And then as to watering your plants: always have standing in your greenhouse a large canful of water, so that when you want to use it—which, by the way, we know, is not so very often in the winter months —it may be of the same temperature as the house. Set your plants that are in bloom in good prominent positions, so as to give as good an effect as you can.

Avoid, however, having one long row of large and shrubby plants all of a uniform height; there is a formality in this; but have among your large plants a few smaller and choice ones, either elevated on a small block of wood, or stood upon another flower-pot of its own size placed bottom upwards. And, as far as you can, keep the plants of any particular kind or class together.

The buds on our camellias will be beginning to swell. Let them have plenty of air, and very little water. It is very often a little difficult to manage camellias with thorough success in a house such as that we are supposed to be managing, and devoted to a general collection of miscellaneous plants. All that camellias, as a rule, just now require in the way of water is a very little of it, and that little only at stated times and intervals. The buds, however, would fall if water were not given. As it appears to be a plant that lives by rule, have a day, perhaps once a week, on which to give it only a slight moistening. Fire-heat it is decidedly impatient of, while if your thermometer was allowed carelessly to fall as low as thirty-two degrees, very probably your camellias would be the least injured by the lessened temperature.

All your myrtles or orange-trees should be cleaned and set in order for the winter. Sometimes they will want a complete washing with a piece of sponge, leaf by leaf. It is certainly a tedious process, but it will well repay you for the trouble; the leaves get nearly black, and often the stems as well, so that you will hardly recognise your plant after the washing operation is over.

If you have any azaleas in your collection, have them in the warmest part of your house, while the camellias might certainly be in the coolest.

Another reason for having your plants arranged according to their kinds, of which we spoke just now, is that you can then be uniform in your watering. It may fairly be said that a large quantity of water which, after having had it, a geranium might recover, would very much damage a camellia, and perhaps even kill a heath. One of the symptoms of suffering from overcrowding is that the lower leaves very often begin to drop, so that the stem, and very often some of the branches too, begin to get bare. Any one who has noticed the difference between, say, a fir-tree standing in the centre of a bed by itself, or on a lawn, and a number of fir-trees in a plantation, will see at once the beauty of the one, and very often the positive unsightliness of the other. A plantation is invariably set out with the shrubs and trees too close together. In process of time some will die outright, while the rest will be like a collection of open umbrellas, namely, a long pole or stick, and only a little something green or brown at the top. Thus much, then, for our greenhouse, which occupies us so largely during the winter months, and particularly during the month of October.

A TURN AMONGST SPITALFIELDS WEAVERS.

(THE WAY SOME FOLKS LIVE.)

In the minds of most people the name of Spitalfields is closely united with silk. Readers who can look back to the times when the weavers' distress was a fact of almost national importance; when performances were given at the opera for their benefit, and attended by the Queen in state; when Court balls took place, at which it was a point of honour with the ladies to appear in Spitalfields silk; when the hand-loom weavers ever and anon submitted petitions to both Houses of Parliament, and were regarded as a dangerous, because desperate, element in the population—such readers, with these facts in their minds, may possibly think that the trade must have been long since extinct. And this conclusion might almost be warranted by facts.

The precise locality of Spitalfields, as well as its most prominent modern characteristics, seem but little known. Wedged in between Whitechapel and Bethnal Green, it appears largely to have escaped the ill-fame attaching to its neighbours, although harbouring a much greater criminal population than these districts. Whitechapel is a popular synonym for whatsoever is wrong; the memory of silk has saved Spitalfields from even more merited reprobation.

Our business to-day will not take us into those streets where vice is rampant, and we therefore enter Spitalfields from its most inviting side.

Turning from the bustle of Bishopsgate into the seclusion of Spital Square, we are at once surrounded by old associations. Here at one time stood the Priory of St. Mary, Spital. Hither on Easter Monday and

Tuesday came the Lord Mayor and Corporation, accompanied by the boys of Christ's Hospital, to hear the Spital Sermon. This spot appears to have become the head-quarters of the French Protestant colony when ejected from their own country. The substantial houses, with their low wainscot-lined rooms and handsome chimney-pieces, were at first the dwellings of the aristocracy of silk. Then came their conversion into warehouses, and now many are applied to the uses of meaner trades.

Some of the poorer streets exhibit unmistakable signs of the old industry. The tall, brick houses appear to be full of windows, and these windows have been brought forward to the level of the outer surface of the wall, so as to admit all the light possible. This is especially to be observed in the top or attic storey, which in most houses is very prominent. Pursuing our course through these streets, we carefully bear in mind the words of Mr. Matthew Arnold's sonnet—

> "'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
> Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
> And the pale weaver through his window seen
> In Spitalfields looked thrice dispirited."

But, although moved thereby to peer into all windows, we cannot discern any signs of a weaver. In the poorer streets we hear from many rooms the rattle of sewing-machines, and here and there through grimy windows catch a glimpse of cramped forms wielding the shoe-maker's hammer. These trades appear to flourish, for many are the men and lads we pass staggering under bundles of over-coats or masses of new boots, whilst wealthier workmen are conveying their finished tasks to the warehouse on barrows. But no such signs indicate the whereabouts of weavers. Here, however, in one straggling, dirty, Jew-thronged street, we will prosecute our inquiries more particularly.

Mind your head! These staircases are not adapted to the requirements of silk hats. They are dark and narrow, lacking the friendly hand-rail, and abounding in awkward twists and projecting angles most destructive to the head-gear of strangers. We stumble slowly up three flights of stairs, knock where the dim outline of a door is visible, then grope for the handle, and enter.

Our friend—we will call him Weston—salutes us cheerily; his wife sets down in a half-dried condition the child she has been washing, and hospitably dusts a rickety chair for our accommodation. Seated thereon we are able to survey the apartment. Fresh from visits in adjacent streets, where the vicious and those utterly beaten in the race most do congregate, from rooms in which the floor, the walls, and the cupboards are all equally bare, Weston's room has an appearance of absolute comfort. Its dimensions are sufficiently ample for it to contain the loom, two bedsteads—one of wood, the other a folding frame of iron—a table, and a few chairs. There is a scrap of patternless carpet before the fireplace, and the family crockery, disposed upon a couple of shelves beneath a fly-blown, once gaudy, now faded, German print, imparts an air of home to the place.

Observing our look of curiosity at the loom, Weston proceeds for a moment with his task. As the power is applied, and the shuttle thrown from hand to hand, there is a jar and a clash unique in its way, and a mysterious movement of perpendicular lines of string, knotted in many places, with the long tags flying.

What is he at work upon? Well, it is a piece of satin from his old "ware'us" (the rich material contrasts strangely with its poor surroundings), and he is very glad to have got on with them again, not being so good at the work as he once was. How much does he earn? Well, sometimes fourteen shillings a week, but often not as much. And he has to work late for that, sometimes up to midnight, when the widow below is well, and doesn't mind the sound of the loom. Not like the old times? Ah, there I am right. Why, even as late as twelve years ago, he could earn four-and-fourpence a day by weaving a yard of velvet. He doesn't know anybody working at that now nearer than the edge of Bethnal Green. He used once to do a good deal in the way of gentlemen's silk handkerchiefs; he supposes that his patterns (produced for inspection) are old-fashioned, or that machinery beats him. Lots of his neighbours have given up the trade, or the trade has given up them, and all the young people go to something else. But thirty years ago, though the weaving was not at its best then, fathers, mothers, and children all threw the shuttle.

We watched Weston for a few moments whilst he pointed out the simple mechanism of the old loom. His wife, looking over his shoulder, interjected explanatory sentences with the pride of a woman brought up to the craft, and whose maiden name, like so many in the old parish registers, was obviously of French origin. It is some trouble to her that circumstances should compel them to bring their son up to a strange trade; the higher wages he is likely in time to earn as a carman only partially reconcile her to the change.

After conversing for a few minutes on other topics, we bid this pair good-bye, and cautiously feel our way down the stairs. In the same street we enter another house, and repeat the adventures on the staircase until another attic is reached.

Newland's room is even more comfortable than that of his neighbour. He knows Weston, does he not? He thinks he *does*, since they once went to school together when no bigger than the little 'un by the fire, and have stood by one another ever since. And then he sets the shuttle flying, and the loom clashing and jarring as though in corroboration of his statement.

What was he working at? Umbrella silk. He had worked for the same "ware'us" (always warehouse, never the employer's name) fourteen years, and had regular employment. Weston had never learned the umbrella silk, or he might often have done something at that. He supposed the trade would soon be gone altogether, as only a few hands yet kept it up, and the lads and girls tried other openings. Yes, the loss of this trade *had* changed Spitalfields. It scarcely seemed the same place, with the Jew clothiers and cigar manufacturers having their "ware'usses" where the old silk merchants once lived. Thirty years ago nearly everybody in the

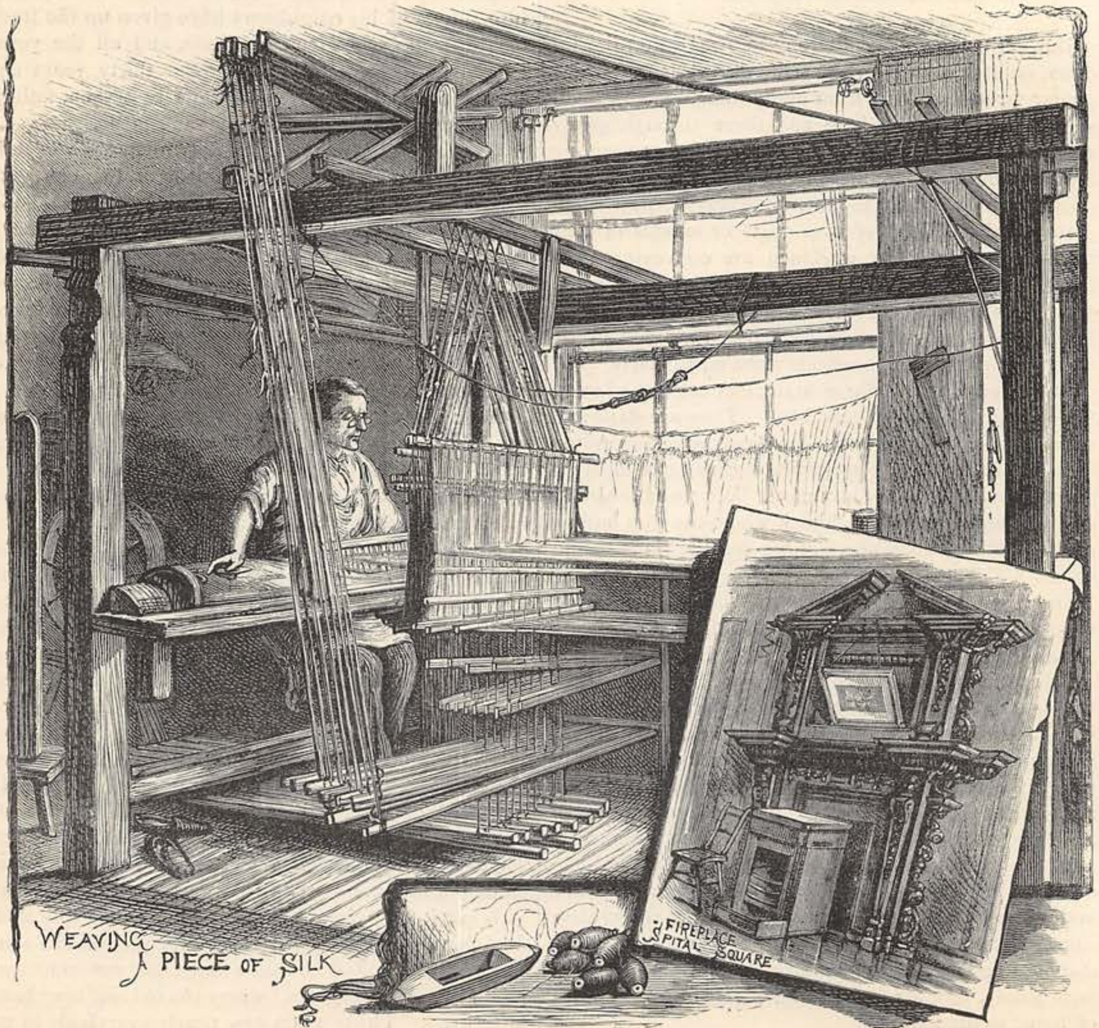
chief streets kept their carriage. Now, many houses in those streets were let out in single rooms. Besides, the Jews were pushing in everywhere, and seemed likely to leave no Christians a place in the parish.

Gathering from Newland's conversation that he has to take his work home that day, we speedily set out in search of a fresh informant. Another is found in the same street, and in a room devoid of all comfort and exceedingly dirty. The wife, here the chief bread-winner, is stitching industriously at a pair of trousers, whilst the husband nurses the last baby. Another child disports itself amongst the framework of a long-neglected loom.

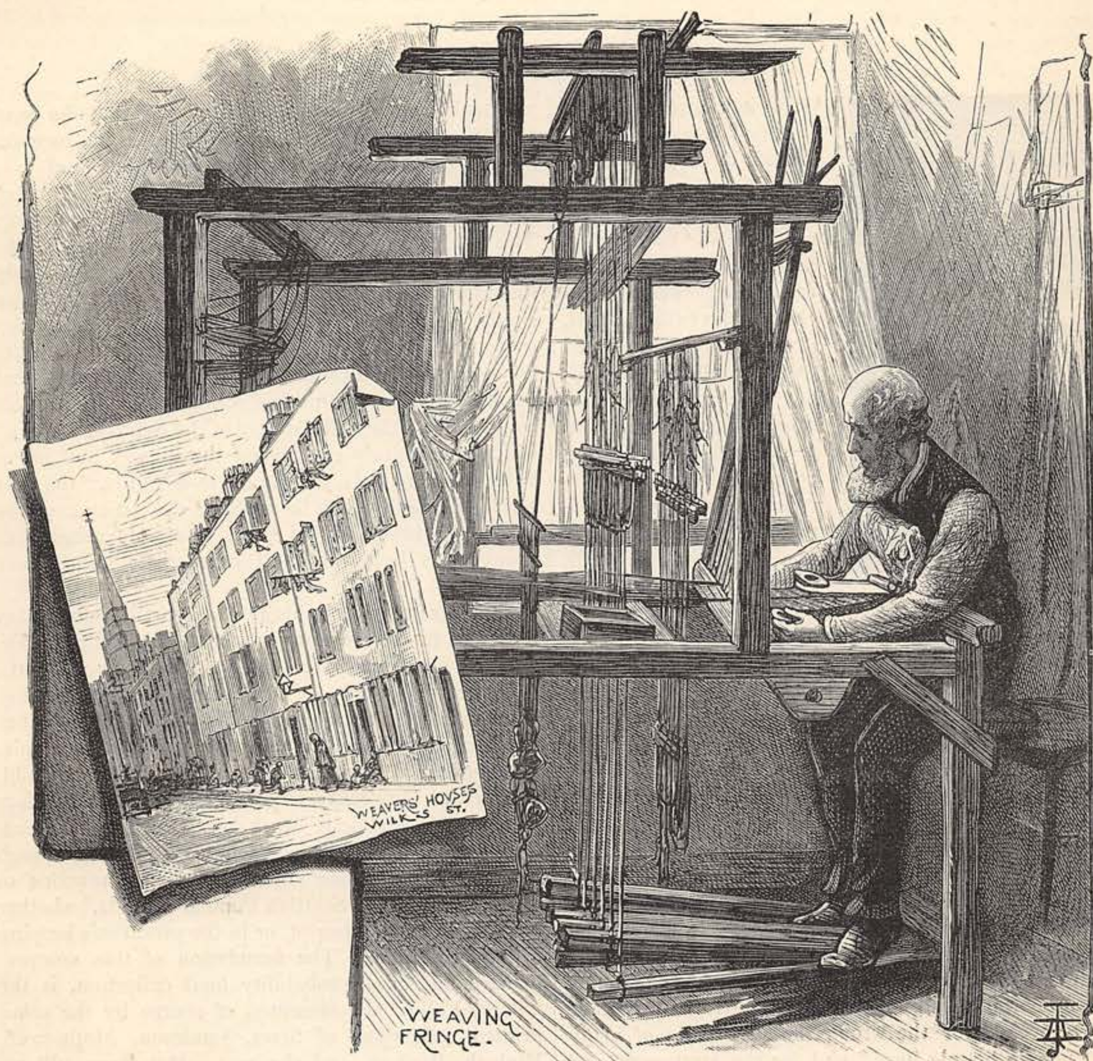
No work? No, he has had no weaving for more than ten years. Perhaps he was not a good workman, or else there was not enough work given out to keep more than a few looms going. He never expected to weave another piece, but worked, when he could, as a day-labourer, and many other weavers had come to the same thing.

Away now to another street, where we toil up three pairs of grimy stairs, and find Ladkins and wife at home. A cheery couple these are, both well stricken in years, and "enjoyin' bad 'ealth," as she puts it, yet apparently happy and contented. Ladkins is proud to show his loom. He is weaving fringe, of a kind largely worn by ladies at the time. Of course he has to work hard at it, for he cannot earn more than three-pence an hour, from not having been used to that kind of work. He can't make the "shittle" fly as fast as those brought up to the fringe-making. Now with silk or velvet he would be at home, but he has not had a piece to make for years. So he toils at the fringe, paid for at twopence-halfpenny the yard, and often works till midnight to make both ends meet. At our request he sets the loom in motion, and then the shuttle leaps from hand to hand, and the many-knotted strings jerk to and fro whilst the piece grows before our eyes.

A great contrast in every way to the condition of the Ladkins household is seen in that of a family in an adjacent street. They actually rent two rooms, working in one, and making the other their living and



WEAVING A PIECE OF SILK



sleeping place. The wife is weaving gimp at an open window. Day after day, from morning till night, we have marked her at the loom. Her husband and son follow the same occupation, and the earnings of the entire family average nearly two pounds a week. Yet the rooms are bare, and the occupiers discontented. But the explanation is subsequently found in the habits of the husband, who indulges in fits of dissipation, in the course of which he will menace his wife with the hatchet, and beat the son cruelly as a less dangerous occupation. In the same house are some young girls following the same trade, and living comfortably upon its proceeds. But the weaving of gimp can scarcely be classed with the manufacture of velvet, silks, and satins.

Yet one more relic of the old times is found in the person of the parish clerk, a *quondam* weaver, who can recall the time when distress first fell upon this quarter, as well as the palmy days when, consequent upon troubles in France, every English loom was in full work. He sums the history of their decay thus :

"As far as I understood it, sir, there was some treaty made with France, in consequence of which our people couldn't contend against the silk they sent over. Perhaps machinery could do it, but the hand-loom weavers couldn't. So most of us soon gave up the trade, and a fine trade it was. I can remember, as a young man, earning three pounds a week, with my wife's help, for weeks running. Once I made six pounds in nine days, and for a good many months my earnings would average fifteen pounds. If I worked now, I *might* make four in the same time. It was a pity they couldn't leave us alone."

It may be that, as threatened persons live long, a few weavers may still continue to earn a precarious livelihood at the trade. Or possibly the next generation may search in vain for that once plentiful commodity, a Spitalfields weaver.

A. R. BUCKLAND, B.A.