

is entirely carried through rock, is two miles long, and is in some parts 100 feet deep. In order to make it, 430,000 cubic yards of rock had to be removed. Seen from above, it has the appearance of a tremendous defile, and is resounding almost every minute with the thunder of the frequently passing trains between Liverpool and Manchester. Had it not been for the opposition of certain landowners when the line was being planned, this immense work might have been entirely avoided.

TO AND FRO IN LONDON.

FOR more than twice seven years it was my lot to walk to and fro, for three long miles, daily through a portion of the city and suburbs of London, ever in the same unvarying track—going one way in the morning, and retracing my steps in the evening, or in the night, at any hour when the despotic necessities of business would set me free. This perpetual transit forwards and backwards, like a weaver's shuttle, though it winds off the thread of a man's existence in a rather mechanical way, is not exactly what one might suppose it to be. It is neither so varied in point of interest as might be expected in a city of two and a half millions of people, nor is it so monotonous and void of excitement as one might fear to find it. It is not very varied, because the business of life is with all business men a routine, the same thing, or very nearly the same thing, day by day and year by year; and hence, he who walks to his labour at a stated hour in the morning will encounter hundreds, and, if his route be a long one, perhaps thousands, who are travelling on the same mission. In time he will begin to know the majority of the faces he meets, and to be struck with the wonderful regularity with which they appear at a particular spot at a particular moment, and that for months together.

The regular business faces, however, that one is accustomed to meet are hardly so interesting as the perpetual fixtures which one passes in these morning walks. There are the same peripatetic tradesmen, the same beggars, the same crossing-sweepers, the same impostors whining or bellowing psalm-tunes for alms, the same hurdy-gurdy and piano-grinders, and the same vagabonds, though these last use up a neighbourhood much quicker than any class of regular professionals, and betake themselves elsewhere. It is amusing to note the cool effrontery of the whole impostor races; having levied black mail on you once or twice, they no sooner recognise you as a regular passenger—as one who, like themselves, has his own living to get—than they make you free of the road, and cease their importunities ever afterwards. They know you and understand you, and know that you know and understand them; and if thenceforth you happen to exchange a glance with them, you perceive that it is on their part one of intelligence, as if there existed a mutual understanding between you—which indeed there does, after a sort.

How many personal and domestic histories have I read as I walked to and fro in London's streets

during those long years! how many comedies and how many tragedies have I witnessed from their first scenes to their last! How many commercial bubbles have I seen blown and burst along that line of route! how many promising speculations entered on which failed! how few which succeeded! I have marked the rise and gradual growth of prosperity—the exultation of the prosperous—then the advent of adversity in the shape of pecuniary difficulty, or of financial panic—or perhaps of disease and disablement—and then the final decline and disappearance of the actors from the stage. I have seen merry weddings, to the music of merry bells, and joyous embarkations on the sea of life, followed by disasters and ruin, the sudden breaking up of households and the scattering of families; and I have seen also—as, how should I fail to see it?—the sure reward of prudence, diligence, and integrity, in the increase of this world's goods and the acquirement of reputation and respectability. I have noted also, in the same long course of time, the growth and fortunes of new neighbourhoods as well as new families. Thousands of acres which, when I began my daily travels, were either waste lands or grazing meadows, brick-fields, market-gardens, or drying-grounds, are now swallowed up in the maw of the omnivorous Babylon, are covered with dwellings of all kinds and degrees, and are swarming with hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. Not all of these new districts have turned out what their originators intended them to be. In some places where a dead set was made at gentility, traffic has crushed itself in and swept all genteel pretensions aside, usurping the field for itself; and on other sites the contrary has come to pass—as though brick walls and stone pavements, as well as human beings, had an obstinate will of their own, and would have their way.

Going always city-wards at a stated hour, but returning at all hours of the twenty-four, I have seen the multitude under all its aspects; and in the dead of the night as well as in broad daylight I have faced the wealthy and gay, the houseless and destitute, the honest and virtuous, the vicious and depraved, the lost and the abandoned. Among the million faces which have passed from my recollection, there are a few which haunt me after the lapse of years, shining out distinct and clear amidst the crowd of dim undistinguishable shadows. I never knew their names, and never shall know them, but they have inscribed indelibly their images upon my mind. There was, for instance, "the last pair of Hessian boots," whose owner bore an evergreen face at three-score and ten. I used to overtake the tasseléd chaussure of a morning, on approaching one of the inns of court, and on passing the wearer generally heard him reciting to himself some oratorical deliverance full of legal phraseology, from which I inferred, what was doubtless the case, that he was a barrister in good practice, and that he rehearsed his addresses to the jury as he walked to his office. One morning I observed him stoop rather stiffly and pick up a sovereign; he held it openly between finger and thumb, to see if any one would claim it, and as I passed him begged me, if I heard of the loser, to give him or her the card of

his address, which he tendered. Then there was the fussy-faced man, who lived in a perennial perspiration, and moved with a sort of convulsive rapidity, like a locomotive at starting, who seemed to be giving off steam and sparks, meet him when you would, and who left you with the impression that there was neither space enough nor time enough in the world for him and his undertakings. Then there was the merry-faced man, who used to rise upon me like a sun at the crossing in the New Road—whose very look was enough to “make a sunshine in a shady place,” and the glance of whose eye, if you were fortunate enough to catch it, was a cordial for the whole day. There was also the resigned face, which was a cordial too in its way; it belonged to a man of three-score, or thereabouts, who travelled with a leather bag, and whom fortune had made her sport, without wounding his conscience or shaking his trust in Providence; it was one of those few faces one sees in the course of a life, which is a sermon to the unthankful and a reproach to average humanity.

Some of my enforced night walks led to singular companionships at times. One night a young man whom I had often before noticed, accosted me, and, turning back, walked by my side for a couple of miles, after one in the morning. For some time, as business at that season detained me late, he did this almost nightly, and told me his story. He was a prodigal son, who had run riot and offended his father, who had cast him off, as he owned deservedly, to indigence and want. Not so his mother. She harboured and fed him unknown to her husband. The father went off daily to business at seven in the morning, and the son, after tramping the streets all night, watched him forth, and was then stealthily let in by his mother to a meal and a bed. I have reason to think that this maternal deception, which some will rightly blame, proved the salvation of the youth. At any rate, he reformed, was reconciled to his father, who died shortly after, and at this day supports his mother in comparative ease and comfort. Another night-walker whom I fell in with was a professional man, who chose the fine moonlight nights for his seasons of recreation. He declared that he never walked for mere pleasure in London streets at any other times, and that there was to him an irresistible charm in the Great Babylon by moonlight. He had traversed it in all quarters for years past at such hours, and believed that he should do so as long as he had the use of his legs. The reader may think there is no accounting for taste; but I could understand the moonlight wanderer, and the charm which had fascinated him.

Towards the fall of the year, the workhouses and refuges begin to afford a tolerable index, not only of the state of the weather, but of the amount of pauperism and total destitution in the metropolis. I think there is no more sad sight than the groups of hungry, half-naked wretches, grouped round the workhouse doors on a winter's night awaiting the moment of admission. I have seen them in the fast-falling snow and sleet, crouching and huddling together, whining and shivering, and sighing for the miserable accommodation of dry straw and

shelter from the winds and the pelting storm. Some, in their eagerness to make sure of a couch, which they have wanted on the previous night, would come for hours before the opening, and lie starving in the cold and writhing with bodily pain. Of late years, more humane regulations have saved them much of this gratuitous suffering.

It is fortunate, since vice, crime, destitution, and misery, assume all shapes in this world of London, that philanthropy is quite as multifaceted and versatile. As an instance of this, I may mention an acquaintance I made many years ago with an amateur philanthropist, who was quite an oddity, and who loved darkness rather than light, not because his deeds were evil, but because they were good, and he was half ashamed of them. He was a countryman, not a Londoner, by birth, wore top-boots and corduroy shorts, a coloured plush vest, and a coat of old-world cut, which he buttoned with a single button only at the neck. It was a long while before I could make him out, but I got at him at last. *Mirabile dictu!* he was a horse-dealer—of course, you will perhaps say, a knave. I don't know anything about that. What I know is, that he amused himself by night in going round to the workhouse doors and other places where the destitute resort, and picking up the poorest and hungriest of the younger outcasts, whom he led off to a refuge of his own—an unoccupied stable, littered down with plenty of straw, and tolerably well supplied with such refuse food as broken bread and bakers' waste, with the bones half picked and other disjecta of a cook shop. He was rough as his ragged protégées; would talk to them in their own rude language, and enforce order in a physical way, without any ceremony, if it were necessary; and this mode of managing them, so far from outraging their feelings, had a contrary effect. Nor did he stop here; many of the outcasts he either employed himself, or succeeded in locating with horse-couplers or cattle-drovers on the north road. I know not what became of this man, or how long his benevolence lasted, or whether the compassionate horse-dealer yet finds a pastime in the exercise of his philanthropy; if he does so, it must be in some other locality, as a row of tall handsome houses now stand on the spot where he once harboured his houseless vagabonds.

Whosoever walks much by night in the streets of London will hardly fail of making the acquaintance of a mute companion, whom, whether you notice his appeals or not, it is not so easy to shake off. This is the night dog. When all the high-ways are lonely and deserted—when not a foot-fall is heard from far or near, and you feel like a solitary wanderer in a city of the dead—you catch the faint small sounds of fast-trotting feet pit-patting on the stones; and, before you can turn round to look, the night dog is at your side, wagging his forlorn tail and lifting up his expectant face in the hope of a friendly greeting. If you are kindly-intentioned enough to say “Poor fellow!” lo, how he jumps about you, and tries to lick your face or hands! how he capers on this side and that, and whines out his gratitude—then runs on before to await your coming, and again repeats his dumb acknow-

ledgments as you draw near. "Ah," says he to himself, "kind fortune has befriended me at last—now I have found a master! no more starving all night on the cold stones—no more pelting from cruel boys—no more tin-kettles tied to my tail, or swimming for dear life in the New River; no more of all that—now I shall have a snug home, a berth on the rug by the fire, and a good meal every day. Hooray! Bow, wow, wow!" All this you understand as plainly as possible, and perhaps you wish you could realize the golden dreams of poor Pincher. But you know you can't do it. As for taking him into your lodgings in the two pair back, what would Mrs. Grundy your landlady say? It is clearly impossible. So you see that you have inspired vain hopes in the poor brute, and in order to disabuse his mind, you tell him to "go back," "get along," "be off;" all which objurgations Pincher answers by more antics and tail-waggings and attempted carresses, and will not be driven away. So, in spite of your compassion, you have to do the cruel thing at last: ere you produce your latch-key, you must perforce proceed to extremities, and make a show of decided hostility, and of pelting off poor houseless Pincher in order to prevent his following you upstairs to bed. Poor dog! he sees your meaning at last, and as his heart sinks within him, he gives you one last look—a look half appealing, half reproachful, and then, depressing his forlorn tail between his legs, he sneaks despairingly away. Truly, that last look of the poor, outcast, masterless, supperless, night dog is not the least touching spectacle one meets with in one's wanderings to and fro in London.

THE BLACK COUNTRY.

CHAPTER V.—A TEA PARTY IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

WE were a bower of evergreens; a perfect nest of sylvan simplicity and loveliness. The Black Country, indeed! The Black Forest in miniature, if you please: a scene of enchantment in which Queen Mab and all her train might have descended and enjoyed themselves: a leafy glade in which the running stream and babbling brook might well be looked for, but where, alas! the streams were hot ones, and the babbling *not* of brooks. The site of all this rusticity was our national school-room at L. R., and we were going to have a TEA PARTY. And know, ye uninitiated, that for a tea party in the mining districts is demanded no common development of physical and mental capabilities. But what, it may be inquisitively demanded, was the good of having a party which was to prove so great a tax upon the powers? and who were the exacting and not to be disappointed guests, in whose behalf the stirring preparations were afloat?

My inquiring friend, were you ever in want of cash? If not, rejoice: we were; not indeed individually, or domestically, but parochially; and therefore we had a tea party. For, let it not be imagined that for nought we parted with our bread, our butter, cake, tea, milk, sugar, and, far more than all, our words of honied eloquence. We had our *quid pro quo*, be sure, and something over; that was the good of having a tea party.

To enter into more particulars: our guests were the neighbourhood; their means of admission, tickets one shilling, children ninepence; their object, enjoyment as much as they could find—possibly, in some instances, instruction, as much as they could get.

It has been modestly suggested that such a mode of raising money as that in course of description, is decidedly beneath the dignity of the church, or church institutions, and that there are other expedients which should be resorted to in preference. Perfectly just is all this in theory, but utterly untenable in practice. The other resources for obtaining money are *not* available in many parts of the mining district; not that the coin itself is scarce, but it is not church coin—not even always charitable coin. Now, episcopacy and dissent alike enjoy plum cake, and in strong tea are content to sink those differences which an appeal for half a crown might draw forth in great bitterness. To no other call does the mining heart so readily respond. Is a church or a chapel in need of slight repair? Get up a tea party. Are the school funds (when are they not?) at a very low ebb? a tea party must be the remedy. Is a poor family deprived of him who had been their support? a tea party is proposed for their benefit, and the heart of the bereaved rejoices. No, take away what else you will, but leave us our tea parties.

Where all the green stuff came from, (it must have journeyed a considerable distance), and how it ever got into that school-room, shabby tenement, I never correctly ascertained; but there it was; and, being there, hands were in requisition to arrange it, and heads to direct the hands; and ladders, hammers, nails, cords, threads, and needles, without which the heads and hands, however ornamental, would have been of but little avail. Six o'clock that morning found us hard at work; that is, Carry and myself, the schoolmaster and mistress, Scripture reader, and some other half dozen volunteers. We were few enough to do the business effectually. Mrs. Bary was far too much engrossed in arranging the cutting of cake and washing of crocks, and her husband in arranging ideas for his evening's speech—especially an *extempore bon môt* or two—for more than an occasional peep at us, usually accompanied by a suggestion which, never being considered good, was never adopted.

How we fagged, and how we hammered, and how we gave vent to more artistic and fantastic designs than we could have believed possible to have been in us! How we wreathed, festooned, and garlanded, and how sorely put to us sometimes were to hide the dirt of walls or beams beneath! When the church clock, striking four, warned us that it was time to desist, and prepare for the evening festivity, we felt that we had earned the coming pleasure. It was difficult to realize, glancing over our handiwork with humble yet admiring eyes, that the fairy scene before us was enshrined within the dusky old walls of the much despised national school-room. Fame is sweet; and the encomiums of the women, who invaded our fairyland with the profane intention of laying cloths, and setting tea-things, fell soothingly upon our ears.