

CHARACTERISTICS OF LONDON.

WHAT survives of the seven wonders of the world may mainly be seen in London, itself the eighth and greatest, not only for what of the Old World and older times it holds, but for the living, growing marvel that it is, the highest achievement of the agglomerating human spirit. With all the years I have known it, and the times I have been in and out of it, I find at every return that I scarcely know how great it is, or realize how wise and how wicked, how noble and how degraded. Mighty and wealthy beyond any dreams of Arabian Nights; wrapping in its tortuous folds all extremes of human existence; by turns, a city of palaces, and the nest of the highest and divinest human impulse, and the smoke-blackened, fog-wrapped, dingy, gloomy capital of Cimmericia; plague latent in its alleys, and utter destitution driving its people to death and all degradation in clouds like the flies that perish,—it seems the very focus of life-and-death ferment, quickening and releasing at once what is divinest and most infernal in the human heart, and ripening both, as no other city, built by human hands can do.

Visit it for the first time from the south, if possible—in the autumn, and towards the close of day, when the gray incertitude lies on the mighty city. You will have come through the lovely country of Kent and Surrey,—garden of England,—the little compact villages twinkling by the railway side, the ever-green fields chasing the parks, and the parks following the downs, in an unbroken succession of lovely landscapes; then the villages come closer together, and you see the houses begin to lose their pagan aspect and grow up stories higher—villas—suburb houses, miles of suburbs with intervals yet to become city; and then you come on the outskirts of the world's metropolis, no longer suburbs pushing off for better air, but low, dingy haunts of labor and poverty, packed and involved in economic leaseholds on earth's surface—scarcely more than graveyard room. You look down into the streets—into the windows, down chimney-pots even; and the din of unnumbered streets, the smoke of myriad chimneys, and the twinkle of lamps as the very stars of heaven for their multitude, come up to you whirling along dizzily above it all. You hear the hum of the world below you, and, as far as the eye can catch the gleam of gas-light through the space

around, there is an unbroken, endless wilderness of houses. Wider streets yawn and send up a sudden, stronger pulsation of sound, but no change beyond. Lights burn dimmer, smoke grows denser, the indefinite grows more and more indefinite. You wonder what would happen if a broken rail should send your train off that line of arches which overstretch London,—the highway of the age of mechanism bringing you into the capital and working center of the modern mechanical system; and while you wonder still, your train flashes out as into mid-air, and you see on both sides a gray and hazy tide, twinkling with wavy lights and spanned by bridges, either vista ending in mystery. This is Father Thames; after the Tiber, greatest of rivers. Here the history of modern civilization centers; and from Cæsar to William of Orange the possession of this water-course has been a main motive in struggles which have widened, deepened, and established human rights and wise government more than those of all other civilized countries in the same epoch. For the Thames made London, and the salt sea which ebbs and flows at its doors has kept alive liberty and prosperity through disasters which would have destroyed an inland town many times; and that municipal independence which has never failed London is the source of all that is healthiest and most truly conservative in our modern political organization.

As the river vanishes from sight, your train slows within the vast and mysterious structure, last creation of architecture, where sight and hearing are alike confounded; calls and cries, whistles and bells, a score of locomotives coming and going, trains entering and trains departing, a ceaseless flood and ebb of passengers, bewildering, confusing to every sense but their own, yet each ticketed to his destination and surely directed to his train. The system, the consummate order with which the demands of a commerce so vast are met and satisfied, the want of bustle and fussiness, impress a stranger more than anything else in this first impression of London. One can but recall the Romans, the great builders and organizers, the masters of all good system of civic things in the old time as these are in our day.

This is the side of English character which imposes on me, compels me to, a deference and respect which deepen as I know the

more of it. In taste, they are barbarians; in comprehension of the principles of political or social science, they are *arrières* and blindly conservative; but they build better than they know, by an intuition; and the gravitation of the national character is, in spite of their prejudices against progress, carrying them to the best and safest form of civilization—that based on an inborn morality, love of justice, and respect for human rights. It seems strange, looking at the history of England,—at her imperial policy of to-day, at such huge violations of both justice and human rights as are involved in her church system, at her rule in India, at her arbitrary and, at times, wicked domineering over weak and disorganized nations,—to talk of love of both justice and human rights as traits of English character. But no man can live in London long and not understand the problem. The acts which in his government the Englishman consents to, in his individual capacity he abhors; and while his fleets beat down the unoffending gates of China and his armies commit huge filibusterings in India, there is no great city in the world where a stranger is so certain of justice, or the weak are so effectually upheld against the strong, as in London. The law is blind, crooked, and perverse, but sure and equal; its administration is on the practice of by-gone ages, slow, reticular, complicated; but where it is a question of justice, no human jurisprudence is more effective or impartial. It is too much a city of shop-keepers,—but of great shop-keepers, with a mercantile morality such as accounts for a commercial power and prosperity unrivaled since the world began. What London does, it does slowly but well. English civilization is not full of fine-spun theories and declamatory recognitions, but is, in all the personal relations, profoundly moral, and (if sometimes mistakenly) religious as well; and if the morality be of a rather uncharitable type, and the religion brings out now and then its Juggernaut car, it is at least something that they maintain their steady pursuit of human well-being.

All that is hard and unsympathetic, ugly and unsentimental, in England, you see as you drive or walk from the station to your hotel; all that is servile and snobbish, and respectable and extortionate, after you have got there; and as you sit by your window in the dim November evening, waiting for your coal fire to break the chill which begins to enter your soul, I misdoubt much if you do not begin to forswear England.

All that man has done for London has been to the eye ill done; nature has been bounteous to her as to few cities. Illimitable liberty of growth, equal facility of access,

a plain country round, and the sea at its gates; the railway radiating and the tide ebbing and flowing with the traffic sustained by the wealth accumulated in centuries. No one knows how rich she is, and no one who has not wandered about her for weeks can conjecture how huge. We may talk of our western empire and our admirable ports, of our growth and our growing wealth; but here is, and will remain for generations, the center of the commercial and political world, the focus of intellectual activity, and the mint of thought. Here ferments the largest and most highly developed humanity which as yet the universal mother has given birth to, and here the whole world's intellect comes to pay its homage. We boast, but out of this mint of London comes most of what is newest as well as of what is rarest in human work. "Solitude is the nurse of great thought," but society is its mother; and, in London, society is most complex and solitude most easy of access in any of all the aggregations of men. The seclusion of the backwoods is not more complete, so far as intellectual or social influences are concerned, than lodgings in some of the out-of-the-way quarters of London. The extremes meet—the publicity of the court journal and a privacy which defies the detective police; a wealth, not of individuals, as with us, but of classes, which suspends the laws of political economy, and a concomitant poverty which threatens one day to subvert them; vortices of prosperity and misery, into which society at its extremes rushes with accelerating and concentrating velocity; here a quarter where, in teeming filth, humanity is crowded out of existence, hour by hour, with a destitution and degradation of woe uniquely the property of London,—a bottomless pit of misery, emergence from which into anything by death must be light and life; and then a region of palaces, with a luxury and profusion such as England's kings, even three hundred years ago, would have held as fabulous: whatever there is of most opposite and extreme in life or death, in power or utter impotence, in having or want, is here.

London is one of the few perennial sensations of this world,—like the sea, a primeval forest, Sahara, or the multitude of stars, all measurable, doubtless, but in terms between which and the infinite we can no more perceive the distinction than we can from the top of St. Paul's perceive the margin of the city. You enter it not knowing exactly where, and when you leave it you do so by so fine degrees that you have not been able to say where the town ended and the country began. It draws all England to it. It pervades the realm. Even the cabmen do not

know the whole of it. When you have spent months exploring it, you find some day a new quarter opening to your eyes. I believe that no one can appreciate it fully but an American thoroughly versed in English history and in the practical knowledge of his own country. To him all the historical associations have the mingled charms of novelty and antiquity; there is the delightful surprise of seeing a real and vitalized antiquity, which strikes him much like going into Barbarossa's cavern and finding the middle ages just waking up. In his picture gallery nothing is cheapened by common uses, and nothing lost by contradictory associations; Henry VIII.'s palace has not been forever a barber's shop, or the Strand a tide-way of shop-keeping. Familiarity breeds contempt, indeed, and no London-bred boy can have a reverence for an antiquity he saw white-washed yesterday. We come to the old scenes with an ancestral reverence for objects which are, not only England's but ours—in which we have the romantic interest of historical cause without the galling burden of political effect. English associations are to us utterly delightful, and London especially a huge romance, a bazaar of the Arabian Nights, in which at one time we encounter Cromwell, and at another Dick Whittington.

But do not imagine that you can get the characteristic impression of London by running over it. When curiosity is satisfied and such familiarity as a stranger can get is attained, it will still be reserved for some moment of a sublime quiet and removal from details to give you the key-note of its greatness. As I write, sitting by my study window, full five miles from the city proper, I hear the roar of the traffic like the sea on a rocky shore—the rush of incessant trains along the iron ways, the rumble of myriads of drays along hundreds of miles of stone-paved streets (for which wood is now being in part substituted), each no more to the general symphony than the hum of a gnat to the sounds of a summer day—a volume of sound unintermitting from dawn till dark. Yet I am bowered in green trees, with cowslip and daisy-flecked fields spread out under my eyes—not a spire, not a chimney-stack of the metropolis visible; and the carols of larks and thrushes, the song of the nightingale, run through the web of sounds like gold and silver threads through a dingy fabric, with the twitter of scores of sparrows like tiny spangles thrown on at random. Out of the monotone flashes the individual roar of a nearer train, the scream of a whistle, and the roar dies away again into the sullen monody. This is audible London.

If you want to see what the traffic of London is like, go to Clapham junction, where the great railway systems connect. The rails lie together like the wires of a grand piano. System and organization have done their best, and sixteen hundred trains a day run over them. It is a bewilderment. In and out, coming, going; slow trains and fast trains: one side of you halts a train, and while you watch its wheels slowing, an express rushes past on the other side like a tornado of iron; no shrieking of whistles or clanging of bells as on our railways—they keep their signals for their officials, and outsiders must expose themselves at their own risks,—only a rush, a blast of wind that almost takes your breath or draws you into its eddy when it has gone by, a torrent of carriage windows, and you see the rear of the last carriage shrinking before your eyes as it leaves you; and the fast express has come and gone in a space of time which you could hardly find on the dial of your watch. Up and down the lines you see signal-posts and semaphores—arms working; by night lamps green, red, white, the language of the railway, but no confusion; every man knows his place, or forgets it at his bodily peril. You ask the official when your train is due: "In two minutes"; and as the clock hands point, the train comes. He knows to the second when it left the last station, whether it be on table-time or behind it; every movement is recorded, and every train has its place and moment. A tunnel-way for passengers connects the whole, so that no one is allowed to cross the rails, except the officials, who grow foolhardy and now and then come to grief. The guard at the junction told me one day of the killing of one of the porters, who undertook to cross the line in front of the fast express, and was struck midway the rails by the full front of the locomotive. He was knocked like a ball twenty feet, and when they reached him there was no quiver even in his flesh. If a shot from a twenty-inch Rodman gun had hit him, it would not have expunged life more completely and instantaneously. It is a saying of the denizens about Clapham junction, that, on the average, one man is killed every six weeks. One wonders, after having watched the traffic a half hour, that some one is not killed every day. Look cityward and see the trains flying—diverging eastward, westward, northward, line under line three deep, crossing each other, diving under or going over, but never on the same level, and then sweeping by long curves round the huge circumference of suburban London, a girdle of iron, meeting, crossing, uniting, separating again on the opposite side.

Neither the sounds nor the sights of London

impressed me as did its labyrinth of railways; no other evidence of the power and intelligence of England has ever seemed to me like this stupendous accumulation of engineering accomplishment: tunnels under the river and bridges over it; the long arcades of the railway approaches, and the still more surprising vaults of the underground tunneling under the dense houses, with an inner circle of communication,—the most surprising engineering feat in the world, and perhaps the most costly, considering its extent, the cost being £1,000,000 per mile, and all to help you get about the city quicker. If the enterprise be astonishing, how much more the need which impelled it and maintains it.

But, imperial as London is in all that pertains to industrial and commercial power, it is in the architectural manifestations of metropolitanism (except size) as provincial as New York or Boston. It is impossible to say that artistic feeling is exotic in England, not knowing with absolute certainty whether they were Englishmen who built the magnificent old cathedrals or not; but it does seem that, since the race was what it is, anything æsthetic is a chance flower, and of so rare occurrence that its exceptionality—its want of visible cause and effect in precedent or succession—proves the rule more clearly than though no example had ever been found. The cities of the civilized and half-civilized world will not furnish another such collection of hideous public edifices, with so little originality, so little sense of fitness or artistic insight, as the capital of England shows. A man who could develop artistic fire in such surroundings must be of a genius irrepressible by any compression of circumstance. St. Paul's is a squat parody on St. Peter's, with everything that is ugly of the original and no advantage of position like it—no approaches, no *ensemble*, a petrified infraction of common sense and æsthetic judgment. The British Museum is an ill-harmonized *pot-pourri* of Greek motives; Trafalgar square, a curious antithesis to the *Place de la Concorde*, with the elaborate imitation of that freak of some barbarous Roman, "Pompey's Pillar," instead of the obelisk, and that ludicrous combination of the shut-up and elongated, the National Gallery, crowning it. Even most of the later buildings, when there is a determined effort to be original, impress the stranger as ghastly evolutions of the stuff of which nightmares are made. All things impress one with an immense sense of solidity and stolidity, and, if I am not over-fanciful, with a latent contempt of the outside as compared with the inside of the house, inherent in the English nature. What that most characteristic defect of Lon-

don—its smoke—may have to do with this utter want of sympathy with the exteriors of their buildings in the minds of modern Londoners, I can only conjecture; but if the city were another Venice, it could only be kept beautiful by pouring its canals daily over its buildings.

I recall some of those dreary days of my first November, when, sitting by my window in the City, I used to look out into the mid-day gloom under the impenetrable veil, with a shadowless world before me, and recall the oppression of this inversion of fantastic elements, where by day the air was thick and oppressive, and when night fell the stars came out with their little consolations for the loss of the greater luminary, and have seen the black flakes of condensed coal-smoke come drifting, floating down like the first flakes of a snow-fall—a snow of soot, visible, palpable, disastrous to gloves and linen as to stonework and to color in all things. And what is odd, too, this comes from the very love of brightness and cheeriness at home. Offer to the Englishman to-morrow a fuel which would heat his house without flame or smoke; give him furnaces which would consume all his fuel in some subterranean recess, like our own, and he would utterly and peremptorily refuse the boon. To him his open grate and its cheerful flame, pitchy and smoke-evolving as it is, are the roc's egg to his home. London may be dingy and smoky, Stygian in darkness and diurnal in its Egyptian curse, but *his* glad hearth shall glow while soft coal comes from the mine. It shall darken and gloom until it is a new Pompeii of drifting soot from its million chimney-volcanoes, before the individual love of light and comfort shall become civic, and London burn her own smoke!

Civilization and Christianity are in all intermediate stages at odds; the former in the highest ferment does but disengage the latter as a volatile essence. Civilization brings out by inexorable logic those extremes of human condition from both of which Agur prayed to be preserved. The rich grow richer and the poor poorer, and the laws of political economy go on asserting themselves by which we see that he who has the power has a law by which he may make it greater, and he who has it not shall lose even the little he seems to have; and as in London the laws of political economy and of progressive civilization have found their highest expression, we must expect to find men divided into the widest extremes of social condition—wealth fabulous and poverty incredible. To one who has tried the hard side of human existence and known how little will keep a man or woman from the grave, it is enough to say

that men and women die statistically in London from starvation,—not the sudden death of men shut in a dungeon so to die, but with long and unrelieved deprivation just sufficient to make them waste away with intolerable craving, mocked by the merest dalliance with alimantation. Some such in their involuntary apotheosis I have seen — with their gaunt faces glued to those flaming windows of the Cheap-side chop-houses, looking with hungry eyes and tremulous lips at the piles of luscious steaks and saddles of prime mutton, the hell of Tantalus without his sin, for these are mostly the honest, as honesty goes in London streets—stand with unmoving faces and unconscious of whatever goes on around them, like fascinated beings unable to break away from the charm. I remember especially a young girl—not over twelve,—whose face I saw pressed against the window-pane of a restaurant where I was lunching one day, a grave, hollow-eyed creature, who, without a smile or a change of any feature save the rolling of her eyes from one dainty to another during the whole of my lunch time, fed her only available sense on this phantom banquet, but who, when on going out I offered her a huge piece of plain cake, refused it in fright and with crimsoned cheeks, as though I had caught her in theft; and it was only after repeated insistence, and on my telling her to take it home to the little ones (for there are always little ones in this case), that she took it, bewildered, and went her way.

Spiritual gravitation is as irresistible as physical, and men fly to its center as grains of sand to the earth; the weaker and the less individual they are, the sooner they obey the law; only the few who have the centrifugal power of self-assertion can live content away from others. The clod-hopper who digs and never dreams or knows what lies beyond his farm rests rustic; but once he has come within the attraction of the aggregate humanity of the city, he drifts helpless into the vortex, and rots and dies in the mass of corrupted humanity,—helpless in himself, because he has not strength to stand alone, and hopeless, because there are so many like him that no human prevision could care for the poor of a great city like London. It is no place for the helpless and the friendless, and yet it is precisely those who drift most readily to it. There seems to be a universal belief among the very poor that help is only in great cities. Dick Whittington entertained a very common superstition and strengthened it; and Heaven only knows how many, with this golden dream in their hearts, have gone to London to die in its dirt or drown in its tide. And once in the city, the deluded never leave it;

the company in misery which it offers to them is better than any emigration; the fascination of crowds is stronger, even with better men and women, than any good in solitary independence. This and the innate laziness of mankind, the insanity to escape all bonds of labor, are more the causes of the destitution and misery of London than any social wrong or want of charity and benevolence in the wealthy. These great cities will always be crowded to the last limits of their capacity. Relieve the importunate and improvident of to-day by a determinate provision, and to-morrow there will appear mysteriously as many new improvidents and unfortunates, candidates for the same provision; the whole realm of beggary and improvision will make a hitch forward, and the serried line will still stand like that at the post-office windows or theater doors at times, waiting for another vacancy and pushing on, always as long, always as miserable, and all the more improvident as provision is made by others. This is the poverty of London: not a chance-come misfortune which some sad widow may have in a country village, her support and provider being suddenly gone and struggling with a new and straiter living to which in time she adapts herself or dies; not a sudden cutting away of the small margin and a distress in the house for rent, which hard working sometimes gives a laborer, but an habitual living on what may come through picking up by chance,—pilfering and stealth to the worse and slow starvation to the better natures, with gradual extinction of all that is human to all,—squalor, filth, a sinking till sense of degradation is lost and the poor soul slides into utter vice as a boat adrift goes down into the sea.

Look into the quarters of this poverty: for convenience, in some of the streets about Seven Dials or Clare street, or down in Goodman's Fields, swarming like ant-hills: shoals of children of all ages below four or five encumbering the road-way, careless of carriage wheels, for no vehicle ever enters here except the huckster's cart or the parish hearse; frowzy, sodden, beer-soaked faces of women thrust out at the windows, cursing their brats who cry in the dirt below; sauntering men who look at you, if you are decently dressed, as if your personal safety were a wrong and injustice to them; young girls, filthy, slatternly, leering, jeering, and ogling, imagination can readily conceive what for. Men do not grow to manhood in such slums and sunless ways, or women to virtue or dignity. All is squalor and filth and utter degradation of the divine image. And this is one of the inevitable results of the highest civilization, as certainly as

that London is greatest and most civic of all great cities.

For the other great result you have not far to go. In that region of grim and forbidding palaces, which, like Ali Baba's cave, are nothing to him who has not, but everything for him who has the "open sesame," any one will answer our purpose—this one, for instance, with a covered way from the door to the street, lest its dainty inmates should catch a drop of rain on the way to their carriage. Within all is order and decorous silence. The foot falls on deep-piled carpets. In the intonation of the low-toned command is the highest expression of that incommunicable, indescribable, and, except by generations of cultivation, unattainable quality we call *high breeding*. In the reply to it is that perfect antithesis in breeding, which we ought to call *low*—the profound, unquestioning, and unhesitating prostration of self of the traditional hereditary "flunky," disciplined like a soldier, who, as his master never permits himself to express a disturbing emotion, never allows *himself* an expression of surprise or a word of comment; whose self-command is as great as his master's, perhaps greater,—a well appareled statue, save when an order is given; whose bows and deference for his master's guests are graduated by the distance at which they sit from the head of the table; a human creature that sees nothing, knows nothing, and believes nothing which his master does not expect him to see and know and believe; who, if he thinks of a heaven at all, never dreams that it can be the same thing for his master and himself: he hopes to meet his father and grandfather and great-grandfather in the servants' hall of that celestial abode where his master and all the family for countless generations will dwell in their mundane state; his brains could no more take in the parable of Dives and Lazarus than the laws of Kepler, and the most insensate chartist or radical could never inspire in him an ambition to be anything beyond butler in his master's mansion.

All the gorgeousness and luxury about them—master and servant—are the fit trappings of the gentleman's estate. They two make one, a kind of social Centaur, a single brain and a double body. The civic mechanism necessitates other grades of mankind, but this is the summit level. The Centaur may be the highest expression of human culture; he may be a mere vehicle of pleasures—betting, horse-racing, with no conception of or respect for that culture. He is to all the world the personation of human dignity, and the King or Queen is only the head of his order. He may enjoy the refinements his

wealth has gathered round him and justify his position, or he may bury himself deeper in stultifying indulgences by the weight of it,—be the best or worst of men; he is still the cynosure of the Old World regards—*milord Anglais*. In his sphere the echo of social wants and wrongs dies away; the tenants on his estate are as well cared for as his favorite flocks, and he does his duty to all who depend socially on him. Beyond, all is ignored which disturbs the serenity of that earthly heaven in whose immobility he abides. For his existence, civilization, law, order, the church, army, and navy are the guaranties and prerequisites. It is for him, according to the original theory of the British constitution, that the state exists.

In other European countries of approximate civilization, his congener has gone under; he, wiser, draws up to him the social elements that might menace his supremacy, and which, by their necessity to the state, are necessary to him,—the banker, the successful administrator, soldier, admiral; and even the church, whose power is not of this world, is led in by its lord bishops. So that the Centaur, being the governing and the governed in one, wins over from any possible opposition whatever elements may be assimilated to his class, which outside its limits might be dangerous, and so fights off the fate which has befallen his congeners of the Continent.

In the strictest social creed of the Centaur, it is held as an essential to this assimilation that the candidate shall not only never have done anything useful for its due compensation, but that society shall not be able to remember when one of his ancestors did so, the bluest blood being that of him whose remote forefathers did but follow the original centaurial proposition of taking all that they wanted wherever they found it, and, by levying contributions on all the classes of society, enabling his remotest heirs and successors to enjoy the proceeds in complete and reputable abstention from gain by any useful employment,—useless labor, such as breeding and running race-horses, etc., being perfectly allowable.

Although socially dominant in all England, the Centaur is only to be known in London in perfection, or the extent of his dominance to be recognized. He must have his residence in London, no matter how many others he may have, and it must be worthy his position. There are here and there certain literary and intellectual heresies and heretics refusing to recognize Centaurdom as the highest of human good; but in general the people accept the distinction by which, when they are overridden by the Centaurs, they are privi-

leged to override some one else in the grade below them, and each one in the long file of social gradation is permitted and expected to be a toady to the superior and a bully to the inferior grades. And down to the very substratum of beggars and crossing-sweepers, there is a keen recognition of the social stamp of "useless" and "useful," and an inherent contempt of the individual as such. I have noticed scores of times that, when I was carrying a package through the streets of London, the beggars and sweepers paid no attention to me. The Centaur and the beggar agree in one thing, that a man who carries his own parcels is beneath their social recognition.

It is to London, as the center of all that England is or can be, that these two classes gravitate—the poles of civilized humanity; nowhere but in London could they find their commensurate importance, and here they attain their highest perfection and greatest development. Beggary and aristocracy are the productions *par excellence* of the metropolis of civilization; the traits which, even more than its size and wealth, distinguish it from all the cities of the earth.

And from all this antagonism of extremes, from all the heat and ferment of this alembic of humanity, there comes not only much refuse—dead matter which goes back to decay and first disorganization—but there distills the truest, divinest spirit humanity can embody. Here does but disengage more quickly and more perfectly what may be of better than aristocracy and more beautiful than court or state. If the individual is securest in his individuality, if the one talent is best buried in the retirement of rustic life, if philosopher and poet find in their hearts to say with their Roman confrère, "*Procul, procul este profana,*" and float tranquilly down the stream of life alone, yet in the thickest *mêlée* is the most strength won; and in spite of the terrible perversion of Christianity, and the palsy condition of social organization, one can find here the rarest types of Christian and of mankind. Who escapes humanity shuns God.

I am not a lover of great cities; their ambitions and ideals, their vulgarities and their urbanities, are alike distasteful to me; but I must say that I have known in London the most angelic natures that it has ever been in my lot to encounter. Perhaps I should have seen still better if my eyes had been open wider.

And it is in this very class which I have, in no disparaging sense, termed Centauric, the aristocracy, where social independence has reached its highest, that we find here and there, cased like the flower and fruit of this mighty growth, in extraneous and deciduous

leafage, that best type of humanity as the world knows it, the true English gentleman,—a being whose exterior decorum may be counterfeited by his emulator, whose inmost gentleness and courtesy may be shadowed forth in peer or peasant,—who loves his kind, and feels the common bond of divine birth, but whose most perfect union of noble demeanor and large-heartedness can only be found where the best type of mind has been permitted the largest and richest culture and the completest freedom of hereditary development in the most favorable external circumstances. There are nobles and noblemen—men who seem to be conscious only that surrounding men are lower than they, and others whose illumination pervades every one near them and brings all up into the same world of light and sweetness. The prestige of nobility is founded on a true human instinct; occasionally one finds an English nobleman who justifies its existence, and makes us snobs in spite of our democracy.

I could, I am certain, point to Americans who, in every substantial trait of the gentleman, will stand comparison with any aristocrat born—men in whom gentleness has grown to hereditary ripeness; the third and fourth generations of men who have cultivated on American soil the virtues of honesty, morality, sincerity, courtesy, self-abnegation, humanity, benevolence; men and women whose babyhood was cradled in those influences which make what we call "good breeding," and to whom the various vulgarities of our parvenu princes are as foreign as to the bluest-blooded heir of Norman fortune; and this is to me a more grateful and sympathetic type of humanity than that of its English congener. But to this will always be lacking one grace which that may possess—the majesty of the born legislator and ruler; the air of habitual command and control, hereditary as are all generic traits, good or bad, and which imposes itself on the consciousness of all men. This, be it for the bettering or the worsening of the type, is to our democratic, ruled, leveled, and ballot-boxed civilization forbidden forever; and the fustian heredities of quickly and perhaps ill-made millionaires, for ever so many times told, will never be other than a curious caricature of it. Theoretically, we must gainsay it; but when all is said, be it of our original paradise-planting, or a devil's graft got among the thorns and thistles of our exile, the growth of a certain reverence for a time-honored nobility has become a part of every gentle nature, which only time and assiduity can, but which they certainly will eradicate,—but not to-day, nor while the English nobility is

what, as a whole, it is. We may prefer, in our struggles of race, the independence of the Athenian hoplite, of the quick-footed runner; but the Centaur had his side of the story, and the same marble immortalizes them both.

We Americans are fond of talking of being our own masters; but the man who is his own master is also his own servant. A well disciplined army is the type of highest human development,—compassionate, unflinching, strategy in its head, intelligent, unhesitating and unquestioning obedience in its body. He who in an army will exercise his own judgment and will, is a mutineer. Independence means isolation and incompleteness; association is the true life, social, political, and spiritual.

London is indeed a microcosm, not merely that it is large, but because everything is in it; and with all its intense commonplaceness and humdrum conservatism, there is a degree of unexpectedness which keeps one on an intellectual alert. No city grows like it; yet you pass from quarters of new palaces, on ground which even I remember as once an expanse of kitchen-gardens, as remote from metropolitanism as the hop-fields of Kent, to others where the dinginess of the middle ages seems to linger, and where the only change of the century past must be of deaths and births; into "no thoroughfare" squares, round which the flood of improvement has swept without entering; into places that impress one with the idea of antiquity far more than does the Parthenon or the Colosseum, dusty, grassy, and silent, where, if you chance to see a merry, playing child, it startles you as an anachronism. One day, perhaps, the republic and the proletariat and the boulevard will come: be sure that they will be to the breaking of many hearts grown old in a world of circumstance and association which will not suffer change.

But to a passenger London's most attractive point is her suburban wealth—the lovely wedding of city and country in Richmond, Twickenham, and Barnes, and so all round by Clapham, Dulwich, Norwood, and the Crystal Palace, but especially near the Thames, whose lovely windings, with frequent villages and luxuriant meadows, always green with that vivid greenness which no climate besides this can boast of, remind me

of the early summer Mohawk in its most gentle portions. Great glades of oak and elm come down to the water's edge, and a sward that all the year round is like a carpet, with a river-fringe of willows and flags, and the swans going in and out undisturbed, following the ebb down to the city even, and the flood back to their homes, running the gauntlet of steamer and wherry, with none to make them afraid; and the lazy, picturesque barges drift down from their inland markets, catching the ebb while it serves, and waiting at anchor till it comes again, their rusty tackle and tawny sails so unlike what our seafaring man would settle his fancy to, and yet so beloved by painters and etchers.

Yes, London ends as it began, with the Thames. The dreamy reaches of its upper course, with their framing of rural picturesqueness, their wealth of park and villa, the meed and stimulus at once of the greatest of commercial communities, run by insensible degrees of change into those so unlike in all surroundings, so stirring and vibrant with commerce and speculation; and the two extremes, corresponding as heart and brain the one to the other, or as root and branch, are what makes the life and immensity of London, and, in one sense, of England. Above the river in which the miserable perish and on which the fortunate grow rich, runs the other tide whose flood leads on to fortune, whose sources are in the sea empire, and which debouches in the lands of the little island; above the river of the painters and poets, winding through the downs and meadows of the rarest of cultivated landscape, out by the reaches where the melancholy sea breeds its fogs and damp east winds, is that of the merchant and politician, having its springs in the uttermost parts of the earth, and pouring out its golden tribute on the lands whence the other steals its drift and ooze. Father Thames! Father Thames! God only knows if thy commerce and the world's tribute be worth the sighs and tears and blood thy muddy waters carry into the oblivion of the unremembering and unforgiving ocean! He only can balance the values of thy better and worsen worlds, or tell if hell or heaven finds most gain in your ebb and flood.

W. J. Stillman.