards the lighted windows behind which the votes are being counted. There is no horseplay, no rowdyism, no jostling, no disorder. Labour is a gentleman.

The spacious vestibule of the Town Hall, behind its well-guarded doors, buzzes with chatter like the Lobby at West-

minster. There are journalists, election agents, committee men, canvassers with party rosettes in their coats. The rival candidates for Clapham are talking to each other genially. It is a far cry to Eatanswill. Horatio Fizkin does not shake his fist in the countenance of the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, nor does Mr. Slumkey defy Mr. Fizkin to mortal combat. All is cold decorum. The minutes limp by lamely. Nine o'clock. Ten o'clock. Outside the crowd grows and grows, despite the endless rods of rain. The round oes of faces waver like a sea of living ciphers, noughts of flesh drawn on the blackboard of night, surging to right and left like a diagram, blotting out the broad street, clogging the crawling trams, and fading in the opaque distance into a blur of humanity. Twenty thousand men and women, waiting, waiting, waiting in the rain. I begin to think I have discovered the General Election.

At last a short, square-shouldered man, with white ribbons flying from his buttonhole, dashes down the broad staircase, vanishes, reappears, and leaps lightly up the steps again, taking them three at a time with the springy agility of a deer. It is John Burns. His majority is over a thousand. The whispered rumour runs like wildfire through the lobby. The minutes crawl. What is that? A cheer upstairs. In a flash the lobbyful of waiting men rushes past the janitor, dashes up the staircase, bursts into the room where the votes have been counted, and struggles madly over the desks and benches towards the balcony, which is now crowded with mayor, town clerk, candidates, officials, local politicians, and pressmen. On an illuminated transparency the one word "Burns" is displayed, and as if a button had been pressed the silent crowd turns into artillery and thunders out a straight volley of iron sound. Its "attack" is instantaneous, without a ragged edge. This clear explosion, issuing from twenty thousand throats, does not die or dwindle. The sonorous note is held. It moves through a long, level space of time, neither waning nor waxing in volume. The pitch is high, but not shrill, and it does not flatten. It is perfectly fused, the ringing music of one vast voice made out of myriads. As it rushes past the ear-drum it seems to

become a visible, ponderous, touchable thing, having colour and shape and breathing life, sweeping through the darkness. It is the soul of the crowd streaming in sound across the sky, charged with electric emotions, joy, pride, exultation, glory, ecstasy, triumph, defiance, hope, devotion, love, hate, and whatsoever moves the deep heart of man in the passion of victory. It is a song without words, the marching-song of democracy, the hymn of man, beside which poetry and music are pale stammerings.

The shout beats upon a worn, grey, pock-marked face whose eyes blaze with personal fire. Leaning out over the balcony John Burns faces the proletarian music. The blown flare of Roman candles picks out the hollows in his features and silhouettes his vehement profile against the dark stentorian masses below and beyond. Only a Rodin could carve the immobile speed of his poised head, its passionate angles cutting the air, every line alive with passion tenser than the cheering passion at his feet. The wind tosses his thinning grey locks, as he vainly strives to still the storm of voices.

Let me try to hew out a rude portrait before the acclamations let go their grip. The head is grandly built, the forehead daringly valiant in its forward thrust; the rough, curved black eyebrows are smudged with grey, and the fierce, incisive grey moustache and beard are smudged with black. The masculine power of the man is seen in the shaggy hair covering throat and cheek and chin up to the delicate line of the vividly scarlet lower lip. He is an Esau. The dark, poignant eyes flame in deep, sombre sockets. The nose is vigorously broad yet nervously sensitive, the nostrils finely attenuated and alert. Deep chest, heavy shoulders, powerful hands. The body symmetrical, elastic, graceful, eagerly fluent in its posture, every limb and muscle playing athletically under the neat blue serge. Quick on his feet as a pugilist, he looks courage incarnate, audacious flesh drained clean of corrupting passions, violently ascetic, glowingly austere.

"O-r-der-r!" The hoarsely resonant voice cuts through the cheers like a sword. "Silence!" He speaks; the crowd

hangs on his lips. His words ring out like iron bells, old battles colouring their clang, crying the worn cry of a worn man whose soul is still boyishly adventurous. Then he darts back, dashes down the stairs, and flings himself into the arms of Battersea. Two of the old guard, "Soldier Collins" and a bricklayer, pounce upon him like tigers. They have carried him through ten victories. The line of police parts. He is submerged in the crowd for a second; then he is hoisted on their shoulders and swept tumultuously away like a cork tossed upon a raging sea. Riding the human billows like a sea-gull, he vanishes down the Latchmere Road.

As the crowd rolls after him, I sigh a deep sigh of content. I have discovered the General Election.

WILL CROOKS

THE big hand of the clock above the tall gates of Woolwich Arsenal is moving towards one. That big hand controls the lives of sixteen thousand men. It is the very fate of Woolwich. As I stand in Beresford Square watching it creeping from minute to minute, I see the families in a thousand mean houses in a hundred mean streets. They revolve with its revolutions. On one side of the clock the women and children: on the other side the men. It is the clock of toil. I wish our poets would cease troping tropes about the sun and the moon, and sing the romance of the industrial clock that measures out life and death to the people, dividing their nights and their days, their sleep and their labour, their joys and their sorrows. Its inexorable visage is a silent symbol of the social fate that blesses and blights with vast impersonal impartiality. Doom crawls on its dial. It registers the decrees of the tyranny behind all the tyrannies, the tyranny of economic law.

The piston-thrust of the General Election is audible in Beresford Square. Here the shams and shibboleths of politics turn into grim realities. Men are fighting for life. Clothes for the back, boots for the feet, bread for the belly—that is the politics of Woolwich. This bare square is a labour parade-ground. Life here is food. Round the square are eating-shops and stalls. The army of labour marches on its belly.

Against the kerbstone on one side of the square a van is drawn up. It is Will Crooks's platform, the labour general's war-wagon. His lieutenants are waiting for him, Mrs. Crooks at their head. No general could have a better aide-de-camp. Buxom, clear-eyed, alert, she looks every inch a workwoman, incisive vigour shining in her strong, kindly, homely face.

She is dressed with simple propriety: plain black hat, brightened with pale blue ribbon; plain black coat and skirt; her capable hands grasp a plain black bag. No jewelry save her wedding ring and its "keeper." A splendid woman, she incarnates the English home. Behind her I see the women of England, the host of humble washers, bakers, menders, the heroines of obscure rescues, the Grace Darlings of poverty.

It is one o'clock. The Arsenal vomits the lava of labour. The wives meet the husbands. They have brought the food to the gates so that the men may spend the dinner hour round the van in the square. A huge multitude rolls forward and eats while it waits. There is a shout, "Here he is!" Cheers. Then, like a Jack-in-the-Box, a fierce, dark, rugged face is shot up above the capped heads. It is Will Crooks.

He is like a shaggy Highland bull. He has a bull-head, bull-shoulders, bull-chest, bull-body. A square rock of a man, with no jelly in him. Planted firmly on his feet, he seems rooted in Woolwich as immovably as the Arsenal, the very mould and model of a labour leader. There is that behind his piercing eyes which compels respect, the energy of will working in a simple mind.

A stormy face, weather-worn, scarred with battle. Between the black, bristling, bushy eyebrows are two deep, vertical trenches. Dug across the broad, massive brow scowl row on row of wrinkles. There are crow's feet round the humorous, vigilant eyes, and two furrows plunge downward from the precipitous nose, which is very strong and stern. The swarthy skin gleams in its frame of violent black hair and moustache and greying beard. The head is large, heavy, almost sullen. It is furiously vehement in its gestures, aggressively combative even in immobility. The large-lobed ear is resolute in every curve of its powerful modelling. The short, hirsute neck is pugnacious. The angular shoulders are jammed like rocks upon the deep chest. The big, punishing hands are solidly masculine, the fingers broad to the nails. The man is all male strength. His physique is coarsely stalwart, all compression and concentration, as if he had been forged in an

iron-foundry, tempered in a furnace, beaten together with steam-hammers, and riveted into a stockish virility.

His clothes are decent black, roughly neat. His linen is spotless, the shirt-cuffs fastened with plain links. Shake-speare collar, blue knotted tie, sprinkled with white horseshoes. The soft black felt hat sits easily on the head. The whole man is one piece of masculine symmetry taken straight out of the people, a rough lump of democracy. He is London to the marrow. His harsh voice is London articulate. It is a 'bus-driver, cabby, costermonger voice. It is the pavement crying aloud. It is brutally direct, rudely explosive. It detonates. It rips and tears. It drops like bricks. It bellows, thunders, growls. It comes through a speech without an aitch, and the vowels are a pure cockney brogue. I like all brogues. But the ripe, fruity cockney brogue is the most delectable of them all.

Mr. Crooks is a cockney humorist. He fills Beresford Square with laughter. His humour is broad, shrewd, genial. He is a born mimic. Hear him parodying the accent of the 'Randlord'. ("Shun! De Union Shack` is de most budivul gommershal asshet in de world. God shave de King!") He revels in mellow irony. He chaffs the Unionist candidate with boisterous ridicule. He does not take "The Major" seriously. The Major's name is William Augustus Adams. He has nicknamed him "Bill Adams."

Will is as ready in retort as a 'busman. He stops in the middle of his speech and points to an empty hearse passing on the fringe of the meeting. The crowd looks round. Will puts both hands up to his mouth and halloos to the driver: "Hi! You'll find him up there! Bury him decently, will yer?" The crowd smiles one vast smile, guffaws one great guffaw.

Will's pet targets are 'Randlords' and Army contractors. He keeps the square roaring with tales of jampots weighing twelve ounces to the pound; of remounts called chargers—"the only charger was the man who got the money for 'em"; of invalid wine brought back to be auctioned—"Tommy 'done'

in South Africa, and somebody making a red nose at home"; of 100 mules—"thirty-one lost, sixty-nine never found, but all paid for."

Mr. Crooks loves to heckle the heckler. His wit flashes like lightning. Glasses on nose, he reads question after question, answering each with brilliant brevity. "Favour of Women's Suffrage?" "Yus!" "Will a tax on ground values raise house-rent?" "We'll watch it don't!" "Favour of married schoolmistresses?" "Wouldn't ye rather have a decent married woman to look after your kids than a silly girl?" Thus, with homely humour, Will Crooks woos Woolwich. The hand of the clock points to ten minutes to two. The clang of a bell is heard. Will stops short and sharp. There is a cheer, and like magic the whole crowd rushes through the gates.

THE WONDERFUL WINSTON

I AM more keenly interested in personality than politics, and therefore I am more heartily interested in Mr. Winston Churchill than in many other politicians. There are many clever men in the House of Commons, but not one of them stings you with the romantic excitement of adventurous ambition. It is an age of ability, rather than an age of genius. Most of the flaming figures are past the climacteric of peril. Mr. Churchill alone tingles with a dramatic future.

It is a curious fact that some of the youngest men in the House are the oldest. Surprise is not latent in them as it is latent in Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Churchill. Unhappily Mr. Chamberlain's *peau de chagrin* is shrunken. Mr. Churchill's has not yet begun to shrink. There is nothing much more certain than that if he lives he will be Prime Minister.

This afternoon he is the cynosure of Westminster as he unfolds the Constitution of the Transvaal. A few years ago he was a prisoner in Pretoria. To-day he is outlining the Magna Charta of his gaolers. The antithesis is violent, but his career bristles with antitheses. A Tory yesterday, he is a Liberal to-day, leading his former antagonists against his former comrades. Like Gladstone and Chamberlain, he is an inspired opportunist, whose luck is a kind of inconsistency, and whose inconsistency is a kind of luck. He has a firm grip of Fortune's forelock. Did she not once appear to him in the guise of a vulture?

Statesmen are born as well as made. He is both. The rotund maturity of his new Parliamentary manner is absolute. He has more than style. He has the grand style. What other men acquire after decades of toil he has acquired by a movement of the imagination. He has that ductility of genius

which is a creative art. He is what he imagines himself to be. Like all great orators, he is a consummate actor with a perfect mastery over his flesh. Others see him as he sees himself. You may call it hypnotism or magnetism or what you will, but in essence it is purely the power to impose upon others the self-painted portrait. A man is always taken at his own valuation.

Clothes are the man, and Mr. Churchill dresses his part. He wears the hideous uniform of the middle-aged British statesman. He eschews dandyism. His frock coat is severely pompous and his black cravat is gravely austere. His collar is solemnly respectable, and its vast ears are beginning to glory in the Gladstonian tradition. He begs a humble colleague to fetch him a glass of water like an old parliamentary hand. His mien is not merely important: it is majestic. Sir William Harcourt himself in his ripest fame did not wheel round to invoke the cheers of his legions with more splendid assurance. Even Gladstone did not launch a more piercing glance of challenge at the Leader of the Opposition. Nor was Disraeli less burdened with superfluous modesty or exaggerated diffidence. His superb aplomb is native, not assumed. He has the gift of spontaneous superiority, and natural domination. He can patronise bald veterans without an effort, and accept silver-haired homage without a smile. He groups famous men round his eloquence as if he were inured to adulation, and yet he is always greater than his setting. The very Sergeant-at-Arms becomes his acolyte, and the Mace his sceptre. He even contrives with a delicate flicker of his cold blue eye to suggest that the Speaker is not, like himself, a survival of the fittest, and the House laughs with scandalised awe at the audacity of an innuendo which is only a gesture.

His physique is that of a neurotic athlete. He is all nerves and vigour. His frame is as lean and lithe as Mr. Chamberlain's, with something of the same impassioned intensity of vigilance and sharp alertness of ear and eye. But it is prematurely bent and bowed, and the square, ugly shoulders tell a tale of laborious hours, which is confirmed by the thinned

brown hair, the bald brow and temples, the wide parting, and the white patch on the crown. The face, too, has shaken off the hesitating contours of youth, and settled itself into a granite fixity. It is a square face, all battlemented brows and walled jaws, heavy angles and salients, with a portcullis mouth, and a nose like a tower. When the hard mouth melts into a humorous smile the lovable boyish side of his nature is visible. But this is rare.

His voice is erratic. He lisps over every sibilant, and I am sure he could not say "Shibboleth." His lisp is part of his neurotic temperament. It will be known as the Winston lisp, like the Gladstone collar, the Disraeli curl, and the Chamberlain eyeglass. He also possesses a fine stammer. The Winston stammer will be popular. But not every stripling can lisp himself into notoriety and stutter himself into fame.

The nervous passion of the man is visible not only in his neurotic hair, in his neurotic lisp, and in his neurotic stammer. It plays in his neurotic hands. I used to go to see Duse solely for the pleasure of watching her beautiful hands. This afternoon I watch the nervous hands of our young Chatham. I forget the cascade of oratory that is tumbling out of his mouth as I look down on the dramatic fingering of his fingers. They are long, thin, white, supple, restless tentacles. They coil round each other in an interlaced passion. They flicker in the air, flinging electrical metaphors over the absorbed faces that are fixed in an enchanted silence. They are the fingers of a violinist, and they seem to draw music out of the six hundred human strings of Westminster. Now they caress and cajole, now they close in sudden menace, now they throttle and strangle, now they mock and deride. It may be fantasy, but it seems at times that these subtle fingers sweep over the spellbound Parliament as the fingers of a lyrist sweep over a lyre.

But stranger than neurotic hair, neurotic lisp, neurotic stammer, neurotic fingers, is the neurotic flesh. Life has drained it of colour, and left it a dead, cadaverous white. Its waxen pallor is ghostly in the sad neutral light, but behind

the bloodless parchment glows a steady radiance of impassioned energy, like fire in a bladder. This luminous strength flames in the tired face. It is more than will and intellect. It is lambent imagination leaping along the nerves into the mobile features. It is a conflagration of personality, the soul in action, a spiritual thunderstorm, a charged cloud stabbing the Parliamentary sky with electric flashes. Members and Ministers, peers and journalists, financiers and ambassadors, lawyers and soldiers, rigidly watch the brilliant fulgurations flame and fade. And by a prank of irony I find my eye fixed upon the gold stud that fastens the back of the rhetorician's collar to his shirt. It seems to knot and knit the dramatic scene into unity. The last time I saw Gladstone was on that fateful night when he threw down his gauntlet for the last time to the House of Lords. The only thing that stuck in my memory was the black silk bows on his evening pumps. So this afternoon I go away brooding over the untidy collar-stud on the nape of Winston Churchill's neck.

THE GAME OF BOWLES

TIME: 4 P.M. Place: the Cusack Institute, Moorfields, E.C. Business: a meeting of City Electors to hear the Free Trade candidate, Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles, otherwise known as "Tommy." The room is small—not larger than the stage of His Majesty's Theatre. As the electors file in the scene resembles the public meeting in "The Enemy of the People." There is the platform with its desk, a chair for the chairman, and a chair for the candidate. The front row of seats is reserved for the committee by the expedient of piling one chair upside down on another. As the room fills newcomers pick up these chairs, reverse them, and sit on them. A fussy little man then appears, and dislodges the intruders. After arguing awhile the intruder invariably yields. But as soon as the fussy little man turns his back the chairs are again captured by fresh arrivals, and the same comedy is enacted. We all smile at this farce of discomfiture, and note the various forms it assumes. I suppose twenty City electors lose their seats in ten minutes. It is like a miniature General Election.

Now we are sardined into every corner. We gasp for air, and there is a cry for open windows. Cords are pulled, and windows drop down, and we breathe more freely. In the street workmen are hammering something very clangorously. The noise of traffic floats in, with now and then a newsboy's cry. But we are a very quiet, respectable box of sardines, most of us silk-hatted, some of us grey-bearded, a few of us bald; prosperous merchants in the main, comfortably clad, with diamond pins, signet rings, fur coats, and gold-rimmed spectacles. Presently there is a rattle of cheers outside, and through the crowd at the narrow doorway, a tiny, meagre man appears, convoyed by a tall fat man—the Candidate and his Chairman.

What could we do without the Chairman? The quality of Chairmanship is British. No other race can breed it. Bald obesity is not enough. Nor is prosperous stolidity. Nor is conventionality. These things are important. But they are as sounding brass without the one virtue which makes a perfect Chairman—Respectability.

Well, we have a perfect Chairman this afternoon. The good electors beam on him as he utters the immemorial Chairmanities. During his "remarks" we all crane our necks to see "Tommy." But he has vanished behind the desk. Perhaps he is under the Chairman's hat. Breathlessly we watch, as an audience watches a conjurer, for the apocalypse of the fiery pea. The Chairman sits down. A large voice is heard. "Tommy" is up, but we cannot see him. There are cries of "Take off your hat!" The hats are removed, and we see a little man, looking like a lively marionette buttoned up tight in a creaseless frock coat. But the little man has a big heart and a big voice. He has tons of dignity in his coldly vigilant eye. The dark Gladstone eye was terrible. The blue Kitchener eye is appalling. But the steel-grey eye of "Tommy" is petrifying.

It is hard to describe "Tommy's" eye. It is vulturine. It swivels swiftly. It darts fire. It has no pity in its fierce pupil. Just such an eye may be seen at the Zoo in an old bald sea-eagle, disdainfully surveying a Bank Holiday mob. The hard, bitter, remorseless soul of the man looks out of this hard, bitter, remorseless orb. It is the eye of the born ravager. It glitters with fury. The rest of the man is iron impassivity. His face is as emotionless as a twelve-inch gun. But his eye is bright with battle, and its sharp intensity makes you shiver, for you can see the steel-pointed soul behind it, glittering like a bayonet, ready to plunge itself into the breast of the enemy.

This unblinking eye is set in horn, not flesh. It is encased in wrinkled eyelids that roughen its menace. They are like shards. The under lids are extraordinary. They bulge in tough pouches that curve into violent V's on the cheek-bone.

They are like inverted accents, imparting an indescribable ferocity to the glance of the eye. It would be impossible to caricature them. They are themselves a caricature. The caricaturists always caricature "Tommy" in profile. That is a mistake. He has a mild, meek, bland, deprecating profile. It is in his full face that his truculent vehemence blazes. The head is ridiculously small. The forehead is neither high nor broad. But the features are all audaciously enormous. There are great, writhing, horizontal trenches in his brow, and the thin eyebrows are pugnaciously twisted into the temples. The nose, delicate on the bridge, spreads out like a bludgeon at the tip, and the great nostrils are violently indented above the violent moustache.

If "Tommy" were not all eye, he would be all moustache. Here, again, the caricaturists err, for in profile the moustache curves in a debonair droop, but in front it is a hairy explosion, all redhot wires paling into grey. The small impetuous chin is sharply carved. The large ears are fixed flat to the compact head. The little, lean, nervous, wiry body is made of steel springs from the straight, square shoulders to the small, dainty hands, and the midget boots. The whole man is like a live bullet, all compressed energy and concentrated audacity.

Like most wits, his air is dreary, mournful, melancholy. No mute could be more funereal. He muffles his jokes in crape. He never smiles at his own epigrams. His mien is a frozen desolation.

THE DECAY OF ORATORY

THE orator is a picturesque but antiquated being. He belongs to the last century. He is now quite out of date. He is being quietly stifled by the newspaper, just as the horse is being quietly stifled by the motor-car. The other day I saw a crowd in the street gaping at a dead horse. Some of these days I expect to see a crowd gaping at a dead orator. I can recall the time when all the newspapers printed verbatim reports of political speeches. Now the tendency is to boil down the orator and to feed the public on extract of eloquence. Readers have grown fastidious. They do not care to graze over acres of words. Oratory blights a newspaper. No ingenuity can make a page of political babble look gay. Even the "Times" cuts down Demosthenes and prunes Cicero. The other afternoon I paid a visit to the Reporters' Gallery in the House of Commons. I found its aspect curiously changed. It was a big day. Mr. Birrell was about to bring in his Irish Bill. I expected to find the Gallery seething with excitement. I found it quite calm and cool.

There are still veterans in the Gallery, but I was astonished to find that the average age of its occupants is greatly reduced. There are more striplings and fewer patriarchs. The grand manner is disappearing, and there is a subtle air of cynical levity in the place. The Gallery is suffering a sea-change like the House itself. It is affected by the slump in eloquence. I think the austere attendant is shocked by the signs of decadence. His solemn countenance is a protest against the new fashions. He contemplated me with a jaundiced and suspicious eye, as if I were one of the iconoclasts who are converting the sacred precinct to base uses. I trembled when I met his reproving gaze. His features seemed to harden into

contempt as he surveyed the interlopers who are breaking down high traditions and trampling upon use and wont.

Mr. Birrell seemed to feel that oratory is hardly good form in these days. He reminded me of what we call the "natural" actor. He strove to keep down his feelings and to avoid all unseemly emotion. He was almost gestureless. He did not stand, like Gladstone, with every limb alive and tense. He did not wheel and whirl passionately on his feet. His hands and arms did not gyrate. His eye did not flash. His back did not bend. He did not toss his head like a mettlesome charger. He lolled and lounged on the brassbound box, a staid study in black immobility. I was struck by Mr. Birrell's ebon air. He was wrapped to the chin in a tightly-buttoned frock coat. Only a thin splash of white collar gleamed above his black cravat. His head looked very huge as it rested low down on his square shoulders. His grim, saturnine face was curiously expressionless. It looked like a heavy mask. The mouth never relaxed its tight severity. His voice also was black, a kind of audible darkness. It pronounced his epigrams like type, and I felt as if I were reading a printed page. He seemed to be writing with his lips. It was an odd sensation—the literary method without the literary medium. It was as if a book were to begin to talk. I saw the quoted tags in the air. I felt the hang of the sentences. Unconsciously, I began to review him, and to mark the purple patches in my mind. The incongruity was comical. Next day I chuckled when I found one of his stalest quotations mangled—"remote, unfriendly, melancholy, slow." It was good to know that somebody had tasted the pleasure of meeting that tag for the first time.

Has anybody ever invented a notation for Parliamentary oratory? Its rising and falling stresses are very definite. They have no relation to the meaning or the mood of the orator. It is hard to describe the thing, but it is a sort of false emphasis, not unlike the lines in a "whip." Some of the expedients of the old Parliamentary hand are amusing. At one point in his speech Mr. Birrell desired to read a citation from some-

body or other. He had mislaid it. He began to search for it, and while he hunted among his papers, he deliberately padded his phrases. You could see that his brain was doing two things at once. It was extending his hand and picking up papers and it was also keeping the ear of the House with perfectly balanced but absolutely otiose sentences. It was a charming feat of juggling, and for the life of me, I could not help thinking of Cinquevalli and his cigar, his top hat, his umbrella, and his gloves, all in the air together. Mr. Birrell is an artist. He kept his speech in the right key from beginning to end. It was a gun-spiking speech, all pacifist persuasiveness and wily disarmament. He did not inflate Mr. Balfour. He deflated him.

I felt sorry for Mr. Balfour. He never tugged at his gyo-ropes. He could not soar. Mr. Birrell had quietly let out all the gas. In some ways, Mr. Balfour is really, as he himself has confessed, a child. He cannot conceal his feelings. He takes an unaffected pleasure in his own hits. He waits till his followers rise at his points, and his delicate features beam with gratification when a shaft goes home. He is one of those speakers who openly enjoy their own good things. I like to see a vain man who is not ashamed of his vanity. I hate a man who masks his conceit. Mr. Balfour's pride is deliciously ostentatious. He lets you see that he relishes his own cleverness. No doubt an inordinate self-approval has its perils. Mr. Balfour would rather make a brilliant speech against his own party than a vapid speech in favour of it. He would sacrifice his dearest friend to a *bon mot*. He prefers a subtle fallacy to a tame truism. His dialectic is a disease. I have no doubt he is sincere, but he carefully displays all the symptoms of insincerity. When he sounds the note of passion it always cracks. He is too clever to have vulgar convictions. Yet he has one adoring worshipper. It is sweet to see Mr. Wyndham's lustrous eyes rolling rapturously under the skirts of Mr. Balfour's frock coat.

There is only one orator of the grand school left in the House. Mr. Redmond has the old-fashioned organ-voice.

His eloquence is Gladstonian. You feel it in your bones as soon as he rises. His rhetorical stride is tremendous. He has the gift of looking gigantic. He dwarfs the whole House. His violent profile dominates the dishevelled benches. His vehement nose plunges into the flabby flesh of politicians like an eagle's beak. He strikes his talons deep into the carcass of Parliamentary unreality. In his rolling syllables there is the ring of mastery. His dignity is superhuman. There is a magnificent restraint in his coldly impassioned audacity. He is like Ireland in one respect—he knows what he wants. The weakness of the modern politician is that he does not know what he wants. The strength of Ireland is that she is never in doubt about her soul. That is the secret of her amazing power in the House of Commons. Mr. Redmond has caught from her the accent of authority. He does not beg. He demands. He does not cringe. He is free from the frailty of gratitude. His eloquence is not ornate. He has no tricks of voice or gesture. You feel the man behind the utterance, and the nation behind the man. That is why he is an orator. Oratory, like poetry, is simple, sensuous, passionate; and it is because we have not the living fire of a simple, sensuous, and passionate ideal that oratory is dying out. Politicians are debaters. Patriots are orators.

SPRING GARDENS

TRAFALGAR SQUARE. Nearly half-past two. As I pass the lions that guard the waterproof capes of policemen I hear them talking.

FIRST LION—What's up in Spring Gardens?

SECOND LION—It looks like a wedding. I saw two lords going in just now.

FIRST LION—There's George Alexander. It must be a wedding.

THIRD LION—You're a fool. It's the first meeting of the new County Council.

SECOND LION—How do you know?

THIRD LION—Will Crooks told me. He says they are going to feed us on Canterbury lamb and Antwerp horse. No more fresh joints.

GORDON—I say, young man, give me a cigarette. . . . Thanks.

Leaving the Christian hero blowing rings at Nelson, I strolled into Spring Gardens. A man and a boy were watching the arrivals. At the door of a dingy building I saw a man in a gold-braided uniform. I boldly passed him and climbed a meanly narrow staircase, the steps of which were sheeted with zinc. At the end of a narrow corridor I found a carpeted room. There I met a journalist, who told me that it was the Lobby. From the walls fifteen portraits of Progressive chairmen were gazing grimly at several smart young men with glossy black hair brushed straight back without a parting.

“Who are these young men?”

“They are Municipal Reformers.”

My friend leads me along a narrow passage, and, opening a door, pushes me into the Press Gallery. Looking down, I

see a small horseshoe-shaped chamber. Opposite is a public gallery packed with ratepayers of both sexes. A round clock ticks in its midriff. Rows of leather-cushioned seats run round three sides of the horseshoe. Below me is the dais, a platform bearing three rather ugly chairs with carved claws at the ends of their arms. Before the dais is a table littered with calf-bound books and official documents. Mr. Gomme, the clerk, sits in the middle, flanked by his assistants. Mr. Gomme is very like a professor, with his lank, dusty beard and his lank, dusty hair. He has a plan of the Council Chamber before him. One of his assistants is studying a set of newspaper portraits of the new members. The officials must find it hard to learn all the new faces. Why don't the Councillors wear numbers like footballers? It would be helpful.

Mr. Percy Harris, the new Chairman, having been elected after a good deal of fuss, a glass door under the clock is opened, and he emerges. He is very tall, and very spare, and very neat. His features are extremely emaciated. He looks delicately nervous. His chair seems a world too big for him. His long, thin hands, with their long, thin, tapering fingers, tremble as he signs a paper handed up to him by Mr. Gomme. Then he delivers a fastidiously phrased speech, which he has obviously learned by heart. It is full of those sonorously benevolent but insincere politenesses with which Englishmen love to lard each other. It is decorously applauded by both sides. Then the vice-chairman is elected by the Moderates, and the deputy-chairman by the Progressives. They solemnly shake hands with the chairman, and solemnly sit down on his right hand and his left. I begin to perceive that the Council has evolved a hard, dry, punctilious ritual of its own.

Then, one by one, the Moderate aldermen emerge from the glass door. As the door opens, one catches a glimpse of a buffet laden with cake and bread and butter. It is the tea-room. The whole scene is rather like a caricature of a parochial Bumbledom. As each alderman advances, he is convoyed by the handsome young Moderate whip, who is as exquisitely groomed as the best man at a wedding. The alderman signs

a paper, and is then solemnly escorted or pushed by the whips round the dais to the chairman's right hand, which he solemnly shakes. He is then solemnly conducted to his seat. Mr. Brodrick and Mr. Hayes Fisher are lodged together against the wall. Mr. Brodrick's fine teeth glitter frankly under his tooth-brush moustache in a happy smile. Mr. Hayes Fisher looks like a highly polished double of the Prince Consort. When the two Progressive aldermen arrive, they solemnly circulate round the dais in the reverse direction. Yes, the Council has its ritual. Its procedure is very ably stage-managed. Mr. George Alexander must feel quite at home, although, for the first time in his life, he is not in the centre of the stage. He looks very comely, with his silver-grey locks, and his perfectly creased trousers. You could cut cheese with his creases. I fear he is a little bored by the dingy debate on receiving-houses for lunatics, by the controversy over a site for a polytechnic, and by the fusty mysteries of the housing policy. At any rate, he goes off presently with a fair-haired young gentleman to the tea-room. When he comes back, he looks as if he felt the importance of being earnest. I idly wonder whether he ate cake with his tea.

There is no lack of flamboyant personality in the new Council. Sir Edwin Cornwall is a study in mournfully sleepy vigilance. He is an exact double of Mr. Carl Meyer. Mr. McKinnon Wood is pallidly and sombrely plump. Sir Melvill Beachcroft looks like a cadaverous colonel. Sir John Benn wrinkles his forehead very poignantly, trying hard to recover from his amazement at the Moderate majority. Lord Elcho is a magnificent marble dome. Lord Michelham is elaborately stern. Captain Hemphill is a black moustache. Mr. Gilbert is a bearded razor. The Reverend Scott Lidgett is an incarnation of the Nonconformist conscience. Mr. Will Crooks is sardonic labour, an arrangement in hirsute ebony. Mr. Robinson is solid, grey, dull respectability. Mr. Ernest Gray looks like a keen, curly black retriever. The Reverend Stewart Headlam is a symphony in genial silver recalcitrance. Mr. Naylor is timidly uncomfortable in a sagging frock coat.

But the dominant note of Spring Gardens is the Tea Room. It yawns regularly. It distracts my attention from Mr. Sidney Webb's suavely insinuating imperial and Sir Evan Spicer's dulcetly snowy persuasiveness. It makes me feel that I am in an A. B. C. or a Mecca. Instinctively I listen for the shuffle of the dominoes and the clatter of the chess-boxes. As to the debating, what strikes me is the dearth of rhetoric. The speeches are pithily brief. The Council's motto seems to be, "No flowers." There is no logorrhœa. It is like an unemotional board meeting. When a Moderate indignantly protests against being called a Moderate, he is tacitly ignored. The Council is naïvely human, but it is also keenly fastidious. I think the House of Commons responds more readily to brilliant claptrap and sparkling rhetoric.

It is not easy to analyse the personality of the Council, but it is a sharply-marked personality. I think it hates fireworks. It is cynically practical. Its ruling spirit is practical business. It is ashamed of playing to the gallery. It is more like a Parliamentary committee than a partisan arena. It wrestles with cold facts rather than with hot opinions. It respects a man who knows his subject. It does not tolerate the mountebank. It reverences reality. It hates to waste time. It despises the wordster and the tonguester. It is, in short, a big committee rather than a Parliament. On the wall to the right of the chair, hangs a huge map of London, showing the tramway extension program for the coming year. That map strikes the committee note. It seems to say, "Business is business." Whatever party may be in power, the Council hankers after its reputation as a body of business men. The government of London is not a matter of sloppy sentiment. It is hard, cold, dull, unemotional business. It is main drainage, trams, electric lighting, housing, parks, fire brigades, water, gas, weights and measures, education, street improvements, and rates. In spite of party duels, its bedrock is business. And in the long run it is the business party which will win. But which is the business party?

“AN ARMY WITH BANNERS”

I HAVE seen many processions. But they were all processions of men. On the Thirteenth of June, 1908, I saw a procession of women. It was more stately and more splendid and more beautiful than any procession I ever saw. When men march through the streets they carry huge banners with ugly paintings on their glazed surface. The colours are violently crude. The portraits are hideous. A banner is a lovely thing, but the banners borne by men are not lovely. They are grotesque. The women have done what the men have failed to do. They have revived the pomp and glory of the procession. They have recreated the beauty of blown silk and tossing embroidery. The procession that wound like a gigantic serpent of a thousand hues from the Embankment to the Albert Hall was a living miracle of gracious pageantry. It was like a mediæval festival, vivid with simple grandeur, alive with an ancient dignity.

I saw it as it streamed across Trafalgar Square, a bright river flowing between the banks of the jostling crowd. I think the people were ready to scoff and jeer, but the flaming beauty of the procession smote them into a reverent silence. Even the grimy and greasy loafer with his evil, unshaven face was abashed into a dull wonder as the head of the marching army of women broke through the scuttling mob. The brave simplicity of the sight struck a hush of awe into the cynical London multitude. There in the front of the army walked a few quiet women with a look of courage and confidence in their eyes. The crowd instinctively felt the serene power of the idea in their souls. The idea pierced the heavy imagination of the people, wavering between curiosity and derision. In a moment the idea triumphed. One felt that the cause of woman-

hood in that little space of time had surged over ridicule and swept itself into acceptance and respect.

Marching six deep, the women moved quietly forward. It was pathetic to see how many sorts of women were there, shoulder to shoulder, massed in a splendid isolation of sex. There were many grey-haired women, many sad-faced women, many time-worn and life-worn women. But the dominant note of the army was youth. The crowd stared at the bright eyes and the bright hair and the rosy lips of the marching maidens. The popular legend that all suffragists are either old or ill-favoured crumbled away, as the flushed faces of girls carrying banners and bandrols glided softly past in an unending frieze, like the frieze on a tremendous tapestry wrought by patient hands. The face of a woman is softer than the face of a man, and as the crowd watched the soft faces swaying like flowers under the glowing silk and the gleaming ribbons, the heart of the crowd grew soft with involuntary pity for the sharp pathos of the moving wall of gentle life.

Now and then the soft wistfulness of the womanly faces was broken by the brazen music of brass instruments blown by men. Somehow the pathos was deepened by the incongruity of the bands. The martial sounds only served to throw into relief the unwarlike aspect of those thousands of fragile troops. The blood-red strains of the Marseillaise floated over the line of fluttering feathers and tulle and chiffon and linen and silk as the smoke of a steamer floats over its wake, but the fierce sounds clashed with the peaceful appeal of the procession. They came out of the throat of the brutal past, breathing war and violence, bloodshed and battle. The eyes of the marching women were set on the fair future. They looked forward to the clear day of peace and human fellowship. The gay banners, emblazoned with wisdom and tolerance, were not the gonfalons of a Joan of Arc, sworded and in arms. They were the symbols of something stronger than physical strength and mightfuller than weapons of war, the conquering thought and the triumphing ideal. The names wrought upon the delicate silk were the names of women whose power was the

power of the intellect and whose strength was the strength of the soul.

As the wind wrestled with the frail banners borne by frail hands, I began to feel the might of weakness and the strength of simplicity. These women as they marched past, interminably gentle, suggested to my imagination the whole outlawed nation of women, pale exiles of humanity, fragile serfs set in the framework of freedom, patient helots held in the machinery of citizenship. And in a flash I knew that no male barrier could perpetuate their serfdom, their helotry, and their exile.

As the women doctors and graduates in their robes moved by, their faces serene and grave under their black caps, over their black and crimson gowns, I was stabbed by the ironic injustice of their exclusion and ostracism. Tears started in my eyes at the monstrous comedy of life and the terrible mockery of civilisation. I thought of the unpaid debt the world owes to the nation of women, of the undischarged obligations, of the unliquidated liabilities. I realised that mankind is not male, and that a state which is based solely upon male suffrage is a caricature of the state of our dreams. I felt that men ought to entreat women to co-operate with them in the high task of making the world a nobler and holier and humaner residence. It was with scorn that I contemplated the claim of half the human race to usurp the government of the whole. The slowness of progress stung me as I stood watching the outlawed sex marching past, and I wondered whether the wheels of the chariot of life would not drag less heavily in the ruts of convention if woman took her place in it beside man.

The little banners went on, beating bravely against the breeze, the coloured patterns shone on their silken ground, and I saw in them the beauty that is strength and the strength that is beauty, the strength and the beauty of a dream.



MAINLY ABOUT POVERTY

THE THIN GREY LINE

It was a bleak and bitter morning. The wind was blowing in gusts down Holborn, and every gust was like the edge of a razor made of blue ice. The chilly rain was full of needle-points that seemed to puncture the skin. Everybody was in a hurry, and everybody was miserable. The wind and the rain were helping each other to torment the people on the pavement who walked mournfully along, with bent heads, collars turned up, and hands plunged deep in their pockets. The wind blew umbrellas inside out, and the rain dripped from the brims of hats, and crawled down the napes of necks. There were icy puddles in the road, and you shuddered as the splashed moisture struck your ankles. There were damp blotches on the paper of your cigarette.

Along the pavement in front of the Prudential Building and in front of Gamage's stood a closely packed row of men and women. Their feet were rooted in the gutter, and their melancholy shoulders touched each other. You could not have put a sheet of notepaper between their elbows. There they stood and there they shivered, the doleful refugees who had been exiled from Ludgate Hill. They had migrated to Holborn to hold their Christmas Fair. They held before them wooden trays filled with grotesque toys, garish trivialities upon which the wind and the rain beat derisively, for the wind has no pity and the rain has no compassion.

The Wind and the Rain are cynics. They gloat over the woes of the weak and the pangs of the poor. They take an evil delight in mocking the forlorn and the friendless. They laugh at the sorrows of the desolate and the sighs of the destitute. The Wind was very malicious as he romped up and down the thin grey line of human misery. He chuckled as

he blew his frozen breath through the tattered skirt and the threadbare overcoat, and he gloated as he watched the stretched skin quivering on the weary bones. "Come on," he hissed, as he took the Rain by the arm, "let us charge down the line again." The Rain grinned and leered. "Blow me, if I don't," he growled, and away he went, fixing his dripping bayonets and burying them in the sodden flesh of the outcasts. Down the wretched line the demons swept merrily, and roared with laughter as they felt the huddled abjects shuddering.

There were all sorts of pinched faces and all kinds of twisted bodies in the thin grey line. Some of these faces were very old and some were very young, but they were all unanimously despondent. Not one smile from Gray's Inn Road to Holborn Circus! There was an old, old man, with white hair and a long white beard. He was selling tiny magic bottles that refused to lie down unless you knew the secret. For a penny he would sell you a magic bottle and its magic secret, but nobody desired either the bottle or the secret. Everybody yearned for only one thing—a warm shelter from the Wind and the Rain. Everybody passed the old man, deaf to his quavering cry. Poor old fellow! He knew the secret of making his bottles to lie down, but he had not discovered the secret of lying down himself. Nay, he did not wish to lie down. He was striving to stand up in the Wind and the Rain. He had not cured himself of the lust of life, although life for him was a merciless tyrant and a cruel taskmaster.

There was also a man with one arm. His face was wet and wistful. His eyes were like dirty glass marbles. His boots were squelchy and squidgy, and as he painfully oscillated from one foot to the other, they exuded squirts of muddy moisture. He was selling two lamentable mannikins who perpetually saluted the shivering pedestrians, eternally taking off their little tall hats, and putting them on again. The one-armed mannikin pulled the string, and the flimsy puppets doffed their hats in a jerky gesture of dank despair and sappy humility. But the marching regiments on the pavements took no heed. The living mannikin with one arm was not worth a farthing

and the matchwood mannikins with two arms were not worth a penny. The man of flesh and the men of wood were to the passer-by equally null. He was not astonished at the spectacle of humanity that was worth less than nothing. He accepted it. It was there in the Wind and the Rain. It was hungry and cold and trembling. There was black pain in its eyes. He recked not. He was the usual, and it was the usual, and they were as they had always been and always would be.

It was not good to walk up and down that thin grey line of derelicts, and to stare at the curious versatility of human disaster. No two faces were alike in that long, repulsive row of broken bodies and shattered souls. No, they were all different, and yet they were all stricken with the same physical dilapidation. Many of the men wore dirty, old woollen gloves, with the fingers eaten away to the knuckles till they looked like mittens. Beneath the grime of their fingers there shone a ghastly white pallor, the cold light of, anæmia glittering through the lamp of dirt. The dull faces were horribly pale beneath their grey uncleanliness. It was not a pleasant paleness, but a kind of corpse-like drab unhealthiness, neither white nor grey, but the horrible hue of death. Some of the girls were decked in squalid finery that turned one's heart sick. A stringy ribbon, a bedraggled feather, a bunch of sloppy roses, tossed by the Wind and bespattered by the Rain! These things seemed loathly, waving and bobbing over a ghastly wan face with no gladness in its eyes, and no smile on its lips.

Pah! the thin grey line is intolerable. It hurts. It stings. It stabs. Let us fly from it. Let us hurry westward. In Pall Mall a cosy motor-car slides softly to the porch of the Carlton. A fur-clad footman leaps lightly to the pavement and opens the door. A tall man helps a pretty woman to alight. Her cheeks are rosy with health and happiness. From head to heels she is wrapped in a sable coat. In one of her little white-gloved hands she holds a huge sable muff. Under her arm is a fat dog, its dull eyes bulging with well-fed content. Her tiny patent leather shoe as it peeps out beneath her brown skirt is a miracle of dainty gloss and delicate curve. From

her wrist dangles a bunch of golden trifles, gleaming with diamonds. If you could sell her adornments you could feed and clothe the thin grey line for a year. The dirty beads on the human string in Holborn are not worth a penny apiece. She is worth hundreds of pounds. Every inch of her grace represents a pile of round yellow sovereigns, a pyramid of loaves.

The glass doors revolve. You enter a palace of luxury. Scores of expensive men and expensive women are eating expensive morsels of food and drinking expensive throatfuls of wine to the sound of expensive music. On every face there sits an expensive smile. Here there is no Wind and no Rain, no hunger and no cold. The champagne bubbles out of the magnums, and winks in the frail glasses, and gurgles in the white throats. The strong white teeth munch the quails. The soft red lips sip coffee and liqueurs. A solemn waiter carries a pile of cigar-boxes from table to table. The band plays "The Merry Widow" waltz. And still along the Via Dolorosa of Holborn the thin grey line shivers and shudders in the Wind and the Rain.

OUR LADY POVERTY

REMEMBER the Sixth of November. It is a vital date. Historians, note it. Sociologists, record it. Almanack-makers, print it in red. Chronologists, set it down. Statesmen, mark it on your charts. Forget the Fifth. Gunpowder Plot and Guy Fawkes are limbo-lumber. Here is a new event. Its meaning stings. To-day at noon in London—the Exodus of Womanhood and Childhood.

Hitherto they have starved and died in their rat-holes and slum-burrows, resigning the war against social lethargy to husband and father, brother and son. To-day for the first time the Family flings itself under the chariot of civilisation. Drive on, O charioteers! Henceforward your wheels drive heavily, axle-deep in blood, to the hoarse anthem-requiem, "Home, Bitter Home." Drive on over Manhood, Womanhood, Childhood. But lash your steeds, look down into the mire, and number your victims and count your cost.

It is high noon at Hungerford Bridge. The cold winter sunlight is cutting diamonds out of the Thames. The ancient river on his way to the sea passes a new river, a river of hunger, a Thames of famished flesh. It rises not in far sunny meadows, but out of the black depths of the city of a hundred sorrows. Its main stream comes from the Pit of Poplar and the Gehenna of West Ham and the Tophet of Walthamstow. Wells of want gush up under the white palaces of Mayfair and Belgravia. There are dark subterranean springs bubbling out of Shoreditch and Bethnal Green. These women are the poor grey parishioners of poor grey parishes whose very names are a sigh and a moan upon the map of London.

"Symbols and metaphors!" you say. But they are alive. Six thousand living women with living children in their arms

crawl out of the very pavement into the sun that shines on your Parliament's spires and your Abbey's towers, and, crawling, they stain your glory and soil your pride.

Still they come, blinking in the light, these captives, escaping from earless and eyeless dungeons of Poverty, whose walls are more durable than stone and stronger than iron, being quarried out of wrong and mortared with injustice. Six thousand prisoners of hope! They have heard the King's word of solace and they come to cast their misery at the feet of the Prime Minister. They are small folk. They have faith in the great. Surely the miracle will be wrought. The Prime Minister will pity their desolation. He will take a pen and write. There will be work, golden work, for their men. They and their little ones will know cold and hunger no more. There will be bread, magical bread, in the mouths of their boys and girls. Ah! their anguish is well-nigh over. Their woe is all but ended. Smiles dance in the creases and furrows of their faces. Laughter ripples over their bloodless lips. Exodus at last!

Four-deep are these miserables. Their rusty ranks creep like a centipede of sorrow through the wind-swept mud. They carry rude white banners like brandished shrouds bearing black legends. "Bread for our Children!" "Work for our Men!" The column of women and children is selvedged on each side with workmen. They stare at the packed faces. They say nothing. They dumbly gaze. The women gaze dumbly back. It is the quiet look of dull despair. It is the calm eye of poverty. As we walk along the narrow lane between the women and the workmen, the eye of want watches us. There are twelve thousand eyes here, eyes of babes, eyes of children, eyes of girls, eyes of mothers, eyes of grandmothers. But all these eyes are one vast eye, and all these souls one vast soul. It is life looking at life. The mystical unity of life surges over every barrier. We feel that the thing behind their eyes is the thing behind ours. This is more than brotherhood. It is identity.

We turn from Life's Eye to Life's Flesh. Thridding again

our alley of anguish, we survey its frieze of faces. Famine is a great sculptor. He has carved each of these countenances with a separate agony. It is his winter exhibition. Six thousand statues of starvation! Are there so many nuances of pain? Has grief so many moods? These ruddled and raddled visages have been harrowed by privation and ploughed by distress. Haglike old women, chapfallen, loose-lipped, rheumy, their knuckles gnarled, their hair grey, their backs bent. Stunted girls, their locks screwed into long spills and rolls from ear to temple, their skin sucked sallow, their bosoms crushed flat, their gapped teeth crumbling in black and yellow decay. No savages are more horribly defeatured and defaced than some of these Englishwomen, stealthily mutilated by economic laws that are crueller than any steel.

Sad is the starving man, and sad the starving woman, but sadder than these is the starving child. There are hundreds of anæmic infants in this pilgrimage of poverty, shrivelled babes sleeping wanly in weary arms, their thin shanks dangling, and in their blue lips what the ironic poor call a "comforter." Round them the crowd roars, the trains thunder, the hansoms jangle, the motor horns are blown, the horses prance. But the children sleep. They are too weak and weary to keep awake at noon. More dreadful than the open eyes of the mother and the father are the closed eyes of the child. Yet these men and women were once babes, and these babes will one day be even as they, for in the land of Poverty generation after generation lives and dies a living death.

Slowly the women march behind a band of boys playing merry music, their brass instruments shining in the sun. Shambling along Northumberland Avenue they go, skirting Trafalgar Square and winding down Whitehall. It is a lame and lugubrious dance of death.

As the files of famine press forward, murmurs are heard among the spectators. "Shocking!" . . . "Damned shame!" Three cartloads of puny children rattle by. We think of the tumbrils and the French Revolution. Those are our tumbrils. They carry our children to the guillotine of hunger. Our Lady

Poverty is pitiless. The phantoms shuffle on, their white flags flogged by the wintry wind. Their garments are brutally grotesque. Battered straw hats, black turning white, white turning black. Dingy crape bonnets, jettied and bugled: grimy broken feathers, dusty faded flowers, plush capes and mantles green with age, shawls, men's overcoats on women, tattered skirts dabbling in the mud: lamentable feet, blobs of flapping leather, caked and crusted with mire. It is the obscenity of civilisation. O dainty ankles, hide your delicate grace as these caricatures go past, dancing uncouthly their minuet of death! Cover your slim insteps, O Virtue! Muffle the drums of contrast. Mute the strings of paradox. Let Our Lady Poverty move past in her silence and her sadness and her despair.

IN WEST HAM

IN the West End the east wind is blowing bitterly. Let us go to its birthplace. Tube to the Bank. Thence to Fenchurch Street. There we take a third-class ticket to Canning Town. The wooden seats in our "smoker" are greasy with grime, and the floor is strewn with sawdust. From the window we watch a dreary procession of dingy streets. The houses are "brick boxes with slate lids." Their back yards flutter with domestic bunting, melancholy flags of drying clothes. We spell out the despairing signal of poverty: "The East expects the West to do its duty." We glide by a congested graveyard, its huddled headstones gleaming greyly through the October fog. Then our train pierces some desolate flats, where the scrofulous grass seems to pray for the spade. We get out. We walk to Hermit Park. There we see a bandstand in a green, dismal desert. Round the bandstand there is a silent crowd of shivering men.

As we approach they eye us doubtfully. "More splits," one of them mutters. There are police hovering on the fringe of the crowd. A caped inspector stares at us with an ironical smile. We are chilled by the tragic silence that washes round the bandstand. We shrink from these haggard faces and hungry glances. We feel ashamed of our warm clothes, of our cigarette, of our last meal, of our boots, of our watch and chain. The money in our pocket burns us. Our gloves are an outrage. The sullen dejection of these slouching men stabs us like a sword. There are a hundred sorts of misery. Old misery. Middle-aged misery. Young misery. Misery with a grey beard. Weak misery. Strong misery. The raiment of these derelicts is like a walking rag-store.

A man climbs on the bandstand. He has a square, resolute

face. His worn clothes are shabbily clean. He nervously grips the rail, and lards the police with praise. They must help the good police. "No rioting. No pillaging. Be orderly."

As he ends, we wait for the cheers. There are no cheers. The crowd is silent. These men have lost all heart and hope. The smiling inspector has taken a shorthand note of the speech. He closes his book and glances sardonically at us. The crowd closes round us. We are buried in the unemployed. They suffocate us. The ring of faces is like a circle in Dante's *Inferno*. These sad, mutilated shadows, "tormented phantoms, ancient injured shades," shut out the earth, the air, and the sky.

Dazed and bewildered, we tear ourselves out of this *Malebolge* of want. We walk in a stupefaction of despair through the dolorous streets of Canning Town. As we walk our guide lifts the lid of hell, and shows us its horrors. Yesterday two P. and O. boats came in. Out of 2,000 men waiting for a job, only 150 were needed. Eleven weeks ago the first register of the unemployed showed 915 workless men. On these men depended over 400 wives and 1,060 children.

We investigate the case of the orator. He is 32. Born in Durham, he has lived here since 1879. He served 8 years 306 days in the Army. He produces his discharge. His regimental number is 91,610, 124th Field Battery, Royal Field Artillery. He went through the siege of Ladysmith, got enteric, and was invalided out of the service. He had a pension of 1s.6d. a day for a year, then 8d. a day for the second year, then a pair of spectacles for his injured sight. Since that—nothing. He produces letters peremptorily declining to do more for him. He has not yet received the war medal to which he is entitled. He holds an excellent testimonial from his lieutenant. According to it he can "ride and drive." Up to March last he worked as a plater's labourer on the Black Prince. He was discharged owing to slackness of work. Until July he picked up odd jobs as bricklayer's labourer. He has two children. In August his wife was confined. He then got

tickets for meat (1s.6d.), milk (1s.6d.), and grocery (2s.6d.). He has had only 3½ days' work in three months. He has been selling his furniture—overmantel 7s. (cost 24s.), clock 2s. (cost 8s.6d.), shade of birds 2s., chair 6d., and so on. He owes £3 for rent of two rooms at 4s. a week. He has been in workhouse for two days.

Has he tried for work? Yes, he has been "through the hoop." He has got up like the others at 3 A.M. and walked the 21 miles to Tilbury in search of a job. Here is his itinerary for one day: 6:30 A.M. At Victoria Dock gates. Attended the 7, 8, and 9 o'clock calls. No work. Came home, "signed off to mother." 10—"Adverts." Walked 7 miles to Seven Kings, the other side of Ilford. Tried several buildings. No work. Walked round by Romford Road and Stratford. No work. 11 P.M.—Got home. No food all day. "I'm getting too shabby." Their last good meal cost 3d. Here is the menu: Two cold faggots 1½d., potatoes 1d., onions ½d. What is a faggot? He seems surprised at our ignorance. "It's a Savoury Duck." What is a "Savoury Duck"? "A faggot." You can buy a hot faggot for 1d., a cold faggot for ¾d. Boiled with potatoes and onions it makes "Savoury Duck Soup."

We walk through the dusk to his home. His room is tiny, but clean. His wife is a comely lass of twenty-two. The eldest boy is a fair-haired little fellow of three. There is no squalor. It is a cosy nest with a faded air of decency. But bit by bit it is breaking up. When the landlord's patience is exhausted, what will happen? Here, then, is a test case. A man who starved for his country in Ladysmith should not be allowed to starve in London.

His plight is better than that of hundreds. There are families who have burnt or sold all their furniture. We hear of one case where six children are sleeping on the bare floor. The people help each other. Women are eager to wash heavy articles at 6d. a dozen. Children pick the cinders off new cinder-paths. The suffering of the young is piteous. At fourteen the boys leave school and turn into Hooligans. At night under the railway arches you can see hundreds of people sleep-

ing out, most of them destitute lads. There are all sorts of queer trades in this land of hunger. Some women earn coppers as "Jew's pokers." For 2d. they light fires on the Jewish Sabbath. Ghouls prowl over the battlefield. They rob the wounded. We are shown a bogus 6d. raffle-ticket which is being sold in the streets "for the benefit of the family of an unemployed man."

West Ham reviles the new Act. It regards it as a fraud. West Ham also loathes the workhouse. The women prefer to starve rather than let their husbands enter it, for it is the death knell of home and the black badge of shame. No landlord will let rooms to the man whose last reference is "Bill Bailey," the nickname of a certain deputy labour-master.

What of the future? Will these starving men go on meekly starving through the winter? Their patience is almost invincible. But it may snap. The other night there were 100 police from fourteen London divisions at a meeting of 1,000 workless men. But what can be done? That is the aching riddle. We turn our back on the anguish and the agony. We get into the train. We feel the sharp pang of pity growing dull. In a few hours we shall forget. Life is very implacable. As we pass the grey headstones in the silent cemetery, we think of Death. His hospitable house is open even to the Unemployed.

PETTICOAT LANE

"PETTICOAT LANE?" says the policeman at the Bank. "Take a Shoreditch 'bus." "Petticoat Lane?" says the conductor. "Get off at Dirty Dick's." Who is Dirty Dick? We wonder. We want to know, but we are ashamed to ask. Perhaps it is some famous hostelry, a London landmark like the Angel and the Elephant. Yes, there it is, its shameless name staring from its brazen front. "Dirty Dick's!" The fellow is proud of his appellation. He glories in it. He has peppered his house with DD. He is as impenitent as the French king who peppered the Louvre with D's in honour of Diane de Poitiers, his mistress.

Well, let us not be hard on Dirty Dick. He must live up to the Lane, where dirt is next to godliness. The dregs and heeltaps of London are pouring into it this bright Sunday morning, and as we are gulped down by its roaring gullet the first thing that startles us is a shop-window stacked with Passover Cakes, a granddaughter of Miriam sitting placidly at the door.

Unlike Dirty Dick, Petticoat Lane is ashamed of itself. It disguises itself as Middlesex Street, a miserable name, a name that sticks in ear and throat. Out on it! Petticoat Lane is a true coinage of the people. It has the right smack of vernacular romance.

Along the kerbs in two parallel lines are long rows of stalls. The sidewalks and the roadway are packed with lounging promenaders, mostly malodorous. The Lane has a pungent smell. Its fragrance lingers in the nostrils. Like the scents of Houbigant, the perfume of Petticoat Lane is made of many ingredients.

High above the turbid torrent of greasy caps grins the

violent face of a Jew. He is perched on a stall. His curved beak swings through the air like a scythe. His vast mouth is horribly dilated. His features are distorted by the noise of barter. His eyes bulge in an agony of trade. There you see the secret of the Jew—intensity. This hawker is in Petticoat Lane to-day, but he may be in Park Lane to-morrow. To-day he is selling old clo': to-morrow he may be selling old empires.

In the Lane the Jew barterers and the Gentile buys. These wonderful people traffic in our absurd desires. Their wares are a minute satire on our wants. They sell us gewgaws as if we were savages. They exploit our stupidity.

At this swirling corner we can study types of the two races. A dandified Jew is suavely selling gimcrack jewelry for shillings. Behind him in the mire a Lancashire acrobat is bursting blood-vessels for ha'pence. The one makes money with his wits, the other with his muscles. I fear the brain of the Jew beats the brawn of the Gentile.

There is another type who relies on noise. He is selling old leather with a muscular fury that carves his face into a gargoyle of sound. He foams at the mouth. He lards his eloquence with saliva. His voice rips and tears the rival din around it. Never have I heard speech so strident, so raucous, so brazen. The man is a demon of discord, with lungs of iron and throat of steel. On his right hand he wears a leathern glove. With a huge bar he belabours old engine-belts, fire-hose, saddlery. While he thumps he yells. With a murderous knife he hacks off sixpenn'orths, scrapes the surface, and sells them to the amateur cobbler. "Let your eyes be your guide," he howls, "and your money the last thing you part with." Another noisy trafficker is selling coats and vests. He chants a chorus as he puts on a jacket. "Down where the red poppies blo-o-w." Then he shrieks: "Six guineas! Six guineas! . . . Six bob! Come off a lord—the Lord knows who." He puts on a serge reefer: "In-di-go blue! Navy blue! Bluey blue till you can't blue any more! Come off a drowned sea-captain."

Flying from this ear-splitting humorist, we stumble over a young gentleman who is trying on boots. Hard by, a seedy old man is being measured for trousers, while his son, a jolly bluejacket, looks on with a grin.

In the crowd there are men of all nations—Turks, Lascar seamen, Chinamen, Japanese, Hindus. These Orientals put the Cockney to shame. Their clear skins and glossy beards reprove his pimpled stubble.

An old blind Jew is playing tunes on his skinny hands. His face is sallow parchment stretched on bones. His mouth is a round O. His grey beard floats on the breeze. Hollowing his lean hands, he claps them together, and produces a strange manual music. The contrast between his rabbinical face and the cockney airs he beats out of his palms is fantastic. It is the East mimicking the West, Abraham mocking Kipling.

The Lane likes medicine. It has its waters as well as Marienbad. Strong men drink Dutch Drops and eat Dutch Eels. "Queeneenanops," an amber beverage, is very popular. It cures "inward weakness, tendencies to faint, weight and pressure over the eyes, dimness of sight, slightest flurry, the body oppressed and the mind confused, all nervous prostrations, cuts, burns, and old-standing wounds."

A Jewish fish-merchant wears a leather apron. He is like a dingy merman, enamelled from head to foot with shining scales. Old women are skewering cat's meat. Old men are whittling horseradish. Jolly fellows are carving tricoloured bars of ice cream. You lick it off the paper as you loaf along. A dexterous youth is selling gyroscopes. There is a bird-fancier selling canaries. In a lofty cage there is a monkey that glares and jabbers horribly. It is the familiar of the fair, the succubus of the Lane.

A nigger is cleaning a boy's teeth with his finger. He explains that his powder would make the teeth whiter if he had a "toot-brush." Polish Jews, garlanded with boots, are crying "Ze more you loke, ze more you vand." Stalls festooned with coats and trousers rise up like gallows, hundreds of flabby arms and legs wagging in the wind. We are stunned with the

cries of Mendozas and Assenheims, Rubinsteins and Levys, Elbozes and Valentines. We are hashed in a hash of languages, stewed in a stew of tongues. Our eyes are worn with gazing at collars, fronts, socks, studs, boots, carpet slippers, toys, cycle horns, locks, keys, trowels, brushes, whelks, "dying pigs," ocarinas, alarm clocks, revolving rubber heels, albums, penny cameras, goldbeater's skin, violins, crockery, opera glasses, French transparencies, songs, old boots and old books, hats, remnants, handkerchiefs, ribbons, bead necklaces, furs that mew and bark, banjos, dulcimers, knives, forks, files, spoons, saws, chisels, jockey-scales—all the fads of our civilised folly.

It is one o'clock. The thud of the beer-engine is heard in the taverns and Miriam is still selling Passover Cakes.

A PENNY FAIR

"CHRISTMAS, Father . . . OO Fairyland." "Double oh, Fairyland." There is a long silence. "Are you there?"

A loud laugh bursts out of the receiver. "Ha! Ha! Ha!" I never heard such a laugh. It is a round, crimson, roast beef, plum pudding, mince pie, port wine, snapdragon laugh. There are holly leaves and mistletoe berries and fir-trees in it, cotton wool and icing sugar, raisins and almonds, walnuts and crackers, frost and snow, carols and church bells, bugles and children's squeaking voices. I cannot tell you how many other wonderful things there are in it. There are the shining eyes of mothers bending over cots, and the sleepy eyes of little boys and girls, and the twinkling eyes of bald old uncles, and the soft eyes of rosy old aunts, and the winking eyes of fathers that pretend to be very solemn and proper and indifferent and calm.

The whole world seems to be in this wonderful laugh.

"Who the Dickens are you?"

"I'm Father Christmas, and Dickens is staying with me." At that I hear another laugh like the sound of a shower of new sixpences.

"I thought Dickens was dead."

"Ho, Ho, Ho! Dickens dead! That is a good joke. Why, he always spends me with me."

"Spends you? What do you mean?"

"Why, Christmas, you silly old buffer!"

"A-o-oh! Is that a joke? And I'm not silly, or old, or a buffer."

"Well, you ask silly old questions."

"I say, Father Christmas, how do you feel this—um—this you?"

"That's better, young 'un. I never felt better in my life."

"Aren't you played out?"

"Bless my soul! haven't I got millions of children?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Well, you see I'm made of children."

"Go on! How on earth . . . ?"

"And children are made of me. Ha, Ha!"

"But you are awfully old, you know. You've got a long white beard."

"Oh, that's only a disguise. I'm young inside. I have got all the children in my heart."

"It must be a big heart."

"You're right, my boy. It's the biggest heart in the world."

"Room for me in it?"

"Can you laugh?"

"Yes."

"Can you cry?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe in indiscriminate charity?"

"Yes."

"Then come in and warm yourself." And the old fellow went off into a perfect convulsion of guffaws.

"Are you busy to-day?"

"Of course, I'm busy. Don't you know I have got millions of stockings to stuff."

"Can you spare half an hour?"

"Perhaps. What do you want?"

"I want you to walk up Ludgate Hill with me and see my Penny Fair."

"All right. Meet me under the railway bridge."

Sure enough, I see Father Christmas sitting in a big motor-car under the bridge. His beard is longer than General Booth's. He shakes hands with me and begins to laugh. The policeman laughs, too, the 'bus-drivers laugh, the cabmen laugh. Everybody laughs. The laughter runs up Fleet Street to the Strand. Old St. Paul's fat old dome begins to laugh, too, and before we know he is dancing a cake-walk up and down the hill. The Mansion House joins him, and the old couple waltz along

Cheapside, where Bow Bells begin to peal Noel, Noel. The old city churches shake their belfries as if they were wearing a cap and bells. Drowsy old Father Thames hears the noise, and with a jolly chuckle he jumps right over the Monument.

"Come along," says Father Christmas, "and see my Penny Fair." He takes my hand and we push through the laughing crowd on the sidewalk. In the gutter on each side are hundreds of gutter merchants with trays of toys. Old men, old women, young men, young women, little boys and little girls, all selling penny toys.

"My servants," chuckles the old chap, with a wave of his fat red hand.

"They're very poor servants."

"That's why I engage them. I like them poor. The poorer the better. What's the good of being rich if you have no poor to give your money to? Why, my boy, I just live on the poor. No poor, no Christmas." With that he digs me in the ribs, and begins laughing again.

We push along the line of hawkers right up to St. Paul's. There the old fellow stands chuckling. He points down the Hill at the double river of toys.

"All my work," he grunts.

"Your work! Why, they're made in' Houndsditch."

"Fiddlesticks! I invents 'em, I makes 'em, I sells 'em, I buys 'em, I gives 'em away, and I breaks 'em. Ho, Ho, Ho!" With that he turns round, and takes off the Dome of St. Paul's.

"Paul," he says, "lend us your hat." He turns the Dome upside down, and he begins to fill it with penny toys.

"All made to die," says a greasy old man with a tray of dying pigs and roosters. "All made to die."

Bill Bailey's uncle, a double-jointed Zulu; Japanese drums; the bull and the bear hammering each other; *animaux assortis*; Asia paper; living pictures; motor-buses, motor-cars, motor-boats; Scotch expresses; sewing machines; bicycles; musical turbines and musical cigars; clocks in glass cases; gold watches; lamps; suites of furniture; a Japanese farmyard in a box; dwarf fir-trees; dancers, horses, and flower-pots made of paper; the

smallest purse in the world; fighting cocks; photo frames; brooches, "any name you like"; boy feeding a dog; thumbnail saucepans, chairs, teapots, candlesticks, coal-scuttles, cameras, prams—caricaturing the knicknacks of the "silver table"; nutcrackers; "loidy-birds"; trick bunches of "voyolets"; bone studs; comb and mirror; jumping and squeaking frogs; Lilliputian skittles; three brown jugs; scales; an india-rubber face that puts its tongue out; wriggling snakes; china babies in a walnut; brush and crumb trays; a big elephant and three elephantlets—"the happy family"; magnetic teetotums; crowing cocks; cribbage pegs; masks and puppets, whose tongues and arms blow out; mouth organs; "three china bybies with gowlden 'air"; creeping blackbeetles, crocodiles, swallows, mice—"all over the carpet"; jack-in-the-boxes; acrobats; flags; plates; biscuit-tins; knives and forks; fans; drawing-books; expanding glass bracelets; the eating monkey; the jumping monkey; the climbing monkey; dachshunds with nodding heads; puzzle corks; revolving balls. All these and millions more Father Christmas tosses into the Dome. Then, tucking me under his left arm, he steps off Ludgate Hill upon the top of the Nelson Monument, and turns the Dome right side up, scattering the toys all over London.

"Ho, Ho, Ho!" he chuckles, as the toys darken the sky and tumble down the chimneys. "I must be off for another Domeful." With that he hops back to his Penny Fair.

MAINLY ABOUT CHILDREN

LONDON-ON-SERPS

It is seven o'clock. Let us stroll along the Knightsbridge bank of the Serpentine. Between the water and the iron fence there is a strip of grass several hundred yards long. It is swarming with nude, half-nude, and quarter-nude boys. Hundreds of them, squirming and wriggling, twisting and tumbling, running and leaping, laughing and shouting, in a frenzy of youthful mirth. As we plunge into the rout and riot, we are drowned in a whirlpool of boys, seething, shrieking, jumping about like landed trout, frisking like puppies, gamboling like kids, freaking like kittens. All sorts and sizes of boys in all sorts and sizes of jackets and trousers and boots. A grand ballet of boys dancing the dance of boyhood. The lust of the boy for raw noise is here let loose. Any sound is good: shriek, squeak, whistle, catcall, groan, yell, scream, shout, yelp, yap, hiss, hoot, howl, giggle, gurgle, chuckle, laugh. The clamour mounts like brandy to the brain. One grows drunk with boy, dazed with perpetual motion and perpetual noise.

At intervals vigilant policemen control the merry devilry of these india-rubber imps, herding them across the fence that bounds their paradise. As we walk along the outer edge of their Eden, urchins with white skins and black faces ask us to tell them the time. Like the sick watchers by the Pool of Bethesda, they are waiting for the troubling of the waters. Their angel is Policeman X. Not until half-past seven can one little grimy foot enter the Serpentine. Thanks to the London boy's pathetic instinct for order, no force is needed to secure obedience. They beguile the leaden minutes with every insanity of movement known to boyhood. One stark naked skeletonette whose spine is like a string of knots, and whose ribs and shoulder-blades are sharp as a razor, turns solemn

summersaults, his thin body bending like a whip. Other urchins walk on their hands. Some of them are trousered, some of them wear nothing but string garters. Their inverted peripateia is a humorous grotesque beyond sculptor's chisel. It is the true paradox of the featherless biped, the perfect topsy-turvydom of humanity.

Wisps of imp-jargon float across the fence. "I 'opes as nobody don't pinch my boots."—"I 'opes as nobody don't pinch my trousis." What happens if the "trousis" are "pinched"? Policeman X. gravely replies: "Oh, they make up enough between them to take them 'ome." A golden-haired cherub tells me that you can convert your jacket into breeches. Soon a knot of young nudities clusters round me. Can they swim? Oh, yes. They learned in the Notting Hill Baths. It costs them a penny. One haughty Cupid is pointed out with pride. He has swum halfway across the Serps.

"Serps?"

"Yus; 'London-on-Serps,' we calls it."

"Ever been to the sea?" A chorus breaks out: "I've been to Whitstable!" "I've been to Clacton!" One pretty little lad opens his big blue eyes and says wistfully, "I've never seen the sea."

"'Is muvver is too poor, sir." Another rogue in ivory boasts: "My brother nearly won the five-mile championship on the Thames; 'e got cramp six yards from the post."

A boylet with dancing brown eyes carries a life-belt made of cork fragments.

"Where did you get it?"

"Off the back of a seat, sir, in a garden, sir."

The preparations for the bath are infinitely various. There is a rich variety of loin-rags. A woeful lack of tape or string breeds perplexity. On all sides naked gossoons are pinning and knotting, twisting and tying clouts round each other.

"Aren't they allowed to bathe in their pelts?"

"Under fourteen," growls Policeman X., with laconic solemnity.

The humour of this army of Pucks and Ariels does not arride the man in blue. Nor does its pathos stir him. Nothing could make a London policeman smile or weep. For my part, as I watch this carnival of childhood, I do not know whether I ought to laugh or cry. And as the sartorial secrets of a hundred homes are laid bare, I feel a certain shame. Why should I intrude upon the pitiful ingenuities of motherhood? Are not these poor garments sacred? Is not every patch and darn a holy symbol of maternal love? Ah, the mothers of these children, who can fathom their humble yearnings, their weary labour, their dim ambitions? But, see! the sun-gold has been hammered into a yellow doubloon, and it is falling through the branches of the trees. What is that golden network of filmy threads? They are the heart-strings of motherhood.

But look! Three boats put off from the station of the Royal Humane Society. It is half-past seven at last. A shudder of delight runs through the herds of boy. The long strain of waiting in nude impatience snaps. Far as the eye can see there is a frantic rush of running legs across the grass, across the gravel path, into the water. The young limbs glow and glitter in the rosy gold of sunset. Will their many-twinkling charge never end? Where are they springing from? The running regiments seem innumerable. Minute after minute goes by, and still they are leaping out of the grass into the water, like grilse fresh from the sea. A saraband of youth, indeed. As the foul rags fall off the young limbs, they are transfigured. The horrible ugliness of civilised clothes is magically sloughed, and the beauty of boyhood flashes like a bright sword torn from an evil scabbard. The sad grey water is furrowed with ivory laughter of dauntless youth. Its grey bosom is covered with gnomes and goblins, splashing, dashing, dancing, prancing, hopping, squeaking, shrieking. The clamour and the din increase. We become stupefied with noise. Here for one mad hour King Boy reigns supreme. It is his festival. Look along the vociferous vista of whirling legs and flying arms and bobbing heads. The water boils over with boy. It breeds boys like bubbles and foam-bells.

What music has led them out of their slums? Have they heard some Pied Piper? No, they have heard the music of the joy of life, and they have come to beat it out in the cool water. Why does no painter paint this lyrical incarnation of London's youth? The tones of flesh cry for the brush. Why does no Wagner hymn this fierce explosion of nature in the midst of smoke and dust and bricks? It is the deathless chant of life that rings across the Serpentine, the beautiful melody of being, the chorus of the years that were and the years to be.

The Serpentine spring-board is the focus of the fun. It never ceases to bend and recoil. Packed from end to end with boys, each must dive in turn. Each diver vibrates vigorously before the plunge, sometimes vibrating a neighbour into the water. There is a perpetual crawling and writhing and wriggling tangle of flesh around this patient spring-board, whose resilience is sadly enfeebled by overwork. The absurd gravity of boys may be seen here at its best. The spectators split with laughter at the grotesquery of the seething bathers, but the bathers have reached the solemn climax of ecstasy. They are too happy to laugh. One boy nearly drowns himself with purple bladders. Another dives into the folds of an adult obesity that practises the art of floating. Students of physical degeneration ought to peruse these human documents. Nearly all the boys are flat-chested, thin of arm and leg. Their sharp shoulder-blades are shot, and their lean ribs strain the fleshless skin. Underfed and anæmic, they cannot stay in the water long. Their lips are blue, their teeth chatter, their limbs shiver. Soon the grass is covered with shivering boys. Few have towels. By half-past eight all is over, and bands of tired urchins trail wearily homeward.

We, too, go home, for that is life.

SQUITS AT PLAY

ONE generation knows little of the next, and a father is the last man to ask for information about his son. There is a great gap between the present and the future, and we are apt to cultivate a culpable indifference to posterity. We forget that posterity is not a long way off; it is here now in our nurseries and our schools. If we please we can look at it, and talk to it, and we may even try to persuade it to look at us and talk to us.

The other day I went down into the country and spent an afternoon watching the boys playing cricket at one of our most modern preparatory schools. The sun was shining with sensational fervour, and the sky was unseasonably blue. The larks were singing as they used to sing in ancient Junes before the winter had acquired the habit of breaking out in mid-summer. The meadows were lakes of green and gold. The hedgerows wore wild roses in their buttonholes. There was real dust on the roads, and the wind was audaciously warm. In the school garden there was an insurrection of colour, great white roses opened their languidly sleepy petals to the unfamiliar sunlight, and the old, fat Yorkshire terrier snored in the genial air. The boys were rolling up the practice nets, and two of the masters were marking out the tennis court. Yes, it was actually warm enough to play tennis without a comforter! The pavilion looked very gay in its new coat of white paint, and the grass was dry enough to loll on without fear of rheumatism. One almost dared to believe that summer is not a poet's dream.

The boys, in their cool flannels, looked as fresh and as happy as the white roses. One forgot for the moment that they were orphans. As they took their places in the field, I

imagined that I was looking at Lord's through the small end of an opera-glass. It was cricket in miniature. The little men settled down to their work with the solemnity of veterans. They parodied the minutest ritual of the game as it is played by Hayward and Hirst, Fry and Spooner, Payne and Palaret. The English boy is born with a bat in his hand and pads on his shins. He lisps in overs. The tradition of cricket is here seen in the process of percolating out of the Blue of yesterday into the Blue of to-morrow. These "squits" of nine and ten and eleven and twelve have already begun to acquire the rudiments of style. Their captain is a tiny fair-haired babe whose feet are already quick, whose eye is already keen, and whose wrists are already flexible. He places his field with the assurance of a Jackson. The tall Blue who an hour ago was an austere pedagogue is now one of the eleven, towering over his midgets like Gulliver in Lilliputia. He mixes praise discreetly with reproof. "Good shot," is the reward of a neat cut or a clean off-drive. A fluffy stroke earns a sharp "Hold your bat tight." "That'll never do, Smith Major; why didn't you play back?" "Don't turn in that right toe, my man!" "Come on, Jones! Why are you slacking?" "Run it out, Brown!" "Fielded, sir!"

The squat umpire does not wear a white coat, but he is a grave person who does not hesitate to no-ball the fast bowler, or to give the squat batsman out whose bat is an eighth of an inch outside the crease when the bails are whipped off by the squat stumper. The squits are quick to appeal, and a shrill chorus of "How's that?" goes up when a squat slip takes the ball smartly. The squat bowlers are very keen, although their offbreaks are sometimes invisible. The fast bowler takes a run nearly half as long as Knox's, and his action is vaingloriously high. There is also a squat lob-bowler who bowls insidious lobs which the batsmen plainly detest. He has well-defined mannerisms. During his run he makes circles in the air as if he were turning a handle. It is his trick for bewildering the batsman's expectant eye. Perhaps one day his concentric circles will obfuscate some Nourse or Hathorn at Lord's.

There is not much slogging in squat cricket. That slim infant whose pads seem to be a foot too long for his shanks may live to wear the beard of Grace or to be photographed in bare feet like Fry. He is conscientiously trying to get his strokes all round the wicket. That leg-glance is quite classic, and he plays with an impeccably straight bat. He has caught the trick of looking behind him to see where the field is placed. "Played, sir!" Most assuredly this is a scientific squat, with a sound defence, and a distinct vein of Haywardian patience. His score slowly creeps up by singles and two and threes, until at last he puts one into the safe hands of mid-on, and strides to the pavilion amid restrained hand-clappings. You congratulate him, but he has learned the tradition of modesty. "Oh, I was missed twice!" he says with a delightful air of deprecation.

There are plenty of sensations in squat cricket. There are hot returns and short runs. There is even a collapse and a stubborn stand. An innings begins with a hat trick, and the treble squeak of triumph that salutes the fall of the third wicket stirs the blood as gallantly as any shout that ever made the welkin (what is the welkin?) ring at the Oval. It is true that the boundary is not quite so far away, and that long-on's young arm cannot throw in quite as far as the bowler. But things that are equal to the same are equal to one another, and the game played by the squits is the game played by the giants. It is pretty to watch the machine in the field working with something like classic precision, the young backs bending and the small hands thrown forward in the right, real way. It is jolly to see the babes backing each other up and anticipating the flight of the ball before it leaves the face of the willow. And after the last ball has been bowled and the last wicket has gone down, it is good to watch the squits skylarking and ragging in jovial comradeship. Even the stern old Blue is not above joining in the fun, and shouldering his boys with nicely calculated vigour on the way to the swimming bath.

Don't shiver! Yes, even in June, an English June, it is possible to dive into an open-air swimming bath without being

a Polar Bear. It is a jolly swimming bath: none of your glazed-tile, lukewarm, indoor abominations, but a huge concrete basin thirty yards square with a spring-board at the edge, off which the lithe young bodies fly like arrows into the clear cold water. In the slanting rays of the westering sun the boys splash and dart like trout, with infinite laughter and rollicking horseplay. By the edge stands a master with a stout pole bearing a broad band of webbing with a noose at the end. The noose goes round a squit's glittering ivory torso, and the master holds him above water as he learns to swim. There are irreverent attempts to splash (accidentally, of course) the master's immaculate flannels. The boys who display any tendency to shirk the general fun are carefully attended to. One passive babe who clings to the water-tap is assailed by three energetic splashers behind him. As he turns round to use his heels against his tormentors, a young wretch steals round on the landward side and turns on the tap upon his head. Then the signal of "Cease Bathing" is given, the dripping young limbs are violently towelled, and soon there is a dishevelled rosy procession to the dressing-room, followed by a terrific assault upon hot cocoa and bread and butter. After all, the orphans seem to bear their orphanhood very merrily. There are worse things in life than being a squit.

HAT-BOXES AND PLAY-BOXES

THERE are some sights which can be seen in London alone, and one of them is the migration of the schoolboy. The London schoolboy is a bird of passage. Thrice every year he spreads his wings and flies home from school for the holidays. Thrice every year he spreads his wings and flies to school from home. As most of the public schools and most of the preparatory schools close and open about the same time, the streets of London are sprinkled with these small migrants. It is easy to recognise them, for they travel in hansoms and four-wheelers, on the roof of which repose the tell-tale hat-box and the pathetic play-box. For some reason or other the play-box is made of unpainted deal with black iron hinges. On it is painted the name of the owner, and, as a rule, it is stoutly roped, for the lock of the play-box has a trick of giving way under the pressure of boyish treasures. There are afternoons when you may see an unbroken procession of white-faced boys in cabs going down Park Lane towards Victoria. Boys always come back from school in the morning and go back to school in the afternoon. The distinction is profound. It symbolises the eagerness to escape and the reluctance to return.

As a rule there is a mother beside the small boy. The men of Eton and Harrow and Winchester scorn maternal escort. They prefer to come and go like beings who have risen above human weakness. The small boy is in the transitional stage. He is torn by his secret yearning for motherly consolation. He has not yet learned to wean himself from the comfort of the maternal kiss. I have heard of an homunculus who confided to his mother in a moment of frailty that the only thing he longed for at school was her kiss. It was a dreadful confession, for the code of the British schoolboy debars all dis-

plays of sentiment. It is at school that the Briton is taught the art of suppressing his feelings. Here he acquires that marble face compared with which the countenance of the Red Indian is a playground of the emotions. Here he trains his flesh to hide his soul. Here he attains that sublime immobility of the features which is the secret of England's greatness. Foreign observers are often puzzled by the passionless frigidity of British actors. They do not realise that it is due to the British school. All our actors are old boys. They bring the expressionless stoniness of the public school and the 'Varsity to the boards.

The Irishman or the Frenchman can never outgrow his astonishment at the frozen visage of the perfect Englishman. Take him to Victoria Station and show him the stupendous spectacle provided by the English mother parting from the English child. He will expect to see tender embraces, caressing endearments, and intermingled tears. That is exactly what he will not see. The mothers are there and the boys are there. Scores of them. But the sad business of farewell is transacted without any visible sign of grief. The boys are stoically nonchalant, and the mothers are nonchalantly stoical. Now and then you may see a Jewish mother in tears, a Rachel weeping over her large-eyed darling. But the English mother sees her boy off without any public exposition of affection. The luggage on the truck and the porter who puts it in the van are not more imperturbable. Parting is not a sorrow. It is like posting a letter. The Irishman or the Frenchman views these apparently heartless mothers with indignation. He regards them as unnatural beings without pity or compassion.

But he is quite wrong. The emotion is there, although it expresses itself by an absence of expression. These English mothers are strangely quiet and tragically inarticulate. They say a great deal by saying nothing. They carry off their anguish with an heroic fortitude that deceives the superficial spectator. They, too, have been disciplined into absolute self-control. From their girlhood they have been drilled in the art of automatic calm. They have been taught to avoid

“scenes.” They have been born and bred in the tradition of icy phlegm. They know how to freeze their warm blood and how to keep all their skeletons under lock and key. Their pride is stronger than their passions. Their dignity masters their imagination. They know that feeling exists only to be crushed. Yet not without a struggle do they denaturalize themselves. Their arms are aching to clasp the boy who is eating chocolates behind the glass of the carriage window. There is sharp hunger in their dry eyes. Yet mixed with their bottled wistfulness is a vague relief. The strain of the holiday is over. For a few weeks the stress of being a mother will be relaxed, and they will slide back into the safe, dull monotony of dutiful frivolity. They will pack their hearts away with the football boots that grow bigger every year. They will file their souls with the bills that grow longer every term. It is a wonderful system that is able to destroy the most powerful passion in the world, the passion of motherhood.

No other nation in the world has ever based its education on the principle of orphanhood. If the French Government were to enact a law which would tear all French boys at the age of eight from the arms of their mothers, there would be a revolution. But the English mother cheerfully endures the torture of separation. I am not sure whether the boy loses as much as the mother loses. That he loses a great deal is undeniable. He gains the hard and strenuous virtues, but he sacrifices the grace of plasticity. He is hammered into a type, and his personal idiosyncrasies are extinguished. He learns to conform and accommodate. His young imagination is nipped in the bud. He becomes a splendid machine which works without spiritual friction. Life cannot easily break him. He is honest and clean and straight, but he is also narrow, incapable of imaginative sympathy, and invincibly proof against the blandishments of art. In the grey groups round the trains at Victoria you see the greatness and the littleness of England, all her Spartan renunciation and all her mutilative inertia.

She has a noble heart, but it beats in a block of marble.

THE NEUROPATH IN KNICKERS

LAST Friday in London was a day of mourning. The school-boys were going back to school. All the afternoon the streets that converge on Paddington were melancholy with cabs, bearing a load of beardless discontent and callow disillusion and green dyspepsia. Faded the Christmas smiles that lighted the dingy dulness of Praed Street a month ago. There was no eagerness of naïve expectancy in the sullen faces glowering over the shaggy bones of the cynical cabhorse. Satiety clouded the dismal cheek and the desolate brow. The silk hat, no longer poised raffishly on the nape of the neck, drooped dolefully over dreary eyes.

The exiles of Eton stare resentfully at you as they go by. They hate you because you are left behind in town, with the dear pavement under your feet, and the beloved fog in your lungs, and the lights of London in your eyes. You are the usurper. All the fun they forsake is at your elbow. The perpetual feast of the city is spread before you, while Tantalus Junior sees it spirited away as the rubber tyres revolve on the polished wooden road. In the keen, pure country air how their nostrils will hunger for the smell of blended smoke and soot and dust and tar and water-carts. The pampered schoolboy feels the nostalgia of London more intensely than the soldier on foreign service, the sailor in the tropics, the pioneer in Rhodesia, the civil servant in India. There is in his precocious heart the deep hunger of the townsman for the town. There are many sorts of loneliness in this lonely world, but what loneliness is lonelier than the loneliness of the world-weary schoolboy as he is slowly ejected by the vast mouth of London, like the pip of an apple. Imagine the feelings of the pip, and you have the feelings of the banished boy.

I am sure the boxes on the roof of the cab are weeping dry

tears as they hear the mocking jingle of the brass bells on the waggling head of the immemorial horse. They chuckled in December when the matron packed them with term-worn raiment. They gurgled joyously as she locked their lids. They whooped with delight when she tied on the labels and they spied the old familiar address. They knew they were going home. But now they shrink from the imminent solitude of the lumber-room and the long void of dusty silence. The Play-box is sorrowful, although his stomach is swollen with a giant cake, clad in perspiring sugar, and ponderous with almonds and walnuts, citron and sultanas. But the Hat-box is the chief mourner. He has a vision of thirteen tall drab Sundays, waiting like sombre mutes for the burial of holiday mirth. He is as dreary as his master, and when the porter bangs him down on the platform he utters a hollow groan.

If these are the woes of the boxes, what are the woes of their lord? Napoleon on the quarter-deck of the Bellerophon was not more lugubrious. Victor Hugo, singing sad songs of exile in his glass cell on the roof of his house in Guernsey, was not more dejected. I think the Christmas holiday is harder to recover from than the others. The poison of pleasure is in the blood of the returning boy. His soul is toxic with sensations. For four weeks he has eaten too much and slept too little. He has drenched his mind with dissipations and diversions. His parents have taken him to the pantomimes and his uncles have taken him to the music-halls. He has been neck-deep in parties that begin early and end late.

The children's party is no longer a nursery tea: it is a variety entertainment when it is not a fancy dress ball. Small boys during the Christmas holidays lead the life of a man about town. You meet them everywhere. They lunch at the Carlton, come on from a matinee for tea at Rumpelmayer's, rush home to dress for dinner at the Savoy, winding up the evening at the Empire, followed by supper at Romano's. Is it strange that their nerves are flayed into shreds? Is it surprising that they go back to school in a state of mental, moral and physical decrepitude?

It is a mistake to imagine that the children of the well-to-do are benefited by a holiday in London. They are shattered in body and demoralised in mind. Their natural simplicity is corrupted by the pestilence of pleasure-seeking. They lose the power of tasting homely joys. They are too impatient to read Scott and too indolent to read Dumas. Their sole desire is to see some new thing, and to get to some fresh place. They crave after continual excitement and perpetual distraction. They tire of the most costly toys, and they despise the most amusing amusements. An army of conjurers, clowns, drolls, ventriloquists, and miscellaneous entertainers is engaged in the vain effort to please these pocket sultans. In spite of the whole metropolitan apparatus of recreation they are jaded and blasé, bored and stale. They do not know what they want, and they do not want what they know. They are far more pitiable than the children of the poor, whose nerve of joy is still unworn and unwithered.

The disease of the day is pleasure, and the boy of the period is a burnt-out sensualist at the mature age of twelve. He is a caricature of his elders who have ended where he has begun. He is an infant neuropath saturated with ennui and soaked with discontent. I was talking the other day to a pessimistic babe, who candidly confessed that he was tired of everything. "I know I am lazy," he declared, "but the truth is I have an inclination to do anything but work." He expected amusement all day every day. Stand in the vestibule of any London theatre during the Christmas vacation, and you will see these juvenile decadents driving up in motors and cabs with boredom stamped upon their weary features. Senility at seven is common. For the indulgent mother the problem is how to get her boys through the holidays without a nervous breakdown. I heard lately of a neurasthenic boy who had to be Weir-Mitchelled back to health.

What is the cure for this plague of pleasure? A return to simplicity. Boys won't be boys if we permit them to be men.

IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

LONDON contains everything, even Arcady. Are you in the mood for Arcady? Well, come with me this morning. We rise at six, and, leaving the lie-a-beds to snore, we walk in Kensington Gardens. I can see its ancient elms from my bedroom window, and often I gather May dew under them before the world is down. There is no May dew now. The grass is burnt white, and the fresh green of the leaves has been sobered by the sun. But as we stroll down the noble avenue of elms that borders the Broad Walk our eyes are cooled by the soft light that fills the verdurous corridor.

Throstle and blackbird are singing, doves are cooing, and through the branches we can watch the wind and the light playing their ancient game on the waters of the Round Pond. Near its silver marge there is a flock of sheep, some nibbling the short herbage, some dipping their soft noses in the water, some lying lazily under the trees. The only sounds in the air are pastoral. A distant dog barks, a rook caws, a sparrow twitters. Ducks are quacking as they waddle in the grass. The heavy whirr of their wings is heard as they fly from our intrusion. Then, with a level splash, they slide along the surface of the water.

The morning air is sweet in our lungs as we move round this bowl of blue embroidered with trees. London is shut out by a green silence. We have surprised a rural solitude. It is easy to dream as we idle indolently from tree to tree.

The quiet is populous with gentle memories. On this toy sea Shelley sailed his paper boats. In these glades Matthew Arnold rambled. Browning fled here from De Vere gardens. Laying down his busy pen, Thackeray often left his pot-bellied house in Young Street to smile at the children

in the Flower Walk. Here Mr. Barrie found his Peter Pan, and Mr. Max Beerbohm his "Happy Hypocrite." Yes, Kensington Gardens is peopled with ghosts of genius.

The Round Pond is the Petit Trianon, without the mock simplicity and the tragic aftermath. It is a toy paradise untainted by a meretricious past. Kensington Palace nestles cosily in its trees like a doll's house or a Noah's Ark. It might have been built in a nursery by a child, so simple are its lines, so naïve its ornament. The very windows, with their drawn blinds, are unreal. The water-tower leans against the sky like a boy's plaything. The fairy spire of St. Mary Abbot's stabs the toy clouds like the spires in picture-books. The golden cross of the Albert Memorial peeps over the trees. I am sure it was a boy who put the Speke Obelisk in that green glade, and planted those two tall chimneys at the end of the vista where the Serpentine hides.

The scene is set for a game. Toy palace, toy churches, toy trees, toy sheep, toy ducks, and toy pond are all ready for the sleeping children.

But see! Under the elms there is a burst of girlish laughter. Are they dryads? Yes, London dryads, pretty little shopgirls from Westbourne Grove. Country maidens, perchance, coming to ease their nostalgia in this Arcady before the long day behind the counter begins. They come, they go, and after a while the white nursemaids with their white babes begin to stipple the green pleasaunce. The charmed stillness is shaken with childish voices. Little elves dance and gambol under the trees, and the old oaks nod to the old palace, as if their loneliness were assuaged. So the ancient play goes on until the luncheon hour empties the toy Eden, and the sheep and the ducks are left in idyllic loneliness.

But not long. The afternoon brings a merrier rout of youth. The schools are closed for the summer holidays, and the children of the poor come to play beside the children of the rich. There are woeful contrasts now in Arcady. Blue eyes peer out of tangled golden curls and smudged features at the white fairies in their white chariots. Notting Dale and

Kensington Gore stare at each other half in wonder and half in envy, for the fine linen of the one is counterbalanced by the fine liberty of the other. "Rags" can roll on the grass, walk on his hands, turn cartwheels, fling stones, and angle for sticklebacks. The "Just So" child must walk soberly and solemnly round and round, chained to the skirts of watchful Nanna, vigilant Fräulein, or austere Mam'zelle.

Now the gravel margin is covered with children, launching all sorts of craft on all sorts of voyages. Small boys are dragging penny boats through the water, the bigness of their imagination eking out the smallness of their vessels.

Some of the yachtsmen are white-haired old salts, ancient mariners tanned with storm and tempest. One old man looks like Cap'n Cuttle come to life, hook and all. He climbs the iron fence with rheumatic groans, while his tiny granddaughter, Little Nell in person, utters wise warnings. He has a battered brigantine which crawls steadily from shore to shore through the crowd of disdainful yachts. The wind brings the water into his dim eyes, but the old man hobbles with his little girl round and round, absorbed in the voyages of his tramp.

Another grotesquely pathetic figure is a workman who pushes a baby in a bassinette round the Pond after an erratic man-o'-war, which staggers under full sail through the Bay of Biscay. He is a shrivelled little cockney, but his eye blazes with sea-rapture. His feverish gaze fixed on his pocket Victory, he fears lest the precious ship should strike reef or rock or shoal or be captured by the pirates that lurk and lie in wait on this perilous coast.

A crowd is gathered at Cape Kensington. A ship is in distress. Slowly she founders, and now only her mast-head is seen above the cruel waves. Alas! there is no lifeboat, and the weeping owner must conduct salvage operations with a string tied round a stone. But see! there is a battleship in the offing. It steams rapidly to the rescue. A hawser is made fast, and the great ironclad, rolling realistically, steams out to the rescue amid the sobs of newly widowed wives.

There are many strange craft from Hamley's and Gamage's. Clockwork submarines, electric launches, Thames steamers, fire-boats, torpedo-boats, motor-boats. The odour of methylated spirits and singed paint scents the breeze. Nautical phrases punctuate the chatter. Bald old boys with huge pipes and bamboo-poles thrill with rapture as keen as that which makes the children shriek and shout.

Fathers monopolise the navigation of the new schooner which they have bought for their sons. "Dad, you might let me sail it a little!" But Dad mutters something between the; teeth clenched on his pipe-stem, and goes on grimly navigating. Well, there are less innocent pastimes for parents; and the children, on the whole, are marvellously patient. "It takes little to amuse a child," says the mendacious proverb. But when the child is forty or fifty years old the saying is not so paradoxical.

I know no prettier sight than this our Cowes in Kensington. The white clouds are tumbling in the blue sky. The trees are piling their massed greenery all round the little regatta. The rippling water slides smoothly along the careening hulls. The white spinnakers flutter and flap and swell, the mainsails swing to and fro, the pennants stream at the mast-heads, and the merry voices of boys and girls float across the mimic ocean. After all, life is very pleasant. We smile tenderly at these sailors sailing their toy ships on this toy sea. Perhaps the Great Spectator smiles still more tenderly at man, the everlasting child, for the Round Pond is very like the world.

IN THE PARK

"WHERE do you keep your Smart Set?" cries Mrs. Whim. My pretty American cousin is supping with me at a smart restaurant.

"Dear lady, I don't keep them. I can't afford to."

"But where are they?"

"There!"

Brushing the tables with a lazy glance she tightens her lips into a rosebud of disdain.

"Won't they do?"

"No, they won't."

"We might find the Smart Set at Church Parade to-morrow."

"Yes, and we might find a needle in a haystack."

"What about Henley?"

"I don't like these haunts of the lower middle-class."

"Do parade to-morrow."

"Perhaps."

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I like Mrs. Whim. She gives the moral Philistine in me a holiday. She leads the strenuously idle life of the feminine Roosevelt. She lives in Europe while her husband slaves in America. Her pet grievance is that he makes money there faster than she can spend it here. Sentenced for life to the penal servitude of pleasure, her nerves are in rags. She is saturated with trional and sulphonal, antipyrin and phenacetin, anti-kamnia and veronal. I suspect her of chloral, and she has the morphine manner. She jumps if a fly walks across the ceiling. She is a panic in porcelain. She has everything she wants and nothing she desires. She buys more gowns and more hats and more shoes and more stockings and more of

everything than she can wear. She is mad about colour. Everything on her must "go" with everything else.

HYDE PARK, SUNDAY MORNING.

"So you came after all?"

"After all what?"

"I thought . . ."

"Did you? Well, you thought wrong, as usual."

She is in one of her white caprices. Her burnished hair shines in the sun like a dull gold aureole under the mist of her airy hat. She is clad in white clouds taken from the sky at dawn.

"You look like iced thistledown. Let me blow to tell the time."

"Any more melancholy metaphors?"

"You look like an Alpine volcano of flaming snow, O daughter of Vesuvius and Jungfrau!"

"I'll erupt if you persist in walking on my frock."

"Here is a nice plane-tree for you."

We sit down under the swaying leaves.

"So this is the Smart Set. How dreadfully they are libelled!"

"As to?"

"Oh, everything. They look like Adam and Eve before the fall."

"There is such a thing as dowdy depravity."

"But these people look as if they couldn't help fearing God and doing right."

"My dear lady, they fear right and they do God."

"Who is that heliotrope horror walking with that shot wisp of slime?"

"I think that must be the spirit of sea-sickness bowing to the demon of dyspepsia."

"Isn't she yellow?"

"Like a well-seasoned meerschaum."

"But where are the Smart Set?"

"What about that pair of undulating angels?"

"Oh, they're Frenchwomen."

We watch them gliding over the grass, and sinking into chairs like snowy sea-mews melting into the trough of a wave. They carry their clothes with the subtle French simplicity, learned in its elaborate innocence, delicate curves springing from throat to shoulder, from chin to waist, from waist to tiptoe; decorative details lost in the rhythmical harmony of colour and contour; the total effect gently incisive in its suave grace of flowing lines.

"Why do plain women dress better than pretty ones?"

"It's the triumph of art over nature. That's why so many Englishwomen are frumps. They expect their beauty to redeem their clothes."

"They do their best. The British bust; for instance, is always decked out like a shop window."

The feminine kaleidoscope is now a polychromatic nightmare. It shifts in the green sunlight into a writhing dissonance of effervescent rainbows. Innumerable hues clash and collide in jangled chaos. Brutal primary colours butcher the fainter shades. Fragile complexions fade and sicken as a fairy in ferocious purple sweeps by, a human scythe mowing swathes of discord.

"What is the fashionable fad this morning?"

"The filmy floating scarf that veils the roast beef of Old England."

"I like the filmy scarf."

"But Englishwomen are not sylphs, and nobody but a sylph should wear a scarf. Look at that girl—hers is like a halter."

"Anglophobe!"

"Not at all. I like Englishmen and Frenchwomen, but Englishwomen are too masculine, and Frenchmen too effeminate."

"But we are more moral than the French."

"Not a bit. You make a vice of virtue: they make a virtue of vice. You are afraid of being found out: they are afraid of not being found out."

All this time freshets of frocks are foaming over the low iron rail that skirts the path. Tiny patent shoes gleam below daintily lifted gowns as they rise and poise themselves and fall on the grass. There are brief glimpses of pink insteps in transparent stockings. There are seductive flashes of foamy lingerie and silken flounces. As I gaze I feel Mrs. Whim's ironical smile.

"It's like a minuet," I murmur.

"Oh, you men; you dear furtive liars! Why do you look at our feet before you look at our faces? Vassals of an instep! Slaves of an ankle! We don't gape at your feet."

"Naturally, dear lady. A man's foot is the end of a platitude: a woman's ankle is the beginning of a mystery."

"I suppose that is why you lie at our feet."

But the sky grows dark. A few drops of rain splash on the harlequinade. Panic! There is a wild stampede. In five minutes the Park is empty. Mrs. Whim whirrs off to luncheon. The comedy is finished, and as I pass Byron in his suit of bronze he smiles, or seems to smile.

THE CHARM OF A CHILD

WITHOUT children and flowers London would grow old and cold. It is hard to imagine a childless and flowerless London. If we knew that there were children and flowers in the stars, I think those night-lights would look less inhospitable. I fear there are no children in the moon. I doubt whether there are daffodils in the Pleiades. I am convinced that children and flowers are the especial grace of life. It is not easy to explain the charm of a child or the charm of a flower. It is the charm of a dying beauty that does not know it dies. It is the pathos of mortality unaware. It is the sad loveliness of fading sweetness. Knowledge is an ugly thing. When life begins to strive against death it loses its poised freshness. A man is comic, for he is full of helpless foresight. But a child is not comic. Being helpless, without foresight, it is exempt from the irony of existence. We who behold its exquisite incapacity to look before and after are stung by a sense of contrast. We feel that a gulf divides it from us. We watch its feet joyously approaching the abyss of wisdom. We await its fall out of the paradise of the unknown into the purgatory of the known. We know that no necromancy can stay its steps. Our impotence fills us with a secret tenderness. Helplessly we stretch forth our arms—we who have fallen—to the dream about to fall. The love of children is the pity of remembrance. We, too, were once children in our misty past.

Another fragile grace of childhood is its delicate immorality. There is no such thing as a moral child. For it the dreadful machinery of morality does not exist. There is no worm of conscience in its soul. It is a pity that the arrival of the worm cannot be postponed. I suppose education is a necessary evil,

but why meet it half way? There ought to be a close time for children. The torture of teaching ought to be staved off as long as possible. We ought to foster healthy ignorance in the young. We ought to give prizes for stupidity. We ought to reward children for resisting the baneful onslaughts of the schoolmaster. Their healthy hatred of learning ought to be encouraged. Clever children ought to be severely punished. Precocity ought to be a nursery crime. The ambition of every boy ought to be to fight his way to the foot of the class. The bright child ought to be put on bread and water.

Education is a gross impertinence. We regard a child as a thing that must be taught. We are wrong. We ought to allow children to teach us, for we can learn more from them than they can learn from us. It is adult arrogance to talk about the need of forming a child's mind. We can deform it, but we cannot form it. All educational aphorisms are horrible. "As the twig's bent the tree's inclined." But are we fit to bend the twig? Our idol is uniformity. We wish to bend every twig into a parallel line with every other twig. Nature is wiser. She abhors landscape gardening with its rhomboids and trapeziums of dragooned greenery. Growth is the best gardener. Some ferocious surgeons put the legs of children in irons in order to assist nature. It is a barbarous practice, but it is not more barbarous than the education which puts the mind in irons.

The growth of a child's mind is the most wonderful thing in life. Why is that growth arrested as soon as the child falls into the hands of teachers? Why does a child's mind grow more rapidly during the first five years of its life than during the next twenty? Because it is free. The mind of a child is supposed to be feeble. A man is supposed to have a powerful mind. The exact opposite is the truth. Most men have weak minds, whereas the childish mind is almost invincibly strong. The supple play of a child's mind is marvellous. It asks unanswerable questions. "Where was I before I was born?" inquired a boy of four. That riddle is insoluble. "Mother," said a little girl, "who is God?" That is a poser for the theologian. "Why am I myself?" That question was put to me

by a cherub who had not yet grasped the fearful mystery of multiplication. I did not attempt to answer it.

The logic of a child is crushing. One Shrove Tuesday I heard an infant of four reduce his parents to a state of mental pulp. He bent over his plate and licked the sugar off his pancake.

"Don't do that," said his father.

"Why?" said the child.

"It is rude to lick."

"Must I never lick anything?"

"Never," said his father.

"Then," said the child, after a thoughtful pause, "what is the word 'lick' for?"

It was a triumph of the Socratic method.

Are you afraid of a child? I am. We all are. Education is based upon our fear. We are afraid of being found out. Discipline is the armour of ignorance. Obedience is the sword of tyranny. We lie to each other, but the lies of the adult to the adult are nothing compared to the lies of the adult to the child. The nursery is a palace of lies. The school is a crematorium of truth. Parents pay the schoolmaster to teach what they do not believe. They hire pedagogues to assassinate the mind, and they call it education. We grieve over the decay of filial respect, but what about parental respect? Can we ask our children to respect us when we do not respect them?

It would astonish parents if they could see themselves as their children see them. Children are adepts in dissimulation. They swiftly learn to conceal their private opinions about their elders. Have you ever surprised the look of amused contempt with which a child meets the clumsy advances of a patronising grown-up? He knows that the amiable idiot is doing his best, but he recognises the amateur, and nobly endures his fatuities. The child is all imagination, and he instinctively resents any attempt to treat him as a harmless little lunatic. We err in trying to stoop down to a child. We ought rather to reach up to him. We ought to bring our dead imagination into touch

with his living one. I know a boy who loathes children's books. He often begs for a real grown-up book.

Our publishers fusillade the nursery with books which are an insult to the mind of childhood. They are careful exercises in inanity. They are hideous with a revolting facetiousness. I would not give these books to a puppy. They are beneath the intellectual level of Bedlam. The authors of these books are stickit novelists, baffled serialists, and undetected criminals. The modern child-book is stuffed with realism and devoid of romance. It stonies imagination to death with facts. It even makes animals uninteresting. I once gave a little boy "The Book of Romance," and I was delighted to find him one wet afternoon weeping luxuriously on the hearthrug over the death of Roland at the battle of Roncesvalles. They were golden tears full of Homeric magnanimity and heroic pity. The same boy was staying at a farmhouse one summer. He had been lying in a hammock in the orchard reading one of Mr. Andrew Lang's gallant fairy books. Boylike he left the book in the hammock. Next day before breakfast he found it dank with dew and woefully stained and torn. A romantic cow had been chewing it during the night. There was green cud on the leaves. "I suppose," said the boy, "we'll have fairies in our milk this morning." That conceit is a kind of wild poetry. It has imaginative humour in it.

Children are very humorous. I know an elflet who is only two years old, yet she bubbles over with humour. It is an emanation of radiant wonder. It flickers shyly in her blue eyes. It wavers in her tiny lips. It tinkles in her laugh and ripples in her smile. It is a very subtle quality, full of fine gradations. For example, she can distinguish between real grief and sham grief. She can caricature sorrow. She can pretend to cry, but her histrionic sobs and moans are quite different from her real ones. There is a chuckle in them. She can also parody the mannerisms of other children. She can burlesque a fellow-baby in a pet. Her dear friend Marguerite has a peculiarly wrathful way of saying, "No!" She can catch the very inflection of her voice, and cry her friend's "No!" like a baby Bernhardt. Her

memory is incredible. She can remember the rhyme-words of her long nursery rhymes and utter them with diabolical patness. I am sure education destroys the memory. This morsel seems to forget nothing. The odd thing is that she takes in ideas as a flower takes in sunlight. She knows things that cannot have entered her little brain by any link of association. It is a sort of magical absorption.

She is most inscrutable when she is silent. At times in the midst of boisterous fun she suddenly glides into an immobile rapture. Her face listens and her eyes are filmed with a beautiful wonder. You can see the flower-soft soul moving behind the flower-soft face, the life within whispering to the life without. Her look is visible poetry. It is at once a rebuke and a beckoning. It enables one to realise how ineffable life can be and how coarse.

Children are dramatists. This pretty sweetening dramatises everything. One day she saw a flock of sheep in Kensington Gardens. For her it was a terrible adventure. She went about baa-ing vigorously. A few days afterwards a sheepskin rug came home from the cleaners. When she saw it she stood petrified with terror. At last she baa-ed timidly, and by degrees mustered up courage to toddle over to it. With valiant foolhardiness she put forth her hand to touch it, and then shuddered with a fearful joy. It was another terrible adventure. Her dauntless courage was visibly wrestling with her dread. As I watched the little drama, I saw in it the whole history of man. It was the past in miniature. There in essence was the story of the human experiment, with its explorations, curiosities, and conquests. And I wondered whether there is a Spectator who beholds the little drama of man as I beheld the little drama of the child—watching with wise smiles little Man toddling over his little patches of land and sea with his little toys of steam and electricity, and listening tenderly to his little language. Yes, and perhaps behind that Spectator there is another Spectator—an infinite ascending series of Spectators. "Baa!" said the babe. After all, did Shakespeare say more?

MAINLY ABOUT LAW

THE HALO

THE Forging of the Anchor is a poetic labour which has been hymned by the minor bardling. Who shall hymn the Forging of the Halo? I do not know how much Mr. Hooley's Halo has cost in fees and refreshers, but the canonisation of a modern saint is expensive. Many a king has been crowned with a meaner ritual and a less elaborate ceremony. For seven months the great officers of State toiled to prepare the stage for the gorgeous celebration, and the sacred pageant itself lasted for twenty days.

At the beginning of the ceremony strange delusions were rife among the populace. There were vague suspicions with regard to Saint Terah, in spite of the fact that he had taken the vow of poverty known as Bankruptcy. In deference to these popular legends, the functions of the Devil's Advocate were entrusted to the Solicitor-General. But Sir Edward Carson failed to find a stain on Terah's robe.

When I entered the Old Bailey, I expected to find a cowering miscreant in the dock. Instead of a criminal I found a martyr. Already around his clear unsullied brow I discerned the nascent gleam of the dawning aureole. When he stepped out of the dock into the witness-box the celestial radiance grew more golden hour by hour and day by day, until at last nothing was needed save a background of stained glass, a choir of angels and acolytes with swinging censers.

Hard it was to restrain one's wrath before the spectacle of a just man at bay. The Crown became the culprit, and the Saint of Nottingham a gentle accusing spirit. The sword suspended above the judge's head became a sword of Damocles, threatening to fall upon justice herself if she dared to injure that spotless innocent, that holy victim of conspiring malignities.

Squalid and sordid was the setting of the scene. The renowned court seemed to be a morgue. Through its dingy windows a sickly, sallow light leaped dismally. In the airless cell all the inmates were huddled into absurd proximity. The judge could have dipped his pen in the dock. Sir Edward Carson could hardly gesticulate without decapitating the jury. But Saint Terah triumphed over this vulgar environment, his spiritual radiance transfigured the greasy walls and the grimy benches. Neither Luther at Wurtemberg nor Cecil Rhodes at Westminster achieved a victory so effulgent, a vindication so sublime.

Let me try to paint a thumbnail portrait of the good man. As he stands in the witness box he looks like a dapper owl—his large, round, dark eyes staring wistfully from under his meagre, high-curved eyebrows, full of puzzled pathos and tolerant astonishment, mild magnanimity and forgiving pity. The gentle and genial soul of the man brims over in those clear wells of untroubled benevolence. A simple, untutored nature, void of guile and cunning and craft, gazes out of their calm honesty. There is no shifty flicker in their unblinking glance, no filmy evasion, no sham emotion. They are like the polished plate-glass windows in Throgmorton Street; through them you may inspect the orderly furniture of the great financier's shining mahogany soul, with its impenetrable safes and strong rooms, its spick ledgers, its respectable clerks, its clicking tape-machines, and its domestic sentiment.

For me Saint Terah's eyes are an obsession, and the other details of his body mere insignificances. He has carefully groomed himself into a frozen aspect of convention. The close-cropped, black hair, decently brushed, has a neatly ruled parting; and, with a due regard for the traditions of melodrama, during the ceremony of trial it has turned a pathetic iron-grey. The black moustache and beard are meticulously conventional, the latter cropped close to the cheeks in City fashion. The only symptom of nervous eagerness in the man comes from his hands, which now and then have that horrible wandering unrest that reveals the hunted agony of the mind.

For relief I turn from the appealing flesh to the clothes which trick out its tragedy with farce. Mr. Hooley is an artist, and his tailor is a man of genius. He is dressed like a jovial country squire, with a deliberate smack of that honest vulgarity which captures the heart of a British jury. There is a loud splash of white knotted necktie on a sonorous pink shirt, while below a scarlet waistcoat bellows at its blaring band of brass buttons. His fingers drum on the desk, and his clothes carol "A Southerly Wind and a Cloudy Sky."

But the eyes take no part in this mummery. They are serenely sad and sweet, and as the rich rhythm of Sir Edward Carson's Dublin brogue undulates in accusations, they grow sadder and sweeter, until at last their sad sweetness overflows in a torrent of tears. That torrent sweeps through the Augean Court and sanctifies the grime-stained floor of the Old Bailey. Justice blows her nose, and Law takes snuff, while the Press turns the tears into headlines. The Old Bailey is a tear-bottle in which are kept the sobs of many misunderstood men, but the tears of Saint Terah are more precious than all the drops in that great lachrymatory. If the saint should ever write the story of his life, there must be a chapter entitled "Mes Larmes." Gracious is the touch of nature which shows the kinship between Mr. Hooley and Miss Blanche Amory.

After those tears I realised that the legal minuet danced so elegantly by Mr. Rufus Isaacs and Sir Edward Carson could only end by leading us gently towards the radiant realms of rehabilitation. And the mellifluous melancholy of Mr. Hooley's voice, as it groped after the finest and subtlest shades of verity, filled me with admiring pity for the lonely sufferer. No sense of wrong could make this patient searcher after truth weary in his quest. Let us all emulate his passion for rigid veracity, his fearless candour, and his fierce hatred of quibbling or equivocation.

But, fine as is that facet of Mr. Hooley's character, it is not finer than another which flashed out during his cross-examination—his loyalty to his friend Lawson. "Game as a linnet," he is also staunch as steel. Just as he freely forgave

the Treasury for prosecuting him, so he freely forgave Lawson for deceiving him, and his magnanimity culminated in his immortal offer to bail out his old comrade. Some may prefer to regard that as a stroke of absolute humour; I regard it as a noble display of that generous profligacy which has wrought the ruin of the man, leaving him without even the bed he made to lie on.

THE OLD BAILEY

LET us go to the Old Bailey and watch the closing scenes of a murder trial. The famous court stands amid the desolation of Newgate, on the site of which is rising a brand-new building. As we enter the court we pass through a lane of loafers, buzzing like flies round a carcass. The court is a small, mean, dingy chamber. Along one side there is a row of six desks on a dais. Above the midmost desk is an oaken canopy; fixed on its crimson panel an inverted sword of justice, gorgeous in its gilt scabbard. The six desks are strewn with sweet herbs, a quaint survival of ancient custom. In old times the prisoners often suffered from gaol fever, and the nostrils of the law were safeguarded by thyme and lavender, mint and rosemary.

Opposite the six desks is a large pen or pound or paddock. It is the Dock. Its size is surprising. Space is lavished upon the accused. The high side-walls of the Dock are furnished with glass as a protection against draught. There is ironic humour in the solicitude which shields from a draught a man who is on trial for his life.

The Judge comes in, followed by Aldermen and Sheriffs, each carrying a country nosegay of roses, carnations, and sweet peas.

The Judge bows to the Bar, the Bar bows to the Judge, and the dreadful ritual of a murder trial begins to unroll itself.

As I look around the court there is something familiar which puzzles me. What is it? Is it the colour of the woodwork, that revolting light-oak, bilious hue which is the official tint of Government furniture everywhere? The Dock is a vast blotch of it, and it looks like a horrible chancel in some hideous chapel, with the Prisoner for Priest and his warders for acolytes. Ah, that is the baffling resemblance which has been tantalizing me.

The Old Bailey is like a dilapidated conventicle, and the Dock is simply the largest pew, tenanted by the squire and his servitors.

As I listen to the sermon—I mean the speech of counsel for the defence—I succumb to the illusion. I nod. The good man is audibly inaudible. When a fragment of phrase reaches me it is so vapid that I cease to listen. Even the Prisoner seems bored by his own advocate, as if all desire for life were extinguished by this dismal dribble of forensic eloquence. I begin to understand why so many mediocre minds shine at the Bar.

But the sunlight strikes the windows, and touches the pallid Prisoner with rosy fingers, and in a moment I see right to the heart of this tragedy. Only one man in this court is in earnest, terribly, awfully, feverishly in earnest. It is the Prisoner. We are all tired, Judge, Jury, Bar, Press, Police, and Public. The sunlight beckons to us this summer afternoon. It whispers alluring visions of cool waves and winds, bright skies, and tossing cornfields. "Come," it sighs, and its voice silences pity and compassion.

But for the Prisoner the sunlight is an impertinence. He brushes it aside. With his eyes plunged into some vista of thought, he is isolated from us all, a burning body of flaming doom, every sense quickened with intense anguish of foresight. As his counsel ends, he glances swiftly over his shoulder at the clock. We all follow his glance, but the thought in our mind is bitterly different from the thought in his. We are wondering how long the last rites will take, and how much of the golden afternoon will be left. Oh, life is very insatiable, and it snatches its delight out of the very teeth of death.

And now the Prosecution—a forensic eccentricity. His twisted face is like a Reed caricature, the features writhed like those of a lemon-eater. His voice is like a Punch and Judy squeaker worked by steam at varying pressures. It spirts and spurts and sputters in thin jets, as if the sound were being squeezed through a small orifice. It is the noise of a fantastic engine of agony. All the conjunctions and prepositions, articles and participles, are sharply accented. When by chance he emphasises an important word, he goes back and de-emphasises

it. His sentences are broken into bits, chewed into staccato pieces, and spat out painfully in a tormented discord.

The Prisoner is now burning more fiercely than ever. His face is like a live coal. As I watch him his eye meets mine, and I shiver, for the soul of the man seems to wrestle with mine for a second. There is a look in his eye like the look I have seen in the eye of a stag dragged out of the water by the huntsmen, and surrounded by yelping hounds.

Horror takes hold on me as I watch this creature struggling in the toils. And as I note the frightful profile, with its zigzag riot of angles, its feeble chinlessness, its dreadful lack of equilibrium, its moral instability, its sharp brilliancy of intelligence, I shudder. This man, surely, has inherited a heritage of moral disaster.

Not in one generation was that tragic profile carved. Its callous insensibility is hardly human. Its crafty intensity is hardly brutal. The pointed ear, faunlike in its unnatural shape, hints at something repellently hideous, a recurrence of the dim evil and the dark power that curdles the blood and roughens the scalp and sickens the soul. Alas! that man should be made on the very verge of the ineffably obscene.

The Prisoner's iron nerves are now drawn out very fine. Somebody tears a piece of paper. He starts. His small, sunken eyes glance quickly round the court; then, as the Judge sums up, they settle like points of flame upon the old gentleman's placid face. The Judge wilts under their fire. Once he meets them, but after a swift duel he flinches and averts his gaze. The Judge and the Jury withdraw, the Prisoner disappears through his trapdoor, and again life asserts its claims. How long? Hardly have we asked the question when the Jury return. They do not disguise their desire to escape from this stifling oven of crime into the clean air.

The Prisoner reappears, the Judge returns, and for a second there is an electric pause. The Prisoner stands like a man of stone, his hands gripping the ledge of the Dock, his eyes fixed on the Foreman.

“Guilty!”

He does not blanch. The Judge fumbles with the Black Cap, which looks like an old woman's mutch, and then, in a low unemotional murmur, sentences the Prisoner to be hanged.

Still the Prisoner stands, gazing, gazing, gazing, into that far vista at the end of which is—what?

The sentence has broken his continuity with a snap, but still he stands, still he gazes. At last the warders seize him by the arms, and he is hurried out of the sunshine and heat and bustle of life.

It is not an impressive scene, but it has all the tangled triviality of realism in its tragic moments. It is not theatrical, save for the Black Cap, and, curiously enough, the Black Cap is the one unreal episode, the one touch that stagifies the ritual.

Stay! What of the roses, carnations, sweet peas, and sweet herbs? Well, perhaps they breathe tidings of a mystic world where even the murderer may rest at last.

THE POLICE-COURT

THE "virtuous end" of Regent-street is very vivacious this October morning. Oxford-circus is a whirl of 'buses, hansoms, motors, and petticoats. The crossings are alive with ladies. Every other minute the policeman in the centre of the road holds up his hand and cuts the traffic in two. Piling up the tide of vehicles, as Moses piled up the Red Sea, he allows the huddled groups of women to dart like flurried hens from bank to bank, from kerb to kerb. His gesture is quietly omnipotent. It freezes and thaws the torrent of wheels like the wand of Harlequin. The shop windows are craftily dressed with feminine fripperies. Their great plate-glass doors swing perpetually to and fro. The liveried scouts, ruddy giants, armed with cab-whistles and wheel-guards, are opening and closing the doors of carriages, calling "taxies," hansoms and growlers, and escorting nervous old ladies. The air is full of the hum and buzz of bargain-hunters, the frou-frou of silken *dessous*, the chatter of avid shop-gazers, the collision of a hundred perfumes. A blind man, in a short, white linen jacket, his clean-shaven, square-jawed, thin-lipped face thrown back in a blank, expressionless vacancy, tap-taps his way through the press. Chickens, fresh from the incubator, are running about in one shop-window. Women with miraculous hair hanging down their back advertise a hair-restorer in another. In a third, paste jewelry desperately strives to look like reality, its false glitter and lying lustre stimulated by the forged glare of electric lights.

Everywhere we see the desire of the star for the moth, and the desire of the moth for the star. The women have the tan of the sea-wind on their faces. They are garlanded with golden chains strung with fantastic charms. They carry purses and bags woven like mail out of steel and silver and gold. They

are encrusted with costly eccentricities. Round their high heels silken extravagances foam and flicker with all the hues of the dyer's art. Their hair gleams with fantastic combs. They exhale luxury, luxury, luxury! Poverty seems to be annihilated, but let us turn the corner and look at the other side of the shield in the Marlborough-street Police-Court. Round the entrance there is a knot of dingy loafers. Passing along a melancholy corridor, we open a dolorous door that leads into a sad-coloured room, littered with policemen. In the ceiling there is an oblong skylight like an inverted glass tank, with squalid blinds of striped ticking, and a whirring fan. Against the further wall a tarnished lion and unicorn are stuck over a bookcase full of gloomy legal tomes. Below sits a rosy old gentleman, with deeply ruled wrinkles. He is the magistrate. On the right is the usher, in his rusty gown. In front of him is the dock, a long, low, narrow wooden pedestal, fenced with crossed iron rails, its floor worn smooth by the brief trappings of innumerable malefactors. Blotches of liquid stain it here and there, for its transient inmates demand deodorization. The acrid perfume of carbolic stings the nostrils. It is the scent of crime, the perfume of poverty.

The magistrate is a lightning cadi. He deals out his penalties as suavely and swiftly as an adroit card-player deals his cards. All his underlings move like the gear of a lubricated machine. The prisoners are fed into and out of the dock as the paper is fed into and out of a printing-machine. They are extruded with the stamp of guilt or innocence on them. The smart dock-policeman takes the prisoner, puts him into the dock, calls out his name and number, and says, "Guilty or not guilty?" Another policeman kisses the Book, mumbles his name and number, and tersely gabbles the charge. Another rapidly reels off a string of previous convictions. Then the prisoner is asked if he wishes to put any questions, the magistrate jerks out a laconic formula ("Ten shillings or seven days"), the dock-policeman shuffles him out into the mysterious background, repeating the penalty in a still terser formula ("Ten or seven"), and the next prisoner is shot into the dock. It is

like the oiled mechanism of a self-ejecting breech-loader. The process is astounding. The human cartridges are slipped in, fired, and discarded with automatic precision. Now and then a slight hitch impedes the volley of justice, but it is rapidly removed, and the stream of sentenced flesh continues.

But what saddens me is the discovery that poverty is often the mother of crime, and that crime is not always the mother of poverty. Most of these stumps of manhood and womanhood are guilty of want and convicted of starvation. A man who would not be allowed to understudy a scarecrow is charged with having asked a gentleman for a penny. The penalty for begging seems to be three shillings or three days. It might as well be three millions or three centuries, so far as the regeneration of Lazarus is concerned.

One case is cruelly pathetic. A boy with a peaked and pinched face confesses that he did implore a gentleman to give him a penny. He is too doleful, too desolate, for protest. He gasps out his despair in toneless sentences. "Been walking the streets for a week—no food—no bed—I'm destitute." He is an image of ragged hunger and forlorn famine.

Another boy represents poverty in revolt. A policeman heard a smash of glass, found prisoner in doorway. "What are you doing?"—"I'm trying to break in, an' if you hadn't come, I would have been in."—"What did you do it with?"—"This." The policeman holds up a bar of iron. "Any questions?" The boy hangs his head, and mutters, "All true." He is stupidly indifferent. He is at war with society. He is crime in the rough and raw. We see in him a grain of the grit that clogs the machine of civilization. The grain gets into the machine. It is taken out at immense cost, kept in gaol for a few months or years, flung again into the streets, gets in again and out again, and so on, until it is finally arrested by Policeman Death, and gaoled for ever in the grave. There is something wrong somewhere. Surely at some point in the process the journey of the grain of grit can be diverted. Can it not be humanized and moralized, or at least sterilized? What is the sense of this perpetual futility of prisoning and disprisoning? Is there no better

way? Must the legal machine go on grinding its chaff for ever? Is there not a method more scientific and less inhuman? Chemists have taught us how to utilize the waste and refuse and residuals of manufacture. We want social chemists who can teach us how to utilize the waste and refuse and residuals of civilization.

Another class of police-court crime rivals begging in its pathos. It is the crime of trying to get into the army again. The army vomits the wastrel and lodges him in gaol, where he lives as the guest of the State. The army is a convalescent home for the wounded soldiers of society. The harried criminal, worn out with crime, tries to lose his identity by everlasting enlistments. But his degenerate physique betrays him, and he is tossed from the barracks to the gaol in a miserable game of social tennis.

I am convinced that the State cannot delegate the problem of criminal poverty to the Barnardos and the Booths. The true method is to attack the disease at its root—the child. No child should be allowed to mature in criminal penury. The State ought to stand by every cradle and lead the infant up to the light. In the end, it would be cheaper than this unscientific prodigality of surveillance and revenge which works in a wilderness of waste between the workhouse and the gaol.

CRIME AND THE CROWD

THACKERAY speaks of "that great baby, the public," and I recall his phrase as I stand outside the New Bailey, watching the crowd that is waiting for the verdict in the Camden Town murder trial. It is a child-crowd, a crowd of grown-up children.

Three o'clock in the afternoon. The crowd stands and stares intently at the floridly pompous building behind whose walls Robert Wood is fighting for his life. It does not talk much, though here and there knots of men idly debate the mystery. But, on the whole, it is a silent and moody crowd. It is composed of all classes. Here are two black-haired actors with flannel collars, fur coats, and blue chins; here a soldier daubs the grey light with a splash of scarlet; here a Gordon Highlander in full fig—tartan plaid, silver-mounted dirk, and white gaiters, with one blob of mud on them—struts up and down, on his arm a solemn servant girl, whose large hands are shapeless lumps wrapped in white cotton gloves. Women with whey-faced babies in their arms are constantly arriving and departing. A dandiacal Frenchman with a bushy coal-black beard, neatly combed and parted in the middle, gazes fixedly at the great door and the giant policeman guarding it. A grimy hawkker is selling sickly bananas. Women, with purple, puffed cheeks, dull eyes, and oiled hair, are bandying coarse jests with dingy loafers. The cheap eating-houses are filled with unwashed men, devouring strange messes that exude a rank savour of onions and burnt lard. A dim tavern, whose signboard boasts that it has been established two hundred years, is congested with rough men, smoking cigarettes and clay pipes, and drinking glasses of frothing ale and foaming stout. "The King of Denmark" has heard many a murder trial threshed out over its bar. Its smoky walls seem to be gloating and chuckling over its squalid memories.

They sneer at the raw, white-grey walls opposite, which are only beginning to take the leprous finger-prints of time and crime. "The King of Denmark" knows the Newgate Calendar by heart.

As the daylight wanes the sightseers come and go perpetually. Some of them drag tired children, muffled to the ears, to gape at the moving scene. There are laughing young girls in twos and threes, whose gaudy hats and cheap furs contrast sharply with the mouldy idlers whose coat-collars are shiny with ancient grease and grime. Some of these men are filthy monsters, with a fungoid evil down on their discoloured cheeks and chins. There is a dull, besotted degradation in their glazed eyes, their pendulous lips, their slovenly shuffle. Here is every type of criminal, from the fleshy bully to the gin-soaked drab. That swarthy fellow has a lower lip which protrudes horribly, an obscenity of bruised and bitten flesh.

On the smooth asphalt there is a sticky film of slimy mire, the glutinous London mire that is like no other mire on earth. Men with hose-pipes flush it with clear water that liquefies the mud. Up and down the sloping surface shamble and shuffle the feet of the crowd, hustled to and fro by the police. All sorts of feet in all sorts of boots and shoes. Flimsy, high-heeled shoes of girls, brown boots, black boots, and hideous boots that have been trodden out of shape. Lop-sided boots. Boots with gaping rents. Boots soaked with mud. Up and down, to and fro, they slither and slink. It is a nightmare of boots. They haunt me with a vision of all the boots in London, rising and falling day after day in the cold slush on the cold stones of innumerable streets. Millions of boots moving in couples, with millions of eyes and ears and hands and hearts above them. Boots of the living and boots of the dead. Ugh! By a trick of fancy I think of the boots worn by Phyllis Dimmock for the last time on that fatal Wednesday. I see them lying dumbly in that room of horror, while the charred letter lies dumbly in the grate. If they could talk to the embers of the letter, what a tale they could tell!

I leave the crowd and the shiny pavement as the lamps begin

to see their yellow light in its foul mirror. I pass the sombre policeman guarding the great glass doors. I climb the broad staircase to the vast hall with its painted frescoes, its veiled lights, and its waiting groups. It is curiously like the Central Hall of the House of Commons. I go into Court No. 1. I see the sword of justice in its sheath behind the grim judge. I see the prisoner sitting in the empty loneliness of the huge dock, a warder on either hand, and a keen-faced doctor behind him. Round three sides of the dock is a glass screen, and I can see the handrail plunging down the stairs that lead to the cell and to the scaffold and to the grave. The crowd in the court is not like the crowd outside. It is more subtle and more cynical. In it there are delicate and dainty women and cultured men—actors, actresses, novelists, dramatists, journalists, alienists, lawyers in robe and wig. It is flippant. It is cruel. It jests. It knows that the prisoner is safe. The judge knows. The lawyers know. The police know. The prisoner knows. We all know. Before the jury return the prisoner comes back. He is chewing a last mouthful of bread and butter, for he has just taken tea. He is cool, calm, almost gay. He sketches the judge, while the spectators stare at him in amazement. The warders stop him. He smiles. He talks to them airily. He smiles. He puts both hands in his trouser pockets, and strolls round the dock, surveying us all with a swagger and a smile. He smiles a cheery recognition at his father. He signs autographs with a flourish. The jury returns. He licks his lips. At the words "Not guilty" a sharp shout of exultation explodes like a mine, as if a button had been pressed. The judge raises his hand, and across the sudden silence is heard the muffled roar of the crowd outside, like an echo of the roar within. It is a superb stage-effect, electrically dramatic in its lightning rapidity.

I hurry to the outer gates. They are closed. Through their solidly massive bars I see a swaying, writhing, struggling tidal wave of white faces, moving unsteadily under the vague, shifting light of the street lamps. The numberless mouths are wide open like little black holes, and out of these little black holes

is pouring a torrent of bellowing discords, which blend into a high, shrill, sharp-edged song without words, ringing metallically, brazenly, in a prolonged clang of fiercely passionate triumph. The iron note of the song is held without fluctuation. It does not flag or falter. It drives straight on like a knife tearing through paper. It does not soar or sink. It is the cry of the crowd, the roar of the strange beast with a thousand throats. It is horribly human, hideously alive, appallingly savage. It is the howl of the beast of blood that stoned Stephen and crucified Christ, that battered down the gates of the Bastille, and drank blood in Cawnpore and Khartoum. It is the brazen chant of the Mafficker, the iron cadence of the Commune. It is the maddening chorus that has sacked a thousand cities. It is the dead march of death that has been heard in pogrom and massacre, in riot and in rapine. The hero of the mob is a man after its own heart, and if he had been condemned it would have stormed the New Bailey and torn its defenders limb from limb. Even its exultation is hoarse with menace, even its triumph is sonorous with fury. Civilization has not changed the mob. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

MAINLY ABOUT ELD

THE EAST INDIA HOUSE

BEHIND Liverpool Street Station, near the Houndsditch end of St. Mary Axe, there is a little lane called Cutler Street. On one of the houses is the inscription, "Cutler Street, 1734," a date which takes you back to the boyhood of Clive and the palmy days of the East India Company. As we walk down the street we pass an old-clo' shop, framed in whose doorway stands a vast Jewess, her mountainous form draped with manifold furs, placid, contemplative, immobile, as becomes the daughter of a race older than Aurungzebe's.

Before us rises into the grey sky a huge pile of brick buildings surrounding a great courtyard. In the Post Office Directory it is prosaically described as "London and India Docks Committee." But under that bald name lurks all the dead romance of eighteenth-century adventure. These dull warehouses carry in their dusty heart a dim memory of John Company, that wonderful shop out of whose ledgers came the Empire of India.

Mounting some ancient steps, we ascend a gloomy old staircase, its balusters polished by centuries of human hands, and enter a large official room. It seems that John Company, in its magnificently opulent way, built these gigantic buildings for its warriors. They were barracks in the eighteenth century, and in this wing were the quarters of the officers. We see the arch, now built up, which once led into the other half of the room, and under which Clive walked.

But the most eloquent witness of the past is the old door, with its quaint moulding and opaque glass panels. The right-hand half of the door has sunk half an inch, the old brass hinges having been worn away by the friction of generations; the hinges of the left-hand half, being seldom used, remain in their original

condition. These worn hinges affect us strangely. We think of all the dead hands that have turned the old handle, of the dead men whose feet have aroused the echoes of these buff walls. The dauntless figure of Clive once stood there between the gloom of that staircase landing and the light from these windows, the dreams of empire playing behind his steady eyes.

Down two steps we go and stand outside another heavy door, its mouldings carved out of the solid wood. We turn the handle and enter a little room in which Clive worked. It is full of Customs clerks. The mantelpiece is a venerable affair, the wood worn into a mellow, rounded ancientry. There is a tradition that once upon a time on the yellow wall over the fire there was a portrait of Clive drawn by some unknown hand. No man living has seen it. It is only a vague legend. But the tale goes that it still survives somewhere behind the distemper, a ghostly picture of a ghost. The portrait has vanished. It is only a shadowy reminiscence.

Leaving the room of the invisible portrait, we stumble down the stairs into Clive's back garden. The garden is a silence walled in by tall buildings that seem to be playing a solemn game of hide and seek with each other. We look up at the bedroom windows with their rusty iron balconies, whose criss-cross design wears a pathetic air of faded gaiety and gallantry, strangely incongruous in this world of bonded goods, police inspectors, and Custom House officers. Half-way up the building a queer wooden frame with dingy windows clings despairingly to the grimy wall. As we stare a sparrow flies out. We seem to smell the odour of Time here, as if we had surprised him at his work of decay. Perhaps he transformed himself into that phantom sparrow. Well, it is no wonder that they call this nest of memories the East India House. The old East India House in Leadenhall Street, where for three and thirty years the desk vexed and fretted Charles Lamb's gentle soul, is now a block of modern offices, but surely its spirit has passed into these precincts. Perchance the ghost of Lamb foregathers of an evening in this dreary pile, if not with the ghost of Clive, at least with the shade of Chambers, Dodwell, and Plumley, those faithful part-

ners of his toils. Even the ghost of Wawd may hear once more the voice of Elia stammering the couplet:

What Wawd knows, God knows,
But God knows what Wawd knows.

But we must leave these musty fancies and trudge through the mighty labyrinth of the warehouses. It is said that if you were to walk through them from top to bottom and from end to end you would have traversed twenty-two miles. We must be content with a shorter journey. Passing the curious old square clock, with its three dials, stuck on the wall, we step into the hydraulic lift that runs up and down the face of one of the lofty buildings. In a moment we are far above the ground, and trudging through miles and miles of vast chambers filled with chests of tea. The aromatic odour stings our nostrils. We pass mountains of tea, heaped up like sand, on which children might play king of the castle. Tea, tea, everywhere. A hundred thousand chests of it! Each chest is covered with Customs hieroglyphs that reveal its history to the expert eye, strange symbols gouged out of the wood. We grow weary of these aisles of Assam and avenues of Orange Pekoe. Here men are shovelling tea off the floor into cases. There men are treading tea down into chests. Their slow, rhythmical motion calls up a vision of the winepress.

As we walk along we note a window-pane which is quartered with lead strips. It is a relic of the window tax, from which small panes were exempt. As we descend from floor to floor we leave the realms of tea for the kingdom of silks, cashmere shawls, Persian carpets, and feathers. The Orient blazes in these coldly desolate rooms. The delicate odour of tea turns into the pungent smell of camphor and naphthaline. Here is the feather emporium of the world. The last feather sale realized £212,000. The total feather sales average over a million pounds a year.

Here are huge packing-cases, crammed with the corpses of green parakeets from India. The other day 250,000 parakeets were sold at one sale. Here are birds from the tropics,

skins of gaudy jungle-cocks mounted flat on paper, gorgeous birds of paradise, humming-birds in thousands, regent birds, Japanese jays, and Burmese Arguses. There is a fascinating museum here, full of spoils from the seven seas, models of Chinese junks, and oddments tingling with the rumour of traffics and discoveries in the days when the tall East Indiamen patrolled the path of trade. Here are cases of filmy ospreys worth ten guineas an ounce. As we take up a bundle a cloud of white dust floats in the air. It is rice dust, put in to increase the weight. Another trade dodge is to tie needles in the heart of a bunch of ospreys. We hear wonderful tales of the devices adopted by smugglers, of a cabin lamp filled with tobacco, of a drum of olive oil lined with pure brandy. Then we walk through vast rooms filled with huge cases of ostrich feathers. In another room the feathers are being sorted in alleys made of bins. There are forty grades of feathers, all subtly different in stem and flue. "Any booze?" says our guide. But he is asking for tail feathers, not for drink. Once upon a time a case of ostrich feathers worth £1,000 arrived with its seal intact, but with £80 worth of feathers missing. A board had been ingeniously removed and replaced. But the nails in it were different. They were sent back to Cape Town and identified as Harbour Board nails! Used tea leaves sometimes come from Germany dried, curled, and dyed! But we are footsore. We have seen enough, and after drinking a cup of the finest tea ever brewed we depart, musing over the marvels that are hidden in the back streets of London.

The vast Jewess is still wedged in her doorway as we go by.

TILTING IN TUDOR TIMES

You know Hazlitt's essay on reading old books. He notes how they bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. "They are landmarks and guides on our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we hang up, or from which we can take down at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens of our happiest hours." An old book transports us to the time when we first got a peep at the raree show of the world—through the glass of fiction—gazing at mankind as we do at beasts in a menagerie. Well, here I sit in Olympia watching the jousting knights, the heralds, the pursuivants, the marshals, and the men-at-arms, and as the spears are shattered, and the trumpet sounds the triumph, I am in a dream of remembrance.

It was many summers ago, and there was a boy, and there were high revels. But the boy had fallen under the spell of "Ivanhoe," and he begged to be reprieved from the picnic. In vain the revellers tried to bend his contumacy, and at last they left him alone in the silent house—alone with "Ivanhoe." What a day of romance! The hours flashed by unheard. The boy ate not. The boy drank not. Lying on his stomach, with elbows on the carpet and his chin in his hand, he forgot hunger, solitude, and physical discomfort in the coloured splendour of the romance. Not often in a lifetime can one escape for a whole day from human society and meals into a tranced vision of the past.

So this afternoon I am carried back to the strange delight of boyhood and fall to wondering whether I can recreate the boyish point of view that links "Ivanhoe" for ever in my mind with a lonely house and an empty stomach. Only the boyish temper

can enjoy the Military Tournament, the jousting, the housings of the horses with spiked brows, the silken pavilions, the stiff banners, the halberdiers, the billmen and the pikemen, the armourers, the esquires and the pages, the many-coloured hose, the purple cloaks that flow over the haunches of the coursers, the brassards and the gauntlets, the gorgets and the greaves, the helms and the visors, the tossing plumes on the crest of the casque, the rattle of tace on cuissard, and all the illuminated pageantry and golden pomp of chivalry.

In order to taste its full savour you must be a boy. You must have the gift of pretending. You must forget that you live in the age of motors, top-hats, and creased trousers. You must dream yourself into a dream of days when a knight and his horse were encrusted with shards of steel, like a small dragon-fly riding upon a large one. It was a sad, bad, mad, glad world. When a knight descried another knight pricking on a plain, he hurtled down upon him without ado, hewing and hacking for pure joy of death. Then blood was cheap, and a whole skin an indiscretion. The knights in the *Morte D'Arthur* slew each other as politely as we shake hands. The fashionable greeting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a spear-thrust, an axe-blow, or a sword-cut. When you killed anybody you had to open his visor in order to find out whether he was your brother—as he usually was.

The gentle knights led “the strenuous life.” They carried far more weight than a sandwichman, and they looked more hideous than a motorist or a diver. Yes, let me make a clean breast of it. “Tilting in Tudor Times” is a spectacle which delights the antiquary, but which makes the poet grieve. Its accuracy is depressing. Viscount Dillon knows too much to descend to the ignorance of Sir Walter Scott. He presents the tourney in its naked reality. It is very tame and tedious. The procession round the arena is a melancholy *præludium* to a mournful display of inferior tent-pegging, in which the knights are the pegs. There is no “go” in the march-past. Lord Dillon is a vile misogynist. A tourney without ladies is like beef without mustard, or porridge without salt. Their eyes ought

to rain influence and adjudge the prize. The "female interest," indeed, was very strong in the age of chivalry. Lord Dillon argues us out of our "Queen of Beauty." It seems that she was a mediæval Mrs. Harris. There never was no sich person. He admits that Queen Katherine of Aragon presented the prizes on one occasion, but he rudely remarks that she had no "pretensions to the fatal gift of beauty, though of high birth." What does he know about the lady's "pretensions"? Are not all royal ladies "pretenders" in this sense, from Mary Queen of Scots down? Do we not help them to pretend? But Lord Dillon robs us of all the joys of pretending.

It is heartbreaking to be told that the jousting knight was not smitten by the lance. That, it seems, is a poetical fable. It was the knight that smote the lance. There was no such thing as thrusting of a lance. "My tough lance thrusteth sure," sang Tennyson in error. It was the knight who thrust his breastplate against the lance. The lance itself was a kind of punt-pole, and dangerous only when it was broken. The splintered end then became a deadly peril. Thus Henri II. of France was slain. Young M. de Lorge, captain of the Scottish Guard, gave his majesty a counterbuffe on the head which carried away the pannage and panache of his headpiece. The lance broke, and the splintered stump pierced the royal right eye, whereat he was much "astonished," says Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. The expression seems inadequate.

I suppose it would be wrong to expect to see the floor of Olympia strewn with unhorsed knights. But I confess I lusted for something more thrilling than two animated Dutch ovens holding fountain-pens under their oxters, and riding past each other on opposite sides of a red Japanese fire-screen. I longed to see them charging plump into each other, to hear the crash and clash of steel-clad horses hurtling breast to breast and brow to brow like colliding thunderbolts. I wanted to see sparks flying from sword-bitten crest or spear-struck gorgerin. I yearned to behold the fiery smoke spurting from the nostrils of the warhorse, to hear his hooves thudding mightily on the Olympian tan.

The knights struck me as being very small. They are not big men of their hands. Also they are comic. It is a kind of blasphemy to make this dread admission, but it is as well to face the bitter truth. The knight in armour looks like a lame shrimp or a lopsided lobster. His head is fishlike, and the device on the crest of the helm is top-heavy. Perhaps the art of wearing armour and tossing the plume has been lost. The Olympian knights looked very ill at ease. Their iron waistcoats and knickers seemed to nip them. I wonder how Sir Grummer Grummersome managed when his backplate tickled him. Did Sir Lancelot du Lake suffer from armour-galls?

Will posterity assemble at the Military Tournament of 2306 to gaze at a learned representation of Edwardian costume? If so, what will they think of our top-hats, cutaway coats, waistcoats, tubular trousers, and hide boots, our starched breastplates, our braces, and our buttons? Will their novelists romanticise us as our novelists have romanticised the knights? They will have their work cut out, **I fear,**

HAMPTON COURT

THE other day I spent a few pleasant hours at Hampton Court, rambling through its leafy pleasaunces and storied apartments. There is much to delight the eye in the one and much to stimulate the imagination in the other. It is well, however, to choose a quiet day, when the paths are not choked with chattering visitors, and when the stately chambers are not littered with weary lovers. Solitude and silence are things necessary if you desire to feel the charm of the old palace, with its faint fragrance of the romantic past.

There is something strange and bizarre in the violent contrast between the vague ghosts who look dreamily out of the pictures and the solid flesh of the living. They are delicate and fastidious ghosts, gallantly and gorgeously attired, and they seem to gaze with a secret scorn at the hideous garb of the good folk who trudge past them in an interminable procession of uncomprehending bewilderment. I fear the time hangs heavily on their painted hands, as they stare at our bowlers and our boots, our cloth caps and fancy waistcoats, our ugly starched collars and our prosaic neckties. The languorous beauties of the Court of Charles the Second gaze with calm disdain at the feverish finery of our maidens and matrons, with its baffling incongruities of sham fur and dishevelled feather, screaming paste and shrieking pearls. Their sins were seventy times seven, and now they are punished day after day and year after year with the contiguity of a generation which is without taste. Yet still they smile with their voluptuous lips, still they gaze with sleepy eyes that speak the sensuous soul. Their night-gowns are still fastened with a single pin, and they still trail their silk attire through meadows and purling streams. Their hair has not been dressed for two hundred years, but time has not tumbled

it, and its wanton tendrils still wander over their white brows and painted cheeks.

It is now quite safe to fall in love with these sirens who once broke so many hearts. Their beauty has lost its sting and their grace its victory. It is very pleasant to flirt for five minutes with the Duchess of Richmond. She still preserves her *air de parure*, her faultless features, her dazzling complexion, and her luxuriant hair. She it was who sat by command of the king for the figure of Britannia which still glorifies our penny. When you are tired of her, you can kill a few moments with what Pepys calls "the so-much-desired-by-me picture of my Lady Castlemaine, which is a most blessed picture." When you are sated with her loveliness, you can toy with the Duchess of Portsmouth, and wish that you had been with Evelyn when he saw her in her dressing-room in her morning loose garment, her maids combing her, newly out of her bed, his Majesty and the gallants standing about her. It is not hard to lose your heart to the Countess De Grammont. One can well believe that this picture made the Duke of York fall in love over again with the original. A charming story is told about her marriage. The Chevalier De Grammont, after paying court to her in London, repented and fled. At a Dover inn he was run down by her two brothers. "Chevalier, have you forgotten nothing in London?" "Pardon me, gentlemen," he replied, "I have forgotten to marry your sister." The chevalier thereupon returned and married the lady. One wonders how he ever had the strength of mind to fly from her.

It is hard to believe that the world in which these phantoms moved was the same world as our own. There is a strange fantasy and elaborate unreality in the expressions on their features. These painted eyes seem to conceal thoughts and moods and emotions which are beyond our experience. The life that plays round the corners of the lips seems to be an alien life with a secret mystery in it. The picture of Francis I. and his wife, Eleanor of Spain, affects one very oddly. It is as grotesque as a Chinese ivory or a Japanese bronze. The ironic figure of the fool standing behind and holding up a mocking

forefinger suggests a kind of sinister symbolism. One feels that the king and the queen are helpless dolls in the nursery of fate. Indeed, all the kings and queens on these walls look like feeble marionettes. Even the ponderous flesh of Henry VIII. does not convince us. He seems to be made of pasteboard, like the king on a pack of cards, and one wonders whether real passion could ever have burned in his veins. Still more unreal is the mysterious portrait of a mysterious woman in a marvellously embroidered garment which looks like a cross between a dress-gown and a kimono. She is certainly not Queen Elizabeth. Who was she? No one knows, and no one will ever know. The secret and subtle face is alive, but we cannot interpret the meaning of the pallid smile on the lips and the quiet misery in the eyes. She is standing in a wood, and her right hand rests on a stag with a garland of flowers round its neck. Her fingers are long and fine, and on her feet are curiously wrought sandals. These enigmatic verses are inscribed on a tablet at the foot of the picture:

The restless swallow fits my restless mind,
In still reviving, still renewing wrongs;
Her just complaints of cruelty unkind
Are all the music that my life prolongs.

One cannot help being teased by the strange mystery in these verses and in the woman's face.

I am very fond of beds, but they must be old. There is no romance in the modern bed, whether it is made of cast-iron, or brass, or fumed oak, or wood painted white. The state beds at Hampton Court look very uncomfortable, but they are delightfully pompous. There must have been a ripe satisfaction in dying on a bed of crimson Genoa velvet, under a ceiling painted by Verrio. One would not greatly mind being murdered in a bed draped with lilac satin which had been embroidered by orphans. It must have been in such a bed that Othello strangled Desdemona. The bed of Queen Anne and the bed of Queen Charlotte and the bed of William III. seem to give body to history. One falls to wondering what Queen Anne looked like while she slept. Did she snore? Did she sleep with her

mouth open? Did she wear a night-cap? The sleep of Henry VIII. must have been a portentous sight. I am sure he had bad dreams, and I hope his murdered wives walked regularly round his bed. Even more fascinating than beds royal are clocks royal. There is an old clock here made by Daniel Quare, which goes for a whole year without being wound up. It has been telling the hours in yonder corner for nearly two hundred years. It is telling the time to-day, and I suppose it will go on telling the time after you and I are in our graves. I cannot help looking on it with awe, for it lives with a kind of life among these memorials of the dead. It makes one shiver as one feels that it is ticking us to death as mercilessly as it ticked to death all these kings and queens, lords and ladies, gallants and courtiers. There is a delicate humour in Daniel Quare and his clock that never runs down.

MAINLY ABOUT SPORT

THE DERBY

SOME things beggar description. Other things are begged by description. The Derby is both. It begs description, and description begs it. Every year oceans of ink wash over continents of paper. Every description of the Derby is like every other description. It is fixed by tradition, like the marriage service. Fleet Street is the most conservative highway in the world. It likes to file events for reference. Somewhere in the misty past a journalist saw the Derby. Perhaps it was in 1780 that the first article was written about the first Derby. With awe I salute the nameless creator of the Derby legend.

Still, 1780 is a long time ago, and it occurred to me that after a hundred and twenty-six years Fleet Street might safely take another look at the Derby. It is barely possible that there may be some change since Diomed's year. So I go to compare the legend with the reality.

From Epsom Town I walk a mile along a leafy road. The sky is a blue bowl filled with sunlight to the brim. The chestnuts have lit their candelabra. The fields wear green mantles embroidered with buttercup gold. The hawthorns glimmer in rose and ivory. Shepherd's clocks shake their filmy heads. Between the hedgerows drifts a blue wisp of petrol, wreathing delicately round the cool, pale green leaves of lime and elm. The white ribbon of dusty road is dotted with sad and silent travellers. Sadness and silence on foot. Sadness and silence on bicycles. Sadness and silence in vehicles. No smiles. No songs. No joy. We are like dejected ants. We crawl.

Now the road leans like a ladder against the sky, and mounting the last rung we see the skirts of the Downs. They are frayed and bedraggled. They are crusted and caked with splashes of human mud and mire. Woeful men are selling

c'rect-cards, bananas, and tumblers of green tonics. A sleepy child sits wearily beside a basket of cocoanuts. The verdurous mystery of the paddock sheds a breath of calm romance over the tortured chaos of motors, coaches, brakes, 'buses, and non-descript vehicles struggling up the hill.

Passing a lurid tavern, postered to the chimneys with liquorish appeals, I dart through the train of tired horses and tired men, and suddenly the Racecourse lifts itself up swimmingly before my eyes like an apparition. The blue of the sky is pimpled with kites upholding advertising scrolls. It is like a Chinese festival. The green turf is blotted out for miles by a multitude that no man could number. The earth is clothed with men. Far away on the sky line I can see green trees. But inside the circle of sky I cannot see enough turf to sod a lark.

The movement of life here is almost intolerably huge. Its hugeness is deepened by its disorder. The crowd is not like an army. It has no coherence. It is like a flat monster that is eating itself, chewing itself, licking itself, twisting itself, turning itself inside out and outside in. It is horribly formless and shapeless. There is nothing so inhuman as humanity.

Lest I go mad with man, I plunge into the mass, and gaze at its corpuscles and particles. The bookmakers are like bell-buoys in a raging sea. Round them the crowd breaks in foam and spray. They alone retain their personality. The others are merged in each other. Their faces are like the round oes in the key-plan of a coronation picture. But the bookmakers are the Supermen. They strive to emphasise their isolation. They wear grotesque garments, naval uniforms, white beaver top-hats, long white coats, broad leathern scarves studded with glittering coins, tennis flannels. On their satchels are polished brass name-plates. Brass name-plates are fixed on their hat-bands. Indeed, the bookmaker is all brass. He has a brass face and a brass voice. I hear him say "No!" in a tone that is like the cough of an iron foundry, "Na-a-o-ow!"

The crowd contains all human contrasts between wealth and poverty, between the unemployables on the grand stand and the unemployables on the bare ground. Over the clock under

the royal standard I can see the King's white beard. At my elbow is a grimy boy yelling in a sad sing-song, "Kahmaday-shun." But the livery of Lazarus is dirt rather than rags. I see nobody without boots. I meet no mendicants. Even the scum of the scum are clothed. Most of them are smoking or eating or drinking. The food of democracy is dreadful. The jellied eels affright me. Baskets of livid pastry sweat in the dusty sun. Hard-boiled eggs are popular. So are acid drops.

The amusements are few and dull. There are boxers with cornets and wooden rattles, swings, roundabouts, try-your-strength machines, cocoanut shies, games of chance, such as 'the crown and feather.' Tipsters and cardsharper tout desperately for clients. But as a rule the crowd is listless, melancholy, and subdued. I see one girl in crimson satin. A cockney wife reviles her husband for leaving her "in a bleedin' 'ole on the bleedin' course," pulls off his imitation panama, and threatens to tear it up. "Bloody" and "bleeding" are the pet intensives of the cockney. There is another participle which is too obscene to print. It is used by men and women, boys and girls with absolute irrelevance.

The roar of the crowd is an amorphous din, stabbed by the clang of a bell, the blast of a bugle, the whine of a concertina, or the hoarse howl of the "bookie." There is a strange silence before the race; then a strangled hum floats over the hill. On one of the stands I see a gesture—an arm is silhouetted against the sky. Then the horses flash along the ridge like Valkyries—flash and fade. The far hum deepens into a sonorous tumult. I am jammed against the rails. There is a cry of "Spearmint!" A jumbled tangle of horses with heads low and necks outstretched, violent pigmies in many-coloured jackets, whips rising and falling, a rapid rub-a-dub of hooves drumming on the hard turf, fragments of soil tossed in the air, and all is over. It is instantaneous. I can compare it only to a handful of peas thrown against a window-pane. Then the crowd magically submerges the course, and the long green avenue is blotted out once more.

The dramatic tension during the race is terrible. I feel it like a kind of concentrated agony. I am impassive. I do not

care what horse wins. But the passion of the crowd grips my heart like a vice. The communion of saints is nothing to the communion of sinners. I am hypnotised by a monster with five hundred thousand brains all thinking the same thought. Suddenly the monster dissolves, and the strain relaxes. It is the most enormous undulation of life that this passionate planet can achieve. Through it all the calm tethered horses eat their oats or crop the trampled herbage, infants sleep, the wind blows, and the sun shines.

One picture out of myriads remains stamped on my memory. Two grinning buck niggers are being posed by an itinerant photographer.

"That's a sight," says an American, "you couldn't see in the States."

"Why?"

"Wal, no white man in my country would photograph a nigger."

THE STRONG, RESPECTABLE BARGE

"THE SHIP" at Mortlake is opposite the winning-post, and therefore it stands knee-deep in the Boat Race Crowd. Perched on its windy roof between the pale blue sky and the pale grey water we look down at the moving multitude. Our lofty isolation is not inhuman, for we are a part of the human whirlpool. The Crowd is a child, even as we are children, playing with the cheap toys of sensation provided by the showmen who run the show of life.

At two o'clock the ebb tide has not turned, but soon a piece of wood suddenly pauses as it slides seaward, hesitates a while and then slowly wanders up the stream. Now the flood tide is running fast, and with it comes the Crowd, in spates and freshets, in turbid torrents. And what a Crowd! How richly diverse! We sigh over a haggard little mother carrying a drowsy baby; at her elbow, sucking his pipe, slouches her silent man. We chuckle over a fat woman, cloaked in bright Prussian blue, with mock ermine toque and stole and muff, blood-red handbag, white cotton gloves, and a bunch of blue ribbons under her treble chin.

Below us waits the telegraph van, its pencils dangling from strings, and on its roof a swarm of schoolboys, one of them gloomily poring over a comic paper. On the top of a post sits an urchin in agony. He has been in torture for hours. He shifts his posture perpetually, now kneeling, now standing, now sprawling on his stomach, a symbol of the hedonist who buys a little pleasure at a great expense of pain.

There also is the Boat Race Dog. He is a doleful dog, scarred with traditions, and his fur is peeling off in patches. He is like a museum dog, weary with long decay. What can be his frame of mind? I fear he is a cynic.

Chattering shoals of cockney hoydens are hustling about in twos and threes. They are all titivated from head to heel with fripperies in every shade of blue. Their furs defy derivation, and vainly we try to conjecture what strange beasts wore these dyed skins that shudder in the astonished sunlight.

What is this dream in the pale-blue "Umbrella Hat" and the heavily spotted veil? Her crackling silk gown is shot with green and red, green tassels hang from its yellow-edged vandykes, her green-gloved hand holds a ruddy muff, and a rope of giant pearls hangs like a halter round her neck. Beside this voluptuous beauty bridles a musty dame in a purple motor-cap, her shoulders shawled with an old horse-rug. A despondent banana-merchant leans against a wall, while his wife sells blue bead necklaces at a penny a row.

"Oo'll 'ev a Stend? Yer can't beat this Barge. She's a strong, respectable Barge. She'll rise wiv the Tide, and then yer won't see nuffin'. Oo'll 'ev a Stend?"

Slowly the strong, respectable Barge is plastered with humanity as a fly-paper is plastered with flies. There is music on the Barge. A sad man plays sadly on a harmonium which is dying of bronchial catarrh. His hands and feet move mechanically, while his glazed eye roves in quest of coppers. On his left a dingy woman wails "Annie Laurie." On his right a thick-necked gentleman follows her powerful moans on a desolate flute. For hours these three sad ones thump and bleat and blow together on the strong, respectable Barge. Their triple misery worms its way through the surging clamour of the Crowd.

Despite the discords of the doleful Three the strong, respectable Barge is now gorged with gazers. On its very edge a boy is squirming in anguish, holding on with his finger nails. We tremble for him. One throb of curiosity behind him would push him into the water. I forget the Crowd. I forget the Race. I forget everything. The fate of that wriggling brat is more to me than the fate of Oxford. I am fascinated by his "secret trial." Nobody cares for him but me. It is a callous world.

But now the museum dog is barking. The Crowd is swaying and lurching between the river and the brewery on whose high

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walls is emblazoned the proud boast: "Reid's Stout." The Crowd is a queer beast, for it is now quite inhuman. It has been boiled out of itself into something else. It has been "rendered." It ferments visibly. It seethes. We smell the foul reek of it. It is like a horrible flower-bed heaving in an earthquake. It is a nightmare of dirty pink toadstools trembling on dusty black stalks. There are sudden explosions in its smutty unrest, and we see the flash of a soldier's red coat or a sailor's blue collar, for only the primary colours leap from the chaos of weltering hues.

The Crowd is weary. It is sad with suspense. Will they never come? "Votes for Women!" The suffragists go by in their little steamer, gesticulating like little marionettes. Their vehement pantomime makes the Crowd laugh a big, broad, jolly, brutal laugh. There is nothing mean in Mob Laughter. It is hoarse and coarse, rough and rude, but it has the clean honesty of life in it.

Suddenly, into this vulgar ribaldry of the sweating, shoving crowd, there flashes a delicate vision of fragile and fastidious charm—the Eights! They skim round the bend of the river like large dragonflies with gossamer wings, the slim oars daintily flicking the water, and the beautiful young bodies swinging in a long, slow cadence of youthful grace and youthful power.

The vision is past, and we remember our perilous boy. Alas! he is no more. Has he been drowned? We hope not, but we know not. A lady in white falls out of a boat, and is promptly rescued, dripping like a mermaid. Do we pity her? No. The memory of that boy haunts us. Perhaps he had a mother. Perhaps his mother is on the strong, respectable Barge.

BUSHIDO AT LORD'S

"YEH," says my American friend. "This is my tenth trip, and your shop-soiled side-shows make me tired. Can't you show me something noo from the skin to the skeleton? I'm fed up with Old England. Give me a block of Noo England, if you've gotten any."

"What about the Test Match at Lord's?"

"Cricket? Too slow for me. How long does it last?"

"Only three days."

"Well, time don't seem to be money here, anyhow. Will there be a crowd?"

"About thirty thousand."

"Sure? Thirty thousand folks wasting three days in one week on one game. Ninety thousand days! Why, that's nearly two centuries and a half burnt on buncombe. You are a great people."

Nevertheless, we go to Lord's.

"Have we got to sizzle here all day? Why isn't there a roof?"

"We are a robust race."

"Who's that fellow with the bad teeth and the red face and the white hair?"

"That's Craig, the Surrey Poet."

"Ladies and gentlemen," shouts Craig, "if England wins the toss, I'll throw my 'at oop in the air. If Australia wins, I'll joomp on it."

We watch Craig's silvery poll working steadily round the great green carpet, with its sloping fringe of faces. Gasps of laughter punctuate his progress. On the grey Pavilion the starry Federal flag flutters above the M. C. C. colours. Opposite us the huge black scoring-board bisects the long banks

of silent humanity. To the right the white screen rises in front of the nets.

Now the sun-soaked air is tense with the concentrated impatience of thirty thousand people. Smart femininity in its multicoloured muslins and painted chiffons abdicates its fluttering and flickering charm. Sport submerges sex, even in the high white boxes and the ladies' stand.

Suspense . . . See! Craig tosses his hat high in the air, and instantly the manscape round the ropes fires a ragged volley of cheers. Now the crowd shakes itself into a sharper silence. Shadowy white phantoms gleam behind the dark Pavilion windows, and break into sharp, snowy silhouettes in the doorway. The crowd roars sonorous welcome. The Australian eleven, led by swarthy, beetle-browed Darling, leap gaily down the steps, and move alertly in twos and threes toward the stumps. The scene is set with a formal etiquette as rigid as that of a Court ceremony. The crowd now waits for the England batsmen. Two white ghosts glimmer at the farther end of the pavilion. The crowd roars with a new ring in its deep throat-music at iron-grey MacLaren and heavy Tom Hayward.

Now the umpire takes the new ball from his pocket, and tosses it on the turf. The batsman takes centre, the field is craftily placed at cunning angles, the bowler faces his opponent, runs up to the crease, and delivers the first ball. Sixty thousand eyes follow its flight. Sixty thousand ears drink the music of its impact on the willow. And so the great game begins with Roman dignity and Olympian pomp.

A French critic has made a study of the psychology of the crowd. I wish he were here. Many a crowd have I seen, but never one like this. What magical spell fuses these thousands into one gigantic personality? Before each man passed the turnstile he was a separate ego. Now he is only a speck in the grey matter of one titanic brain that thinks one thought, thrills with one sense, and feels one shock through one network of monstrous nerves. It is a manscape, an immense man made of many men. His giant lungs are breathing multitudinous breath. His colossal limbs sprawl hugely round the vast green amphi-

theatre. His Atlantean arms embrace this shield of earth whereon dart and dance these thirteen white pigmies. His il-limitable laughter smites the tree-tops and breaks in musical spray against the blue dome of cloud-splashed sky. His enormous hands clap in sudden thunder. His Brobdingnagian breast expels a surging sigh that rushes and rustles like a mighty wind. My American friend is silent. I look at him. He looks at me.

“There’s your block of New England!”

He smiles a slow smile of deep content.

“It’s great,” he sighs.

What has wrought this miracle? The spirit of sport and the cult of kinship. Blood and Sport is better than Blood and Iron. And as I watch England wrestling with Australia, I look across the ocean to the Sea of Japan, whose waters wash the ruins of the Russian Armada, halfway on the road to the Southern Cross. I fall a-musing. The secret of Japan is Bushido, and Bushido is the spirit of Sport, the spirit that makes one man out of many men. This crowd is lifted above its lower self. It feels a dim, common ecstasy. It flames with the indomitable good humour of the Anglo-Saxon, with his chivalry, with his patience, with his passion for fair play, with his unselfish delight in the dauntless heart and the unconquerable will.

The long day dies. The crowd melts, but melts only to flow again next morning into the same gigantic mould of passion. The men are different, but the manscape is the same. My American is magnetised by this wonderful crowd, which wants both sides to win, which awards nice praise to every nuance of the game, which inflects its vast voice with delicate shades of humour and irony, and which simultaneously exults in England’s triumph and aches at Australia’s defeat.

But look! Victor Trumper is batting. Ah! here is our hero. His romantic temper charms the magnanimous multitude. Young, lithe, clean-limbed, bright-eyed, sunny of soul, gallantly gay, daringly adventurous, exulting in his fresh manhood, a radiant image of the happy warrior—in a moment he sets our pulses galloping. The manscape shivers with sheer joy as he

smites its chosen champions hip and thigh, glorying in that valour so direly valiant, revelling in that disastrous mastery over eye and muscle, nerve and thew. Thus in perfect knight-hood this knightly crowd salutes the perfect knight, the Bayard of Australia. And when all too soon he bites the dust, the noble temper that glows in the ballad of Chevy Chase glows again in the chivalrous crowd. It takes the vanquished Victor by the hand and cries in one glad, sad shout of yielding triumph, "Wae's me for thee!" That is Bushido. That is Sport.

Am I hyperlyrical? Is Kipling's scorn of "the flannelled fools at the wicket" nearer the truth? I think not. My American thinks not.

"Well," he says, as our hansom picks its way through the dissolving crowd, "we have nothing like it."

As I survey the world, with its mean welter of international avarices, as I touch the slime of finance and the pitch of politics, I cry not for less, but for more of this clean, pure spirit of gallant rivalry. An Empire of Sportsmen is what we need to-day, and a World of Sportsmen to-morrow.

THE ALL-BLACKS

BEING interested in everything, we set out to see the new zealots from New Zealand who are revolutionising Rugby football. We know nothing about football. The rules of "Rugger" and "Socker" to us are as obscure as the Eleusinian mysteries or the song the sirens sang. Our knowledge of the game is purely literary, gleaned from the immortal description of the Schoolhouse match in "Tom Brown's Schooldays." Therefore our impressions will be virginal. They will be vivid with ignorance and nervous with novelty. We trudge through the Richmond mud amid a procession of capped, mackintoshed, knickered, and putted young men.

The green playing-ground is fringed with trees, some leafless, some with their golden rags of autumnal leafage glinting in the watery sunlight. There is a crowd standing round the ropes. There are covered stands on each side. Inside the ropes there are three lines of newly sawn benches with carpenter's pencilled marks at intervals to define each seat. Between two of these marks we squat. Beside us is an Irish girl, who is frantic with "footer" fanaticism. Bidy tries to expound the complexities of the game for our benefit. But her exposition bewilders us, and we fail to grasp the meaning of knock-on and throw-forward, off-side and on-side, touch and try, drop-kick and place-kick, tackle and charge, punt and fair-catch, five-eighths and three-quarters, dead-ball lines and the twenty-five.

Far away over the tree-tops we recognise a landmark which helps us to anchor our five wits. It is the Kew Pagoda. But soon a splay-footed programme-seller makes us feel quite at home. He has often sold us the "c'rect card" at Lord's. Then white-haired old Craig appears with his gap-toothed smile and his lyric on "the gallant men from New Zealand." The other

day it was a madrigal on "the gallant men from Australia." As he passes he calls out, "Velocity, Santry, Dean Swift!" Roars of laughter! What does he mean?

"You *are* a gom," says Bidy. "It's the big race!" Blushing, we reply, "What big race?" Bidy turns on us with a scornful eye.

"Sure, man alive, you've heard of the Cambridgeshire!" We are crushed into silence. Then we venture: "But we didn't know there were races at Cambridge." Bidy snorts: "Who is Connie Gilchrist? Have you never heard tell av a place called Newmarket?" A sudden avalanche of rain damps the male grin that ripples round us.

"Ochonee!" wails Bidy, "an' me with me best pale blue silk petticoat on!" We hoist her umbrella. Then we hoist our own, and put it on the sodden clay to cover her knees. She rewards us with a flash of her grey-blue Irish eyes.

"Can't ye sit a wee bit closer and get out o' the dhrip?"

We can and do. . . .

The crowd round the ropes is now a bank of black mushrooms. The sallow light falls from the muddy sky upon thousands of streaming umbrellas. The rain comes down in ramrods. The luminous emerald of the grass fades under the deluge. It is comic to see ten thousand sane human beings solemnly soaking round a bare field with a gibbet at each end. For the goal-posts look like a gallows, and one would not be surprised to find a corpse dangling from each crossbar. It would provide a motive for the funereal spectacle. We idly wonder whether a referee might not be used to while away the damp languors and *longueurs* of the prologue.

But at last the mushrooms roar, and fifteen black marionettes dance out into the deluge. They look like executioners. But where is the axe? Where is the mask? Where is the block? They are not hangmen. They are the New Zealanders. They are the "All-Blacks." They wear black jerseys, black pants, black stockings, and black boots. They have, however, white faces, and white hands, and between the end of their pants and the beginning of their stockings there is a stripe of white flesh.

That knee-stripe fascinates me. It is the oriflamme of the battle. The black marionettes are very lively. They are "injiarubber idiots on the spree." They juggle with an oval ball. In a twinkling they are capering down the field, the ball jumping about among them like a familiar imp.

"Has the game begun?" we whisper.

"Divil a bit," says Bidy. "They're only divartin' themselves."

Now another fifteen stalk soberly out.

"That's Surrey!" says Bidy, clapping her white kid gloves with terrific vigour. Again the mushrooms yell furiously. The Surrey men are like Zebras, for their jerseys are striped. They mingle with the Blacks. As we wait we note that on each man's shoulders is pasted a large white ticket with a large black number. The effect is comical. Is it a game of human dice or animated tectotums?

Surrey kicks off, the ball skims towards New Zealand, a Black seizes it, a Zebra seizes him, the pair crash to the ground, and there is a wild tangle of arms and legs, striped and black torsos. It is a scrummage. What is a scrummage? Well, it is an inverted tug-of-war, with muscles riveted to muscles instead of to the rope, and with "Push devil, push baker!" for its war-cry. It is a living rat-trap writhing round a dead rat. The bars of the trap are locked arms and legs swaying rigidly into grotesque patterns. Now it is a beehive, now a battered bowler, now a brand-new parrot cage, now a squashed Gibus. It opens and shuts like a concertina or a camera, or a folding gate in a lift. It turns itself inside out like some strange animal swallowing itself. It is a giant crab trying to walk forty thousand ways at the same time. It is a mariner's compass with all its points fighting for the needle. It is a wheel whose spokes are wrestling for the hub. It is a human whale eternally spewing out a dirty little egg-shaped leather Jonah.

One can have too much whale and too much Jonah. The referee, however, seems to be a regular Jonah man. Whenever he blows his whistle there is a scrummage. As he blows it every other minute there is nothing but scrummaging. The

dead rat is always being thrown back into the rat-trap, and the dancing terriers outside the trap are not allowed to worry it and each other too much. They stand round the trap bristling with eagerness. When the rat comes out they fall on it with vehement fury. They roll over each other in the mud. They butt like goats and charge like bulls. They leap up at the ball like trout at a fly. They fling themselves down on it like a cat on a mouse. The Blacks swerve like swallows and zigzag like snipe. Some of them are scraps of forked lightning. A Zebra is running like a Devon stag before the hounds. The New Zealand goal is near. Behind him a Black shoots out of the hunt like an arrow. With easy grace he overtakes his quarry, flings his arms round his loins, and the two plunge headlong in the mire. Ere they have time to disentangle their ravelled limbs the whole pack is pouring over their bodies, and before they rise the storm of speed is raging at the other end of the field.

So the battle ramps and rages for eighty minutes in a perpetual showerbath. Our collar is pulped. We sneeze and shiver. We are tired of the whistle. Biddy's furs are like a necklace of drowned cats. As the crowd streams out she picks up her muddy pale blue petticoat and ploughs bravely through the squelching squdge. A Zebra shoves past, on his way to the baths, his stripes bemired, his face bedaubed with dirt. Biddy pats him on the back.

"Good old Surrey!" she squeaks.

"Good old whistle!" says a wag.

As we wring out our gloves on the railway platform, we sympathise with the Frenchman who said that the English take their pleasures sadly. A-a-h-tchee!

THE HORSE SHOW

IT is not hard to kill time in London. The trouble is to choose the stone with which to kill it. There are almost too many stones. Every day there are at least ten things you must do, and at least ten things that you are reluctant to leave undone. And now the Horse Show completes the merry congestion of June. If you please you can live at Olympia from nine in the morning to midnight.

Upon the whole, it is well to go to the Horse Show after dinner. If you are a lady, you will put on your head an umbrella disguised as a hat, you will mislay your waist, and arrange your figure in the shape of an ice-wafer or a hollow-ground razor or a closed glove-stretcher.

You will have a neck that ends under your ears and sleeves that begin at your finger-nails. You will hang on your wrist a gold bag with a fringe of coloured jewels, and you will carry a gold cigarette-case in your hand. In short, you will look as ephemerally expensive and as extravagantly brittle as you can. You will imitate the painted frivolity of the butterfly and the futile fragility of the moth. Over your costly evanescence you will wear a kimono made of moonbeams that exaggerates your slowness and your slenderness, hanging on your hock-bottle shoulders like a veil on a hat-pin. Thus fabricated you will be invisible when seen edgeways.

If you are a man, you can marvel at the art which transforms an hour-glass into a paper-knife, and at the skill which poises an ostrich farm upon a dome of straw. You can admire the indefatigable industry of the wise birds who provide mountains of plumage for the feminine head. You can also marvel at the ingenuity which has made ugly Olympia as delicately dainty as sylvan Ranelagh. I really do not know the place. Its

glazed iron is veiled with flowers and garlands. It looks like Cinderella at the ball.

The arena is a garden with hidden lights in its floral skirts. The harshness of the roof is softened with pendulous green, and the vast expanse of tan is lighted like a gigantic billiard-table with hanging chandeliers. The tiers of seats are bright with multi-coloured hats and multi-coloured dresses, shifting and shimmering like a human kaleidoscope. In the seats round the Royal Box you can see Burke and Debrett and the Almanach de Gotha. Most of the men are smoking cigars. Some of the women are smoking cigarettes.

The note of the Horse Show is informality. The tone is a mixture of Ascot and Sandown, Henley and Ranelagh, with a dash of Church Parade and Monte Carlo. You can sit a little and look at the horses a little. Then you can walk a little and talk a little and flirt a little. When you are tired of sitting and looking and walking and talking and flirting, you can listen to the Earl of Lonsdale's Private Band playing "J'aime tant les militaires."

Everybody loves the militaires at Olympia. The Italian officers are the curled darlings of the Show. When they are not caracoling and curveting and passaging on the tan they are twirling their great black moustachios in the boxes. Heavens! how their fine black eyes flash as they salute the wisps of attenuated beauty languishing under acres of chip and prairies of Tegal. Very dashing and debonair are the Roman dandies as they click their heels together and touch the shining peaks of their gallant cavalry caps. Dashing and debonair also is the American Millionaire, with his slim waist and his weary smile. Jolly and jovial are the judges, and the jolliest and jovialest of all is Lord Lonsdale, chewing his cigar. He mounts a fine black charger, after shortening the stirrup-leathers that have just released Lieutenant Daufresne's long legs. He makes the charger do everything a well-conducted charger ought to do in time of peace. Having done so, he dismounts, with his cigar between his teeth, and his air of horsey omniscience.

There is no lack of thrills at the Horse Show. It is pleasant

to watch bold horsemen coming croppers at the high jump. They come all sorts of croppers, but, bless your heart, they don't seem to care a straw whether they break their necks or their collar-bones. The horse and the man hover for a flash in the air, then the horse comes down on his nose and his knees, the man is shot over his head, turning a beautiful somersault, and for a fraction of a second the picture is like a sporting print. The riderless horse and the horseless rider are up again in a jiffy, ready for another go, while the crowd claps its innumerable hands.

As the wooden wall grows higher there are more spills, and there are more splinters in the air. Some of the jumpers appear to have a prejudice against jumping. They turn their tails to the wall, and pretend to be interested in the band. One horse is a humorist, for he tries to climb the wall like a Zouave. When his rider sadly explains to him the difference between jumping a wall like a hunter and scaling it like a cat, the horse indignantly tries to jump through the wooden framework at the side, scattering the judges right and left. But now a real jumper arrives, and sails over the wall like a swallow, amid a thunder of cheers.

But it is almost Sunday morning. The Earl of Lonsdale's Private Band has gone to bed. We leave the jumpers still jumping, and the crowd still cheering. As we go home we reflect that life, after all, is only a stiff fence, and we resolve to pray for the heart of a good horse and a good rider. Never flinch, never falter, never refuse; always ride straight, even when you do not know what is on the other side. That is the right motto, whether you win your rosette or come your cropper.

WHEELS

IN the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Wh-ah-ah-oh-oh-oom! Moaning her long, low, melodious moan our car whirrs along the Hammersmith Road through weary rows of sandwichmen. Curling round the corner she glides daintily between lines of waiting cabs, carriages, and motors up to the gates of Motoropolis, the City of a Thousand Wheels, Olympia.

The turnstile clicks, and we pass out of the night of day into the day of night. Outside, the London sky leaks a grey gloom, but here the air is ringed, necklaced and braceleted with electric jewels. Olympia is looped from floor to roof with white fire. The stands brandish garlands of light, like girls in a ballet. They are ranged in line of battle. It is a war of lights. Famous firms are hurling spears of light at each other, slashing each other with electric sabres.

IN the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Volleys of light startle us. The seething streets of Motoropolis excite us. The place is like a water-tube boiler with a perpetual circulation of humanity in its labyrinthine veins. Up and down, round and round, back and forth, under the galleries, along the galleries, into the annexe, the flow of flesh never ceases. The tormented restlessness of Motoropolis infects us. We are notorious in a moment.

IN the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

We assume a knowing air. We pretend to be veterans. We cock our eye at this undecipherable machinery sleeping on its mirror-bed, its secret anatomy reflected in polished glass. We are boyishly hypocritical, swaggering with mechanical lore. Thus we used to pose before horsey men, or anglers, or sportsmen. For it is the whim of man to overvalue the unknown and

undervalue the familiar. There is a good deal of straw-chewing in human nature.

A mechanical epidemic rages in Motoropolis. It is a nightmare of wheels. Its streets are walled with wheels. The flies on the wheels are men and women.

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Behold the whirligig of time and its revenges: Ixion up to date. The old Ixion bound by the old god to the old wheel. Wheels within wheels. Wheels of the Cosmos. Wheels of the Solar System. Wheels of the Planets. Wheels of the Stars. Wheels of the World. Zeus on his cosmic wheel. Man on his mundane tyre. Thus the motor mimics the universe.

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Do not despise the mania of motion. It is life. Life is motion. Everything is running away from everything else. Motion in moon and gnat, in sun and swallow, in comet and kangaroo, in lamp and lightning, in wind and fan, in sea and ship, in meteor and motor. Yes, the motor is only a phase of the everlasting flight, the eternal escape, the immortal hegira of life.

But peace to the immensities. Let us be flippant for a while. Let us toy with man's latest toy, for Earth is a toy-shop and man a child. Fools say that man is old. He is a bounding boy, with Science for his Santa Claus. Every Christmas Santa Science brings a new toy—steam engine, telegraph, telephone, wireless telegraphy, cinematograph, phonograph. We open our eyes, gape at a brown-paper parcel, cut the string, tear off the wrappings, and find—the motor-car. We take the lid off a big box, and, behold! the airship.

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Olympia, then, is man's play-box. It is good fun to play with these lyrical toys. Let us play. Come, boys and girls of all ages. Down on your knees and join in the game. Do not imagine that play is the frivolity called work. Play is the solemnest thing in the world. Look at old Ixion's face, bent over that grey chassis, with rhythmical cogs meshing like Miltonic harmonies, its warty little cylinders, its tangle of rods and

pipes, its shining shaft, its carburetter, its commutator, its live axle, its internal and external brakes, its magneto-ignition, its change-speed levers, its steering-wheel, its lubricator and accelerator, its springs and sprockets, its magical clutch, its wise valves, its bottled speed, its corked thunder, its tabloid lightning. Note the idolatrous awe in Ixion's eye. No babe could be more serious, no schoolboy more earnest. Man may whistle over his work, but he is an owl at play.

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Olympia, then, is a Palace of Poetry, a Fane of Fairy Tales. Here the practical man chases a dream in steel. Here the business mole clasps a revolving vision. Here the materialist kneels before a mechanical miracle.

Let us study these mystics. That handsome clear-eyed boy is a millionaire. He buys thousand-pound cars as you buy newspapers. He is buying one now. He has a stud of motors. He is one end of this mystic cult.

That blue-eyed, curly-headed youngster is the other. He is the Chauffeur of Cræsus. He has driven Cræsus through five countries—France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy—in five days. Cræsus made a bet, and this Phaethon won it, climbing precipices, skirting chasms, dodging avalanches, playing leap-frog with glaciers, dancing on the razor-edge of nothing.

He has zigzagged down a ten-thousand-foot pass with Alpine ropes twisted round his front wheels. He has nipped over a level-crossing under the nose of an express. He has dived out of a blazing motor-boat.

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Phaethon loves his steel greyhound. He talks to her like a lover. Every one of her flexible nerves and thews he knows. He exults in the pulse of her pistons and the beat of her fiery heart. To him her burnished levers are lovelier than a woman's arms, and the undulating wail of her siren sweeter than a woman's voice. He and his millionaire master are wheel-fellows. They live together, drive together, and if the god of motion so decree, they will die together. Mystics both!

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

Now regard the merchants of motion, the makers of four-wheeled speed, the artificers of harnessed lightning. They move amid a cloud of salesmen, mechanics, motor-jockeys, and typists. Grave, quiet, unostentatious, they are the cool brains that evolve these steel lyrics. They are swimming in a golden sea of millions, an ocean of capital. They, too, are mystics, charmed paladins fighting the duel of design, warring the war of invention. Hovering round them are the myriad sutlers and camp-followers of a giant industry—chemists, engineers, managers, workmen, drummers, makers of motoriana, costumiers, milliners, drivers, repairers, oil-refiners, petroleurs.

As we loiter in Motoropolis we hear its slang. Strange phrases tantalise our ignorance. Pretty girls chatter gaily in automobilious argot, as they glue their noses against a glass box in which a four-cylinder engine is spitting blue sparks and dancing a *pas de quatre*.

As night falls Motoropolis is invaded by the democracy. The workman, the clerk, and the small shopkeeper come to marvel and wonder. That is the note of this Olympiad. Demos is a motorist now as well as Dives. Has he not already his fleet of motor-buses? Ere long the coster will have a motor moke, and the butcher's boy a steel pony. One man one motor will be the motto. There will be municipal garages and national motor-tracks. The king's highway will be horseless, all the corners will be banked, and the double roads will be dustless, soundless, deathless. There will be a motor-hearse, and its name will be Mors Omnibus. There will be motor prams driven by droplets of petrol and pinchlets of electricity. On Margate sands there will be motor bathing-machines, motor donkeys, and motor goats.

In the Name of the Prophet, Wheels!

THE AGONY OF DORANDO

No one had ever heard of Dorando. He had no friends and no fuglemen. He was an obscure little man, only an humble Italian from Soho and Carpi, a nonentity without fame and without prestige. Perhaps there was ancient blood in his undistinguished veins. His vanished ancestors may have been noble Romans. On the other hand, they may have been slaves. Nobody knows. But Dorando had in his obscure breast a heart worthy of Pheidippides, the noble strong man who raced like a god and who died in the Akropolis with the tidings of victory on his lips. If I were a Pindar I would write an Ode of Victory in honour of Dorando, the Victor who lost and the Loser who won. I would grave his dauntless name in deathless stanzas of praise.

First of all I would sing the valiant hope that beat high in his bosom as he raced along the dusty Windsor road. I would chant the Roman virtue that sped his flying feet over hill and dale, past town and hamlet, under leafy elms and branching oaks, across railways and bridges, along avenues of alien cheers. Not for him the hoarse salutations of the spectators. Not for him the exultant cry of compatriots. He ran to the music of his own courageous pulses and to the thunder of his own indomitable heart. The confused murmur of the people sounded strange in his ears, and he heard not the mellifluous syllables of his native tongue. On he ran, mile after mile, with the foreign dust clogging his throat and the alien sun burning his flesh. In his reeling brain, mayhap, a vision of Italy surged up now and then like a mist, and he saw in a fiery trance the olives and the vineyards of his native land.

At length, after an age of agony, he heard the last rocket

crashing in the sky, and as he staggered into the Stadium the thunder of the shouting thousands smote his drumming ears. The surging faces swam before his bloodshot eyes, swam in dizzy curves and soaring slopes. Blind with weariness, demented with fatigue, he halted in dazed bewilderment, not knowing whether his long anguish was at an end. The gigantic pageant was spread out before him, with its fluttering flags, and he saw in a dream of pain victory and glory within his grasp. Strange men speaking a strange tongue bade him press on to the goal. Slowly the vague summons travelled from his distracted mind to his tortured nerves, and in a delirious flash he saw what remained of the dire task and the tragic ordeal. The wine of passion throbbled through his fainting flesh, and with a supreme agony of endeavour he broke into a lamentable little run, his worn feet tottering on the black cinderpath, and madness mounting in his anguished brain. The lust of conquest carried him forward pitifully for a few desperate strides. Only a very little way, and the last word in the long litany of pain would be uttered. Alas! darkness closed over him as he staggered and stumbled on. The hot blue sky grew black above him. The swaying faces faded away, and he fell.

There in sight of victory he lay, a victor yet not a victor. He heard the far hum of voices urging him to rise. He rose in blind anguish, stumbled on for a few awful yards, and then fell again, his heart bursting with the very fury of impotence. Behind him all the vanquished miles. Before him the pitiless yards that mocked his triumph. So far, so very far, had he won in the teeth of his mortal pain, and now, alas! he could win no farther. Courage, Dorando! The laurel is waiting for you. The crown of wild olive is hovering over your brow. If need be, creep and crawl to the goal, for there is yet time for victory. The antagonists you have vanquished are still labouring far behind you. Up, man, and on!

With infinite weariness the tortured hero struggles once more out of the darkness of hell, and reels direfully forward. Hands, foolish hands, succour his heroic limbs. Dorando does not beg for aid. Nor does he spurn it. He is too far gone for

either. He does not feel the fatal helping hands whose compassion is the death-knell of his desire. He totters. He staggers. He gropes in the sunlight. He reels. He stumbles. The kind, disastrous hands prop him as he sways blindly towards the bitter end of his anguish. His tragic face is blank and blind with agony. He falls again and yet again, until at last it seems that he is feebly fumbling for the latch of the door of death. He has lost his way. The kind, cruel, outstretched fingers thrust him onward. He cannot see plainly. He cannot hear plainly. The shouting of the frantic multitude sounds faint and far away. The steep mountains of faces are like horrid phantoms. His broken body lurches from side to side. His grey, ghastly face is hideous and horrible in its anguish. His staring eyes are the eyes of a madman. With immeasurable suffering and abominable pain he beats the air with his frenzied hands. At last his sobbing breast breaks the thin thread of yarn, and he falls like a corpse into the horror of his tragic victory. For a while he lies on the lip of death. He is borne out prone on a stretcher, and slowly, slowly, slowly he crawls back from the edge of the dark abyss. But he has died a thousand deaths.

Dorando has conquered. Dorando has not conquered. Dorando has won. Dorando has not won. With a double tongue the fates have spoken. His glory has been stolen from him by the stupidity of things. By no act of his own is he deprived of the fame he broke his heart for. He is the victim of chance, the martyr of an accident. The hands that helped him to win helped him to lose. His saviours were his destroyers. Dorando, it is not well that you should suffer for the errors of others. It is not just, Dorando. If they had let you alone, Dorando, you might have torn a few more yards out of your mighty heart. Falling and rising, groping and fumbling, staggering and stumbling, creeping and crawling, you might have agonised your shattered body up to the goal. Who knows? Not the careless crowd that cheered you, Dorando, and not your helpers, and, above all, not the servitors who failed to keep your path to victory clear. Do you know yourself, Dorando?

But the tragic pity and irony of it all is intolerable, Dorando. One thing we know. The agony of Dorando will go down the ages in company with the agony of Pheidippides. All hail, Dorando! In you we salute the Victor who lost and the Loser who won!

AT RANELAGH

"HULLO!" cried a cheery voice behind me one morning in June as I lay back in my chair at Philippe's in the middle of a luxurious shave. With the tail of my eye I saw a sunburnt face in the mirror before me, and recognised my friend The Man About Town. His effulgent top-hat was cocked at that rakish angle which I vainly endeavour to imitate, and his glossy black moustache curled into that miraculous curl which is the envy of the pavement.

Tony is a natural dandy, a perfect master of the external proprieties. He is devoid of affectations and effeminacies, yet he is always exquisitely right in his effect. He is half-French, half-English, and the blend has produced a mellow masculinity and an elegant virility beyond description or emulation. He is French grace grafted on English vigour, and groomed to the nines by Eton and Oxford. He is an all-round sportsman, hunts, punts, rows, fences, plays polo and racquets, bridge and billiards, drives his coach, shoots, fishes, and, in short, does everything that can be done by a gentleman, and does it well.

He can talk, too. He knows something about everything, and everything about some things. You may see him at Christie's exuding connoisseurship. He is an adept in pearls and diamonds and precious stones, and knows his old china and his old furniture like a Bond Street dealer. He is a good judge of a horse, and at his ease in Tattersall's. He has judged and umpired and refereed all over the world. He talks politics like a Greville Minor, and has always the latest phase of Mr. Balfour up his sleeve. He is an expert critic of feminine frocks, froufrous, and furbelows. He smokes excellent cigars, drinks his pint of champagne every night without a quiver of liver, and is an omniscient gourmet who reveres his digestion. He can cook as

well as his own chef, and he knows where to buy the best of everything eatable, drinkable, smokable, and wearable.

His clothes are unobtrusively smart, brilliantly apt, incisively original. His dress-coat is a lyric of clinging curves. He boasts that he is the only man in London who has solved the secret of a dress-shirt that does not bulge under a dress-waistcoat that does not cockle. It is rumoured that he wears a straight-fronted corset, but that is a slander. His trousers are the despair of guardsmen and the desperation of hussars. They hang on his hips without the supererogation of braces, and the sweeping line from haunch to instep betrays no hint of knee and only an innuendo of calf. His boots, his hose, his gloves, his ties, and his tie-pins, are subtle echoes of what the Navy calls 'the dress for the day,' and his canes are barometers of occasion. He fills the opera with eddies of envious admiration, and at a first night the heart of the pit palpitates with awe as he glides from his stall between the acts. In fine, he is the immaculate, inimitable, imperturbable Man About Town, compared to whom Beau Brummel was a florid bungler and D'Orsay an orchidaceous amateur.

"Hullo! Doin' anything this afternoon? No? Let me drive you down to Ranelagh?"

Reader, have you ever idled away an afternoon at Ranelagh? If not, you have missed one of the pastoral whimsies of the season. Hurlingham is delightful, but Ranelagh is delectable, with its shaven lawns, its shady trees, its leafy lakelet, and its *va-et-vient* of fragile femininity. It is the Paradise of Ladies, where men are tolerated. Its quaint old clubhouse, fragrant with memories of its Kit-Cat past, is luxuriously dainty, and to dine here *al fresco* on a summer evening is not grievous.

Of course, the soul of Ranelagh is sport, and the presiding deity is the horse. Polo is the quintessence of the Englishman's passion for horseflesh. In it the rider and the horse are moulded and melted into one organism, like the fabled Centaur, their two hearts beating together in a fast and furious rhythm of speed and grace, agility of nerve and muscle, thew and bone. Lovely is the interplay of swift limbs in football, sweet is the swallow-

flight of a golf ball, bright is the gallop of a racehorse, but polo combines the loveliness, the sweetness, and the brightness of them all. Along the edge of the polo ground at Ranelagh there is a glittering surf of ladies, their soft, many-coloured gowns foaming along the green marge.

Now and then the eight Centaurs thunder down upon the border of beauty in wild pursuit of the flying white ball, but few of these women have nerves, and they watch the riotous quadrille with a bored serenity. The polo-stick is half lance and half sabre. It is also a croquet-mallet. Croquet on horseback, tent-pegging, lemon-slicing, and pig-sticking—that is polo.

But it is hard to watch all that goes on at Ranelagh. Turn your back on the polo, and you will see all sorts of horse-games on the green track behind you. Here the coaches are drawn up, and another iridescent surf of ladies foams along the ropes. Outside the little pavilion are arranged the prizes for the day—silver cups shining in the sun. The judges are rich in character and type. Some of them are daringly flamboyant in dress, flaunting gallant audacities of colour in their garb.

Here the horse still defies the all-conquering motor. Ladies drive their ponies. Old weather-beaten coach-drivers display their skill, manœuvring their four-in-hands in delicate wriggings through serpentine avenues of blocks. Polo ponies swerve and gyrate, hunters leap over hurdles. In brief, all sorts of horses do all sorts of things.

Then comes the climax of the afternoon—tea on the lawn. You buy tickets for tea and tickets for strawberries, and you capture a table.

The tinkle of teacups is mingled with the tinkle of talk. In the sunshine the myriad hues of hats and parasols and frocks gleam and glisten like a living kaleidoscope. After tea, as the shadows lengthen, the crack of the croquet-mallet is heard. Lovers steal softly into sequestered nooks, or punt lazily on the toy lake. The idyll is exquisite, and the golden moments slide all too swiftly into the dinner-hour.

Now the perch of the club-house is congested with chiffon and silk and muslin and crêpe-de-chine. There is a revel and

riot of vehicles, horses prancing, and motors whirring in an interminable line, the orderly disorder being disentangled like magic. Down the leafy lane we spin, over Hammersmith Bridge, through gaping aisles of onlookers, back to Kensington, Knightsbridge, the Park, and Piccadilly.

As Tony pulls up his team and I descend from my seat by his side, my admiration for him culminates. He is gaily superb as he flicks his leaders and swings faultlessly through the traffic. Yes, The Man About Town is a wonderful being. He has style. If I could write as well as he drives and dresses—well, I should be immortal.

THE POETRY OF BILLIARDS

THE other afternoon, being afflicted by the crudity of life, I drifted into Soho Square. Cabs were driving up and discharging men in the left-hand corner as you come from Oxford Street. These men stimulated my curiosity. They did not look like men of business. On the contrary, they had the air of men of leisure. They seemed to be in a quiet hurry. They all entered a solemn, respectable house. Moved by a whim, I followed them. In a kind of a vestibule a man was taking money. "Front seats, six shillings." What on earth is going on? We ascended some stairs, and reached a room in which a man in his shirt-sleeves was playing billiards.

"Who is he?" I whispered to my neighbour.

"Stevenson," said he, reverently.

Suddenly it flashed on me that I had stumbled on a Billiard Tournament. That, then, was the meaning of the gilt sign outside, "Burroughes and Watts." By pure chance I had wandered into the Mecca of Billiards.

As I settled myself in my chair I smiled at the inexhaustible variety of London. It is the city of surprises. In it there are always all sorts of excitements. Idleness in London is hard labour, for it provides more amusements than you can digest. If a man were to do nothing but work hard at amusing himself, he could not overtake the London clock. Even now, before the season has got up its speed, no man could do everything and go everywhere.

Here in a lazy nook, secret and sequestered, London provides me with the luxurious spectacle of supreme dexterity in the most exquisitely subtle game on earth. The stage is discreetly and decorously arranged. There is no crowd. Billiards is a gentlemanly game. It is not a vulgar sport. There is no

tumult and clamour of mobs around it. It is a solemn rite and hieratic ceremony rather than a recreation. It is the sport of philosophers.

The room is not large. It holds only a few score of mild-eyed fatalists. They sit like Roman senators in their shadowy seats. The lights on the walls are veiled. Only on the green table is there a steady shower of illumination falling from the great conical lamp-shades. A visitor from Mars might imagine that these two men, with their long, tapering wands, were high priests celebrating some strange mysteries, charged with occult significance. He might mistake the clear, resonant tones of the Marker for the voice of an invisible oracle chanting some awful formula. The painted board with its changing numerals he might regard as a dreadful symbol of mystical sublimities. I am sure that his blood would be chilled with reverence as the solemn office unrolled itself. He would gaze with awe on the three inscrutable balls that dance a labyrinthine dance, tracing strangely complicated lines and curves. The red ball he might imagine to be the sacred symbol of the blood that is life, and the white ball he might conceive to be the emblem of innocence, and the ball with the speck of black he might regard as the image of sin. The voice of the invisible Marker he might mistake for the cry of Fate. "Two-seven; Five-seven; Seven-all." The solemn iteration is pontifical. It fills me with reverence for the rhythmic divinity of numbers and for the inexorable majesty of arithmetic.

The world fades away like cigarette wreaths as I watch Stevenson making poetry with his cue. I am soothed by the fluent ease of the artist. Here is a man whose mastery over brute matter is absolute. The three balls are his helots. They obey him silently, or all but silently, with ivory whispers and kisses and feathery wisps of sound. I mutely worship this magician who makes these spheres move in obedience to his will. Thus move the planets on the billiard-table of infinity. Thus rolls the earth, thus swerves the sun, thus swoops the moon. This quiet, keen-eyed man has discovered the secret of motion and gravitation and all the mysterious forces that lead the ions

and electrons in their predestined waltz. Brain and finger and cue and balls are one with the inviolate laws of the universe. I fall to studying this necromancer. His face is an epitome of concentration. It has the sharp swiftness of the hawk in its fine angles and curves. It is nervously sensitive in every feature. It is vividly alive with serene vigilance. His lithe limbs move with sinuous grace to and fro. He is a living nicety, an incarnate precision. Even when he sprawls with one leg along the edge of the table there is no awkward violence in his posture.

I am amazed at the apparent ease of his feats. There is no evidence of difficulty overcome. He bids the balls to go and they go, to come and they come. Their woven paces seem to be controlled by some will within themselves. They twist and swirl as if they were living things endowed with volition. Once a ball seems to have erred, and a gasp of regret issues from the deluded spectators as it passes its target. Then it strikes the cushion and recoils and flicks the ball it had evaded, and the spectators laugh in self-derision. At times the interminable caresses of nursery cannons grow monotonous, and one is narcotised by the display of perpetual artistry. But now and then comes a double-baulk. With infinite care the wizard places his ball, and sends it zigzagging all round the table. As it nears the goal his quick eye moves with it, and as it screws in a delicious curve off one ball and off the other his glance seems to swerve with it in a kind of visual harmony. It is the poetry of billiards.

The contrast between the temperament of Stevenson and the temperament of Dawson is delightfully sharp. Dawson is as slow, dogged, and heavy as his opponent is swift, nimble, and light. It is a duel between a broadsword and a rapier. The skill of Stevenson makes Dawson's skill seem clumsy. The one is all ease, the other all labour. Yet it is only relative clumsiness. Dawson is a miracle, but Stevenson out-miracles him. Stevenson has the diabolical gift of making things easy for himself and difficult for Dawson. Dawson cannot make things quite so easy for himself and quite so difficult for Stevenson. "To him that hath shall be given." The little margin of over-

mastery becomes a vast abyss. By a freak of irony Dawson seemed to be not only less skilful, but also to be forced to encounter greater difficulties. But he created these difficulties, whereas Stevenson's art enabled him to avoid creating them. The art of billiards is like the art of life. The artist in life controls and circumvents and wheedles his materials. He does not assault them. Dawson is all *tours de force*, but Stevenson is all *tours de grace*. As I came out of the cloisters of billiards into the monastic calm of Soho Square, I resolved to play the game of life like Stevenson. My friends, let us cultivate the art of rhythmic grace. Did not Cleopatra and Herbert Spencer play billiards? Were they not both philosophers? And, by the way, let me warn you that the story told about Herbert Spencer and the young man who vanquished him at billiards is apocryphal. Spencer did not say to his conqueror, "Sir, such proficiency in a game of skill implies a misspent youth." The only ground for the legend is the fact that Spencer played billiards and played execrably. Stevenson may be a philosopher, but no philosopher could be a Stevenson.

AT THE NATIONAL SPORTING CLUB

THERE is a strong literary flavour in pugilism. Byron, like his grandson, Lord Lovelace, was fond of slogging. Hazlitt gloried in it. His description of a prize-fight is the best in the language. He hailed it as "the high and heroic state of man." Those were the days of the bloods, of the Fives Courts, of Jack Randall's in Chancery Lane. Tom Cribb, the champion, read Byron's poems. The bulldog was worshipped. There was bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting. The Georgian blood wore a white beaver hat, a caped overcoat, and a white-and-blue spotted handkerchief, known as a "Belcher," after the renowned Tom, that great man who combined pugilism with landscape-painting. Then Pierce Egan wrote "Boxiana" and John Hamilton Reynolds created Peter Corcoran in "The Fancy," a delightful book which Mr. Masefield has edited with curious care. Mr. Masefield tells us that on the morning of a fight the highways out of London were thronged with gigs. The road to Epsom on Derby Day is a pale parallel to the spectacle that the "sports" presented, tooling down four-in-hand with fifteen on top, six inside, a two-foot horn, an icehouse, two cases of champagne, and sixteen boxes of cigars. Etiquette permitted all coloured neck-cloths but white, all coloured hats but black. The pace was the limit of the team, and God take care of the turnpike. The bloods were adepts at long-distance spitting, and the whips could flick off a hat with a flip of the lash. The dandies ruffled it in crimson. Tom Cribb went to the battle-field in a four-horse carriage, each steed gay with blue ribbons and the English colours flying from the box. He was cheered like a king. The bells rang in the belfries as he passed, and the girls flung flowers at him.

The ring was a white-roped square pitched on the green turf, surrounded by gigs, coaches, and curricles, sports chewing straws, Jews, gipsies, macers, and flash coves. The gipsies beat back the mob with whips. The men tossed with a silver crown for corners, and then peeled amid a gabble of chaff and heavy betting. Thus Reynolds describes the "Nonpareil":

With marble-coloured shoulders,—and keen eyes
Protected by a forehead broad and white,—
And hair cut close lest it impede the sight,
And clenched hands, firm, and of punishing size,—
Steadily held or motioned wary-wise,
To hit or stop,—and kerchief, too, drawn tight
O'er the unyielding loins, to keep from flight
The inconstant wind, that all too often flies,—
The Nonpareil stands!—Fame, whose bright eyes run o'er
With joy to see a Chicken of her own,
Dips her rich pen in *Claret*, and writes down
Under the letter *R*, first on the score,
Randall,—John,—Irish Parents—age not known—
Good with both hands, and only ten stone four.

After Hazlitt and Reynolds came George Borrow, who dated the decadence of England from the decline of boxing, and who wrote in "Lavengro" that immortal battle-piece, the fight with the "Flaming Tinman." Contemporary votaries of the Ring are Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Watts-Dunton, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, not to mention the Right Honourable John Burns, who once used his fists with punishing effect in a Paris café, avenging in British fashion an insult to his wife.

With all these great men to keep us in countenance, let us pay a visit to that modern temple of "The Fancy," the National Sporting Club. It is nine o'clock as our hansom jingles into silent Covent Garden and halts at a dim, lonely building which looks like a nonconformist chapel. As we enter we encounter an archidiaconal old gentleman, who takes our overcoat. He lives in a vast fortress of coats. Fur coats are piled round him like sandbags. But he gives no ticket, for this stately conservative club despises new-fangled ways. Leaving the vestibule, we sternly avoid the bar, and passing some billiard-tables, we reach a door. Peering over packed shoulders, we see a large hall hazy with smoke and dizzy with sloping rows of faces.

There is not room here for a fly. The faces in the numbered seats rise from the floor in slanting congestion up to the four walls under the gallery, with its projecting boxes crammed with spectators. Our first impression is that it is a congress of fat men. Why are "sports" fat?

In the centre of the floor is the roped ring, a wooden isle in a sea of shirt-fronts, diamond studs, and obese cigars. On a raised dais sits the polished referee, groomed elegantly, his glossy top-hat glittering in the gaslight. On his left sits "Peggy" Bettinson, the presiding genius of the club, an austere judicial figure that fills us with speculative awe. On his right and left are two meagre spiral iron staircases, up and down which top-hatted men are perpetually gyrating like the kerbstone merchant's monkey. These staircases fascinate me. They are puzzle staircases. I watch men groping for the first curl of the spiral. They all try to climb in by the back. Were these staircases designed by Mr. Theodore Cook in order to illustrate his spiral theory of the universe?

Let us spiral the spiral. Being total abstainers we need not dread the ordeal. Round and round, down and down you go. It is hard to find space for your body in this elegant mob. You are forced to push yourself down into the spectators like a match into a full match-holder. Luckily you remain head up. A sense of incongruity invades you. You feel like a messenger from Mars. This is not your world. Its point of view is violently strange. Have you ever sat under the gallery in the House of Commons? There you feel awkwardly amphibious, neither a stranger nor an M.P. This feeling of jarred relationship is strong now as you study these rows on rows of hatted men, whose eyes are placidly fixed on the gleaming flesh of the boxers, just as the eyes of members in the House are fixed on Front Bench gladiators. Yes, the resemblance between the National Sporting Club and the House of Commons is comforting. The Referee is the Speaker. The Ring is the table, with boxing-gloves for mace and buckets for dispatch-boxes. The members sit on opposite sides facing each other. There is the Peers' Gallery, and the Press sits behind the Referee. The proceedings

are parliamentary in their frigid pomp and frozen dignity. Boxing here is a sacred and solemn ritual, governed by elaborate ceremony and innumerable standing orders. There is nothing so serious as sport, nothing so humourless as amusement. Men can laugh over the great things of life, such as love and religion, but they invest pugilism and politics with an august and majestic awe.

I am sitting beside a benign old gentleman. Suddenly he addresses a technical remark to me. I blush. I feel like a trespasser. Why am I masquerading as an expert? For it seems that I am sitting amid the pundits of pugilism. Humbly I confess my absolute ignorance. The old gentleman casts a pitying glance upon me. My blush falls on my shirt-front like a Polar sunset on an icefield. I am humiliated. I do not know. Why should two men flourish four large leather bags in the air? Why do they not pound each other with coke-hammers? I catch myself thirsting for blood. I want a visible sequel to all this dancing and gesticulating violence. I yearn for palpable wounds and bruises. There is the secret of the decay of the Ring. The attempt to substitute science for savagery is futile. Only the erudite experts can delight in the artistic nuances of a Moir or a Moran: I cannot. Indeed, I am compelled to ask them to tell me who wins. I cannot detect superiority. In fact, I invariably admire the worst boxers. This is a mark of my low intellectual endowment. Yet I think the glory of the old pugilism was its worship of moral courage, of grim endurance, of the big heart that faces punishment without flinching. The new pugilism worships trickery, agility, craft, cunning. It is the fox instead of the lion.

The result is that pugilism is now strangled with rules—again like the House of Commons. A good example of this is presented to us as we watch the great fight between Box and Cox. Box hits his opponent below the belt—to use plain English, in the belly. Cox curls up on the floor, and the subsequent proceedings interest him no more. He lies as inert as a string of sausages. He is counted out. His seconds apply the usual restoratives, and after a while they help him to stagger out, his

face a ghastly mask of agony. The referee awards the fight to Box on the ground that the blow was aimed above the belt, but its direction was changed by Cox in trying to ward it off. Thus Box wins the fight by means of a foul blow evolved by an accident. The subtlety of the point shows how meticulously elaborate is the modern Queensberry code.

“WONDERLAND”

“WONDERLAND,” the last refuge of pugilism, is a hall in the Whitechapel Road that holds three thousand people. To-night there is a great boxing tournament, the chief battle being a fifteen-rounds contest between Pedlar Palmer (ex-Bantam Champion of the World) and Cockney Cohen (8-stone 10-lb. Champion of the Midlands). As we step out of St. Mary’s Station a crowd is struggling to enter the big, bare vestibule, bisected by turnstiles. On the other side of the turnstiles the crowd is flattened into a queue by close-cropped bruisers with rip-saw voices. “Three, five, ten, an’ a poun’!” They chant this iron chorus as the East End shuffles past the pay-box.

No congregation could enter a church more quietly than this variegated rascaldom. Here, indeed, the East puts the West to shame. The shepherd of the flock is an alert little man in a grey jacket, with black curls, black eyes, black moustache, a black cigar, and a diamond ring. He owns the East London Tavern next door, where, according to the programme, he is “pleased to see everyone, so give him a call.” He works his barking sheepdogs with consummate skill. We watch him for an hour with speechless awe. His mastery over this multifarious villainy is marvellous. No violence. No threats. No force. Nothing but cold-drawn order.

“Three, five, ten, an’ a poun’!” While to that brazen cadence the East End marches into “Wonderland,” we review it with a wistful smile, watching Life fingering her rosary of faces, telling these beads of battered passion, toying ironically with these visages of crime. We are afraid of Life. She has no reticence. Her sacred secrets are babbled publicly. We long for a faceless humanity. These confessional countenances affright us. There are gargoyles on crutches, pot-paunched

topers, furtive wastrels, greasy toughs, and grimy roughs. But this slum-brew is liberally laced with dandy sportsmen and dapper bloods, comedians, jockeys, wrestlers, bookmakers, racing men, card-sharpers, cracksmen, and magnates of the swell-mob. It is a stew of society, a haggis of tastes.

“Three, five, ten, an’ a poun’!” In a corner there is a swarm of slum-bees, some with mysterious newspaper parcels, some with queer little black bags. “Boxers!” At the cry they vanish, and the endless queue goes on worming its way in; for “Wonderland” is very hungry, and eats and eats, yet is not full. Let it eat us also. As it gulps us a sea of faces breaks out of a fog of smoke. In its midst swings an anchored raft gaily fenced with blue and white ropes. In the centre of the raft two naked men with breech-clouts and boots, and black blobs for hands, are dancing a tuneless dance. The square raft is the Ring! We see it for the first time, and the impact of the impression is clear and resonant. The Ring! It sets the echoes of old times hallooing. It calls up famous names—Tom Cribb and Teucer Belcher, Heenan and Sayers, Shelton and Randall, Ned Turner and Bulldog Hudson, Fearless Scroggins and Sam the Jew, Broughton and Slack and Ben, Black Richmond, Purcell, and Tom of Bedford, that “true piece of English stuff, sharp as winter, kind as spring.”

The manscape in “Wonderland” is a spiritual Caliban, a mob-monster of mystics, for the Wonderlanders are hero-worshippers. They bow before the fist. They glory in belly punches, body blows, drives in the mark, smashes on the jaw. They love the deep thud of leather on gleaming flesh. They loathe sparring. When the bruisers are coy they “give them the bird,” and whistle “Dear Old Pals.” Yet there is a lyrical beauty in their brutishness. Those springing flanks and rippling muscles are a sculptor’s dream. A moment ago that lad was a dingy loafer: now he is a Farnese Hercules, all chiselled grace from shin to shoulder. Is it not fine to see the gutter groping after the manly glory of Greece and the virile splendour of Rome?

Hush! The combat of the night begins. The seconds clear

the Ring, fanning away the smoke with flick of towels. Palmer faces Cohen. The gong sounds. Their fists turn into whirling drumsticks. Cohen is a Jew, Palmer is an East Ender, who once sold bootlaces in the streets. Therefore he is known as "The Pedlar." Pedlar Palmer is renowned for guile. Hence he is called "The Box o' Tricks." The Box o' Tricks needs all his craft to-night, for the Jew is younger, stronger, and in finer condition. The Pedlar's arms are rounded like a woman's, and he has welts of fat on his body. But he is an artist, subtle in tactics, with a faultless eye for distance, and a gift of prophetic evasion; his feet are oiled lightning, and his head ducks and dives with the swiftness of a swallow and the elusiveness of a snipe. He capers like a legion of twinkling imps. His fists revolve like a racing screw. The retina cannot register their gyrations. They multiply into a shower. His head turns into a Hydra, in each of the hundred heads a pair of wily eyes and a wicked smile. "There is nothing like Long Melford for shortness," said Isopel Berners, but Cohen's long right is useless against air. It flashes out, but the feet flicker back and the fist smashes nothing on the tip of Palmer's nose. Or the head swoops in a circle round the fist, and ere Cockney recovers he feels the rub-a-dub of left and right. Exerting his superior strength, he drives the will-o'-the-wisp right on the ropes. He has him at his mercy now, but, although his head is down, Palmer blindly times the blow to the fraction of a second, and while Cohen is smashing the smoke he wriggles into safety. Thus the pair weave spiral feints and convoluted ruses to a perpetual obligato of hoarse cries, punctuated by the official rebuke, "Quiet! Quiet!"

The ding-dong fight is fast and furious. Round follows round, the two-minute tussles being hyphenated by one-minute towel-fannings, massagings, face-spongings, garglings, each man lying limp in his chair with head flung back, arms stretched along the ropes, and legs extended on the second's hips. The three seconds work at each man like demons, bounding on the boards as the gong sounds, and packing their minute with subdivided extracts of energy. It is all a miracle of trained speed.

As the battle reaches its crisis, the house is a roaring furnace of howls. The Cohenites yell in Yiddish. “Let ’er go, Tommy!” “Short work, Tom!” “Go on, Tommy!” shriek the Pedlar’s backers, purple with passion. But the boxers are cool and punctilious. When Palmer knocks his antagonist into the ropes on his knees, he allows him ample time to regain his feet and begin afresh. Cohen once, it is true, tired of punching air, hits in holds, but the referee cautions him, and he needs no further hint. There is no brutality and no blood: only extreme endurance and extreme skill. The issue is decided on points, and only the expert can tell which man has won. But the crowd knows, and when Palmer is proclaimed the victor its acclamations are terrific. As I go out I pass Cohen. His mouth is swollen and his smile awry. Palmer follows. His hands are bandaged, and his shoulders are covered with tiny scratches, the mark of the ropes. But the two bruisers are virtually unscathed. Passing the Ring, I note that the corners are soaked with water, and the seconds look wearier than their men. As I squirm through the crowd, drinks are circulating, and a man is selling Monte’s Jellied Eels. On the whole, I think “Wonderland” is aptly named.

THE AGONY OF GOLF

MR. BALFOUR has declared that golf is not a game for old gentlemen. "It is," he said, "a game for young people, and unless you begin it when young you will never enjoy the full glory of it when you are old." I used to be a golfophobe. I despised golf. I sneered at my golfophile friends. To me golf and senility were synonymous. But last summer a young Irishman converted me. His exuberant eulogy of the game excited my curiosity, and I bought a bagful of strange weapons with strange names. Instantly the devil of golf entered into my soul and took possession of me. No longer was I master of myself. The things which formerly engrossed me became stale and flat. For nearly a year I have grieved over my wasted youth. The past is past, but I bitterly repent the hours I have squandered on idle work and unprofitable play. I sorrow over the memory of holidays squandered wantonly. Fiercely I think of weeks and weeks and weeks that were utterly null and void, although before my unseeing eyes stretched the reproaching links. Yes, I have even walked ignorantly over undiscerned paradises in all parts of the world. I have vacuously gazed at golfers year after empty year, and in my besotted folly failed to grasp the skirts of happy chance. For all my other sins I can forgive myself, but for this sin, never. Reader, there is only one kind of remorse that is intolerable. It is the remorse of the golfer who has not teed a ball in his teens. Other omissions may be buried in oblivion. We can forget the kiss that was not taken in the moonlight, the word that was not uttered in the conservatory, all the women we have not married, the bargains we have not bought, the sights we have not seen. But we can never forget the years that might have been and were not consecrated to golf.

There is, however, one grain of sugar in your cup of gall. The basis of golf is suffering, and the young golfer suffers less than the mature golfer. Youth plays the game with levity, but manhood plays it with the passionate solemnity of a minor prophet. The fun of golf is due to the torture of mental conflict with perverse matter. Youth misses the awful joy of misdirected toil. It learns golf too easily to taste the true ecstasy of torment. The man who has achieved success in other forms of activity, such as trade, politics, painting, literature, or football, finds to his horror when he faces the tee-box that all his knowledge is a vain thing. Even a King becomes a poor creature. Even a Prime Minister is a bungler. Feverishly the successful merchant grasps his driver and embarks upon the sea of unfathomable failure. No cunning availeth. No wisdom profiteth. For he who would conquer the imp of golf must become as a little child. He must abase his pride in the dust. He must expose his folly to the world. He must make a public laughing-stock of his grey hairs. It is said that Lord Chancellor Campbell took dancing lessons at the age of thirty-four, but he took them by night, like Nicodemus, in stealthy privacy under an assumed name. The eminent man who condemns himself to golf cannot hope to learn the dreadful sport in secret. He must perform his grotesque contortions in public. He must endure the furtive grin of the caddie and the simulated gravity of the club verandah. He must not only make an ass of himself, but he must also feel an ass and be an ass for months and even years. There is no other game which manufactures the habitually and contentedly incompetent. Many men delight in golf who know that they are living monuments of incapacity. Indeed, the worse you play the game, the more you enjoy it.

The agony of golf is largely due to the fact that in it all the natural and spiritual laws are suspended. You may do everything right and yet everything goes wrong. Here the effect does not follow the cause. The strong will and the strong sinew are equally useless. Courage is valueless and determination vain. Perseverance only deepens your misery and fortitude but increases your humiliation. You realize for the first time in your

life that you have hands and feet totally unfitted for the business of life. It is not helpful to grip your club as you grip other things. You must learn to twist your finger-joints into a horribly unnatural series of knots. You must grasp the weapon with your fingers and thumbs and not with the palms of your hands. As you labour you cultivate a crop of corns and blisters. But although your skin comes off you don't get on. If you clutch your club tightly you are told that your grip is too tight. If you clutch it loosely it is too loose. In other avocations men are right-handed. In golf you must be left-handed. For mournful months you struggle desperately to weaken the grip of your right and strengthen the grip of your left. By virtue of some accursed perversity you must always do in golf exactly the opposite of what you want to do.

For instance, your infuriated heart longs to hit the ball. But that is forbidden. You must not hit it. You must strive to forget its existence. How can human nature compass that miracle? As to the abominable rapture of the upward swing, I am sure that in no circle of Dante's Inferno was there any torture so fiendish. You must stand like a stone image and compel your body to twist in some sections and to remain motionless in others. It is too much. How can a man keep his feet and his head fixed while his knees bend in and his backbone revolves and his elbows and shoulders swing round? It is melancholy to watch a fat gentleman who is old enough to know better desperately struggling to perform these ludicrous evolutions. Perhaps after ten years of ceaseless experiment he discovers that by aiming carefully in one direction he is able to propel the ball in another. Then he is happy, for he has discovered the secret of golf.

Of other vices men have the grace to be ashamed, but the golfer is a shameless voluptuary. He is the most abandoned of all criminals. Take my own case. There is nothing which I would not sacrifice to my dark passion. The ceiling of my library is low, but that did not deter me from practising the art of swinging in it. The toe of my club gashed the plaster and laid bare the laths. Did I relent or refrain? No. I swung,

and swung until I saw the sky through my roof, and the house began to tumble about my ears. Cowed by the imprecations and moved by the entreaties of my fellow-creatures, I desisted for a while, but soon the devouring demon drove me into fresh iniquities. I swung my driver in my bedroom. For a while all went well. Then suddenly I heard a crash of shattered glass, and, looking guiltily over my left shoulder, I beheld the ruins of an electrolier. Even this disaster did not arrest my fell mania. Still I went on swinging, and now my home is in ruins. My carpets are worn into holes, and my relatives are in a state of gibbering despair. My sleep is no longer peaceful. I am haunted by nightmares of lost balls and abysmal bunkers. Often I rise from my dreams, and, seizing the poker, I putt my watch into the fireplace. I can no longer eat my meals with simple dignity. I drive with my knife and fork, and play mashie shots with my spoon. You should see me lofting a brussels sprout out of the rough, or laying a pea or a tomato dead, or negotiating an apple stymie.

Sometimes when I shake a friend's hand he winces and turns pale. I apologise, explaining that I had inadvertently used the overlapping grip. I notice that my fingers are assuming bizarre shapes. My gloves are all too small. My feet have expanded, and I am becoming hen-toed and lark-heeled. In fits of abstraction, I find myself pivoting on my toe and gazing vacantly into the distance like a pointer. For it is an immutable rule in golf that, after you have struck the ball, you must freeze into a peering posture. The best golfers are those who can peer longest. If I go for a walk, suddenly I pause, grasp my umbrella firmly with both hands, and waggle it wildly in the air. Nursemaids in the park whisper, as they push their "prams" past me, "Poor fellow! He's been drinking." But I have not been drinking, for the immature golfer must not yield to the temptations of alcohol. Only the veteran can drink with impunity. A whole volume might be written on the weird beverages consumed by golfers. For some mysterious reason, golfers are addicted to sloe gin. I suspect there is some connection between sloe gin and the great golf maxim, "Slow back."

Cherry whisky is another golf liquid. It is a sickly medicated oily syrup that seems to lubricate the golfing muscles.

It is generally believed that Ananias was an angler. I don't believe it. He was a golfer. No other game places so severe a strain on the moral nature. An incompetent angler is a conscious liar. An incompetent golfer is an unconscious liar. In the early agonies of golf two and three make four. It is too much to ask the most upright man to count accurately the blows he deals at a ball in a bunker. Before we idolize George Washington, we ought to reflect that he never played golf. After three blind swipes in a bunker, you feel that man was not made for arithmetic, but that arithmetic was made for man. How can you count when you cannot see? How can you add up when you are a runaway windmill in a sandstorm?

Another severe trial to the broken but sanguine heart is the inadequate reward meted out by golf to industry. Golf is emphatically not an infinite capacity for taking pains. In all other branches of suffering severe effort produces some visible result. In golf the carefully arduous toiler is beaten with many stripes. You stand before your ball like a priest of Baal. You gaze at it with solemn adoration. You try to remember the ten thousand commandments of golf. You procrastinate in the anguish of indecision. Years seem to pass before you venture to push your club slowly and painfully through the air. Your eyes are projected towards the fateful blade of grass behind the ball until you feel that they are dangling at the end of wires. Then all is over. The ball rolls feebly through the grass, scattering the raindrops in a spray of humiliation. You have done everything right, and yet everything is wrong. At that moment you taste the bitterness of death. Black fury curdles in your soul. That is golf. But would you exchange your deep despair for any other joy? No. You hug your torment. You hope against hope. Out of your very anguish you snatch a fearful delight. With glum rapture you study Vardon's "Complete Golfer." You pore over Braid. You sweat over Taylor. You try a new driver or a new stance. You begin at the beginning a thousand times. You renounce once more the pomps and van-

ities of this wicked world, and dedicate yourself afresh to the fickle goddess of golf. And the joke is that you take pleasure in your pain. Lucid intervals there are when you swear that never again will you play this accursed game, but you cannot give it up. Once a golfer, always a golfer. I used to wonder what Keats meant when he wrote "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." I know now. She was the siren of golf.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone, and palely loitering?

What ailed him? He was learning golf. Why did he shut her "wild, wild eyes with kisses four"? Because four was "bogey."

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried, "La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

But although their lips gaped wide with horrid warning, he did not heed, for death alone delivers the golfer from his devoir. And when he dies he does not cry "Adsum!" In solemn and sonorous tones he calls "Fore!"



MAINLY ABOUT EVERYTHING

IN THE READING ROOM

YOUR cockney likes noise. I am sure he would go mad if there were silence in London for the space of half an hour. He would feel that the foundations of the earth had given way, and that the bottom of the universe had dropped out.

Have you observed that a sudden silence produces the sensation of falling through space? Thus Satan must have felt during those nine days while he was executing the finest back-fall ever seen on any stage. It is now, unhappily, impossible to arrange for a nine days' drop, but you can procure the equivalent silence. Therefore, I prescribe for all sound-wounded persons a sojourn in the Reading Room.

In that noiseless mausoleum they may enjoy a perfect rest-cure without money and without price. It is a securer retreat than any sanatorium. Its cloistral peace is more impermeable than any club. The Athenæum compared to it is a gabble-den, and White's a choral hell. It is a more inviolate sanctuary than a Trappist monastery. It is serener than the crypt of St. Paul's.

Its inmates live in a vow of silence. It is a crime even to whisper and a sin to sigh. The orchestral cough that ravages the church and the theatre here is hushed, and your ears are not lacerated by the rustle of newspapers and the crackle of silken skirts. The human voice is not heard under this crystal dome. Here the pen is wool-shod and the nose seldom becomes a trumpet on which fiends blow soul-desolating strains. A fig for your nursing-homes! Give me the Reading Room Cure!

But noise is not the only plague from which the Reading Room provides a means of escape. It is a sure refuge against fresh air. London is a City of Draughts. Its houses are caves of Boreas. Its theatres are conclaves of the four winds. Its

churches are swept by icy gales. Its "Tubes" are fit only for men of stone. Through them rushes a perpetual tornado, a continuous typhoon. To travel in them is like being a pea in a pea-shooter. You are blown to your destination. The pier at Brighton is stuffy compared to these subterranean resorts. The bitter blast congeals you at all angles. It hacks and hews your shivering body like the Maiden, that mediæval instrument of torture which clasped the victim with enveloping knives, cutting him into little pieces before he could gasp. To such a pass has the insane passion for fresh air brought us.

But, thank heaven! there is one place in London where there is no fresh air. Thank heaven for the nobly conservative Trustees of the British Museum. They have kept the Reading Room free from the pestilence that is making London unfit to live in. Thanks to their stern conservative principles, one can be as cosy as a mummy in an airtight sarcophagus, as comfortable as a corpse in a healthy old vault. Why should the dead monopolise all the privileges? It puts a premium upon suicide, for the thought of the draughtless coffin makes one fall in love with snug and airless death. It is as well that the Reading Room helps us to endure the windy world. No fault can be found with the foulness of the air. It is richly laden with those germs of which Science desires to rob us. I love bacteria, and microbes are my closest friends. I abhor the lonely solitude of a sanitary atmosphere. It would be as bleak as the ether. Filtered air and filtered water are both abominable. For me the full-bodied vintage of the Thames, the fruity nectar of the Lea, and the germ-congested air of the Reading Room.

Of late I see with boding terror dim signs of revolution in the Reading Room. The hoof of reform is vaguely seen in the sallow light I love. Leather tags have been attached to the backs of the sedate volumes of the vastest catalogue in the world. A gross indignity! I blush when I pull out a volume as if I were pulling on a boot. And there is a villainous air of newness about the whole place. Some fierce charwoman has lately been let loose. The old pens and the old ink bottles have been swept away from the catalogue desks, and no longer can

the eye rest lovingly upon splashes and splotches of ink. A horrible tidiness infests the Reading Room. The slips on which you write your application are no longer strewn on the desks. They are kept, like the lodgment forms in a bank, in bilious oak boxes.

I know how this ferocious charwoman will end. She will let in the fresh air. She will evict my beloved microbes. Already I hear of pneumatic tubes that will hurl books at your head like bricks the moment you ask for them. All the dear delays, the fond procrastinations, the dignified circumlocutions will be rudely abolished. The large indolence of our beehive will be destroyed. We shall be compelled to hustle like the Chicago frog. You know the story. A Boston frog and a Chicago frog fell into a basin of cream. The Boston frog resigned himself to a lingering death. The Chicago frog bade him hustle. He declined to hustle. The Chicago frog hustled, and in the morning they found the Chicago frog dead, and the Boston frog sitting on a pat of butter. Now, I will hustle outside the Reading Room, but not in it. Therefore, let the charwoman pause, for many valueless lives will be lost if she blights us with fresh air and pneumonia.

I like to figure the Reading Room as the Labyrinth of Literature. In it weird men and weird women wander, each following a separate lure. Its geometrical aisles and alleys exhale an ironic symbolism. In the central circle sit the minions of the Minotaur who feeds on human ambition. Round them in concentric eddies are the catalogue desks. The letters of the alphabet preside over this silent session of clues. It is a long walk from A to Z. I often make a mental obeisance to the Roman alphabet whose twenty-six potentates loom here like gods. Consider their empire. Out of their permutations and combinations are made the millions of books that line those walls and all the invisible galleries and catacombs behind them. Almighty alphabet! Yet I, man, invented it casually in my leisure hours. Am I not wonderful?

Behold me in various guises sitting at my numbered desks. Rows on rows of me, hunched in all sorts of attitudes, garbed

in all kinds of clothes, absorbed in all varieties of industry, bees in the biggest beehive on earth. Here my bald head glows like ivory under the beams of the electric lamp. There I am a dreaming girl, my warm youth and fresh grace mocking the printed dead. Now I am a grizzled grandmother, spectacled, wrinkled, rheumy-eyed. Now I am a serious boy with smooth cheek and careless curls. Are these shadows real? They glide languidly to and fro like the drowsy fish that moon behind the muddy glass of an aquarium. They are inhumanly unaware of each other. They are unconscious of each other's absurdity.

The Reading Room is rich in eccentric characters, mostly parasites. I have seen Micawber there and Dick Swiveller, Mr. Dick and Sylvestre Bonnard. Many of these strange beings are slaves of habit. They sit on the same seat day after day, year after year. Samuel Butler once complained bitterly because he could not get Frost's "Lives of the Early Christians." He had been wont to lay his papers on it, and its loss paralysed him. Many of these barnacles would die if they were dislodged. They are adhesive habits. Rarely do you see famous men in this sepulchre. It is the haunt of dryasdusts, hacks, compilers, and vampers. Yet it is a pathetic tomb. If we could catalogue the hopes and despairs that have come and gone through those ever-swinging doors we should have a microcosm of life, a dusty sunbeam peopled with those motes of irony, the ghosts of the living and the phantoms of the dead.

THE AGE OF POSTCARDS

WHEN the archæologists of the thirtieth century begin to excavate the ruins of London, they will fasten upon the Picture Postcard as the best guide to the spirit of the Edwardian Era. They will collect and collate thousands of these pieces of paste-board, and they will reconstruct our age from the strange hieroglyphs and pictures that time has spared. For the Picture Postcard is a candid revelation of our pursuits and pastimes, our customs and costumes, our morals and manners. It is not easy to discover the creator of the first Picture Postcard. He has been swallowed by oblivion. It is a pity that his lineaments should remain unknown. If we were not careless custodians of our own greatness, we should have erected a colossal statue of this nameless benefactor, so that posterity might gaze upon his features and ponder on the cut of his frock coat.

Like all great inventions, the Picture Postcard has wrought a silent revolution in our habits. It has secretly delivered us from the toil of letter-writing. There are men still living who can recall the days when it was considered necessary and even delightful to write letters to one's friends. Those were times of leisure. Our forefathers actually sat down and wasted hours over those long epistles which still furnish the industrious book-maker with raw material. It is said that there are at this moment in London several tons of unpublished letters written by Ruskin, and it is alleged that a few hundredweights from the pen of Robert Louis Stevenson have not yet seen the light. It is sad to think of the books which dead authors might have written if they had saved the hours which they squandered upon private correspondence. Happily, the Picture Postcard has relieved the modern author from this slavery. He can now use all his ink in the sacred task of adding volumes to the noble collection in

the British Museum. Formerly, when a man went abroad he was forced to tear himself from the scenery in order to write laborious descriptions of it to his friends at home. Now he merely buys a Picture Postcard at each station, scribbles on it a few words in pencil, and posts it. This enhances the pleasures of travel. Many a man in the epistolary age could not face the terrors of the Grand Tour, for he knew that he would be obliged to spend most of his time in describing what he saw or ought to have seen. The Picture Postcard enables the most indolent man to explore the wilds of Switzerland or Margate without perturbation.

Nobody need fear that there is any spot on the earth which is not depicted on this wonderful oblong. The photographer has photographed everything between the poles. He has snapped the earth. No mountain and no wave has evaded his omnipresent lens. The click of his shutter has been heard on every Alp and in every desert. He has hunted down every landscape and seascape on the globe. Every bird and every beast has been captured by the camera. It is impossible to gaze upon a ruin without finding a Picture Postcard of it at your elbow. Every pimple on the earth's skin has been photographed, and wherever the human eye roves or roams it detects the self-conscious air of the reproduced. The aspect of novelty has been filched from the visible world. The earth is eye-worn. It is impossible to find anything which has not been frayed to a frazzle by photographers.

The human face has fared like the human earth. It has been stamped on pasteboard so many times in so many ways that it has lost its old look of unawareness. It has grown common. There is no facial expression left which affects one with the sensation of surprise. The ingenious efforts of actresses have familiarised the youngest office-boy with all the mysteries of beauty. It is no longer possible to discover a new kind of smile. There are not very many varieties of smile within the compass of our facial muscles. At any rate, the Picture Postcard seems to suggest that there are not more human smiles than human jokes. It is said that there are only three distinct jokes in the

world. It is certain that there are not more than two smiles. The most accomplished professional beauty can smile in only two ways. She can smile with her mouth open and she can smile with her mouth shut. The Picture Postcard has accustomed us to the charms of both smiles. It is a little hard on the young lover that he should start with dismay when he discovers a Picture Postcard smile on the divine lips of his fair one. That way lies disillusion. On the other hand, the Picture Postcard fills the soul of many a maiden with innocuous romance. She can moon over the features of her favourite actor without incurring the penalties of actual passion. She can gaze with rapture upon the Hero of a Hundred Poses. Perhaps her Postcard amours make her hard on the candidate for her heart and hand. Romeo may find it rather difficult to live up to the god of the camera that Juliet has adored. The modern lover is seldom a hero to his sweetheart. The actors have raised to too dizzy heights the standard of manly beauty.

The Postcard has always been a feminine vice. Men do not write Postcards to each other. When a woman has time to waste, she writes a letter; when she has no time to waste, she writes a Postcard. There are still some ancient purists who regard Postcards as vulgar, fit only for tradesmen. I know ladies who would die rather than send a Postcard to a friend. They belong to the school which deems it rude to use abbreviations in a letter, and who consider it discourteous to write a numeral. The Postcard is, indeed, a very curt and unceremonious missive. It contains no endearing prefix or reassuring affix. It begins without a prelude and ends without an envoy. The Picture Postcard carries rudeness to the furthest extremity. There is no room for anything polite. Now and then one can write on a blue sky or a white road, but, as a rule, there is no space for more than a gasp.

Men suffer dreadfully over Picture Postcards. Their wives drag them into shops full of horrid revolving postcard-stacks. They are forced to choose dozens of sticky, slimy postcards with tissue paper over their ghastly colours. They then must help to send off these atrocities. If they are in France, they must

hunt for stamps. It is not easy to find stamps in a French town. For some insane reason or other, stamps are sold with tobacco. I suspect the real secret is this. French tobacco is so execrable that nobody would smoke it if he could help it. The good Government, therefore, sells stamps with tobacco, so that in order to get stamps, you are tempted to buy tobacco. But the French Picture Postcards are better than ours, for you can write only five words on them for a halfpenny. M. Marcel Prevost attributes to this stringent law the recent change in French prose. The lapidary style is now the rage. Everybody makes jewels five words long. I wish our Postmaster-General would reduce the legal number in this country.

LIVING CARICATURES

It is a mistake to think that caricature is a malignity. True caricature is a kind of poetry. It is a vision of the reality behind appearances. This truth flashed upon me the other day while I was looking at Mr. Max Beerbohm's caricatures in the Carfax Gallery. It seemed to me that those wonderful caricatures were more alive than the faces of the men themselves. The dramatic genius of the artist had made the meaning of the faces clear. It had dragged the soul to the surface of the skin and revealed it shingly. And as I said to myself that surely this is a new kind of art, it dawned upon me that it was the old art of dramatic poetry working itself out in a new vehicle. We are apt to separate art into compartments, and to think that imagination can express itself only in the conventional ways. But there are many languages, and some of them have no words. Sometimes imagination expresses itself in life alone. Its power is boundless. It may seem whimsical, but as I looked at Max's caricatures, I began to wonder whether a touch of chance might not have made Shakespeare a caricaturist instead of a dramatist. I swiftly translated the Shakespearean characters into caricatures. I saw them done in faint lines and washes. Then to amuse myself, I translated Max's caricatures into Shakespearean characters, and, to my amazement, they began to move and talk and live. The tiny little room at the Carfax turned magically into a theatre, and the people on the walls burst into the bustle and fuss of life. They were no ghosts, but hot-blooded, solid fellows, stuffed with companionable passions. At last in pure horror, I fled to steady my wits by sipping tea at Rumpelmayer's, where I found a crowd of living caricatures busy at the same business. It is not often that the vision of the human face as a caricature afflicts one, but it is none the less a true vision. Every face is a caricature of the soul.

If I were a theatrical manager, I should put on my stage a play that would draw all London. It would be a play made of living caricatures. I would hire actors to impersonate Max's caricatures, and I would make them talk to each other. The conversation would be ripely humorous, profoundly passionate, and wistfully tender. Mr. Pinero would explain himself to Mr. Shaw, and Mr. Hall Caine would unpack his heart to Mr. Wells. Mr. Balfour would confide to Mr. Haldane his secret bewilderment and gentle dismay, and they would quietly discuss the virtue of politics and golf as rival anodynes for the disease of life. From this deep theme I would pass to a chat between Mr. George Wyndham and Mr. George Alexander on the secret of manly beauty, and its relation to rhetorical grace. Then Mr. Sutro might explain the commercial aspect of art to Mr. Sargent, and the Marquis de Soveral might deliver a lecture to Mr. John Davidson on the significance of Puritanism in English history. William Shakespeare could take Mr. Sidney Lee into his confidence with regard to the dark lady and "Mr. W. H." He might even introduce him to Mr. William Hall, and he might drily note the link between Mr. Hall and Mr. Hall Caine.

In the meantime, we must be satisfied with the theatre of caricature whose lessee is Nature. After all it is a very jolly theatre. In it every man is his own caricaturist. There is not a face in these crowded streets of ours but has its own spiritual humour. The highest and the lowliest are there for our diversion, and as we walk along the pavement we can chuckle without paying a farthing for our entertainment. The very crossing-sweeper who makes philosophy with his besom is as lively as King Lear. I have seen Dogberry disguised as an usher at the Old Bailey, and I have started at Bully Bottom in the Royal Courts of Justice. Who is Mr. Chesterton but a reformed Christopher Sly? Lord Rosebery is the best Hamlet of our day.

I have seen a marvellous portrait of General Booth in the National Gallery, for Nature, like history, often repeats herself. Sardou looks very like Napoleon, and Mr. Chamberlain very like Pitt. This is one of the richest jests of caricature—the foisting of one man's face upon another man's personality.

There are satyrs who look like saints and saints who look like satyrs.

I am a profound disbeliever in physiognomy. Features are often false witnesses. Stupidity frequently wears a mask of intelligence. I know business men who look like poets and poets who look like business men. A weak chin generally conceals a strong will. You will find sensualists with ascetic lips. Thin-lipped voluptuaries are common. The most violent passions are compatible with a cold and virtuous countenance. Men of genius invariably look like idiots, and if you pick out the man who looks most eminent at a party night you are sure to find that he is a nobody. I always distrust men who look magnificent. Nature is a stingy creature. She seldom gives a man the double gift of being great and looking great. She took care to lame Byron and deform Pope and disfigure Johnson. But the crowning example of her jealous parsimony is Shakespeare. I have always been disappointed with Shakespeare's face. It does not live up to his poetry. It is dull, heavy, and commonplace. It suggests that Shakespeare was a fat man. Droeshout the painter and Droeshout the engraver may have been bad artists, but I imagine that Ben Jonson was right in congratulating "the graver" on having satisfactorily "hit" the "face." Aubrey says that Shakespeare was "a handsome well-shap't man," and the two Droeshout portraits corroborate that description. I like to think that Nature gave Shakespeare a conventionally handsome face. He was too many men to look like any particular man. Milton's portrait looks exactly like Milton, but Shakespeare's portrait looks like anybody you please. The most extraordinary man who ever lived looks like the most ordinary man who ever lived.

I have said that caricature is a kind of poetry. It is a blend of imaginative humour and imaginative irony and imaginative pathos. Has it ever occurred to you that irony is a phase of pathos, just as pathos is a phase of humour? In modern prose I know nothing more poignant than the pathetic ironical humour of Sterne. You find the same quality, though diffused and diluted, in Anatole France and Robert Louis Stevenson. You do not find it in Bernard Shaw. He seems vainly to strive after it,

but something is lacking in his humour and irony. I think it is the humane magic that we call pathos. That humane magic bubbles up waywardly and fitfully in Mr. Barrie. You seek for it in vain in Mr. Pinero, but you come upon it where you least expect to surprise it—in Max's caricatures and in some of his essays. One feels the humane magic in these caricatures as one feels it in Shakespeare, in Sterne, in Stevenson, in Barrie, and in Anatole France. For there is sympathy in the derision and comprehension in the satire. Even in the most exuberant caricature, the Ray Lankester, there lurks the gentle quality which softens Falstaff and Uncle Toby, Pantagruel and Don Quixote. Men are all queer, but they are all brothers.

It is this humane magic that makes living caricatures so grotesquely pathetic. These faces that surge round us are the waves of life. As they flow round us we are moved by their strange unconsciousness, their unaware isolation. The unknown sculptor that is carving their fantastic features is also carving ours. He is careless of rank and station. He plies his chisel as cunningly on the face of a wretch who sells penny toys on Ludgate Hill as on the face of a king. If the faces of horses and dogs and cows were as diverse as the faces of men, the spectacle of life would be intolerable. But the faces of birds and beasts and fishes are restfully monotonous. Stones and flowers and trees and grasses maintain their homely familiarity. It is only the human face that seems strange. Now and then a glimpse of strangeness in animals makes the flesh creep. Now and then one shivers at a tree that comes alive. In silent woods, such as Burnham Beeches or the New Forest, Nature seems to be all eyes, and I have known sensitive minds that have shrunk in horror from such solitudes. It is the old sense of life making itself felt as children feel it. It may invade you as you look at a primrose, or as you meet the gaze of a dog or a cat, or as you regard a questioning star. But it touches you most intimately in the living caricatures that are the faces of those you love. For it is the old familiar faces that are most foreign, and the consummation of strangeness is the look that is seen only by lovers in the hush and rapture of love.

THE QUEST OF JOY

THE art of inexpensive joy is not so easily cultivated in London as it is in Paris. In Paris you can escape from the tedium of life by stepping into the street. The boulevards throb with gaiety. The air is vivacious, and the people are vivid. They do not step along the pavements with the sad reticence of the London pedestrians.

The secret of the Parisian is freedom from self-consciousness. Rich and poor alike yield to the pressure of the passing mood. They are publicly amused by the trivial nothings of existence. They express their feelings in volatile chatter, in the quick play of feature and gesture. They have the gift of lightness and the genius of transition. They brush sensations in swallow-flights of swift interest.

The Londoner is slow, ponderous, dignified, and dull. He walks his streets in the full armour of an aggressive pomposity, hardening his heart against any leakage of personal emotion. He thinks only of himself, and of the impression which he is making on those he meets. He seldom smiles or talks. He has no gestures. His eyes are resolutely glazed with reserve. He clothes himself with gloom like a garment. That is why a walk along London streets is like a walk in a living graveyard.

This frigidity is due to the racial passion for concealing its self-consciousness. Paris is all rarefaction. London is all petrification.

Now, stone is a good and desirable thing, but it is possible to have too much of it, and one sometimes grows weary of walking amid millions of stone men and stone women. One feels in one's blood a wild insurrection of defiant joy. I know Irishwomen who glory in scandalising the petrified decorum of their English friends. The granite propriety of Englishwomen mad-

dens the imp in their blood, and tempts them to smash the tables of stone.

The other night I watched one of these Celtic rebellions. Molly is a wild Irish girl, who spends her life in horrifying the maidens and matrons of the solemn suburb against whose bars she beats her passionate wings. She came to me the other evening crying for a respite from "Drearydom." That is her name for life.

"Let us have some fun somewhere," she beseeched.

So I blow two blasts on my cab-whistle, and at once the air is full of jingling bells and thundering hoofs. Two hansoms arrive simultaneously, and the galloping steeds, pulled back upon their haunches, slide on their light shoes for several yards.

"Hurroo!" cries Molly, "I like this."

In a trice we are jingling down Regent Street. It is seven o'clock of a summer night, and the shops are shut, the pavements are sparsely sprinkled with forlorn pilgrims, and everywhere is a vibrating dejection. The only sign of life is in the omnibuses, the hansoms, the broughams, the motors and the taxies which are carrying silent ghosts from dull dinners to dull plays.

"Stop at the first restaurant," I shout through the trap-door in the roof. The cab stops, I jump out, and passing a liveried janitor of gigantic stature, I spy out the Promised Land.

The environment is radiant. There is a blaze of light. There is a fragrance of flowers. There is a snow of napery. There is a glitter of glass. There is an army of waiters. There is music. But the diners . . . I survey their stolid gravity and fly.

"Well!" cries Molly.

"Glasnevin not in it," I groan. On we go, and in each caravanserai we find the same funereal phantoms in the same atmosphere of false gaiety.

"My dear Molly," I moan, as I sink back for the fifth time, "it is the people. The restaurants are all right. But a French chef cannot cook guests as well as food."

"I know," she sighs; "but surely there is some place in all

London where we can be gay. Can't you find a jolly little French café—something in Soho?"

Alas! I know those French restaurants. There are two sorts, the dull and dear, and the dull and cheap. The cheap one is a bad burlesque of the Ritz. Ten courses for two shillings. Everything in season—salmon, quail, plover, partridge, duck, grouse, pheasant, woodcock, as the case may be—but everything brandishing the same wishy-washy flavour, from the variegated hors d'œuvres to the debilitated ices. Still more sad is the solemn swagger of the deluded diners, their dress and their manners a still more horrible hash of imitative snobbery.

By this time our cabby has come to the conclusion that we are mad.

"Ain't you 'ungry, guvnor? I know as I've got a thirst!"

We take the hint, and in desperation we dump ourselves into an old-fashioned restaurant in Leicester Square. It is not gay. Oh, by no means. But it lacks the ghastly artificial glitter of the modish restaurant. It is sober. It is a trifle dingy. The diners are very silent, very subdued, very melancholy. The women are dowdy. The men are obese. Molly looks round the place, and makes a face at me. The waiter smiles. He is an old Frenchman, lean, lantern-jawed, and lame. Yes, he will give us a good dinner, the best in London.

While we eat we chat with our lame Frenchman. Molly has quickly captivated him. They chatter about Paris. He has been in London for twenty-five years. In this restaurant? Yes, in this restaurant. He finds London very *triste*. He could not live without his annual holiday in Paris with his old mother. Molly tells him about our fruitless search for gaiety. He smiles, spreads out his palms, lifts his shoulders.

"No," he says meditatively, "there is no place in London where you can be gay." The proprietor had given him a sovereign the other night and told him to go out and amuse himself. Like us, he had tried to find gaiety in London.

"It is not possible, sir," he said quietly.

Well, we enjoyed our dinner and our gossip with the old lame French waiter, and, filled with fresh hope, we went to a

music hall, but after half an hour we fled. Then we walked round Piccadilly Circus, killing time, or being killed by it. Tired of loitering, we dived into a German beer hall, and drank amber pillars of lager beer to stupefy our ennui. But the Teutonic melancholy and the Teutonic tobacco smoke soon proved insupportable, and again we found ourselves in the sad, discomfortable street.

"Molly," said I, "we may give it up. There is no gaiety in London."

"What time is it?" said Molly.

"Ten o'clock."

"Take me home," she cried. "I'm tired of trying to be gay."

What is the cure for this climatic desolation? I see that some syndicate is trying to grow a little Paris in London. They might as well try to grow shamrock. The spirit of London is sadness. If Paris were peopled with Londoners, it would be London. The Londoner cannot live in the street like the Parisian. That is why there are no rows of tables and chairs on the London pavements in front of the London taverns. With us gaiety is like guilt, a thing to hide behind closed doors, to lock up like a skeleton in a cupboard.

Some philosophers ascribe the ennui of the English to Puritanism. That is absurd, for even our impropriety is dreary, and our sins are dull.

THE PLEASURES OF INSANITY

It is delightful to be mad for an hour or two, but it is not easy to find a place where you can go mad with absolute comfort. Therefore the Mammoth Fun City in Olympia supplies a great moral and intellectual need. It is the metropolis of innocent lunacy and harmless idiocy. No longer must the desperate searcher after silliness go to Hanwell or Colney Hatch. In the Fun City you can be moderately silly for sixpence, and uproariously imbecile for half a crown. For half a sovereign you can taste the most refined delights of Bedlam. The charm of the Fun City is the cheapness of its nonsense. There is none of its follies which costs more than threepence, and most of them can be purchased for twopence. The mad King of Bavaria spent thousands on the cultivation of lunacy. He hired Wagner to invent many expensive varieties of noise. What a time King Ludwig would have had in the Fun City! Wagner imagined that he had said the last word in noise. He did not foresee Funopolis. I prescribe it as a cure for neuropaths who are worried by street cries and street music. After an evening in the Fun City they will realize that London is a city of dead silence.

I took my young friend Bimbo there the other afternoon. He had arrived from a drowsy country school. He was hungry for theatres and pantomimes. The Fun City sated even his appetite for strenuous amusement. After four hours of it he was pale with laughter, limp with enjoyment. First of all, we went down in the submarine, 20,000 miles under the sea. Ah, it was awful, that dire plunge into the ocean. We shuddered as we saw the water bubbling outside the dim deadlights, and the fish swimming between the legs of the diver. We trembled as the submarine rolled and pitched. Then, leaving the bed of the ocean, we bravely walked into the winding corridors of Katzen-

jammer Castle. It is dark as Erebus, baleful as Gehenna. Through the midnight gloom we stumbled, and at every step we groaned with laughter and terror. It is a haunted castle. The ground is insane. It wriggles under your feet. It bites you. It sinks from under you. It dances. It jumps. It gets gloriously drunk. As you stagger on you hear demons howling and chuckling, shrieking and laughing. If your sweetheart is with you, it is necessary to put your arm round her. Nay, you may find that nothing but a kiss will allay her fears. When you come out you are laughing. You can't help it. Stand for a moment outside, and watch the people coming out. It will do you good to see how many kinds of laugh the human face is capable of.

But the crowning idiocy of the Fun City is the bewildering variety of insane movement in it. There are all sorts of diabolical machines which whirl you and toss you and jerk you and shake you round and round, to and fro, up and down, backward, forward, and sideways. You are whisked like an egg and sizzled like a cocktail. You are churned like butter and pulled like toffee. There is a staircase which makes you dance the cake-walk. There is a huge roulette wheel, which dips as it spins you round. There are wigglers which wiggle you horribly. There are motor-cars which duck and dive in a blaze of light and a blare of sound. There are galloping ostriches which buck and peck as they gyrate. There is also the aeroflyte, which sends you flying on a wire across the hall over the heads of the lunatics below. There are haunted swings, and heaven only knows what else. After a full course of these engines of insanity you feel as if you had been turned upside down and inside out. There is no physical dignity left in you. The consequence is that you are perfectly happy in the certitude that you are a fool. You grasp the great truth that your residence in a thing so absurd as your body is the master-joke of the universe. You see the comic side of your nobility. You perceive that your great soul is at the mercy of your grotesque body, and that your grotesque body is at the mercy of the stars. If the dance of the earth were a cake-walk instead of a waltz, all your glory would be gone. The splendour of your pride is based upon the sober behaviour

of a million constellations. You can get drunk without dislocating the universe, but the universe cannot get drunk without dislocating you.

It is possible that these profound thoughts do not cheer the Fun citizens. It is even possible that they do not think at all as they shy at the hairy cocoanut or strike the patient striker. Bimbo certainly is not moth-eaten with introspection. He approves of the Bactrian camel which stands as still as stone at the gates of the Morocco village, its great eyes staring scornfully at the gaping crowd. He also approves of the Touaregs, Chaambas and Meharis, with their melancholy dances, their deafening drums, and their screaming pipes. We ask Korah, a swarthy lady in gaudy raiment, to bring us coffee. Two other dusky damsels sit down at our table. They chatter to us in French. They beg for a cigar. We are desolated because we have no cigars. We offer cigarettes. They condescend to take them, explaining at the same time that they prefer cigars. They smile on us out of vast mouths filled with glittering teeth. They flirt with us. We tear ourselves away, and go round the tents. We find more Moorish beauties, some with string-coloured skin and delicate features. We discover a solemn Moorish schoolmaster, sitting cross-legged among his scholars, who are writing Arabic pothooks on a wooden tablet.

Then there are the lions, and the untamable Nubian lioness, Spitfire. There is the Hunger House in which Sacco starves for his daily bread. There are giants and midgets. There is our old and tried friend, the sacred bull from Benares. There are holy baboons from the Ganges. There is, above all, a real Russian Circus, with real clowns and a real ring-master, Monsieur Emilio Gautier, who is doubtless descended from the great Théophile. I like circuses, and this circus makes me quite happy: I lose my heart to Mlle. Helen Girard, of the diabolo waist, the sparkling eyes, the bewitching smile, and the bewildering hat. How daintily she makes her palfrey dance the cakewalk! How well his hoofs keep time with the band, or vice versa! How daring are the Four Lepicqs in their marvellous aerial act! I fancy I am in the vanished Aquarium, and un-

consciously I look round for Papa Ritchie's flowing locks and paternal smile. Alas! Papa is no more! But, thank goodness! I am still young enough to love a circus, and as I look slyly at Bimbo's enraptured face, alight with ecstasy, I remember my first circus. It was Ginnett's. It was in Ireland, an immense building packed to the roof. Ah, the clown there was a clown of clowns. How he sang "Killaloe," and how we all roared the chorus! And how I adored the dazzling divinity in lampshade skirts and pale blue tights who pirouetted so airily on the flat back of the old white horse! Are you an old fogey? Well, if you want to feel young again, go to the Mammoth Fun City with a soaring human boy.

A COMEDY OF FRIENDSHIP

POMPEY CRAWLE is the wittiest man in London. His novels are coruscations of irony. He is feared by his friends, for he crucifies them on a phrase. He has perfected the art of oblique derision. His touch is so delicate that only the victim is sure that he is the victim. He never descends to coarse satire. His sneer is like the forked tongue of a serpent. It flickers lightly in the air, and vanishes. His pen is a butterfly with a sting.

His acidulated miniatures are not portraits. They are veiled insolences. He hates his fellow creatures with a bland and tolerant venom that rankles in their vanity. His patronage is so suave that it is more cruel than his contempt. He tinges his praise with an almost invisible scorn, and his fleers with an imperceptible condescension. There are men who writhe under his benevolence. His blessing is a kind of gangrene. It festers in the soul.

The artful mistiness of his insults deprives their target of its glory. For the only consolation of a target is the certainty that it is being aimed at. Pompey always denies his prey that certainty. He invests his sport with an intolerable aspect of chance. His bow is always drawn at a venture. His poisoned rain falls, or seems to fall, on the just and the unjust. I think that is what makes him universally hated. His caps always fit more than one head. It is very perilous to assume that he means what he says. The duplicity of his hate is equalled only by the duplicity of his love.

There is a well-known story which illustrates his agility of contumely. An irascible man of genius walked up to Pompey one afternoon as he sat reading in the smoking room of his Club. He flourished Pompey's latest novel. Many of us thought he

was going to hurl it at Pompey's sleek head. Pompey looked over his pink sheet at the purple fury of the great face.

"How d'y'e do, Flobber?" he drawled. "What have you got there?"

"You know what I've got, hang you, sir!" roared our great man.

"Some masterpiece, I suppose," he cooed, polishing his eye-glass indolently.

"It's *your* masterpiece, sir!" Flobber bellowed. "A masterpiece of impudence!"

"Really," smiled Pompey. "I've forgotten it. You see it has been out so long."

"But it's only a week old!"

"Hopelessly antiquated, my dear fellow! What's the title?"

"Confound you, sir! Do you mean to say you have forgotten your own novel in a week?"

"Well," said Pompey, "my memory is not so good as yours. Memory is vulgar."

"Vulgar!" howled the eminent one. "Do you call me vulgar?"

"Not exactly, my dear boy, but you know you are—er—by way of being popular."

"It's more than you are, sir."

"Ah, one can't have everything in this world."

"Well, I mean to have one thing."

"And what is that one thing?" murmured Pompey, screwing his monocle into his right eye.

"An apology!"

"My dear fellow, if you want me to apologise for you, I'll do my best. What's your offence?"

"My offence! Confound you, sir, it's *your* offence. What do you mean by putting me into your wretched novel?"

"Dear me! Did I put you into it? How careless of me!"

"Am I not Doodle? Isn't Doodle a gross caricature of my manner, my habits, my—?"

"My dear Flobber, calm yourself. I never thought of you.

I make a point of never thinking of you, except as a friend, and a very amusing friend, too."

"Look here," said Flobber, "if Doodle is not meant for me who on earth is he meant for?"

"It's hardly a fair question, my dear Flobber. The fact is it's a secret. Still, I don't mind telling you in strict confidence. Promise never to divulge it."

"Of course, of course," said Flobber eagerly.

"Well," said Pompey, in a stage whisper, "I am Doodle."

"You!" cried Flobber. "But that necktie, that hat, that gesture! They are mine, not yours."

"Tricks, Flobber, only tricks. It would never do to give myself away too flagrantly."

"But it is not playing the game. How will the public know?"

"My dear chap, the public never know."

"All the same, it's deuced hard on me. Everybody is saying that Doodle is Flobber."

"Well, if you like, you can say that I authorised you to contradict it."

"Oh, they wouldn't believe it. Look here, will you write me a letter that I can publish?"

"With pleasure, my dear Flobber. Anything to oblige!"

.

Pompey rose, sat down at the desk, and wrote a letter in his delicate Italian calligraphy. Flobber bore it off triumphantly. Next day in all the papers appeared a letter from Flobber, in which he set forth Pompey's certificate of indemnity as follows:

MY DEAR FLOBBER:—I authorize you to contradict the idle rumour that you are the Doodle in my novel, "The Gasometer." I am at a loss to imagine how the rumour originated, and I take this opportunity of assuring you that my admiration of your gifts remains, as ever, undiminished.

Believe me, sincerely yours,

POMPEY CRAWLE.

Some malignant commentators pointed out that the epistle was tinted with Pompeian ambiguity, and called attention to the ironic flavour of the word "undiminished." Flobber, however,

was satisfied, and the episode served to cement the friendship between him and Pompey. He sent Pompey a complete set of his works, with an autograph inscription upon the title-page of each magnum opus. His next novel was dedicated, "To my dear friend, Pompey Crawle, an earnest of gratitude and regard." Not to be outdone, Pompey dedicated his new novel to Mr. Flobber in these touching words: "To my very dear friend, Flavian Flobber, as an humble oblation on the altar of our friendship." Mr. Crawle's novel bore the somewhat sentimental title, "Friendship's Guerdon." It was a study of literary comradeship. It chronicled the mutual esteem of two novelists, one supremely great, the other supremely small. Flobber instantly recognised himself in the former and Pompey in the latter. He met Pompey one morning in Piccadilly, and shaking hands with him heartily, he cried:

"There can be no mistake this time, old boy!"

"No," said Pompey, "there can be no mistake."

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

THE London season has begun, and town is full of the old familiar faces. We are all talking about the new portraits in the Royal Academy and the new caricatures at the Carfax. Academy portraits are even more amusing than Carfax caricatures, because unconscious humour is always more amusing than conscious humour. A caricature by Max is a delicate jest, but a portrait of an eminent person by an eminent painter is an indelicate jest. You can repudiate a portrait, but you cannot repudiate a caricature. You can say that your portrait flatters you, but you cannot say that a caricature libels you: for a portrait is a representation of your face, a thing which can be verified by reference; but a caricature is a representation of your soul, a thing which cannot be verified by any reference. There is no doubt that caricature is cruel, for it emphasises a man's weakness and suppresses a man's strength. It is strange that there is no such thing as benevolent caricature. Perhaps some day a great artist will invent a new kind of caricature which will exaggerate virtues instead of defects. A comically enlarged virtue would be as amusing as a comically enlarged vice.

Is your face a failure? I insist upon a plain answer to this plain question. You must make your mind up once and for all without any further vacillation. I know that the matter has caused you many years of anxious thought. It is perhaps well that your mirror cannot write the story of your silent communings with its crystal soul. What a procession of baffled yearnings and passionate regrets has marched across its surface without leaving a footprint! Perhaps it has watched you weeping because you were not born as beautiful as a romantic hero or a romantic heroine. Perhaps it has gravely regarded you while you made a mountain out of a mole and elephant's tracks out

of crow's feet. Perhaps it has seen your raven hair yielding to the touch of time and gradually growing golden. Yes, my friend, a great part of your life is spent upon the contemplation of your face. Is your face a failure? Do not prevaricate or equivocate. Do not evade the issue.

Let me help you to answer this important question. In the first place let me tell you that, if you are the unhappy possessor of a perfect face, I have nothing but pity for you. A perfectly beautiful face is an inhuman thing. Its proprietor is seldom popular and never beloved. Moreover, a perfectly beautiful face is insipidly regular. What we call regular features are really the most extreme form of ugliness. The nearer the human face approaches towards the human ideal of beauty the more hideous it is. Man has an insane desire to standardise everything, and if he had his way, he would manufacture human beings like bricks. Let us be thankful that Providence is not a manufacturer and that life is not a factory. We are all born beautiful because we are all born different.

In order to decide whether your face is a failure, it is not necessary to look in the kind of mirror which is made by hands. You must look in another mirror. It is a mirror which is not made by hands. It is the most marvellous mirror in the universe. Monsieur Lemoine says he can make diamonds, but neither Monsieur Lemoine nor any other inventor can make this wonderful mirror. I suppose you are eager to know where it is to be found. Well, it is not in any strong room or in any inaccessible place. It is the commonest thing in the world, for everybody possesses two of these mirrors. If you desire to know whether your face is a failure you must look into the eyes of those around you.

No face is a failure which is loved by even the meanest thing alive. You may be lonely and desolate, but if your face is loved by your dog it is a magnificently triumphant success. If your face is loved by one human being, then its success is more dazzling than that of a hated emperor or a loveless millionaire. The shape of your face has absolutely nothing to do with the question in point. You may be worse than ugly, that

is to say, you may be plain, but if your features are dear to one or two human beings, then your features are in the highest sense of the word beautiful.

That is why we ought never to sit in judgment upon each other's faces. A face which may seem to you dull and dreary may be radiantly lovely when it is mirrored in the eyes of one who loves it. I think this is the reason why caricatures nearly always wound the friends of the victim more cruelly than the victim himself. The face which is caricatured means something to a friend which it does not mean to a stranger. The image in the mirror of the eye is richer than the image in the mirror of glass. There are wistful memories in it and ancient tenderness and imperishable tears. For those who know and love a face it is more than a face, it is a spiritual history.

Consider for a moment the image of a mother's face in the eyes of her child. It is no exaggeration to say that this image is always beautiful. There are no ugly mothers. The reason why there are no ugly mothers is simply this—a mother is lovely because she loves, and because her love is the purest and the most selfless kind of love in the world. I think motherhood in these days has lost something of its noble simplicity and sublimity. The modern painter does not paint madonnas. You seek in vain on the walls of the Academy for modern versions of the Holy Family. Our urban life tends to destroy the home. A mother is out of place in the modern flat. Indeed, she is nearly as incongruous as a bookshelf.

The tragedy of London life is the lonely face which is lonely because it is greedily addicted to lonely pleasure. This type of face is very common. You meet it in the street, in the theatre, and in the restaurant. Sometimes it belongs to a man, sometimes it belongs to a woman. It is the weary face of the pleasure-seeker who has never found time to allow any kind of love to illumine the gloom of gaiety and the darkness of amusement. These melancholy beings are the husks that once were human beings. They have contracted themselves out of human sympathy and human tenderness and human compassion. They are without hope in the world because they are without

memories. They have no future because they have no past. They cannot comfort themselves with the remembrance of a vanished hand or the sound of a voice that is still. They do not know that loves pay higher interest than selfishness. They cannot say:

What is to come we know not. But we know
That what has been was good—was good to show
Better to hide and best of all to bear.
We are the masters of the days that were.
We have lived. We have loved:
We have suffered. Even so.
Shall we not take the ebb, who had the flow?
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our foe—
Dear, though it spoil and break us need we care
What is to come?

If I were to name the most heart-breaking poem in the English language I should without hesitation choose Charles Lamb's lines, "The Old Familiar Faces":

I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women;
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man;
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like, I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces—

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

It is said that Lamb wrote this poem in a fit of remorse after a fit of resentment against his friend Charles Lloyd. Writing

to Coleridge at the time, Lamb tells of the estrangement, adding: "But he has forgiven me." Whatever may have been its inspiration, the poem expresses the hungry longing of a lonely heart for faces that exist only in the memory. It is a sad poem, but there is a kind of sacred joy in it. Desolate indeed is the man who has survived those who had loved him and whom he had loved, and whose feet must go down to the grave along an avenue of tombs. But his desolation is a wilderness that blossoms with the roses of remembrance. He has a stake in death. The only really desolate man is the man who has never lost anybody because he has never loved anybody. For him memory is an abiding horror from which he must ever fly, and the past is a black abyss from which he must always avert his gaze. Your face is not a failure if after you are dead it will live like a beautiful agony in the memory of some one who loved you. The time will come when you too will be numbered among "the old familiar faces." Others will think the thoughts that you have thought, sigh the sighs that you have sighed, and shed the tears that you have shed. For their sake as well as for your own you ought to endeavour to earn the right of admission to the Valhalla of Memory.

I know a man who sacrificed love to ambition. He has gained the whole world, but he has lost his own soul. When he was young he resolved to emulate the pitiless selfhood of Napoleon. He made himself superhuman. In the jargon of Mr. Bernard Shaw, he became a Superman. He hardened his heart against the still small voice of sympathy and the little whimperings of fellowship. He turned his heart into an anvil and he beat out worldly glory upon it with remorseless blows. He boasted of his splendid isolation. He exulted in his self-sufficiency. His wife died of spiritual famine, for he could not spare her even the crumbs of affection and the broken fragments of comradeship. He used her dead heart as a stepping-stone to fame. He climbed over her tombstone into the glare of eminence. Now that he has got the desire of his heartless heart, he is of all men the most miserable. His face is a failure, for nobody loves it. His greatness is only an intense solitude,

and although he is envied by his fellows, he is devoured by the furies of regret. He has not only killed love in others; he has killed love in himself. He has discovered too late that nothing is worth winning which you win for yourself alone. His glory is Dead Sea fruit, for he is condemned to eat it in exile—the exile of the soul. He has banished himself from humanity.

YOM KIPPUR

THE adventure of adventures! I have seen Israel. I have heard the tide of the past roaring in her synagogues. I have seen the ghosts of her prophets rising from the tomb of time. All day long my ears have been filled with the music of Hebrew syllables that were shaped by the lips of Ezekiel and Isaiah. I have heard that majestic poetry rolling over our Babel of tongues and submerging our confusion of creeds, until our civilisation seemed a vapour vanishing like its predecessors, our iron order of empires, our brazen glory of kingdoms, our golden pomp of nations shrivelling into a shadow. Two thousand years ago we were not, but Israel was. Let us not be duped by the pinchbeck centuries and the brittle chronologies. Issuing out of the opening doors of the Ark the very wind of eternity rushes over the torn leaves of history into fathomless futurity.

In the Great Synagogue the venerable presence of Lord Rothschild touches the scene with the romance of a secret dynasty. Around him is the flower of English Jewry: leaders in finance, in scholarship, and in the liberal arts. This is the higher Ghetto. There is no vestige of oppression here. These finely moulded faces are calm with conquest, serene with wealth and power. Here is the supple imagination which has emerged from the vicissitudes of hate to endure the subtler perils of tolerance. Pride of race ennobles the ugliness of top-hats, black skull-caps, striped praying-shawls, frock coats and swallow-tails, starched collars and cuffs, trousers, patent boots and felt slippers. There is a throb of exultation in the clear, metallic cry of the choir chanting the ancient songs, and the mournful voice of the white-haired Cantor rings pure in the immemorial cadences. The same spirals of sound are curling at this moment from innumerable

throats in every clime. The same sad moans and the same ecstatic wails carve the London silence to-day as they carved the Egyptian silence yesterday. Although in these cultured visages the passion of Israel is veiled, behind their polished immobility glows 'a hard, gem-like flame' which fuses even merciless men of the world into a mystic unity. As I listen to the perpetual murmur of the Hebrew vocables, the grave faces flow into gigantic lineaments inscribed with the triumphs and tribulations of an unconquerable race. The mysterious sculptures of Isis and Osiris, whose vague regard chills the corridors of the British Museum, are not more awful than this living effigy of the living Israel. In the presence of the hoary theogony out of whose loins came our whimpering Christianity I bow my head, humbled by the antiquity which stamps our oldest creeds as novelties and our greyest philosophies as new-fangled toys.

Escaping from this surcharged symbolism into the secular din of Aldgate, we are piloted by a Jewish novelist through the broad boulevards and clean byways of the East End. The pavements are crowded with Jewesses, garbed in flaming colours and insolently beautiful. There is not room for a tithe of these girls in the grilled seraglios of the synagogues. In any case, the Jewish woman is a religious cipher. The Jew is an Oriental when he enters Shool. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who hast not made me a woman," says the Jew. But the Jewess cries: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who hast made me according to Thy will."

To-day the Pavilion Theatre in the spacious Whitechapel Road is transformed into a synagogue. At the edge of the proscenium the Ark is rigged up crazily, with a bowler hat cast on its roof to fix the incongruity. In the centre of the stage are the Readers. The house is packed with foreign Jews, hatted, capped, shrouded, shawled; their bizarre voices bubbling and muttering the fantastic liturgy. The Reader is a Russian virtuoso, and I hear eager debates about the quality of his voice. With dramatic gesticulations he chants in sonorous tenor tones, using many modulations, now in a galloping murmur, now in a slow, long-

drawn rising rhythm. As he reaches the solemn passage recalling how the High Priest pronounced of old the glorious and awful Name of Jahveh, and how "he in awe prolonged the Name," the Reader prostrates himself on the ground, and a ragged silence steals through the congregation. As we tiptoe into the street, hot-coloured theatrical posters drag us back from Sinai and Jerusalem into the gutter of life. To-night "The Traitor," a bellowing melodrama, will purge the boards of Israel's historic wraith. It is the insanity of Paradox.

But the Jew is pure paradox. He moves in everlasting incongruity. The spirit of place is his vassal. His bush burns and his Shekinah shines in the darkest squalor and the vilest vulgarity. We find his mystery even in prosaic "Wonderland." Here, a few days ago, a Jew fought with a Gentile for a purse of gold. Now the Cohanim are fighting on the floor for pardon. The den of pugilists is a house of prayer. The latest aliens and exiles are here, eager to climb the social pyramid whose apex we saw in Aldgate. It is polyglot Jewry in valiant beggary, hungry pathos and haggard zeal.

From "Wonderland" to Beaumont Hall, with anti-alien posters plastered ironically on its portals. It is a free service for men, mostly Russian, Polish, and Galician refugees. What a tumult of features! What a riot of Rembrandts and Holbeins! Here are no masking languors, but yearning faces and eyes bright with bitter tears. A group of shrouded mystics, their heads covered with shawls, range themselves in a row. The congregation turns its back upon the hooded figures. They are Cohanim, descendants of the priests, hallowed with the holiness of Aaron. As these shapeless ghosts sway to and fro, their hands outstretched in a supernatural gesture, crying a desolate cry, a faint shudder of awe shakes the averted worshippers, and even I, a Gentile, thrill with communicated dread.

With large grandeur the pattern of the ancient ritual is unrolled. These passionate exiles groan forth the dark catalogue of all imaginable transgressions, beating their breasts with simultaneous blows of remorse. The sense of sin is graven on their wan countenances, worn with fasting, scored and scarred with

the fierce vigil of penitence and prayer. Isolated, alien, intrusive, I shrink from this terrible agony of the Semitic conscience. I feel its pity and its terror. I divine the secret of that moral miracle, the Jew.

In the vast spaces of the Jewish Free School I find a vapour-bath of flesh. There is barely room for my nose, but it recoils from the foul odour of steaming thousands. After one glimpse of Rabbinical ancients we hasten to the Spitalfields Synagogue, a fine old Huguenot chapel which is now a school. It is crowded with shawled devotees and groaning patriarchs. Stifled with their stench, we take flight again. In Bevis Marks we find richly dressed women chattering on the threshold of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. The warm southern beauty of these laughing brunettes bewilders the eye accustomed to the colder northern charms. The interior of the synagogue is an exotic calm made of sombre, mellow tones, the light of many-candled brass candelabra sinking richly into the slumbering gloom of the oaken walls. The congregation is like a collection of old masters. One of the cantors is an august hidalgo, his Castilian features finely sculptured, his eyes calm wells of scorn, his pose haughtily fluent, a living Velasquez, in whom I see a gesture of Israel, a carven symbol of the Jew.

From Bevis Marks we hurry to the marble opulence of the Bayswater Synagogue. Long lines of broughams are waiting at the doors. The interior vaguely resembles the House of Commons, but the top-hatted members are frozen into a congested immobility, and the galleries are gay with ladies. The Ark replaces the Speaker's chair, and white-robed celebrants stand on a tribune in the centre of the floor. Two men slowly advance like tellers to the Ark. One solemnly divests the other of his talith, and drapes its folds over his top-hat. He then performs a like office for himself. The act is solemnly absurd, but as the grotesque figures close the great doors and draw the mystic veil, our irreverence is quelled by awe. The white-robed Baal Tokeiah, the Master of the Sounding, sets the ram's horn to his lips and blows a long, melancholy blast. Instantly the anguish of the long White Fast is ended, the taliths are folded up, the doors

are flung open, and the famished congregation disperses in a burst of laughter and joy. As I go home the quavering desolation of the blown shofar is sounding through the night, and the magic and mystery of the Hebrew seers is beating in my blood.

Yes, it is the adventure of adventures. I have seen Israel.

HELIOTROPE AND ROSES

It is easy to take a cheerful view of life if you choose to be cheerful, for cheerfulness is largely a caprice. You can make up your mind to be miserable and you can make up your mind to be gay. As a rule, you have no sound reason for sadness, and no sound reason for gladness. Life is neither very bright nor very dark. It is usually a serviceable grey. Well, unless you are going to be hanged after breakfast, there is no reason why you should not decide to make a happy day for yourself. You may not be rich, and you may not be poor, but whether you are rich or poor or merely comfortable, your blessedness depends upon your own self-made mood.

I think it is very easy to make happy moods at all times of the year, but it is especially easy if you are in London in June. The London summer offers bliss for nothing at all. The man who cannot then be joyous in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park is an incurable pessimist. He is not fit to look at the green leaves and the blue sky. The wisest folk in London are the children. Go and sit at their feet and let them teach you how to be happy. They at any rate are happy. The Round Pond is more helpful than any philosophy. The great circle of green trees which stood round it last summer is there still, and the same children are sailing the same toy fleets from shore to shore. The same ducks promenade on the water with the same ducklings. The aspect of life is as delightfully idle and innocent as ever, and the pale blue of the sky rests as airily as of old on the spire of St. Mary Abbot's and the cross of the Albert Memorial. These things all take life lightly. Why can't you take it lightly too? I see no earthly reason. If there is discontent in what you call your soul, turn it out on the grass among the busy birds and the yelping dogs and the nibbling sheep.

When you are tired of watching the solemn frivolity of the tiny mariners, take a lazy stroll through the green glades under the shady branches. Refresh your eyes with the delicate coolness of the lime trees, and see how cleverly they are fabricating their honey-sweet blossoms for the cockney bees. Amble lazily down to the playing fountains by the Serpentine and stare awhile at the peacocks, whose miraculously blue throats are glowing and glittering in the sun. Then lean on the bridge by the Magazine and enjoy the free pleasure of looking at the sparkling water with its perspective of noble trees and dim towers. After you have done that, go over the bridge to the barracks and listen for half an hour to the band of the Guards playing the best music in the world. You will find there hundreds of happy people with happy faces. When the band has played "God Save the King," stroll along the Row under the trees, and cast sidelong glances at the dancing water with its green island and its waterfowl. Do not forget to lean on the railings for five minutes and survey the little green hollow where rabbits are grazing and the blackbirds and thrushes and starlings are hunting for belated worms.

Then go and absorb the loveliness of the flowers that fill all the green, smooth-shaven spaces with colour and fragrance. There are all sorts of flowers, from the pompous rhododendron to the pert pansy. But be sure to lose your heart to the roses and the heliotrope. It is a very wonderful thing to see the languishing languor of the roses, those queens of beauty, who offer their boon of voluptuous charm to the passer-by. It is very wonderful that they can bloom in security here in the heart of the crowded city. They have no guardians to guard their fragile petals. They are protected by public spirit. Nobody dreams of violating their silent grace. They are in sanctuary. From morning till night they breathe their sweetness on the populous air, and not a hand is raised to steal from everybody what everybody owns. The marvel of their safety makes one proud of human nature. Civic sacrilege would be easy, but the saddest tramp and the sourest loafer cannot stoop so low. The roses give their beauty and their odour freely to everybody,

and everybody is content. It is very jolly to smell the perfume of the roses and the heliotrope as they shed it recklessly upon the sun-saturated air. How on earth can you refuse to be as radiant as the roses and as happy as the heliotrope?

If you seek for something more cheerful than heliotrope and roses, go and look at that old gentleman who is feeding the sparrows. The sparrows know him. They perch on his shoulder and on the brim of his top-hat. They peck crumbs daintily out of his fingers. When he throws a crumb in the air they snatch it on the wing. They squabble prettily for morsels on the grass, fluttering and twittering in their excitable fashion. You see it does not take much to make a sparrow happy. He is an optimist on crumbs. Why can't you rival him, O feeble pessimist! Life will throw crumbs to you if you will allow it to do so. Why demand point'steaks and chump chops? Believe me, there is a lot of bliss in crumbs. The pigeons are also very helpful to the cheerful eye. They are deliciously plump and prosperous. Their breasts are beautifully burnished. They are obviously contented with their mild destiny. They are the bourgeoisie of birdland.

"Ah," you growl, "if I were a sparrow or a pigeon I might be happy, but I am a creature with desires which are harder to appease than theirs." Well, leave the pigeons and sparrows and saunter on the green lawns where all the world and his wife are parading in what they are pleased to call Church Parade. The sight will cure your moral jaundice. These people are as happy as the sparrows and the pigeons. They have smiles in their eyes and there is laughter on their lips. They are picking up their crumbs with resolute gaiety. They have desires, like you, and you may be sure that not one of them has got everything he or she desires. But they are rubbing along on the crumbs they manage to pick up. Some of them are old, but they are trying to make the best of old age. There are old ladies with young hats and youthful figures and rejuvenated hair. There are old boys with merry neckties. Many of these faces are wrinkled and crinkled with trouble and tribulation, but they are filling their ancient furrows with smiles. There is joy in their

crow's feet. There are crumbs for everybody who chooses to take them.

Above all, look at the young English girls. They will help you to give life the benefit of the doubt. Their complexions will reassure you as to the youthfulness of youth. Their bright eyes will make you ashamed of your experienced cowardice. They are not afraid to be alive in the sunlight. Some of them are with their lovers, and it is good to see their radiant faces and to hear their happy voices chattering adorable nonsense. The old trees over their heads are wiser than you, O philosophic grumbler! They know that youth is as young as the young leaves they wave on their smoky old branches. They know that happiness comes every year with its spring magic and its summer mystery. They do not worry over the winters that were or the winters that will be. They know that life is a game of chance in which you can always call for a fresh deal. It is easy to call for it, and you may be sure that the dealer will not refuse to cut a new pack so long as the sun shines and the scent of roses and heliotrope is in the air.

INDIGNANT SPRING

OUR London spring is no longer what she used to be. She is a hoyden and a hussy. She has lost all her old respect for the almanac, and all her old reverence for the calendar. She comes when she pleases, breaking all the rules of rotation, and flinging her flowers about our grey streets as recklessly as any milliner in the Rue de la Paix.

Every morning she shocks us with some freshly cut impropriety, some bright premature blossom, some impudently early bloom. You can hear her giggling as you stand in astonishment before the florist's window, staring and gasping at her dear impossibilities.

There was a time when the daffodils came before the swallows dared, and took the winds of March with beauty. She has changed all that. The daffodils come now before the snowdrops, and we are weary of their golden rain long ere Easter spears us with pneumonia. Our new-fangled spring anticipates every flower that blows. I fear she is a hustler.

Each day during the past few weeks she has brought a new blossom out of her bosom. She has kept it up like a smart American girl, who would die rather than be caught twice in the same hat. Where she finds all her flowers is a mystery to me, but there they are in the streets and in the windows, mocking our dull, dank air with their sunny gaiety.

She began the game with violets, "fast-fading violets, covered up in leaves." Violets in winter, however, are tolerable. They are not more dreadful than snow in June—an English June. It was pleasant to look at the huge bunches of Parma violets in the windows. They made one think of the morning flower market in Cannes, and long for a background of violet sky and violet sea to match their scentless splendour. It was

good, too, to gaze at the rich gold of the mimosa, scattering its perishable yellow dust.

But Parma violets and flaming mimosa from the Côte d'Azur did not arouse our resentment, for we knew them for alien immigrants. It was the roses that broke our hearts. Spring ought really to be ashamed of her venal treachery. She has been mimicking the whole pageantry of summer while our teeth chattered and our noses turned a bluer blue.

It is a crime to flaunt roses in our faces before the year is aired and before the sun is visible. And such roses! Great, lazy, luxurious, voluptuous, crimson blooms, swooning with pouting petals and drunken with secret perfume. Where did spring purloin these sirens of the summer? It is larceny, fragrant larceny.

Sad were the shy, pale, trembling pink roses, blushing faintly at their own untimely falsehood, sad were the delicate white roses, stricken with shame and remorse, but more and more sad were the Maréchal Niels, hanging their sensuous heads in an ecstasy of guilt. I think I pitied their wistful, yellow sorrow more deeply than any hue of grief in Bond Street or any tint of woe in Regent Street. They drooped in an exquisite languor, and I watched them with tears in my eyes as they hung dying on their pallid thorns.

"Spring," I cried, "you are a murderess! Fie upon you!"

She laughed heartlessly under the enormous brim of her gigantic hat, as she threw a bunch of wallflowers in my face. That finished me. I could bear no more. I could endure roses and azaleas, cyclamens and carnations, lilies and violets, but what has spring to do with wallflowers? No wallflower ought to be born until the sun has made the sun-dial too hot to touch, yet our cruel spring drags them into the shivering town, and forces them to parody their natural glow. "How much?" said I. "Twopence," said Spring. I paid her, picked up the wallflowers, and buried my bleak nose in their golden-brown. Alas! they had been bereaved of their homely smell. I threw them away, for a wallflower without scent is a queen without a crown.

Next morning I saw pansies. It was the ultimate insult.

Pansies do not go well with furs and fires, chest-protectors and overcoats. At last I realized that something was amiss, and a hideous suspicion stabbed me. "Perhaps," said I, "this London spring is a snare and a delusion. Perhaps she is impersonating the real witch, the true enchantress." With that I resolved to expose the insolent minx, and I hastened with a thirst for vengeance in my heart into the real country where the real flowers grow out of the real earth.

It was a brave wintry morning as I tramped through Princes Risborough, with its sleepy thatched houses and its drowsy market-place. There are no warmer thatchers in all England than the thatchers of Princes Risborough. They know how to pull the cosy thatch of three generations well down over the cosy leaded windows, like a Dickens muffler twisted round a Dickens throat. As I stepped blithely along the white road to Great Kimble I saw many traces of the old-fashioned spring. I met one furtive daisy, five audacious hedgerow buds, two almond trees in full blush, and three splashes of barberry. In the old garden of the Bear and Cross daffodil and primrose and polyanthus were flirting with each other behind the jolly, old, fat box hedge. But there were no roses and no pansies.

In a farmyard twelve woolly lambs were frisking round a haystack. In an odorous pigstye an innocent young porker was curling his tender tail beside his mother. I fell in love with the chubby little cherub, and if I had been wealthy I swear I should have bought him and taken him home under my arm for dinner. I know he would have melted in my mouth.

Harbouring these inhuman thoughts, I walked down the hill to Little Kimble, and tumbled straight into the young arms of the antique spring. She was dozing dreamily on a bank among a silent congregation of surprised primroses. Her slender fingers chilled mine as we shook hands, and she spoke with a cold in her red nose. I told her plainly what I thought of her dilatory indolence, and asked her what she had to say for herself. She was very indignant, and at first she refused to believe my tale.

"Roses!" she screamed. "Pansies! It is against nature. It is impossible."

"Come with me, my dear, and you shall see for yourself."

I took a third-class ticket for her. She asked me to turn on the steam-heating regulator, and to shut the windows, remarking that the weather was seasonable for the time of year. We spent two hours in town, doing the florists, and I vow I never saw an angrier woman in my life.

"You see," said I, "you are shockingly old-fashioned. I think you had better retire from the business, unless you can hustle and jolly your flowers along."

"I do my best," she sobbed. "I know I am late this year, but what with the cold rains and the cold winds . . ."

Thereupon she burst into tears.

"Spring," said I sternly, "you are out-of-date. You must brisk up. We cannot put up with your dawdling and dilly-dallying. This is not the age of Wordsworth. It is the age of——"

"I know," she blubbered, "I know, but I won't be hustled. Your town spring is a blackleg. Her flowers are foreigners. I hate her and her hot-houses. She is a market-gardener's mercenary. I don't want your money. Let her keep it. I grow my flowers for the wayfaring man, for the fool, and for the children. Take me back, for I cannot breathe your sickly air. I will go home to Little Kimble. If you can do without me, I can do without you."

"Spring," said I, as I saw her off, "I am with you. When we are tired of our town spring, we'll come to see you at Little Kimble."

"Ah," cried the baggage, as she smiled through her tears, "you shall smell *my* wallflowers!"



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