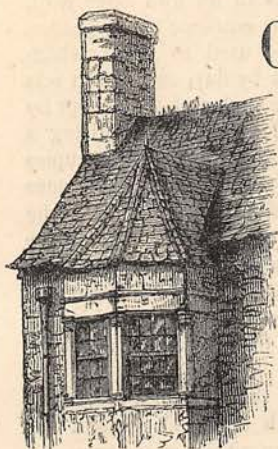


IMPROVED COMMON LODGING-HOUSES: TWO VISITS.



COMMON LODGING-HOUSES are not desirable places to live in, and the lodgers are not the most exemplary characters to be found in the world; but we would fain hope that neither the houses nor those who live in them are so utterly bad as they have been represented. Every one knows that all houses of this description are placed under police supervision, and that the sanitary laws and regulations, which every lodging-house keeper must observe,

secure good drainage, and a certain amount of ventilation and cleanliness. But it may not be generally known that a great improvement has been made in many of these houses by gentlemen whose sympathy for the working, struggling masses of this great City is of a very practical kind.

I invite all those who are interested in such matters to accompany me on an imaginary visit to one or two of these improved lodging-houses. In one of the dimly-lighted streets which branch out of High Holborn there are four gas-lamps, on one of which is inscribed the word "Chambers." The house opposite is registered as a common lodging-house. We knock at the door, which at once opens of its own accord, or seems to do so. I am well known in this house, therefore without further ceremony we will walk down into the kitchen, where we find a dozen men seated at one of the tables, partaking of the "cup which cheers but does not inebriate." Three of them are clerks, one is a law reporter, and the rest are bricklayers. That man who is sitting in the corner half asleep is the deputy, who gets up at four o'clock in the morning, lights the fires, "washes up" the dirty crockery, makes up the sixty beds, keeps every room tidy, attends to the kitchen all day, and goes to bed between ten and eleven.

Our appearance scarcely interrupts the conversation, which is a very animated one; for the subject is politics, and political feeling runs very high in this establishment. We leave the kitchen and go into the lavatory, which is a very spacious apartment plentifully supplied with water, with a long row of basins under the taps. We now ascend, and enter the largest dormitory in the house, which contains sixteen beds, which stand about three feet apart from each other, and look very neat and clean. The rooms are lofty and well ventilated.

Our inspection of the dormitories being at an end, we walk down-stairs and enter the coffee-room. Why it should be called by that name I cannot tell, for it is very rarely used for the purpose which the name implies. This room is very large and provided with

comfortable seats all round the apartment, which remind us of the sitting accommodation provided in the saloon of an oceanic steamer. Under this extensive settee are lockers, in which the lodgers "stow away" their provisions. Each locker is numbered the same as the beds, and as there are sixty-eight beds there is the same number of lockers. The walls are adorned with handsome pictures, and golden-framed illuminated mottoes, such as "God Bless our Home," "Welcome," "God is our only Hope," &c.

The library, which consists of two or three hundred volumes of good literature, is open every evening at five o'clock. Two large bagatelle-boards and four tables occupy the floor of the room; and we count thirty-six men who are variously engaged. That pale young gentleman, who is occupying two chairs, is a Yankee, born and reared in the State of Maine. He came over to the Exhibition in Paris to represent a New York commercial paper, which collapsed a short time after he arrived in the gay city, and he to a certain extent collapsed with it. He is brimful of Yankee notions, a few of which he has tried in London; but the English people are too slow for him, and he is now, to use his own language, "putting in his best licks" to raise sufficient money to take him home. By the relation of an American story, see how he excites the wonderment of that tall slim fellow, who is an hotel waiter, and who has been patiently waiting for a situation for the last six months! That little man, with the long thin face, and high narrow forehead, is the poet of the establishment. His faith in his own poetic genius is strong, and he firmly believes that he will yet outshine Tennyson, of whom he thinks very little as a poet.

His pen is in his hand, and he is at this moment "making the world in general step along to tune and time." It will be a good thing for himself, and his family whom he has left behind in Dublin, if he be as fortunate as "Tom, the farmer's son," who was "going for a poet," but who finally

"Struck the opinion that poetry didn't pay,
And turned the guns of his genius and fired them another way."

You want to know who those foreign-looking gentlemen are, who are playing draughts. One is an Armenian, who is about to return to his own country as a medical missionary; the other is an M.D., from New York State, who has been in this country for nearly a year, and who hopes soon to return with an English diploma. That long-bearded young man, who seems interested in the game, once occupied a very good position in the commercial world; but he became a victim to intemperance, which dragged him down to an extreme state of poverty and degradation; for nine months he has been a total abstainer, and he is struggling hard to gain his former position. The life and prospects of that venerable-looking gentleman who is cleaning his spectacles have been blighted by

the same curse, and he thinks it is almost too late to mend. He is endowed with a fine, rich voice, and sings with great taste and feeling the "auld Scotch sangs," and his rendering of "Jolly Nose," while his own nasal development seems to glow with a fervent heat, is irresistible. Yes, there are a few black sheep in this establishment, but they cannot remain here unless they keep within bounds. There are also one or two mysterious characters of respectable appearance, but the majority are hard-working men, who can afford to pay three shillings per week for their lodgings, and who had rather live in an establishment like this, where they can cook their own victuals, and spend a social evening after the labours of the day, than take a private apartment for the same money, and be deprived of the advantages which a house like this affords.

But there are thousands and tens of thousands of working men in London, and men out of work, who cannot afford to pay three shillings per week for their lodgings, and who cannot pay a week in advance, consequently a house like this is closed against them, for no "night lodgers" are allowed here. This fact brings us to the common lodging-house proper; for although this is registered as such, the name does not fairly apply.

We will therefore bid good-bye to our friends of the coffee-room. As we stand in the passage, talking with the superintendent, we hear the rich, powerful voice of our venerable friend, who is singing with great taste and feeling, "My Ain Fireside," and as that good old song dies away on our ears, we heartily wish that the singer and each one of his appreciative audience may soon be cheered, and warmed, by the "sweet bonny blink of his *ain* fireside."

No man need walk the streets of London all night who has fourpence in his pocket. "Fourpenny doss-houses," as they are commonly termed, are plentiful. I am going to take you to one which has been reclaimed from its use as a bad lodging-house, and made into the best of its kind in London. It is known to hundreds by the name of the "Farm-house in the Mint." This must not be confounded with the Mint from whence issues the coinage of the kingdom. London has another Mint in the Borough of Southwark, so called from a "Mint of coinage" having existed there in the time of Henry VIII., hard by the magnificent mansion of the king's brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk, called Suffolk Place, and Tower Hill. Queen Mary gave the Mint property to the Archbishop of York, who sold it in 1557, when a great number of mean dwellings were erected on the estate; and soon after it became an asylum for debtors, coiners, and vagabonds, felons, fugitives, and outlaws. It was the haunt of such heroes as Jack Sheppard and Jonathan Wild, whose histories train thieves at the present day. When officers of justice were sent here, they were jumped on to suffocation, or thrown into sewers; and here is said to have occurred the first case of Asiatic cholera in London. "There are many streets, alleys, and wretched tenements in the Mint," says one author on the curiosities of London, "still inhabited by an

indigent and profligate population, also 'lodgings for travellers;' a few of the old houses remain." The "Farm-house" is one of them. It is built in the Elizabethan style, and stands in its own open yard, with a garden in front. At the entrance to the garden from the street an old shed used to stand, which housed some seventy persons by day, and over it was a dark and airless loft, where twelve of them slept by night. A large three-storied building, comprising a kitchen, a mission-room, and a dormitory, occupies the site of the old shed. Had we visited this house over twenty years ago we should have needed the assistance of more than one police officer; but there is no danger now, therefore we will go into the kitchen at once. This kitchen presents a very different appearance to the one which we have already visited—first in its size, and secondly in the number and character of its occupants.

It is four times the size of the first, on a level with the street; well lighted, with tables all around the room, at which over eighty can sit down at once. All those who think that men who earn from twelve shillings to a pound per week can dress in broadcloth, and are skilled in all the rules of parlour etiquette, and are the beloved disciples of Mrs. General on account of their elegant pronounciation of "prunes, prism, and potatoes;" and that lodging-house keepers can supply good beds, Brussel-carpeted rooms, black cooks, and white-chokered, dress-coated waiters, for the small sum of fourpence per night for each lodger, had better not look upon this scene, or we shall never hear the last of the wretchedness of common lodging-houses, and the extreme depravity of the lodgers. Every man is his own cook in this establishment. The half-circle that is now formed round the fire is composed of men of rough exterior, who address each other in language not the most refined, and who are now attending to the cooking of Yarmouth bloaters, mutton chops, beef steak, liver and bacon, while others are toasting bread. The group of men who occupy the middle of the room, and who are looking down at the floor with sympathetic countenances, are prescribing different remedies for "Old Mow," and wondering whether he has been poisoned, and if so, what will be the best emetic to administer. One or two are of opinion that he ought to be put out of his misery, but not one of them has the heart to do it. We naturally feel interested, and join the group, to find that "Old Mow" is a fine specimen of the feline tribe. The poor animal is breathing with great difficulty. We are told that it has been suffering like that for two days, and that "Old Mow" was a cat in a hundred; that it was a splendid mouser; that such a thing as a rat had never been seen since it came about the place; and that it was distinguished for its honesty. But the variety of subjects which engage the conversational powers of the fifty or sixty men who are seated at their evening meal, and the determined effort which is made by each one to be heard, and the whole-souled profanity in which a few of the speakers indulge—as the superintendent is not present—draw your attention from "Old Mow," and you want to

know what these men are, and what they do for a living. Most of them live by hard and honest labour; the majority are water-side labourers, a few of whom are on strike. The rest are boot-blacks, porters, canvassers, skilled mechanics; then there are two or three who are generally occupied in seeking work, and never find it, and one or two reduced gentlemen. That old man in the corner who is stirring his tea with the head of his walking-cane was, metaphorically, born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He who sits on his right hand, by the same rule which led the collegians to look up to Mr. Dorrit as the Father of the Marshalsea, ought to be recognised as the Father of the "Farm-house." He has lived here twenty-eight years, and every one in the Mint knows old "Fiddler Jack."

In an adjacent building there is a reading-room, which contains a good library, and the daily and weekly papers are taken in; and a few gather together every evening to talk politics, criticise the Government, and set the nation to rights. Two or three meetings of an entertaining character are held every week in the mission-room in connection with "The Mint Temperance and Band of Hope Societies." We heard one of the lodgers say that he had rather go there than to the South London Music Hall, because there was better singing in the mission-room, and the readings and recitations were well given. Every Sunday evening divine service is held in this room. I had the privilege of attending a short time ago, when I saw a number of the lodgers, and heard the principal promoter of this improved lodging-house give a manly and practical address. But men *have* been reclaimed here, who have been outcasts from society, whose evil habits have separated them from their families; and they have come to this house, wretched, miserable, and despairing, and a helping hand has been held out

to them, and they have given up their evil habits, and been restored to all that makes life precious, and are at this moment respectable members of society.

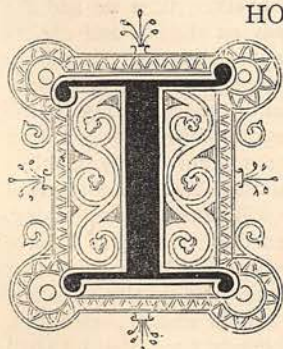
But we must bring our visit to a close. Before we do so, we will enter the largest bed-room in this establishment. It is registered to hold thirty beds, and contains twenty-eight. The counterpanes are not so handsome as those we saw on our first visit, but the sheets present a more snowy appearance, and look as though they had been washed in the country and dried on hedges, instead of in the back yard of a City laundry. We have not time to visit all the bed-rooms, but they are as lofty and as well ventilated as the one in which we now stand, the next largest being registered to hold eleven beds, and the smallest five, and the whole establishment provides sleeping accommodation for seventy-nine persons. This house, from the time of its renovation and improvement, has been placed under efficient superintendence, and is self-supporting, so that all who live here can do so with a feeling of perfect independence.

An old inhabitant of the Mint said to me the other day, pointing to the "Farm-house," "That improved lodging-house has done more good round here than all the preaching." A day or two after, I was standing opposite the handsome "Globe Coffee-tavern" in Drury Lane, when I heard one man say to another, "That coffee-tavern has done more good in old Drury since it was opened than all the temperance societies put together." Both men failed to recognise the fact that these improvements were the natural outcome of preaching and the temperance reform; and if we realise the fact that Gospel preaching and the temperance movement will never lay complete hold of the masses until the "Farm-houses," lodgings, and coffee-taverns are multiplied, then our common lodging-house visitation will not have been in vain.

G. E. M.



HOW TO MAKE JELLIES CLEAR AND BRIGHT.



TWANT you to tell me how to make jelly," said Mrs. Thompson, as we started one morning for a walk together, a few weeks ago. "We are going to have a few friends next week, and I think cook and I, between us, can manage everything but the jellies and creams. Cook says she can make them quite

well, but as a matter of fact she has never yet produced a jelly that was perfectly bright and clear. Her sweets taste very good, but they do not look as they should, and that tells very much against them."

"You need not be astonished at her failure," said I. "There are a great many cooks who are not quite up to the mark in that one particular. Success in making jelly depends upon careful attention to three or four small details, and so many people have a general idea of how jelly is to be made, but are a little uncertain as to these details. If you like I will describe the process of making jelly, from the beginning, as minutely as if I thought you knew nothing at all on the subject.

"The first consideration is the stock. Supposing you wanted a quart of jelly—you would need for that two calves' feet. The stock would have to be made the day before the jelly was, and the jelly would need time to stiffen after it was made, so of course you will understand that jelly cannot be made at half an hour's