



Snapshot Photographs by H. C. SHELLEY.



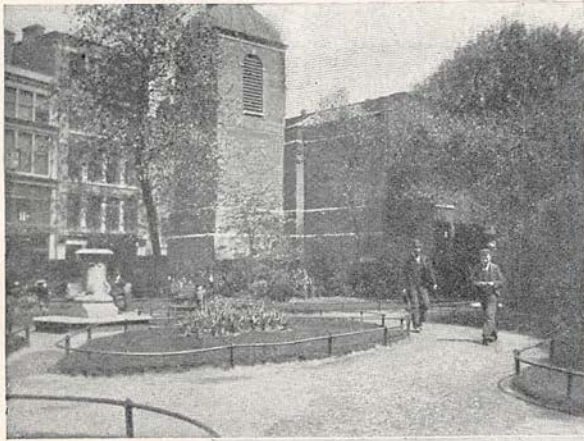
MOST public bodies, and many great commercial firms, have their own map of London. To a gas company the metropolis is mainly interesting as a vast assemblage of houses which require light; to a telephone company, as a herd of five million people anxious to speak to each other. In the map of each corporate body or trading concern, all that does not bear upon their own particular end in view is obliterated, or only faintly indicated.

But there is a map of London which preserves the essential conditions of such a document, with something else thrown in. It embraces an area from Wood Green on the north to Streatham Common on the south, and from Ealing on the west to Woolwich on the east; and its broad surface is stippled over with 343 crimson squares. This is the map of Picturesque London. It is issued by the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, and there are few societies which can produce such an eloquent testimonial to the value of some fifteen years' public services. A notable change has taken place in London during those fifteen years—such a change as practically justifies Sir Henry Irving in holding the opinion that the metropolis is the “prettiest village in England.”

There are few streets, even in the heart of the city, without their vista of sheltering

trees and green grass. Wedged in between the north end of the new General Post Office and the church of St. Botolph Without is one typical retreat known as the “Postman’s Park.” Its gravel walks, its flower beds, its lawns, are as carefully tended as though they were for the pleasure of the highest lady in the land, and those who rest here for a brief spell from the turmoil of city life, come so thoroughly under the charm of the orderliness of the garden as to make superfluous the request that “paper and other litter” may be placed in the boxes provided for that purpose. Another calm resting-place for the wearied Londoner is that of Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Heedless, indeed, are those eyes which, from the south side of High Holborn, can miss the vision of nature which blocks the end of Great Turnstile; and hard, indeed, is that heart which can resist the invitation that vision offers to a few minutes’ pause by the way. Who, too, will ever forget his first glimpse of Fountain Court in the Temple? Eighty years ago, Washington Irving found himself, one summer day, trying to buffet the current of humanity setting through Fleet Street. “The warm weather,” he wrote afterwards in recalling the experience, “had unstrung my nerves, and made me sensitive to every jar and jostle and discordant sound. The flesh was weary, the spirit faint, and I was getting out of humour with the bustling, busy throng through which I had to struggle.

when in a fit of desperation I tore my way through the crowd, plunged into a by-lane, and after passing through several obscure nooks and angles, emerged into a quaint and quiet court with a grass plot in the centre, overhung by elms, and kept perpetually fresh and green by a fountain with its sparkling



jet of water. A student with book in hand was seated on a stone bench, partly reading, partly meditating on the movements of two or three trim nursery-maids with their infant charges.

I was like an Arab who had suddenly come upon an oasis amid the panting sterility of the desert. By degrees the quiet and coolness of the place soothed my nerves and refreshed my spirit." Of another type are the gardens which line the north side of the Embankment; and who shall measure the mission of renovation of body and peace of soul which they, too, have fulfilled?

But all these phases of picturesque London, save for Fountain Court, have the mark of newness upon them. There are other phases which have been for a longer period the justification of those who assert that the capital is not the dreary city some declare it to be. There is the Thames Embankment, for example, which has become during late years a favourite drive with

Her Majesty the Queen. What better tribute to its beauty could be desired than that? If a love of nature which has been nurtured amid the Highlands of Scotland, the undulating landscapes of Berkshire, and the sea-girt loveliness of the Isle of Wight, can find satisfaction and enjoyment by the side of the Thames, who shall deny to the Embankment the right to be considered an integral part of the picturesqueness of London? And the Embankment has its years of mature beauty still to come. A hundred years hence, when the trees which line its broad walks have attained the girth and umbrage of centenarians, and when the more modern buildings along the Chelsea portion have taken on something of that charm of age

which lends a beauty to Somerset House, the Embankment will be able to hold its own with any thoroughfare in the world.

Yet, let us not stake London's claim to picturesqueness



PEEPS IN THE PUBLIC GARDENS.

on the Embankment alone, or even primarily. That would be to mete out scant justice to those areas of beauty which were in existence long ere the Embankment had been dreamt of. Out West, London must always have been arrestive to the artistic eye. Strolling through the Green Park on a *levée* day, what

a picture of colour and animation greets the eye! Midway down the Mall a crowd has gathered; in front of the crowd is a royal guard of honour, gay in cuirass and plumage; in front again are the towers of the old

dark yellow clouds, and between those two colours the dull red of the roadway became transformed into a hue which would have baffled even the palette of Turner.

There are some supercilious critics who pretend to find adequate reason for dissatisfaction with the Houses of Parliament, but such a carping spirit is only one phase of that modern "smartness" which is as inane as it is childish. Even apart from the appeal which that noble pile makes to the historic imagination, no lover of form and colour can gaze unmoved upon its fretted turrets as they are seen from the south side of the Thames. It only needs the setting sun to

add the final touch to the picture, and surely it is possible that the architect may have had some forethought about the frame which Nature now and then might build



red palace of St. James's. Or, take the stretch of Piccadilly from Queen's Walk on to Hyde Park Corner. It does not need the gaiety of a royal procession to add the elements of a picture to that famous thoroughfare; for the elements are always there. The verdure of the Green Park on the one side, the stately club buildings and homes of peers on the other, and between these the constant stream of the aristocratic carriages, the indiscriminate hansom, and the plebeian 'bus—what more can the eye desire? But if the rush of traffic distracts, turn into Rotten Row at an unfashionable hour. That historic drive loses none of its beauty when empty of horse and rider. Rarely, indeed, does even London furnish forth such a feast of dreamy beauty as fell to the enjoyment of a handful of people who happened to stand at the end of the Row one Sunday afternoon last winter. A pearly-grey fog was creeping up the avenue, overhead the atmosphere was charged with

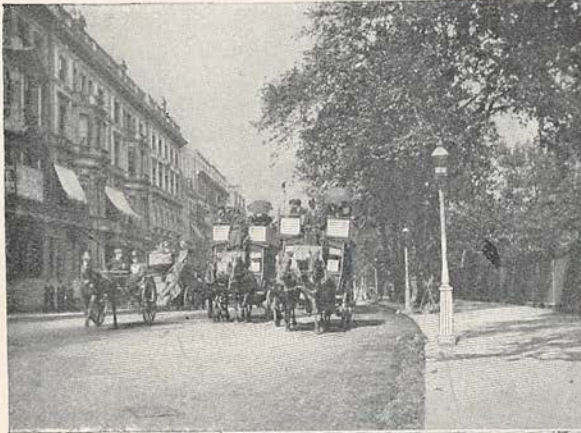


ON THE EMBANKMENT.

around his work. What that frame is Richard Jefferies has described. "Vast rugged columns of vapour rise up behind and over the towers of the House, hanging with threatening aspect; westward the sky is nearly clear, with some relic of the sunset

glow; the river itself, black, or illuminated with the electric light, imparting a silvery blue tint, crossed again with the red lamps of the steamers. The aurora of dark vapour, streamers extending from the thicker masses, slowly moves and yet does not go away; it is just such a sky as a painter might give to

artists, and English literature would be distinctly impoverished if some ruthless hand could expunge from its pages all the lofty verse which has owed its creation to the influence of London. Wordsworth's sonnet, composed upon Westminster Bridge—not the present structure, be it remembered—is a case in point.



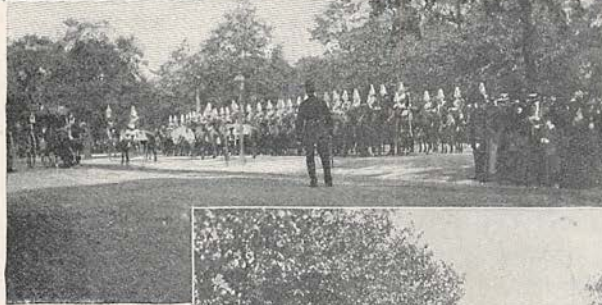
Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did the sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

some tremendous historical event, a sky big with presage, gloom, tragedy."

Artists ought to be the best judges of the beauty of any given district or city, and the fact that an increasing number of painters are seeking inspiration for pictures within the limits of London is ample condemnation of those who, in past years, have ignored the claims of the metropolis, and sought in foreign lands subjects for their brush. Within recent years the pictures exhibited at the Royal Academy by Mr. T. B. Kennington and Mr. W. Logsdail have rendered yeoman service in showing the artistic possibilities of the metropolis. Mr. Kennington, it is true, has restricted himself to the use of London streets as backgrounds by which to intensify the pathos of life; but Mr. Logsdail has conclusively shown how effectively the famous churches of the great city lend themselves to artistic treatment.

Poets, too, are as sensitive to beauty as

London, notwithstanding its dirt and ugliness—often, indeed, because of them—is rich in beauty to the seeing eye. Even those fogs which the city dweller so



IN THE WEST END.

much dreads, often reveal, by the suppression of distracting details, the true majesty of architecture and throw into relief against the dull orb of a winter sun the stately proportions of buildings which are overlooked in the clear sunshine of summer.