

THE LORD MAYOR'S SHOW.

PLAY IN LONDON.

BY ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL.

WITH PICTURES BY JOSEPH PENNELL.



SWEARING IN THE NEW LORD MAYOR.

IN London a great deal is heard about Queen's weather; for the sun is supposed to know how to behave, and always to shine, when the Queen comes to town—perhaps because she comes so seldom. But less is said of Lord Mayor's weather, which means fog, smoke, drizzle, damp, and everything abominable, since the one special day set apart for the Lord Mayor's drive through the streets falls on the 9th of November, a month that has the reputation of being the vilest in the London year.

A new lord mayor has been elected regularly every year from the time of a certain charter of King John's, and the annual election has been an excuse for a pageant that, nowadays at least, has not its like on earth for pomp and splendor. It begins with a little-known function in the Guildhall on the 8th of November, when the old Lord Mayor yields up the keys or symbols of of-

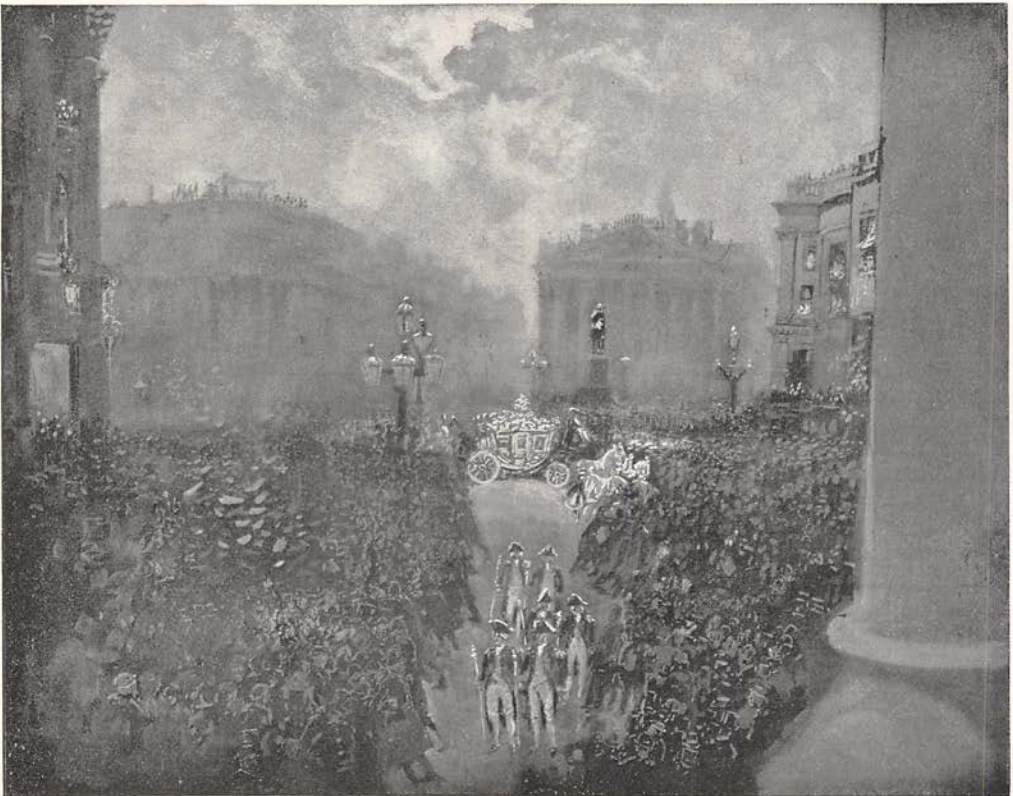
fice to the new Lord Mayor, then duly sworn in. Mace-bearer and sword-bearer, and sheriffs and under-sheriffs, and aldermen, and all the masters and wardens of the worshipful city companies, attend in their purple and scarlet robes and gold chains, and the recorder bids the unlawful intruder begone at the penalty of something very dreadful, and everybody looks absurdly ashamed of being mixed up in a scene as sumptuous and pictorial as any Veronese ever painted. Not even the palace in Venice on a doge's feast could have been finer. Yet the stately ceremonial of to-day remains to be chronicled on canvas, while the historical painter breaks his heart trying to reproduce the past's great spectacles, which he never saw. Unfortunately, this first performance is enjoyed only by the few for whom space can be found in the beautiful old hall. The second performance, on the 9th, is the show that all London

crowds to see; for this has the public streets for its stage. Before actually entering upon his duties, the Lord Mayor must take the final declaration of office before her Majesty's representatives—a ceremony which of old, when the pageant was by water, and afterward until very recent years, sent him all the way to Westminster. He still does go to St. Stephen's to be presented to the Lord Chancellor; but this is a few days beforehand, when any one who happens to be on the Embankment can see his state coach driving westward, with no display beyond gilded panelings and powdered footmen, that would seem amazingly gorgeous everywhere except in London, long accustomed to the sight. But the law-courts have been removed to Fleet street, and it is there that he must now drive from the Guildhall, on the 9th, to pay his respects to the chief justices of the royal courts of justice, and there, consequently, that the official end of the day's program is accomplished. But he is amiable enough to go back again by a long and circuitous route through the Strand, down Northumberland Avenue, and along the Embankment.

Of course in the greater part of London

the 9th passes as quietly as in New York or Hong-Kong; but its excitement begins with the day on the line of procession and in the neighborhood. By nine in the morning—or before dawn, for all I know—groups of idlers already gather in the City; by ten they are jammed in Cheapside and overflowing into Fleet street and the Strand. All traffic is stopped, all business at a standstill. Employers and sweaters may protest, for the 9th is not a national holiday; the economical balance may be endangered: it makes no difference. When the sturdy Briton wants a holiday he takes it, and not one provided by a thoughtful nation does he love so well as Lord Mayor's day.

With busses gone from the Strand, and cabs vanished, the narrowness of «the long, lean, lanky street» is all revealed, and the shabbiness, the meanness, the squalor, of its smoke-stained buildings are laid bare. The paltry decorations only set off its insignificance. No more, as in the happy past, do fountains flow with wine and beautiful maidens blow gold-dust into the air. No more, as when royalty came to see, do rare tapestries cover the shabby walls. Instead, here and there flimsy



THE PROCESSION AT THE MANSION HOUSE.

red stuffs are flapping from a window or stretched skimpily across a house-front. Most of the banners waving over the street advertise some of the many things that the London family should not be without, and the few that flaunt more appropriate inscriptions are so commonplace and cheap that the soap-manufacturer or the pill-maker would disdain them as posters. It is no better in Fleet street. And if the City, in the Lord Mayor's own ward, seems more lavish with its pyramids of flowers and triumphal arches, why, any impoverished Italian town—Siena when the *Palio* is run, Venice for the *Festa del Redentore*—could easily surpass it in dignity and magnificence. But the rich atmosphere, the splendid grime, the smoky glory, the shadowy perspectives, and the thick, dim distances—where could you find them except in London? And the people, the wonderful people! hundreds, thousands, millions, swarming in the open street, massed on the sidewalks, or crushed against the boarded-up shop-fronts; groups in the windows where usually the tailor's dummy stands or the latest news bulletin hangs; groups looking down from the housetops;

groups clambering over the base of St. Mary le Strand's, of «cold, staid Clement's», of every convenient church along the route. And such a crowd—the London crowd: tradesmen from the suburbs; Mr. Davidson's clerks «at thirty bob a week»; 'Arriet in feathers from her factory; 'Arry from Whitechapel; small shopkeepers; errand-boys in buttons; workmen in corduroys; children of every age and size; pickpockets from Drury Lane; harpies in battered bonnets from Seven Dials and Clare Market, whose curses would make a Moll Flanders blush; Tommy Atkins dashing the gray monotony with red!

Every public-house is as full as it can hold. The air is heavy with the classic city perfume of fried steak and onions, tempered for a space by strong whiffs from Rimmel's, «the house of odors in the Strand.» Pushing, elbowing, struggling through the crowd are fakirs selling overgrown macaroons and oranges and nougat; or the «Lord Mayor's show panorama, a pinny!»—a beautiful long sheet of brilliant lithographs, soldiers' coats and helmets put in with great slabs of red and yellow; or the «Program of the Lord Mayor's procession, a

pinny!» or «A dozen songs, a pinny! All copyright!» which you buy, hoping for genuine broadsides of the people on the screaming crimson, green, and orange sheets, but finding there only the latest music-hall songs. From the windows coppers are thrown to be scrambled for by ragged boys and gaunt men under the very heels of the crowd—the same game played everywhere, from the canals of Venice to the Alhambra's groves, but nowhere in such grim earnest. And there are showers of *confetti*—London pretending to take its pleasure with the jauntiness of Nice or Monte Carlo. And there are heavier downpours of paper circulars and adver-



THE PROCESSION ON LUDGATE HILL.

tisements—the Londoner never losing sight of the main chance.

Above the voices of the crowd there rise the twanging of banjos, the strumming of guitars, the jingle of hurdy-gurdies, the squeak of Punch, his little theater set up in any chance court or passage, the songs of the «nigger» minstrels, who carry their blackened faces and worn-out jests into the thick of every holiday crowd from Henley to Epsom, from Hammersmith to the City. And presently, toward noon, all this uproar is drowned in the welcome clashed and hammered from a hundred towers, as the Lord

Mayor sets out upon the first, which is the most splendid, of the year's official journeys. The little city churches, hidden away in their quiet nooks and corners, are pealing and ringing like mad; in Cheapside Bow Bells are clamoring and calling, as they called centuries ago to the runaway resting on the stone in Holloway:

Turn again, Whittington,
Thrice Lord Mayor of London!

And loudest of all are the clear, jubilant chimes of St. Paul's; all making a perfect saturnalia of bells.

And then gradually other sounds mingle with the jangling chorus of the churches,—the loud beating of drums, the brazen blare of trumpets,—and through the City's labyrinth of streets, by the Mansion House, by St. Paul's, the procession makes its way in a gold and scarlet glory. From Ludgate Circus is the place to see it, if you can, just as it emerges from the curtain of mist that hangs about Wren's cathedral into the pale wintry daylight, and moves slowly down Ludgate Hill, under the gay lines of little fluttering pennons and the somber line of the railway bridge. Before the spurred, prancing horses of the mounted police the people are crushed a few feet to left and right, flattening themselves as best they can into the crowd behind them, now packed solid from the house-fronts to the horses' heels—the terrible London crowd, which is like none other in the world, compact, impenetrable, so that to stand in the midst of it is to be at its mercy, as powerless as the pebble caught in an avalanche. Between the shabby houses, between the swaying, swearing, surging, cheering, yelling, laughing, fainting masses, royal artillery and royal fusiliers pass in a blaze of splendor, muskets and bayonets and trappings gleaming through

the dull grayness. In a frenzy of music mounted royal bands ride with them, gorgeous in lace and gold. Then, far above the heads of the procession, the clustered banners of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle-makers and the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights break the misty perspective with sudden glints of green and crimson and silver, and the yells of the crowd become articulate. «Good old Juggins!» «Good old 'Arris!» it used to be in the great days of Drury Lane and Augustus Druriolanus. Wot price watches? Good old tickers! 'Ooray! 'Oo

's that bloke! Good old Juggins! 'Ooray! 'Ooray!» And in their carriages the masters and wardens of the worshipful companies, resplendent in gold chains and velvet and ermine, white-haired, white-bearded, like so many old prophets, bow with shamefaced shrinking from the part they play in one of the few beautiful pageants left in the world. Then there are more soldiers, royal troops and volunteers, more bands. There are squadrons of yeomanry and contingents of firemen, their helmets, brass and silvered, as you look down, a shining floor across the street. There are orphan boys, whom



THE MOUNTED BAND.

the sentimental Briton greets with frantic delight—little wretches, all of them, who go by singing. There are huge allegorical floats, or «cars» representing «England and her Heroes»—foolish, even vulgar, when seen too near, but as majestic as any old triumphal chariot as details are lost and only a brilliant outline survives in the friendly shadows. And there are more soldiers, more flamboyant banners, more schools, more firemen, more bands; and there is the «Old Times' Coach» and after it the «Present Times' Motor-car.» And the crowd has become a hopeless pandemonium, children shrieking, women swooning, boys shouting themselves hoarse, 'Arris jeering,



THE LORD MAYOR'S COACH PASSING UP FLEET STREET.

men mashing top-hats and swearing like troopers, policemen threatening and pushing back the mob with all their might.

And now, in greater pomp and solemnity, the chief city officials follow close upon the band of the Grenadier Guards, led by Lieutenant Dan Godfrey, bearskin shako, sword, and baton—Lieutenant Dan Godfrey, the greatest man in England, who won the battle of Waterloo, who has written all the music that ever was written—Lieutenant Dan Godfrey, the most wonderful man in the world! And if you do not believe it, the people of London do! First come the undersheriffs and the officers of the Corporation of the City of London, the town clerk, the remembrancer—every one of them in gorgeous costume. Then the mounted state trumpeters of the Household Cavalry, in gold and crimson, led by their bandmaster, his kettle-drums slung across his saddle, all swagger and glitter and gold, marking time with his drum-sticks, a picturesque figure that one can see nowhere else. And next the aldermen who have not passed the chair, in their carriages; and the recorder in his carriage; and the aldermen who have passed the chair, in their carriages, with the mounted band of the Royal Horse Guards, more gold and glit-

ter and swagger; and next Mr. Sheriff Somebody in his state carriage, drawn by four horses, accompanied by his chaplain, and Mr. Sheriff and Alderman Somebody Else in his state carriage, drawn by four horses, accompanied by his chaplain; and next the band of the Second Dragoons; and next the late Lord Mayor in his carriage, drawn by four horses; and the crowd with a single voice cries, «Good old Wilkins! 'Ooray!» and one wit finishes with «Good old Winkle!» and the crowd takes it up: «Good old Winkle! Good old Periwinkle!» until their «'oorays» are deadened in a loud burst of trumpets. For here are the city trumpeters, in a whirl of gold and brazen sounds; and close after them the city marshal on horseback, and the Lord Mayor's servants, in state liveries, on foot, their gorgeous pink legs giving gay flashes of color as they walk, and gay chances to boys with sticks to prod them. And now, at last, it is the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor, with six horses to pull his gilt coach, which looks precisely like the carriage the fairy godmother provides for Cinderella, and is driven by the fattest coachman that ever sat on a box, and who, next to Lieutenant Dan Godfrey, is the greatest man in London—he is certainly the biggest. And the Right



RECEPTION OF GUESTS, GUILDHALL LIBRARY.

Honorable the Lord Mayor is accompanied not only by his chaplain, but by his sword-bearer and his mace-bearer, and the gold mace sticks out of the window; and the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor bows to left and to right, and it is all just the same as in Hogarth's picture of «Industry Rewarded,» with the Right Honorable Francis Goodchild parading before royalty, while poor Tom Idle is trundled off to Tyburn in the cart with a coffin at his side. And the Lord Mayor is greeted with a deafening outbreak of cheers or of groans, according to the humor of the crowd, and with shrieks of «Wot 's the price of candles?» or «spectacles,» or «clocks,» or whatever it may be, according to his trade. And behind his coach and his escort of honor another detachment of mounted police brings up the rear; and behind it the crowd falls in, scuffling and cursing, and the splendor fades into the mist.

There is a rush, a wild flight, a scrimmage, a human cyclone tearing down Ludgate Hill, around Farringdon street, through every alley leading out of Fleet street. Lord Mayor's day is only half over: a second glimpse of the show is to be had, if well

fought for, on the homeward route. For after the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor, in the law-courts, has invited the judges to dine with him, and has stayed to lunch with them, the long return journey is still before him. And so, in Northumberland Avenue, on the Embankment, in Queen Victoria street, every inch of standing-ground is captured, and every chance parapet or low wall besieged. Every tree blossoms forth with small boys, and the temporary shelters in the Temple Gardens and under the arches of Somerset House are a mass of heads. By the time the procession reaches the Embankment the pale daylight is waning, the river is a vague, shadowy stream, South London floats in an opalescent fog. There is a stir of music and color in this strange gray shadow-land; a line of scarlet and gold winds between the leafless trees to where Waterloo Bridge throws ghostly arches across a ghostlier Thames, and the long façade of Somerset House rises, phantom-like, from the faint shores, and the «unsubstantial pageant» disappears into the grayness; and thus from

my own windows do I see the last of the Lord Mayor's show for a year to come. It is the fashion of our generation to laugh at it, I know; but really there is no other spectacle to compare with it. The very season lends additional beauty. Where June sunshine might reveal tawdriness, only splendor makes itself felt through the thick, soft, all-enveloping November atmosphere. And there is the mystery the painter loves in the way this pageant of color looms suddenly from out the smoky shadows, and is scarce seen before it has melted into them again. Had Rembrandt been an Englishman, he must have painted the Lord Mayor's show in a fog, instead of «The Night Watch.»

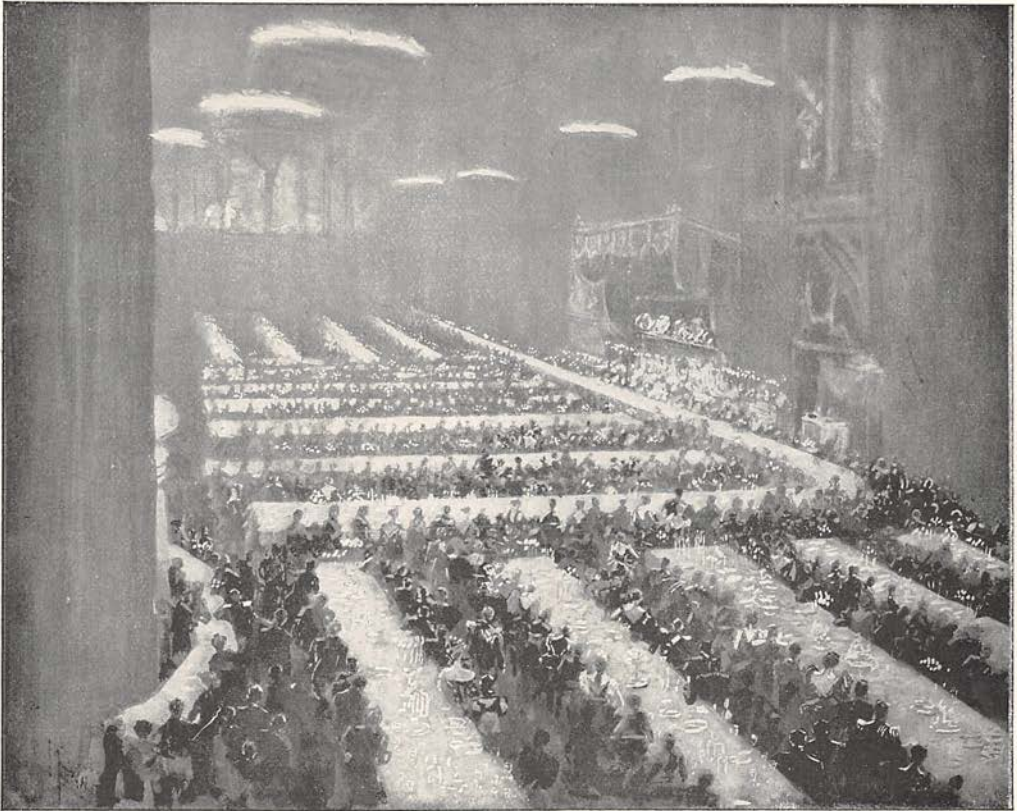
Long after the parade has passed, streets are chaotic, people everywhere blocking the crossings, spreading over the road, packed tight on the sidewalks. Cabbies are wrangling and roaring, busses stranded, hemmed in by frantic women. Policemen are distracted, and lose their heads completely. London is in the hands of a friendly mob.

In the meanwhile the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor has gone back to the Guildhall to prepare for the evening rites. And to those

bidden the Lord Mayor's dinner is a far more important event than the Lord Mayor's show.

It begins early. City banquets provide not only more to eat, but more time to eat it in, than any others I know of. After the Lord Mayor, in civic state, has received his guests in the library, the company marches into the great hall, where Gog and Magog preside in stony state; and now eyes are dazzled more than ever by the lights and the celebrities, and the display of costume, such as cannot often be seen in this age of black swallow-tails and white ties. Everywhere the scarlet and purple, the ermine and gold, of civic robes and military uniforms; everywhere the elegance of court dress and the sheen of women's silken gowns; everywhere decorations and medals and twinkling wands of office. The farthest tables are dimly seen through the mists that seem to have crept in from the street; the turtle-soup flows; there are streams of champagne; there is a baron of beef, that dish so Elizabethan in

sentiment and substance; there is an endless menu. On all sides it is gobble, gobble, gobble, as at Thackeray's memorable City Dinner. At such a table, in such company, Gargantua would have been at home. And when all is over, the toast-master rises in his glory and gorgeousness, and begs, on the part of «your royal highnesses, your excellencies, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen, pray silence for the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor of London, Mr. Richard Whittington,» who proposes, among other things, as he passes the loving-cup, the health of the Corporation of the City of London, which, root and branch, may it endure and flourish forever! And it is in this happy moment of repletion and mutual exchange of compliments that the Prime Minister makes the famous speech which is supposed to settle the affairs of state and empire, and which will be reported at length in every London paper to-morrow. And thus the great day ends in thick fumes of food and wine—the backbone of patriotism!



THE DINNER AT THE GUILDHALL.