

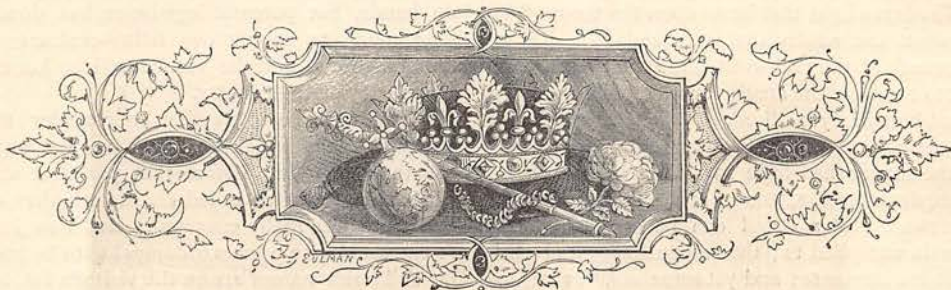
followed Mrs. Martin down-stairs—a glance that took in every feature of his face and detail of his dress from head to foot. Then he turned round suddenly and re-entered his room, banging the door after him.

“That fellow must be a lunatic,” Harry thought as he left the house. “I hope he’s not dangerous, and won’t take to firing his revolver through the ceiling some night.”

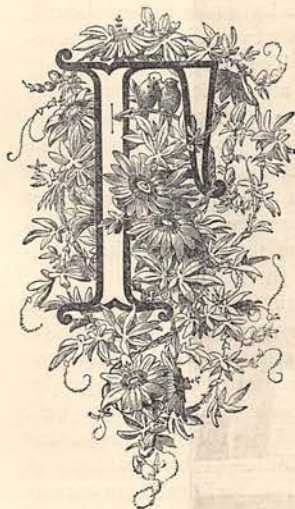
The single gentleman meantime returned to his amusement.

“That stranger ain’t a genius,” he said reflectively, “but he don’t look exactly like a fool, either. I guess I’ll have a shot at him, anyhow.” And with that charitable resolution the eccentric tenant of Mr. Martin’s drawing-rooms continued his pistol practice.

END OF CHAPTER THE SIXTH.



ENGLAND AS IT IS.



FROM the days of the Grecian philosopher to those of the Scottish poet it has been considered desirable, if difficult, to know ourselves. “To see ourselves as others see us,” to know what our friends think of us and what they say about us, is the aspiration of not a few. Yet we do not find that so many of our fellow-countrymen and women take the same lively interest in their surroundings, nor possess the desire to be-

come acquainted with the ways and means by which their native land has risen to, and by which they all, in a general way, hope she will remain in, the proud position she occupies. We know, or think we know, a great deal about government, national and local. We are, thanks to the press, kept *au courant* with the events of the day. We know a great deal that is going on, but as to the reasons *why* it goes on, *how* it goes on, and *how far it may go on*, we are confessedly ignorant. We hear of great centres of industry, of strikes, and are vaguely conscious that coal and iron, and cotton goods, are produced in immense quantities in our islands somewhere. We hear of breaking banks and of successful ventures—of large landowners and shipowners, of aristocrats and the typical “working man,” but what do we know of the innumerable ties which bind class to class—the landlord to the miner, the peasant to the squire? The great business, pleasure, or industry of the country goes on almost unheeded by many of us. The endless bands of brain-power rotate ceaselessly overhead and around us as

unheeded as the message which flashes over the wire as we walk through our busy streets. We pass on, unheeding all the clattering bands which stretch from the great shaft of existence, and we never care to inquire whence comes the motive-power which keeps us going as we are.

England has lately been presented to us as it actually exists.* Hitherto, in too many cases we have had the dry bones of abstract statements served up to us, without any attempt to satisfy us with the invigorating refreshment of life. Of many important changes we may be ignorant, or only obtain a glimpse of them through Parliamentary Reports or Returns. We are always changing, and any work which, here in England, shows one half of us how the other half lives and moves, confers a benefit upon us which it is not easy to estimate to the full. With such a work, then, for our authority, we may touch upon some of the topics most interesting to the general reader.

As a twig may be said to typify a tree, so the English village may be said to be a type of the nation, containing in itself the various elements—the lords spiritual, temporal, and the “commons.” The clergyman, the squire, and the tenantry represent all the estates of the realm, and it is fit that we glance at ourselves as reflected in the English village life around us. Even here at the very outset we have a proof that isolation, even in the remote village, is non-existent.

Each individual in a village is an element in the great framework of the Constitution, and, indirectly, in society a power; and from the consideration of this we may ascend to the landlord—the great owner and responsible holder of so many hundred acres of the county in which he was born, or perhaps to which he was, till he came into possession, a stranger. The

* “England: her Polity, People, and Pursuits.” By T. H. S. Escott, Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.

clergyman, we know, has an ever-varying round of duty, if he properly discharge the labours of his calling; and the responsibilities of the squire are in their way equally heavy. How little do people consider this! How often do we wish to be what we are not! If we were only So-and-So how we should enjoy ourselves! But little do the majority of people know, or if they do know, appreciate, the cares of a large landowner. From the Queen downwards every lord of many acres has nearly sufficient to occupy the greater part of the day. "The fierce light that beats upon the throne" is reflected upon the nobles that surround it, and it is from ignorance of the real work done that we are at times apt to condemn the apathy or want of liberality of some great hereditary landlord.

From ten o'clock, when his letters are opened, the lord of the manor has little rest till late afternoon. Estates require attention, tenants request loans, or time, or interviews. Not a detail can be escaped, not a letter remain unreplyed to; the responsibility and real hard work are immense; and yet some say, "as lazy as a lord!" Accounts of repairs, wages, and a most varied expenditure for labour, or receipts from mines or other sources, have all to be audited and checked, as well as household accounts, if a landowner would know how he stands before the world. From the wealthy landlord and employer of labour we may glance at the working classes of this great country, and see how far they deserve the sympathy which is freely extended to them. Their numbers alone are formidable. A grand total of nearly seventeen millions is a goodly array of figures representing the "working classes," as they are generally understood—though we contend that in hundreds of instances the real working—hard-working—class in a parish may be chosen from the professional as much as from the labouring population.

But be this as it may, we cannot estimate the working men unless we mix with them and view their surroundings. Too often, alas! they are drunken and brutal, but we venture to assert that the contrary is much oftener the case. In this as in other instances, we, who are not obliged to do actual hand-work for our living, are scarcely fair judges of the working man, and we generalise very much. Between the worker of the metropolis and of the country there is a great difference, particularly in religious matters, for the provincial working men leaders certainly are identified more or less with religious belief. On the other hand, the London man is perhaps the best "all round," though he is far behind his provincial mate in matters of organisation, and, owing to the great difficulty of getting at all the working men in the metropolis quickly, any combined co-operation amongst them as a body has never proved the success it has in provincial towns. One good feature which is common to all is the improvement in the existing relations between employers and employed. True, we have strikes to deplore; but these are not now accompanied by outrages which made these combinations so formidable before the Unions took the place of Secret Societies. The improvements that have been made in the manufacturing and mining districts by careful legislation

will bear fruit in the next generation. The Factory Acts have acted as great blessings to all classes of workers, and they regulate the age of the worker, and the amount of work to be done by him or her at that particular age. As to the moral benefits conferred by the Acts, there can be no question, though there is still much to be done by the operatives themselves to improve their social and moral condition. Things in the Black Country look almost as gloomy as the name would imply; overcrowding and crime very frequently join hands, but parental legislation has done and is doing much to benefit our fellow-creatures in the mining districts, and the results will be beneficial to the industry of the country.

It will here be interesting to consider the educational facilities which we now have, and which date from the year 1870. Before that period it was more or less a matter of so-called chance whether a lowly-born youth was really educated. But now inspectors are entrusted with powers to compel us to be instructed. Our children's names are on the visitor's list, and they must be sent to school. We have now School Boards in all directions, and certainly two-thirds of the population are being educated. The Boards have plenary powers, and can make the attendance compulsory or permissive at will. They can regulate what extra subjects or what religious teaching shall be inculcated. In some places there is a strong objection to religious teaching in Board Schools. In London the matter is compromised. Eighty-three per cent. of the School Boards have sanctioned the reading and simple undenominational teaching of the Bible.

It is satisfactory to learn that crime has diminished since education has become universal; and yet it is a curious fact that the actual criminal class is more profoundly ignorant than before, for in 1874 only 3·7 per cent. of those committed could read and write well, whereas in previous years (1836—1848) the proportion was 9 per cent. The constitution of the great army of criminals is very curious. It is recruited from various classes, so to speak—the hereditary, the unwilling, and those who are driven to sin, on whom crime is thrust. The rank and file of this great army (the pickpocket and the area sneak), up to the "crack" burglar or "general" of the profession, are wonderfully clever in their vicious walks. In planning a robbery and boldly executing it much talent is wasted, and the daring displayed in open-day thieving, if turned into a legitimate channel, might have worked wonders. Then there are receivers, who are rarely captured, and the "catspaws," who generally burn their fingers. There are some 40,000 thieves, &c., continually at large, and about 23,000 people are annually apprehended, of whom about 14,000 are committed for trial. But extensive as the system of crime is, the police can and do encompass it. All these criminals are known, and the Criminal Register at the Home Office is handy for identification. Besides these "habituals," in this Record there are many who have fallen into crime from poverty or from a desire to live beyond their means. Then we have the latest "genteel" type—the director or other officer—a gentleman of polished manners and unblemished antecedents, who

has only made a few trifling errors in account, and lived upon systematic robbery, to the eventual ruin of hundreds who trusted him. These are the "first-class misdemeanants," who have every luxury in prison, and who possess the inestimable advantage of being "gentlemen," instead of being of the "lower classes," in crime.

We spoke of police just now. Every morning reports are received in Scotland Yard from all out-stations. All these are printed and distributed in light carts, and thus the "information is received" by all constables, to whom the reports are read before they go on duty. In serious cases telegrams are despatched, detectives are employed, and in cases of robbery the astute policeman can detect the handiwork of an old acquaintance. The wire carries the news to all whom it may concern in the "Force," and the culprit is pounced upon before long. We have vastly improved lately. The eyes of the law, unlike the telegraph offices, are now open all night. Since Benson turned "evidence" a superior officer is always on duty. This officer is able to communicate in most European tongues, and has various powers entrusted to him. A Reward Fund is also established, so the small and great sums paid by grateful clients are distributed without giving rise to comparisons, which are proverbially odious, and no dishonesty can now enter into dealings with the public.

The culprit, when apprehended, is tried and sentenced to penal servitude or hard labour. In the former case he goes to a convict prison—in the latter, to Coldbath Fields, or other such prison. The hardest labour at Clerkenwell now is oakum-picking, but the treadmill is being re-erected. All prisons are now under the Home Office, and worked on a uniform system, so a decided advantage in the reduction of expenditure alone has been the result of this concentration.

There are one or two points to be touched upon which, though we have left them till the last, are perhaps the most important. Unfortunately our space will not admit of more than a glance at them. Our British views of life have of late years undergone a considerable change. The need, or supposed need, of annual Continental travel has affected, in a considerable degree, those who indulge in it; and as the nation is but an aggregate of households, we find ourselves more tolerant of foreign manners and customs. What our grandfathers denominated "kickshaws" are now looked upon as fashionable French dishes. Furthermore, we pass our time in visiting. Clubs abound, "Chambers" are numerous. The old domestic squire, who only occasionally left home to take his son to London or Eton, is seldom to be met.

The domestic life of England has undergone a complete alteration. Change, a hurrying to and fro, is the great object of modern life. Society moves, and the dweller in society must go with it, and though the

members move and the scenes are perpetually changed, the same faces, the same routine, the same "daily round and common task," are to be found wherever society's votaries most do congregate. We are not so domestic as we were, by any means. We will not here enter upon certain questions relative to the influence of the present state of things upon our children, nor touch upon the relations existing between married couples. We are glad to think and believe that England in these respects can still, let our detractors say what they may, hold up her head high above the rest of Europe in the purity of her hearths, hearts, and homes. Feminine independence is certainly rearing its head; the ladies seek for rights and privileges they did not formerly desire. But it should not be forgotten that so far as they seek business equality with men they run the risk of losing, not the respect, we trust, but the outward deference which a gentleman should always pay, and pay spontaneously, to a lady. The constant rubbing of shoulders in a crowd is apt to wear away the gloss from a garment; it may have a similar effect on our manners if ladies are to struggle in the battle of life with or against the sterner sex. Woman's place is at home, where by her example she can purify and elevate the man who enters it fresh from the contamination of a rough world. Women make nations what they are, for good or for evil; and are not nations the aggregate of households? We are far from saying that women should not work, or join in certain pursuits fitting for their sex; but we think that some champions for "women's rights" are going beyond the necessity of the case.

English society, we are told, is composed of three elements:—the aristocratic, the democratic, and the plutocratic. The first is the basis of the structure, but the line formerly so distinctly drawn is fast being overstepped, and is consequently fading away. Sons of dukes are in trade, high birth is uniting with commoners' wealth to their mutual advantage; territorial grandees are becoming merchant-princes; and commercial magnates are now-a-days country gentlemen. Our aristocratic youth are no longer the "do-nothings" which the slang term "swell" once implied. Your true "swell" is to-day as hard a worker—aye, frequently a much harder worker than the "working man." We have few idle sons of nobility. They are statesmen in embryo, painters, authors, Members of Parliament, or perhaps conscientious directors of public enterprises. And is not this a considerable social advance upon the "exquisite" of a former age or the "swell" of a later period, who is now more likely to be found in a far lower stratum of society?

Here, then, for the present we lay aside our pen, having indicated some of the many ways by which our readers may, if they please, proceed to a more complete study of their fellow-countrymen as they appear in Mr. Escott's interesting pages.