

She would hold back no detail of this matter from a gossip-loving world. There would be a chancery suit, and in her affidavits she would accuse you and your father of mercenary motives; Mr. Haslam also, most likely. In fact, she believes he sought to marry you only to get possession of the Martock money; and she is not alone in that belief. Nearly all the world would share it with her."

This was tantamount to saying there was no beauty to be desired, no well-favoured loveliness or grace in the pale drooping girl before him. She caught his meaning more in his smile than in his words, and her cheeks flushed again with a transient pain, and before her eyes there flitted as in a vision Lady Martock's glorious figure, and the clear-cut beauty of her ivory face.

"Pardon me," continued Mr. Bruntwell, "if I am obliged to use frankness. I assure you, if I thought only of my own interest, I should not have urged my client to offer you these terms; a long law-suit would pay me better."

He smiled, and then rose because Cordelia did.

"Is it all said now?" she asked.

"I think so. When may I expect your answer, Miss Gwynne?"

"In a week, Mr. Bruntwell."

"That will be the thirtieth," he said, making a note of it in his pocket-book.

"Just so," she answered.

She seemed so calm and quiet, so resigned and cold, that he thought she had but little feeling, yet there was something in the sweet graciousness of her face which made him sorrowful for her.

"I trust, Miss Gwynne," he said, "you have observed that I have not insulted you with the offer of any share in this money. I have not supposed that any motive but consideration for your father and Mr. Haslam could actuate you."

"I had not noticed it," she answered; "I should never have thought it possible such a thing could be said to me."

She still stood, so there was no alternative for him but to go, and he went, feeling his last speech a failure.

When she was left alone, Cordelia looked around her in a bewildered way, her eyes full of a frightened agony, then as she heard steps approaching, she turned hastily to the window, opened it, and fled out into the November mist, heedless that she had no covering for her head.

It was an hour before she came back, shivering and white as the snow just falling on her sparsely.

END OF CHAPTER THE THIRTY FOURTH.

## THE LIVERY COMPANIES OF LONDON.



HERE was an Anglo-Saxon law that required all freemen over fourteen years of age to find sureties for their good behaviour. As a simple way of providing such sureties, ten families would agree to be mutually re-

sponsible, and would collect among themselves a common fund wherewith to pay (*gildan*) the fines which might be imposed for any offences. And that they might the better know and watch each other, they met from time to time to eat and drink at a common table.

In this bond lay the germ of the Saxon trading guilds, and of the great City companies of our own day. Of those Saxon trading guilds, the names of only three—the Steel-yard Merchants, the Knights, the Saddlers—have come down to us.

The Steel-yard Merchants settled in London before A.D. 967, dealt in grain, flax, cloth, and iron, and set on foot the Hanseatic League. They swore to remain

unwedded, and lived on their premises, guarding their wares from the marauders of the surrounding forests. Gradually the guild decayed, and in 1552 dissolved itself. But long before this happened many others, tracing back their origin to Saxon times, were flourishing in the City. We hear of the Mercers in 1172 holding the lands left by Gilbert à Becket, father of the great archbishop; and a few years later, in 1226, the Goldsmiths and Merchant Taylors, having chanced to quarrel, met on an appointed night, numbering, with their respective followers, 500 on either side, and fought manfully till separated by force.

The purposes and functions of these guilds were manifold. They supported, protected, and regulated trade, preserved trade secrets, and watched over the morals and manners of the citizens of London.

The master of each guild was, during his year of office, almost omnipotent; and though, by degrees, certain members of the craft were allowed to help him in managing its affairs, the brethren as a body were little consulted, and were expected to yield entire obedience.

Assisted by three wardens, chosen by himself, he searched for spurious goods, tested weights and measures, and fined and imprisoned dishonest traders. The Master of the Merchant Taylors, followed by his beadle armed with a silver yard wand, went through Smithfield during Bartholomew Fair, trying the ells used "within the said fayre." The fishmongers were not permitted to sell stale fish, nor the vintners bad



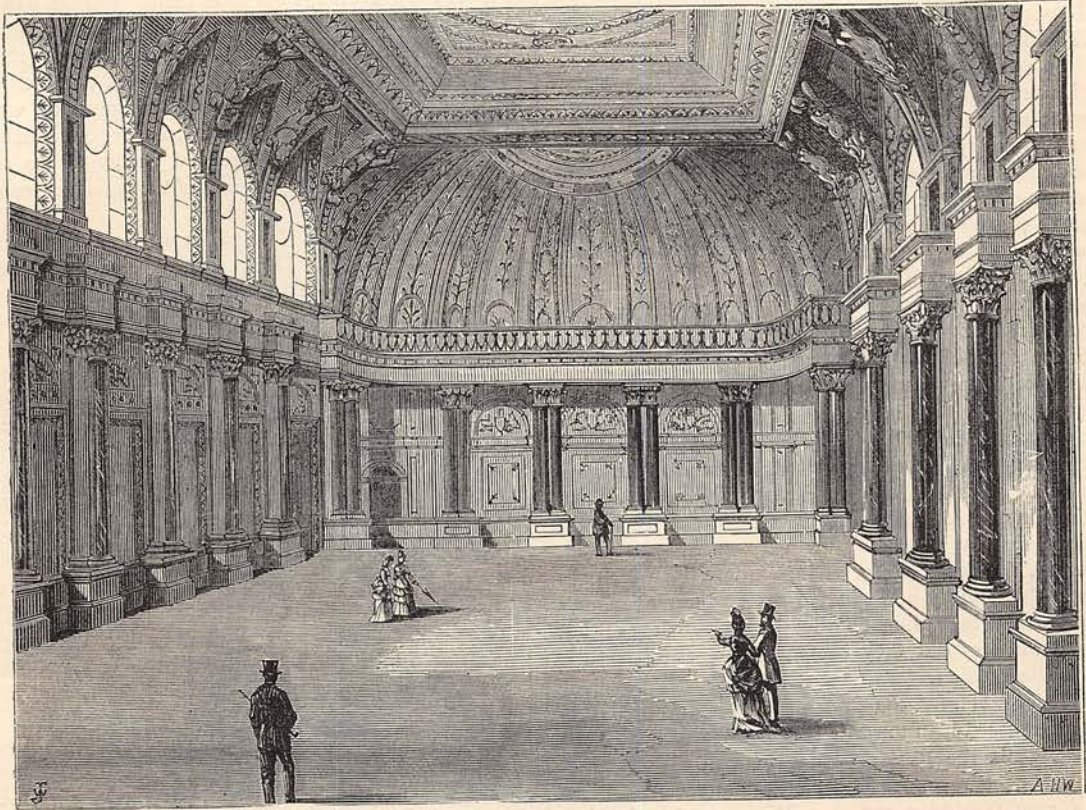
wine. A baker sending out adulterated bread might be drawn on a hurdle from the Guildhall to his own shop, with the condemned loaf hung round his neck ; and if he transgressed three times, had to forswear his trade for ever. A goldsmith, who had alloyed his metal overmuch, was once set in the stocks by Goldsmiths' Hall, and then cast into Newgate to die.

But the authority of the guild-master was by no means confined to trade concerns. If any of the guild left London without his leave, or contrary to his command, a sergeant was sent to bring the truant

them and their masters arbitrarily settled. They were bound at the age of fourteen, and having served their seven years, and being of age and good name, they were then sworn of the freedom and enrolled.

However galling all this guild control might be, there was no escape from it. If a man wanted to follow any craft in the City, or to enjoy any of the benefits of citizenship, he *must* belong to a guild.

And he had compensations for the restraint imposed on him; he bore a part in such grand City pageants as greeted Edward I.'s return from his victorious Scotch



INTERIOR OF DRAPERS' HALL.

back. Brawling and insolence were punished by fine ; perjury and debt by expulsion. On election and quarter days, and especially on the anniversaries of their patron saints, the brethren were expected to assemble in their distinctive liveries and go *en masse* to church ; the Skinners, on Corpus Christi Day, being accompanied by priests in rich vestments, bearing torches and chanting as they walked. There were, besides, services at St. Paul's, and as time went on state ceremonials, at all of which the liverymen, as they came to be called, were bound to appear unless "lawfully let."

The apprentices were still more strictly ruled. They might not carry weapons in the City ; their dress and length of hair were minutely regulated, any disorderly conduct severely chastised, and all disputes between

campaign. He helped to swell the coronation trains to Westminster ; and from the time when the third Edward enrolled himself as a Linen Armourer, or Merchant Taylor, he could generally claim kings and princes as his fellow-liverymen.

But the dignity of the great guilds rested on surer grounds than their presence at royal shows, or the royal names included in their lists. Special charters, granted by Edward III., had confirmed and increased their ancient privileges ; and now, under their changed name of Livery Companies, they held in their hands all the power and most of the wealth of London. For several centuries the Common Council consisted entirely of their representatives, and the Court of Aldermen of their chiefs (in earlier times styled aldermen), who yearly elected from among themselves



the Lord Mayor, "Master of all the Companies," and veritably master throughout the City.

For those too among the London craftsmen who loved convivial meetings, there were the great feasts in the noble old halls, to which, on high days, wives, sisters, and sweethearts were often bidden. Then the board groaned under capons, bucks, and barons of beef; the loving-cup went freely round, and once a year the new Master sat at the high table, crowned with a gay garland; while minstrels played in the gallery, or the London parish clerks acted a miracle or mystery play. There were Mayings too in Greenwich Park, and stately barge processions down the Thames to instal in turn each new Lord Mayor at Guildhall.

So even the most prosperous trader gained both in pleasure and importance by belonging to one of the great companies; while, if he should chance to fall into adversity, he might look to receiving a pension or finding a shelter in some alms-house supported by the common moneys. Death itself was not allowed to break the tie which bound the members of a guild together. They were carried to their graves under a gorgeous state pall, and followed by a long line of brethren. And the chaplain, while praying by name for every living member, did not neglect to say masses for the souls of those who had passed away. Large sums of money were often left by will to provide in perpetuity for such masses, the residue to be spent on some specified charity, or laid out in banquets, or such other ways as might seem fit to the officers of the companies. And as these legacies were frequently in land, which increased enormously in value, the wealth of the companies by degrees grew very great—too great, indeed, for their safety. Kings might be willing to enter their ranks, and glad to secure their chaplain's prayers by bestowing on them fresh privileges; but none the less did they cast greedy eyes upon their well-filled coffers.

Henry VIII. led the first attack by wringing from them a forced loan towards the expenses of his Scotch wars, while the Reformation gave him a pretext for claiming the revenues hitherto faithfully expended on the now forbidden masses. With much ado they came to terms with him, and if they lost a good deal, they obtained at least many fine conventual buildings and noblemen's mansions, easily transformed to halls and chapels with the needful surroundings of buttery, brewery, and bake-house.

Elizabeth made them contribute more or less willingly to the American exploring expeditions, the building of the Royal Exchange, and the magnificent masques in which she took delight. But they showed no backwardness when the Spanish Armada threatened English shores, and she called on them for help. With eager zeal they raised and equipped 10,000 men, and furnished six-and-thirty ships; and when somewhat later she required them to supply from among their numbers a standing force for the protection of the City, 3,000 men, partly musketeers and partly pike-men, were soon ready to be reviewed by her in Greenwich Park, and did no small credit to their City training.

To another wish of hers the companies proved less compliant. Disregarding the rights of the Leather-sellers, she granted a patent to one of her courtiers, giving him authority to "search and seal" all the leather throughout England. At once the whole craft rose to resist the encroachment, and the queen wisely yielded to their protest.

But evil days were now coming. James I. and Charles I. exacted from them large sums of money; and when the Commons became masters of London they fared still worse. The massive plate which had long adorned their buffets had to be sold or pawned to meet the great demands upon them. Puritan hands tore down and defaced the tapestry hangings, and the portraits of former benefactors, which embellished their halls, and shattered the stained windows emblazoned with heraldic devices. The halls themselves were converted into barracks, public offices, or conventicles, and the lofty oaken roofs echoed no longer to the minstrel's song, but to the ring of arms, or the nasal twang of some favourite preacher.

But the life in these City guilds was too vigorous to be easily destroyed. During the Protectorate they rallied, and were able to welcome back their exiled king with costly gifts and entertainments. He ill requited their loyalty. They were soon forced to surrender their old charters, and to content themselves with others which greatly curtailed their powers, and brought them completely under the control of the Crown. Another and a worse blow followed. The Great Fire destroyed many of their halls and archives, and left much of their property in ashes. Once again, however, they rose above their calamities. They recovered their melted plate from among the charred and smoking ruins, and sold it as so much weight of silver. By subscriptions among the brethren the halls were speedily rebuilt, and William and Mary's reign saw restored to them their ancient privileges, and the lands and tenements of which the Stuarts had despoiled them.

Since then their history has been one of unbroken, uneventful prosperity. Amongst them twelve, not always the oldest or the richest, have long stood out pre-eminent. They alone count royal personages among their members and entertain crowned heads, and on all occasions of ceremony they take rank in the following order:—Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Merchant Taylors, Skinners, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners, Clothworkers.

Their civic authority has indeed died out, but many of their old customs and traditions survive still. Each company has its own church, to which, on certain days, the brethren go together all habited in their furred gowns. Each has its chaplain, who prays for its prosperity; while the money once devoted to masses for the dead now finds a better use in supporting University scholarships and exhibitions.

The master of a City company has still, in his own sphere, an absolute rule; and though he does not exercise the same close supervision over trade wares and dealings, some traces of the ancient regulations



remain in the Fishmongers' right to destroy bad fish in Billingsgate, and the yearly trial of the pyx at Goldsmiths' Hall, where the fresh coinage brought from the Mint is tested, and all articles of gold and silver made in London are assayed and stamped. The members of a guild may now follow any calling; but apprentices are still sometimes bound to their master's trade, though more often the binding is merely nominal, serving as one form of entrance into the guild.

If they no longer fulfil their original ends, the City companies still have a worthy part to play, and play it worthily. As patrons of livings, as governing bodies of great schools, like Merchant Taylors', St. Paul's (the last left by Dean Colet, more than three centuries ago, in the hands of the Mercers), as trustees of many smaller schools scattered over the country, they discharge their grave responsibilities always honestly and carefully, and generally wisely. The affairs and properties of the several companies are entrusted to Courts of Assistants, picked members of the Livery, from among whom the masters and wardens are annually appointed. Forming themselves into distinct committees, the "members of Court," for the most part experienced professional or business men, apply themselves earnestly to their allotted work, whether it be dispensing charities, overlooking schools, or

managing estates, with a single-minded desire to promote the welfare of their guild and of the institutions dependent on it. The fee they receive is rarely large enough to repay them at all adequately for the time they spare from their own concerns. They have no personal interest whatever in saving or spending the company's money, and jealous care is taken to prevent any one among them from using undue influence for the advancement of any personal *protégé*.

And the larger portion of their finances is spent in charity, wider and more discriminating than any of which their guild forefathers ever dreamt. In splendid subscriptions to the great London hospitals and infirmaries, in founding and supporting Convalescent Homes, in bountifully relieving the wide-spread misery brought about by famine, warfare, and shipwreck, the great companies, one and all, set a noble example.

Moreover, there is even now a scheme afloat which will revive, and in a better shape, something of their old influence over the crafts of England. Before many years are over a great college for technical trade education will probably be built and endowed in London, with offshoots all over the country, maintained entirely by the Livery Companies of London.

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## THE TABLES TURNED.



AM not sure that it redounds much to our credit. I will tell it, however, as a warning."

So our guest answered an inquiry made by a young and, it must be confessed, somewhat conceited member of the little party gathered together one winter evening round our dining-table.

"Hang the credit!" that person replied. He was rather uplifted, for he thought he had that evening won distinction in the sight of a lovely pair of eyes, then wasting their sweetness in the drawing-room. The owner of the lovely eyes had been a widow for some years; she was rich, elegant, and clever. There was a humorous wrinkling about the mouth of our middle-aged guest, as he answered—

"Hang the credit! So I can say now with a light heart. Then the credit was of more importance to me. However, you shall judge. You have heard," he went on, turning to the gentleman who headed the table, "that in the early days of our settlement we were a wild lot. Large fortunes had been made by the first settlers; and it got abroad at home that gold was to be had simply for the asking. Adventurers poured in. The native war brought in adventurers of another kind—men whose lives had been played out in the old country, and who were ready for any kind of devilry. Oh! I can assure you there was at times a singular collection in the settlement. I could tell you one or two tales that would surprise you. This, however"—

turning to the person whose remark had provoked his tale—"is not of so desperate a character."

You must understand that at the time of which I speak—things are much changed now—we had neither library, nor theatre, nor concert-room, and were driven now and then to queer devices for killing the time. Some few of us took up with practical jests, but after a time even these palled. Every one in our community became so keen and wide-awake, that the most artfully constructed scheme broke down. If it did succeed, on the other hand, the vengeance taken was so dire as to be alarming. We were sorely in need of a patient butt.

It happened that, at this time, a young solicitor whom fortune had not favoured at home, taking it into his head that competition was slaying his talent, determined to try his fortune amongst us. He was certain—and he was not far wrong—that in such a community causes for litigation would abound.

He was slightly acquainted with one of my friends, and wrote to him of his intention, asking him at the same time to be so kind as—in the poor fellow's own words—"just to let people know, you know, that I am coming."

The letter was shown about, and that same evening my friend and I, with two or three others whom we had let into our secret, went out together, armed with large pieces of chalk. In the morning there was much questioning in the community, for on every bit of