Directly the doors were thrown open, the remains of our feast, with the dishes, cutlery, and spoons arranging themselves in order, from the least unto the greatest, marched out into the night. Whither they went it was impossible to tell, but there was neither crowding, pushing, nor confusion. They proceeded with the measured regularity of an army, as if under the leadership of the strictest of military martinets.

No Parliamentary squad, going into the Lobby to vote for a Bill which its members were unable to comprehend, could have been more docile under their tyrant chiefs than were those dishes and spoons.

The departure of these humble but necessary adjuncts of the *cuisine* was followed by a low sweet strain of wild Oriental music, which seemed to proceed from a distance; while this continued, a profusion of costly fruits was placed upon the board by industrious, but hidden, hands.

Mayune was not forgotten.

It even appeared that the Hindoo had been especially honoured by the mysterious donor of bounties.

Had he repented in his heart, and been forgiven?

A basketful of green figs, the fruit cosily nestling in cool vine-leaves and upon feathery fronds of palm, was placed directly opposite to him.

Mayune was particularly partial to figs, although he had more than once informed us that he was superstitious enough to believe that they would some day bring him ill-luck; as a learned fakir had once said to him—

"Beware of the fig-tree; O, Mayune!"

It would have been well if he had remembered the warning now.

But it was not to be.

The web of his fate was woven.

As he stretched out his hand to take of the pleasant fruit, the figs were stirred from below; then a small viperous body, which we recognised as *Echis carinata*, one of the most deadly of Indian serpents, raised its head above the edge of the basket.

The Brahmin had only time to ejaculate "*Afae!*" the Hindostani name of the reptile, when, throwing itself into a double fold, the serpent, with a stroke as swift as the lightning's flash, struck him fairly between the eyes. The victim fell back, screaming.

As he fell, a female's voice, muffled as if it came from the grave, was heard to utter the words—

"Is your master at home?"

This was more than our overstrained nerves were able to bear.

Moved by a common impulse, we sprang to our feet.

As we did so every light in the room was put out, and an icy blast swept past us.

It was the breath of death.

One of the party struck a light.

What did we perceive?

Only a perfectly arranged old-fashioned English dining-room, with the table set for dinner. The figures on the ceiling appeared to be fairly executed, but ordinary frescoes, smoked and mellowed by time; but, assuredly, innocent of any participation in the occult transactions which I have feebly endeavoured to describe.

Were we the miserable victims of a delusion?

How could this be? The body of Mayune lay at our feet.

Had he been slain by a delusion?

That could scarcely be.

We raised our comrade, laid him upon the couch, and sent for the nearest medical man.

The sufferer was unconscious, and breathed stertorously.

Before the surgeon arrived Mayune was dead.

"It is a clear case of *delirium tremens*, gentlemen," said Galen, after a hurried examination, for his time was valuable.

As he was leaving, he added—

"Of course, as the man was dead when I saw him, there will have to be an inquest, but the inquiry will be merely a formal one."

Mayune's death was attributed to *delirium tremens* by the coroner's jury, upon the evidence of the doctor; but we knew well enough that no imaginary blue flames or incorporeal serpents ever yet inflicted two tiny livid punctures between the eyes.

Yet, where was the viper?

It had disappeared: that is, if it had ever really possessed an objective existence.

LONDON SIXTY YEARS AGO.

BY S. BARING GOULD.

WE hardly realise the changes that take place under our eyes, the revolutions in social life, unless we go back to old books or diaries that belong to the period when we first began to look out into the world. Customs with which we were familiar in our childhood are now no more followed, and we forget that they were familiar to us till we light on some description of them as they were, when at once old life rises up before us as seen by youthful eyes, and we are moved with wonder to think that we have passed through such changes without taking more note of them.

In 1825-8 a German named Otto Von Rosenberg was in London. He had good introductions, had an observant eye, some humour, and a ready pencil. In 1834 he published at Leipzig his "Sketches of Modern London from Life," with coloured drawings. The book is now extremely rare and almost completely forgotten. There are in it exaggerations, but on the whole it is very true, and almost a photograph of London as it was during the first quarter of the present century. As a photograph, unless much touched up, is often not a pleasant likeness, and makes the most of defects, so perhaps does this picture of London. The writer stumbled upon it by accident when turning over a mass of his grandfather's books, that had lain neglected for over fifty years, and having opened it, he found he could not put the book down till he had read it to the last page.

Rosenberg was present at the funeral of the Duke of York, in 1827, and he was in England when Weber died, in 1826. In connection with the last circumstance he mentions an incident not generally known.

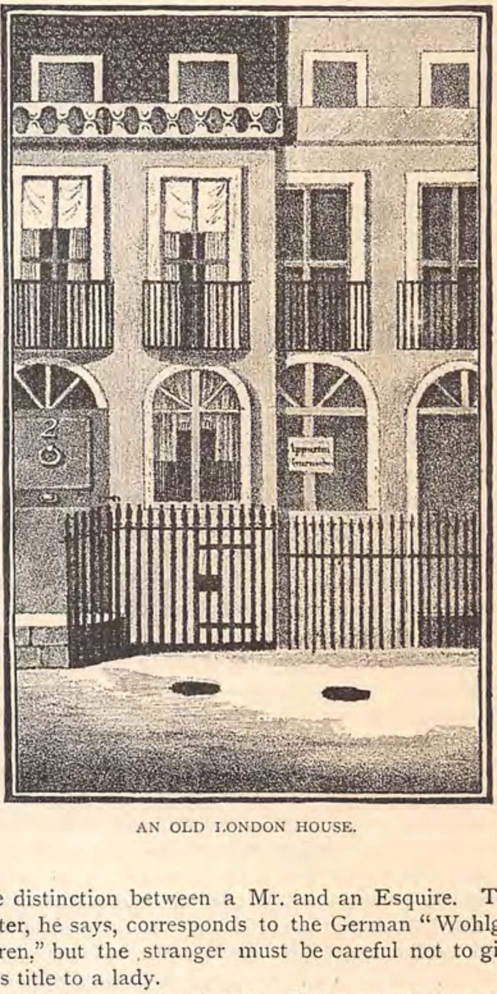
He says: "Weber can, without exaggeration, be called the musical idol of the English people. A few days after his death I was in the Italian Opera, where a concert was being given for orphans, and among other symphonies by Weber, the overture to the 'Freischüts' and his hymn on the death of the King of Bavaria were given. The latter was admirably rendered, and it thrilled through the audience, which at once, moved by the beauty of the music and the sense of loss for the great composer, became profoundly agitated, so that several ladies fainted, and I must confess it, I was myself sensible of some internal emotion. At the close of the piece no loud applause ensued, as had been the case at the conclusion of every other. All the vast concourse in the brilliantly illuminated theatre sat still, and the silence became oppressive. Not a breath, not a word escaped the breast contracted with deep feeling; everyone seemed to be offering by their silence an homage to the departed artist."

An amusing chapter on "Correspondence" shows us how great a transformation has taken place in the post-office.

"At eight o'clock comes the postman's knock: a double knock. A letter which has come from four to six miles distance in London costs the recipient twopence. Every letter from 'off the stones'—that is to say, from outside London—costs an extra penny. This is called the Two-penny Post.

"In sealing a letter, care must be taken to follow the proprieties. It is most uncourteous to seal a letter to a lady with a wafer. Elegant, sometimes perfumed, sealing-wax is employed, and the look of the seal is enough to convey an idea of what is within. The paper employed is small quarto, gilt-edged. These dainty little letters, which in Germany we should, as a matter of course, set down as love-letters, are fastened with little seals on which are allegorical figures, as a dove with a letter in its bill, with the inscription 'Répondez vite'; or a blind man led by his dog, with the legend 'Faithful in adversity'; or a seated hound with this written round, 'When this dog barks my friendship shall end.' But such seals can be employed only by ladies writing to one another, or by a gentleman to a family with which he is intimate. If a gentleman writes to a lady he franks the letter, but this is rarely done between gentlemen. If you are writing to a tradesman or a professional man with an order, you do not frank the letter. When the correspondence is between friends, the letter begins, 'My Dear Madam' or 'My Dear Sir,' but when it is addressed to a stranger or an inferior it is conducted in the third person."

Von Rosenberg goes on to describe what constitutes the distinction between a Mr. and an Esquire. The latter, he says, corresponds to the German "Wohlgeboren," but the stranger must be careful not to give this title to a lady.



AN OLD LONDON HOUSE.

"The General Post is to be distinguished from the Two-penny Post; the functionaries of the former wear a scarlet coat with dark blue facings. The letter-carrier gives the same rap at the door as does the Two-penny postman, but he brings letters from abroad and from other counties of England and all parts of Great Britain. The post comes in once a day only, between noon and one p.m. Every afternoon the postman goes round about five p.m. with a bell, and all who have letters for the post bring them out, and put them into the bag which he carries for the purpose."

Rosenberg was in London at the time when dogs were employed to draw cars, and he mentions as one of the familiar objects in the streets a man born without legs who played national airs on a clarionet, and was drawn about by a couple of dogs harnessed to the car into which he was strapped. In connection with this subject, he mentions an anecdote told him by Sir Walter Scott of his own dog Camp.

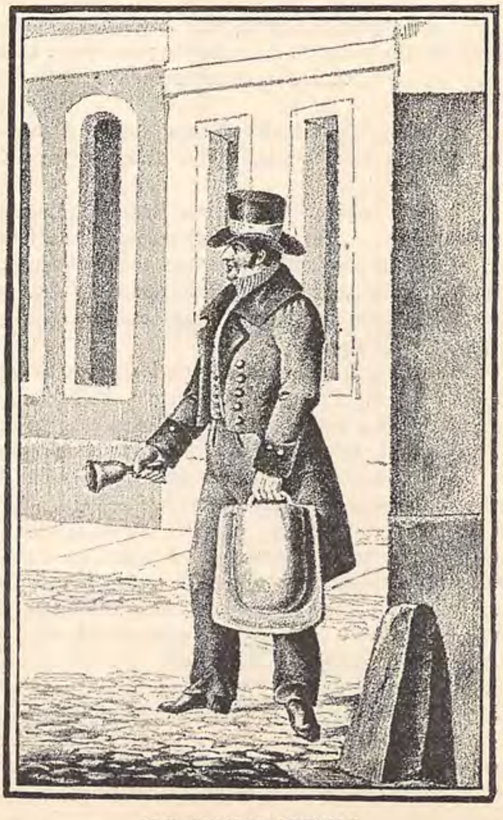
"Camp," said Sir Walter, "was the cleverest hound I ever had. I taught him to understand a great many words, and I am quite convinced that it is possible to develop the intelligence which exists between dogs and men. One day Camp bit a baker, and I beat him for it, and read him a severe lecture over his iniquity. From that time to his death he winked whenever the work 'Baker' was mentioned, and exhibited profound compunction when what he had done was spoken of. If I alluded to this affair, Camp sneaked away into a dark corner. But if I said 'The baker has been well paid,' or 'The baker did not get angry,' then out of his corner bounded Camp, barking and gambolling. When, towards the end of his life, Camp was too feeble to accompany me on my walks, if the servant said, 'Master is coming down the hill' or 'over the down,' it was enough for Camp, even though the man had given no indication with his hand or otherwise that I was approaching."

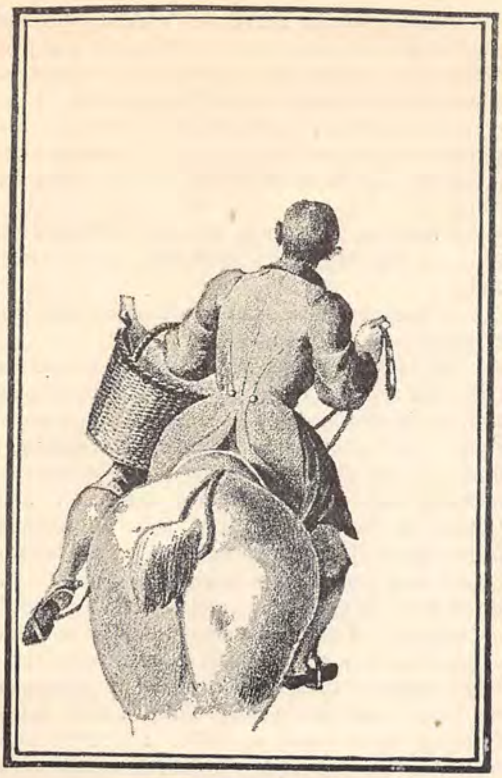
The description of the hucksters, professional beggars, the ballad singers, the butchers' boys, the sweeps, the dustmen, among the sights of the London streets is very true and amusing.

It is, however, when the writer comes to an account of an English dinner party that we notice the greatest change in our national customs.

"Half, or perhaps three-quarters of an hour before dinner the family is assembled in the drawing-room, the elder ladies in immense caps, in turbans adorned with feathers and flowers, and in evening gowns. Every lady not only comes in gloves, but wears gloves throughout dinner. The gentlemen have changed the nature of their ties, and appear in silk stockings and shoes. All take up their positions in a semi-circle, beginning at the fireplace, leaving a gap through which the guests enter to shake hands, and to inquire mutually after each other's health. At each double knock the porter opens the house door as wide as possible. The guest lays his hat and great coat aside in the hall, and draws off the glove of his right hand and retains this glove in the left, which remains gloved. As soon as he reaches the staircase the footman asks, 'Please, sir, your name?' ascends, and the name is announced aloud at the door of the drawing-room. Then come the introductions. . . . When all those expected have arrived, the butler appears, and bows to the hostess to announce that dinner is ready. The hostess gives the signal to form *en suite*. The greatest stranger, or the oldest gentleman present, takes the hostess on his right or left arm, according to the direction of the stairs, so as to assure her to be near the wall. Every gentleman takes his partner. The *arrière garde* is brought up by the giggling and whispering young people of either sex for whom no partners have been provided. At the dining-room door a solemn halt ensues, and the gentlemen bow profoundly as each lady defiles into the room. The gallant knights hang about the door till the master of the house has placed them all, each by his lady. Host and hostess then take their seats at the ends of the table.

"When all are seated, the gentlemen proceed to uncover their left hands. Each takes the piece of white bread from his *serviette*, and lays it beside his plate on the left. In the majority of houses, however, no napkins are provided, and then the gentlemen take up the table-cover and lay it over their knees. On the right side of each plate is a white or blue glass bowl, in which are two wine-glasses of different sizes turned upside down, so that they may be cooled by the water in the bowl. Beside the steel forks, everyone has one of silver, which an Englishman invariably grasps with the left hand. Beside the salt-cellars, of which one occupies each corner of the table, several spoons are laid cross-wise about the table, to be employed during the meal for vegetables and sauces. When the dinner parties are not very large this is the order of the dishes:—On taking one's place at table, a tureen is already in place at the upper end, full of strongly-peppered soup; at the lower end is a sea fish that has been boiled in water, only laid on a napkin and not a dish. In the middle of the board are peeled potatoes and others in their skins, others again mashed, carrots, cauliflowers, asparagus, all boiled in water only, covered with highly-polished metal shining dish-covers. After the master of the house has murmured a grace, and everyone has stooped over his plate, the servants


THE GENERAL POSTMAN.



THE BUTCHER'S BOY.

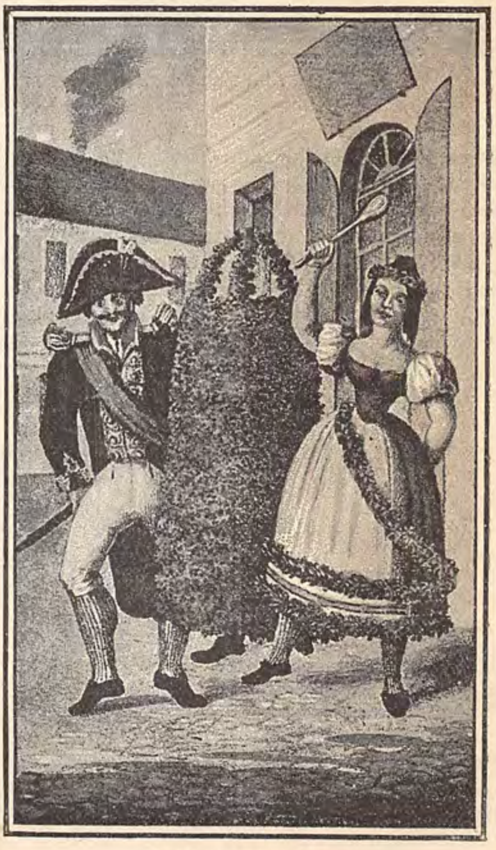
remove the dish covers. Everyone has his choice: first soup, and then fish, or fish and no soup, or soup and no fish. All the guests are asked what they would like to eat.

"After five or ten minutes have elapsed, during which some mouthfuls have been swallowed, each gentleman, naming another, desires the honour of drinking wine with him. A few years ago only heavy, highly-coloured port, Madeira, or sherry, was drunk. Now intercourse with France has led to the introduction of Bordeaux wine, here called claret, Burgundy, and champagne. The gentlemen who are drinking with each other half fill their glasses, which are now removed from the bowl, stare fixedly into each other's eyes for a moment, bow their heads without bending their bodies, put their glasses to their lips, and swallow a few drops: a few drops only, because at each invitation they are bound to replenish their glasses.

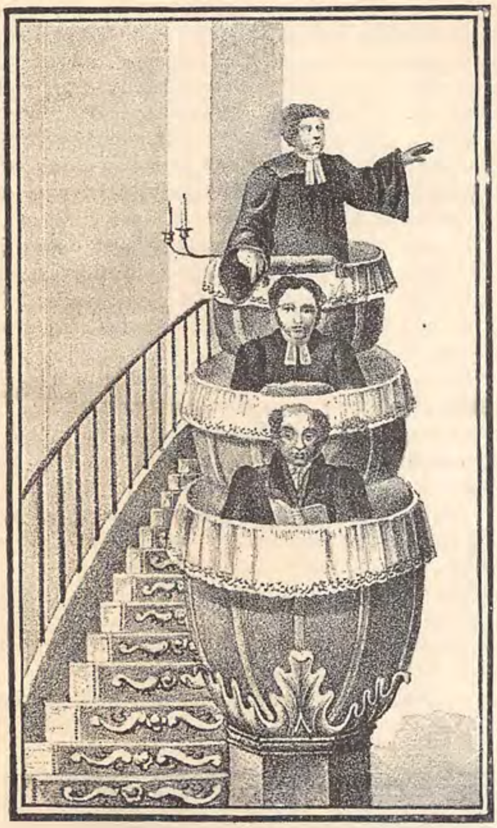
"It is hard for a stranger to note the names of the persons, and without knowing their names, one may not venture to invite anyone to drink. After this 'bitter-bad' ceremony is over, or something serves as an interruption to it, the servants plant before the master of the house a gigantic piece of boiled or roast meat, and before the hostess a fricassee of fowl, duck, pheasant, or rabbit, in a strong peppery brown sauce, or a curry. Most of the vegetables that served for the fish remain on table. The guest is asked which or what he will take, and if a stranger, whether he will have the meat well-done or under-done, fat or lean; but it shows a lack of courtesy in a hostess to ask these questions of an old acquaintance, whose peculiar tastes she is supposed to have taken to heart and to remember. The hostess urges to eat, and endeavours to induce the guests to try other dishes or take additional helpings; and one hears on all sides the assurances, 'I assure you, ma'am, I have made a most excellent dinner.'

"Finally enter the plum-pudding, great and little tarts, creams, and jellies. If anyone desires porter or ale, he asks for it specially of the waiters, and it is served in champagne glasses. Butter and cheese conclude the meal.

"Here I must mention an usage that is somewhat startling, and may be cleansing, but is not cleanly. After the grace, and before the ladies have left the table, each person rinses out his mouth with the water in the coloured glass vessel at his side, and then wipes his fingers in his napkin, if there be one, if not in the table-cloth"—the whole operation is described with terrible minuteness—"then the bread-crumbs are brushed from the table, and everything is removed to the table-cloth, revealing the polished mahogany, which now receives an extra rub, after which dessert is laid on it. Before the host are fresh decanters, with port, sherry, Madeira, and claret, the latter in a peculiarly



JACK-IN-THE-GREEN.



THE THREE DECKER.

formed bottle, bulging, and with a handle and glass stopper. The other wines wear round their necks chains and silver shields, on which their names are engraved. Each decanter stands on a silver base, and is passed from right to left from the host. Every gentleman helps the lady near him."

After an account of the withdrawal of the ladies, the writer goes on to say that then toasts are drunk, the first of which is to the ladies who have just departed.

"Thus from two to three hours are spent in toasting and drinking, all the gentlemen huddling together at one end near the host, who has removed his place to the other end of the table, and their gravitation to each other perhaps means to prop each other up in the event of intoxication supervening. Finally, a servant announces that tea is ready, and such as are able to stagger adjourn to the drawing-room, where are the ladies."

An amusing chapter is devoted to "Routs": that is to say, "At Homes"; another to pugilistic encounters.

Von Rosenberg's account of a London afternoon as spent by ladies is this :—

"The ladies drive out in their equipage; each young lady with a novel, or, at all events, a book of some sort, in the carriage with her. The carriage halts at a shop. The ladies do not descend, but send the footman into the shop to call out the shopkeeper. He appears, with hair frizzled and dressed in the last fashion at the carriage door, asks for orders, and brings forth all kinds of varieties of the article required, and places them in the carriage. He writes down what is purchased, and promises to send the commands. Infinitely funny is it to see mamma crushed under a mountain of drapery, with the only too handsome tradesman standing by commending his goods, and the young ladies sitting unmoved studying their books, or rather appearing to study them; for what female heart could remain uninterested when the matter discussed is fashion and dress, and the shopman possibly young and good-looking?"

The writer describes what is now quite a thing of the past: the chimney sweep's May-day feast, with Jack-in-the-Green and Maid Marian. Such appeared in the London streets as late as 1845, in which year we remember to have seen them in the Strand, but now Jack-in-the-Green is as much a thing of the past as the Two-penny postman, and blue glass dessert bowls, or three-deckers. Von Rosenberg gives a picture of the last of these articles, which astonished him greatly. The author of this curious little book heard Irving and records some of his prophecies, and he likewise tells some good stories of Dr. Abernethy.

HOW A WILDERNESS BECAME A GARDEN.

A TALK ABOUT PANSIES AND VIOLAS.

"I INTEND to persevere," said Charles Robinson one bright September morning, when making a brief survey, in company with his neighbour, of the still lingering summer beauties of his flower garden; "I intend to persevere in giving a preference to those flowers that bloom the longest."

"Very good," replied John Smith, "and I am quite of your opinion, for it is to me often a matter of regret that there are so many gay and almost gorgeous flowers upon which, perhaps, we have been bestowing infinite pains, but which, after all, only favour us with a bloom that lasts but a few days; and in a prolonged and hot season the bloom is still shorter. Take, for instance, one or two popular herbaceous plants, such as the peony and the iris, in the months of May and June: how showy is the scarlet brilliancy of the one or the pale blue of the other; but in a few days' time, under a hot sun, all is over, and we are left for the