

## LOFTY LONDON.



THE OLD QUEEN'S BENCH PRISON, SOUTHWARK.



ATTENTION is continually being drawn from time to time to the ever-growing size of London. The "vast area covered with bricks and mortar," as it is often termed, is a familiar enough phrase, and this idea of constant extension of boundaries is clearly recognised. There is another aspect, however, of the great increase of London, which is not generally so much noticed. This is the increased density of population of certain localities, owing to the gradual change of comparatively small individual houses for great block dwellings five and six floors high. To the ordinary passenger along the main thoroughfares this change in building arrangements is not conspicuous.

These block dwellings, being mostly for people of very limited incomes, are usually placed up side streets, and behind good business frontages. Still they exist, and are increasing, in almost every London district, north, south, east, and west. Many residents of the districts even do not know of their block neighbours just round the corner. The inhabitants of the Grand Hotel, Charing Cross, know little of the inhabitants of the Bedfordbury blocks, almost within stone-throw. Perhaps even the majority of the permanent householders and residents in Russell Square and Brunswick Square are not aware of the large group of blocks situated between these two places, and but little visible from the main streets. Yet there they are, filled with human beings, and built on what once was back gardens. And it is the same in many other districts: Aldersgate, Strand, Westminster, Lambeth, Southwark, Bermondsey, &c. &c.

This change from small houses of two or perhaps three floors to great blocks of buildings five or six floors high, so arranged as to "house" the largest possible number of persons in the smallest possible space, is an important factor in the changed conditions of London life. The increase of London not only means a great extension of area covered with houses, but it also means a greater compression of people into certain small areas by means of higher buildings. It is the same in the City for offices as in other places for residences—huge blocks of many rooms, placing a much larger number of people in the same area, till London is becoming like a collection of monstrous bee-hives, full of combs, with two or three bees in every cell.

Of course the new blocks are in many respects better than the old. They are built with the intention of packing people like sardines in a box. There is order and arrangement in the business. Provision is made for a large number, while the old houses were not intended for half the number of their final tenants. Still, with all this method in our madness, the fact remains that if a large number of people in a small area is bad, the new state of things is about three times worse than the old, as the new blocks contain in varying proportions a much larger number of people per square acre than the old houses. Here they live and breathe, and cook and clean. Where before there was one kitchen chimney, there are now six, for every two or three small rooms is a separate household, with all the domestic manufactures in full operation.

When Queen's Bench Prison was pulled down a few years ago, an effort was made to have the site cleared, and turned into a public garden for what was then

described as the "densely populated district of Southwark." This effort failed. Where the Queen's Bench Prison stood there is now a large group of block dwellings, containing above three thousand separate rooms. These are let out in suites of two or three rooms. Thus every five rooms represent two distinct households. If this district was "densely populated" while this spot was a prison, surely it will better merit such description when all these rooms are occupied by tenants. And this is not all, for part of the "Mint improvements" means the pulling down of many old houses, and building great blocks in their place, all of which is in the aforesaid "densely populated district." Some of the old houses are only *one* or *two* floors, all the new ones are five or six. If this goes on, where shall we end, unless better precautions are taken to secure pure air, light, and cleanliness? When these buildings have grown old and dirty, what then?

Tall houses in themselves are not bad. Every one admits the dignity of lofty castle-towers and imposing public buildings, although they may demur to the severe simplicity of Peabody Blocks. But many of the newer blocks have really handsome front elevation. Their chief want is air-space. The natural complement to tall houses is a correspondingly large open space all round. This is usually deficient in London. With the increase of block dwellings, the citizens and the local authority should insist on increased open spaces between the blocks. In these open spaces a few trees might be planted. One or two groups of the block dwellings already have this boon.

Then there is the question of smoke. With two

households for every five rooms, three thousand rooms give twelve hundred distinct households, with, of course, twelve hundred kitchen fires and chimneys, without counting occasional other room fires. The number may be more than this, as several blocks are two-room dwellings only, four rooms making two households. It is not at all likely that Queen's Bench Prison had twelve hundred separate fires burning; consequently, the smoke nuisance will be much worse under the new arrangement. Of course, comparison with a prison is not quite so appropriate as comparison with the same area of small houses. But the argument is the same. The inhabitants of these blocks are supposed to dry their washing on the flat roof. The drying process is usually accompanied by a dyeing process from the rows of chimneys.

It is possible to imagine that some time in the future electricity may be "laid on" to our houses, to supply light and heat without smoke. But this is not likely to take place in reference to block dwellings of the poorer classes within a few years. Meantime, certain districts of London are being re-built on the block system, and the smoke nuisance increases. It becomes a question whether it would not be possible to tax chimney-pots, and allow exemption to all hotels, large buildings, and block dwellings whose flues were conducted into a central "smoke chamber" to purify the smoke before being discharged into the atmosphere. This has been successfully done in the case of particularly black and noxious smoke from a factory, and some compulsion might be used to extend the purification of all smoke.



QUEEN'S BUILDINGS, SOUTHWARK BRIDGE ROAD.  
(On the Site of the Old Queen's Bench Prison.)

The block system of dwellings makes this comparatively easy. When you have one hundred and forty households in one house under one roof, and that roof flat from end to end, a central smoke chamber and spray purifier is not difficult. It would require to be paid for, as every improvement must be. But it is better to pay a little directly for cleanliness and health than a great deal more indirectly for dirt and disease. We have got beyond the time when people were allowed

to throw household slops and refuse into the streets out of their windows. It is worth considering whether people should not be prevented from throwing refuse out of their chimneys into the atmosphere and the lungs of their neighbours. A tax on smoky chimneys, that is, every chimney that simply takes the smoke out of the house and discharges it into the air without purification, might gradually help to make our towns more healthy and habitable.

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### A BUNCH OF DAFFODILS.

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THE wind to-day is keen of edge—  
It rakes the wrinkling river ;  
It sweeps the swinging, rattling sedge,  
It makes the pollards shiver.  
The lambs send forth a quavering bleat  
From sheltering stacks and fences ;  
The young buds feel the sun a cheat  
That lured with false pretences.

A day—as English springs begin—  
More fell than all Decembers  
To nip the blood and rip the skin,  
And drive us round the embers.

Yet daybreak heard you lilt a tune  
Through fields and beechen closes ;  
You passed and made us think of June,  
And almost look for roses.

I saw you seek the blazing beds  
Where, braving wind and weather,  
A thousand sprightly golden heads  
Were tossing all together.  
You placed a bouquet in your breast—  
The faint blush grew so deep, dear,  
I almost guessed its glow confessed  
A secret—which I'll keep, dear.

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.

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### OUR BREAKFAST BEVERAGES.

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THE old saying that the world is compassed to provide a washer-woman's breakfast, applies more to the drinkables than to the eatables.

On the principle that it is of things with which we are most familiar that we know the least, I am going to begin by talking about tea. We have been drinking it in England for the last two centuries and more; the Chinese for the last ten. The Dutch have the credit of introducing it to Europe; they exchanged it

with John Chinaman for sago, and their physicians praised it so greatly that it would appear, according to their showing, to be a panacea for every ailment and every woe.

When we first had it here, it cost ten guineas a pound. Catherine of Braganza, Charles II.'s Portuguese wife, made it popular in England, and since that time the history of tea is closely associated with the story of our social life. Pepys speaks of it as a China drink,

and describes his wife making it at home. It was then bought principally of Thomas Garway, a tobacconist who had a coffee-house in Change Alley, Cornhill, which later on became the chief resort of people of quality, with business in the City, and was only closed some twenty years ago. But the tobacconist and tea-dealer knew how to puff his wares. If we may believe his handbill, tea not only "maketh the body active and busy," but is a preventive against most of the bodily ailments, which he very particularly describes.

This valuable commodity he offered at from sixteen to fifty shillings a pound, showing a great abatement in cost. Dr. Johnson would have endorsed pretty well all Garway alleged in its favour. The great lexicographer drank tea nearly all day, by himself and in company—in truth he was the very king of tea-drinkers. To Hazlitt it was meat and drink; De Quincey, Lord Palmerston, and men of all shades of politics and every kind of pursuit, have been known as patrons of the cup that cheers without inebriating. It clears the mind, soothes the nerves, and has a most stimulating effect on the faded mental powers, but like all good things it may be abused. Too much of it produces nervousness, and