

LONDON.

BY HENRY JAMES.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

I.



HERE is a certain evening that I count as virtually a first impression—the end of a wet, black Sunday, eighteen years ago, about the 1st of March. There had been an earlier vision, but it had turned gray, like faded ink, and the occasion I speak of was a fresh beginning. I know not whether I had a mystic prescience of how fond of the murky modern Babylon I was one day to become; but as I look back I find every small circumstance of those hours of approach and arrival still as vivid as if the solemnity of an opening era had breathed upon it. The sense of approach was already almost intolerably strong at Liverpool, where, as I remember, the perception of the English character of everything was as acute as a surprise, though it had nothing of surprise in it. It was expectation exquisitely gratified, superabundantly confirmed. There was a kind of wonder, indeed, that England should be as English as, for my entertainment, she took the trouble to be; but the wonder would have been greater, and all the pleasure absent, if the sensation had been less. It seems to sit there again like a visiting presence, as it sat opposite to me at breakfast at a small table in a window of the old coffee-room of the Adelphi Hotel—the unextended (as it then was), the unimproved, un-Americanized Adelphi. Liverpool is not a romantic city, but that smoky Saturday returns to me as a supreme success, measured by its association with the kind of emotion in the hope of which, mainly, we betake ourselves to far countries.

It assumed this character at an early hour,—or rather, indeed, twenty-four hours before,—with the sight, as one looked across the wintry ocean, of the strange, dark, lonely freshness of the coast of Ireland. Better still, before we could come up to the city, were the black steamers knocking about in the yellow Mersey, under a sky so low that they seemed to touch it with their funnels, and in the thickest, windiest light. Spring was already in the air, in the town; there was no rain, but there was still less sun,—one wondered what had become

of it, on this side of the world,—and the gray mildness, shading away into black at every pretext, appeared in itself a promise. This was how it hung about me, between the window and the fire, in the coffee-room of the hotel—late in the morning for breakfast, as we had been long disembarking. The other passengers had dispersed, knowingly catching trains for London (we had only been a handful); I had the place to myself, and I felt as if I had an exclusive property in the impression. I prolonged it, I sacrificed to it, and it is perfectly recoverable now, with the very taste of the national muffin, the creak of the waiter's shoes as he came and went (could anything be so English as his intensely professional back? It revealed a country of tradition), and the rustle of the newspaper I was too excited to read.

I continued to sacrifice for the rest of the day. It did not seem to me a sentient thing, as yet, to inquire into the means of getting away. My inquiries must have remained casual, for I found myself, on the morrow, in the slowest of Sunday trains, pottering up to London with an interruptedness which might have been tedious without the conversation of an old gentleman who shared the carriage with me and to whom my alien, as well as comparatively youthful, character had betrayed itself. He instructed me as to the sights of London, and impressed upon me that nothing was more worthy of my attention than the great cathedral of St. Paul. "Have you seen St. Peter's in Rome? St. Peter's is more highly embellished, you know; but you may depend upon it that St. Paul's is the better building of the two." The impression I began with speaking of was, strictly, that of the drive from Euston, after dark, to Morley's Hotel, Trafalgar Square. It was not lovely—it was, in fact, rather horrible; but as I move again through dusky, tortuous miles, in the greasy four-wheeler to which my luggage had compelled me to commit myself, I recognize the first step in an initiation of which the subsequent stages were to abound in pleasant things. It is a kind of humiliation, in a great city, not to know where you are going, and Morley's Hotel was then, to my imagination, only a vague ruddy spot in the general immensity. The immensity was

the great fact, and that was a charm; the miles of housetops and viaducts, the complication of junctions and signals through which we made our way to the station, had been already a symptom of it. The weather had turned to wet, and we went deeper and deeper into the Sunday night. The sheep in the fields, on the way from Liverpool, had shown in their demeanor a certain consciousness of the day; but this momentous cab-drive was an introduction to rigidities of custom. The low black houses were as inanimate as so many rows of coal-scuttles, save where at frequent corners, from a gin-shop, there was a flare of light more brutal still than the darkness. The custom of gin—that was equally rigid, and in this first impression the public-houses counted for much.

Morley's Hotel proved indeed to be a ruddy spot; brilliant, in my recollections, is the coffee-room fire, the hospitable mahogany, the sense that in the stupendous city this, at any rate, for the hour, was a shelter and a point of view. My remembrance of the evening, afterward,—I was probably very tired,—is mainly a remembrance of a four-poster. My little bedroom-candle, set in its deep basin, caused this monument to project a huge shadow and to make me think, I scarce knew why, of the "Ingoldsby Legends." If at a tolerably early hour the next day I found myself approaching St. Paul's, it was not wholly in obedience to the old gentleman in the railway-carriage; I had an errand in the City, and the City was doubtless prodigious. But what I mainly recall is the romantic consciousness of passing under Temple Bar and the way two lines of "Henry Esmond" repeated themselves in my mind as I drew near to the masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren. "The stout, red-faced woman" whom Esmond had seen tearing after the staghounds over the slopes at Windsor was not a bit like the effigy "which turns its stony back upon St. Paul's and faces the coaches struggling up Ludgate Hill." As I looked at Queen Anne over the apron of my hansom—she struck me as very small and black, and the vehicle ascended the mild incline without an effort—it was a thrilling thought that the statue had been familiar to the hero of the incomparable novel. All history appeared to live again, and the continuity of things to vibrate through my mind.

To this hour, as I pass along the Strand, I recall the walk I took there that afternoon. I love the place to-day, and that was the commencement of my passion. It appeared to me to present phenomena, and to contain objects, of every kind, of an inexhaustible interest; in particular it struck me as desirable,

and even indispensable, that I should purchase most of the articles in most of the shops. My eyes rest with a certain tenderness on the places where I resisted and on those where I succumbed. The fragrance of Mr. Rimmel's establishment is again in my nostrils; I see the slim young lady (I hear her pronunciation) who waited upon me there. Sacred to me to-day is the particular aroma of the hair-wash that I bought of her. I pause before the granite portico of Exeter Hall (it was unexpectedly narrow and wedge-like). It invokes a cloud of associations which are none the less impressive because they are vague: they come from I don't know where—from "Punch," from Thackeray, from old volumes of the "Illustrated London News" turned over in childhood; they seem connected with Mrs. Beecher Stowe and "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Memorable is a rush I made into a hosier and glover's at Charing Cross—the one you pass going eastward, just before you turn into the station; that, however, now that I think of it, must have been in the morning, as soon as I issued from the hotel. Keen within me was a sense of the importance of despoiling and ravaging the shop.

A day or two later, in the afternoon, I found myself staring at my fire, in a lodging of which I had taken possession on foreseeing that I should spend some weeks in London. I had just come in, and, having attended to the distribution of my luggage, sat down to consider my habitation. It was on the ground-floor, and the fading daylight reached it in a sadly damaged condition. It struck me as stuffy and unsocial, with its moldy smell and its decoration of lithographs and wax-flowers—an impersonal black hole in the huge general blackness. The uproar of Piccadilly hummed away at the end of the street, and the rattle of a heartless hansom passed close to my ears. A sudden horror of the whole place came over me, like a tiger-pounce of homesickness which had been watching its moment. London was hideous, vicious, cruel, and, above all, overwhelming; whether or no she was "careful of the type," she was as indifferent as Nature herself to the single life. In the course of an hour I should have to go out to my dinner, which was not supplied on the premises, and that effort assumed the form of a desperate and dangerous quest. It appeared to me that I would rather remain dinnerless, would rather even starve, than sally forth into the infernal town, where the natural fate of an obscure stranger would be to be trampled to death in Piccadilly and his carcass thrown into the Thames. I did not starve, however, and I eventually attached myself by a hundred human ties to the dreadful, delightful city. That



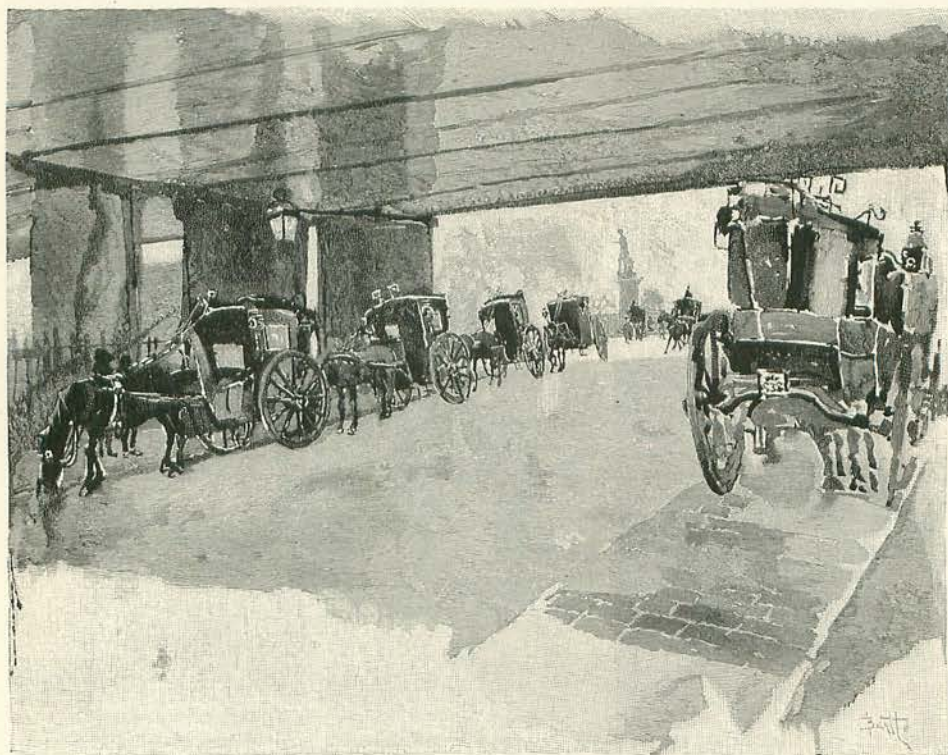
CHARING CROSS STATION.

momentary vision of its smeared face and stony heart has remained memorable to me; but I am happy to say that I can easily evoke others.

II.

It is no doubt not the taste of every one, but for the real London-lover the mere immensity of the place is a large part of its merit. A small London would be an abomination, and fortunately is an impossibility, as the idea and the name are beyond everything an expression of extent and number. Practically, of course, one lives in a quarter, in a plot; but in imagination, and by a constant mental act of refer-

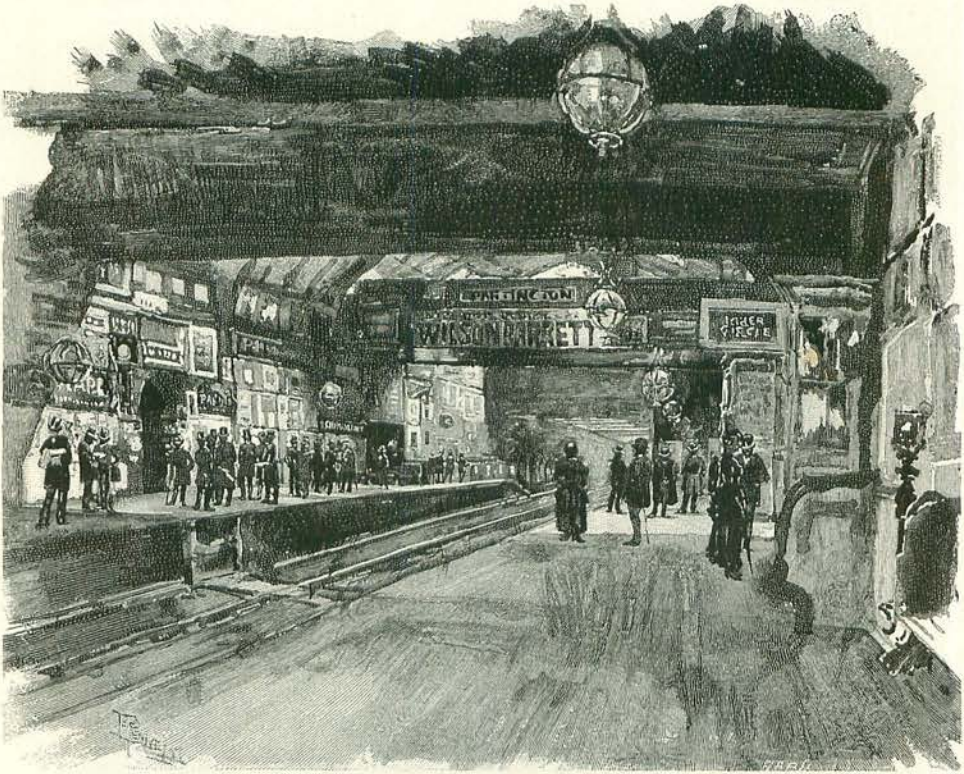
the eyes which, at least in some measure, feed its activity are, fortunately for the common advantage, solicited, at any moment, by a thousand different objects. If the place is big, everything it contains is certainly not so; but this may at least be said, that if small things are noticed and talked of, they are not noticed and talked of long. There are too many items, small or great; and each day, as it arrives, leads its children, like a kind of mendicant mother, by the hand. Therefore perhaps the most general characteristic is the absence of insistence. Habits and inclinations flourish and fall, but that is never one of them. The spirit of the great city is not analytic, and, as they



A CAB STAND.

ence, the sympathizing resident inhabits the whole—and it is only of him that I deem it worth while to speak. He fancies himself, as they say, for being a particle in so unequaled an aggregation; and its immeasurable circumference, even though unvisited and lost in smoke, gives him a sense of social and intellectual elbow-room. There is a luxury in the knowledge that he may come and go without being noticed, even when his comings and goings have no nefarious end. I do not mean by this that the tongue of London is not a very active member; the tongue of London would indeed be worthy of a chapter by itself. But

come up, subjects do not receive at its hands a treatment that in some other communities would be deemed earnest or exhaustive. There are few—of which London disposes with the assurance begotten of its large experience—as to which a good deal does not remain to be more patiently and tenderly considered elsewhere. It takes a very great affair, like the Irish question or a divorce case lasting many days, to be fully threshed out. (The London mind, when it aspires to show what it really can do, lives in the hope of a new divorce case, and an indulgent providence—London is positively, in certain ways, a spoiled child—



IN THE UNDERGROUND STATION.

usually does not keep it waiting long for its opportunity.)

The compensation is that things do come up; that there is great variety, if not morbid intensity; and that the whole of the procession of events and topics passes across your stage. For the moment I am speaking of the inspiration there may be in the sense of far frontiers; the London-lover loses himself in it, delights in the idea that the town which incloses him is, after all, a kind of country—a state by itself. This is his condition of mind quite as much if he be an adoptive as if he be a matter-of-course son. I am by no means sure, even, that he need be of Anglo-Saxon race and have inherited the birthright of English speech; though, on the other hand, I make no doubt that these advantages minister greatly to closeness of allegiance. The great city spreads her dusky mantle over innumerable races and creeds, and I believe there is scarcely a known form of worship that has not some temple there—have I not attended at the Church of Humanity, in Lamb's Conduit, in company with an American lady, a vague old gentleman, and several seamstresses?—or any communion of men that has not some club or guild. London is indeed an epitome of the round world, and just as it is a commonplace to say that there is

nothing one cannot "get" there, so it is equally true that there is nothing one cannot study at first hand.

One does not test these truths every day, but they form part of the air one breathes (and welcome, says the London-hater,—for there *is* such a benighted animal,—to the pestilent compound). They color the thick, dim distances, which in my opinion are the most romantic town-vistas in the world; they mingle with the troubled light to which the straight, ungarnished aperture in one's dull, undistinctive house-front affords a passage, and which makes an interior of friendly corners, of mysterious tones, and of unbetrayed ingenuities, as well as with the magnificent thick medium of the sky, where the smoke and the fog and the weather in general, the strangely undefined hour of the day and season of the year, the emanations of industries and the reflection of furnaces, the red gleams and blurs that may or may not be of sunset,—as you never see the orb of day, you can't in the least tell,—all hang together in a confusion, a complication, a shifting but irremovable canopy. They form the undertone of the deep, perpetual voice of the place. One remembers them when one's patriotism is on the defensive; when it is a question of introducing as many striking features as possible



BOW BELLS, CHEAPSIDE.

into the list of fine reasons one has sometimes to draw up, that eloquent catalogue with which one confronts the hostile indictment,—the array of *other* reasons,—it may easily be as long as one's arm. According to these other reasons it plausibly and conclusively stands that London is the most detestable spot on earth. I don't say it is necessary to meet so absurd an allegation, except for one's personal complacency. If the indifference of the dear old city is even greater than her curiosity, you may avail your-

self of your own share in it simply to feel that if such and such a person does n't appreciate London, so much the worse for such and such a person. But once in a while the best believer recognizes the impulse to set his religion in order, to sweep the temple of his thoughts, and trim the sacred lamp. It is at such hours as this that he reflects with elation that the British capital is the particular spot in the world which enjoys the greatest sense of life.

III.

THE reader will perceive that I do not shrink even from the extreme concession of speaking of it as the British capital, and this in a shameless connection with the question of "patriotism" on the part of an adoptive son. For I hasten to explain that if half the source of one's interest in it comes from feeling that it is the property, and even the home, of the human race,—Hawthorne, that best of Americans, says so somewhere, and places it, in this sense, side by side with Rome,—one's appreciation of it is really a large sympathy, a comprehensive love, of humanity. For the sake of such a charity as this one may stretch one's patriotism; and the most alien of the cockneyfied, though he may bristle with every protest at the intimation that England has set its stamp upon him, is free to admit, with conscious pride, that he has submitted to Londonization. The British capital I have called it; which is but a way of saying that it is a stroke of luck for a particular country that the capital of the human race happens to be British. Surely every other people would have it theirs if they could. Whether the English deserve to hold it any longer might be an interesting field of inquiry; but as they have not yet let it slip, the writer of these lines without scruple professes that the arrangement is to his personal taste. For, after all, if the sense of life is greatest there, it is a sense of the life of people of our incomparable English speech. It is the headquarters of that inestimable tongue; and I make this remark with a full sense of the terrible way in which the idiom is misused by the populace in general, than whom if there be a race of more vulgar and abominable tone I know it not. For a man of letters who endeavors to cultivate, however modestly, the medium of Shakspeare and Milton, of Hawthorne and Emerson, who cherishes the notion of what it has achieved and what it may even yet achieve, London must ever have a great illustrative and suggestive value, and indeed a kind of sanctity. It is the single place in which most readers, most possible lovers, are gathered together; it is the most inclusive public and the largest social incarnation of the language, of the tradition. Such a personage may well let it go for this and leave the German and the Greek to speak for themselves, to express the grounds of *their* predilection, presumably very different.

When a social product is so vast and various it may be approached on a thousand different sides, and liked, and disliked, for a thousand different reasons. The reasons of Piccadilly are not those of Camden Town, nor are the curiosities and discouragements of Kilburn the same as those of Westminster

and Lambeth. The reasons of Piccadilly — I mean the friendly ones — are those of which, as a general thing, the rooted visitor remains most conscious; but it must be confessed that even these, for the most part, do not lie upon the surface. The absence of style, or rather of the intention of style, is certainly the most general characteristic of the face of London. To cross to Paris, under this impression, is to find one's self surrounded with far other standards. There everything reminds you that the idea of beautiful and stately arrangement has never been out of fashion, that the art of composition has always been at work or at play. Avenues and squares, gardens and quays, have been distributed for effect, and to-day the splendid city reaps the accumulation of all this ingenuity. The result is not in every quarter interesting, and there is a tiresome monotony of the "fine" and the symmetrical, above all of the deathly passion for making things "to match." On the other hand the whole air of the place is architectural. On the banks of the Thames it is a tremendous chapter of accidents—the London-lover has to confess to the existence of miles upon miles of the dreariest, stodgiest commonness. Thousands of acres are covered by low black houses, of the cheapest construction, without ornament, without grace, without character or even identity. In fact, there are many, even in the best quarters, in all the region of Mayfair and Belgravia, of so paltry and inconvenient, and above all of so diminutive, a type (those that are let in lodgings—such poor lodgings as they make—may serve as an example), that one wonders what peculiarly limited domestic need they were constructed to meet. The great misfortune of London, to the eye (it is true that this remark applies much less to the City), is the want of elevation. There is no architectural impression without a certain degree of height, and the London street-vista has none of that sort of pride.

All the same, if there is not the intention, there is at least the accident, of style, which, if one looks at it in a friendly way, appears to proceed from three sources. One of these is simply the general greatness, and the manner in which that makes a difference for the better in any particular spot, so that though you may often perceive yourself to be in a shabby corner it never occurs to you that that is the end of it. Another is the atmosphere, with its magnificent mystifications, which flatters and superfuses, makes everything brown, rich, dim, vague, magnifies distances and minimizes details, confirms the inference of vastness by suggesting that, as the great city makes everything, it makes its own system of weather and its own optical laws. The last is the congrega-



THE TOWER FROM SURREY SIDE—FLOOD TIDE.

tion of the parks, which constitute an ornament not elsewhere to be matched and give the place a superiority which none of its uglinesses overcome. They spread themselves with such a luxury of space in the center of the town that they form a part of the impression of any walk, of almost any view, and, with an audacity altogether their own, make a pastoral landscape under the smoky sky. There is no mood of the rich London climate that is not becoming to them,—I have seen them look delightfully romantic, like parks in novels, in the wettest winter,—and there is scarcely a mood of the appreciative resident to which they have not something to say. The high things of London, which here and there peep over them, only make the spaces vaster by reminding you that you are after all not in Kent or Yorkshire; and these things, whatever they be, rows of “eligible” dwellings, towers of churches, domes of institutions, take such a capital gray-blue tint that a clever water-colorist would seem to have put them in for pictorial reasons.

The view from the bridge over the Serpentine has an extraordinary nobleness, and it has often seemed to me that the Londoner twitted with his low standard may point to it with every confidence. In all the town-scenery of Europe there can be few things so fine; the only reproach it is open to is that it begs the question by seeming—in spite of its being the pride of four millions of people—not to belong

to a town at all. The towers of Notre Dame, as they rise, in Paris, from the island that divides the Seine, present themselves no more impressively than those of Westminster, as you see them looking doubly far beyond the shining stretch of Hyde Park water. There is something admirable in the large, river-like manner in which the Serpentine opens away between its wooded shores. Just after you have crossed the bridge (whose very banisters, old and ornamental, of yellowish-brown stone, I am very fond of), you enjoy on your left, through the gate of Kensington Gardens, as you go towards Bayswater, an altogether enchanting vista—a footpath over the turf, which loses itself beneath the scattered oaks and elms in a fashion inexpressibly park-like. There could be nothing less like London, in general, than this particular “bit,” and yet it takes London, of all cities, to give you such an impression of the country.

IV.

It takes London to put you in the way of a purely rustic walk from Notting Hill to Whitehall. You may traverse this immense distance—a most comprehensive diagonal—altogether on soft fine turf, amid the song of birds, the bleat of lambs, the ripple of ponds, and the rustle of admirable trees. Frequently have I wished that, for the sake of this daily luxury, and of exercise made so romantic, I

were a government clerk living, in snug domestic conditions, in Pembridge Villas,—let me suppose,—and having my matutinal desk in Westminster. I should turn into Kensington Gardens at their north-west limit, and I should have my choice of a hundred pleasant paths to the gates of Hyde Park. In Hyde Park I should follow the waterside, or the Row, or any other fancy of the occasion; liking best perhaps, after all, the Row in its morning mood, with the mist hanging over the dark red course, and the scattered early riders taking an identity as the soundless gallop brings them nearer. I am free to admit that in the season, at the conventional hours, the Row becomes a wear-

empty benches and chairs, its occasional orange-peel, its mounted policemen patrolling at intervals like expectant supernumeraries, it offers a considerable analogy to a circus with the lamps out. The sky that bends over it is frequently not a bad imitation of the dingy tent of such an establishment. The ghosts of past cavalcades seem to haunt the foggy arena, and somehow they are better company than the mashers and elongated beauties of current seasons. It is not without interest to remember that most of the salient figures of English society during the present century—and English society means, or rather has hitherto meant, in a large degree English history—have bobbed



THE TOWERS OF WESTMINSTER.

ness (save perhaps just for a glimpse, once a year, to remind one's self how much it is like Du Maurier); the preoccupied citizen eschews it and leaves it, for the most part, to the gaping barbarian. I speak of it now from the point of view of the pedestrian; but for the rider as well it is at its best when he passes either too early or too late. Then, if he be not bent on comparing it, to its disadvantage, with the boskier and remoter alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, it will not be spoiled by the fact that, with its surface that looks like tan, its barriers like those of the ring on which the clown stands to hold up the hoop to the young lady, its

in the saddle between Apsley House and Queen's Gate. You may call the roll if you care to, and the air will be thick with dumb voices and dead names, like that of some Roman amphitheater.

It is doubtless a signal proof of being a London-lover *quand même* that one should undertake an apology for so bungled an attempt at a great public place as Hyde Park Corner. It is certain that the improvements and embellishments recently enacted there have only served to call further attention to the poverty of the elements and to the fact that this poverty is terribly illustrative of gen-



TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

eral conditions. The place is the beating heart of the great West End, yet its main features are a shabby, stuccoed hospital, the low park-gates, in their neat but unimposing frame, the drawing-room windows of Apsley House and of the commonplace residential façades on the little terrace beside it; to which must be added, of course, the only item in the whole prospect that is in the least monumental—the arch spanning the private road which skirts the gardens of Buckingham Palace. This structure is now bereaved of the rueful effigy which used to surmount it,—the Iron Duke in the guise of a tin soldier,—and has not been enriched by the transaction as much as might have been expected. There is a fine view of Piccadilly and Knightsbridge, and of the noble mansions, as the house-agents call them, of Grosvenor Place, together with a sense of generous space beyond the vulgar little railing of the Green Park; but except for the impression that there would be room for something better, there is nothing in all this that speaks to the imagination; almost as much as the grimy desert of Trafalgar Square the prospect conveys the idea of an opportunity wasted.

All the same, on a fine day in spring, it has an expressiveness of which I shall not pretend to explain the source further than to say that the flood of life and luxury is immeasurably great there. The edifices are mean, but the social stream itself is monumental, and to an observer not positively stolid there is more excitement and suggestion than I can give a reason for in the long, distributed waves of

traffic, with the steady policeman marking their rhythm, which roll together and apart for so many hours. Then the great dim city becomes bright and kind, the pall of smoke turns into a veil of haze, carelessly worn, the air is colored, and almost scented, by the presence of the biggest society in the world, and most of the things that meet the eye—or perhaps I should say more of them, for the most, in London, is no doubt ever the realm of the dingy—present themselves as “well appointed.” Everything shines more or less, from the window-panes to the dog-collars. So it all looks, with its myriad variations and qualifications, to one who surveys it over the apron of a hansom, while that vehicle of vantage, better than any box at the opera, spurts and slackens with the current.

It is not in a hansom, however, that we have figured our punctual young man, whom we must not desert, as he fares to the south-east, and who has only to cross Hyde Park Corner to find his way all grassy again. I have a weakness for the convenient, familiar, treeless, or almost treeless, expanse of the Green Park and the friendly part it plays as a kind of encouragement to Piccadilly. I am so fond of Piccadilly that I am grateful to any one or any thing that does it a service, and nothing is more worthy of appreciation than the southward look it is permitted to enjoy just after it passes Devonshire House—a sweep of horizon which it would be difficult to match among other haunts of men, and thanks to which, of a summer's day, you may spy, beyond the browsed pastures of the foreground and



PICCADILLY.

middle distance, beyond the cold chimneys of Buckingham Palace, and the towers of Westminster, and the swarming riverside, and all the southern parishes, the hard modern twinkle of the roof of the Crystal Palace.

If the Green Park is familiar, there is still less of the exclusive in its pendant, as one may call it,—for it literally hangs from the other, down the hill,—the remnant of the former garden of the queer, shabby old palace whose

black, inelegant face stares up St. James's street. This popular resort has a great deal of character, but I am free to confess that much of its character comes from its nearness to the Westminster slums. It is a park of intimacy, and perhaps the most democratic corner of London, in spite of its being in the royal and military quarter and close to all kinds of stateliness. There are few hours of the day when a thousand smutty children are not sprawling

over it, and the unemployed lie thick on the grass and cover the benches with a brotherhood of greasy corduroys. If the London parks are the drawing-rooms and clubs of the poor,—that is, of those poor (I admit it cuts down the number) who live near enough to them to reach them,—these particular grass-plots and alleys may be said to constitute the very *salon* of the slums.

I know not why, being such a region of

nothing left but to go on to his work—which he will find close at hand. He will have come the whole way from the far north-west on the turf, which is what was to be demonstrated.

v.

I FEEL as if I were taking a tone almost of boastfulness, and no doubt the best way to consider the matter is simply to say — without



SOUTH LONDON.

greatness,—great towers, great names, great memories; at the foot of the Abbey the Parliament, the fine fragment of Whitehall, with the quarters of the Guards of the sovereign right and left,—but the edge of Westminster evokes as many associations of misery as of empire. The neighborhood has been much purified of late, but it still contains a collection of specimens—though it is far from unique in this—of the low black element. The air always seems to me heavy and thick, and here more than elsewhere one hears old England—the panting, smoke-stained Titan of Matthew Arnold's fine poem—draw her breath with effort. In fact one is nearer to her heroic lungs, if those organs are figured by the great pinnacled and fretted talking-house on the edge of the river. But this same dense and conscious air plays such everlasting tricks to the eye that the Foreign Office, as you see it from the bridge, often looks romantic, and the sheet of water it overhangs poetic—suggests an Indian palace bathing its feet in the Ganges. If our pedestrian achieves such a comparison as this, he has

going into the treachery of reasons—that, for one's self, one likes this part or the other. Yet this course would not be unattended with danger, inasmuch as at the end of a few such professions we might find ourselves committed to a tolerance of much that is deplorable. London is so clumsy and brutal, and has gathered together so many of the darkest sides of life, that it is almost ridiculous to talk of her as a lover talks of his mistress, and almost frivolous to appear to ignore her disfigurements and cruelties. She is like a mighty ogress who devours human flesh; but to me it is a mitigating circumstance—though it may not seem so to every one—that the ogress herself is human. It is not in wantonness that she fills her maw, but to keep herself alive and do her tremendous work. She has no time for fine discriminations, but after all she is as good-natured as she is huge, and the more you stand up to her, as the phrase is, the better she takes the joke of it. It is mainly when you fall on your face before her that she gobbles you up. She does n't care much what she takes, so long as

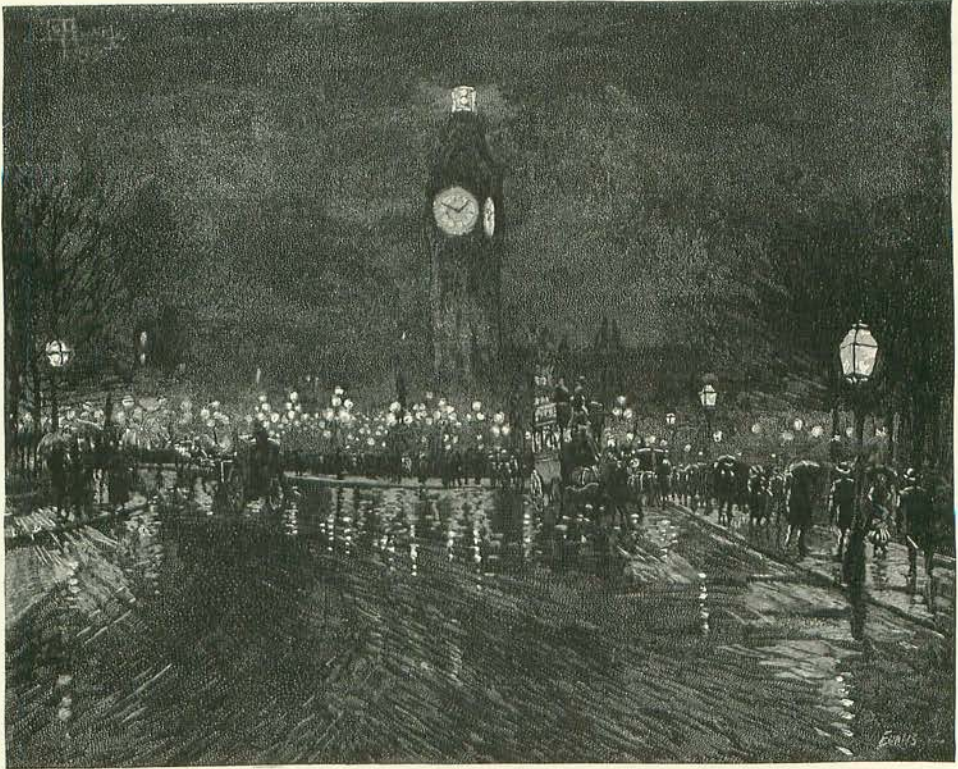
she has her stint, and the smallest push to the right or the left will divert her wavering bulk from one form of prey to another. It is not to be denied that the heart tends to grow hard in her company; but she is a capital antidote to the morbid, and to live with her successfully is an education of the temper, a consecration of one's private philosophy. She gives one a surface for which in a rough world one can never be too thankful. She may take away reputations, but she forms character. She teaches her victims not to "mind," and the great danger, with her, is perhaps that they shall learn the lesson too well.

It is sometimes a wonder to ascertain what they do mind, the best-seasoned of her children. Many of them assist, without winking, at the most unfathomable dramas, and the common speech of others denotes a familiarity with the horrible. It is her theory that she both produces and appreciates the exquisite; but if you catch her in flagrant repudiation of both responsibilities and confront her with the shortcoming, she gives you a look, with a shrug of her colossal shoulders, which establishes a private relation with you for evermore. She seems to say, "Do you really take me so seriously as that, you dear, devoted, voluntary dupe, and don't you know what an immeasurable humbug I am?" You reply that you shall know it henceforth; but your tone is good-natured, with a touch of the cynicism that she herself has taught you; for you are aware that if she makes herself out better than she is, she also makes herself out much worse. She is immensely democratic, and that, no doubt, is part of the manner in which she is salutary to the individual; she teaches him his "place" by an incomparable discipline, but deprives him of complaint by letting him see that she has exactly the same *ferule* for every one else. When he has swallowed the lesson he may enjoy the rude but unfailing justice by which, under her eye, reputations and positions elsewhere esteemed great are reduced to the relative. There are so many reputations, so many positions, that supereminence breaks down, and it is difficult to be so rare that London can't match you. It is a part of her good-nature, and one of her clumsy coquetries, to pretend, sometimes, that she really can't, as when she takes it into her head to hunt the lion or form a ring round a celebrity. But this artifice is so transparent that the lion must be very candid or the celebrity very obscure to be taken by it. The business is altogether subjective, as the philosophers say, and the great city is primarily looking after herself. Celebrities are convenient,—they are one of the things that people can be asked to "meet,"—and lion-cutlets, put upon the ice, will nourish a family through periods of dearth.

This is what I mean by calling London democratic. You may be in it, of course, without being of it; but from the moment you *are* of it,—and on this point your own sense will soon enough enlighten you,—you belong to a body in which a general equality prevails. However exalted, however able, however rich, however renowned you may be, there are too many people at least as much so for your own idiosyncrasies to count. I think it is only by being beautiful that you may really prevail very much; for the loveliness of woman it has long been noticeable that London will go most out of her way. It is when she hunts that particular lion that she becomes most dangerous; then there are really moments when you would believe, for all the world, that she is thinking of what she can give, not of what she can get. Professional beauties, before this, have paid for believing it, and will continue to pay in the future. On the whole, the people who are least deceived are perhaps those who have permitted themselves to believe, in their own interest, that poverty is not a disgrace. It is certainly not considered so in London, and indeed it is difficult to see where—in virtue of diffusion—it would more naturally be exempt. The possession of money is of course immensely an advantage, but that is a very different thing from the lack of it being a disqualification.

Good-natured in so many things in spite of her cynical tongue, and easy-going in spite of her tremendous pace, there is nothing in which the large indulgence of the town is more shown than in the liberal way she looks at obligations of hospitality and the margin she allows in these and cognate matters. She wants, above all, to be amused; she keeps her books loosely, does n't stand on small questions of a chop for a chop, and if there be any chance of people proving a diversion, does n't know, or remember, or care whether they have "called." She forgets even if she herself has called. In matters of ceremony she takes and gives a long rope, and wastes no time in phrases and circumvallations. It is no doubt incontestable that one result of her inability to stand upon trifles and consider details is that she has been obliged in some ways to lower, rather portentously, the standard of her manners. She cultivates the abrupt,—for even when she asks you to dine a month ahead, the invitation goes off like the crack of a pistol,—and approaches her ends not exactly *par quatre chemins*. She does not pretend to attach importance to the lesson conveyed in Matthew Arnold's poem of "The Sick King in Bokhara," that

Though we snatch what we desire,
We may not snatch it eagerly.



WET EVENING, PARLIAMENT SQUARE—HOUSE SITTING.

London snatches it eagerly, if that is the only way she can get it. Good manners are a succession of details, and I don't mean to say that she does n't attend to them—when she has time. Perhaps the matter of note-writing is as good an example as another of what certain of the elder traditions inevitably have become in her hands. She lives by notes—they are her very heart-beats; but those that bear her signature are as disjointed as the ravings of delirium, and have nothing but a postage stamp in common with the epistolary art.

VI.

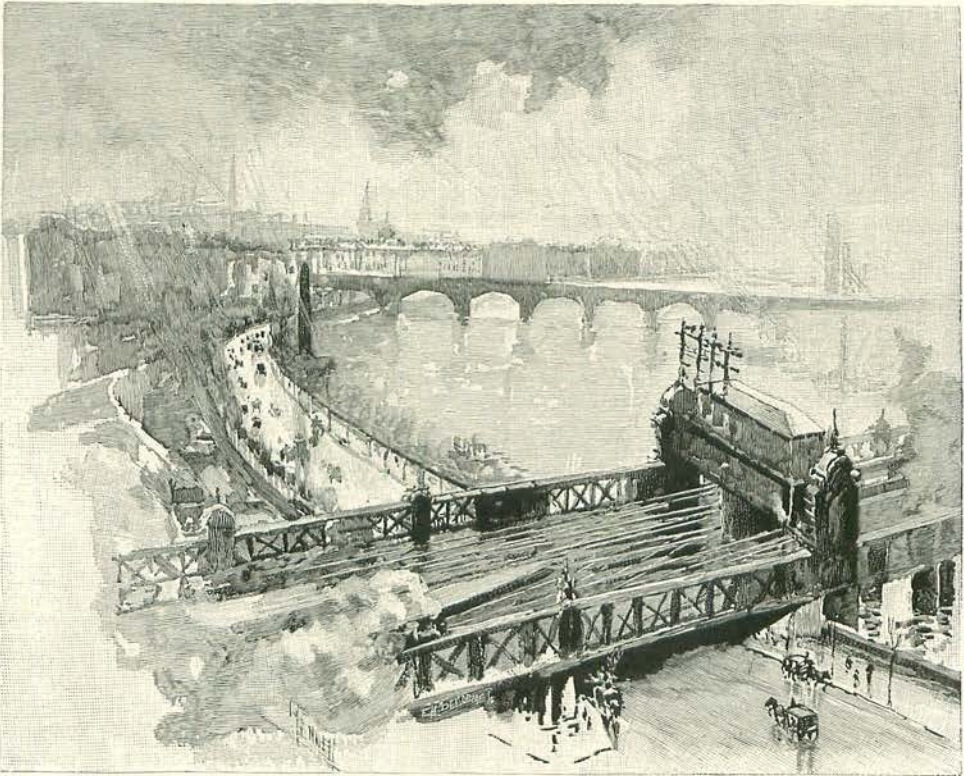
If she does n't go into particulars, it may seem a very presumptuous act to have attempted to do so on her behalf, and the reader will doubtless think I have been punished by having egregiously failed in my enumeration. And, indeed, nothing could well be more difficult than to add up the items—the column would be altogether too long. One may have dreamed of turning the glow—if glow it be—of one's lantern on each successive fact of the jewel; but, after all, it may be success enough if a confusion of brightness is the result. One has not the alternative of speaking of London as a whole, for the simple reason that there is

no such thing as the whole of it. It is immeasurable—you never arrive at the end. Rather, it is a collection of many wholes, and of which of them is it most important to speak? Therefore there must be a choice, and I know of none more scientific than simply to leave out what we may have to apologize for. The uglinesses, the "rookeries," the brutalities, the night aspect of many of the streets, the gin-shops and the hour when they are cleared out before closing—there are many elements of this kind which have to be counted out before a genial picture can be painted.

And yet I should not go so far as to say that it is a condition of such geniality to close one's eyes upon the immense misery; on the contrary, I think it is partly because we are irremediably conscious of that dark gulf that the most general appeal of the great city remains exactly what it is, the largest chapter of human accidents. I have no idea of what the future evolution of the strangely mingled monster may be; whether the poor will improve away the rich, or the rich will expropriate the poor, or they will continue to dwell together on their present imperfect terms of intercourse. Certain it is, at any rate, that the impression of suffering is a part of the general response; it is one of the things that mingle

with all the others to make the sound that is supremely dear to the consistent London-lover—the rumble of the tremendous human mill. This is the note which, in all its modulations, haunts and fascinates and inspires him. And whether or no he may succeed in keeping the misery out of the picture, he will freely confess that the latter is not spoiled for him by some of its duskiest shades. We do not like London well enough till we like its defects:

when the weather is vile, of one of the big square clubs in Pall Mall. I can give no adequate account of the subtle poetry of such reminiscences; it depends upon associations of which we have often lost the thread. The wide colonnade of the Museum, its symmetrical wings, the high iron fence, in its granite setting, the sense of the misty halls within, where all its treasures lie—these things loom through a thickness of atmosphere which does n't make



SOMERSET HOUSE, FROM CHARING CROSS.

the dense darkness of much of its winter, the soot in the chimney-pots,—and everywhere else,—the early lamplight, the brown blur of the houses, the splashing of hansoms in Oxford street or the Strand on December afternoons.

There is still something to me that recalls the enchantments of children—the anticipation of Christmas, the delight of a holiday walk—in the way the shop-fronts shine into the fog. It makes each of them seem a little world of light and warmth, and I can still waste time in looking at them, with dirty Bloomsbury on one side and dirtier Soho on the other. There are winter effects, not intrinsically sweet, it would appear, which somehow touch the chords of memory, and even the fount of tears, in absence: as, for instance, the front of the British Museum on a black afternoon, or the portico,

them dreary, but on the contrary imparts to them something of a cheer of red lights in a storm. I think the romance of a winter afternoon in London arises partly from the fact that, when it is not altogether smothered, the general lamplight takes this hue of hospitality. Such is the color of the interior glow of the clubs in Pall Mall, which I positively like best when the fog loiters upon their monumental staircases.

In saying just now that these retreats may easily be, for the exile, part of the phantasmagoria of homesickness, I did not allude simply to their solemn outsides. If they are still more solemn within, that does not make them any less dear in retrospect, at least to a visitor who is bent upon liking his London to the end. What is the solemnity but a tribute to your

nerves, and the stillness but a refined proof of intensity of life? To produce such results as these the balance of many tastes must be struck, and that is only possible in a very high civilization. If I seem to intimate that this last abstract term must be the cheer of him who has lonely possession of a foggy library, without even the excitement of watching for some one to put down the magazine he wants, I am willing to let the supposition pass, for the appreciation of a London club at one of the empty seasons is nothing but the strong expression of a preference for the great city—by no means so unsociable as it may superficially appear—at periods of relative abandonment. The London year is studded with holidays, blessed little islands of comparative leisure—intervals of absence for good society. Then the wonderful English faculty for “going out of town for a little change” comes into illimitable play, and families transport their nurseries and their bath-tubs to those rural scenes which form the real substratum of the national life. Such moments as these are the paradise of the genuine London-lover, for then he finds himself face to face with the object of his passion; he can give himself up to an intercourse which at other times is obstructed by his rivals. Then every one he knows is out of town, and the exhilarating sense of the presence of every one he does not know becomes by so much the deeper.

This is why I consider that satisfaction not an unsociable, but a positively sociable, emotion. It is the mood in which he most measures the immense humanity of the place, and in which its limits recede farthest into a dimness peopled with possible illustrations. For his acquaintance, however numerous it may be, is finite; whereas the other, the unvisited London, is infinite. It is one of his pleasures to think of the experiments and excursions he may make in it, even when these adventures don't particularly come off. The friendly fog seems to protect and enrich them—to add both to the mystery and the security, so that it is most in the winter months that the imagination weaves such delights. They reach their climax, perhaps, during the strictly social desolation of Christmas week, when the country-houses are filled at the expense of the metropolis. Then it is that I am most haunted with the London of Dickens, feel most as if it were still recoverable, still exhaling its queerness in patches perceptible to the appreciative. Then the big fires blaze in the foggy void of the clubs, and the new books on the tables say, “Now at last you have time to read me,” and the afternoon tea and toast, and the lonely old gentleman who wakes up from a doze to order potash-water, appear to make the assurance

good. It is not a small matter, either, to a man of letters, that this is the best time for writing, and that during the lamplit days the white page he tries to blacken becomes, on his table, in the circle of the lamp, with the screen of the fog folding him in, more vivid and fruitful. Those to whom it is forbidden to sit up to work in the small hours may, in London, between November and March, enjoy a semblance of this luxury in the morning. The weather makes a kind of sedentary midnight and muffles the possible interruptions. It is bad for the eyesight, but it is excellent for the imagination.

VII.

OF course it is too much to say that all the satisfaction of living in London comes from actually being there, for it is not a paradox that a great deal of it consists in getting away. It is almost easier to leave it than not to, and much of its richness and interest comes from its ramifications—the fact that all England is in a suburban relation to it. Such an affair it is, in comparison, to get away from Paris or to get into it. London melts by wide, ugly zones into the green country, and becomes pretty insidiously, without exactly knowing it. It is the spoiling, perhaps, of the country, but it is the making of the insatiable town, and if one is a helpless and shameless cockney that is all one is obliged to look at. Anything is excusable which enlarges one's civic consciousness. It ministers immensely to that of the London-lover that, thanks to the tremendous system of coming and going, to the active hospitable habits of the people, to the elaboration of the railway service, the frequency and rapidity of trains, and last, though not least, to the fact that much of the loveliest scenery in England lies within a radius of fifty miles—thanks to all this he has the rural picturesque at his door and may cultivate unlimited vagueness as to the line of division between the center and the margin. It is perfectly open to him to consider the remainder of the United Kingdom, or the British empire in general, or even, if he be an American, the total of the English-speaking territories of the globe, as the margin of the agglomeration on the Thames.

Is it for this reason—because I like to think how great we all are together, in the light of heaven and the face of the rest of the world, with the bond of our glorious tongue, in which we labor to write articles and books for each other's candid perusal, how great we all are and how great is the great city which we may unite, fraternally, to regard as the capital of our race—is it for this that I have a singular kindness for the London railway-stations, that I like them in themselves, that they interest



SUNSET IN OXFORD STREET.

and fascinate me, and that I view them with complacency even when I wish neither to depart nor to arrive? They remind me of all our reciprocities and activities, our energies and curiosities, and our being all distinguished together from other people by our great common stamp of perpetual motion, our passion for seas and deserts and the other side of the globe, the secret of the impression of strength—I don't say of social roundness and finish—that we produce in any collection of Anglo-Saxon types. If in the beloved foggy season I delight in the spectacle of Paddington, Euston, or Waterloo,—I confess I prefer the northern stations,—I am prepared to defend myself against the charge of puerility; for what I seek, and find, in these vulgar scenes is at

bottom simply so much evidence of our larger way of looking at life. The exhibition of variety of type is, in general, one of the bribes by which London induces you to condone her abominations, and the railway-platform is a kind of compendium of that variety. I think that nowhere so much as in London do people wear—to the eye of observation—definite signs of the sort of people they may be. If you like above all things to know the sort, you hail this fact with joy; you recognize that if the English are immensely distinct from other people, they are also, socially,—and that brings with it, in England, a train of moral and intellectual consequences,—extremely distinct from each other. You may see them all together, with the rich coloring of their dif-

ferences, in the fine flare of one of Mr. W. H. Smith's bookstalls—a feature not to be omitted in any enumeration of the charms of Paddington and Euston. It is a focus of warmth and light in the vast smoky cavern; it gives the idea that literature is a thing of splendor, of a dazzling essence, of infinite gas-lit red and gold. A glamour hangs over the glittering booth, and a tantalizing air of clever new things. How brilliant must the books all

otherwise than with the mass. There is too little of the loose change of time; every half-hour has its preappointed use, written down, month by month, in a little book. As I intimated, however, the pages of this volume exhibit, from August to November, an attractive blankness; they represent the season during which you may taste of that highest kind of inspiration, the inspiration of the moment.

This is doubtless what a gentleman had in



LIMEHOUSE.

be, how veracious and courteous the fresh, pure journals! Of a Saturday afternoon, as you wait in your corner of the compartment for the starting of the train, the window makes a frame for the glowing picture. I say of a Saturday afternoon, because that is the most characteristic time—it speaks most of the constant circulation, and in particular of the quick jump, by express, just before dinner, for the Sunday, into the hall of the country-house and the farms of closer friendliness, the prolonged talks, the familiarizing walks, which London excludes.

There is the emptiness of summer as well, when you may have the town to yourself, and I would discourse of it—counting the summer from the 1st of August—were it not that it seems ungracious to insist so much on the negative phases. In truth they become positive in another manner, and I have an endearing recollection of certain happy accidents, at the only period when London life may be said to admit of accident. It is the most luxurious existence in the world, but of that especial luxury—the unexpected, the extemporized—it has, in general, too little. In a very tight crowd you can't scratch your leg, and in London the social pressure is so great that it is difficult to deflect from the perpendicular or to move

mind who once said to me, in regard to the vast resources of London and its having something for every taste, "Oh, yes; when you are bored, or want a little change, you can take the boat down to Blackwall." I have never had occasion, yet, to resort to this particular remedy. Perhaps it's a proof that I have never been bored. Why Blackwall? I indeed asked myself at the time; nor have I yet ascertained what distractions that locality offers to the arriving excursionist. My interlocutor probably used the name generically, as a free, comprehensive allusion to the charms of the river at large. Here the London-lover goes with him all the way, and indeed the Thames is altogether such a wonderful affair that he feels he has composed his picture very clumsily not to have put it in the very forefront. Take it up or take it down, it is equally an adjunct of London life, an expression of London manners.

From Westminster to the sea its uses are commercial, but none the less pictorial for that; while in the other direction—taking it properly a little farther up—they are personal, social, athletic, idyllic. In its recreative character it is absolutely unique. I know of no other classic stream that is so splashed about

for the mere fun of it. There is something almost droll, and at the same time almost touching, in the way that on the smallest pretext of holiday or fine weather the mighty population takes to the boats. They bump each other in the narrow, charming channel; between Oxford and Richmond they make an uninterrupted procession. Nothing is more suggestive of the personal energy of the people and their eagerness to take, in the way of exercise and adventure, whatever they can get. I hasten to add that what they get on the Thames is exquisite, in spite of the smallness of the scale and the contrast between the numbers and the space. In a word, if the river is the busiest suburb of London it is also by far the prettiest. That term applies to it less, of course, from the bridges down, but it is only because in this part of its career it deserves a larger praise. To be consistent, I like it best when it is all dyed and disfigured with the town and you look from bridge to bridge—they seem wonderfully big and dim—over the brown, greasy current, the barges and the penny-steamers, the black, sordid, heterogeneous shores. This prospect, of which so many of the elements are ignoble, etches itself to the eye of the lover of "bits" with a power that is worthy perhaps of a better cause.

The way that, with her magnificent opportunity, London has neglected to achieve a river-front is of course the best possible proof that she has rarely, in the past, been in the architectural mood which at present shows somewhat inexpensive signs of settling upon her. Here and there a fine fragment apologizes for the failure which it does not remedy. Somerset House stands up, higher perhaps than anything else, on its granite pedestal, and the palace of Westminster reclines—it can hardly be said to stand—on the big parliamentary bench of its terrace. The embankment, which is admirable, if not particularly interesting, does what it can, and the new red houses of Chelsea stare across at Battersea Park like eighteenth-century ladies surveying a horrid wilderness. On the other hand the Charing Cross railway-station, placed where it is, is a national crime; Milbank prison is a worse act of violence than any it was erected to punish; and the water-side, generally, a shameless renunciation of effect. It turns out, however, that its very cynicism is expressive; so that, if one were to choose again—short of there being a London Louvre—between the usual English irresponsibility in such matters and some particular flight of conscience, we should perhaps do as well to let the case stand. We know what it is, the stretch from Chelsea to Wapping, but we know not what it might be. It does not prevent my being always more or less

thrilled, of a summer afternoon, by the journey, on a penny-steamer, to Greenwich.

VIII.

BUT why do I talk of Greenwich, and remind myself of one of the unexecuted vignettes with which it had been my plan that these desultory and, I fear, somewhat incoherent remarks should be studded? They will present to the reader no vignettes but those which the artist who has kindly consented to associate himself with my vagaries may be so good as to bestow upon them. Why should I speak of Hampstead, as the question of summer afternoons just threatened to lead me to do, after I should have exhausted the subject of Greenwich, which I may not even touch? Why should I be so arbitrary when I have cheated myself out of the space privately intended for a series of vivid and ingenious sketches of the particular physiognomy of the respective quarters of the town? I had dreamed of doing them all, with their idiosyncrasies and the signs by which you shall know them. It is my pleasure to have learned these signs,—it is a deeply interesting branch of observation,—but I must renounce the display of my lore.

I have not the conscience to talk about Hampstead, and what a pleasant thing it is to ascend the long hill which overhangs, as it were, St. John's Wood and begins at the Swiss Cottage,—you must mount from there, it must be confessed, as you can,—and pick up a friend at a house of friendship on the top, and stroll with him on the rusty Heath, and skirt the garden-walls of the old square Georgian houses which survive from the time when, near as it is to-day to London, the place was a kind of provincial center, with Joanna Baillie for its muse, and take the way by the Three Spaniards—I would never miss that—and look down at the smoky city or across at the Scotch firs and the red sunset. It would never do to make a tangent in that direction when I have left Kensington unsung and Bloomsbury unattempted and have said never a word about the mighty eastward region—the queer corners, the dark secrets, the rich survivals, and mementos of the City. I particularly regret having sacrificed Kensington, the once-delightful, the Thackerayan, with its literary vestiges, its quiet, pompous red palace, its square of Queen Anne, its house of Lady Castlewood, its "Greyhound" tavern, where Henry Esmond lodged.

But I can reconcile myself to this when I reflect that I have also sacrificed the season, which, doubtless, from an elegant point of view, ought to have been the central *morceau* in the panorama. I have noted that the London-

lover loves everything in the place, but I have not cut myself off from saying that his sympathy has degrees, or from remarking that that of the author of these pages has never gone all the way with the dense movement of the British carnival. That is really the word for the period from Easter to midsummer; it is a fine, decorous, expensive, Protestant carnival, in which the masks are not of velvet or silk, but of wonderful deceptive flesh and blood, the material of the most beautiful complexions in the world. Holding that the great interest of London is the sense the place gives us of multitudinous life, it is doubtless an inconsequence not to care most for the phase of greatest intensity. But there is life and life, and the rush and crush of these weeks of fashion is after all but a tolerably mechanical expression of human forces. It goes without saying that it is a more universal, brilliant, spectacular one than can be seen anywhere else; and it is not a defect that these forces often take the form of very beautiful women. I risk the declaration that the London season brings together, year by year, an unequalled collection of handsome persons. I say nothing of the ugly ones; beauty has, at the best, been allotted to a small minority, and it is never, at the most, anywhere, but a question of the number by which that minority is least insignificant.

There are moments when one can almost forgive the follies of June for the sake of the smile which the skeptical old city puts on for the time and which, as I noted in an earlier passage of this disquisition, fairly breaks into laughter where she is tickled by the vortex of Hyde Park Corner. Most perhaps does she seem to smile at the end of the summer days, when the light lingers and lingers, though the shadows lengthen and the mists redden and the belated riders, with dinners to dress for, hurry away from the trampled arena of the Park. The population, at that hour, moves mainly westward, and sees the dust of the day's long racket turned into a dull golden haze. There is something that has doubtless often, at this particular moment, touched the fancy even of the bored and the *blasés*, in such an emanation of hospitality, of waiting dinners, of the festal idea, and the whole spectacle of the West End preparing herself for an evening six parties deep. The scale on which she entertains is stupendous, and her invitations and "reminders" are as thick as the leaves of the forest.

For half an hour, in the region of 8 o'clock, every hurrying vehicle contains an obvious diner-out. To consider only the rattling hansoms, the white neckties and "dressed" heads which greet you from over the apron, in a quick, interminable succession, conveys an over-

whelming impression of a complicated world. Who are they all, and where are they all going, and whence have they come, and what smoking kitchens and gaping portals and marshaled flunkeys are prepared to receive them, from the southernmost limits of a loosely interpreted, an almost transpentine, Belgravia, to the hyperborean confines of St. John's Wood? There are broughams standing at every door, and carpets laid down for the footfall of the issuing, if not the entering, reveler. The pavements are empty now, in the fading light, in the big dusty squares and the stuccoed streets of gentility, save for the groups of small children, holding others that are smaller,—Ameliar-Ann intrusted with Sarah Jane,—who collect, wherever the strip of carpet lies, to see the fine ladies pass from the carriage or the house. The West End is dotted with these pathetic little gazing groups; it is the party of the poor—their season and way of dining out, and a happy illustration of "the sympathy that prevails between classes." The watchers, I should add, are by no means all children, but dingy elders too, and I am sure these wayside joys are one of the reasons of an inconvenience much deplored—the tendency of the country poor to flock to London. Those who dine only occasionally, or never at all, have plenty of time to contemplate those with whom the exercise is more frequent.

However, it was not my intention to conclude these remarks in a melancholy strain, and Heaven knows that the diners are a prodigious company. It is as moralistic as I shall venture to be if I drop a very soft sigh on the paper as I affirm that truth. Are they all illuminated spirits, and is their conversation the ripest in the world? This is not to be expected, nor should I ever suppose it to be desired that a society should fail to offer frequent opportunity for intellectual rest. Such a shortcoming is not one of the sins of the London world in general, nor would it be just to complain of that world, on any side, on grounds of deficiency. It is not what London fails to do that strikes the observer, but the general fact that she does everything in excess. Excess is her highest reproach, and it is her incurable misfortune that there is really too much of her. She overwhelms you by quantity and number—she ends by making human life, by making civilization, appear cheap to you. Wherever you go, to parties, exhibitions, concerts, "private views," meetings, solitudes, there are already more people than enough on the field. How it makes you understand the high walls with which so much of English life is surrounded, and the priceless blessing of a park in the country, where there is nothing animated but rabbits and pheasants and, for the worst, the

importunate nightingales! And as the monster grows and grows forever, she departs more and more—it must be acknowledged—from the ideal of a convenient society, a society in which intimacy is possible, in which the components meet often, and sound and measure and select and inspire each other, and relations and combinations have time to form themselves. The substitute for this, in London, is the momentary concussion of a million of atoms. It is the difference between seeing a great deal of a few and seeing a little of every one. "When did you come—are you 'going on'?" and it is over; there is no time even

for the answer. This may seem a treacherous arraignment, and I should not make it were I not prepared, or rather were I not eager, to add two qualifications. One of these is that, cumbrously vast as the place may be, I would not have had it smaller by a hair's-breadth or have missed one of the fine and fruitful impatiences with which it inspires you, and which are at bottom a heartier tribute, I think, than any great city receives. The other is, that, out of its richness and its inexhaustible good humor, it belies, the next hour, any generalization you may have been so simple as to make about it.

Henry James,

TO A CRITIC.

YOU bid me sing of passions hot,
That burn a fiery way
Through social forms, enduring not
The social sway.

You bid me sing, as Byron sang,
The heart's untoward fire,
Whose heats, amid the trumpet's clang,
Unstrung the lyre,—

The lyre, that should have sounded long,
Lay broken on the shore,
And, with one burst of noble song,
It rang no more.

You bid me seek a sounding note,
Where thundering squadrons come
And beat the march with double rote
Of fife and drum,—

The rumbling drum with muffled roar,
That times the martial tread,
And, when the fiery day is o'er,
Beats home the dead.

You bid me climb, by rugged ways,
And oft through starless nights,
Where sightless Milton tuned his lays,
On lonely heights,—

On lonely heights which glorious song—
So cold that upper air—
But rarely seeks, nor tarries long,
Though Fame is there.

Nay, I along the common road,
Beside my fellow-man,
Walk meekly, adding to my load
What flowers I can.

And when I put my burden by,
At noon, or close of day,
If some cool, darksome thicket lie
Along the way,—

If in that thicket hide a rill
That runs a pleasant round,
I listen, listen, listen still,
To catch the sound.

Or if a bird, in reed or rush,
Delight a quiet stream
With simple lay, or, like the thrush,
With ampler theme,

I listen, till my heart is full,
Then haply, if I can,
I snatch a reed, and bid it tell
A brother man.

Perchance some rustic traveler
At noon may pause to hear,
Or some slow-moving wagoner
Incline an ear;

Some village maid in threadbare plaid,
Who shuns the gayer throng,
Or some brown-handed, freckled lad,
May like the song.

If not, what then? I've heard at eve
The wood-thrush sing unknown,
Content in singing to relieve
His breast alone.

And I can touch a slender quill,
With none to heed the task,
And if my own heart feel the thrill,
'T is all I ask.

James Herbert Morse.