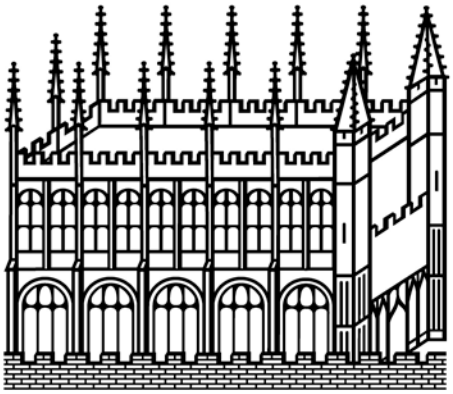


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LONDON *and* LONDONERS *in the* EIGHTEEN-FIFTIES *and* SIXTIES

Author of

Telephone Systems of Continental Europe; Proposals for London Improvements; First Railway in London; Electrical Parcel Exchange; A Convection Mill and Calorimeter; A Cheap Form of Voltaic Battery; A Saga of Guernsey, etc., etc.

LONDON *and* LONDONERS *in the* EIGHTEEN-FIFTIES *and* SIXTIES

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FOREWORD

MANY of the incidents in the following pages may justly be classed as trivial.

But it does not certainly follow that they are quite destitute of significance.

Of what is the most artistic painting made up? Of a multiplicity of smudges. And the grandest cathedral window? Of fragments of coloured glass.

Yet each tells a story of some kind more or less completely, and the smudges and fragments are lost sight of in the general effect.

Should my piecing together of tiny personal experiences and recollections produce a not dissimilar result, it will mean that I too have made a picture and told a story—that I have succeeded, as I wished to do, in bringing the London of sixty years ago a little nearer than it has been to the present generation. And some may think that amongst the verbiage lurks a lesson too.

March 14th, 1924.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

Islington—City Road—Cholera—Measles and Weasels—New River—Pranks—London Bridge—The Pool—Crimean War—P.s. *Prince*—H.M.S. *Tiger* . . . . . pp. 17–27

CHAPTER II

SOUTHWARD HO!

Camberwell—New house—Severe frost—Maidens at the well—First railway journey—Accidents . . . . . pp. 28–33

CHAPTER III

STREET TYPES OF THE 1850s

Policemen—Experiences humorous and tragic—Postmen—Old clo'man—Skin merchant—"Skin 'em alive oh!"—Milkmen—Butchers' boys—Volunteers—Street banter . . . . . pp. 34–42

CHAPTER IV

OLD-TIME STREET SCENES

Retailing beer to houses—Can-boys—Workmen and beer—Dustmen—Muffin-man—Brewers' draymen—Austrian General and Barclay and Perkins—Sweeps—Water-carts and pumps—Popularity of street trading—Water-cress girls—Lavender sellers—Cats'-meat man—Gipsies—Thimble-rig—Three-card trick—Purse trick—Street roulette—Impromptu rhymer . . . . . pp. 43–51

CHAPTER V

THE DIORAMA OF THE STREET

Chair-menders—"Ornaments for your fire stoves"—Fly-catchers—Draught-bags—Italian images—Sham sailors—Groundsel—Baked chestnuts and potatoes—Night refreshments—Fruit and vegetable hawkers—Strawberries in pottles—Street stalls—Orange-girls—Hand-bills—Beggars with paintings—Cheap Jacks—Preachers—Waits—Workmen's paper caps—Soldiers—Sailors—Pensioners—Beadles—Lamplighters—Crossing sweepers—Shoeblacks—Undertakers . . . . . pp. 52–59

CHAPTER VI

STREET ENTERTAINERS

Raree-show—Punch and Judy—Dancing puppets—Acrobats—Multiplex musician—Bagpipers—Hurdy-gurdy and white mice—Organ-grinders—German bands—Ballad singers—Victorian and modern music—Happy families—Glass-blowers—Bell-ringers—Jack-in-the-Green—Guy Fawkes—Grottoes—Marrow-bones and cleavers . . . . . pp. 60–71

CHAPTER VII

STREET PASSENGERS—COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS

Ladies and crinolines—Riding habits—Complexions—Maiden simplicity—Little girls—Men's whiskers and attire—Night-caps—Bed curtains—Little boys—Top-hats—Few women in City—Office equipment in 1850s—Wafers—Seals—Quills . . . . . pp 72–77

CHAPTER VIII

STILL ON THE QUEEN'S HIGHWAY

Tea-shops—Aerated bread—Chop- and coffee-houses—Taverns—Railways and refreshments—Lake's—Lord Mayor's Show—Gog and Magog—Show programmes—Mayors and Reeves—Omnibuses—Fires—Manual engines—Fire-escapes—Steam fire-engines—Tooley Street blaze—Thames on fire—Braithwaite and Ericsson—Locomotive *Novelty*—Turret ship *Monitor*—Hot-air ship—Motor-car radiator . . . pp. 78–87

CHAPTER IX

PEARLS AND DIVERS MATTERS—FIRST TREMOR OF THE WORLD-QUAKE

Grand Surrey Canal—Severe winter—Learning to row—Diving for pearls in London—Disastrous fishing expedition—Road-making—Toll-bars—Road steamers—Bricklayers' Arms Station—Crown Prince Frederick—Act I of Armageddon—Railways and taverns . . pp. 88–94

CHAPTER X

BUILDINGS, BEER, AND BEARS' GREASE

Buildings—Beer—English *v.* French—Brewers—"Entires"—Convinced M.P.—Shop and tavern signs—London Bridge railway termini—Southwark Town Hall—Crimean plum-puddings—Wellington Clock Tower—New London Bridge as Rennie left it—Skating on London Bridge—Glengall Grove bridge—A puzzle for future antiquaries—Moses and Sons—Harper Twelvetrees—Bears' grease and bears—Antimacassars—Hair-brushing by machinery . . . . . pp. 95–102

CHAPTER XI

BIG BEN BOOMS—DONATI LOOMS

Big Ben—Old and New Houses of Parliament—Donati's comet—Consternation—Signs and portents—1858 extraordinary astronomical year—A clever coast-guardsman—B.C. 637—A.D. 4353—Fine summer—Pictures of comet . . . . . pp. 102–106

CHAPTER XII

FATHER THAMES

River Thames—Steamers above and below bridge—Margate, Ramsgate, Ipswich, and Continental steamers—Tug-boats—A great highway—Call-boys—Let-down funnels—Surrey Side Pier—Gravesend and Rosherville—Uniforms—Steering—Decadence of steamer traffic . pp. 107–115

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIGGEST SHIP SINCE THE ARK

First river trips—*Great Eastern* in 1857 and 1886—Echoes in Muscat—At Bombay—Breaking up—Gruesome discovery—Performances as steamer—Voyage to New York—Man going to be hanged taken to see her—Trip to the Chesapeake—Visited by President and slaves—Unlucky career—Before her time . . . . . pp. 116–121

CHAPTER XIV

BRIDGES—GARDENS—CHURCHES—PARSONS

Hungerford Bridge—Market and Pier—Lambeth Bridge—Battersea Timber Bridge—Old Westminster Bridge—Old Blackfriars Bridge—Cannon Street Bridge—Rosherville Gardens—North Woolwich Gardens—Cremorne and Royal Surrey Gardens—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon—St. George's, Camberwell—Churchwardens' staves—Pulpits, clerk and beadle—Boys and girls—Problems and peppermint—The Rev. Samuel Smith pp. 122–128

CHAPTER XV

BELGIAN CIVIC GUARDS—WHITEBAIT AT GREENWICH—LORD PALMERSTON

English Volunteers in Belgium—Festivities—Dining with the King—Field of Waterloo—"*À bas le Roi*"!—Luminosity in North Sea—Belgian *Gardes Civiques* in England—Troop-ship *Serapis*—Thames steamers—*La Vivandière*—Turtle famine at Guildhall—No lunch at Wimbledon—Dinner with the Queen—Merriment at Crystal Palace—All forgotten in 1914—Whitebait at Greenwich—Lord Palmerston and Ministry in 1861—German opinion of "Pam"—Trimmings and Turtles . pp. 129–135

CHAPTER XVI

THE HISTORIAN HIMSELF BECOMES HISTORY—OF VARIOUS MATTERS, REGAL TO RAGGED

Lord Macaulay—Model locomotive—Opening of Parliament—"Stop thief!"—St. James's Park—Balloons—Mouldy coppers—Vulgar speech—Other errors—Swear words—Affected speech—Names—Manners—Rough boys—Effects of pugilism not all bad—Baiting eccentrics—Boys and cats pp. 136–144

CHAPTER XVII

TWO GREAT INVENTIONS—EVERYDAY THINGS THAT WERE

Lucifers — Postage stamps — Letters — Script — Benevolence — Uncut newspapers—Carpet-bags—Willow pattern china—Dutch clocks—Roasting jacks—Baths . . . . . pp. 145–151

CHAPTER XVIII

SIXPENNY TELEGRAMS SIXTY YEARS AGO—THE BICYCLE'S ANCESTORS

Druggists—Shutters—Food—Sixpenny telegrams—Smallpox—Lamps—Candles—Pantechnicons—Velocipedes—Insurance signs—Slaughter-houses—Toys and games—Skelt's sheets—Toy theatres—Magic lanterns pp. 152–159

CHAPTER XIX

1852-7—LIFE'S KALEIDOSCOPE—FRANKLIN—INDIAN MUTINY

Home life—Illustrated journals—A loving mentor—Chess—Great Duke—Crimean War—A Turkish Fenian—German champion for England—Dr. Palmer—George Herring—Sir John Franklin—Arctic and Antarctic—An American courtesy—Indian Mutiny—Day of humiliation—Spurgeon at Crystal Palace—Captain Lukis . . . . . pp. 160–167

CHAPTER XX

1857—A GOOD MAN GETS HIS CHANCE—LONDON'S ODOURS

Burning of s.s. *Sarah Sands* — Captain Castle — P.s. *Nyanza* — At Sunderland—Cleopatra's Needle—Atlantic cable, first attempt—Chinese and Persian Wars—General Tom Thumb—London, S.—Insanitary London—Foulness of Thames and Serpentine—Chloride of lime . pp. 168–174

CHAPTER XXI

1858—THE PANTOMIME JOGS ON—INVADING THE OCEAN BED

Don Quixote — Astley's — St. James's Theatre — Prestidigitation — Dinner at Leicester Square—Orsini—Perim—Queen at Cherbourg—First Atlantic cable laid—Whales, American barque and Irish steamer—Disaster and disappointment—Jersey-Coutances cable . pp. 175–179

CHAPTER XXII

1858-9—CRYSTAL PALACE—SPAIN POISES THE JAVELIN

Crystal Palace—History—Sir Joseph Paxton—Fountains—Balloons—Antediluvians—Railways to—When the Crystal Palace owned a railway—Crystal Palace Station—Divers attractions—Court of Lions—Protest from the Moorish Ambassador—Refreshments—Photographs—Flying machines—Later visits—Dangerous bridge—Colonel Burnaby—Shadow Show—Perfect Cure—Green's Balloon—Pepper's Ghost—Handel Festival—Concerts—Express trains to Palace—Declaration of war by Spain—Bad business—*Royal Charter* . . . . . pp. 180–188

CHAPTER XXIII

1860—GLADIATORS, HA'PENCE, MURDERS, WRECKS, AND TRAMS

Sayers and Heenan—One arm *versus* No eyes—National enthusiasm—Heenan in railway accident—Marries a poetess—Heenan's backers presented at Court—New bronze coinage—Old coppers—Victoria Station—Approach through glass tunnel—Constance Kent—Repercussion of Grace Darling—First street tramways—George Francis Train—Eccentric telegram . . . . . pp. 189–196

CHAPTER XXIV

1860—LONGITUDE 0° 0′ 0″

Family removal—Greenwich in 1860—River path to Woolwich—Derelict steamers—Angerstein's Wharf—A good *Fairy*—Yarn of a rope—Marooned off Blackwall—Churchwardens . . . pp. 197–202

CHAPTER XXV

1861—GREENWICH SIXTY YEARS SINCE

A straight road—Southern outfall sewer—Live British workmen—Winding and pumping engines—New Cross Road—Greenwich Hospital and its pensioners—Collegemen's Chapel—Characteristic hymns—Hospital wards—Trafalgar model—Painted Hall—Changes in hospital—Out-pensions—Deplorable results—Empty hospital—Removal of the *Dreadnought* . . . . . pp. 203–209

CHAPTER XXVI

1861 (*continued*)—SCULL AND OAR

Regattas—George Everson—Bob Chambers—Harry Kelly—A popular win—A dark horse in light blue—Sport at Horsleydown—Something like an umpire—Living to fight another day . . . . pp. 210–216

CHAPTER XXVII

1861 (*continued*)—MOSTLY ECCLESIASTICAL

Religious life—Methodists—St. Alphege's—Reverend W. A. Soames—St. Mary's—A didactic preacher—Mothers' meetings—Tea-urns—A priestly uncle—Our Lady's, Croom's Hill—A Brazilian broad road to heaven—*Maid of the Mist*—Big Ben again—Death of the Prince Consort—Hartley colliery—Sale of honours . . . . pp. 217–223

CHAPTER XXVIII

1861 (*continued*)—FEDERALS AND CONFEDERATES—PERILOUS MOMENTS

American Civil War—*Nashville* at Southampton—*Trent* affair—Commodore Wilkes—*Great Eastern* for Canada—Army Medical Board—Record railway run—War pictures—*Monitor*—Ericsson—Blockade runners—Midhat Pasha—Fredericksburg . . . . . pp. 224–231

CHAPTER XXIX

1861 (*continued*)—VARNISHED INDUSTRIES

Locomotive building in London—Shipbuilding in London—Last days of—Blackwall (Germany)—Greenwich again—Trinity House Almshouse—Old Woolwich Road—Park—Blackheath—Circus—Dick Turpin—Panoramas—Monte Video—Magic-lanterns—Modern "penny dreadfuls"—Scarlet fever—Saffron and tamarinds—"Walk on Jenkins"
pp. 232–239

CHAPTER XXX

1861 (*continued*)—THE FIRST LONDON RAILWAY

Greenwich railway—First London terminus—Boulevard—Prince of Orange—"Kiss me, Hardy"—Captain Marryat—George Stephenson—Leased by S.E.R.—Enormous holiday traffic—Early poems and prognostications—And results—Enter the gorilla . . . . pp. 240–245

CHAPTER XXXI

1862–3—GREAT EXHIBITION—PRINCESS ALEXANDRA

1862—Exhibition—Disappointing buildings—Mr. Gladstone defeated—Splendid exhibits—Locomotives—Ships—Colonies—Aniline dyes—Armstrong and Krupp guns—Candlesticks—Koh-i-noor—Strand Theatre—*Lady of Lyons*—1863—Prince of Wales's marriage—Woolwich—Illuminations—London Bridge unapproachable—Successful manœuvre
pp. 246–251

CHAPTER XXXII

1863—THE FIRST UNDERGROUND

Metropolitan Railway—Sir John Fowler—Forth Bridge—Special engines for underground—Broad gauge—First gas-lit carriages—Great Western Railway—Edinburgh Exhibition, 1890—Supine Museum authorities—M.R. quarrels with G.W.R.—Great Northern called in—Boiler explosion at Bishop's Road—Metropolitan work their own line—R. H. Burnett . . . . . pp. 252–257

CHAPTER XXXIII

1863 (*continued*)—TRAGEDY, PATHOS AND FARCE

Ionian Isles cession—Donnybrookopolis—Everything declines except taxes—Pathos in Houndsditch—Steam fire-engines competition—*Manhattan* defeated—Baked potato-can—American leveller in the Philippines—Moonshine blindness—Catastrophe at Santiago—Cardinal Manning's exorcism—Accident at New Cross—Sources of the Nile—Mr. Banting—William Crookes and thallium . . . . . pp. 258–263

CHAPTER XXXIV

1864—MURDER ON SEA AND RAILROAD

Flowery Land pirates—Calcraft—A gibbet for five—Public execution—North London Railway murder—Mr. Briggs—Müller—Chase to New York—Detectives' triumph—Trial and execution—King of Prussia intervenes—*Kreuz Zeitung*—Abolition of public executions—Danish War—Naval battle off Jutland—First German flag in Persian Gulf . pp. 264–268

CHAPTER XXXV

1864 (*continued*)—THE HERO OF ITALY

Garibaldi—Barclay Perkins—Kisses—Red blouses—Austrian double-faced eagle—For France in 1870—Old Garibaldians in Mesopotamia and Inverness—Foolish protest by Common Council—Last of the Fleet prison—Penny parcel-post—Sinking of *Alabama*—Gallant fight—Belvedere explosion . . . . . pp. 269–274

CHAPTER XXXVI

1865—JUSTICE OFF HER BALANCE—FIRST LONDON TUBES

Wreck of *San Jacinto*—Saffron Hill murder—Pneumatic tubes—Electrical Parcel Exchange—Thames tunnel—Thames subways—Serpentine bridge statuary—Cobden and Bright—Paxton—President Lincoln's assassination—Desolate cotton-fields . . . . . pp. 275–281

CHAPTER XXXVII

1865 (*continued*)—EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS

Jersey—P.s. *Normandy*—Harvey monument—Sark—French p.s. *Comète*—Langham Hotel—Dr. Pritchard—Fun in Rotten Row—Chignons—Cheap Sunday excursions—Boulogne-sur-Mer—A venturesome Cornishman—Science Museum—Spain *v.* Chili—First bombs—Rabies, Cholera, and Fenianism—Jamaican Insurrection—Governor Eyre—*Samphire* collision—"Free" Trade . . . . . pp. 282–288

CHAPTER XXXVIII

1866—KING NEPTUNE FETTERED AT LAST

S.s. *London*—Sentence of death on 200—Amateur casual—Captain Coles—Cigar-ship—Overend and Gurney—Atlantic cables—*Great Eastern* finds her mission—Complete success—Array of British talent—Post Office red tape—King Neptune and the cables . . . . pp. 289–294

CHAPTER XXXIX

1866 (*continued*)—PLAGUES OF SORTS—PENAL PUNISHMENTS

London's last cholera—Quarantined—Cat-o'-nine tails—Treadmill—The main point—First public ball—Nellie Power—The old, old story—After-years—Leicester Square—George II in charge—Baron Grant—Meteors—Hyde Park railings—Crystal Palace fire—Mr. Gladstone . pp. 295–302

CHAPTER XL

1867—STRIKES AND REVOLUTIONS—PARIS UNDER THE EMPIRE—GUNPOWDER TREASON

Martyrdom of Governor Eyre—A disloyal Government—Strikes on the Brighton and North-Eastern Railways—Woburn Square ghost—Emperor Maximilian—The *Tomahawk* and Napoleon III—Empress Charlotte—First visit to Paris—A fascinating chamber-maid—Parisian showmen—P.s. *La Parisienne*—Czar—King of Prussia—Bismarck—Luxembourg dispute—*Fêtes de l'Empereur*—Hard on the English—*Arc de Triomphe*—Grand Exhibition—Clerkenwell Prison explosion—Gunpowder treason—Last public execution—Special constables—Glasgow explosions—German raids—H.M. Theatre fire—A scrimmage—Faraday—Alison—Holborn Viaduct—Tichborne case . . . pp. 303–312

CHAPTER XLI

1868—BY LAND AND SEA

Royal College of Surgeons—Fenian shoots Duke of Edinburgh—Greenwich Hospital scandal—*Victory* and *Bucentaur*—*Theseus*—Abyssinian War—An earnest wooer—Napier of Magdala—Governor Eyre acquitted—Admiral de Horsey—*Shah* and *Huascar*—Tea clippers—Emigrant ship—Auxiliary screw-steamer—East and West India Docks—Ratcliffe Highway—Swedish Church—Wapping Old Stairs—Mahogany Bar—Landseer's lions . . . . . pp. 313–323

CHAPTER XLII

1869—A STORMY VOLUNTEER REVIEW

New Law Courts—Volunteer Review—Storm at Dover—Wreck of H.M.S. *Ferret*—Captain H. M. Carré—After many years—Whisky pp. 324–327

CHAPTER XLIII

THE DRAMA—EARLY RECOLLECTIONS—BURLESQUES

Miss Woolgar—*Porter's Knot*—J. L. Toole—Paul Bedford—Phelps—Louis XI—Miss Marriott—Fechter—Miss Bateman—Sothern—Buckstone—Adelina Patti—Mme. Tietjens—Santley—Burnand—James and Thorne—Elise Holt—H. J. Byron—W. Brough—*Black-eyed Susan*—Alice Burville—W. S. Gilbert—Burlesques . . . . . pp. 328–334

CHAPTER XLIV

THE DRAMA (*continued*)—FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS—UNITY CLUB

New Standard Theatre—Queen's Theatre—Irving—First telephone in England—Dynamite demonstration—Labouchere—Gaiety Theatre—Nellie Farren—Adah Isaacs Menken—Mazeppa—T. W. Robertson—Marie Wilton—*Grande Duchesse*—Mrs. Howard Paul—Can-can—Miss Furtado—Unity Club—G. R. Sims—Theatrical hours and customs—Music-halls—The chairman—Weston's—Unrehearsed turn—*Poses Plastiques*—Judge and jury—Florentine Venus—Benefits . . . . . pp. 335–344

CHAPTER XLV

SPORT

Leonidas to Tom Sayers—Mills's Field—Cricket—Football—Racing—*Caractacus*—*Bribery Colt*—Running—Deerfoot—Rowing—Boxing—Baden-Powell—Archery . . . . . pp. 345–352

CHAPTER XLVI

CONCLUSION

Education—Curtailed liberty—Englishmen abroad—Workers *v.* Shirkers—Old-time wisdom—*Quo vadimus* ? . . . . . pp. 353–364

INDEX . . . . . pp. 365–371

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

LOCOMOTIVES OF THE 1850S AND 1920S . . . 30

A VANISHED LANDMARK 96

DONATI'S COMET VIEWED FROM CAMBRIDGE, OCTOBER, 1858 104

THE THAMES AS A HIGHWAY 108

WATERMAN STEAMBOAT COMPANY'S STEAMER "TEAL" EMBARKING THE LABOUR CORPS . . . 114

"GREAT EASTERN" STEAMSHIP 116

THE FIRST MAN-POWER LOCOMOTIVE: VELOCIPEDES, 1862 156

A FINE EXPRESSION OF INTERNATIONAL AMITY: SIR JOHN FRANKLIN SEARCH SHIP "RESOLUTE" 164

MAP OF LONDON, 1857 172

THE CRYSTAL PALACE AND PARK, 1854 180

COPPER COINS WITHDRAWN FROM CIRCULATION IN 1860 192

DREADNOUGHT HOSPITAL SHIP 208

LONDON AND LONDONERS

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

Islington—City Road—Cholera—Measles and Weasels—New River—Pranks—London Bridge—The Pool—Crimean War—P.s. *Prince*—H.M.S. *Tiger*.

TO one who has had the opportunity of comparing by personal experience the conditions which prevail to-day, in 1924, with those that ruled the lives of Londoners sixty and seventy years ago, it is very obvious that in many ways things are not what they were. Whether the changes are all for the public weal may be doubted; that they have occurred is beyond dispute.

As a very little boy I lived in the north of London, not far from the erstwhile fair village of Islington. When nearly five years old a family migration happened, and Camberwell, not yet the forlorn locality we know to-day, became the scene of my small activities. Five years later these shifted to Greenwich. So my knowledge of Suburbia did not lack variety.

My recollections of Islington are confined to the years 1853–4, probably mostly to the latter, and are naturally not very numerous. The most vivid, perhaps, have reference to the stepped terrace upon which the pathway from the *Angel* tavern to near Liverpool Road is raised. In itself it has certainly undergone no considerable change since then, although the *Angel* and some of the shops have been rebuilt.

It is likely that my observation was concentrated on this terraced walk, not so much because of its unusual construction as from the fact that among the shops which it fronted were two, trading respectively in cakes and toys,

that were wont to arrest my particular attention. Which attracted me the more I cannot say, but I sometimes remained in suspense between them, much as Mahomet's coffin is fabled to hover between opposing magnets.

Two mishaps which have never been forgotten occurred to me on this terrace. I once got my left foot wedged between the bars of a cellar grating in front of the confectioner's and was held prisoner in midst of a gaping but sympathetic crowd until a man, rough both in attire and language, appeared with a crow-bar and by prising apart the tenacious irons set me free. On another occasion a coal-heaver carrying a 2-cwt. sack on his back turned suddenly to enter a doorway just as I was passing and struck my face with one of the stiff corners of the sack, giving me my very first black eye.

An earlier recollection—the most ancient of all my surviving infantile memories—was of riding along the terrace in a two-seated perambulator with my baby brother, fast asleep, with his head on his left shoulder, facing me. I also seem to sense that he was dressed in white or very light-coloured clothes and wore a cap to match; while I could almost swear an affidavit that when this occurred I sat with my back to the direction of motion, which was towards Highbury. In after-years this remembrance occasioned some wonderment, although its precision was not challenged, for at the time my comings and goings on this planet had all been performed within the limited span of some twenty-eight months.

I remember the *Angel* dimly (we were not supposed to notice public-houses); the reservoir on Pentonville Hill, Sadler's Wells theatre, and the Waterworks adjacent to it, very well.

Not far from the theatre was the churchyard in which two men prominently connected with it in its palmy days were buried—Charles Dibdin, the talented writer and composer of nautical songs, and Joe Grimaldi, the famous clown. I had never seen a pantomime, but had come to know somehow that a clown was an exalted personage, and Grimaldi the very pick of his kind.

Our walks sometimes extended to another public-house, the celebrated *Eagle* in the City Road, which could not be ignored, for did it not possess a theatre (where the great Sims Reeves made his first appearance on any stage), and have annexed to it a pleasure garden in which General High Jinks held permanent command ?

Was it not recorded that there a daring acrobat once attached a horse instead of a car to a balloon, and seated on its back surpassed even the Eagle in his flight and discharged fireworks in the very face of the wondering stars ? And that, when he descended, near Twickenham, the horse began to gallop as soon as his feet touched earth with the result that he jumped over a Quakers' Meeting House (causing much mute astonishment), and then cleared Eel Pie Island and the encircling Thames, all at a bound and without turning a hair ? And did not a difference of opinion develop between the acrobat and certain tender-hearts—the one being certain that the horse enjoyed the entertainment quite as much as he did himself and the others that it was cruel and ought to be put down ?

And could we not sing the ditty which has rendered the house classic if not immortal :

> " Up and down the City Road,
> In and out the *Eagle* " ?

To reach this resort of the Muses—in after-years (until purchased and captured lock, stock, and barrels by the Salvation Army) to become familiar to gay young Londoners as " The Bird "—whose glories we were only permitted to contemplate from across the way, we had to pass the bridge over the Canal Basin in the City Road. In 1854 hoardings covered with advertising posters much like those which adorn it to-day were already there. The bills, perhaps cruder and less artistic than their successors of 1924, were equally numerous and insistent. I have sometimes thought that these hoardings—which I did not like, for they prevented any view of the canal and navigating barges below —and the terraced walk at Islington ought justly to be reckoned amongst the most stable of London's monuments.

Certainly St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey have changed more.

The cholera was bad during the latter part of our stay at Islington, and I remember having imbibed an impression that in some way or other it was connected with chickens in confined spaces, for walking one day with my father in or near the Goswell Road we came upon a lot of fowls in piled-up coops, the topmost containing a great yellow cock, who, as we passed, flapped his wings and crowed lustily as if announcing himself far and wide as king of the castle. "Should we catch cholera by going very near them?" I enquired. Thenceforth, long before I knew anything about quarantine flags and their significance, I somehow associated yellow with disease, and especially cholera. Some seventeen years later I was in a village in Mesopotamia which was suddenly occupied by a Turkish Kurdish regiment on the march to embark for El Katiff in Arabia which the Ottomans were then invading. They had cholera amongst them so badly that they were losing a man about every hour with great regularity. Once more that yellow cock clapped his wings and crowed in my imagination.

This feeling about yellow may have been assisted by the fact that I took measles at Islington and occupied for many days a yellow-painted iron cot in the parental chamber —segregation for measles had not then been dreamed of— an apartment the form and arrangements of which I remember perfectly. My yellow cot lay to the left of the main bed, beyond which was the door. To the right on entering was the fire-place, and facing the beds were two windows. Beyond the fire-place were the washstand and towel-rack, and against the left wall was an antique wardrobe. A dressing-table occupied the space between the windows and a circular clock hung on the wall above it.

When the doctor came he made a brief examination and said: "He's got the measles—got 'em badly." Now I had never heard of measles, but in connection with my elder brother's rabbits was familiar with the word weasel,

which I knew designated a wicked little animal, for not long before one had got into a hutch and killed the dun-and-white mother of fifteen. So I jumped to the conclusion that he meant that I had the weasels, and, not without apprehension, began to wonder how they had got into me and why I didn't feel them running about inside.

Connecting chickens with cholera was by no means an extravagant idea for those days. The fell disease was not understood, and in the prevailing ignorance all sorts of notions were current. The water supply, however, was beginning to fall under suspicion, and the merits of chloride of lime to be mooted. Remedies recommended were numberless. Acorns, mustard plasters, castor-oil, laughing-gas, cold mutton broth, and hot mint-tea each had its strenuous advocates.

While I lay ill my father received a present of a pair of handsome china vases which he, as I remember vividly, brought up to show me one afternoon. After due admiration they were placed on the mantel-piece and next day supplied with water and flowers. Blooms were considered refreshing for a sick room then. Those vases remained in the family for many years, miraculously surviving the perils incidental to a household finally containing seven boys, and did not, I think, completely disappear—they were pretty fragmentary before that happened—until well on in the 1880s. Father, also, another day, brought me a large toy, with which I was greatly pleased, although its nature, strange to say, I have completely forgotten.

A recollection of these yellow-cot days is of watching little groups of flies circling and apparently gambolling in the centre of the bedroom, continuing at the game, seemingly without change of personnel, for hours. I used to wonder what they were really doing and why they always waltzed in the centre of the room and nowhere else. These speculations went on for years, but nearly seven decades later remain unsolved. As I write, flies are dodging each other in the air over my head and in the exact centre of

the room. Yet what they are after or up to I *know* no more now than then. But as there is usually an upward atmospheric current in that position, especially if a gasalier or electric pendant hangs there, they *may* be catching nutritious trifles—small deer in the shape of germs, for instance—in the ever-rising and changing air.

I remember a chemist's shop not far from the Terrace, but not on it, at which we sometimes made purchases, where there was a large rectangular aquarium with gold and silver fish. Close to it stood a globular receptacle for leeches which the doctors of those days, not yet entirely emancipated from the craze of blood-letting, were fond of prescribing, and a stock of which every druggist was bound to keep for sale or hire. The proprietor had a bald head, and him I detested, for he sold a peculiarly disgusting grey powder which he was insistent on all occasions in recommending for little boys.

My elder brother, eight years my senior, met with two mishaps during our stay at Islington. Coming home from school one day he was interfered with by a butcher's boy. A tussle ensued, and my brother was thrown violently upon an iron grating and his left arm broken. This caused a commotion in the house, as may be imagined, and it was long before he was convalescent. I remember him with a toy drum of mine hanging round his neck which he was beating with his uninjured hand. As he kept rabbits and was fond of books and drawing he made the time pass not entirely without profit.

The other occurrence was on Guy Fawkes Day, 1854. Gunpowder Plot *was* kept up in those days! My brother bought materials and made up fireworks of his own which, in the evening, he let off from an apple-tree in the back garden, to the admiration of his parents and younger brothers. He seemed slow in coming down the tree afterwards and in to supper, and when he did appear mother noticed that he was pale. Later, showing clumsiness in managing his food, she caught his hands, and lo! on the palm of the right was an angry and extensive burn. One of the home-made fireworks had exploded in his grasp.

And he was trying to emulate the Spartan boy with the fox!

At Islington we, of course, heard much of Sir Hugh Myddleton and his New River, and I was shown places where this was said to run underground. When, some years later, I was told that in certain vast caverns eyeless fishes inhabited pools and subterranean streams, I wondered if in the portions of the New River which flowed underfoot the fishes were eyeless too. The pit of Sadler's Wells was reputed to be situated immediately over some springs, and close by, Grimaldi once swam across the river in his haste to get to the theatre, in which a panic, due to a false alarm of fire, was in riotous progress.

I'm afraid that apart from a big snow-storm—my first—and some personal escapades that might have happened to any naughty boy anywhere, these reminiscences of Islington must be the last.

I have mentioned the filthy grey powders vended by the bald druggist of piscatorial tendencies. These I would only take under the strongest compulsion, and one morning refused absolutely all solicitations and threats. The powder was all ready in a spoon, unmixed—on the advice of the pernicious chemist—with jam or any other tempting qualifier. I felt that it would make me sick and said so. That morning the chimneys were being swept and the house-maid most treacherously suggested—it was long before I forgave her, if I ever did—that the sweep, then "doing" the kitchen, should be sent for to make me take the powder. I treated the proposal with derisive defiance, but was alarmed when, a few minutes later, the dingy craftsman was ushered in. His face was very black and his general get-up, including smell, deplorably sooty. He was apparently one of those objectionable individuals—I have met several during my life—who think they cannot effectively communicate ideas without pushing their faces close against that of the person addressed. Accordingly, friend sweep put his dirty countenance close to mine, and in a husky voice said: "Young master, you must please take your nice powder." I opened my mouth to deny

that it was nice, when in was popped the spoon and dismal contents. What I had feared immediately took place. I retched and discharged the whole dose straight into the sweep's face. A chorus of dismay rose from the women folk; and a minute later, I heard the water running in the scullery where the sweep had at last been compelled to wash his face. When he left the house it was as a cleaner and, possibly, wiser man. His medical practice had been brief.

More than thirty years afterwards I one day entered a druggist's shop near the Town Hall, Carlisle, and found myself confronted with a rectangular aquarium containing gold and silver fish. Instantly I thought of Islington, and once more felt the taste of those grey powders in my mouth. Such is the power of suggestion.

A few years before that I had been very ill near Kilmalcolm, Renfrewshire, and the doctor there, who afterwards attained some eminence in his profession, prescribed his medicine in the form of powders. I protested, offering to take any sort of liquid mixture without winking, but he insisted that in any other form the medicine would be less effective, so, to please him, I accepted a dose. The usual consequences ensued, and I refused to try again, notwithstanding his urgency, which amounted almost to entreaty, and when he found himself up against a stone wall he called me "an obstinate Englishman" and went off in a pet—but I recovered. His drug was not the same as the Islington one, but suggestion was at work and proved all-powerful.

My good mother sometimes tried to circumvent my hatred of the powders by concealing them in pleasant disguises. Once she gave me a specially nasty one in a fig, and it was fully twenty years before I could bring myself to taste that fruit again.

One afternoon, on going out, my mother left a sovereign —think of that in 1924 !—on the dining-room table, together with an account which she thought might be called for in her absence. I found the coin and took it under the table, where I played at being a miser and hiding it from all the

world on ledges and projections I found there. Being summoned to tea I left it hidden and forgot all about it. Mother returned after I had been put to bed, and as the expected collector had not appeared asked where the sovereign was. The maid was, of course, quite unable to explain, a fact that seemed rather extraordinary. On father reaching home the matter was reported to him, and the poor girl fell under some suspicion. Fortunately, I was asked next morning if I had touched the coin, when, diving under the table, I triumphantly produced it. The lecture that followed was not of the kind that goes in at one ear and out of the other—but it certainly knocked at one of them.

My mother was very fond of flowers, and one afternoon father sent home a plant covered with beautiful white blooms which pleased her very much. It was placed on a circular table in the dining-room window. I found it there, and possessed by the spirit of mischief or something of that sort, carefully picked off every one of the blossoms and ranged them in rows on the window-sill. I had cause to remember that escapade too.

My elder brother wore the expansive white collars then deemed indispensable for schoolboys. A box of new ones was left at the house and placed on a table on which a pair of scissors was unluckily lying. I found the deposits, and putting two and two together, as it were, cut off all the bands from the collars, afterwards coiling bandless collars and collarless bands neatly together and restoring them to the box and the box to its wrappings.

But, Islington, I must leave thee and thy memories! At the end of 1854 we removed to "the other side of the water," as *The Ratcatcher's Daughter*, a popular song of those days, had it. After the last furniture had left and the old house was closed, mother and I boarded an omnibus and travelled to Camberwell. The bus had very bright scarlet cushions, upon which I stood as it crossed London Bridge, and, through the windows, got my first brief glimpse of shipping. The river at that point presented a very different aspect from the present one. Docks were few,

and ships, especially sailers, were many, for it took a dozen or two of such small craft to equal in carrying capacity one of the huge steamers of to-day. They were moored almost stem to stern, in what was called the Pool, in two tiers, each tier consisting of two or three craft abreast, extending down the river further than the eye could reach. Between the tiers an open channel was kept for steamboats, and between the tiers and the river bank barges and wherries navigated. The Harbour Master's job in those days was no gilded sinecure. Cargoes were discharged and loaded by barge, and the Thames waterman was a person of many privileges and high prestige. Steamers—which he struck against and tried to stop when they were novelties—and docks have robbed him of much of his importance. But I shall have occasion to return to London Bridge later on.

The Crimean War was in active swing before we left northern London, but I cannot recollect learning much about it there. It was father's wont to bring home and discuss the news, but early retirement to my yellow cot deprived me of much chance of hearing it.

A few years later, events which occurred in 1854 interested me intensely. One was the wreck of the 2,600-ton paddle-steamer *Prince*, which left London full of sorely-needed stores for the troops, and was lost with many of her crew off Balaclava before she had landed an ounce, in the famous Black Sea hurricane. Another was the destruction of the paddle-frigate *Tiger* near Odessa. Going ashore in a dense fog she threw all her guns but one overboard in an effort to get off. When the fog cleared she found herself under the Russian batteries, which opened fire, and in a few minutes knocked out the captain—who afterwards died—and killed and wounded some of the crew, besides setting the ship ablaze in two places. Hopelessly situated and unable to get her sole remaining gun to bear, she struck her flag. It is pleasant to record that the Muscovites did their best for the wounded and treated their prisoners well. In the 1880s an elderly man once asked me for alms in St. James's Park, remarking that he had seen service in the navy. Enquiring particulars, he said that he had been in the

action of the *Tiger* in the Sea of Azof. But alas! a little cross-examination proved him a yarner for, in addition to being adrift in the wrong sea, he knew practically nothing of either the action or the ship. If that old sinner had the luck to splice the main-brace that afternoon it was not at my expense.

CHAPTER II

SOUTHWARD HO!

Camberwell—New house—Severe frost—Maidens at the well—First railway journey—Accidents.

OUR new dwelling was old-fashioned and stood in its own grounds, for it had a large front garden separated from the road by a tall brick wall in which was a wooden gate bearing the name of the house and furnished with a bell-pull; and a still larger back garden bounded by a brick wall on either hand and a dense hedge at the bottom. To the right a private lane divided the garden from that next door, but on the left our neighbour's demesne ran coterminously with ours. We heard that a public lane had once existed behind the hedge, but had been closed years before. What was beyond I cannot recollect, but it must have been fields or gardens, as the view was not restricted. It is very extraordinary that while my memory is most distinct and particular about many things, there are a few—like the nature of the toy bought to console me during the measles, and this beyond-hedge prospect—upon which it utterly refuses to respond.

A modern wing had been added to the old house at right angles, projecting into the back garden and containing the kitchen and pantry with a good servant's bedroom above them. The original kitchen, a large, square, stone-floored apartment, had been converted into a scullery and wash-house, but still boasted a rusted range, with a huge folding toothed bracket upon which to hang the roasting-jack fixed to the mantel. By craning our necks over the range we could see daylight above through the capacious chimney. A copper in a brick setting, with its flue, had been built in one corner, and, with its well-boiled copper-stick, was a

conspicuous object. This utensil was used every week by the washerwoman—public laundries were rare then and the day laundress ubiquitous—who occasionally employed gunpowder for the purpose of clearing the narrow chimney of soot. This was a performance in which we boys were much interested, but, unfortunately, it was usually completed before we were up. Presumably coppers were generally built with restricted chimneys, as the operation was common. It was popularly known as "skying the copper," owing to a tradition that a washerwoman, once on a time, had used too much explosive and directed the whole concern, copper, soot—and housemaid's sweetheart, who unluckily happened to be concealed therein—heavenward. Every year this cauldron was devoted to the sacred rite of boiling the Christmas pudding.

Opposite the range a huge iron water-tank was reared on two brick walls about three feet high. Water was laid on and supplied the tank through a nozzle controlled by a lever and floating ball. The end of an overflow pipe protruded through the bottom of the tank between the brick piers. This tank—and incidentally the overflow pipe—was destined to prove a source of endless amusement and experiment to us youngsters. It was easy to climb and stand on the wall near the floating ball and thus survey and command the upper part of the tank and all its works. But grief occasionally mingled with our joy: it was not the overflow pipe only that emitted moisture.

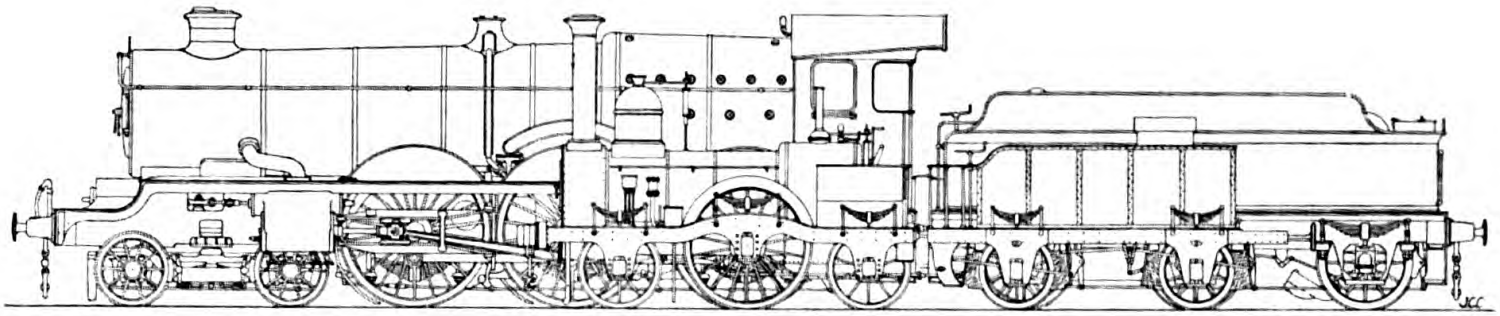
The scullery had but one window, which gave upon the back garden, and it was glazed with small greenish panes, every one of which had a big glass knob or projection near its centre. I understand such panes command a fancy price to-day: then they were contemned as old-fashioned and inferior to modern plain glass.

The "front" door was at the side of the house, next the lane, and was on the top of a flight of steps which in one direction led to the front, and in the other to the back, garden. Apart from the old kitchen, I do not remember anything peculiar about the rooms except that they contained plenty of cupboards and that the dining- and drawing-

rooms were separated by folding doors. There was no bath-room. The stairs were a bit narrow, perhaps, but on the whole the house was cosy and comfortable. The front garden comprised a lawn bordered by bushes and two or three elderberry and laburnum trees; the back one not only had flower beds, but was a veritable orchard of apple, pear, cherry, and plum trees, with gooseberry and currant bushes. Such was a Camberwell residence of those days, and there were plenty like it in the vicinity. Many neighbouring houses had tall and weird-shaped brick chimneys, built at all sorts of surprising angles, but ours was commonplace in that respect and had nothing but ordinary straight chimney-pots to show.

One of our first experiences at Camberwell was a very severe frost. For many mornings in succession we awoke to find the water in the jugs on the washstand only a few feet from our pillows frozen so hard that the ice could not be broken without danger of smashing the vessel; while Jack Frost had utilised the night hours to decorate our windows with elaborate and artistic designs so thickly laid on that much scraping was necessary to gain a glimpse of the sparkling crystal-laden trees outside. The ball in the iron tank became a fixture, and hammer and chisel had to be used on the ice cake before the water beneath could be drawn off. The Water Company's turncocks erected straw-bound stand-pipes in the street, and history seemed put back as troops of damsels hastened to them with all sorts of utensils and once more lingered and gossiped at the "well."

The removal of old London Bridge some twenty-three years before had led to the prediction that the Thames would never again be frozen over, previous instances of that phenomenon being attributed to the arrest of floating ice by the narrow openings of Peter of Colechurch's grand structure; but in February, 1855, a long stretch of the river was completely iced over near Hampton Court. Some of the ships in the Pool below bridge became immovable, and their crews walked ashore opposite Billingsgate and Custom House Quay. The Serpentine had six and a half



LOCOMOTIVES OF THE 1850s AND 1920s.

No. 5 of the South-Eastern Railway, built 1839 and known to the author in 1856, standing in front of an express engine of the Great Western Railway of 1924. The locomotives are drawn accurately to scale.

Assuming a boiler pressure of 100 lbs. per square inch for the old engine, in a tug-of-war it would take ten of the 1839 machine to overcome decisively the best efforts of the modern one and tow it backwards.

inches of ice to its credit, and the morning bathers had to borrow gunpowder from their washerwomen before a dip could be indulged in. Some forty years elapsed before I knew a frost in London approaching this one in severity.

Not long afterwards I experienced the first railway journey of which I retain a distinct and intelligent impression. From a very early age I had taken such interest in ships, steamers, railways and locomotives that my dear mother predicted that I was bound to become an engineer. I eagerly inspected pictures on these subjects and listened attentively to conversations and readings about them. I knew railway engines very well from illustrations, and had seen them all a-hissing and a-puffing during several suburban trips on the shiny rails, but never noticed things as I did on this occasion.

We travelled from London Bridge to Greenwich (probably at my instigation, as it would have been easier to have taken one of the "Nelson" omnibuses which traversed the Old Kent Road for that destination) over the classic arches. The compartment was crowded, but by standing at the right-hand window I saw many trains, stationary and in motion. At Greenwich the engine had been detached before we had reached the exit end of the platform, and run forward on to a traverser, or semi-turntable, which a man, by working a crank, screwed round so as to permit the engine to go off on another track past the train it had just brought in. While the screwing over was in progress the tender was filled with water from a long hose hanging from a tank above.

The locomotive was No. 5 of the South-Eastern Railway, which, in after-years, I learned had been built in 1839—only nine years after the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway—by Sharp, Roberts & Company of the latter city. She rejoiced in plenty of bright brass work and green and red paint and stayed on the table all too short a time for my curiosity. When she went, the blast sounded loud and sharp under the station roof, and, with the revolving of her 5 feet 6 inch driving wheels, left me impressed with a sense of power and majesty. But what

a tiny concern this No. 5 would look beside one of the leviathan locomotives of 1924! This turntable arrangement remained in use at Greenwich terminus until 1878, when the line was extended to Woolwich, and Greenwich Station became only a wayside one. It and adjacent property was damaged by German bombs in 1917.

Another early recollection of Camberwell relates to a rather serious accident that befell me, the mark of which persists to the present day. Racing my younger brother on all fours up the stairs, I slipped and struck my chin against a step, and as I was shouting lustily at the moment my front teeth were driven right through my tongue. Blood, tears, cries, alarms, culminating in the doctor, who came, saw, prescribed and put in a couple of stitches and a narcotic. For a fortnight at least I had to be fed on milk, broth, and suchlike unsubstantialities, besides being forbidden to so much as attempt to speak. I had to say even my prayers mentally. To replace my tongue I was furnished with slate and pencil, and this experience, I think, helped me not a little with my writing. Desperately hungry one morning, seeing my brothers enjoying eggs for breakfast, I took my slate and wrote, "I want an eg." An unfeeling parent—it being part of the game, when the first consternation had passed, to pretend that I was deaf as well as dumb—took the pencil and replied, "You shall have two [my eyes lighted up]—when the doctor orders."

That same doctor could be a little sarcastic on occasion. Not long after my recovery, one very wet Sunday afternoon, we got some fish-hooks, tied them to walking-sticks with thread and, ascending the dining-room table, proceeded to angle round it. I got a bite, and jerking my rod with violence the hook flew back and went right through my left eye-lid. The barb prevented its extraction, so the doctor was again summoned. He came and asked for cutting-pliers. We had no such tool in the house, so he despatched a note to his own. Awaiting the reply, he took me on his knee and solemnly advised mother to engage him to live permanently with us in view of my special cleverness in getting in need of surgical assistance. He thought it

would come cheaper for her in the end. The pliers arrived. The barb was cut off and I was cured. But there was no more Izaak Walton business that afternoon. The wound smarted badly, and obviously I had had a narrow escape of losing an eye. How the hook could go through the lid without touching the ball was indeed surprising. Three years later that same eye was in peril again, and escaped by an almost equally narrow margin, as will be related in its place.

This doctor, in common with many others of the period, employed a page-boy—in natty pot-hat and trim shell-jacket decorated with several rows of silvered buttons—to carry round and deliver his medicines.

CHAPTER III

STREET TYPES OF THE 1850s

Policemen—Experiences humorous and tragic—Postmen—Old clo' man—Skin merchant—"Skin 'em alive oh!"—Milkmen—Butchers' boys—Volunteers—Street banter.

OUR street was a quiet one, but still it provided plenty of scope for observation. In some ways it was a bit of quite a different world from the London of to-day, for types of people encountered in it are not to be met with now. I shall endeavour to describe some of them, but it must be understood that these mental notes are the fruit of all the five years from 1855 to 1860, so that the memories recorded are those rather of a boy of ten than of five years.

The respect due to the majesty of the law decrees first place to its custodian, the policeman. He differed in appearance from his successor of 1924. The old watchmen, immediate precursors of the new police, had been called Charlies, and the modern force was already familiarly known by names still current, Robert, Bobby, Peeler and Copper. The first three appellations were derived from Sir Robert Peel, who had conducted the Police Bill of 1830 through Parliament; the fourth from the slang verb "to cop," i.e. to catch. In addition, he was sometimes called a Blue-bottle, by way of graceful allusion to the colour scheme of his uniform; but this, I fancy, has not survived. Yet another name was "Slop," probably purely slang.

The originator of the idea of the new police was not, however, Sir Robert Peel at all, but Vincent George Dowling, editor of the sporting newspaper *Bell's Life in London*, who had suggested and advocated it years before. Strange freak that caused a rebirth of law and order to proceed

from a spokesman of a reputedly lawless community! V.G.D. certainly modified life in London by this reform. Had not that erring jade, popular opinion, wrongfully acclaimed Peel as the author, the new enemies of turbulence would probably have been baptized Georges or Dowlers.

The new policeman wore a tall "pot" hat, built strongly of varnished leather and warranted to withstand all sorts of assaults and batteries; a brass-buttoned, bob-tailed, stiff-collared coat, and large-legged trousers, all dark blue, although I seem to have some recollection of white unmentionables for summer wear. A black-varnished belt with truncheon, lamp, and rattle completed the awe-inspiring get-up, which in winter was concealed under a long overcoat. The rattle, an inheritance from the old Charlies replaced, in recent times, by a whistle, was a noise-creating device consisting of a tongue pressed by a spring against a wooden ratchet-wheel which when swung round by means of a handle gave out an ear-splitting but distinctive and penetrating sound. It told constables near and far that a comrade needed help. In the Police Court Records of the 1850s and 1860s the expression "the policeman sprung his rattle," or "proceeded to spring his rattle" constantly occurred.

That there were pockets in those dark blue bob-tails I can avouch, on oath if need be. About 1859, when I and my next younger brother were able and permitted to make excursions to some distance—conditionally on avoiding certain thoroughfares, like East Street, Walworth, and Kent Street (now Tabard Street), Southwark, both strictly taboo—we were one day caught in a shower in High Street, Borough, near St. George's Church. An arched passage by the side of a public-house offered shelter, and we took it. Into the passage a swing-door of the tavern opened. While we were standing up a policeman came under the arch, and, whistling unconcernedly, placed himself with his back close to this door. Sheltering, too, we thought. But while we respectfully watched the commissioner of justice, one of the door-flaps opened slightly and a hand slid forth holding a flat flask. The fingers furtively parted the coat-tails, seemed to linger a second or

two, and then withdrew—minus the flask. He of the pot-hat, still whistling softly, immediately stepped into the Borough (so the High Street was familiarly called) and resumed his beat. We had no time to tell him that somebody had been taking liberties with his coat-tails. Could such a thing happen nowadays ?

Perhaps a couple of years earlier we had had an adventure, terrifying at the time, but subsequently amusing enough, with one of these guardians of innocence, which was remarkable because long, long afterwards I was told that *Punch* had once had a picture depicting a similar incident. I think a boy was made to request a policeman to ring a door-bell for him and then ran away, leaving Robert to interview the householder. Ours was not quite like that, and has the advantage of having really happened. One afternoon, returning from school, my brother and I stopped close to a door in a garden wall, in our street, but a good way from our house and on the opposite side of the road, to discuss some matter that was interesting us, marbles or buttons, perhaps, when a policeman whom we knew very well by sight, and who probably had also seen us about, sauntered up and noticing us standing under the bell-handle said : " Can't you reach the bell, my little chaps ? " and without waiting for an answer gave the knob a vigorous pull. Startled, we looked up, then at each other and—was it telepathy ?—without a word simultaneously took to our heels and ran homeward for all we were worth. Looking back from a safe distance we perceived a white apron in the doorway and the constable evidently holding converse with its owner. We avoided that officer long afterwards, dodging out of his way when we saw him coming, albeit our consciences were as the untrodden snow of Hohenlinden. When at last we met him without the possibility of evasion he gave no evidence of recognition. Now, on which side was the real laugh ? Suppose his pull at the bell was a Machiavellian dodge to open communication with that particular servant girl ? If so, that officer was wasted as a mere patrol—his place was with the detectives.

One more little recollection of the force. I approached a crowd one afternoon just as it opened a bit and revealed a dreadful sight. A policeman was supporting in a sitting posture a man whose head was hanging forward on his chest and whose throat was evidently cut, for the whole front of his breast was covered with what looked like a cascade of blood, the ripples being caused by the sinuosities of his clothes, which descended into his lap and thence on to the roadway. Other constables stood by with a man in black, who, I heard, was a doctor, although he looked to me more like an undertaker. It was the first corpse I had ever seen. Shocked, I proceeded on my way after a very brief pause, and had got perhaps two or three hundred yards, when I heard a hasty step behind and, turning, saw the policeman who had been holding the suicide—for such I had learned he was—hurrying along. His face was deathly pale, and he wore a look that was new to me but which was still eloquent of horror and disgust. He passed and turned into the private bar of a public-house which stood a few yards ahead on the left, wiping his mouth with the back of his left hand, as if to get all ready for action, as he did so. No doubt he felt the need of a glass of something after his uncanny ordeal, and well, I think, he deserved one, whether the publican felt justified in serving a constable on duty or not.

In the late 'sixties the leathern pot-hat of the Dowler police was replaced by the familiar classic helmet of to-day. Not long afterwards I met a son of the hatter who for many years had held the contract for the supply of "toppers" to the force. His soul was sad. He said that the old tall hat as made by his father would turn or withstand the heaviest blow, whereas the new-fangled helmet was easily bulged in—and England, he feared, was going to Fra Diavolo, and that at top-knot speed.

> "Every morning at nine o'clock
> Somebody hears the postman's knock,"

declared a very popular song of the period. So way for Her Majesty's postman! A swell he was, and no mistake.

A bright scarlet coat, of, I think, the frock variety, with gay buttons and ornamental cuffs, all pinnacled by a shining pot-hat with, if I remember rightly, a gold-coloured band round it. Who would have supposed that the humble penny post could have produced such a gorgeous offspring? No wonder the servant maids looked out for the postman and watched him flitting from gate to gate like a dragon-fly in the brightest of sunshine! How splendid and how appropriate, they must have thought, for Vice-Cupid who, as Love's harbinger, had to deliver Valentines by the ton every 14th day of February. Oh, St. Valentine! How ever came you to be abolished? You and Twelfth Night, with its sugared cakes seemed to decline, fall and ultimately vanish together. Shops full of Valentines and shops full of cakes were your yearly heralds until the early 'sixties, and now you are both as dead as Oak Apple day and the service in the old Prayer Books for King Charles the Martyr. Yet maids and eke postmen contrive still to love. It will be remembered that Thackeray's fairy tale, *The Rose and the Ring*, written in 1853, was, as its preface discloses, a Twelfth Night story.

The scarlet uniform yet lingers, I believe, in the Post Office, or did a few years back, as I have observed men so attired waiting for the mails at Euston and other termini. When I visited Denmark in after-years I was surprised to find the postmen of Copenhagen sporting a similar ruddy costume. There must be something in ancestry. The British and Danish armies were the last to dress in red and the fact that their postmen followed the same crimson tradition constitutes evidence of identity of ideas and tastes if not of common origin of species. But splendour of dress did not elevate the postman above mundane considerations —he was keen on the subject of Christmas tips. His loud double-rap of to-day was in use then, but telegrams were few and not in Post Office hands, so the additional knock indicative of a "wire" was unknown. When he had a registered letter—there was no parcel post—he doubled a double rat-tat.

I will take the Jewish old clo' man next so as not to

interrupt the continuity of pot-hats. In those days Jews used to go about London buying old clothes, hats, clocks, dripping, almost anything, from thrifty housewives. They invariably carried, in addition to a big bag, a small Dutch clock under the left arm, the bell of which was continually twanged as they went along, the sound, sometimes reinforced by a cry of "Old clo'!" serving as a trade advertisement to all and sundry. A pot-hat was always worn, and when another article of the kind was bought it was stuck on the top of the first. So as the day went on and purchases accumulated, they, like his Holiness of Rome, frequently wore a triple tiara and sometimes more, for pot-hats were mightily in vogue and formed a fecund article of commerce. Such a Jew made his daily rounds through our street, Dutch clock, tiara, and all. He was ill-kempt, sallow, black-bearded, large-mouthed and yellow-toothed, but not ill-natured, for he bore the chaff with which vulgar boys often assailed him with apparent good-humour. The business must have been profitable, for he persisted year after year.

From "beavers" to hare- and rabbit-skins ought to prove an easy transition, so I will take the merchant in those commodities next. He wore a pot-hat, too, and went with a pole hung with skins over his shoulder. He called out—at least our local man did—loudly and clearly: "Hare- and rabbit-skins!" and was often summoned to door-step bargains. I believe similar merchants in other parts of London sometimes invested their call with a musical cadence. These men were credited with being open to buy cat-skins also, and there was a dark rumour that they were accustomed to sally forth at night armed with a spike and a sharp knife for the fell purpose of catching pussies and skinning them alive, furs taken in that fashion preserving their lustre longer and commanding a higher market value. The unfortunate cat when captured was placed between the knees, the spike, driven into the back of the neck, preventing inconvenient reprisals. Dexterous and cunning incisions were then made and the animal reversed with a jerk that only experts could give, and lo! the cat was on the ground entirely destitute both

of skin and fight, but otherwise uninjured. Pathetic stories were told of pussies in this deplorable condition running home and mewing to be let in. One was said to have even reached the drawing-room where its mistress was holding a reception and jumped on her lap.

These tales may have been exaggerated, but in March 1857 a woman got three months' hard labour for skinning several cats alive. They were found by a policeman still moving. This officer was a clever one, as he informed the magistrates that he could tell cat's blood from human, a degree of proficiency in the discrimination of mammalian vital fluids that was not attained by mere scientific men for many years afterwards. The skins were worth 2*s*. 2*d*. each. However, I did not believe that *our* man did such things, for we were told by our washerwoman that he was a member of the Church of England and had a son who had been confirmed by a bishop and blew the organ-bellows at St. George's (Camberwell) Church every Sunday.

Milkmen in those days wore glazed pot-hats and white countrymen's smocks, and went with two covered pails hung round with measures and suspended by chains and hooks from a stout wooden yoke fashioned to fit the shoulders. When girls were employed, as they sometimes were, they also wore smocks and carried yokes. Neither carts nor barrows were as yet much in evidence in the suburbs, and the London milkman was still a genuine son of toil.

Now and then, a man and girl driving a couple of very clean cows came round and drew milk from the udder straight into customers' jugs, or at least into a measure that was at once emptied into the jugs. That might be supposed to be a very direct, honest procedure, calculated to render adulteration laws vain and nugatory; but our milkman said that if people could only see the quantity of water "them poor cows" were compelled to drink before starting, they would cease to wonder that the milk was so thin and blue. For many years after this—into the 1880s, I believe —cows were kept at a stand in St. James's Park and milked as required for customers, who were chiefly nurses and children.

Butchers' boys were numerous, cheeky, noisy, blusterous and aggressive. They called for orders after breakfast, and brought the meat during the forenoon in baskets or in wooden trays carried on the shoulder. No sort of cover was provided, and wet days or sultry days, the joints, chops, and steaks gathered all the dust, soot and flies that happened to be going. Perhaps the largest butchers possessed carts, but the days of the flying butchers' boy with a fast pony and trap—the immediate forerunner of the telephone—were still some ten years ahead. I imagine that the Telephone Exchange, aided by the School Board Inspector, has had a good share in flattening out the mid-Victorian butcher's boy.

The meat came with the name and address of the customer written in bright blue ink on a tiny piece of paper jabbed on with a wooden skewer. Butchers and their assistants affected light-blue smocks, dark-blue aprons and bright-blue ink. Customers' books and accounts were always in cerulean script. Sometimes chops and other small matters were wrapped in paper, and it was from a blood-stained envelope of this kind, which I long treasured, that I gathered my first knowledge of the inside of a locomotive, it being a leaf from some periodical with the picture of an engine in sections, boiler, fire-box, tubes, cylinders, pistons, etc., all lettered and described. What an ass the butcher was to give that away, I thought.

Butchers' boys were always ready to fight—it was a sparring age, remember—and would " put up " their hands for next to nothing, nothing at all, and even less than nothing, for they would insult and provoke boys of about their own age in a way that could only have one result with a lad of spirit. But I believe they always fought fairly; the rules of the prize-ring they admired so hugely ordained that much in no uncertain tone. To hit an opponent when down, kick, strike below the belt, or take any other mean advantage was not to be thought of. Policemen they derided to the very limit of safety; chevied cats, and set dogs on to fight.

When the Volunteer movement of 1859 matured and riflemen in green or grey uniforms, in shakoes and cocks'

plumes, appeared in the streets they amused many people, for few took them seriously or believed that they would ever fight Napoleon III or anybody else. Quite early in the Volunteer days a rifleman was said by public rumour to have shot his ramrod (the rifles of those days were muzzle-loading and had percussion caps) through a dog, with the consequence that gallant members of the patriotic corps were saluted in the streets wherever they went with the cry of, "Who shot the dog?" And the butchers' boys, with an insatiable if misdirected thirst for knowledge, pressed this unseemly interrogation home. The Volunteers, in fact, were born into an atmosphere of popular, or rather lower-class, ridicule, and it was very wonderful how they lived it down and developed, as they did, into such a numerous and useful body.

These boys and others also made a point of demanding, "Who's your hatter?" of anyone whose "tile" departed a hair's breadth from the strictest precepts of custom. A pedestrian in a white top-hat found his lines cast in hard places, and even the sanctity of a reverend bishop was not held to extend to his chimney—or, as the vulgar youth of that day had it—"chimbley"-pot. "Does your mother know you're out?" and "How's your poor feet?" were other public interrogations calculated to disturb the complacency of stylishly dressed personages of either sex.

"Taking a sight" was an accomplishment possessed of all rude boys of the period; it consisted in placing a thumb to the nose and spreading out its accompanying four fingers in the direction of the person to be satirised or derided. Similarly opening the other hand and placing it in advance of the first constituted the very acme of sarcasm and contempt beyond which the sons of Adam were powerless to go.

CHAPTER IV

OLD-TIME STREET SCENES

Retailing beer to houses—Can-boys—Workmen and beer—Dustmen—Muffin-man—Brewers' draymen—Austrian General and Barclay and Perkins—Sweeps—Water-carts and pumps—Popularity of street trading—Water-cress girls—Lavender sellers—Cats'-meat man—Gipsies—Thimble-rig—Three-card trick—Purse trick—Street roulette—Impromptu rhymer.

ANOTHER member of our little world who has no counterpart in these later times was the perambulating potman. Public-houses in the 1850s were allowed to deliver liquor at customers' premises, and nearly every tavern did so, employing potmen for the purpose who carried wooden frames divided longitudinally into two compartments in which cans of ale, porter and stout were deposited, together with a measure or two; a parallel bar above affording the necessary carrying handle. On week-days the supper hour was the principal time of activity for these potmen, but they appeared to better advantage on Sundays, when, as soon as the clock had struck one, they issued from their bars clad in spotless white aprons and, in warm weather, in equally immaculate shirt-sleeves, intent on serving the Londoner with his dinner beer. Staggering under the weight of a couple of frames they went the round of their customers, measuring what was required from the cans into gaping expectant jugs. I am not sure whether they were entitled to serve any pedestrian who wanted drink, but I think they could be called to a house by a chance customer.

It was ill robbing an Englishman of his beer in those days. Gangs of labouring men, bricklayers, navvies, etc., kept a "can-boy," whose duty it was to make periodical trips to the nearest tavern and maintain a stream of gallons between the tap and the inextinguishable fires which

tormented the bowels of his masters. I remember an engraving of the building of new London Bridge in which such a can-boy was depicted in the full discharge of his duties. Tradesmen, painters, plumbers, plasterers, when employed about a private house, expected beer, or money to buy it with, and if the occupier did not rise to the necessary height of bibulous expectation would gather up their tools and leave, saying they were urgently required elsewhere.

This delicate subject induces me to bring the dustman next on the scene as he, too, was sensitive on the subject of beer. The thirst-provoking avocation of dust collecting was not then a matter for the public authorities to perform gratuitously, the carts being sent round by those who made profit out of household refuse. So when the dustman—who wore a cap with a huge leathern flap over the neck and usually carried a bell to notify his presence—inspected the bin he generally found objections to urge against the eligibility of its contents, scruples which could only be dispersed by arguments—such as the heavy coppers of those days commonly constituted with people of his class.

The bell of the white-aproned muffin and crumpet man was heard more frequently than that of the dustman, for he was one of the best known of street merchants. In 1924 one begins to class him with the dodo—in 1856 he was as regular on his rounds as Her Majesty's Post. Nobody dreamed of objecting to his bell: such squeamishness would have been ridiculed. In two respects he was noteworthy—he was one of the very few who carried wares on the head (in a tray covered with green baize) and who didn't wear a pot-hat, the twin characteristics no doubt being related as cause and effect.

Reverting to beer, I will now notice a very popular personage indeed, and one, too, who likewise disdained the exalted head cylinder which the world owes to the first Georgian era—to wit, the brewers' drayman. I imagine the practice of having casks of beer on tap in private houses must have greatly decreased since the 1850s—when the bottled beverage was comparatively scarce and grocers had no licences—for draymen delivering casks inscribed XX or

XXX were to be met in Camberwell every hour of the day. And splendid fellows they were, for brewers would do their products no such villainous disservice as to have them delivered by anybody much under six feet in stature, with dray horses to match. Let it be remembered that in those days beer really contained malt and hops and had no claim to rank with the beverage which the comprehensive strides of advancing chemical knowledge have rendered possible to-day—and therefore justified in a measure or, rather, a good many measures, the prevailing admiration and faith. In our times X perhaps represents an unknown quantity more accurately than it did then.

Probably Barclay Perkins bore off the palm for the comeliness, ruddiness and sturdiness of their men, and bulk and sleekness of their steeds. Rumour had it that the bipeds were regaled with all the firm's Entire they could stow away and each quadruped had a gallon of it by way of composing draught every night. The men wore red pirate caps with turn-over flap, and white—never dirty—smocks and aprons, with a big pocket under the apron for the wooden spiles used to stop the air holes bored in the tops of the barrels. Two men went with every dray, and carried casks for delivery suspended between them by chains and hooks from a pole supported on their shoulders. We were customers of B. P. & Co., and periodically had a procession of this kind up the garden path, and subsequently down it, as the "empty" was borne away. When at home we boys never missed attendance on the operation of installing the new cask on its stool, driving in the bung with the spigot tap and boring the spile hole. We got to know the two good-natured—beer was supposed to act as a great sweetener of character—giants who performed these services very well, as time went on, and they never came without giving us a handful of the spiles, which we found useful for some of our boyish operations. Well do I remember the dive of the huge fist under the apron, and the shower of pegs into our hands arranged cup-fashion to receive them.

Barclay Perkins were just then popular for a cause quite remote from hops and malt. An Austrian general, who had

made himself notorious during the Hungarian rebellion of 1848 by flogging women and other cruelties, came to London, and in an evil hour conceived the idea of visiting Barclay and Perkins' brewery at Bankside. He was well received by the management, but the craftsmen came to know who he was, and began to punctuate his round of inspection with groans and hoots. At first he pretended not to notice, but the men left their work, thronged around, and had such an appearance of resorting to violence—their design was to douse him in a tub of mash—that a retreat was hastily undertaken, and not too soon. Some said that he actually ran and was chased and chevied as far as the outer gates. This "outrage" incensed the Austrian Government, but they were not supposed to have extracted any great excess of satisfaction from Whitehall.

The sweep was yet another artificer who forswore the fashionable "chimney-pot" hat, which must be counted rather inconsistent on his part. In the 1840s he had been a mark of public opprobrium in connection with the cruel treatment meted to the poor little boys then commonly sent up chimneys to sweep them. In the 1850s this practice, still rife in the provinces, had been greatly diminished in London, and what was left of it was under police regulation. So the brush and flexible screwed rods had come in and Mr. Sweep perambulated the streets with a bundle of them on his shoulder, crying "Sweep!" in husky tones. But pride can flourish even in the bosom of a sweep. In the 1860s at Eltham the village practitioner had a sign inscribed "Flanagan, Ramoneur." However, a sweep's brush surmounted the board so that those who hadn't graduated in French might still have a chance of finding the indispensable artist. The employment of child sweepers was finally stopped by a Bill which the benevolent Earl of Shaftesbury got through Parliament in 1864.

There were water-carts in those days. Not dissimilar from those we know, since the driver, by depressing a lever with his foot, caused water to spirt from a perforated pipe behind, but they were filled from road-side pumps instead of hydrants, which involved much pumping by the men,

and, as a consequence, a great deal of bad language. The pumps, about six feet high, had spouts above the level of the carts, into which the water was conducted by movable wooden troughs. We had a pump of this kind in our street—it stood nearly opposite the garden gate of the first school I attended—and to this fact my brothers and I, as well as most of the other children of the neighbourhood, owed our first introduction to swear words. Two watermen drivers usually met and, standing one on each side of the handle, pumped their carts full, discoursing the while on a great variety of subjects, all of which seemed to require a wealth of expressive and expletive emphasis. There was one circumambient adjective which would have made Dr. Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of the blood, smile had he been flying within ear-shot of Camberwell, and been even as balm of Gilead to Mr. Bernard Shaw. It qualified almost every noun, so we came to refer to it as the "waterman's word," being placed under strict parental injunction never to utter it in any circumstances whatever. And "thereby hangs a tale," which, perhaps, will be told anon. It may be asked, why did we listen? Well, there may be little boys who can resist watching a big pump in full swing: if so, they were not conspicuous in our neighbourhood about 1857.

So many frequenters of the suburban streets of my boyhood remain, I find, to be noticed that it is obvious that they must have been both more numerous and in greater variety than the corresponding class met with to-day. I seem to be looking back to a vanished world. Certainly, many more people found their livelihood in the highways sixty years ago than is the case now. What has brought about the change? Improved mechanical appliances—transport and distribution facilities—stricter police regulations—stringent pedlars' licences—concentration of trade by large firms—more regular places of amusement, so that the streets no longer serve as theatres? Probably all these causes contribute.

Here are more departed ghosts. Every day, as tea-time approached, girls selling water-cress from baskets slung from the shoulders went from door to door. They had a

not unpleasing cry of "Water creases!" and their usual enquiry was "Any creases to-day, Mum?" These damsels' wares had always been gathered that same morning, a fact worthy of the attention of the authorities at Kew Gardens and of botanists in general, since, that being the case, it was abundantly obvious that many of our country brooks must have been endowed with the faculty of producing stale water-cress. But the poor girls were civil, and had their none too luxurious living to get.

Lavender sellers appeared in due season, making the thoroughfares echo with their melodious old-time refrain. Flower merchants, too, some with barrows, some with trays carried on the head. They cried lustily, "All a-growin' and a-blowin'!" and sometimes trespassed on the domain of the triple-diademed Jew by accepting old clothes and top-hats in exchange for their pansies and geraniums. I don't remember cut flowers ever being hawked.

The cats'-meat man was in daily attendance with his barrow and basket, and well did the felines know his time for reaching their door. A friend brought a cat from Scotland (where "meat" is unknown), and for some little time the merchant's cry fell meaningless on inattentive ears; but it *was* a little time. Not in vain had puss been bred on t'other side of the Border. Within a week she had discovered what the cabalistic sound meant, and then was as prompt as any of the others in welcoming the vendor.

Another friend had a little cat that always brought her any mouse or bird it succeeded in catching, and she was sometimes able to rescue sparrows—on one occasion a thrush—alive. Pussy was particularly attentive and insistent in this way if her mistress happened to be indisposed, apparently under the impression that at such times she required something really nice to eat. Lying down one afternoon, this lady was disturbed by a tremendous mewing intermitted by loud purring outside. In vain she told the cat to go away, and at last rose and opened the door. Pussy immediately backed into the room, dragging a huge lump of horseflesh, weighing a good many pounds. This she laid at her mistress's feet, with every evidence of delight. "There,

help yourself," she seemed to say. The cats'-meat man had, it appeared, left his barrow to serve customers at their doors, and in his absence puss had ravished the sirloin that formed his main stock-in-trade and dragged it through the garden, up several steps, along a passage and finally up-stairs to the first floor. And, after all, to see the maid take it back to the wondering proprietor on a fork!

In the 'fifties long-haired, Persian and other foreign cats were but seldom met with; and of the commoner varieties tabbies and tortoise-shells were favourites. Fewer black felines existed, the superstition that sable kittens bring good-fortune not being nearly so wide-spread. Persistent preservation of black offspring during the past thirty or forty years has naturally had its effect and should, finally, if there is any potency in Darwin's theory, extinguish all other kinds except for an occasional "reversion to type." What a lot of luck there will be in the world then! And it is curious to note that black grimalkin, esteemed to-day as a mascot, was in the old time condemned (and occasionally burned alive) as the accomplice of witches, and the essence of everything evil.

Gipsies must not be overlooked. They hawked brooms and brushes, clothes props and pegs, fern-roots and other odds and ends from carts and baskets, and pitched primitive swings and round-abouts on plots of spare ground. The steam round-about and organ had not yet been evolved, and the motive power of those they had took the form of ragged boys running round and pushing bars radiating from the centre pole. Gipsy women went from door to door, selling their wares and inducing the servant maids to cross their palms with silver—were it only with a "joey" (four-penny bit) in return for promises of husbands fair or husbands dark. Telling fortunes was not a police offence then, and it is doubtful whether anybody has been a bodle the happier or worthier since it was made one. The broom trade was not, in the 'fifties, quite a gipsy monopoly since there were a few vagrant girls in short frocks, gay stockings, embroidered jackets and plaited hair, supposed, I think, to be Tyrolese peasants, who woke the echoes with their

cry of "Buy a broom!" They looked very odd in those days of crinoline, but were seen no more in Camberwell after about 1857.

Perhaps not wholly foreign to gipsies were the various kinds of swindlers who made their prey of the unwary and self-confident. Police regulations were not so tightly woven then, and a much greater number of sharpers contrived to dodge through the meshes, particularly where crowds assembled, as at race-courses, regattas, fairs and sea-side beaches. One of these nimble gentlemen was the professor of thimble-rig, who had a folding tray slung round his neck which in a moment could be converted into a horizontal table, whereon he manipulated three thimbles and a pea, the game being to get some younker in the crowd to bet that he could indicate under which thimble the pea was resting—a perfectly hopeless undertaking unless he were permitted to be right now and then for the purpose of more effective ultimate plunder.

Sleight-of-hand came in, too, in the three-card trick, in which the victim was invited to pick out the Queen amongst three cards shuffled in his sight, and then thrown face downwards, which he never could do unless it pleased the operator to let him. I watched some respectable-looking men, reasonable beings seemingly, badly robbed in this way at Ealing races in the mid 1860s. And the purse trick I saw effectively worked at Croydon races some years later. The prestigiator pretended to rain half-crowns into a purse, and then sold it for a quarter of its apparent value. But the purchaser would find only a penny or perhaps two to represent the silver. Instead of complaining he would usually swallow his wrath and slink away, unable to face the derision of the crowd; so that a new purse and a new softy usually materialised in a few minutes.

And roulette-tables with a spinning needle instead of a whirling ball were not uncommon. I once tempted fortune in a small way on the beach at Herne Bay about 1864. At first I won and was honestly paid, but luck soon turned and I lost all my winnings—ten-pence or so—and my original stake as well. But then I stopped with a prudence that did

not please the croupier and which, I'm afraid, was not often paralleled. The next time I tried to break the bank was at Alexandria in 1869, with exactly similar results. When I had lost the 5-franc piece I had started with I stopped.

It was at Herne Bay, too, about the same year, that I came across an impromptu rhymer, the only one I ever had the fortune to listen to. He stood on a chair at the base of the Clock Tower with a banjo slung round his neck, and to the tune of *The Captain with his Whiskers*, a popular one of the day, sang rhyming couplets, chiefly descriptive of the peculiarities of members of his audience, men, women, boys and girls, but inclusive of some caustic comments on prominent politicians. Not vulgar, distinctly funny and often far from complimentary (unless it were a pretty girl, in which case he would make her blush scarlet with confusion—and flattered vanity), he created continuous titters of laughter. Never at a loss for a word or rhyme, he seemed ready to fit instantly any new-comer who joined the throng. I thought it very clever and doubted whether even Milton could have done so well. For days afterwards I applied his wheezes to my relatives and friends, until they thought me rhyming crazy. But it wasn't so easy when launching out for yourself and trying to be original, and I reflected that, after all, the number of types in a crowd was limited and could probably be mostly covered (he only rhymed about those he himself selected) by a few dozen of couplets well learned, with some faculty for adaptation. And the troubadour's cap grew weighty as it was passed round for coppers.

CHAPTER V

THE DIORAMA OF THE STREET

Chair-menders — "Ornaments for your fire-stoves!"—Fly-catchers —Draught-bags—Italian images—Sham sailors—Groundsel—Baked chestnuts and potatoes—Night refreshments—Fruit and vegetable hawkers—Strawberries in pottles—Street stalls—Orange girls—Hand-bills—Beggars with paintings—Cheap Jacks—Preachers—Waits—Workmen's paper caps —Soldiers — Sailors — Pensioners — Beadles — Lamplighters — Crossing sweepers—Shoeblacks—Undertakers.

"CHAIRS to mend!" was a very familiar cry. Cane- and rush-bottomed seats were much more common than at present. Bent-wood furniture was not yet, and there was little intermediate between the light and convenient cane-thatched chair and the heavy and massive mahogany and horse-hair, or the solid wood. Poor people, men and women, often of gipsy aspect, brought round bundles of canes and rushes, and, settling on your doorstep or in your front garden, deftly and cheaply repaired the ravages of time or wear and tear.

Summer had hawkers peculiarly its own—he or she who vociferated, "Ornaments for your fire-stoves!" and carried, hung from poles, apron-like confections in curly paper of many colours, designed to fill and hide domestic grates from which King Sol had temporarily banished the hissing yule-log; and the vendor of fly-traps whose cry was "Catch-'em-alive, oh!" and whose merchandise consisted of crude devices for inveigling the domestic pests which then throve and multiplied even more than in the present year of grace.

Autumn likewise produced a seasonal hawker—he of the sawdust bags used for excluding draughts, articles which resembled long sausages and were uniformly coloured red. People used to lay them on window sills and frames and along the bottom of doors, and then blame the weather if

they caught cold and their coal-merchant if the fires wouldn't burn. The Fresh-air Fiend hadn't been born then. Folks were only lately emancipated from night-caps (the woolly with tassel sort) and many were still partial to bed-curtains.

Italian image vendors carried platforms of plaster-of-Paris busts about, and now and then sold one, it is to be presumed, since they went on doing it.

The business they transacted was, however, insignificant compared with the traffic of the one-armed or one-legged sailor hailing (according to his own account) from Navarino or the Crimea. Dressed in sailor costume as immaculate as the decks of the line-of-battle ship they had probably only seen in their dreams, these privateers cruised slowly along the middle of the causeway singing some appropriate ditty. *Tom Bowling*, as suggesting, perhaps, that the public had the "darling of his crew" *in propria persona* before their very eyes, and being capable in artistic mouths of much doleful expression, was a favourite; and *Red, White and Blue*, then very popular, with its "Britannia, the Pride of the Ocean," was another. It is to be feared that some at least of these men were impostors. We were told that could we but see inside the neat white duck trouser leg that surmounted the timber under-rigging, a whole limb doubled up at the knee and laced tightly, calf to thigh, would meet our view. The pot-hatted policeman regarded these old salts with toleration, and never charged them with obstruction. I don't remember ever seeing a beggar soldier, not that they were superabundantly provided for, poor fellows.

Certain wretchedly-clad men hawked groundsel, and had regular customers amongst canary fanciers. There seemed something debasing about this weed, for I never saw a decent vendor of it; but there were a few hawkers of periwinkles who ran them close in sordidness.

In winter roasted-chestnut and baked-potato merchants were more in evidence than they are to-day; chestnuts were not yet the Italian monopoly they appear to have become of recent years. There were no fried-fish shops and no cabmen's shelters, so that Jehus and others whose

occupation kept them much in the open found these simple edibles very much to the purpose as supper time approached. There were, I believe, street refreshment stalls at night in some localities, but I never saw one.

Bawling costermongers selling fruit and vegetables from barrows often traversed the streets. One article of their commerce—strawberries in pottles—is known no more. A pottle in London—it had other attributes in country places, I believe—was a fragile basket of conical shape, like a huge candle extinguisher (if that is not likewise too obsolete to be useful as an illustration for this present generation) holding a pint or so of 'berries—usually fine ones on top and tiny or damaged ones below.

Stalls of various kinds, generally kept by old men or women, were numerous. At the corner of our street, where it joined the great artery of traffic, stood a sweet-stuff stall, kept by a deaf man who had a drunken wife whom he was continually being charged with assaulting, and once with attempting to murder. But he was respectful and obliging to the public and went on year after year, selling quite a variety of sweeties and apparently doing well. Stewed eels, sheep's trotters, oysters, whelks and cockles were sold from stalls not infrequently situated outside public-houses. The two last-named delicacies, which, alas! I never had the courage to taste—although I have since probably often, if unwittingly, made their acquaintance in the disguise of oyster sauce—were sold in little dishes, immersed in vinegar and delicately peppered.

Apple women, too, sat behind stalls or baskets at street corners without any interference by the police. One smiling old lady, whose stand was alongside the Old Kent Road Toll Gate, was noteworthy for her pyramids of shining, rosy-cheeked fruit—the product, so some boys averred, of saliva and elbow-grease cunningly apportioned and combined. The apple stall is likely to have been a very ancient London institution. In 1898 I discovered a woman with an apple-stall on an over-bridge behind the New York Central Railroad terminus in the city of that ilk, who might have been transported on a magic carpet straight from the

London S.E. of the 1850s, so closely did she and her belongings resemble this much-maligned old lady. No doubt a survival of custom from the days when New Yorkers still enjoyed the privilege of boasting themselves Britons.

Orange-sellers there was none in our neighbourhood, but they were in great force outside the theatres in town, and at London Bridge, just at the turn of the road on the way to the railway termini, a row of girls stood until well into the 1860s. They sold oranges from trays or baskets hung by straps from their shoulders, and were both impudent and vociferous. I always thought of Nell Gwynne as I passed, but found it difficult to pick out one likely to attract the attention of a King, although, of course, there is no accounting for tastes.

Distribution of hand-bills to pedestrians was not then banned and many tradesmen took that method of advertising their wares. So it came about that seedy personages were often stationed outside shops and at street corners handing bills to anyone who would accept. In 1858 it occurred to me to make a collection of such bills, and during the two following years I accumulated a band-box full of brilliantly-coloured leaflets of many more hues than the rainbow can boast of. I tired of the game, however, and a waste-paper merchant ultimately walked off with the lot.

Pavement artists, as we know them, did not, so far as my observation went, exist; but there was a class of beggar privileged to spread a roll-up picture in any sheltered corner out of the way of, but alongside, the stream of pedestrian traffic. Such men were usually maimed, and the picture was supposed to represent the scene of their misfortune. One mutilated man sat for years in front of the Blind Asylum (long abolished) near Bricklayers' Arms Station with a crude painting of a whale hunt in several stages. In one of these the artist had chosen the moment when a huge cetacean of the Greenland variety had jerked a boat full of men high in the air, the launch being shown smashed in several pieces and the whalers descending seawards like so many stars from a Roman candle. Another compartment represented the picking up of the men or

what remained of them by a second boat; yet another, the proprietor of the picture in hospital at Liverpool with a consultation of (apparently) most of the medical faculty of that city round his bed; and the last sad scene depicted the operating table. Another unfortunate exhibited a painting, not badly done, showing a locomotive and a train of coal-trucks running over his legs. Another tableau presented a colliery shaft in section with a cage full of men falling down it from a broken rope. Where was the artist standing? Pictures of this kind I have not seen for many years.

Cheap Jacks held the street corners on Saturday nights, and preachers of sorts—the Salvation Army was not then even dreamed of—on Sunday afternoons and evenings. They all seemed to possess the knack of attracting crowds.

At Christmas time we listened for the Waits, who furnished an additional pretext for being allowed to sit up late. The children who now succeed each other at front doors and sing invariably and incessantly "When shepherds watched their flocks by night," were happily not yet. Waits of the 1850s often sang concerted pieces, frequently with instrumental accompaniment, quite acceptably. It was nice to lie in bed on a snowy night and be lulled to sleep so agreeably.

Artisans, more especially, perhaps, carpenters and painters, affected home-made square white paper caps during working hours, both in-doors and out, and these lent another by-gone aspect to the streets, particularly in the dinner hour and in the neighbourhood of public-houses. Such caps were easily renewed when soiled, and were much more becoming than the modern slouching flat cloth cap. This head-dress constituted quite a class distinction: mere labourers or navvies never wore it.

Soldiers lent colour and picturesqueness to the streets, whether in full or undress uniform. The short scarlet shell-jacket and little round cap worn over one ear of the latter would look very funny these post-war days: cause quite a sort of shell shock, in fact. I used to smile at Gustave Doré's picture of the Battle of Inkerman at Versailles, in which the English guards are shown hard at work

with the bayonet in shell-jacket and tiny cap. Sailors in their ducks, jackets and straw hats, and Volunteers (after 1859) were likewise to be met, and Chelsea and Greenwich pensioners; and so were beadles.

The bulk of the youth of the present generation cannot know the beadle, for, with the exception of those pertaining to the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange, and these are comparatively dingy specimens, very few exist. The City Companies retain them, I believe, in name but not in glory. But in the 1850s the beadle was a civic functionary —he is now usually called a mace-bearer or Mayor's officer— and formed an appurtenance of nearly every church. His laced, gold-embroidered cocked hat of enormous dimensions (which he was actually privileged to wear in church!); long gold-edged red, blue or green coat; canary or puce-coloured breeches; calves—tremendous both in magnitude and colour—and long gold-tipped staff, were the terror of naughty boys, and well they deserved to be. I am sure that when the children of those days dreamed of Old Bogie he would often present himself to their imagination in cocked hat and calves. Stalwarts usually filled the part—a little man accentuated the comicality of the dress.

But to-day boys would deride an early Victorian beadle as fit only for comic opera. Well, we have all read of the beadle in *Oliver Twist*. Is it possible that the derision there cast upon Bumble, so eminent a member of the craft, has justified the saying that nothing kills like ridicule? The late C. H. Spurgeon, in his witty little book, *John Ploughman's Talk*, remarks: "Even Poor Law Guardians have their little failings, and Parish Beadles are not wholly of heavenly nature." The word "beadle" survives, it is true, as vulgar children persist in miscalling certain house pests "black beadles." But the real beadle was very far from black. There may be cited, however, a certain resemblance between the genera. Black-beetles are best caught with beer—so was the beadle.

The lamplighter calls for notice, too. He was often an elderly man, furnished with a short ladder and a hand-lamp. The former he placed against the projecting iron

arm provided for the purpose, ran up, turned the gas cock, applied his lamp, down again, and away with shouldered ladder to the next beacon. In the morning he went his round again, this time to extinguish. This system endured for many years. London was gas-illuminated from the dawn of my recollection and I do not remember anything but the ladder device until the 1870s. The gas jet was only a feeble fish-tail burner, but at all events it did not daze and dazzle as some of the modern bright lights do.

Crossing-sweepers, male and female, were very much more numerous than they are to-day. Perhaps the streets were dirtier. There were no wooden blocks and no asphalt paving, and although some of the chief arteries of traffic had granite setts, the ruling type of roadway was macadam, which, in the absence of steam-road rollers, was probably not of the best. And there was not so much objection to poor persons getting a livelihood in the streets as there is to-day. There were crossing-sweepers in the City, near the Bank and Mansion House. I think Thackeray has a character who sweeps a City crossing by day and goes home in his carriage to a sumptuous house in the West End at night. It was not uncommon for suburban sweepers to have a tame animal pet to keep them company—a dog, cat, rabbit or guinea-pig—which suggested good nature and awakened sympathy. But in this direction I must perforce admit that Glasgow outpaced London, for in the 1880s there was a shoeblack on the Broomielaw, near the Caledonian Railway bridge, who kept a knowing goose, or possibly a gander, beside him.

Shoeblacks were numerous. In the 'fifties they were independent men and lads of many ages and descriptions, often sordid and, on occasion, extortionate. Later, came the red-clad boys of the Shoeblack Brigade, clean-faced, under control and with a uniform charge as well as blouse.

Now I conjure up from the " vasty deep " of memory the ghosts of the undertakers and their paraphernalia of woe. The undertaker was of course in black, and equally of course wore a pot-hat turbaned with a wealth of weeping crape. Two of his men bearing draped wands invariably stood,

motionless as the statues in Tutankhamen's tomb, one on each side of the door of the house of mourning. These were the mutes. If the deceased had rejoiced in a coat-of-arms his escutcheon was displayed in front of the dwelling. This was the hatchment. The hearse was a long black box on wheels, closed on all sides, without glass, and bearing sockets in which plumes could be placed. The black horses bore tall black plumes nodding on their heads, acquiring therefrom a touch of the majestic. The coffins were covered with black cloth tacked on with innumerable brass-headed nails, for the polished "casket," as our American friends call it, was still a good many years ahead. A very familiar street sound of those days was the tack, tack, tack of the undertaker's hammer as he nailed on the cloth in his shop. He did it with a kind of rhythm which rendered the process unmistakable.

And one more observation I must make in all sadness—a funeral often passed through the streets, quiet or crowded, without a single head being uncovered or a single hat disturbed in its honour. How far were we behind other nations in that respect! Frenchmen, when they witnessed this indifference, were horrified. They would not admit that there was anything like Spartan stoicism about it. Even the Germans had a better sense of decorum. Once at Trier, from a window of the Porta Nigra Hotel, I witnessed the main thoroughfare closed by the marching of an interminable Prussian regiment for which all traffic was held up. Suddenly from a side-street a funeral—and a poor class one—appeared. Instantly commands rang out. The column halted, space was made, and the cortège passed between the dislocated battalion, officers and men standing at attention while by-standers bared their heads. Bravo Attila & Co.! We are somewhat more decent nowadays, and credit for the fact must, I think, be given to the London County Council school committee. Some doings of that body I contemn, for their effects are evil; but, in teaching boys to uncover and girls to curtsy on the passage of a funeral, they have done well.

CHAPTER VI

STREET ENTERTAINERS

Raree-show—Punch and Judy—Dancing puppets—Acrobats—Multiplex musician—Bagpipers—Hurdy-gurdy and white mice—Organ-grinders—German bands—Ballad singers—Victorian and modern music—Happy families—Glass-blowers—Bell-ringers—Jack-in-the-Green—Guy Fawkes—Grottoes—Marrow-bones and cleavers.

MY Looking-glass Street World would be very incomplete if no notice were taken of the tribe of entertainers. Street amusements were both numerous and varied sixty years ago, due, perhaps, to the comparative scarcity of indoor diversions, and to the much greater tolerance of the police.

Children of to-day, with their cinemas and comic journals and their plethora of elaborate and refined picture-books, automatic machines, etc., would find, I fear, but little use for the Raree-show, or, as it was also called, Peep-show or Gallantry-show. I fancy that this device was decrepit and well on the way to extinction in the 1850s, for its professors were usually poor fellows of the shabbiest description. The Raree-show was a box supported on a stick or, if of the larger variety, on a barrow, in which were placed pictures, sometimes rude paintings, but more often engravings, which could be viewed through peep-holes on payment of a halfpenny. The box was often surmounted by the Union Jack and by placards announcing the rarity and beauty (both highly supposititious) of the pictures within; with perhaps an earnest entreaty to "support the Fine Arts." Some were lighted at night by a candle. People, chiefly children, were attracted, sometimes by sound of trumpet, in sufficient numbers to keep the proprietor's soul in his body, but hardly more. During the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny and also, perhaps, after the great Sayers-

Heenan prize-fight, custom had spasms of activity, but after 1860 events of such moment became scarcer, while pictures grew commoner and cheaper. Then the Raree-show died the death, at all events in London. Its tableaux were poor, and it was a sorry business. Yet we read of the arrival of such a show in a village constituting quite an event earlier in the century. The two peep-hole screen pictures in the Wirtz Gallery, Brussels, are glorified Raree-shows.

Our old friends Punch and Judy afforded an ever-popular show. The presentation itself has varied but little except in the dress of the policeman, but in those days the manipulator of the puppets was always accompanied by a comrade who usually wore a pot-hat, not infrequently a white one, had a mouth-organ stuck in his stock or neckerchief, and carried a drum. The noise of the instruments was quite characteristic and children a street or two off could tell when a Punch was in the vicinity. The musician also acted as collector. In these degenerate days I notice no such picturesque collaborator, the artist's adjunct being often a music-mute youth or woman who looks after the ha'pence and nothing more.

There was sometimes seen a show of dancing puppets using the Punch type of portable stage with let-down curtains to conceal the operator. Female figures performed a ballet of four or six, and a sailor danced the hornpipe; but *the* piece was a skeleton which indulged in a *pas seul.* For a time his whole frame—if not his heart—was in it; then his bones began to separate and, marvellous to relate, disappeared behind the scenes, dancing all the time. At last, when the skull alone was left, still footing it—if I may so express it—merrily, the fragments returned one by one and reunited themselves to the figure, each in its proper place; when the skeleton, finding itself all there and quite itself again, terminated the performance with a graceful bow. These puppet-shows did not excite the same enthusiasm as Punch and Judy—there was no policeman to batter about—and I don't think I saw one in England after 1860 or so. But in 1871 I witnessed a not dissimilar, though more

elaborate—and, be it said, grossly indecent—travelling puppet-show in Mesopotamia. How the Turks reconciled it with the Prophet's drastic prohibition of images I did not learn.

Acrobats and jugglers (then popularly called tumblers) frequently occupied pitches at convenient corners. A troupe visiting our neighbourhood comprised an elderly man, a youth and a girl, possibly all of a family. They spread a carpet, opened a box of properties, threw off their coats and appeared in regulation acrobatic dress. A basin for the reception of coppers was not forgotten at one corner of the carpet. The old man performed feats of strength and dexterity, the others aiding as supernumeraries. His chief act —and it was one common to most of the street tumblers— was to support and balance a pole about ten feet long perpendicularly in a waistband, and allow the youth to climb to the top and there go through several tricks. To keep the balance he had to watch the pole narrowly, hands on hips, as it shifted, but I never witnessed a failure. Then he would take both boy and girl on his shoulders, where they would posture and disport in various ways. He would fasten a cup to his forehead by a band, and, throwing a gilded ball high in the air, catch it in the cup every time. And keep half a dozen balls rotating, and so on. This, with crowded traffic of all kinds circulating within a few feet, required nerve and self-possession. I don't know how many pitches they made in a day, but the old man must have been a tough one to stand the racket.

Another street performer was a foreigner who played, or made a noise on, five or six instruments at once, drum on his back struck by a stick tied to the elbow ; cymbals on the knee played by a string from the foot ; bells on the head jangling when it was shaken ; mouth-organ ; accordion, and so on. The Highland pipers had not yet discovered London, but there was a Tyrolean bag-piper who played over half a dozen bars of the same tune incessantly, all day and every day. There were Italians or Savoyards with hurdy-gurdies and white mice, marmots or squirrels in rotating cages. The hurdy-gurdy was a squeaky instrument

operated by the friction of a wheel against a violin string or strings which were stopped off by keys to form the few notes within its range.

There were two tribes of organ-grinders; one with a tall-backed instrument which tinkled like Queen Elizabeth's virginals and must, I think, have been the forerunner of the present street piano. This was played by a crooked handle at one end. The other was a wind-and-reed affair in a rectangular box, much fuller in tone, resembling its rival only in being invariably and desperately out of tune. Both were carried on the back—always by foreigners of sorts—and supported on sticks when performed on. The square box of the latter excruciator often served as stage for a wretched monkey, gaudily attired, which was forced to dance or to pretend to go through a few tricks. We boys had a favourite grinder (with monkey, of course) who was sometimes admitted to the front garden, where, screened from vulgar observation by the brick wall, we played his organ and teased his (and our) Simian relative. Once poor Jacko escaped and climbed the laburnum tree, which was covered with its poisonous pods. He was fortunately too wise or too frightened to taste them, and was ultimately persuaded to come down by the aid of a pair of steps and a clothes-prop.

What a distance have we travelled since those times! On March 16th, 1923, the *Daily Mirror* had a picture of a "wireless organ fitted with aerial and loud-speaker," all drawn by a donkey—well, no, not *all*, not the picture—busy earning coppers in the streets of London by tapping the music of the broadcasting stations, which by reason of its invasion of the ether had actually become "music of the spheres." Was the proprietor obliged to take out a pedlar's license—or a Post Office one—I wonder? This suggests that at no distant date sea-side loungers may possibly carry down to the beach, in addition to luncheon-baskets, spades and pails, a compact aerial rolled up like an umbrella, and, idly reclining, listen drowsily to the music of five Continents.

German bands existed, but were not numerous. They

rarely counted more than three performers, one of whom accented every bar with a pom-pom on a big wind instrument. "German band" was an expression of contempt in those times, so little promise of this latter-day exaltation of Deutscher music was there in their performances. When they tried English airs it was generally to misinterpret them.

While on the subject of music the ballad-singer must claim attention. *He* was English enough, although usually a very shabby person not of the highest class of education. He was great at public executions, being always present and prepared with a woeful ballad writ to suit the crime under expiation. But in our neighbourhood he was a star most often visible on Saturday evenings, when he planted a wooden frame—sometimes it was a clothes-horse—covered with ballads hung on horizontal strings, at street corners, and attracted a crowd by singing some well-known ditty with force and emphasis. He sold copies of the words, never, I think, of the music, printed on long strips of coarse paper at a halfpenny or penny, I forget which, and never wanted for custom.

The popular songs of the 1850s were, no doubt, often silly and vulgar and contained but little wit as it is understood to-day, but they were frequently set to melodies which, though simple, crudely harmonised, and dreadfully inartistic according to modern standards, had plenty of go and possessed the faculty of sticking to the memory. Many of them terminated in a nonsensical chorus of "Fol de-lol" or "Doodledum-day," but that practice was fast dying out. *The Postman's Knock*, already quoted, was one of the best. Then there were *Beautiful Star*, *Villikins and his Dinah*, *Up and Down the City Road*, *Billy Barlow*, *The Ratcatcher's Daughter*, *Alonzo the Brave*, some of which are not dead yet, sixty years later. The Crimean patriotic song *Red, White and Blue* was heard everywhere.

Words and music, both the work of Mr. D. J. Shaw, were picturesque and bursting with enthusiasm. It passed through many editions and for a long series of years was as

truly a national hymn as *God save the King* or *Rule Britannia*. But, in view of what has happened since to—

> " Britannia, the Pride of the Ocean,
> The land of the brave and the free,"

I am sorely afraid that sarcastic queries might justly be written against every line of the poetry, and that Shaw's discontented ghost must be looping the loop somewhere in the azure welkin in very rage—although I hope not, as I believe he was a parson—at the hauling down of his precious Red, White and Blue, and the jettisoning of Britannia's trident by the nerveless hands of the modern politician. One of the couplets refers to the *entente cordiale* of the Crimean days: it runs:

> " May the French from the English ne'er sever,
> But staunch to their colours prove true ! "

Shaw's song is still very much alive to-day, for in the United States it has been adopted as a sort of national pæan, and is believed by many Americans to be of strictly native origin. The words have been altered to suit the new rôle, but the refrain of " Red, White and Blue " is retained as descriptive of the Stars and Stripes.

In 1898 I steamed into New York in the Cunarder *Umbria* just as the American fleet was returning from the Spanish War. Many pleasure craft were afloat to receive them, and one steamer with a walking beam and high-pressure engine accompanied us for some distance, a band on board playing *Red, White and Blue*. Naturally Britishers took that for a decidedly graceful compliment until Yankee passengers informed us that it was an American national hymn, and wouldn't be persuaded to the contrary !

A young gentleman from Yale was even highly indignant when informed that the tune of the *Star-spangled Banner* was English also, while *Yankee Doodle* laboured under a strong suspicion of being Irish. And as the Americans have likewise adopted the air of *God Save the King* for their *My Country 'tis of thee*, the compliment to English music seems fairly complete from the American side.

But it is right to state that in the 1850s many of Uncle Sam's productions were favourites in England, such as *Nelly Gray*, *Swanee River*, *Old Dog Tray*, *Wait for the Wagon*, *I'm off to Charleston*, *Cottage near a Wood*, *Old Kentucky Shore*. Some of these were, no doubt, due to British musicians domiciled in the West, but they were known and acknowledged as American or American negro.

About 1860 came Stead with his *Perfect Cure*, which raged through the land like an influenza. We have had a lot of musical education since then, but what modern composition has rivalled the renown of that to-all-appearance silly production? In later years it was stated that this popular performer was a relative of Mr. "Pall Mall" Stead.

The music of to-day is no doubt superior to the old in the artistic sense, but it does not appeal to the masses in the same degree. Folk-songs, the infantile musical lispings of a nation, were, and are, always simple; and they take their form and tone from the mentality of the people from whom they spring. They accord with their peculiar mode of thought; they are the 'prentice voice. Substitute something infinitely more scientific and the target will be missed. What elaborate symphony could compensate a Switzer for the *Ranz des Vaches* or the Scot for *Scots wha hae*? Where is the latter-day composition, highly wrought after the modern German method, that equals many of the old English ballads for pathos and force?

I say "modern German" because the old German songs were both simple and touching. At the Frankfort-on-Main Exhibition of 1891 a choir sang native folk-songs to the British electrical engineers one evening after dinner, to the admiration of us all. The tenor was a fat schoolmaster who took himself very seriously, and some of his colleagues didn't look very musical from the outside, but they scored.

The fact is that very technical music is an acquired taste. Education in refined musical methods vitiates the original natural inclinations. It is like a stimulant or a drug that ceases to take effect except in increased doses. The result is that British composers trained exclusively on scientific German lines succeed in pleasing their compeers only and

are treated with indifference by the masses. In the old days English musicians kept pace with national requirements and aspirations. Three years ago Gay's *Beggar's Opera* was revived and astonishment was expressed that such a wealth of beautiful English music existed in 1728. The *Daily Telegraph* [1] called it, "lovely, irresistibly-fresh melody." And witness the Napoleonic wars, with their opulence of naval and patriotic minstrelsy, *Hearts of Oak*, *Tom Bowling*, *Death of Nelson*, and scores of others; and the brief Crimean War as already cited.

What, to compare with these, did the mighty struggle of 1914–8 produce? *Tipperary*! Not one song or composition that has caught the national taste and lived even for one year! And yet music rolled unceasingly from the publishers' printing-presses. Technically, much of it was probably better than that of 1800 and 1850, but it was of a kind not "understanded of the people" and consequently failed to catch on. Before the war the London County Council tried to "educate" the people musically by appointing a German controller for their bands who tabooed all but "high-class" music, and on one occasion, I remember, took credit in his annual Report for excluding from the Parks *Swanee River* and all tunes like it.

Even in music-hall ditties the same phenomenon obtains. Popular songs, such as were chorused by whole audiences and survived for years as street ditties, are no longer known. The new airs lack character, distinction and energy. The best of the old *Lions Comique* couldn't have made them go. Their authors suffer from over-education.

Yet another Victorian street exhibition was the Happy Family, examples of which I remember dimly even from my Islington days. They had a general resemblance and consisted of a large wire cage occupying nearly half of a handbarrow, the rest of which was boarded over to provide a stage for the performers. The content of the cage was not constant, varying a little with the tastes of the proprietor, and, no doubt, with the availability of specimens, but nearly always contained a dog; two cats of distinctive

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, June 7, 1920.

appearance; half a dozen mice of sorts; several canaries or finches, and, occasionally, a small monkey. The initial wonder was to see creatures so antagonistic by nature occupying the same apartment in apparent harmony. The performance would commence by opening the cage door and calling the cats by popular pugilistic names. They came, were invested with boxing-gloves, stood on their hind legs and pretended to spar. After a time the man would ask the dog "if he didn't see the family fighting?" He would bark a reply, and, charging out of the cage, interpose, growling, between the combatants, sometimes upsetting them far from gently. Having stopped the fight he retired wagging his tail. But the cats, encouraged by their master, set to again and were once more stopped. When this palled a little by repetition a medal was hung round the neck of one cat and a bandage tied round one eye of the other, and they were told to sit at two corners of the platform.

Then, under their noses almost, the mice walked a tight rope carrying balancing-poles, *à la mode de Blondin*. A bird fired a toy cannon, and another, affecting to be killed, permitted itself to be placed in a coffin and towed away on a hearse without a sign of life till the carriage stopped at the cage door, when it revived and hopped in. The supposed murderer was executed by placing his head in a running noose, suspended from a gibbet, which another bird tightened by pulling. Then the showman, after going round with the cap, sought another pitch. The public always provided a crowd, although there was a notion abroad that such effects could only be produced by ill-treatment. Whether the Police deemed these displays obstructive or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals interfered I don't know, but Happy Families grew scarcer and scarcer. The last I saw was on the Thames Embankment by Charing Cross Bridge some time in the 1880s.

A glass-blowing exhibition figured amongst the street entertainments of the 1860s. At a portable stall a tallish man (in a tall hat, of course) with a blow-pipe and several small pots of melted glass, probably heated by charcoal,

produced globes and various small glass articles in different colours, which he sold to admiring crowds. Particularly he was expert in evolving masses of iridescent glass fibre, which he called silk, and for which customers never lacked. What would Scotland Yard say to that nowadays, I wonder ? In many ways Englishmen are not so free as they once were. The educative value of that show must have been considerable. It stirred one to think.

Other gatherers of public largess carried frames hung with an octave or two of small bells from place to place and thereon discoursed more or less sweet music. One of these troupes had a piebald pony which played *Home, sweet home*, and other simple melodies, and not badly, by striking the bells with his right hoof. Once I had the luck to find out how it was done. The bell frame had a screen or small tent behind it which got disarranged one day sufficiently to afford a peep of the interior. There was a man inside who, while his mate in front was giving the pony pats and the crowd patter, pointed with a whip, the thong of which was bent back in his hand, to each successive bell to be struck at the proper interval. The pony, seated on its haunches, faithfully followed the lead and chimed out several tunes.

There were several street amusements of amateur origin and only annual occurrence. Jack-in-the-Green was one of these and the most pretentious. He appeared only on May 1st, Chimney-sweepers' Day. Chimneys took care of themselves on this anniversary, and if any unluckily caught alight they had to burn or have the Fire Brigade. After breakfast, Sir Sweep, with wife, family and friends sallied forth on sweeping intent, but it was of coppers and not of soot, and of pockets in lieu of chimneys. A lusty sweep—for strength and endurance were necessary for the due performance of the part—covered himself down to the boots with a circular wicker frame of bee-hive contour, carried on the shoulders, and terminating in a dome or pinnacle above his head. This frame was entirely concealed by green boughs and flowers, May blossoms preponderating if the season was propitious. A small window gave egress

to his gaze, but was not very obvious from without, and one seldom caught a glimpse of the perspiring countenance within. Women and girls, one to each corner, and two or three men or youths, sometimes with sooty faces, mouth-organs and tambourines, formed his escort, the females being in short dresses, white stockings and gaudy shoes, like sorry May Queens. The verdure-clad sweep pranced, twirled, jumped and capered to the music while the others danced round, imitating the ballet at the Opera as well as they were able. Sometimes a vocal accompaniment was attempted, but sweeps' voices but imperfectly resemble silver bells, and this part was seldom conspicuously successful.

Not so the sweeping up of coppers, for the public gave generously. In a residential street almost every house sent a maid or a child with something for the bags flourished by the dusky roisterers. A survival, no doubt, of the old May Day festivities, of a time when we are told every village green had its Maypole. But in London Jack-in-the-Green has been as dead as Judas Maccabæus for a generation or two now. He has gone with Twelfth Night, Valentine's Day, Clown, Pantaloon and Columbine, Operatic Ballet, Burlesque, King Charles the Martyr and Oak Apple Day. He claims no special requiem, but he gave London streets for a few hours what they sorely needed—colour.

On November 5th Guy Fawkes held mighty sway. Him we have still, although in a sadly debilitated condition. Guys were then more numerous and more elaborate than they are to-day, and the public largess was conceived on a more liberal scale. As now, they were exhibited chiefly by boys, and perhaps their decline is not wholly unconnected with the insistent inquisitiveness of the modern School Board Officer.

Another almost vanished show and levy by children greatly in vogue in the 1850s was the Grotto. At the beginning of the oyster season boys and girls collected shells of that bi-valve and built in any convenient street corner or recess a sort of domed temple in which, after dark, a lighted candle-stump was placed. Imaginative youngsters

made windows with bits of coloured glass or tinsel and often produced a pretty effect. They stood by and earnestly invited wayfarers to " remember the grotto," which a good many of them did, bestowing tokens of their remembrance in the shape of ha'pence of the realm. Why ?

Because the oyster was then very much more popular with the masses than is now the case. He was sold at the not unreasonable figure of four a penny, opened, vinagered, and peppered, from numerous costermongers' barrows and improvised corner stalls. The yearly consumption in London streets ran into many millions. Thus St. James's Day was an anniversary that obtruded itself on the public gaze : yet the pedestrian was entreated to remember it, and very often did, to the lightening of his purse. In spite of the haziness of purpose I myself remembered it a good many times in defiance of all the precepts of Political Economy. Imagine Adam Smith remembering the grotto ! I used to know his native place, the " lang toon o' Kirkcaldy," very well, but never detected any grottoes there.

The only other amateur " turn " I can call to mind was the excruciating marrow-bone-and-cleaver band which, as a rule, came to life only in honour of a butcher's nuptials, when he and his bride were apt to be serenaded by apprentices and boys belonging to the craft. Some used two bones in castanet fashion, others clashed big bones against cleavers, awakening noises which sometimes possessed rhythm, but never tune. Complaints were made of the nocturnal progress of such musicians through the streets, and I imagine the police had some hand in the suppression of the rowdy function.

CHAPTER VII

STREET PASSENGERS—COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS

Ladies and crinoline—Riding habits—Complexions—Maiden simplicity—Little girls—Men's whiskers and attire—Night-caps—Bed curtains—Little boys—Top hats—Few women in City—Office equipment in 1850s—Wafers—Seals—Quills.

BUT the streets were not entirely occupied by traffickers. There were also the people upon whom these gentry preyed and they constituted a motley throng. Of these, the ladies, of course, demand prime consideration. They filled, not to say crowded, the gaze in a manner unparalleled at the present day: for did not crinoline abundantly close up any spots accidentally left vacant by beauty? As the 1860s approached, hoops attained marvellous dimensions and were affected by all classes alike, the extraordinary fascination afflicting maid as markedly as mistress. I once entered a rather crowded omnibus with a relative: when about to pay the fares she paused and looked round wonderingly—for I had disappeared. I was not far off, however: only concealed by the inter-arching of the crinolines between which I had nestled. When ladies had to sit close, as in a train or bus, or pass through a narrow doorway, something had to bulge, and hoops perforce became ovals. Croquet was, I believe, originated or revived in the crinoline age—another instance of how hoops had seized imaginations. Of course, little boys had naught to say in the matter—they had hoops of their own—and I, having never known anything else, saw nothing strange in the mode, probably believing that ladies were made that way.

The Empress Eugenie was supposed to be the High Priestess of crinoline, and her portrait was repeated *ad nauseam* in the fashion-plates of the *Illustrated London News*

and other instructive publications. Paris claimed to be the centre of light and leading in all pertaining to female dress, and the British ladies certainly acknowledged her Worth. And then the flower-wreathed bonnets and their dexterously knotted ribbons! And the mantles and Paisley shawls! Well might Venus and Juno, scrutinising Camberwell from Olympus, envy their mortal sisters.

Did the ladies escape the pot-hat? Breeches they scorned with the scorn of the kilted Highlander arrayed in all his tartans—and more; for would they have anything to do with the swelling Turkish trousers insidiously introduced by Mrs. Bloomer of the U.S.A., and after her technically called Bloomers? No! But at the other end of the scale they were not so obdurate. A pretty face is often shown up by a topper, and so when Beauty went a-riding and something that would stick on decently well while cleaving the whirlwind on the back of a frisky mare seemed imperatively necessary, she most sweetly unreasonably adorned her chignon with a high silk-napped cylinder. A contrast indeed to the "pork-pie hat and neat little feather" which she often affected when walking out.

There was no riding astride although it was whispered that the immodest maidens of Mexico and other benighted regions were addicted to the practice. Side-saddles and return to the long clothes of babyhood were the rules. The riding-dress of the 1850s invested the courtly old Spanish tradition that ladies had no legs with a certain suggestion of plausibility. And please don't mention smoking.

But, laugh as we may about crinolines and their funny appurtenances, middle-class ladies of that period are entitled to our respectful admiration on at least one count—they but rarely indulged in rouge, powder, lip-salve and kindred abominations. Vanity bags were unknown. It was not because such things were undreamed of, for those who went to see high-bred dames on their way to the Queen's Drawing-room receptions—a not unpopular amusement—found opportunities for discerning, as the carriages slowed up and waited their turn in the Mall, that such intolerance was far from universal with the fair sex: it was rather that the vast

majority disdained such trickeries. Manœuvres of the kind were considered essentially French and unworthy of English womanhood. "Whited sepulchres," the tinted Venuses were sometimes called. So when one met a devotee of the paint-pot it was natural to class her as either a Queen or a quean, a Duchess or a drab. Extremes met at the dressing-table, if nowhere else. But credit must be given to the sex in other ways. Single girls wore few jewels, and their dresses, although flounced and bulgy, were usually of simple material. Real flowers were worn in the hair. Artlessness was the note struck. *Per contra*, they liked ear-rings, and the necessary piercing was sometimes held to be good for the sight.

And on yet another count may the fair Victorians claim. Their costumes may have been absurd, but in one respect the dresses were eminently sensible—they had pockets.

Little girls had bulky frocks, too, larger than those worn by children of recent years, and when they displayed stocking it was invariably white. Black and coloured hose didn't come in, I think, till the early 1870s. But not all showed stocking, for some—although the style was dying out in the mid 'fifties—wore white drawers that descended below the knee and often terminated in frills. In this way girls could sometimes boast of more in the way of unmentionables than youths of equal age, for boys, until five or six, usually wore petticoats without corresponding sheathings. With their crinoline frocks and long drawers comical little dames those girls seem to me now, although at the time I accepted them as matters of course, products of Nature like their mammas. They used to curtsy, too—a very graceful custom, now only to be met with, I believe, in Scandinavia. Girls were then mannerly rather than mannish. It was not their fault that they were overdressed.

Gentlemen, after the middle 1850s, began to grow long beards and whiskers, the consequence, it was said, of our men being allowed to cultivate their hirsute adornments in the trenches before Sebastopol. Lord Dundreary "weepers" were common. Shop-walkers who couldn't grow them were not much in demand. Men wore cut-away coats, waistcoats,

and trousers which ultimately assumed the peg-top form. As the ladies' dress expanded from the waist downwards so the men's diminished. Had it not been for this saving compensatory action Romeo could not have approached near enough to give Juliet his arm. Dancing had to be standoffish even to the most jazzuistically inclined. With the aid of the peg-top things fitted together in jig-saw fashion. For a period waistcoats and trousers were made of the same pattern and colour, the coat usually being of darker hue. Black velvet jackets were not uncommon for indoor use. Capes and cloaks frequently replaced overcoats, and neckties and watch-chains—always single, these last—were often more gorgeous and massive than those we know.

In the early 'fifties old stagers continued to wear the Georgian stock, a stiff band of black silk made with or without a set bow in front and fastened behind by strap and buckle. They were mostly worn without collars and kept the chin permanently at "attention." Old officers thought the Army would go straight to the devil when stocks were abolished from the rank and file. The Prince Consort long adhered to the stock. Trousers were provided with buttons at the bottom of the legs and kept in tension by straps under the boots. So straps as well as boots had to be cleaned after a muddy walk. Turned-up trousers would have been a curiosity indeed; and it was a point to keep those garments as creaseless as possible.

Night-caps were still affected by many of the older folks, notwithstanding that beds in good houses were often protected from draughts by curtains that were not merely ornamental, but were actually made to draw. Feather-beds were not uncommon, and bedsteads were often surrounded by valances. I had no experience of warming-pans. We are prone to think our ancestors sturdier and more accustomed to rough it than our own degenerate selves, but in truth, in some ways, they were very much the reverse. Night-caps, curtains and hangings were no doubt useful when fogs and hurricanes invaded castles through unglazed casements, and the intrepid knight hung his helmet on the peg from which he took down his night-cap, but people

in the 1850s were only beginning to perceive that times had changed. I am pleased to say that our own father was not one of the coddlers: he banned all these feeble luxuries.

Little boys were usually miniature copies of their dads. They were breeched late, and until that happened wore petticoats. The sailor suit, modelled on the naval uniform of the period, with short jacket, white bell-mouthed trousers, clasp-knife hanging by a lanyard, and straw hat—a very much uglier get-up than the natty sailor costumes boys and girls of later generations have known—was often worn. When I was breeched my first suit was all snuff colour, and I managed to slash the trousers the very first day with a penknife given in honour of the occasion. Glorious ceremony, that first breeching! Parents, uncles, aunts, united in lining the virgin pockets with silver and sundries. Little boys in winter were muffled in long woollen comforters, but for little girls these seemed to be regarded as superfluous. A stage of preparation, perhaps, for the low necks and pneumonia blouses of later times. Boys of a larger growth wore tunics with belts, usually with snake-shaped clasps, and Inverness capes. Peaked caps with chin straps were greatly in evidence; peakless caps with tassel on top were, I think, dying out in the 1850s.

The pot-hat was imperative for all City men, and for their clerks, porters, and door-keepers. My father had an office in Broad Street, which we boys occasionally visited, usually on festive occasions such as the Lord Mayor's Show, when our presence was not calculated to clog the wheels of commerce to any great extent. It was from a window of this domicile that I, on more than one occasion, looked out on literally a sea, or rather mightily flowing river, of silk top-hats. Those who wore them not were scarcer than those who do to-day. Ah! where are all the stove-pipe wavelets of that interminable river now? And there was no relief from an admixture of women. There were no female clerks, no typists, no waitresses. Before Cannon Street and Broad Street stations were opened and enlivened the intervening streets with an interchange of passengers, the fair sex was also a rare sex in the City except, perhaps,

in the vicinity of St. Paul's, where a draper or two had already established themselves. London City was then indeed an Eve-less Eden. Verily times have changed!

Having mentioned my father's counting-house—how musty that once familiar term smells!—I may say that it contained matters scarcely to be matched in Broad Street offices of to-day, such as boxes of many-coloured wafers; sealing wax galore, and seals with ebony handles; ink-wipers made of circular flaps of cloth of different diameters and tints fastened together at the centre; quill pens; penknives really intended for use as such; a cabinet with secret drawers. We always brought away some of those gaudy wafers. Items such as these continued in use by Government Departments until quite recent years. People used to joke about the cross-nibbed and spluttering quills—suggestive of the "fretful porcupine"—supplied by the Post Office to its patrons; and a good joke it was until you took up one to write with—then it lacked point.

CHAPTER VIII

STILL ON THE QUEEN'S HIGHWAY

Tea-shops—Aerated bread—Chop- and coffee-houses—Taverns—Railways and refreshments—Lake's—Lord Mayor's Show—Gog and Magog—Show programmes—Mayors and Reeves—Omnibuses—Fires—Manual engines—Fire-escapes—Steam fire-engines—Tooley Street blaze—Thames on fire—Braithwaite and Ericsson—Locomotive *Novelty*—Turret ship *Monitor*—Hot-air ship—Motor-car radiator.

AN invitation to contemplate a London without tea-shops may seem rather hopeless, but nevertheless, up to about 1875, such an institution was, in the modern sense, to the Cockney unknown. And when it came it was not an innovation that caught on with the speed of the Great Fire. Probably the advent of the girl clerk prompted its inauguration, and her ever-increasing numbers favoured its development.

Aerated bread was first heard of about 1860, and was the invention of Dr. Dauglish of Malvern, who aimed at the abolition of manual kneading with its associated nastiness and dangers to cleanliness and health. This he accomplished by means of yeast-less dough, mixed by machinery and impregnated with carbonic acid gas. Nothing but flour, water, a little salt and gas—no sweat! It was liked by many. For years the Company confined itself to the making and sale of its special bread and cakes.

The first A B C shop to sell tea, coffee, milk, etc., and provide sitting accommodation which I knew was in the courtyard of Fenchurch Street Station and about the date named had only recently been opened. I understood it was the initial attempt and was prompted by the fact that the sale of bread alone was not proving a dividend-earning proposition. Things have developed with the A B C and its imitators since then, but little is heard now of the

mechanically mixed bread which was the Company's *raison d'être* and its employees know about as much of Dr. Dauglish as they do of St. Francis of Assisi.

In the 1850s those who lunched in the City had to rely on the chop-house or its humbler congener the coffee-house. There was the London Tavern, to be sure, and a few others where millionaires could revel, but of regular hotels with grill-rooms attached I doubt whether there was even one within the magic square mile. The Bridge House Tavern, just over London Bridge, had a name for lunches and dinners. The nearest railway stations (excepting Fenchurch Street) to the City were also just beyond London Bridge and the daily migration to and fro of business folk across Rennie's granite arches was enormous. Fenchurch Street, the terminus of the Blackwall, Tilbury, North London and Eastern Counties Railways, was the only station in the City, the so-called Bishopsgate terminus of the last-named line being really at Shoreditch. Neither did anything noteworthy in the catering line, whereas there were Refreshment Rooms of at least decent aspect at the London Bridge stations. It was not until the early 1860s that the chop-house tradition began to be broken into by a few lunching establishments, like Lake's in Cheapside, institutions which usually began as additions to existing public-houses.

Lake's was reckoned very go-ahead, for there one could supplement one's luncheon by smoke, coffee, draughts, dominoes and billiards. They placed implicit faith in the honesty of their clients. On coming out you detailed what you had had to an elderly pay-clerk who instantly and unerringly announced the total due.

I once or twice in the 1850s had experience of a City chop-house, with its sanded floor, straight-backed wooden seats, and primitive arrangements. Pewter plates and dishes were said to have been discarded quite recently by some of them. The things supplied were excellent—chops and steaks, of English meat of course—and an air of good-fellowship prevailed, room being made for a stranger with the greatest readiness. The Head Waiter was always addressed by his Christian name, and was often a man of

parts and character—wealth also sometimes—apt at repartee and free from the servility to which in later years the German waiter accustomed us.

On Lord Mayor's Show day the chop-houses did roaring business, and yielded the unusual sight of ladies and children amongst their customers, for the Show was a great deal more popular then than now, and attracted the fair and the innocent from far and near. I saw it several times, on one of these occasions occupying, with my father and younger brother, a splendid position inside the railings—I believe they were still the famous ones of Sussex iron—of St. Paul's, standing on the base of one of the columns of the semi-circular portico facing Cannon Street, along which the procession could be seen coming with its clouds of banners on its way past the Cathedral to Ludgate Hill. An advancing band could be heard before its precursor was out of ear-shot, so anxious was His Worshipful the Lord Mayor to prevent any lapse of enthusiasm; and we cheered ourselves both hungry and thirsty as the gilded and shimmering dream drifted by.

If only Gog and Magog had been carried in the procession as they—or rather their predecessors, for the original figures were destroyed in the Great Fire—used to be! Without admiring the ugly features of those civic dignitaries we had seen enough of them in the Guildhall to lament their absence. The present Gogmagog and Corineus, for such are their proper names—Gog and Magog springing from a vulgar and quite unauthorised cutting up of the former cognomen—were born in 1669. They are of wood, whereas their forerunners were of wicker, which perhaps makes all the difference in portability.

A feature of the Show in those days was the awful folding panoramic programmes, purporting to give an exact view of the procession, sold by dozens of hawkers. "Lord Mayor's percession! Highly coloured! Tuppence!" The crude and glaring tinting was ludicrous, even to children, but the really funny point was that they were precisely the same year after year, and so really bore no reference to the Show in progress. Apparently about 1790 or so,

judging from the artistic and other evidence, some enterprising printer made a block, bearing more or less resemblance to the pageant of his day, which was still utilised by his heirs or executors half a century or so afterwards, as each November 9th came round. Never mind—we had a jolly time! *Vive le Lor Maire!*

By the by, I have always thought it a pity that we adopted the French title of Mayor for our Chief Magistrates. In Reeve, still extant in the 1850s—for then some towns yet possessed their Town Reeve, or Borough Reeve—we had a good English word expressive of civic authority that afforded no opening for the scoffer and punster to liken the revered head of a whole community to a female horse or a Frenchman's mother. My Lord Reeve and My Lady Reeve —in my humble opinion—would have looked and sounded much better. But as I believe the change, except as regards London, which had had its Mayor for centuries,[1] was enacted by Parliament in its wisdom I had better say no more, having a proper fear of the Clock Tower before my eyes. Perhaps, knowing that a Lord Mayor was bound to be ennobled, or, at the least, knighted, and so made a Cavalier, the drafter of the Bill thought it well to anticipate the inevitable by associating the dignity with the *genus equus* from the beginning. In view of the taste prevailing for things German in those times we have to be thankful that Lord Burgomaster was not foisted upon us instead of Mayor.

To and from the Lord Mayor's Show we went by omnibus, that being the ordinary means of communication between Camberwell and the City. There were hansoms and "growlers" for special occasions, but no railways or tramways. Many of the Surrey-side omnibuses terminated their runs in Gracechurch Street, turning between Fenchurch and Tower Streets, and waiting awhile there. So constant streams of home-bound business men converged on this point as offices closed and created a scene of much animation. Some buses had a complement of regular passengers, started to a fixed time-table, and made non-stop runs to their destinations.

The driver of such a bus often wore a white top-hat,

[1] The first Mayor of London was Henry Fitz Alwyn, 1189.

carried a rose in his button-hole and a cigar in his mouth. The conductor—cad he was then often called, perhaps from his habit of "cadging" passengers from under the nose of a rival—also sported a topper (never a white one) and frequently a flower. He couldn't well smoke, in view of the acrobatic nature of his occupation, but often bore a twig or straw between his lips. He stood on a step to the left of the door, barely large enough for his feet, and supported himself by grasping a strap fixed high on the back of the bus and descending over his shoulder. From this proud eminence he hailed likely passengers, ogled the girls, and chaffed the drivers of following buses or other vehicles. His was supposed to be a pungent wit. One of his duties in the crinoline age was to lean down from his perch and prevent with his hand the oval that hoops or whalebone had to assume when squeezing through the narrow doorway from rising to an indelicate height, as they were somewhat prone to do. "It's well I'm married," a cad once remarked to an outside passenger; "my place ain't fit for a single bloke."

These "outsides" had to climb to the roof by a series of iron rungs on the right of the door, holding firstly to a strap and higher up to a rail, stairs not being yet evolved. On the top he guided himself to a vacant place on the "knife-board," a central seat running longitudinally the length of the roof and divided into two by a low vertical partition, so that "outsides" sat back to back with their feet against skirting-boards fixed to the roof edges. As may be supposed, women were but rarely seen on the knife-board—never in the ordinary way, but sometimes when buses were used for picnics and outings a ladder would be provided for their decent ascension—while all males looked the other way. There were usually only two box seats, one on each side of the driver, although some of the larger vehicles had four. These were mostly reserved as places of honour for known and favoured customers, gentlemen who arrogated to themselves the privilege of providing Jehu with cigars and drinks and occasionally "remembered" the conductor.

Inside, the bus was narrow and cramped. The floor was covered with a thick layer of straw—in imitation of stage-coach practice—dry and clean every morning, but, as may readily be supposed, in wet weather damp, dirty, and smelly for the rest of the day. It was warm for the feet and kept out draughts, but promoted a too-evident stuffiness, especially when the let-down window of the door was up and the portal itself closed—there were no microbes to worry us in those days—and if a sixpence or a four-penny-bit were dropped the chance of recovering it was small indeed. There were no tickets to punch or bother about. The cad took what he could and paid in to his employer what he considered constituted a fair return on that gentleman's invested capital: the rest he shared with the driver. So when tickets were ultimately introduced and the conductors struck against them, people could understand what a real and substantial grievance these down-trodden drudges were protesting against.

But there were employers who favoured the older system, under which the men let no traffic slip that they could possibly secure: when tickets came, the customers had to cadge the buses instead of the buses the customers, while dividends were no better and relations not so cordial. With all this, omnibus passengers were jolly enough. They travelled up-to-date and what voyager could want more? When in the middle of the '60s the Metropolitan Railway put on three-horse buses between Portland Road Station and Piccadilly Circus in connection with their trains, and provided them with staircases, all the world wondered and admired.

The uniformity of name and colour which obtains with the modern London motor-bus was unknown. Every route had a distinctive name and colour in the old horse days—Paragons, Paddingtons, Favourites, Nelsons, Royal Blues, Camden Towns, King's Crosses, etc., etc. They seemed to possess the power of separating, like the spectrum analysis, the vagrant beams of white light that penetrated the London haze into all the colours of the rainbow—although when I come to think of it, I cannot remember a bus of violet hue.

Once, when riding on a knife-board, my bus was stopped by an obstruction due to a fire and gave me a first opportunity, and that from quite a point of vantage, of observing the working of the Fire Brigade. I won't be certain of the year, but we had just passed Camberwell Green and I had noticed that the brick gate-posts for the enclosure then being effected, had been erected, but as yet neither the gates themselves nor the encircling railings were *in situ*. Perhaps it would be 1857. I do not know whether London boasted any steam fire-engines then; if so, they had not turned out on this occasion and the mischief was being fought with three manual machines worked by long handles on either side, the motive force being men and youths, some of them in top-hats, six or eight to each handle, one up and t'other down. They were volunteers who were paid, I understood, a shilling each for a prescribed spell at the pumps. The feeble squirts resulting were directed by brass-helmeted men, not very differently clad from those we see to-day, and others stood around with ladders.

There was no fire-escape present on this occasion. A few such, recently introduced, existed in London, but not in connection with the Fire Brigade. They were owned and managed by a charitable society resembling the Life Boat Institution of the present day. The sliding sectional ladder on wheels called a Fire Escape was the invention of a barber, one Abraham Wivell (he was also the first to propose a system of London sewers delivering into the Thames towards the sea) whose endeavours to get his idea taken up met with the greatest discouragement from the Authorities that were, in spite of the fact that several lives were lost through fires in London every year. The non-receptive obstinacy of people in power, of whatever category, to new propositions is indeed marvellous.

Ultimately a Society supported by voluntary contributions was organised, and for many years this praiseworthy body kept Fire Escapes with trained attendants at specified stations throughout the metropolis. When called to a fire the attendant wheeled the machine himself (although usually he found willing helpers) to the scene and there did

whatever rescuing that was required, all off his own bat and quite independently of the Fire Brigade. I suppose he could rely, however, on aid from the police if necessary. I think things thus continued until the advent of the London County Council as Fire Authority, or nearly so. But poor Wivell got little out of it and had to go on scraping chins for a livelihood, and that not a very lively one.

If the London Fire Brigade did possess steam fire-engines they could not have been numerous, for when the great Tooley Street blaze occurred three or four years later, at which the Fire Superintendent, Mr. Braidwood, was killed, and Ned Wright, the burglar-pugilist, afterwards Evangelist, was converted, the Press wanted scalps because a dozen steamers—which they said would have flooded the place in no time and put the fire out like a damped squib—were not forthcoming. Messrs. Shand and Mason had exhibited steam fire-engines working successfully in August, 1859; the London Fire Brigade had ordered several and I believe two or three of these were actually at the Tooley Street fire. Several floating steam-pumps certainly were.

I saw that conflagration from a distance of about five miles—from the spot where the London County Council's Electric Generating Station at Greenwich now stands—and doubt whether fifty steam-engines would have done much. The Thames was really set on fire that night. Blazing fat floated far down the stream and imperilled the wooden vessels moored in the Pool. For days afterwards, as far afield as Erith, the river banks and mud flats were coated with grease which was energetically salved by hordes of men, women and children.

Steam fire-engines had been originally introduced over thirty years previously by the firm of Braithwaite and Ericsson while fire extinguishing in London was still in the hands of the Insurance Companies. One engine did the work of many manuals, but Conservatism was strong and the wise-acres in power didn't like them. They were heavy to pull about and took a long time to get up steam, they said. Braithwaite and Ericsson sent a locomotive, the *Novelty*, in 1829, to compete for the prize of £500 offered

by the Liverpool and Manchester Railway for the best locomotive, which was won by George Stephenson's *Rocket*. The *Novelty* was fundamentally one of the firm's fire-engines adapted to turn wheels instead of working a pump and was a good little engine in its way but too light for the task prescribed.

Ericsson afterwards went to America and designed the Federal iron-clad, revolving-turret ship *Monitor* which so decisively smashed the Confederate armoured vessel *Merrimac* during the Civil War, and originated a new type of war-ship. He was a clever engineer and tried many things, propelling ships by hot-air engines instead of steam being one of the most noteworthy of his achievements. In 1853 he built a paddle-wheel ship called the *Caloric* (sometimes termed the caloric ship *Ericsson*) which was driven by hot air, but as the machinery and fuel about filled the hull and left no room for cargo or passengers she was not voted a financial success and after a few trial trips was converted to an ordinary steamer. She was of 1,900 tons measurement and resembled a paddle-wheel ship except that the absence of visible funnels rather suggested that she consumed her own smoke, albeit that was an unlikely characteristic for an American production of those days.

Strange to say, in 1866 I saw her in the river Scheldt at Antwerp, equipped with a " walking-beam " steam-engine, while I was in the company of an agent of Shand and Mason, builders of steam fire-engines, which had come mightily into vogue since the Tooley Street disaster. There had been a big fire in Antwerp Docks and he was over trying to get orders for his engines. British manufacturers were not then reproachable for want of enterprise. So Ericsson's name once more became linked, although in a round-about fashion, with his steam fire machine of forty years before. At that time the *Caloric* was trading across the Atlantic. After Ericsson left for America his old firm became Braithwaite and Milner and built locomotives on the Stephenson model in the New (now Marylebone) Road, some of which went to the United States: one, the *Rocket*, constructed about 1838, is still preserved at Chicago. Braithwaite

afterwards became engineer to the Eastern Counties Railway.

One of the devices invented by Ericsson for the *Caloric* was a cooler or radiator arranged so as to expose the greatest possible surface of metal to the air. It is used to-day, modified in various ways, on practically every petrol motor-car.

CHAPTER IX

PEARLS AND DIVERS MATTERS—FIRST TREMOR OF THE WORLD-QUAKE

Grand Surrey Canal—Severe winter—Learning to row—Diving for pearls in London—Disastrous fishing expedition—Road-making—Tollbars—Road steamers—Bricklayers' Arms Station—Crown Prince Frederick—Act I of Armageddon—Railways and taverns.

THE Grand Surrey Canal ran—if such a slow-going concern may be affronted with such an active verb—less than half a mile from our house and was an unfailing attraction for us boys. Grand it might once have been when first constructed about 1805, but some fifteen years before I made its acquaintance the London and Croydon Railway had turned its bed into an iron road all the way from New Cross to Croydon, and in the 1850s it simply consisted, as now, of a water-way from the Commercial Docks to Walworth Road, Camberwell, with a branch to High Street, Peckham, a matter of four and a half miles in all. At the point where the main canal to Croydon used to take off, a short dock-like spur some two hundred yards long was retained for the purpose of exchanging traffic with the railway. This, however, was of small account in the 'fifties, and the branch, which was known as the Coldblow, was used for little besides bathing.

Barges traversing the canal were horse-towed. Carrying coal to the Gas Works in the Old Kent Road, and divers merchants at Camberwell and Peckham, and wood to one or two timber-yards constituted nearly all the business. There was, I remember, an occasional cargo of whiting—by way of contrast to the coal, perhaps—from a factory on the banks near the Wells Road bridge. An ice-well which stood on the canal side at the bottom of Coburg Road was likewise kept supplied with its frigid content by barge. It

was approached through gates painted canary colour, and the carts which fetched the ice away were of the same hue.

The tavern, *The Waterman's Arms*, adjoining Hill Street bridge, kept some quite good row-boats, sculling and pair- and four-oared, which were let at a shilling or eighteenpence per hour: and these boats constituted the canal's chief attraction, for in them, under the tuition of our eldest brother, we learned to row and navigate its waters from end to end. The amusement was not without excitement, as, on meeting or overtaking a barge, or several tied together, it was a matter requiring nerve, skill, and resource to negotiate a passage without getting crushed between vessel and bank. The grimy bargees were usually good-natured enough; chaffy and anxious to know whether our mother knew we were out—a popular wheeze in those days—but never attempting to launch the traditional brick. The knowledge of rowing and boat management which I acquired on the Grand Surrey Canal and afterwards matured on the Thames, stood me in good stead in many parts of the world in later life.

There were freshwater mussels in the canal reputed to occasionally contain pearls of lustre and price, for which in summer vulgar boys dived; and the waters must have been passably stagnant, for weed grew and water-snails of at least two very diverse species flourished in the more-sheltered recesses.

In the severe winter of 1855, in February, soon after our arrival in Camberwell, when the water in our bedroom ewers a few feet from our heads congealed hard for many nights, the canal was likewise frozen over and we walked along on the ice with great appreciation, shouting under the bridges to waken the echoes.

The tow-path was closed off and a halfpenny toll charged from the St. George's Church bridge to the Old Kent Road and thence to the Brighton Railway bridge. Fishing was strictly forbidden on the closed lengths and we, my younger brother and I, once had our fishing tackle seized, with threats of a fine of forty shillings or, in default, imprisonment—I was nine or ten years old at the time—for this wicked vio-

lation of the By-laws, which our captor triumphantly invited us to inspect on the wall of his cabin. We lost our tackle—consisting of two muslin bags on sticks and a pickle jar—but gained the knowledge that there were such things as By-laws in the universe. Learning worth possessing has to be dearly bought.

In Town management and road-making the possibilities of steam were yet hardly recognised. There may have been an embryonic steam road-roller or two about in the 1850s —I believe one of the earliest was used in Hyde Park—but highways were still made and mended by unadulterated man power. Newly laid macadam was compressed by huge iron or stone cylinders painfully hauled by ten or a dozen big navvies—reminding one of the pyramid-building Egyptians of the British Museum frescoes. Stone blocks or setts were driven home by files of men wielding great wooden rammers which they lifted and let fall in unison. There was still more brawn than brain about in some quarters.

The Metropolis was at that time studded with some 178 tollbars. They were logical institutions enough, as they put the cost of maintaining roads on the parties who actually used and wore them out, and not, through the rates, on the community at large. But they often delayed traffic and always exacerbated tempers; besides which they were blamed for retaining within urban limits such undesirable institutions as stables, cow-sheds, and slaughter-houses.

Tolls varied from 2*d*. to 4*d*. and 6*d*. In some parishes people could not drive into the next without being mulcted in two tolls. There were, however, no bars in the City and only one in Westminster.

We had several in our neighbourhood: Camberwell Gate and Old Kent Road Gate being the chief. By-streets which might be used to avoid payment at the main tolls had subsidiary bars. It was in connection with one of these that I encountered the only stage Irishman I ever met in real life, and came to know that it was not a wholly imaginary type as I have since seen alleged in print.

At the corner of the thoroughfares now called Rolls

Road and St. James's Road there was a bar for the purpose of preventing the flank of Old Kent Road Gate being turned, with a shelter for the toll-keeper not much larger than a sentry-box. In 1858 its denizen was a poor, miserable man, more than half-starved in appearance, who spoke with a tremendous brogue and was clad in a pot-hat without a rim, a bob-tailed coat with a brass button here and there, dilapidated knicker breeches, stockings, and deplorable shoes. I do not think he invariably wore a shirt. A shillelagh was all he wanted. He was the butt, poor fellow, of rude boys, who threw stones at his wooden cabin and mocked and jeered him when he came forth. Some funny lad had put it about that old Mike was out to buy May bugs in any quantity at a penny for two, and, acting on this information, boys and girls hunted the willow trees along the neighbouring ditches and pools for specimens, which when obtained they took to the poor Irishman. When he would neither accept the bugs nor pay the money they roundly abused him. Carters, too, would drive through his gates if they got the chance and threaten him with violence when he demanded toll. The popular name bestowed on Mike was opprobrious and unprintable. Manners were certainly rough in those days.

A contrast in every way to his *aide-de-camp* was the chief toll-keeper at Old Kent Road Gate. He was a sturdy, stand-no-nonsense sort of man, with deep leathern pockets for silver and copper in front of his well-rounded corporation. He kept a firm hand over his two assistants as well as over equestrians and drivers of vehicles, whether they might happen to be lords, ladies, or larrikins. He had a substantial brick cottage, with comfortably smoking chimneys, standing on the broad pathway at the eastern corner of the Grange Road. The traffic was great and he must have collected a large sum every day. Pedestrians were untaxed but had to pass between posts set in the footways, spaced so as to drive nearly anything on wheels into the roadway where, of course, toll had to be paid. I think perambulators and wheel-barrows could pass free, but little else. The tollbar was flanked by two other bars,

for on one side stood the *Dun Cow* and on the other the *Green Man*, both taverns of mighty resort.

The abolition of tolls made a great alteration in London. They persisted, however, on certain bridges—Waterloo, Charing Cross, Lambeth, and Deptford Creek, for many years afterwards. And in at least one instance on a road, for about 1909, long after I had imagined tollbars had quite disappeared, driving to the Crystal Palace one afternoon, I was pulled up at a Gate at Dulwich and had to hand over fourpence in order to get through.

It was not far from Old Kent Road toll that I saw my first road steamer or motor-car. Close to the Bricklayers' Arms Station there stood, and stands still, a tavern called *The World Turned Upside Down*, with a pictorial sign to that effect on the top of a post, and (in those days) a water-trough for horses in front. One afternoon in 1857, or perhaps 1858, I was in a shop opposite with our maternal parent when a commotion arose in the street and I saw through a window a strange machine come along and stop alongside the water-trough. A crowd instantly surrounded it, but I made out that a man in a white jacket had got off and was putting a hose-pipe in the trough. The machine had a smoking chimney and a big wheel and I recognised it as a locomotive without rails. In some ten minutes the man got on the engine, the crowd made way and then, strongly puffing, the steamer started eastward. It immediately attained a good speed, for a tail of cheering boys who ran after it was at once left behind. I recollect that part of the performance very well indeed and also that the back of the bunker or screen behind the driver was painted green.

The injudicious law which restricted the speed of road steamers to four miles an hour and prescribed that a man displaying a red flag should walk in front, was not yet enacted, and although such steamers were few in the 1850s they were not handicapped like that. That law proved an effective block to British invention and enterprise, and when the practicable motor-car did come along, it was France and not the real land of its origin that got both the credit and profit.

I mentioned Bricklayers' Arms Station just now. It was there that I witnessed what may be termed, in a sense, the initiation of the world's greatest tragedy. One afternoon, January 23rd, 1858, I was out for a walk with a younger brother and his nurse-maid when we came upon a crowd assembled about this station, which, I must explain, although it has been employed exclusively for goods and hop-pickers' trains for the last fifty years or so, was in the 1850s also used for the trains of royal and distinguished personages arriving in, or departing from, the metropolis. By a pleasant fiction of the South-Eastern Railway managers it was called the West End Station, the drive to Buckingham Palace and other realms of the mighty over Westminster Bridge being shorter and less encumbered than that from London Bridge. There was no Victoria Station then.

Passing by the *Swan* tavern—still there with, to appearances, the same sign-post topped by the identical graven swan—immediately opposite the station gates, we heard that the Crown Prince of Prussia had arrived for the purpose of marrying the Princess Royal and would come out in a few minutes. A pot-hatted policeman noticed us (or, more probably, our neat fresh-coloured maid) and sternly ordering the crowd to let us through, gallantly placed the girl and her interesting charges right in front of the front rank, standing himself by her side, conversing pleasantly about Prooshians and Rooshians, remarking, amongst other things, that for his part he couldn't understand why Englishmen were not good enough for our Royal Princesses.

Soon a commotion was heard in the station yard (then as now surrounded by a high brick wall); the gates were opened and several soldiers in helmets and breast-plates rode out; next a group of officers on horseback, followed by several carriages, which were allowed to pass in silence. Then a stir took place in the crowd and cheering began as another carriage, readily distinguished from the rest in some way which I do not remember—perhaps it had four horses instead of two—came forth. In it was a tall fair man in uniform who bowed to the right and left in acknowledgment of the burst of cheering which greeted his appear-

ance. We understood that the Prince Consort, the Prince of Wales and Prince Alfred were likewise in this chariot. Then more soldiers and a few mounted police; and after them tag, rag and bobtail, vociferating lustily. The crowd left us standing by the *Swan* and we heard volleys of cheering as the pageant proceeded towards the New Kent Road. Poor devils! Far were they from imagining that their grand-children were to be slaughtered in their beds by the scorpion at whose hatching they were abetting. As far indeed as I was from knowing that in the distant future I was destined to meet one of the royal princes I then gazed at with awe and timidity from the kerb.

So, accidentally, we "assisted," as the French have it, at one of Dame History's afternoons out. Two days later the Crown Prince wedded the Princess Royal and some twelve months thence—January 27th, 1859—the calamitous Kaiser Wilhelm II was born.

Bricklayers' Arms was only one of many railway stations in England named after taverns. The fact that the old stage-coaches started from such places made travellers very familiar with them. So the railway companies, when they succeeded the coaches, saw nothing incongruous in calling their stations after inns, probably with the purpose of grafting their exact locality on the popular mind.

CHAPTER X

BUILDINGS, BEER, AND BEARS' GREASE

Buildings—Beer—English *v.* French—Brewers—"Entires"—Convinced M.P.—Shop and tavern signs—London Bridge railway termini—Southwark Town Hall—Crimean plum-puddings—Wellington Clock Tower—New London Bridge as Rennie left it—Skating on London Bridge—Glengall Grove bridge—A puzzle for future antiquaries—Moses and Sons—Harper Twelvetrees—Bears' grease and bears—Antimacassars—Hair-brushing by machinery.

AND were the streets and buildings of the 1850s very different in appearance from those of to-day? Not so very different. Things were suggestive of a smaller scale, but analysis fails to detect, allowance being made for the non-existence of rabbit-warren offices and steel-framed structures, any startling differentiations. Public-houses were more in the foreground, for beer, together with roast beef, was supposed to be the spring of the Englishman's exuberant vitality and the source of his ability (never questioned when I was a boy) to take on and beat a trio of Frenchmen at any moment of the day or night. Such a development as Carpentier would have been incomprehensible, impossible and ridiculous to the ordinary Briton of those times; and it is even doubtful whether Shakespeare, when he wrote,

> "I thought upon one pair of English legs
> Did march three Frenchmen,"

had any distinct premonition of the Georges punch.

A result was that brewers' names were household words. Wherever there was a tavern it had a deep skirting board running round the roof which announced in the brightest colours, never allowed to get dingy, the name of the supplier of the nectar on tap within. The word ENTIRE—always with a capital or all in capitals—which had a magic meaning to

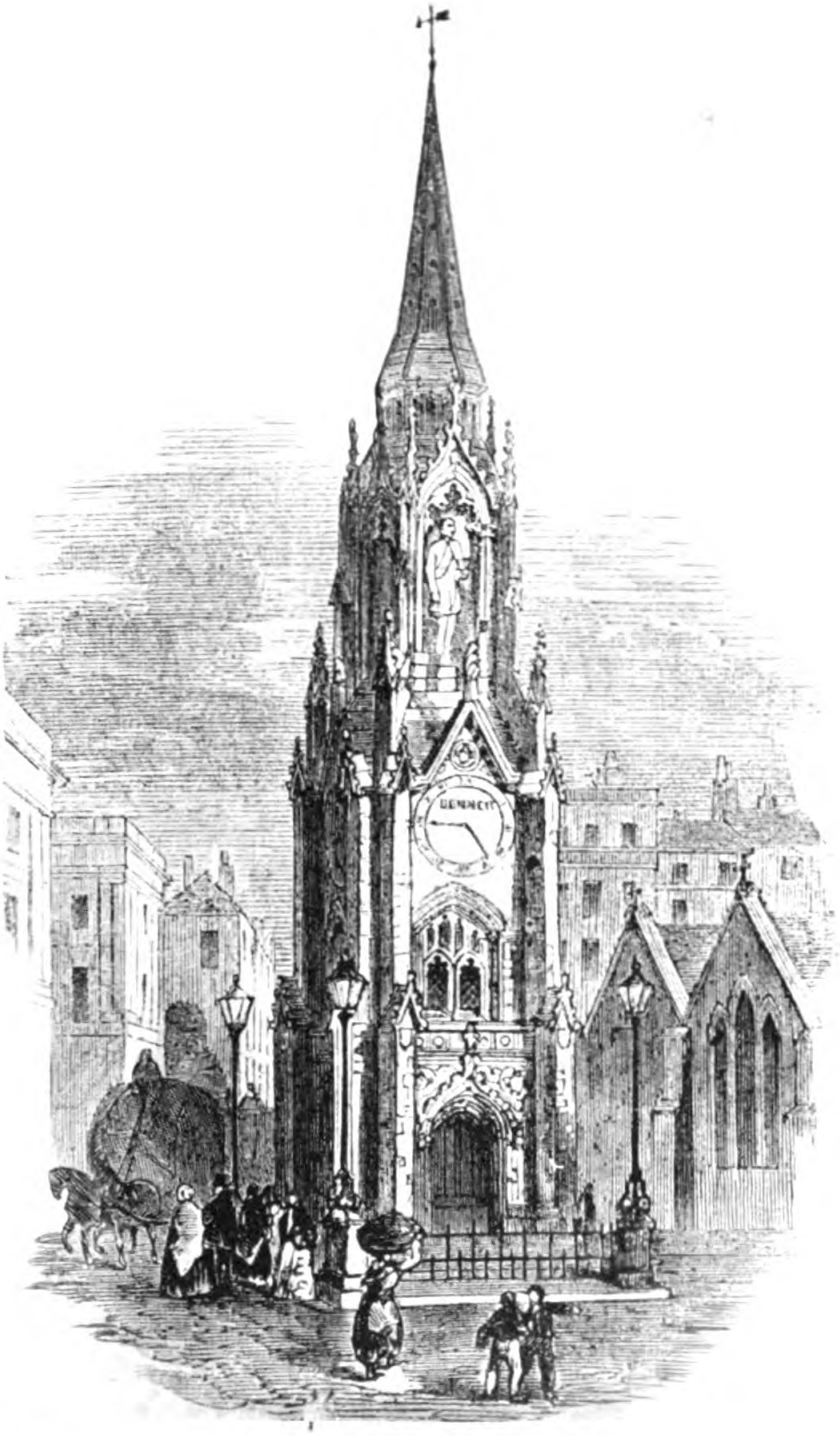
beer-drinkers, suggesting, apparently, unutterable bliss, was never absent. Barclay and Perkins' ENTIRE; Courage and Company's ENTIRE; Whitbread's ENTIRE, and so on, appealed to the thirsty from the sky-line, and not in vain. One firm used to put GENUINE ENTIRE, thereby, unfairly perhaps, suggesting that their competitors' ENTIRES ought, in reality, to be termed mere FRAGMENTARIES. Courage was indeed an excellent name for a brewer, for it hit off exactly the popular belief in the soul-raising properties of the mash-tub—a belief that died hard and may still in some districts be extant.

At any of these resorts compounds unknown to the modern bar-maid might be called for. Such as porter, a thin black fluid suggestive of liberally-watered stout, and "cooper," a half-and-half mixture of porter and fourpenny ale—which was a "small" beer costing 4*d*. per quart, this being likewise the market price of porter.

In the 1890s I knew a very worthy brewer who had been elected by a discriminating community who liked his ENTIRE to make laws at Westminster. He was accustomed on all occasions to express complete confidence in the nourishing power of malt and hops, and when sitting in Select Committee would have a huge tankard brought him as lunch-time approached which he supped unconcerned by the presence of counsel, witnesses and audience. I thought that indicated a very thorough belief. His name wasn't Courage, but it deserved to be.

In this connection it may be remembered that a British constituency once sent a brewer to Parliament in company with but in front of Mr. Gladstone.

Tradesmen indulged in striking signs more freely than they do to-day. Near the Bricklayers' Arms were two grocers who displayed huge tea-pots on brackets in front of their shops. One, painted red and owned by a Mr. Rose, endured to my knowledge for over fifty years. On the *Elephant and Castle* tavern, Old Kent Road, used to stand a well-carved elephant with howdan, visible afar both from the east and west. The *Swan*, already mentioned, had a large and well-proportioned bird on the top of its sign-post; and many other taverns had well-executed picture



A VANISHED LANDMARK.

Wellington Memorial Clock Tower at southern end of London Bridge. Removed to Swanage on construction of the Charing Cross Railway.

signs. *The World Turned Upside Down* had a geographical globe with the southern shores of all continents facing northwards; if anybody wanted Spitzbergen or Nova Zembla he had to seek them in the far Antarctic, while Tierra del Fuego changed latitudes with Labrador.

The vicinity of the London Bridge stations was very different then-a-days. The Charing Cross Extension railway being non-existent, there was no viaduct over the Borough and to pedestrians coming across London Bridge the view was considerably more open and extended. The exterior of the Brighton Station was much as it is now, except that there was no canopy shelter over the roadway in front.

Neither has the adjoining South-Eastern building been altered materially as regards frontage, although radically different as a station. Next to the South-Eastern Railway stood the terminus of the Greenwich Railway, a mean structure which was pulled down to make room for the Charing Cross extension. Portions of one of its boundary walls still remain, however.

Between the stations and Duke Street stood an Arcade, containing small toy and sweet-stuff shops, through which wayfarers could walk if they chose on approaching or leaving the railways. In the Borough, at the junction with the present Southwark Street, then non-existent, stood what was known as the Southwark Town Hall. What use it was put to latterly I do not know, but when pulled down, well on in the 1860s I think, it was stated that in the cellars were found crates containing petrified plum-puddings addressed to the troops before Sebastopol. Probably bought by patriotic public subscriptions, those puddings, and incautiously left to the War Office to forward and by them strategically shunted into Southwark cellars.

In a building close at hand was situated the railway parcel office at which Wainwright, the Whitechapel murderer, left the body of Harriet Lane. At the southern end of the bridge, at the corner of Duke Street, stood a Gothic clock-tower as a memorial to the great Duke of Wellington, which was removed to Swanage when the railway extension to Charing Cross upset all the street arrangements at this

point. The clock had been made by a Mr. Bennett of Blackheath, who had taken care to inscribe his name on it very legibly, and as the Duke of Wellington's was nowhere apparent it seemed to us more like a Bennett clock-tower and our small bosoms felt lifted up accordingly.

The London Bridge footways were paved with huge granite slabs laid side by side across the whole width of the path. They wore well but got slippery and had to be periodically roughened with mallet and chisel. The parapets were of solid granite blocks with recesses over the piers. There were granite seats in these recesses, fortunately for us boys, as we were too small to see over the parapets and the seats afforded points of vantage from which to view undisturbed the bustling river scenes below. In those days the inconsiderate conduct of bridge builders who made parapets too high for boys to see over was a standing grievance with me. The circulation over the noble arches was enormous, probably greater than now, for there was then neither a Tower, nor a very practicable Southwark, Bridge, while several new river crossings farther west have diverted much vehicular traffic. And Railways and Tubes have certainly seriously depleted the floods of pedestrians. Then the footways were solid masses of moving humanity while the roadway for hours together was packed with horses and wheels often without space for even a single addition. The bridge is now considerably wider, but I doubt whether that fully accounts for the comparative sparseness of traffic.

In January, 1866, I witnessed a strange sight on London Bridge—people skating. Late one evening there was a slight rainfall in London followed by a sharp frost with the result that pavements and roads everywhere became coated with a thin layer of ice. Carriage transport was arrested and foot passengers greatly harassed. I had several miles to walk, all cabs and omnibuses being stalled, and fell several times in spite of every care. Crossing London Bridge I saw two young men skating merrily on the eastern footpath and thoroughly enjoying the novel experience, the large and well-laid granite slabs evidently favouring the sport. The bridge across the Grand Surrey

Canal at Trafalgar Road was then being rebuilt and a temporary one approached by steep banks of earth was doing duty. After several vain attempts to walk up the slope from the Peckham side I had to sacrifice dignity and swarm up on hands and feet. That night was a bad one for wires, and London was practically isolated telegraphically for days afterwards. Ice formed on the wires to the thickness of a man's wrist, and its weight brought them, and often the poles they were attached to also, to the ground.

When we first went to Camberwell there was no bridge across this canal at Glengall Grove (now Road), which was a *cul-de-sac*. But in 1858 or 1859 a bridge was erected and approaches thereto of tipped rubbish formed. This contained, at least on the northern side, quantities of old but mostly unbroken ink bottles in glass and stoneware, many different shapes and makes being in evidence. There was one pattern in glass, elaborate and pretty, that could only have come from a mould, and yet moulded glass bottles were being boomed as a new invention thirty or forty years later. We made quite a collection. Antiquaries may perhaps find them at some distant period, wonder what they are and start theories to account for their presence beneath the soil of London. Anybody wanting ink bottles to-day has only to obtain the permission of the Local Authority to dig there and he will find.

Conspicuous in London of the 1850s were the tailoring shops of Moses and Sons. This firm liked prominent corners and especially the wedge-shaped premises—what the Scotch call "gushets"—which occur at the convergence of two thoroughfares. They occupied the gushet at the junction of New Oxford Street and Hart Street, that at the corner of Aldgate and the Minories, and several others. At the Minories they had for a time one of the first installations of electric light for shop purposes that I know of. Whether the newly-invented magneto machine or primary batteries were used I cannot say, but the enterprise must have proved a costly one. Arc lamps were of course employed.

One continually encountered on hoardings and walls the imposing name of Harper Twelvetrees, generally in very

large blue letters. This gentleman was a specialist in laundry blue—a sort of pre-historic Reckitt—and took care to let the world know it. His name would certainly have required an inordinately large bushel to hide it, so there was, perhaps, some excuse for him.



In hairdressers' windows and over barbers' shops notices relating to bears' grease were perpetually seen, such as, "Bears' grease fresh this week"; "Bears' grease personally prepared"; "Try our special Bears' grease." And less frequently, "We kill a bear this week." In the 1850s it was an article of faith that even as beer nourished the muscles so did bears' fat nourish the scalp and what was rooted therein. The benighted early Victorians, poor souls, knew not the late G. R. Sims nor Tatcho, and when they wanted hair went—shall I say bare-headed?—for bears' grease. The barbers naturally fostered the delusion and sold sweet-smelling unguent in pellucid china pots, nicely packed in lead paper, at the rate of about 2*s.* 6*d.* per ounce. This was inscribed "Refined bears' grease" usually on a semi-circular label surmounting the picture of a bear—sometimes a grizzly on a peak of the Rockies, sometimes an Arctic bruin on an ice-berg. Even those not given to scepticism might have doubted the power of fat from two such dissimilar creatures to produce analogous effects—but then Nature is very wonderful.

Some barbers even pretended to kill their own bears, they were so *very* particular and conscientious. One day we heard that a barber on Oakley Terrace had a live bear on view which was doomed to slaughter on the proximate Saturday. We proceeded there "non-stop" and found a small crowd gazing down a cellar grating in front of the shop windows, in which was a notice that a bear of pure race had been acquired at enormous expense and would be killed for the benefit of the firm's customers. As only a limited quantity of refined grease could be prepared from even the largest animal it was considerately suggested that it would be good business for intending purchasers to give in their orders immediately.

Down in the area beneath was a poor lean greyish bear,

large certainly, but quite incapable, one would think, of yielding any grease. He sat on his haunches and sniffed. There was a baker's shop almost next door and perhaps he smelt the buns, although I doubt it—he had such a strong scent of his own.

The next week, happening to be in the Walworth Road, I noticed a crowd round a barber's shop, and, investigating, discovered down a grating what was indubitably the same bear, with a similar notice of slaughter for Saturday in the window. Evidently it was poor Bruin's sad fate to be carted about London and converted into bear's grease every Saturday. No wonder he was lean! There are few things deader than bears' grease in London to-day, but it was a boom that lasted many years.

The men of to-day *are* wiser about their craniums than were their—may I say, forbears?—the Victorians of 1850. Then greasing and pomading and plastering and oiling of hair and waxing of moustaches were practised almost universally. The chief rival to bears' grease was Macassar oil—hence antimacassar to designate a device for preventing the fouling of furniture. *Gardez l'huile!*

Very curious is human nature. I have already recorded the disinclination of the Victorian female for illicit or over-decoration, but her abstinence was, it must be admitted, largely neutralised by the insanitary ostentation of her masculine adorers.

Hair-brushing by machinery came in while we were at Camberwell and I well remember my first experience of it. It was said to produce a most exhilarating effect and I tried hard to feel lifted up accordingly. At first the machine was generally turned by a small boy and I recollect *Punch's* picture of an irate barber proceeding upstairs to oil the stopped machinery with a cane. But it was not long before other methods obtained. An enterprising barber near Newington Butts put a very pretty little two-cylinder horizontal steam-engine in his window, which drove his brushes and attracted attention for years. Hair brushed by steam! It must be admitted that even the early Victorians were edging away a little from Noah's Ark.

CHAPTER XI

BIG BEN BOOMS—DONATI LOOMS

Big Ben—Old and New Houses of Parliament—Donati's comet—Consternation—Signs and portents—1858 extraordinary astronomical year—A clever coast-guardsman—B.C. 637—A.D. 4353—Fine summer—Pictures of comet.

IN 1860 was born a world-famous Londoner—Big Ben: of whose chimes I can claim to have been amongst the first hearers. The Houses of Parliament, as we know them—a group of buildings of the beauty of which few Britons seem to possess due consciousness—were at last nearly finished and the clock tower commenced its useful mission of keeping Londoners to time. We could hear the deep booming, not listened to without a certain feeling of solemnity, in the evening; earlier the traffic noises seemed to intercept the sound although themselves scarcely audible at our house. Then one day the tolling was missed. Big Ben had cracked! Another bell, slightly smaller, was cast and hung, spoke and—cracked! For some years afterwards the hours were struck on one of the quarter-hour bells and then an expert suggested that the 16-ton Big Ben should be turned so as to present a new surface to the 1-ton hammer. This was done and Big Ben has gone on ever since. But, in spite of his weighty utterances, please to remember that he is cracked! He derived his name from Sir Benjamin Hall, First Commissioner of Works, but not without opposition, for there were those who wanted to have him called Royal Victoria.

As I write this in 1924 they are preparing to "broadcast" Big Ben and no doubt will sooner or later make his voice—and ticking too peradventure—audible in New York, Ootacamund and Dunedin. Do the same with Bow Bells and make every baby born anywhere a cockney!

The Westminster clock is the best public time-keeper in the whole world, varying only a second or two in a week. Its success was so marked that when it became necessary some years later to replace St. Paul's clock the new one was made a virtual copy of Westminster's. Strange to say, this great triumph was secured not by a clockmaker but a lawyer, Mr. Denison, barrister-at-law, who, with Sir George Airey, Astronomer Royal, was appointed to provide the new Houses of Parliament with a time-piece. He wanted his machine not to vary more than one minute a week—which all horologers declared impossible. But he invented a gravity escapement which achieved the marvellous result stated. Dent, of Charing Cross, built the clock under Denison's supervision. Bravo Denison! It was a cruel fate that made even a good lawyer of such a born engineer.

My father took special interest in the new legislative buildings for he had, when just thirty years of age, witnessed the destruction of the old habitations of our Mother of Parliaments. It was his good fortune to be dining at Westminster on the evening of October 16th, 1834. Waiters brought word that the House of Commons was on fire and he and his friends beheld the sorry tragedy from a window. Parliament abolished tally-sticks and tally-sticks wiped out Parliament, so even fossils can play tit-for-tat occasionally.[1]

If Big Ben's grave and distant voice inspired solemnity, then what shall I say about Donati's comet? The English people of 1858 saw a sight the like of which has not been vouchsafed to later generations. The only comparable sensation in my experience was, when lying on the deck of a P. and O. steamer, I saw Stromboli in eruption lift from the horizon and grow and glow ever brighter and brighter through the darkness of a Mediterranean night. Dreamily watching, it was easy to imagine a chimney rising from the Infernal Regions with communicating furnaces stoked by legions of incandescent devils urged on by Old Nick himself, like a Chief Engineer roaring out to the boiler-room for more steam.

[1] It was supposed that the fire had been started by injudicious burning of condemned willow tally-sticks in the House of Commons' stoves.

In similar manner the comet grew bigger and brighter evening after evening as the autumn advanced until, from a scarcely noticeable star, it stretched across the heavens like a threatening fiery sword. Silent, flaring, menacing, mysterious, it made its nightly run, to the terror of many, the admiration of all. Crossing the Hill Street bridge of the Grand Surrey Canal one evening the reflection of the comet in the narrow waters made them look all on fire. How many things we boys learned from this fearsome visitor! What questions we asked!

As the spectre approached nearer and nearer, it seemed that the current prophecies of imminent collision with the earth and the end of everything—even *Old Moore's Almanac* —might very well prove true. Luckily that modern theory that comets' tails are composed of carbon monoxide—and are therefore about as deadly as London gas—was not known. It was reported that some good souls, sure that a smash would happen, ordered their coals in by the hundredweight only, just sufficient to keep them going till the date of the catastrophe. So when at last the comet began to recede not a few experienced relief, while some of the prophets no doubt felt aggrieved if not positively sorry.

Commiseration was expressed for the poor folk on the planet Venus, for it was calculated that the stranger approached them so closely that they beheld him from only one-fifth of our distance, so that to the Venusians the apparition must have appeared a dreadful and alarming one indeed.

I have seen it stated in print that subsequent comets nearly approached Donati's in size and brightness. Such allegations are simply—shall I say moonshine? The comets of 1861-74-80-81-82, all of which I saw, lumped together would not have rivalled Donati's. Looking back, I feel no astonishment at the consternation this superlative phenomenon caused or amazement that the people were apt to connect it with some impending disaster of colossal magnitude.

But it did not come until the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny were over. Solferino and Magenta were in the near future, but not important enough to call for a portent so terrible: so, awful as it was, it did not seem to presage



(Illustrated London News.)

DONATI'S COMET VIEWED FROM CAMBRIDGE, OCTOBER, 1858.

This portentous visitant assumed different appearances and angles of inclination during its rapid transit. The picture shows it receding from the earth shortly after attaining its greatest brilliancy.

anything particularly out of the common. But we may reflect to-day that only some three months after Donati reached his zenith—in January, 1859—was born the Kaiser Wilhelm, author and organiser of the Armageddon of 1914. In that way the mighty comet certainly links up with fire and sword, sulphur and brimstone, calamity and ruin! Members of the Royal Astrological Society, please note.

The ethereal wanderer was first detected, as a mere telescopic speck, by Astronomer Donati of Florence on June 2nd, 1858. It was only one of several phenomena destined to render the year astronomically memorable. In addition to the discovery of new asteroids between Mars and Jupiter, Encke's comet reappeared, and several others of minor importance came within our ken. During the year no fewer than seven were detected, four of which—Donati, Encke, Faye and Tuttle—were simultaneously visible. The rare and beautiful occurrence of a ringed or annular eclipse of the sun took place on March 15th and, what was infinitely rarer still, was perceptible in England. Donati's capped the series and completed poor man's bewilderment. Such a succession of signs and portents had never been recorded before and would probably have driven credulous old Tacitus mad. Would the people of 1924 have taken them more philosophically than those of 1858? I doubt it very much.

Early in September, when the comet was still only of the third magnitude and almost telescopic, it was observed by an illiterate coastguardsman in the Isle of Sheppey, who, without any knowledge of the Italian astronomer's discovery which, indeed, had attracted but little notice, its object being so distant and minute, realised its nature and took its bearings by erecting two sticks. He communicated his find in an ill-spelt letter to the Astronomer Royal. Good man! I am sorry that his name has escaped me.

During September Donati waxed brighter and brighter with incredible celerity and early in October extended 30 or 40 degrees across the heavens. On the 10th it was computed to be at its nearest point to the Earth, 50,000,000 miles, and was magnificent indeed. People thronged the bridges, house-tops, open spaces and street corners. The

tail was estimated at 40,000,000 miles long, enough to go round the earth at the equator 1,600 times. The suddenness with which it grew from nothing to out of all comparison the mightiest object in the sky no doubt had much to do with the impression produced.

An elliptical orbit with a period of 2,495 years was calculated, which, supposing our visitant had been this way before, would have made the date of its last appearance B.C. 637, Olympiad 35, when Rome was only some 130 years in being. Solon's laws had not yet been delivered, and Crœsus, King of Lydia, the gentleman who would have been passing rich on the income-tax on his own revenue, was preparing to make his entry on the world's stage. Julius Cæsar was not due in Britain for another 582 years! Donati will not be here again till A.D. 4353 when—but we needn't bother about that!

The heat and dryness of the season were naturally ascribed to the comet's influence. The summer had been warm and dry—in some places, such as Guernsey, the driest on record to that time—and the harvest early and abundant. It was recollected that the great comet of 1811 had brought similar conditions. Still Donati didn't show up until the harvest was over, so his share in ripening it is at least obscure.

Many pictures were published. Drawings, of course, since photography was not sufficiently advanced. Some were good, some bad. One, purporting to be as seen from Cambridge University, was sufficiently terrible, but nevertheless is the presentation that accords best with my recollection and impressions of the flaming sword of '58. Its appearance, however, varied markedly from time to time.

I had heard of a prediction that the world having once been destroyed by water would on the next occasion suffer annihilation by fire. In spite of parental injunctions not to be frightened nor expect anything out of the common in our daily life I could not help pondering this luminous pronouncement; which, notwithstanding, had borne a comforting aspect on a previous occasion when heavy rain, which looked like continuing for at least forty days, had flooded everything around us.

CHAPTER XII

FATHER THAMES

River Thames—Steamers above and below bridge—Margate, Ramsgate, Ipswich, and Continental steamers—Tug-boats—A great highway—Call-boys—Let-down funnels—Surrey Side Pier—Gravesend and Rosherville—Uniforms—Steering—Decadence of steamer traffic.

THE Thames was truly a highway in the 1850s. There were no underground railways along its banks, no motor-buses, no motor-cars. The only method of travelling east and west by road was, for the vast majority, the horse buses already described. Father Thames offered an alternative, however, and it was freely taken advantage of. His stream was alive with steamboats. Incessantly churned up by paddle-wheels as it was, the river could have given the " vexed Bermoothes " points in a contest of restlessness. A look over the western parapet of London Bridge at any hour of the day revealed at least eight or ten steamers in the offing: morning and evening as City people were reaching or leaving their work the number would be increased to twenty or more.

The accompanying picture from the *Illustrated London News* gives a not inapt, if somewhat accentuated, idea of this crowded traffic, although the artist cannot justly be congratulated on a too careful delineation of the boats. I never saw a passenger steamer with a parti-coloured funnel like the one in the centre, although that style was quite common with tugs, neither do I remember any vessels with such rudimentary bulwarks. But the impression that Father Thames looked lively in the 1850s is quite accurately conveyed. How disastrous collisions were avoided day after day may well be marvelled at; but the steamers were very handy and the skippers expert. Over London Bridge

we see the steamboats' great and only rival, the omnibus, cruising along with driver, conductor and knife-board all complete against the sky-line.

In my numerous voyagings I used to get as far forward in the bows as possible; many a time did I act as figure-head to a penny steamer.

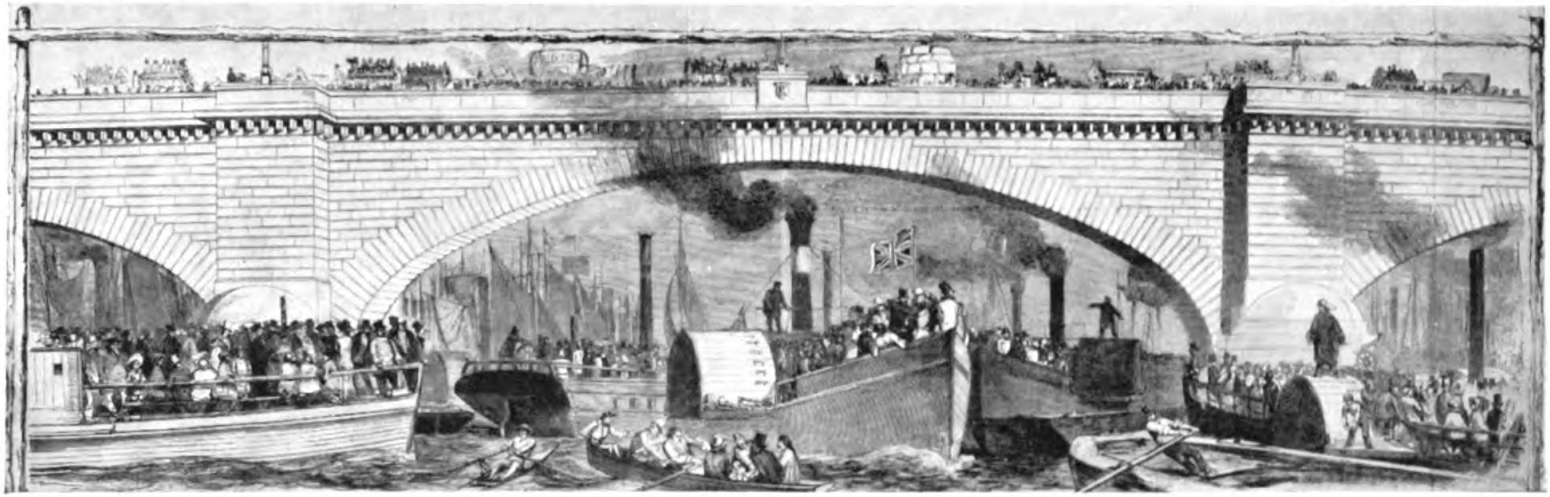
There were three lines of above-bridge and two of below-bridge boats, passengers between the two sections having often to change at Old Swan Pier. This drawback continued for many years, until one Company absorbed all the lines, inaugurated a through service—and thereafter rarely, if ever, earned a dividend!

The Old Swan landing-stage then extended well on the way to where the Cannon Street railway bridge now crosses; but in the 1850s the steamers trading specially to Gravesend and beyond had a pier of their own—known as the Steam Packet Wharf—immediately east of the bridge.

The above-bridge boats—all the Thames passenger vessels were of the paddle-wheel type—belonged respectively to the Citizen Steamboat Company, the Iron Boat Company and the Westminster Steamboat Company. The *Citizens* were the most numerous. They were built of iron, had flush decks with below-deck cabins fore-and-aft; were painted black; carried black funnels with one red band and an open-work bell-mouthed top. The paddle-boxes bore the City arms with a large capital letter in the centre, from which the boats were known as *Citizen A*, *Citizen B*, etc., up to, I think, *Citizen N*.

The *Iron Boats* were of similar size and construction and got up with all-black funnels and open-work bell-mouth tops. They had "Iron Boat Company" painted on the paddle-boxes outside, and inside the name of one of the City Companies to do duty as a cognomen. So we had a p.s. *Haberdasher*; p.s. *Spectacle-maker*; p.s. *Fishmonger*, etc., which sounded funny but served.

The Westminster Company owned only some six or eight boats, which made non-stop runs between Old Swan Pier and an exclusive landing-stage that then existed at the southern end of Westminster Bridge on part of the site of



(Illustrated London News.)

THE THAMES AS A HIGHWAY.

London Bridge with penny steamboats and knife-board omnibuses. A suggestion of the crowded sailing vessels moored in the Pool is given in the background.

the new County Hall. The Company's business was chiefly to afford City men a prompt means of getting to and from Waterloo Station, their route anticipating in that respect the present City and Waterloo Tube; and immense crowds availed themselves of the facility. Morning and evening the boats were crowded and never deserted at any hour, not even on Sunday. These steamers were a trifle larger than the *Citizens*, but very similar. Their oriflamme was a black funnel with one white band, and their bell-mouthed tops were likewise of open work. They were all named after flowers: *London Pride*, *Lotus*, *Azalea*, *Camellia*, *Sunflower*, *Dahlia*, etc., the name being painted on the paddle-box.

All these vessels had engines with oscillating cylinders, by Penn of Greenwich, a form of machine originated by Murdoch, the inventor of gas lighting and one of James Watt's assistants, in 1785, but which had been of small practical account until perfected by Penn. Its valves were worked from eccentrics on the paddle-shaft. These queer revolving discs puzzled me much as a little boy and I sometimes distressed my aunts (alas, in vain!) by insistently demanding to have them and their functions particularly explained.

Some of the very early Thames steamers had Newcomen so-called atmospheric engines with the separate condenser introduced by James Watt (as had also two or three of the first Channel Island boats plying from Southampton), and, what is more, did well, holding their own in speed with some of the best of those using steam on both sides of the piston. But I think they had all disappeared or been re-engined by the 1850s.

The fare by all these above-bridge lines was one penny between London Bridge and Lambeth or Vauxhall, from which fact they were familiarly known as "penny steamers." The traffic by them was tremendous. There were two boats of specially light draught employed for service to Hampton Court, one of which, I think, was privately owned.

The last paddle-wheel steamer to work on the Thames

above bridge was a successor of one of these, the *Queen Elizabeth*, which was condemned in 1916 or thereabouts.

Before my time, in the 1840s, there had been a fourth Company which charged only a halfpenny between London Bridge and most of the other piers, but the boiler of one of their vessels, called the *Cricket*, if I recollect aright, exploded at Hungerford, with consequent loss of life, and as people fought shy of the ha'penny boats afterwards the concern had to go into liquidation. This was very hard, as their ships were as good as any of the others, the tragedy having occurred through the extraordinary foolishness of an engineer who screwed down the safety-valve because he thought the engines were somewhat sluggish, and afterwards went off duty without warning his relief. I heard my father speak of this calamity more than once.

Below bridge, the chief line was the Diamond Funnel Company. It consisted of some twenty steamers of different sizes, the largest class, such as *Sea Swallow*, *Gannet*, *Petrel*, *Oread*, plying to Rosherville, Gravesend, Southend, Margate, etc., an intermediate size like *Elfin* and *Metis* to Rosherville and Gravesend only. The smallest class, which, however, was considerably larger than any above-bridge boat, comprised *Nymph*, *Fairy*, *Sylph*, *Sybil*, and half a dozen others. They gave a frequent service to Greenwich, Blackwall and Woolwich, stopping at Cherry Gardens and other way-side piers. Blackwall was an important call for steamers in those days as the railway from Fenchurch Street terminated at the quay-side and issued through-tickets for the steamers. It delivered crowds on down-river ports intent.

The larger Diamond Funnel Steamers carried a fore-mast which, like the chimney, could be let down when negotiating London Bridge or when facing a foul wind, and a canvas awning over the poop deck—first-class only—abaft the paddles. Their funnels, which had mostly straight tops, were painted black for a foot or so down, and then in four lines of diamonds to the base, white diamonds sideways, and black diamonds foreward and aft. The ships of this line were further distinguished by a white streak along the

port-holes before and abaft the paddle-boxes. In the old picture of the river which the *Illustrated London News* employed as a title-page heading for very many years a diamond-funnel steamer can be discerned, but its resemblance to the original was not great. For instance, the real vessels did not indulge in bow-sprits.

This company owned an old-fashioned steamer which disappeared towards the end of the 1850s, called *Father Thames*, which was larger than any of the others and of different type, especially in being built of wood. She used to sail from London Bridge, East Pier, or Steam Packet Wharf, every morning about 11 o'clock, for some down-river destination and was always crowded. She had a tall funnel—and consequently a big stack of diamonds—and was my special favourite. This East Pier was so close to the bridge that when one of the largest steamers lay alongside its stern would project under the arch.

The last line to be mentioned, the Waterman's Company, consisted of some ten steamers named after birds, *Penguin*, *Falcon*, *Swift*, *Teal*, *Widgeon*, *Stork*, *Osprey*, etc. These were about the same size as the Diamond Funnel Woolwich boats and rarely sailed beyond that port although, in the mid-1850s, they were sometimes to be seen above bridge. They were painted green, with all-black funnels. The vessels of both these last-named companies had oscillating engines, except the *Elfin* which was equipped with a side-lever machine.

In addition to all these, the General Steam Navigation Company ran a fast steamer to Margate and Ramsgate called *Eagle*, and there were two—*Queen of the Thames* and *Queen of the Orwell*, plying to Ipswich, which I fancy belonged to the same proprietors. The Saturday afternoon steamer to the two Thanet ports was known for many years as the Husbands' boat, as it used to be loaded with Benedicts travelling to join their families for the week-end.

An old-fashioned steamer, *Rainbow*, also owned by the G.S.N. Co., which sailed from a berth just east of London Bridge to Antwerp and Ostend, was also a very familiar friend. She lasted many years. In June, 1865, *Queen of*

the Thames ran down the ferry steamer to North Greenwich off Greenwich Pier. She sank in two minutes, but a brig, anchored close at hand, saved the passengers.

A privately-owned paddle-steamer, always kept nicely painted, called *Venus*, could be hired for excursions up or down the river, but never ran in the regular services; another named *Jupiter*, with very large paddle-wheels and a very thin funnel, towed strings of barges—rather an undignified occupation, that, for Father Zeus. This boat had a high-pressure engine and puffed like a locomotive; a surprising phenomenon to us boys, as she was the only Thames steamer that did so. *Jupiter* must have been one of the pioneers of barge tugs. The first screw-boat of the kind appeared about 1859. No name showing on her hull, we christened her *Lamb* because she had a white funnel and, compared with *Jupiter*, towed her barges about so very quietly.

Tug-boats of a larger order were very numerous and universally of the paddle-wheel type. Many were quite powerful, with two funnels placed side by side. They differed from the passenger craft in almost always being fitted with side-lever engines and in having the paddle-shaft in two sections that could be worked together or separately, so that while one engine went ahead the other could be put astern. This gave great power of manœuvring and enabled a boat to turn as on a pivot in her own length. In 1861 *Wonder*, one of the smaller class of tugs, which I knew very well, struck a piece of timber which had become fixed in the bed of the river, and sank opposite Greenwich Pier, where, at low water, I saw the top of her funnel. Snagging must have been an almost unique occurrence on the Thames. She was raised by being slung between empty lighters.

With all this it may be imagined, and with truth, that the Thames was a great highway, giving occupation to thousands of men—counting in the repairers, painters, etc.—and causing annually the turning over of mountains of money. And withal let it not be forgotten that the river was, at the time, little better than an open sewer, although

it never stank as the Clyde was wont to do between Broomielaw and Bowling before the Glasgow outfall sewers were made.

A feature of the Thames steamers of those days was the call-boy. There was no bell or telegraph from the captain to the engineer; instead, a lad of thirteen or fourteen stood at the engine-room hatch with his eyes fixed on the skipper on the bridge or paddle-box, who, by motions with his hand, signalled what he wanted done. The boy then called down the hatch, "Stop her!" "Easy!" "Half-a-turn-astern!" "Full speed ahead!" or whatever it might be, and the engineer worked his levers accordingly. This primitive arrangement persisted for many years, arguing, one would think, a plentiful lack of invention in those concerned.

Another common attribute was the let-down funnel. At high water the chimney erect could not pass many of the bridges, so by means of a hinge and weighted levers it was made to assume a temporarily recumbent position. It was the call-boy's province to attend to this. Valentine Vox in Cockton's famous novel makes a Thames skipper and his call-boy the victims of one of his ventriloquial essays, and Albert Smith, in *Christopher Tadpole*, also holds forth about the steamers.

The Citizen Company owned a pier—known as the Surrey Side—under the southernmost arch of London Bridge, approached by the western flight of stone steps. At low water the boats could moor with funnels upright, but as high tide came on these had to be kept lowered all the time spent at the pier. And the smoke and blacks blew about with disagreeable consequences to collars and cuffs. The company had several steamers especially designed for this landing-stage, where there was no room to turn. They were double-ended with rudders at both extremities. After mooring, the steersman locked the rudder he had brought his boat in with and walked to the bow, which, by putting the rudder there in gear, he converted into the stern. She could then steam straight out on the return journey. This contrivance would have been a convenience at any terminal pier and why it was not universally adopted I do not know.

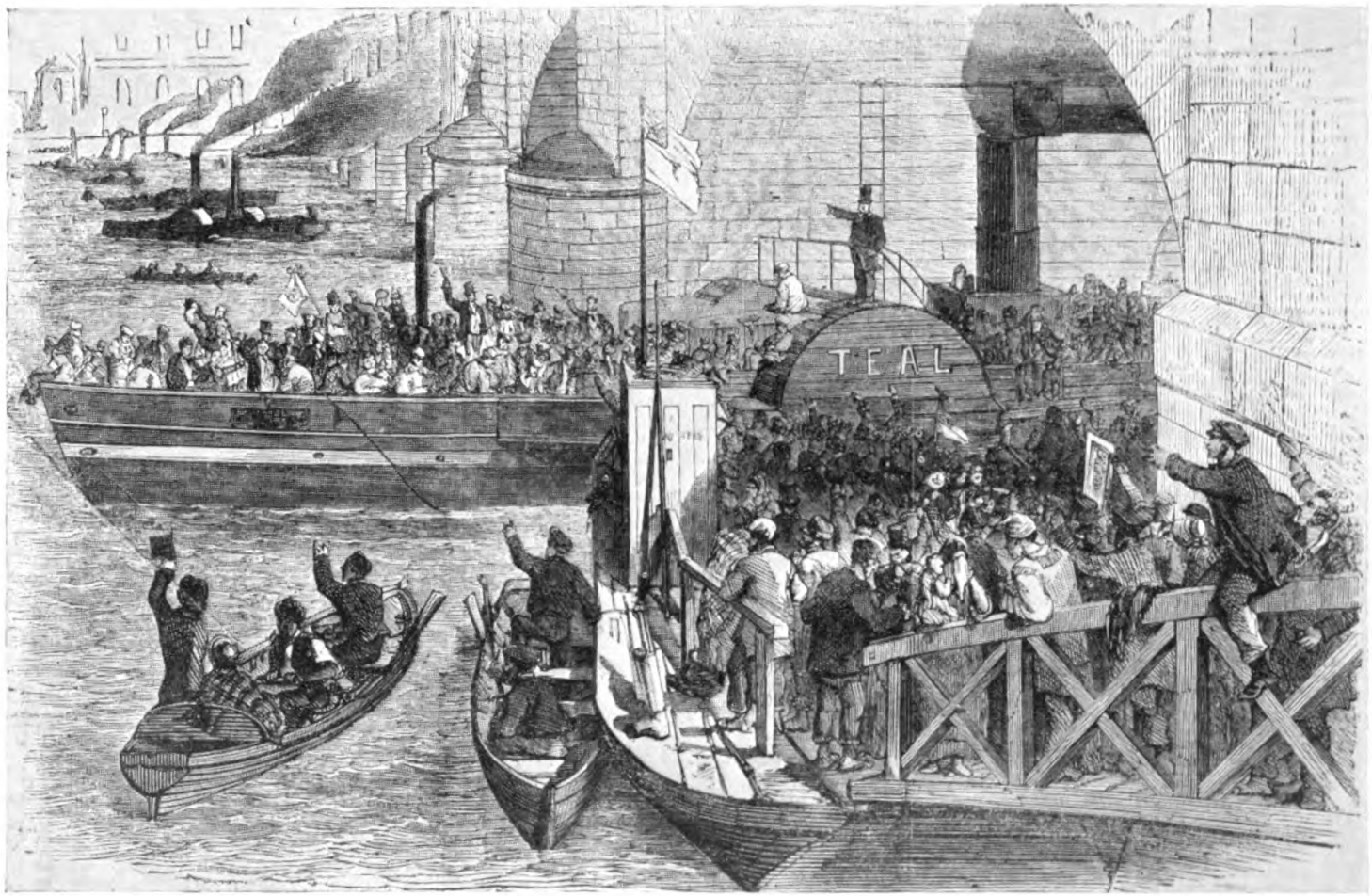
I am able to reproduce a picture from the *Illustrated*

London News of 1855 showing this under-bridge pier being used on a special occasion—the departure of the Labour Corps for the Crimea to work in the trenches before Sebastopol—by the Waterman Company's steamer *Teal*. The hull forward of the paddles should have been shown about one-fourth longer, and the port-holes lighting the cabin considerably larger; otherwise, the sketch is not widely inaccurate. *Teal* is heading up the river which, as she is bound for the transport *Hansa* moored off Greenhithe, at first sight suggests that the top-hatted skipper has got woefully wrong in his course, but owing to the close proximity of a wharf on the eastern side of the bridge to which steamers trading to Dunkirk were always moored, the only practicable access to the pier was from the west—so *Teal* had no doubt backed in and was now heading up-stream with the intention of turning and bearing away through one of the middle arches to make her easting.

None of the boats had saloons on deck—that came years later, but all had an after-cabin for first- and a fore-cabin for second-class, so refuge was provided from wet weather. There was usually a refreshment bar, and steamers plying to Gravesend and beyond served luncheons, dinners, and teas. Rosherville, in the terms of its old advertisement, was the "Place to spend a Happy Day," but the cockney and his lass found pleasant moments in travelling to and from it as well. On the Gravesend boats, too, there was always music, and, coming up the river in the evening, dancing to boot.

Gold-braided garments and caps of Royal Navy cut were not affected by the officers of these river boats. The captains sometimes wore top-hats (occasionally deck hands did likewise) and were generally suggestive rather of undertakers than admirals. I think the gold braid and navy blue came in with the saloon steamers, one of the earliest of which was the unfortunate *Princess Alice*.

The old boats were steered by hand from a wheel at the stern, the necessary directions being given by motions of the captain's arms and hands. Much depended on their proper interpretation, and a notice, "Do not speak to the man at the wheel," was always prominently posted. The



(Illustrated London News.)

WATERMAN STEAMBOAT COMPANY'S STEAMER "TEAL" EMBARKING THE LABOUR CORPS TO WORK IN THE TRENCHES BEFORE SEBASTOPOL AT THE SURREY SIDE PIER, LONDON BRIDGE, WHILE LYING AT WHICH FUNNELS COULD BE KEPT ERECT ONLY AT LOW WATER.

Princess Alice collision and the loss of seven hundred lives might not have occurred had the sacredness of this rule been better respected. With their engine-room telegraphs and steering from the bridge, present-day skippers have a far easier job than had their predecessors of sixty years ago.

Later in the 'sixties and 'seventies when the South-Eastern and Metropolitan District Railways had tapped the London Bridge, Charing Cross, and Westminster traffic, tramways been opened to Deptford and Greenwich, and the railways to Woolwich, Erith, Tilbury, and Gravesend much improved, the great steamer business fell off. The first shock came with the S.E.R. extension from London Bridge to Charing Cross in 1864, which reduced the importance of Surrey Side Pier; and when Cannon Street Station was opened in 1866 and a frequent and rapid service of trains provided to Charing Cross, calling at Blackfriars (afterwards changed to Waterloo), the effect became marked, for the City and Charing Cross traffic was the best the steamers had. In 1870 the Metropolitan District Railway invaded the other most lucrative sections. Efforts were long made to counteract these adverse influences by concentrating all the boats under one management and running through services from Chelsea to Woolwich, but not with any great success. One phase of the endeavour was curious, and to our war-opened eyes, pretty ridiculous. In the 1880s a German manager was appointed who set about attracting traffic by renaming the steamers, *Kaiser*, *Bismarck*, *Deutschland*, and other euphonies from the Vaterland. The sheep-like cockney meekly acquiesced—not a voice was raised against the impudent innovation.

The last scene of all came when the London County Council placed their ill-omened steamboats on the river. The Company competed under every disadvantage, as the Council had got possession of all the piers, and after a few months were run off the course. The County Council, having achieved this notable victory, soon afterwards withdrew their own service, and the Thames thereupon ceased to be a passenger highway except for a few launches which ply in the summer months to Richmond and Hampton Court.

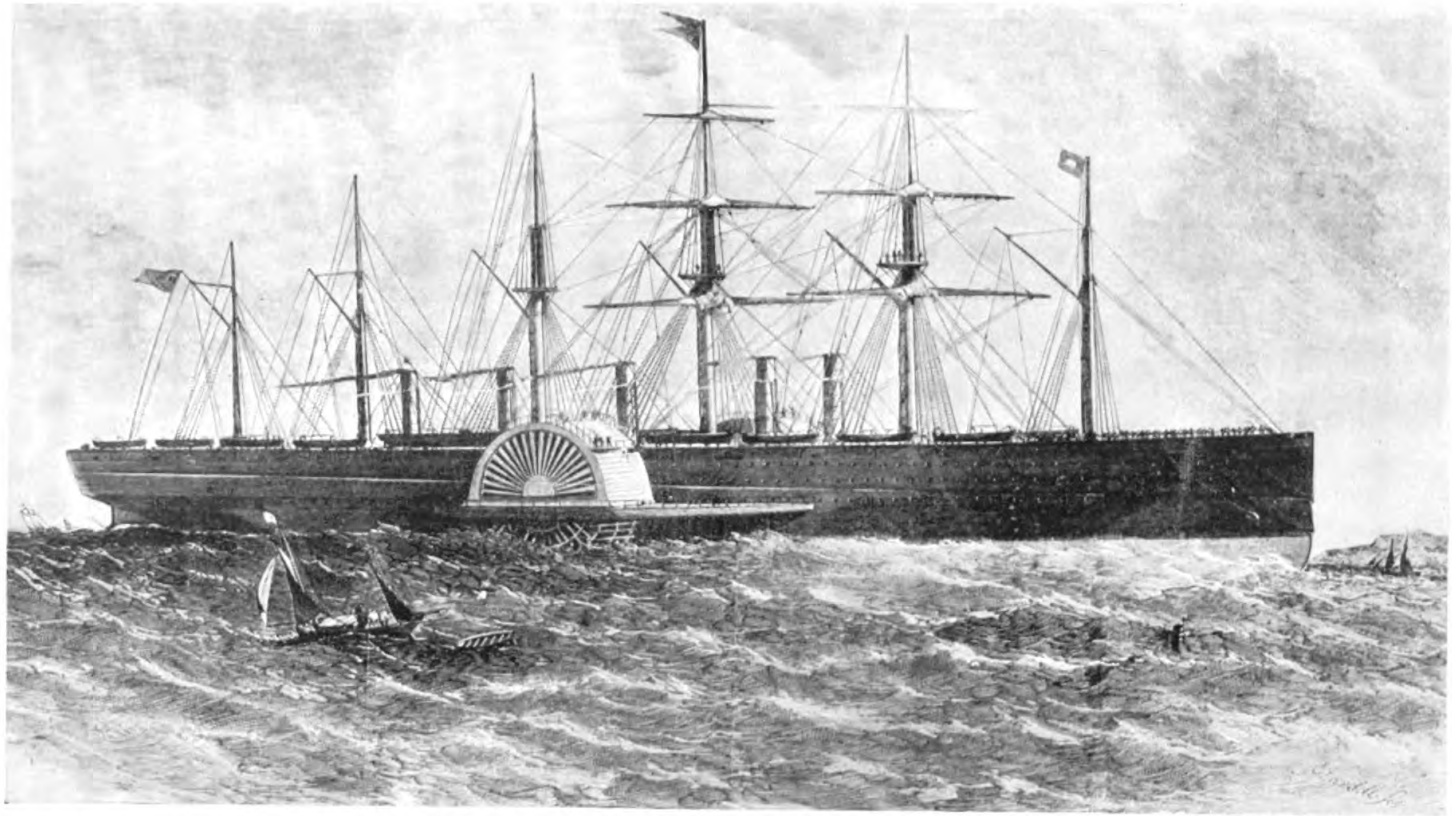
CHAPTER XIII

THE BIGGEST SHIP SINCE THE ARK

First river trips—*Great Eastern* in 1857 and 1886—Echoes in Muscat—At Bombay—Breaking up—Gruesome discovery—Performances as steamer—Voyage to New York—Man going to be hanged taken to see her—Trip to the Chesapeake—Visited by President and slaves—Unlucky career—Before her time.

MY first river journey was undertaken about 1855 or 1856, when I went from London Bridge Steam Packet Wharf to Gravesend in a diamond-funnel steamer, the name of which I cannot recollect. I remember feeling concerned at the piles of luggage accumulated on the pier, and enquired whether the boat would not be likely to sink if it were all put on board; still my mind is a blank about the voyage generally. But I recall hearing at Gravesend of a fire that had happened shortly before in which a lady in her night-gown, fleeing downstairs, perceived that the house walls had become so incandescent and transparent from the great heat that she could plainly see the crowd in the street, the engines working, and the people next door scrambling to remove their furniture. They had reason to in face of such a transcendental phenomenon! I believed this story at the time as it tallied with something I had heard about the stupendous effects of heat.

After a few trips above bridge, during one of which I very distinctly recollect leaving Hungerford Pier for Chelsea in a *Citizen* and passing, exactly under Hungerford Bridge, the Waterman Company's boat *Swift*, the name—which I thought at the time indicated a very fast steamer—being in great yellow letters on a green paddle-box, I again travelled to Gravesend in the diamond-funnel steamer *Nymph*, not the one already mentioned as plying to Wool-



(*Illustrated London News.*)

"GREAT EASTERN" STEAMSHIP.

wich, but an older and bigger boat that was sold towards the end of the 1850s.

I was taken on board by my father, who asked a matronly lady seated near the wheel with a group of children of assorted sexes and sizes if she would mind keeping an eye on me during the voyage. She readily assented, and as soon as the *Nymph* was under way, told me to sit by her side. But I could not accept such a passive rôle on such an auspicious occasion, and saying, "Excuse me, please, but I want to look at the engines" (on a Clyde steamer in later years that would have meant, "I'm going for a drink"), I left her to the company of her family and of the steersman, to whom no man might speak. But she was amiable, and off Erith beckoned me to share the contents of a basket well provisioned for the voyage.

This was late in 1857, and the trip was memorable because we passed, at Millwall, Scott Russell's giant steamship *Great Eastern*, afterwards renamed *Leviathan* and then, when her continued run of ill-luck induced fears that Providence was angry at the use of a biblical term in a more or less boastful sense, *Great Eastern* again. She stood on the stocks unlaunched and, it was feared at one time, unlaunchable. Her five funnels and six masts were not yet in position, but her whole hull was out of the water and seemed tremendous. The 60-feet paddle-wheels were fixed and painted red: huge as they were they yet appeared insignificant against the vast dark sides. I did not see her again until, in 1886, she was moored at the Tail of the Bank, Greenock, as a show-ship in her decrepitude, when I inspected her two engine-rooms and quaint square boilers (then worked at only 10 lb. per square inch pressure): dined in her grand saloon, and finally attended a Music Hall Variety Entertainment given in one of the gigantic cable tanks.

Previous to her visit to Greenock she had been at anchor in Milford Haven for many years, so long that in the meantime her engines had become antiquated to such a degree that no engineer could be found who could discover how to start them. Ultimately an old man who had once acted as an engineer on board was hunted up, and he travelled

from a distant part of the kingdom and, turning back the pages of his life some twenty-five years, assumed charge of the screw engines and successfully took the great ship round to the Clyde.

With the exception of a small Admiralty experimental vessel, she was the only steamer ever built driven by both paddle-wheels and screw, and the only large vessel that could turn in her own length as on a pivot, like a Thames tug or a modern twin-screw ship. After the belated launch, she was anchored off Deptford just above the *Dreadnought* hospital ship, to be completed, where, on Whit Monday and Tuesday, 1859, she was visited by enormous crowds, which overwhelmed the down-river steamers and Greenwich Railway. Even the Blackwall Railway contrived to share the harvest by carrying the surplus and sending them *up* the river from Blackwall Pier. Subsequently the great ship was towed down-stream by a fleet of tugs. I remember that the *Illustrated London News* had a two-page engraving of the event, showing the tide-way so crowded with craft that one wondered how even tiny whitebait could contrive to find room to swim about in it.

The *Great Eastern* was 692 feet long, 82 feet wide (120 feet over the paddle-boxes), 22,000 tons measurement, and 12,000 horse-power. When one considers that the next largest ship afloat was about 5,200 tons the sensation she created may be appreciated. Biblical students stated that she calculated out slightly larger than Noah's Ark. In the matter of horse-power, however, that ancient hooker was at an immense disadvantage; we know that she took only two equines on board, so that 2 horse-power (indicated) must be the limit of *her* rating.

This nearest rival of 5,200 tons was the recently built U.S. screw corvette *Niagara*, which was 375 feet long. The second next largest, also from the United States, was the fine paddle-ship *Adriatic* belonging to the Collins line, that unfortunate early competitor of the Cunard. She was 5,900 tons "American measurement"—which made her the largest ship afloat, *Niagara* not excepted—but her dimensions, 355 feet long, 50 feet beam and 33 feet depth

of hold, show that she was only fractionally larger than the Cunard *Persia*, which was 390 feet long, 45 feet beam and 32 feet depth of hold, and was rated at 3,600 tons. The *Persia*, which was the third largest vessel afloat when the *Great Eastern* left the stocks, had been launched on the Clyde in 1855 in the presence of 50,000 spectators, some of whom had witnessed the launch of the primitive *Comet* in 1812. Her paddle-wheels were 40 feet in diameter, steam pressure 20 lb. to the square inch, and speed 16 knots or 19 statute miles per hour. It is noteworthy that the *Adriatic* was fitted with oscillating engines on the English Penn model to qualify her to compete with the *Persia*.

A knowledge of the *Great Eastern's* measurements proved useful to me some twelve years later, in 1870, when being seated with a friend in a coffee-house at Muscat we were tackled by Arabs and Wahabees (the town was then in possession of Sultan Azim-ben-Ghez of that sect, and it was death for a native to be seen smoking a cigar) on various subjects. One of them suddenly asked about the *Great Eastern*, of which vague rumours were current in that part of the world. I expressed her size in terms of the British India Steam Navigation Company's mail-boats (which ran to about 1,200 tons register) which then came into Muscat twice a fortnight, and with which they were well acquainted, adding the wheeze about Noah's Ark. As Mohammedans, to whom the Old Testament is holy writ, they of course knew something of that craft—for ever classed A1 in a higher register than Lloyds!—and a chorus of "Ai-i-wallah, wallah!" indicative of deep wonderment, went round.

The *Great Eastern* came out to Bombay round the Cape while I was in the East, to lay the Red Sea cable in pursuance of what had proved her special mission. She was painted white for climatic reasons and was reported to look very handsome and majestic.

When broken up at Birkenhead in the 1890s her Lowmoor iron plates were found in excellent condition and made the fortune of her lucky purchaser. She had a double skin, being, in fact, almost two ships, one inside the other—a

mode of construction which gave immense strength (and once saved her from total loss when she got on the rocks near New York) but deprived her of the flexibility needed for the comfortable negotiation of heavy seas. Had it not been for this undesirable stiffness I have reason to know that she would have been re-engined in modern style instead of broken up and might have been afloat to-day. The point was much debated in Glasgow prior to her condemnation.

In the course of demolition, deep down between the double skins, it is said that a human skeleton was found. It was then remembered that while on the stocks building a pay-clerk had disappeared with a large sum of money. At the time he was supposed to have fled with it, but this discovery put a different and more sinister aspect on the affair. Murdered by workmen and dropped between the partially completed skins? In any case the *Great Eastern* had carried a human skeleton about in her secret cupboard for the whole of her career—sufficient, in sailors' estimation, amply to account for her almost unvarying bad luck, which had commenced with the drowning of Captain Harrison, her first commander, and a fatal explosion on her first trip.

How did the performances of the great argosy compare with those of the *Mauretania* and *Aquitania* of to-day? On her initial voyage to New York, leaving Southampton June 17th, 1860, she ran the 3,242 nautical miles in ten and a half days, an average of 309 knots per day, the best run being 340 knots. But for half speed due to fog for a good many hours the record would have been better. The coal burnt was about 250 tons daily; the maximum speed 14½ knots; revolutions of the paddles 12½, and of the screw 36½ per minute, with a steam pressure of 21 lb. to the square inch. The coal used by the *Persia*, the crack Cunarder of the time, was 180 tons per day for a rather less mileage which, regarded from the carrying capacity point of view, was a comparison very much in favour of the *Great Eastern*. Reaching New York on June 28th, she had a great popular reception, hundreds of steamers and yachts escorting her

from Sandy Hook, while the forts and warships fired salutes and the people crowded the roofs and church towers. One day, while lying in the Hudson above the city, there was a man to be hanged on Staten Island and the vessel conveying him steamed up the river to give him, his executioner and her crew a look at the great ship, which, having seen, they went about their business in the opposite direction.

After having taken 1,500 excursionists a trip to the river Delawar, the *Great Eastern* went, on August 2nd, to Point Comfort on the Chesapeake, where thousands visited her, including a number of slaves brought by their owners for a day's outing. What a row there would have been with Uncle Sam had they refused to leave the protection of the British Flag, under which no slave may live! But nobody seems to have thought of it. At Annapolis Roads crowds came from Baltimore and the President lunched on board. On the 16th departure was made for Halifax, where they were very glad to see her and charged £350 for light dues, and thence for England. On a trip in 1861 she brought 7,000 tons of cargo from New York and in 1862 sailed with 1,530 passengers. But such gleams of good fortune did not suffice and the big ship had to be laid up through the inability of the shareholders to finance her further. She was a great engineering achievement, but before her time.

CHAPTER XIV

BRIDGES—GARDENS—CHURCHES—PARSONS

Hungerford Bridge—Market and Pier—Lambeth Bridge—Battersea Timber Bridge—Old Westminster Bridge—Old Blackfriars Bridge—Cannon Street Bridge—Rosherville Gardens—North Woolwich Gardens—Cremorne and Royal Surrey Gardens—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon—St. George's, Camberwell—Churchwardens' staves—Pulpits, clerk and beadle—Boys and girls—Problems and peppermint—The Rev. Samuel Smith.

I HAVE mentioned Hungerford several times, a name now in desuetude, but then, owing to its market, bridge and landing-stage, a household word in London. The South-Eastern Railway is responsible for its wiping out, for in 1862 they built their Charing Cross terminus on its site, and used the piers of the bridge for their own viaduct.

Hungerford Market, for meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, was a large two-storied building, opened 1833, which took the place of one built in 1680 by Sir E. Hungerford. It had a quadrangular yard facing the Strand which formed a convenient starting point for many omnibuses.

Hungerford Suspension Bridge was opened in May 1845. It was 1,342 feet long, 14 feet wide, with a central span of 676 feet. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who was responsible for the broad gauge of the Great Western Railway and had much to do with the s.s. *Great Eastern*, including its ultimate launch, was the engineer. The upper structure had been removed by January 1863, and part of it employed for Clifton Suspension Bridge at Bristol, completed in 1864, which soon earned an unenviable reputation as a jumping-off point for suicides.

At Hungerford a halfpenny toll had been charged, and the Act which handed the property over to the S.E.R compelled them to provide foot-paths alongside their railway track and authorised the levy of a corresponding toll.

To patrons of the penny steamers the bridge was a familiar object, and the landing-stage at its base one of the busiest.

Lambeth was another suspension bridge erected by a limited company on halfpenny tolls intent. It was opened in November 1862, and about 1904 was closed to vehicular traffic as dangerous. Unlike Hungerford, it was of unprepossessing design, cheap and mean, and such as no Authority in the world other than the British Legislature would permit to be erected over such a river as the Thames in the immediate vicinity of such buildings as the Parliament Houses at Westminster.

Other bridges, not now existent, were Blackfriars, Vauxhall, Westminster: old-fashioned stone structures; and Battersea, a timber erection of some twenty narrow spans, the passing under which on a steamer always generated a thrill, for until actually on the spot it looked impossible that the wide-spreading paddle-boxes could ever get through. Old Westminster Bridge I once crossed in a cab in 1858 and recollect, approaching from the Surrey side, being struck (I, of course, had my head out of the window) by its steep and even mountainous appearance. It was financed by a public lottery, like the British Museum and other old-time works were, and completed in 1749. In February and March of that year occurred severe shocks of earthquake. These it successfully withstood, thereby controverting current rumours of instability. Similar stories regarding its successor were circulated for years after its erection. The old bridge disappeared about 1860, being provisionally replaced by a timber roadway. This was brilliantly illuminated at night by oxy-calcium lamps—the lime-light of the theatres and a not inefficient precursor of electricity.

Old Blackfriars Bridge was closed in June 1864, a temporary wooden construction meeting traffic requirements during the erection of the new. The old bridge quickly disappeared and the foundation stone of its successor was laid in July, 1865.

An experience in 1866 will ever cause me to remember this rebuilding of Blackfriars. Going for a long pull in a four-oared cutter one summer evening, we were delayed

in getting home to our Club boat-house by a heavy storm, and had to pass under the twin bridges at about 1 a.m. in the midst of such a downpour that the coxswain had to divide his attention between steering and baling. The tide was running like a mill-race and the darkness such that on approaching the bridge we had to go easy until a flash of lightning showed an opening to aim for. The contracted timber carriage-way and the building scaffolding created a formidable obstruction—and as we forged under the arch into still greater obscurity the stream was swirling and foaming with a loud swishing sound amongst the piles, which the tips of our oars barely cleared. We felt—I especially, for I was pulling bow—the boat plunge and dip as she passed the dammed-up waters and descended to the lower level beyond. It recalled the stories we read about shooting Old London Bridge. Had we met anything in the narrow channel, inevitable disaster would have resulted, but we were the only craft under way at that hour—at least we thought so, until met and challenged by a police boat a little further on.

An entirely new Thames crossing, the South-Eastern Railway bridge at Cannon Street, was completed September 1st, 1866. Like Charing Cross, it was provided with footpaths, but for some reason these were never opened to the public.

Before quitting the subject of bridges the curious fact may be mentioned that in 1671, a Parliament of Charles II debated for several days a Bill to build a bridge at Putney, and eventually threw it out by thirteen votes on the ground that it would affect the tideway and destroy London by blocking the river. A member who suggested that obstruction might be obviated by building the bridge of iron was derisively laughed at.

Rosherville, which I have mentioned several times, was a pleasure garden, a mile or so west of Gravesend, the laying out of which was reputed to have cost £20,000. It had a steamboat landing-stage, and, being without a railway station within convenient distance, was principally dependent on old Father Thames. It was situated partly in an ancient

chalk quarry, contained many foreign trees and shrubs embowering statues of nymphs and fauns and goddesses, and was undoubtedly an attractive place. It had concert-rooms and dancing-floors, and, being energetically managed, lured the cockney and his lass in their thousands. Although hilarity often reigned, disorder was rare. The Master of Ceremonies for some years was a Baron von Something-or-other-hausen, a rather undersized man of very many-pounds-to-the-square-inch dignity and self-importance, whose Marshal's *bâton*, a collapsible opera-hat, no reveller ventured to disregard. The legend from its posters "The Place to spend a Happy Day," was so familiar that it was practically interchangeable with "Rosherville." These gardens will be recalled as the opening scene of Anstey's funny and clever novel *The Tinted Venus*. It was a Cremorne on a small scale and at a distance. When the steamboat traffic decayed, the twenty miles separating it from its chief source of patronage could not be overcome, and the erstwhile happy days had to be sought elsewhere. For many years after closing, the site was overrun at will by boys and vagabonds; its buildings, statues, trees, destroyed, defaced, overthrown, plundered; now—last scene of all—it is, I believe, to give place to a huge margarine factory.

Pleasure gardens as a form of amusement are now quite dead—in London, at all events—but in the 1850s and 1860s there were several in full swing—Vauxhall, Cremorne, Surrey Gardens, North Woolwich, and divers minor ones. Except Rosherville the last-named was, I believe, the very latest survivor and specialised in baby- and barmaid-shows in the days of its decadence.

We children often watched for the fireworks at Cremorne. Condemned to bed before drowsiness had asserted itself, we used to stand on a table in our room and from the window look over the back garden far away to Chelsea, where, at a certain hour, the sky frequently became radiant with rockets and coloured stars, always finishing up with a grand salvo of variously-tinted fires spreading out like the tail of a peacock and lasting a minute or two. Then we listened for the tremendous reports that were bound to follow such a

discharge and sometimes thought we caught them faintly. Perhaps we did. Big Ben used to sound so loud and close in certain winds that there seemed nothing ridiculous in noise-waves enduring all the way from Cremorne to Camberwell. After the grand salvo we went contentedly to bed. When fireworks were shown at the Surrey Gardens, which was not so often, they could be seen from the same window and to better advantage. I have viewed fireworks blazing at Cremorne on the left, while in the sky, to the right, Donati's comet was having a high old time, serenely outdoing them all.

The Surrey Gardens bulk largely in my earlier recollections owing to the disaster there on a Sunday evening in October 1856. Mr. C. H. Spurgeon—the so-called Surrey Side prophet—then twenty-five years of age and already famous as a preacher—engaged one of the Surrey Garden Halls, warranted to hold 10,000. On this occasion some 12,000 forced their way in and 7,000 more remained outside. Find me in 1924 a preacher who can attract a congregation of 19,000! Mr. Spurgeon had just commenced to pray when a cry of "fire!" was raised. The usual result, a stampede for the doors, followed, although the minister continued his prayer in the hopes of calming the multitude. But in vain. Seven were killed and many injured. One little girl aged six, taken to Guy's Hospital, could not tell her name or where she lived. As she was never claimed it was supposed that her custodians had perished. Parallels to this touching incident occurred at the loss of the *Princess Alice* in 1878, and of the Channel Island boat *Stella* in 1899. I heard the account of this dreadful accident read from the newspaper, and the memory has always remained. One of its consequences was the building of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, Newington Butts, opened 1859. It was said to seat 5,000 "in comfort"—a statement doubted in some quarters in view of the doctrine preached.

The Surrey Side prophet was not our pastor, however. We attended St. George's, Camberwell, situated in Wells Street, close to the Grand Surrey Canal. Dating from 1824, this commodious church had been erected out of a

parliamentary grant voted as a Thank Offering for the "crowning mercy" of Waterloo, and consequently was one of the temples known as "Waterloo Churches." That we heard of no similar offering after the Great War does not exalt the piety of our latter-day Parliaments.

St. George's Grecian portico gave entrance and exit to a numerous congregation. There were two pulpits, one containing a lower stage with a seat for the parish clerk, who gave out the hymns, always prefacing the number with the exhortation, "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God"; led the responses; said Amen to every prayer; proclaimed banns of marriage and other necessary announcements. The minister above him conducted the service, reading the prayers and also the lessons, a separate lectern for the latter purpose being then unusual. A much higher pulpit was reserved entirely for sermonising. An awe-inspiring beadle of the type already described kept order by force of personal magnetism or majesty or something, no child of either sex daring to meet his imperious glance. To see him standing with his wand of office, cocket hat and calves on the top of the steps leading to the classic portico as we filed into church banished all ideas of naughtiness; he prevailed more mightily than many sermons.

We sat about half-way down the main aisle, to the left, somewhat in advance of the churchwardens' pews, which were marked by two black staves, about six feet long, one surmounted by a gilded crown, the other by a crimson mitre. They were kept upright by being passed through holes in the seats upon which the wardens sat in solemn awfulness. We understood that the beadle sometimes handled these staves; that they were used for beating the bounds. Being loose, they might obviously also be employed for beating boys.

Even as our father was endowed with a quiverful of boys, the families in front and behind us were each blessed with quiverfuls—I ought perhaps to say cornucopiafuls—of girls, who, notwithstanding the modesty and bashfulness understood to be innate in every female bosom, stared at us when we happened to come in after they were settled.

And much to our confusion. I used to feel my face burn under the ordeal and could by no means nerve myself to encounter, much less return, their gaze. My younger brother, if possible, felt the situation even worse. We sometimes discussed girls and wondered what the use of them was. They couldn't play games, not even throw a ball decently; cried for nothing, and made pretence that dolls were babies so thoroughly that they often ended by really believing it. And we had to take off our caps to them, give way to them, and generally knuckle down to them! However, there they were—no doubt about that—and we had to shape accordingly.

Not long after the service had commenced a sense of peppermint-in-the-air used to diffuse itself both from the front and the rear. Chocolates as children's sweets were then as undiscovered as the North Pole and 'mint was the favourite maiden delicacy, so that the odour of sanctity came to mean for us something pungent and not unappetising. Prayer and peppermint seemed the rational complements of each other, and to think of one was to feel the influence of both. And Eve had all the apples, for we were not allowed to take anything consumable to church on any consideration whatever. The vicar, the Rev. Samuel Smith, was a middle-aged gentleman about whom I can remember nothing definite except that he wore a white surplice, was particular in enunciating his texts and talked of matters beyond our comprehension. Of all the sermons preached in my presence —I cannot say listened to—not one phrase has survived. But that must not be taken as a reflection on him. Strange, but true, I remember the clerk and beadle much better than the vicar. But I learnt to find my places in the Prayer-book—indeed, came to know the morning service almost by heart.

CHAPTER XV

BELGIAN CIVIC GUARDS—WHITEBAIT AT GREENWICH—LORD PALMERSTON

English Volunteers in Belgium—Festivities—Dining with the King—Field of Waterloo—"*Abas le Roi!*"—Luminosity in North Sea—Belgian *Gardes Civiques* in England—Troop-ship *Serapis*—Thames steamers—*La Vivandière*—Turtle famine at Guildhall—No lunch at Wimbledon—Dinner with the Queen—Merriment at Crystal Palace—All forgotten in 1914—Whitebait at Greenwich—Lord Palmerston and Ministry in 1861—German opinion of "Pam"—Trimmings and turtles.

I HAVE not quite finished, however, with the Thames steamboats. In 1867 some of them were employed for an unusual and very special purpose. The previous year a contingent of English volunteers had been received and fêted in Brussels on the occasion of the *Tir National*, at which that year they were both guests and competitors. I know because I was there, although not quite as a volunteer. On my way to spend a holiday in Belgium I made the acquaintance, on the Great Eastern Railway Company's steamer *Zealous*, of a party of marksmen from various corps—jovial fellows, who, when they found that I could speak French, invited me to join their party and paid all my expenses. They started singing in the train from Antwerp and startled a timid priest who incautiously took the only vacant seat in our compartment at Malines, with "Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl," "Pour out the Rhine wine, let it flow!" and other rousing choruses.

While the train was travelling at considerable speed we were amused, and also somewhat surprised, by a novel experience. A guard suddenly popped his head in at one of the carriage windows and demanded our tickets; afterwards proceeding along the train by the foot-board, holding on from window to window and from carriage to carriage.

I afterwards discovered that this dangerous system of ticket inspection was common in Belgium and other continental countries, and so continued for many years. An anticipation of corridor trains with the corridors outside! I myself saw it practised in Germany in 1891 and in Denmark in 1895.

At Brussels we all went to the Hôtel de Saxe, Rue Neuve, (since pulled down) and, in return for my unofficial interpretership, I received invitations to several functions, with, I'm afraid, the result of sometimes introducing me to scenes not altogether suited to my age. One glimpse of continental manners I got was seeing a Belgian officer half draw his sword on a café waiter who had displeased him. We had a reception at the Hôtel de Ville, which was beautifully illuminated, and the King gave a dinner to 1,400 riflemen, including about 700 English, in a big shed, somewhere down by the canal docks, no ordinary room in Brussels being found large enough. It was decorated lavishly and produced the impression of a baronial castle with a Crystal Palace flavouring. The banquet was sumptuous and my friends could (and did) pour out the Rhine (and other) wine, and make it flow to their hearts' content. It was rumoured that the contract price was 40 francs per head. No wonder men jumped on their chairs and roared "*Vive le Roi!*"

Leopold II, who had only recently become King and was as great a hero with his people as in his old age he came to be despised, made a nice speech in English in reply to Colonel Loyd Lindsay's proposal of his health—Loyd Lindsay, who four years later was to be one of the first to enter Paris after the siege with provisions and medical help for the starving inhabitants. Forty years afterwards, in 1906, I was again at Brussels and saw on the walls of the King's palace at Laeken many scribblings abusive of that monarch—"*À bas le roi!*" "*Vive la République!*"—and worse. After the banquet a convivial Belgian got me in a corner, persisted in repeatedly shaking hands while he ejaculated "England and Belgium one nation!" All this was in October 1866, the *Tir National* having been postponed from September owing to the prevalence of cholera in Belgium. My party

paid an interesting visit to Waterloo. At Sergeant Cotton's museum musical instruments found on the battle-field were noticed in the show-case. A fife was handed out by request and once more made to discourse sweet music by one of our riflemen.

All this was sufficiently exciting for a lad of sixteen and a half, but one more experience remained. Returning from Antwerp on the *Zealous*, night fell soon after we had left the Scheldt and it became evident that the North Sea was in a state of luminosity. Every ripple was a flash of brightness—wherever there was motion a greenish splendour burst forth. The waves from the paddle-wheels were cascades of phosphorescent light. Leaning over the bulwark and watching them intently seemed to carry me away to other regions: I lost myself in dreamy, fitful visions; semi-hypnotism probably. One of the officers who had sailed the North Sea continuously for thirty years said he had never seen the like nor anything approaching it. And it was not until I got to the Persian Gulf, some five years later, that I saw the phenomenon again and then in no greater brilliancy.

But where do the Thames steamboats come in? Here. The magnificent reception of the English in Belgium woke a responsive thrill on this side, and Belgian marksmen were invited to take part in the Wimbledon Rifle meeting of 1867. The idea was to bring our guests to Gravesend by sea and convey them thence to Charing Cross by river steamers, in the fond hope that they would be suitably impressed, if not actually dumbfounded, by the resulting views of the Thames and all its glories. Unfortunately, the whole programme of the visit was spoiled by mismanagement. The most incompetent persons seemed to be in charge throughout. Item after item miscarried, and the Belgians went back disillusioned and sore.

To begin with, the troop-ship *Serapis*, afterwards famous as an Indian relief transport, but then quite new, was directed to make her first essay in carrying troops by proceeding to Antwerp and there embarking the 2,000 or so *Gardes Civiques* who had accepted our invitation. They

had mustered on the quay, when the Burgomaster received word from the captain of the *Serapis* that he had anchored twenty-two miles down the Scheldt for want of water and would like the troops sent on to him, please; so all available steamers had to be requisitioned, and it was not until after great delay that the warriors began their cruise under the White Ensign.

At Gravesend they were packed like dominoes in a box on my old friend the *Swift* and half a dozen of her congeners, which then made sail for Charing Cross pier. There I saw them arrive, hungry and thirsty, but cheerful, about 7 o'clock on the evening of July 11th, 1867. Owing to the close packing few of them had seen much of the river. About 2,400 landed and marched up Villiers Street and along the Strand to Somerset House amidst the cheering of an immense crowd, to whom their uniforms and peculiar glazed top-hats with cocks' feathers appealed with all the force of complete novelty. But they had something more striking still—a real live *vivandière*, or *cantinière*, a young and comely lady in tunic, breeches and top boots, carrying slung from the shoulders a dainty little barrel. This was an entirely unexpected sensation. A girl in trousers off the stage in those days was quite a new experience, and her success was immediate and tremendous. The girls shrieked, while the men laughed and applauded. There likewise marched with the visitors a drum-major 6 feet 4 inches in stature, wearing a busby 2 feet 6 inches high, decorated with a 2 feet 4 inches feather. But compared with the *vivandière* he was a mere dwarf in public estimation.

The Belgians lunched with the Lord Mayor at the Guildhall, but the meal was "scant, mean and meagre" beyond description, and, as the *Times* said, "went a long way to obscure the character for hospitality upon which the Corporation prides itself." The Sultan of Turkey was to arrive on the 13th, and it looked as though the City fathers were saving their turtle-soup and toothsome titbits for him. Speeches, however, were numerous and cordial, and might possibly have made up for the lack of physical nourishment had more than one man in a hundred understood them.

On the 14th the Belgians went to Wimbledon and were received by the Prince of Wales. It was a very wet day and refreshments were served only in one small room, the existence of which was not made known to the men. Most of them went hungry and thirsty. Some bought things for themselves, and many bystanders purchased food and drink and distributed it. Verily the poor *Gardes Civiques* thought they had struck the country of Pharaoh's lean kine. On the same occasion it had been intended to present every man with a commemorative badge, but these mementoes ran 400 short! On July 16th they went to Windsor as guests of the Queen and dined—but Her Majesty did not show herself.

They were also entertained at the Crystal Palace, where the concluding foolishness was perpetrated. Each man—and the *vivandière*—was presented with a silver medal inscribed "*Vive la Belge!*" It was received with roars of laughter, for it was thought to be a delicate, if rather eccentric, compliment to the *vivandière*, who blushingly came to the same opinion herself. It did not at first strike them that in this great city of London responsible officials could exist so ignorant as to substitute "*la Belge*" (meaning the female Belgian) for "*la Belgique*"; but it was so!

As may be supposed, those who had experienced the lavish hospitality of Brussels the previous year were much incensed and, as Englishmen, disgusted at these sorry proceedings. I was heartily ashamed. Miss Burdett Coutts, afterwards the Baroness, always patriotic, was very good to the strangers, and fortunately so were many others.

In 1914, when the Germans were declining to recognise the Belgian *Gardes Civiques* as soldiers and were shooting them wherever found, I thought often of my old friends. And I was surprised that not one of the papers called to mind in that connection their invasion of London, 2,400 strong, in 1867.

One last reminiscence of the Thames steamboats. In the old days the Queen's ministers were wont to dine together once a year on whitebait (and trimmings), and for that purpose resorted to Greenwich, either to the *Ship*

hotel near the pier, or to the *Trafalgar* tavern at the other extremity of the hospital riverside walk. One day in 1861 I noticed a common barge, fitted with a temporary deck laid over with red cloth, moored in front of the *Trafalgar*, and a gangway fixed between the barge and one of the hotel windows. I heard that Lord Palmerston with his Cabinet were coming down by steamer from Westminster that evening, so took care to be on the spot. A crowd had assembled, but I managed to push to the front and finally secured an excellent position against the railings. About 7 o'clock a *Citizen* steamboat decked out in awnings and flags hove in sight, revealing a group of gentlemen in tall hats and light overcoats standing aft. The steamer passed the hotel, turned, and, describing a graceful half-circle, was dexterously brought alongside the improvised landing-stage with her stem pointing up-stream; a gangway was run across and a file of legislators—no one daring to say "Tickets, please"—strolled over and through the window into the hotel. The third or fourth was Lord Palmerston, and he was greeted with well-sustained cheering. I knew him at once, for his portrait was often published and was to be seen in many a home and shop-window. I was only some fifteen paces off, and looked for the straw which, according to *Punch* and other authorities, he always bore in his mouth. It was not there. Perhaps, like the Gladstone collar of after-years, that straw was mostly chaff. Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was probably one of the visitors, with other well-known men; but the crowd cheered only Palmerston.

The *Citizen* remained moored to the barge, no doubt to conduct the roisterers safely home after sufficient whitebait had been absorbed.

Some four years later, in October 1865, I remember my father coming home with the evening paper, and saying in a shocked voice, "Lord Palmerston is dead!"

Well did the *Times* express the popular voice—"There never was a statesman who more truly represented England"; and the *Cologne Gazette*, in a two-column eulogy, declared that "in future ages the name of Palmerston will be synony-

mous with England's greatest glory." And I'm afraid that Time is going to prove this German forecast correct: we shall never be so pre-eminent again. Those were the days when England was admired and feared in a few places and admired and respected in many others—the latter particularly in Germany, where it was fashionable to christen the boys Tom, Dick or Harry, and fair-haired *fräuleins* answering to the names of Betsy or Nellie were to be met with at every turn.

Palmerston—he of " the silver tongue, the hand of steel " —believed in England and England believed in him. *Nemo me impune lacessit* was not only Scotland's but Britannia's motto in those days—and nobody did!

I mentioned trimmings in connection with the ministers' whitebait, and some old stagers may think that I alluded to the Cabinet pudding which the popular wit of the time alleged to always follow the tittle-bats. Not entirely. A day or two before, passing the *Trafalgar*, I had happened to glance down a cellar grating at the back, and lo! beheld a couple of large turtles, while at the door below stood a cook in musing contemplation. So, without much mental computation, I put two and two together and deduced that Aldermen were not the only consumers of the verdant-fatted *Chelonia*. Evidently there was to be greenbait as well as whitebait at the ministerial banquet. Well, Lord Palmerston was reputed to be somewhat of a *bon vivant*. But he carried on bravely to the last, for it is recorded that in January 1865, ten months before he died, he had followed the Hursley hounds and finished " well up."

Captain Marryat mentions the *Trafalgar* in his novel *Poor Jack*, written in 1840. Ah, how it and its famous rival, the *Ship*, have altered since the halcyon days of which I write! The *Trafalgar* is now an Engineering Institute and Club, and so may be held to have grown in usefulness as well as age.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HISTORIAN HIMSELF BECOMES HISTORY—OF VARIOUS MATTERS, REGAL TO RAGGED

Lord Macaulay—Model locomotive—Opening of Parliament—"Stop thief!"—St. James's Park—Balloons—Mouldy coppers—Vulgar speech—Other errors—Swear words—Affected speech—Names—Manners—Rough boys—Effects of pugilism not all bad—Baiting eccentrics—Boys and cats.

SPEAKING of famous men, one day in January 1860, a younger brother and I were at Westminster when a funeral procession of considerable length passed towards the Abbey. There were mutes, nodding plumes, many carriages and sombre pomp. Passers-by stopped, but there was no big crowd. I have tried to recollect whether bystanders raised their hats, but cannot be sure. It was the biggest affair of the kind we youngsters had seen, and it impressed us. In the evening we learned from papa that we had witnessed the last journey of Lord Macaulay. The name did not convey much to me then—his writings were too "grown-up" for a lad of ten. Neither have they always appealed to me since.

We had been looking at one of the shops—an optician's—between the bridge and Parliament Street. We never passed without doing so, for in it there stood, under a glass cover, a beautiful model of a locomotive, an accurate representation of Robert Stephenson's long-boiler engine with "single" driving-wheels and "hay-cock" dome. It interested us particularly because we knew an engine, No. 2 of the South-Eastern Railway, which resembled it in all its details except that the boiler of the model seemed thinner in proportion and the dome smaller than No. 2's. The exhibit remained in the window for several years: afterwards, I often wondered what had become of it, for it was

really good, while so-called locomotive models often leave much to be desired. Revisiting the Science Museum, South Kensington, about 1918, I found amongst several models recently added to the fine collection there was my old Westminster friend, instantly recognisable after fifty-eight years or so. I now saw that the difference from a real engine consisted in the omission of the usual lagging or heat-protecting covering from the boiler, probably to show its construction, which was peculiar: the effect being to make the model slighter in proportion than the actual machine.

This type of locomotive did the Stephenson fame no good. The great length of the boiler in comparison with the wheel-base caused unsteady running whenever high speed was attempted, and most railways altered those they had bought after some experience. The South-Eastern Railway purchased a good many, but No. 2 was, I think, the only one that continued to work in its original form. The wheel-base of a number supplied to Germany was extended after one of them had nearly killed King Wilhelm I of Prussia, subsequently the first Kaiser, by running off the rails while drawing the royal train—and thereby coming close to preventing the Franco-German War and its dreadful sequel of 1914–18. Had Stephenson's brought this about they would have deserved celebration equally with "the little gentleman in velvet" so fervently toasted by the Jacobites in connection with the death of our own William III.

We once witnessed the Queen's procession to open Parliament, and were duly impressed by the Life Guards, with their kettle-drums, the grand state carriage and especially by the flunkies, some of whom visibly quivered as their fat was jerked about by the jolting of the vehicles hung on leather straps, to which they clung. Her Majesty had an enthusiastic reception. I regarded her with unspeakable awe, and had she happened to bow politely at me I really don't know what I should have done. While awaiting the procession a cry of "Stop thief!" arose, and we saw a young man of the Bill Sykes tribe running along the back of the crowd fringing the carriage-way. Right opposite to our stand (a form within the park railings)

an on-looker in a white top-hat stepped out of the throng, opened his arms wide, and, the fugitive running straight into them, was instantly clasped tightly to his waistcoat. Two pot-hatted constables immediately appeared, seemingly from nowhere, and led the youth away. As soon as they were out of hearing a gang of similar rapscallions surrounded the captor and abused him for interfering, with many an oath and lurid look. But several decent men gathered round and they eventually went off.

St. James's Park has not changed essentially since then, Buckingham Palace, the Victoria Memorial and environment, the new Government Offices at Storey's Gate, the Admiralty Buildings and arch excepted. The Mall leading up to the palace has been replanted; then the trees were mostly old and lofty, but not uniform. The Cadiz mortar and its companion, the Chinese cannon, used to stand well out on the parade ground, each in an enclosure of iron railings. There were, as now, strange fowl on the lake, and boats, the rowers of which had, as at present, to duck their heads under the suspension bridge, which not many years before had taken the place of the old wooden structure of Chinese or Willow-plate design.

One summer's evening a fine balloon crossed St. James's Park at a low elevation and was greeted with a chorus of "Ha-ba-balloon!" from the children assembled there. Balloons frequently went up from the Crystal Palace or one or other of the pleasure gardens—those were the days of Green, Coxwell, and Glaisher, famous aeronauts—and whenever seen were welcomed by the youngsters in all parts of London with this chorus or chant. After our war experiences I imagine that the passage of a gas-bag would now leave the metropolitan innocents pretty indifferent.

Another refrain of vulgar youth was "Throw [or chuck] down your mouldy coppers!" This was used to induce millionaires and others assembled on a balcony, a coach-roof or other vantage point, to bestow a modest portion of their superfluous wealth on the votaries of melody in the street below. Why it was considered desirable that the coppers should be mildewed I could never ascertain, nor

did I ever see any returned as failing to comply with that specification. The dining-room of the *Trafalgar* tavern, Greenwich, as already mentioned, overlooked the river, and at low water an expanse of mud lay exactly under its windows. Cabinet ministers dined there only once a year at most; on other occasions humbler guests did and, at peace with all mankind after banqueting and speechifying, were wont to respond to musical invitations from ragged urchins assembled on the shore beneath by casting forth coppers, which, whether mouldy or not, speedily became muddy. The intellectual gratification of seeing youngsters roll over each other in the slimy filth must have been great, since the practice never seemed to stale.

The up-trains on the Greenwich Railway used to stop at Spa Road Station, Bermondsey, for several minutes for ticket collection; this they did close to the parapet of the 20-feet-high viaduct. The carriage windows were in full view from the street below and groups of children, standing at the junction of Rouel Road and Frean Street (then called West Street and West Street North) made it a practice on summer evenings to attend every train and extract contributions from the passengers by vociferating their chant of mouldy coppers. Return trippers from Greenwich—then a shrine of Cockney festival—were often jolly. One would throw and a royal tumble ensue; another, perhaps in the next carriage, would follow, and before the train moved on the scramblers might be sixpence or more to the good. The tolerant police never interfered, so far as I could see, and, as a pretty constant traveller on the line in the early 'sixties I had opportunities for observation. It was said that a cruel engine-driver once heated coppers on a shovel and caused much damage and lamentation by throwing them to the crowd. But I never believed this, for, firstly, in drawing the train alongside the platform the engine had to proceed past the point of assembly and stop where the driver had nothing but roofs beneath him; and, secondly, because an early Victorian engine-driver would in all probability consider beer a more solid investment for his liquid cash.

When Crœsus happened to be throned on a coach or omnibus and the vehicle moved off the chorus was sometimes changed into an acrobatic display by the urchins running alongside and throwing what were called "cart-wheels"—turning heels over head on their hands—in the streets, dusty or muddy, hard or soft. This I understood to be a survival from stage-coach days when poor lads assembled at the inn yards would often speed the traveller on his way by such a display of cheerful agility. Possibly "mouldy coppers" had the same origin.

The language used by these children was not refined, but I should hesitate to assert that it was very much less so than that of County School pupils to-day. Many of the present vulgar errors were current then, and there were others; but, on the other hand, modern youngsters make mistakes which an 1850 boy or girl would have contemned. I cannot honestly say that I remember ever hearing, except in a humorous way, the substitution of W for V and V for W which Dickens makes so much of. I knew that Cockneys of the period were supposed to say *werry* for *very*, *wanity* for *vanity*, and so on, but I don't think they did so in our district, and we often heard rival butchers'-boys and others chaffing. According to my experience W = V existed only in books and plays. The misuses of the aspirate were no worse than now.

There was sometimes dubiety about possessives and plurals. Between Greenwich and Charlton there was an estate owned by Mr. Angerstein, M.P., a great gun at Lloyd's, which was famous for birds'-nests. The place was always referred to by the proletarian *jeunesse dorée* as "Angersteenzez," and the objects of their predatory excursions as "birds' nestezez." "Fists" sometimes figured strikingly as "fistezez." Nevertheless, plurals were often correctly expressed. The word "fanets," used by children at play to demand *pax*, or truce, now called "fay-nites'" by London County Council School scholars, was then pronounced "fay'-nets," which was better both as regards force and euphony.

The modern exclamation "Oo-ah!" used, especially by

little girls, to express alarm or surprise, was then quite unknown. "Them" and "them there" for those; "That there"; "This here"; "see" for "saw"; "come" for "came," were probably not more common than now. Other expressions were: "I can't do nuthink"; "I ain't got fur to go"; "He built them houses what he lives in"; "What are you a-doing of?" "He got shook up"; "I see him do it"; "I didn't have no luck"; "We ain't got no brass" (money); "Tea without no sugar"; "Don't lay on the grass—set on the wall"; "I come by myself." "Oh crikey!" expressive of astonishment, was a common phrase and the misuse of "bought" for "brought" quite prevalent.

But I'm afraid that many, if not all, of these may be paralleled to-day after fifty-four years of public education, even by scholars who have triumphantly passed all the County Council standards. And yet they have not improbably been taught French.

"Genteel," "genteelest," expressive of refinement, and "nosegay," now almost invariably rendered by bouquet, were in common use. A current phrase for a penny postage stamp was "Queen's Head." "Intended" was the popular designation for one's betrothed.

Almost universally current was the use of "don't" for doesn't. Dickens, Thackeray, Marryat, nearly all popular authors, fell into this error, although not one would have written, for instance, "It do not fit." Many writers were hazy about the subtlenesses of "lay" and "lie." But are things any better now? In 1923 a prominent politician addressing his fellow legislators at Westminster twice (according to the *Times* report) spoke of matters lying near his heart as one might discuss the doings of fecund hens.

But of one strange modern error, the confusion between "effect" and "affect," which has become so common of late years and even invaded leading articles of leading newspapers, the early Victorian knew nothing. Anyone writing to him "This will not effect you" would have been mistaken: it *would* have affected him—to laughter. And a newspaper report I have before me that certain people were "effected" by a gas escape would have excited both comment and

sarcasm. And the queer modern phrase "substituted by," used even by Cabinet Ministers, when they mean "replaced by," would have evoked at least mild surprise. It is interesting to note that in 1868 the *Times* still spelt a banker's order, "check."

Swear words were common. Workmen rarely conversed without the use of forceful expletives—do they now?—and it was surprising what a sanguinary complexion things assumed once the flood-gates of democratic eloquence stood open. Birth-pangs of the Red Flag perhaps.

At my age I did not consort with the high and mighty, and, as the people about me spoke decently, it was not my fortune to hear the eccentricities, such as, "Bwing me a Welsh Wabbit," to which superior people were supposed to be addicted. But I often heard such mannerisms mimicked and when I came to see and laugh at Lord Dundreary at the Haymarket there was no occasion to instruct me on the subject. Dundreary was a caricature, of course, but one founded on a good bed-rock of fact—at least as regards whiskers.

"Swell" and "toff," to designate a fashionable or pretentious person, were familiar expressions; "macaroni" had gone out and "masher" and "dude" not yet arrived.

Names, especially girls' names, have varied a good deal in sixty years. In the 1850s not only were Marys much more numerous than now, but there were galaxies of Harriets, Jemimas, Sophias, Adelaides, Carolines and Fannys. Ethels, Muriels, Gladyses, Kathleens, Daisies and Ivys were not yet. The one name as prevalent then as now was Nellie. It is curious that, in spite of the great and long-continued popularity of the Queen and the prestige and sonorousness of her name, it was but rarely bestowed at the font and little girl Victorias were never numerous. Before the Crimean War there was only one Florence—surnamed Nightingale; not many years afterwards and there were legions. Amongst the boys one would have to have looked closely for Cyrils and Cecils, and probably not have found a Gordon at all; but I cannot call to mind any once common name that has dropped out of use.

Manners were rougher than they are now, at least street manners. Not in all respects, perhaps, as when an omnibus conductor enquired, as he frequently did, " Will any gentleman go outside to oblige a lady?"—females, be it recollected, couldn't mount to the knife-board—he never asked in vain. But boys were often really bad. Rough lads would wantonly attack decently clad youngsters and often assault them cruelly. I have already related how my elder brother had suffered a broken arm through being molested by a butcher's boy. Once, when about ten years of age, I was in company with a younger school-mate, an amiable little chap named Greenfield, when we were stopped in a lonely place by two boys of twelve or over, one of whom, exclaiming, " I'm Tom Sayers ! " gave Greenfield a heavy blow in the face. Then they ran away.

On another occasion I was attacked near home by a much bigger boy without any provocation whatever. Finding that I could make no sort of fight against him I ran for our garden gate, and, holding it unlatched, turned and—with much regret do I confess it—called him a fool, qualifying the noun with a lurid adjective, nowadays usually considered sacred to Mr. Bernard Shaw—in short, that "Waterman's word" which we had been so sternly forbidden to utter. But while I ran he had stopped to pick up a stone and no sooner had I got the opprobrious sentence out of my mouth than I was struck under the left eye and a cut made the mark of which I distinctly bear sixty-four years afterwards. Never was disobedience to parental precept so promptly punished ! Another inch and I should have lost my eye. When he saw my face covered with blood he turned and fled.

On May 1st in three consecutive years, 1859–60–61, I had street fights with aggressive urchins, with varying fortune. I quite expected, and was prepared for, a similar encounter on May Day, 1862, but the charm was apparently broken, for nothing happened.

Perhaps the high estimation in which the prize-ring and its leading gladiators were held had something to do with this pugnacity on the part of the rising generation ; on the

other hand, the principles of fair play and manly behaviour it inculcated were certainly of educative value. The knife of the Italian and Greek was abhorrent to the worst of these rude boys—that an Englishman should trust to his fists was their accepted creed.

This theory may not seem reconcilable with the instances of wanton aggressiveness cited, but once an affair came to a regular set-to fair-play was the rule and, if necessary, would be sternly enforced by the bystanders.

Both boys and girls would call after, surround, and torment any eccentric person of either sex, especially if old and infirm. A foreigner in his native costume would often be jeered at. Unamiable characteristics on the part of young Londoners, of which I write with regret. In after-years I found much the same sort of thing existing in Glasgow. Is this tendency a vestige of that instinct which impels birds and animals to attack and destroy the weak, injured and unfit amongst them ?

Then no boy—of the proletariat—would dream of passing a cat without throwing at it, setting a dog on it, or chevying it in some way. That cats now come on to public pathways and sit and go to sleep on doorsteps and window-sills is eloquent of the softening of manners which has occurred. No mid-Victorian cat would have been such a fool.

It was not, however, only vulgar boys pussy had to fear. In Woodgate's *Reminiscences of an Old Sportsman* it is related that on the eve of the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race of 1862 the rival crews met at Richmond and jointly indulged in a friendly cat worry, Oxford supplying cats and dogs and Cambridge hiring a shed for the " sport." It would be interesting to turn up the lists of the crews and discover how many of these intellectual athletes afterwards rose to eminence in the Church, in Parliament or politics, at the Bar, or otherwise.

CHAPTER XVII

TWO GREAT INVENTIONS—EVERYDAY THINGS THAT WERE

Lucifers — Postage-stamps — Letters — Script — Benevolence — Uncut newspapers—Carpet-bags—Willow pattern china—Dutch clocks—Roasting jacks—Baths.

IT may seem odd to the present generation, but in the 1850s lucifer matches as we know them were of very recent invention and the country had not long emerged from the age of flint-and-steel. There had been matches, it is true, for a good many years; but they had to be dipped in a bottle containing phosphorus to excite ignition. The striking match was an immense advance, and altered domestic conditions throughout the world in a degree excelled by few other inventions. Yet its author remains uncommemorated, his very name and even nationality unknown to the vast majority of his countrymen. Mr. John Walker, a chemist and druggist of Stockton, is generally credited with the first conception of using heat due to friction to ignite a chemically tipped match and of giving practical effect to the idea. The famous Professor Faraday, himself a creator of epochs, was instrumental in making the new matches known. He heard of them when passing through Stockton, procured a box, which cost him 1*s.* 6*d.*, and demonstrated the invention in the course of one of his lectures at the Royal Institution. Mr. Walker lived till 1859, but does not appear to have benefited greatly by his cleverness.

Faraday was the discoverer of the electric light and of the phenomena which give us the magneto and dynamo, and it is curious to reflect that the ordinary match is no older than these comparatively recently-perfected developments.

Sir Isaac Holden, who died in 1922, aged eighty, was

asserted in some quarters to have been the inventor of the striking match, but he could not have outgrown his swaddling clothes at the date of its appearance. It is singular that such a fundamental departure should have been so casually recorded and its author so little recognised. Is there a Walker monument at Stockton, I wonder?

So the lucifer match, it is satisfactory to be able to say, was of British origin, and its manufacture for a long time was confined to this country. And when the simple modification which produced the safety-match striking only on the box, came along, I believe that was British too.

The present type of sliding box with roughened paper on its cover was in use when I first came to play with matches (which was very early indeed in the 1850s!) but I do not know whether it had been introduced by Mr. Walker.

Swedish matches, packed vertically with tips uppermost, in round willow boxes, were also sold. The tips were of several colours, and pretty effects were produced by arranging them in geometrical patterns. The English boxes cost 1*d.* each; the Swedish were, I think, dearer but contained a greater number of matches.

I now pass to another world-swaying British invention—the postage-stamp. I believe that I am not singular in admiring the original Rowland Hill stamps of the 1*d.* and 2*d.* denominations. I was not early enough to know the 1*d.* black, which was more effective pictorially than the succeeding brick-dust red, but was familiar with the 2*d.* blue, which I have seen described as one of the most beautiful stamps ever produced. Certainly the Queen's head stood out admirably on both. When halfpenny postage came in, the original ½*d.* stamp was in similar style, red, but only half the size of the 1*d.* It, too, was very pretty, and I think it a pity that the process which gave such fine results no longer finds favour. To-day our stamps lack both distinctness and distinction, and are excelled in artistic elegance by those of many foreign States.

Neither do I remember the pre-perforation days, although stamps were snipped off the sheets by scissors up to 1853. It was in that year, I believe, that the Government paid

Mr. Archer £4,000 for his device for perforating sheets and enabling tearing off to be easily effected. Certainly we owe much to Mr. Archer. Had it not been for him, we might, in these stamp-using days, be all carrying snipping scissors in our vest pockets. As a boy I had a collection in which were many unperforated varieties, including numerous specimens of Thurn and Taxis.

Stamps are easier to buy to-day owing to the abolition of some of the absurd old-time regulations. Even in the 1860s, branch post offices would not sell any but 1*d.* stamps after 6 p.m. I remember having a letter for Holland in 1866 and nearly giving a sub-postmistress or some lady of the kind apoplexy by innocently asking for a 4*d.* stamp—that was the rate to France, Holland, etc.—after 6 o'clock. And at the few offices open on Sunday they would not sell less than one shilling's worth. I saw a poor woman refused a 1*d.* stamp, although she pleaded that she wanted the letter to catch her son at Queenstown on his way to America the following day. I gave her a stamp out of my own purchase.

And the letters upon which these stamps were stuck? Many were of a kind never seen to-day. Envelopes had come in, and were pretty generally used; but many people, especially old-fashioned ones, folded the sheet, tucked one flap into the other, and fastened with one or more wafers, even as Queen Anne had done. Quite effective, too. I was surprised that the plan was not widely revived during the war when envelopes were so dear. I sometimes adopted it myself, using gummed stamp margins or paste instead of wafers, and had no mishaps.

The penmanship (and more especially penwomanship) of the letters was also different. Sloping writing was taught. Elbow tucked tight into the side, two first fingers straight down the pen—ruler on knuckles if deviation observed—produced good results in many, and bad in some, including myself. In girls and women this method evolved with great uniformity a script strongly suggestive of intoxicated spiders staggering across the page, usually finishing lower on the right than the starting point on the left. Often only two or three words would go to a line, and it required a

lady of exceptionally strong will to get "immediately"—which had a bad habit of sprawling—into one. And the gentle sex were giving to crossing their pages (it was necessary to make room somehow) so that a missive from a fair friend required, as the Yankees say, "some" tackling. And the universality of the style was marvellous.

The old-fashioned double *s* was still a good deal used, looking like *f* or *p* when carelessly written, and was even taught. I remember instances in my own copy-books.

On the whole I think that people, especially women, write to-day more legibly than did their predecessors of sixty years ago. The advent of the girl clerk and influence of the County Council Schools have in this respect wrought notable improvement.

Quill-pens were still common, and a pen-knife was not quite the misnomer it now is. And so was the art of making flourishes after a signature or at the end of a document. My first teacher in pencraft, Mr. Joseph Woodman, he of the avenging ruler aforesaid, whom we most irreverently called Joe (behind his back), was an adept at what I may perhaps term free-hand flourishing and sometimes enveloped even his simple initials in a maze that made the one at Hampton Court appear, in comparison, little less direct than a straight line. A most conscientious teacher, Joe! But he never did me any good. My writing through life may have been passable or may have been faulty—on that I offer no opinion—but such as it has been, and is, has come about in utter disregard of everything he prized, practised or taught.

Of course the typewriter had not arrived—that did not come in a practical form until the early 1870s—and carbon paper was the only means of manifolding writing.

Newspapers used to contain items of information never met with nowadays. Unclaimed dividends on Government stock were regularly advertised by the Bank of England. Under the heading "Benevolence," contributions to the poor-boxes kept at the various Police Courts were acknowledged day by day under the names or initials of the donors. For a time in 1859 I kept a record—with the aid of the *Morning Herald*—of these sums in a note-book

with the idea of finding out which Court would have the highest total at the year end—unconscious evidence, perhaps, of how ingrained are racing and wagering in the English nature—but was laughed out of it. I was told that such a contest was unfair, seeing that I could at any time influence the result by sending secret contributions to the Court of my especial fancy. In view of the ordinary condition of my pocket-money exchequer that seemed an extravagant proposition, much more extravagant than I was likely to be in the Police Court Benevolence direction—but with other ironies it sufficed to blot charity from my everyday activities.

In those days and during the 'sixties, newspapers and periodicals were sold uncut, and the first thing to be done on buying a paper was to perform on it with a penknife or paper-cutter. Some people did this with great deliberation, and, I am sure, got as much pleasure, if not instruction, out of the operation as any yielded by subsequent perusal. Railway passengers habitually carried folding paper-knives—kept on sale at the bookstalls—in their vest pockets and it was a common sight to see a compartment full of voyagers each intent on cutting the edges of a paper just purchased from Smith and Sons' Mercuries. There was no royal road to newspaper knowledge; it had to be extracted with a knife.

Another feature of the Victorian age has disappeared—carpet-bags—swept away by the avalanches of Gladstone bags and suit-cases. "Packing his carpet-bag" was equivalent to saying a man was starting on a journey; and the American expression "carpet-bagger," meaning a Northern politician on a dollar hunt in the conquered Southern States, will be remembered.

The carpet-bag had metal jaws and a snap-lock and was sometimes a formidable affair, two feet long, perhaps, and, artistically, of startling pattern. It was a strong and capacious packing machine but suffered under the disadvantages of being waterproof only to a limited degree and of having but one top, so that the whole contents had to be discharged to get at its lower regions. Carpet-bags had

been the traveller's stand-by in the coaching days and were still much to the fore in the 'fifties and 'sixties, going out rather suddenly as the 'seventies declined.

Willow pattern china and crockery, now seldom seen on active duty, was quite the common thing in my boyhood. At home, we had nothing else for many years.

I suppose the Dutch clock was killed by the cheap American, German and Japanese articles now so universal in poor households. But at the time of which I am writing, swinging pendulums twelve or eighteen inches long, with exposed chains and weights and a portentous tick, were practically everywhere in kitchens and cottages. This clock was a cheap, simple and enduring piece of mechanism, not readily put out of order and quite passable as a time-keeper. The winding was done by pulling down the chain and thereby lifting the weight in readiness for a fresh descent. A kitten we had at Camberwell disclosed a weak spot, however, for it used to jump at, and sometimes stop, the swaying pendulum of the kitchen dial, thereby occasionally putting breakfast time entirely out of joint. When the cheap clock of to-day needs repairs, it may as well be thrown away, but the old Dutch ticker would go on for decades with very little attention. I do not remember any alarum clocks in the 'fifties. No doubt they existed, for repeater watches were common, but were not cheap enough for popular use.

Roasting-jacks were then in every house, for meat was really roasted. Ours was a clockwork one of ordinary model which stopped and reversed every ten or twelve turns, announcing the fact by a loud tick. It was suspended from a toothed bracket over a dripping-pan with a well into which the fat and gravy drained, leaving intrusive cinders on the upper deck. Periodically the cook had to dip melted fat from the well with a long-handled ladle—such as Dick Whittington was thrashed with—and pour or baste it over the twirling joint. At the 1862 Exhibition a Signor Zanni had an automatic basting-jack which pumped fat from the pan and tipped it over the meat. Marconi was not the first Italian inventor. The jack was often helped by a Dutch oven placed behind it.

Roasting-jacks may yet survive in kings' palaces, but the gas-oven, and the whirl and pressure of modern life, have put them out of gear and they are no longer "understanded of the people," which is a pity. A restaurant enterprising enough to resuscitate them and serve nothing but roasted joints would probably score a success. In France the word for cook-shop is still *rôtisserie*, but I'm afraid few could produce a roasting-jack without first sending round to the local museum.

Once, when staying with an aunt, there were ducks for dinner, and a delicious smell from the kitchen advised hungry boys and others that the roasting process was proceeding satisfactorily to its climax. Suddenly, about ten minutes before dishing-up time, came a shriek from the lower regions with much scuttling of feet. The chimney had caught fire and discharged a mass of burning soot on to the roasting birds, burying the dripping-pan, well, ladle and all. Tragedy! Dinner, vegetables and pudding! On this special occasion an oven would have yielded better results. Ordinarily it was far otherwise.

Bath-rooms were much rarer than they have been for the last few decades. Lack of cleanliness must not be too rashly inferred, however. Tubs and portable baths were quite the rule, and the universally-fitted copper provided plenty of hot water. The daily bath, hot or cold, was not so practised, either for children or adults, but matters were very much better than they had been, by all accounts, forty or fifty years earlier. There were a few public baths and wash-houses already established in the 1850s. In 1902 I converted one of the earliest of these—that of Wincolmlee, Hull—into a Telephone Exchange for the Town Council. It was not, I think, before the 1870s that London saw its first Turkish Bath, the one still extant in Jermyn Street. Real Turkish *masseurs* from Constantinople were at first employed, but they advertised the novelty but indifferently by succumbing very readily to the climate. Several died, and ultimately all were replaced by men to whom Golden Horn conditions were not so essential.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIXPENNY TELEGRAMS SIXTY YEARS AGO—THE BICYCLE'S ANCESTORS

Druggists—Shutters—Food—Sixpenny telegrams—Smallpox—Lamps—Candles—Pantechnicons—Velocipedes—Insurance signs—Slaughter-houses—Toys and games—Skelt's sheets—Toy theatres—Magic lanterns.

THE shops of chemists and druggists affected coloured bottles much more than they do now; the space they occupied is probably better utilised for the display of the multifarious stock-in-trade of the modern magician of the pestle. The radiant flagons were larger and more numerous and, with a bright light behind them, were visible afar off. To me, always susceptible to lovely hues, whether manifested in rainbows or railway signals, they were attractive and, indeed, almost awe-inspiring, for I sometimes lost myself a little in contemplating such floods of resplendent light—that is, unless I happened to think of the abominable stuff harboured behind—and then I realised that the bewitching bottles were even as Lurline of the Lorelei, and "smiled but to deceive." Druggists sold matters little wotted of nowadays—saffron, tamarinds, camomiles, spirits of sweet nitre (potent for colds, that!) hartshorn, squills. Patent medicines, except certain brands of "anti-bilious" pills, were few.

Flexible winding shop shutters were not much in evidence, although I will not say that the germ of the idea had not appeared in places. Even important premises were closed by upright wooden shutters which had to be fetched from a storage place, put in position one by one, and then secured by a locked iron bar. In the 1860s some jewellers began to dispense with shutters, leaving their premises uncovered but well lighted. The watches within were thus more readily safeguarded by the watch without.

The topic of food prices is so insistent in 1924 that it will not be out of place to recall what housekeepers had to disburse some sixty years ago. We paid 4*s*. per lb. for tea, 5*d*. per lb. for moist sugar, and from 1*s*. 2*d*. to 1*s*. 4*d*. per lb. for butter. Lump (loaf) sugar was considerably dearer, and some grocers would not sell sugar at all unless tea were taken. Meat prices I do not remember, but I *do* call to mind the delicious boiled silverside of beef with huge marrow-bone attached that not infrequently graced our board, at the head of which sat a father charged with the duty of ministering to the appetites of seven healthy boys, and of sharing fairly the contents of that marrow-bone.

Fish and vegetables were cheap. Market gardens abounded in the suburbs. The space between Bermondsey, New Cross Road and Deptford High Street, on both sides of the Greenwich Railway, was one vast expanse of them; and they wedged in between the Old Kent Road and the Bricklayers' Arms branch railway almost up to the Grange Road. And it was much the same elsewhere, so that road or railway carriage added but little to the cost of London's vegetables. The commoner kinds of fruit were also quite reasonable. Tomatoes were not used, except perhaps for making sauce, and were seldom seen. The prices mentioned continued until well into the 'sixties. We had no bananas, of course.

In the 1850s cocoa was best known in the form of nibs. I believe Epps, the homœopathic chemist, was the first to sell it powdered and in packets. He advertised it largely for many years as "grateful and comforting," and it was said that his two daughters had these cheering adjectives bestowed upon them as nicknames and were ultimately known by no others. In the early 1860s Fry sold square packets at 4*d*., and there was a popular preparation called Iceland Moss Cocoa, a supposed blend of reindeers' food and cocoa, packed in silver paper and costing a little more.

It may surprise many Londoners to learn that their telegrams were cheaper in the 1850s and 1860s than in 1924, but it is a fact. The London District Telegraph Company established stations in many parts of the City and suburbs,

and accepted and delivered telegrams at 6*d.* per twenty words including addresses. To-day a similar message costs 1*s.* for twelve words. The Company also took telegrams for any part of the United Kingdom and abroad; these they transferred by wire to the other Companies concerned. Their chief office was in Cannon Street, and they were in existence many years, until the purchase of the telegraphs by the Post Office in 1870. This Company used the Morse ink-writer instrument, and, as a rule, employed girl clerks. Their engineers introduced at least one novelty in construction, being the first to bunch several insulated wires into a cable and hang it over the housetops. I believe the very first of these aerial cables, which, at a later period, were much employed by the Telephone Companies, crossed King William Street.

The railway companies of those days had telegraph offices on the platforms of most stations, even quite small ones, and also transmitted and delivered telegrams—sixpenny ones within the metropolitan limits. Their instrument was usually the Wheatstone single-needle, although a good many of the more antique double-needles could be found on some lines—the South-Eastern, for example. I remember sending telegrams from the platform of the New Cross Station of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway which they delivered in the City by their own uniformed messengers. The Post Office abolished the 6*d.* tariff and closed all these wayside stations, compensating the companies out of the public purse, at the same time depriving the said public of a great facility. With monopoly 'twas ever thus. Fifteen years elapsed before Londoners enjoyed sixpenny telegrams again and then they only got twelve words for the money.

Entrusting the telegraphs to the Post Office was a bad mistake. The march of improvement and invention was at once arrested. Before that event, British telegraph engineers were the foremost in the world—as witness the Atlantic cable. Subsequent to it they disappeared so far as new inventions and discoveries were concerned. The Post Office has always copied foreigners, and that at a long

distance, never themselves producing an invention of note. In the 1860s the various telegraph and railway companies were competing as to which should give the best service, and such enterprise, left to itself, would infallibly have yielded us better and cheaper telegraphs in the long run. But this is a topic containing in itself matter for a volume.

A recrudescence of smallpox at Gloucester and elsewhere has recently caused alarm, which would have been no smaller had it been possible to throw on the screen some of the sights I knew when a boy. Persons badly pitted by the disease were too numerous to excite remark, while those blinded by it were many. At a butcher's in Camberwell there was a shopman whose face and neck were so covered with marks that certainly not a square half-inch of original skin remained; and there were others within my purview nearly as bad. An insect undertaking a voyage over such a countenance would have been like an Arctic sledge party in the presence of very hummocky ice. Persistent vaccination —then much less satisfactory than now, for lymph was taken from one person for use on another, and mothers were wont to be cheered by the family doctor saying that he knew a splendidly healthy baby "coming on" and she might depend on her own darling getting a supply from it —so improved matters, however, that, had it not been for the forgetfulness and carelessness inherent in British human nature, the disease would probably have entirely disappeared. And conscientious objections—a phrase more blessed than even Mesopotamia to shirkers of every class— helped not a little in keeping it alive.

Household illumination was very inferior. Paraffin-oil had not crossed the domestic threshold, and sperm-oil, burned in lamps, often of indifferent design, was largely used. The sperm we owed to the British whaling fleet, then a national asset worthy of national pride. The gas of those days had a pungency not now recked of—whether it was more poisonous, recent experience renders very doubtful—and had not invaded the smaller class of house to any great extent. We used sperm-oil for the living-rooms, but, owing to the danger of transporting lamps, tallow candles

were mostly employed for the bedrooms. Sometimes these were enclosed in a tubular stand with spiral spring at the bottom, which, compressed by the introduction of the candle, forced it upwards against a collar until consumed. With a little ingenuity the tubes could be converted into guns and made to project missiles with considerable force, as we boys found out.

Paraffin candles were not yet a commercial article, although an engineer named Gowans, employed on the construction of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway, had discovered the Scottish oil-shale and had shown a few candles made from it—very dark in colour, I was told—at the Great Exhibition of 1851. I came to know Mr. Gowans in the late 1880s, when he was Dean of Guild at Edinburgh.

Tallow candles did not consume their own wicks, so snuffers formed an indispensable item of their equipment, and, as the tapers stank abominably if blown out, extinguishers were equally necessary.

The rushlight, or farthing dip, now happily unknown, was a rush with a thin coating of tallow which served to illumine the poor man's cottage, or rather, somewhat tone down the darkness thereof. Four for a penny sounds cheap as illuminants go in 1924, but measured in therms the efficiency was certainly small. There was a great sale of them, however; I remember an oilman's shop in Deptford Broadway, backing on the Creek, long since demolished, which always had its doorposts festooned with great bundles of dips suspended by their wicks. It is said that the rushlight originated in Hampshire in 1785—which was about the time when Murdoch invented its triumphant competitor, gas.

I think that the Pantechnicon must date from the 1850s. Towards the close of that decade we used to see removal vans of the kind about, invariably bearing the name of Hudson and as universally ornamented with the picture of a railway-engine engaged in pulling a truck laden with one of them. These engines amused us, for it was very evident, even to boys, that the artist responsible for them had waded out of his depth. Some had wheels of different diameters



THE FIRST MAN-POWER LOCOMOTIVE: VELOCIPEDES, 1862.
The immediate precursors of the bicycle and tricycle.

coupled together, which was the most obvious, but certainly not the only, fault. Sometimes the driver and fireman, in immaculate white jackets and red ties, used to stand back in the tender (which was destitute of coal) as if afraid that the boiler was going to burst, and they owed it to their wives and families to keep as far away from it as possible. However, the Pantechnicon had come to stay and Messrs. Hudson were not left their monopoly long. In after-years a removal firm at St. Albans brought out two vans with excellent paintings of real engines and trucks. As these were much admired, they may be in existence still.

I have mentioned that the typewriter had not arrived in the 1850s; neither had the bicycle, but premonitory symptoms of the latter were not lacking. Commencing with the hobby-horse, a two-wheeled seat without propelling mechanism, and usable only downhill, development had now progressed to the velocipede, a frame with four wheels, the hind pair being driven by cranks worked sometimes by hand-levers and sometimes by footboards, like the pedals of lathes or knife-grinding machines. Mr. Willard Sawyer of Dover, the inventor, was awarded a gold medal at the 1851 Exhibition for a machine of this description and another at the American Exposition of 1854. The Prince of Wales ordered a velocipede in 1857, and others were subsequently built for the Czar of Russia, the Prince Imperial of France and the Crown Prince of Hanover. During the early and mid 1860s they were let on hire at the Crystal Palace and at several places in London, so that velocipedes became quite familiar objects in the streets, especially on Sunday afternoons and holidays, when they were taken out by youthful Cockneys on exercise and excitement intent. The tyres were of iron, and rough riding no doubt the rule, but nevertheless quite respectable speeds were obtained by the said youths when racing against each other. Nine miles an hour seems to have been the rate attainable on long runs, 71 miles having been covered in 8 hours. One expert velocipedestrian did 526 miles in 20 days, or 26 miles per day; but it was claimed that 60 miles per day was possible without undue fatigue. Sawyer had a splendid

machine, price 100 guineas, at the 1862 Exhibition, fitted with a sketch desk and umbrella. There was a lady's velocipede with provisions for protecting the dress (this was very necessary), so that it could be used with " perfect decorum." Leg visibility had to be kept low. I understand that the two-wheeled bone-shaker did not appear until 1868, and then it came from France.

London buildings were still freely decorated with the metal plates of the companies they were insured with. I believe these signs dated from the ownership of a private Fire Brigade by each Insurance Company. The tokens originally indicated to the watchman which company had to be called, and to the firemen, when they arrived, whether it was a building they ought to operate on or not. A school I attended bore several of these badges, one dated 1791.

Butchers possessed their own slaughter-houses, often part of or adjacent to their shops. Some were not particular in closing their doors when exercising their craft and, in common with other children, my brothers and I had opportunities of witnessing all the processes incidental to the creation of chops and steaks. Repulsive and improper, many will say; but, after all, it taught us the truth about a sad feature of our civilisation, and was, probably, just as well.

Something may be said about toys and games. Little girls had few outdoor toys. In addition to their swings, see-saws, skipping ropes and balls, the chief articles were light wooden hoops and shuttle-cocks. Here and there a tomboy (tom-girl, rather!) would, greatly daring, aspire to marbles or whipping-tops; but this was about the limit, although a girl might on occasion be admitted as stop-gap to a game of rounders. Croquet came to some, but not cricket or hockey. Lawn-tennis was not; nor " higher-and-higher," that adaptation of their skipping-ropes to jumping exercise which the short frocks of these modern days has rendered possible for the junior fair sex, and which I believe originated in the playing-grounds of the London County Council although now practised all over the kingdom.

Boys, more fortunate, had iron hoops; trap-and-ball (called knurr-and-spell in some parts of the country); tip-cat; tops, both peg and whipping; marbles; buttons; rounders (father of American base-ball); cricket; hockey; and football. These, with running, jumping, rowing and swimming, all in the open air, afforded plenty of both muscle and brain nutriment, and I don't think the mid-Victorian boy often failed to uphold his country's credit when opportunity offered. Would that his descendants could truthfully say the same!

A favourite indoor amusement was the toy theatre. A publisher named Skelt issued sheets of figures—characters in several simple plays, with appropriate scenery, which children coloured, pasted on cardboard, cut out and fixed to wires, so that they could be manœuvred on a toy stage to dialogue spoken by the performer stationed behind. In one of the plays, *The Miller and his Men*, I think, a broken bridge was part of the scenery and led to surprising complications. How trivial all this must appear to the cinema-surfeited youngster of to-day!

Skelt also published sheets for colouring, of soldiers, sailors, pirates, favourite actors, etc., and had quite a name in the boy-and-girl world. I don't think he survived the 1860s, but as late as 1895 I saw some of Skelt's sheets in a little shop near the *Gare du Nord*, Brussels, all yellow and discoloured, but oh! so eloquent of the days that were gone.

Towards the end of the 'fifties, toy magic lanterns made their appearance. I had one in 1860. Judging from the slides, it was of Swiss or German make, but we soon got strips of glass from the glazier and manufactured some truly British ones. It burned sperm-oil and presented us with plenty of soot and smell.

CHAPTER XIX

1852-7—LIFE'S KALEIDOSCOPE—FRANKLIN—INDIAN MUTINY

Home life—Illustrated journals—A loving mentor—Chess—Great Duke—Crimean War—A Turkish Fenian—German champion for England—Dr. Palmer—George Herring—Sir John Franklin—Arctic and Antarctic—An American courtesy—Indian Mutiny—Day of humiliation—Spurgeon at Crystal Palace—Captain Lukis.

HAVING, so far, flitted over London in desultory fashion and endeavoured, like Le Sage's *Diable boiteux*, to lift a curtain, if not a roof, here and there with the result, I hope, that in some general fashion an idea has been gained of not a few things as they were sixty and odd years ago, I now propose to consult chronology a little in registering events within the ambit of memory.

That my childhood and adolescence should leave such a legacy of recollections may seem strange, but we boys were fortunate in possessing parents who took notice of passing events and talked of them intelligently. Papa spent many of his evenings at home, discussed topics of interest at meal-times and allowed us to read the *Morning Herald*, one of the principal daily newspapers (costing 5*d.*) as soon as we were able. Then the *Illustrated London News* and *Illustrated Times* were taken weekly and bound up in half-yearly volumes. These, with their pictorial reviews of current events, constituted educative gold-mines. The bound volumes we called the "big books" and often asked for their production. We had also the *Leisure Hour* and the *London Journal*, both extremely instructive. *Punch* we often saw, too, but it was not taken regularly. In addition, I had the inestimable advantage of a brother eight years my senior whose superior knowledge and experience were always at the service of his younger brethren. He

drew and painted well; was a facile writer and versifier—I think a real poet, although an unpublished one—had an excellent knowledge of English literature; was above the average as a chess-player (for many years he was a member of the British Chess Club), and a sterling good fellow withal. We boys could all play chess at seven or eight years of age; but not one could ever beat him, either as youths or men. For such a "guide, philosopher and friend" I hope the Lord made us duly thankful; I know he did me.

The funeral of the great Duke of Wellington, the Crimean War, the search for Sir John Franklin, all mixed up with cholera and the disinfection of the Thames, were the first impressions of national, as distinct from home and local, life at the dawn of intelligence. The Duke's funeral I did not recollect, as it took place in 1852, but both parents had witnessed it and we possessed the file of the *Illustrated London News*, which had given the event special prominence. The aforesaid "big books" were indeed sibylline volumes to us, to be consulted reverently and turned over with care. The picture of the Duke dying in his chair has remained with me all my life, and when in after-years I stood in the very room at Walmer Castle and by the very chair I found it easy indeed to reconstruct the scene. The Duke must have been a very great man, judging from the profound impression he had created in the public mind. I have known no one since spoken of with such awe and for so long.

Of the actual events of the Crimean War as they occurred I recollect but little, but when we boys became old enough to understand the bound-up volumes we had the illustrated history of it before us and all the place-names—Alma, Inkerman, Eupatoria, Balaclava and Sebastopol—became to us even as household words. The British and French generals, the Highlanders and Zouaves, the Sardinians with their plumed hats and the Turks with their fezzes, were discussed, admired or criticised. We felt cast-down, humiliated and resentful at our failure to capture the Redan while the French triumphed, with such apparent ease, at the Malakoff and, little kiddies as we were, were

acutely conscious that the British had not scored as they might and ought to have done.

Many years afterwards, about 1894, I accompanied a German professor—think of that in 1924—to see Windsor Castle. Coming back in the train we had, as travelling companion, an old man with a corkscrew curl on each side of his forehead, who huskily announced himself as an old Royal Navy tar. "Yes, gentlemen, I served in the Crimea—I stood to the guns in the old wooden ships before Sebastopol. We pounded them, and they pounded us. Gentlemen, I expect you think we licked the Russians in the Crimea. But we didn't, gentlemen; they licked us, and God knows what they made peace for!" And an enigmatical smile crossed the face of my German friend.

But against this I may note a comment by another German. In Busra, in 1872, I spent an evening with L'Année-grace Effendi, a Frenchman in the Turkish service, and at his house met an Irishman, Murphy Effendi, likewise an Ottoman official, a good fellow, but such a rank Fenian as to be quite unable to see anything meritorious in English or Scotch although *pro* everything else—French, American or Esquimaux. Somehow the Crimean War came up and the Irish Turk soon took occasion to remark that it was strange that the English couldn't take the Redan, while the French stormed the Malakoff. There was present an old German doctor—the only European medico in Busra at that time, who replied—we were speaking French in compliment to our host—"*Mais le Redan fut beaucoup plus fort que le Malakoff comme tout le monde sait bien!*" I was gratified, of course, but it was a fact that the British generals ought to have known before they undertook to storm it with a handful of men unprovided with supports.

Poor Murphy was terribly discontented with the Turkish service, where pay was small and uncertain, and, notwithstanding his animosity to everything English, would have given the boots off his feet and the fez off his head for a chance in the British or Indian services. We had an Irishman in our department, too, whose contempt for the Turko-Celt was indeed colossal. Englishmen could be, and were,

friendly and amusedly tolerant, but the Irisher with an Indian appointment could find no soft place in his heart for the fez-weary Pat.

In 1856 the poisoner, Dr. Palmer, was tried and executed, and his deeds were a theme for every tongue. I knew the leading facts of the sad affair from hearing it so much discussed, but any gift of prescience I may have possessed did not inform me that one day I was to become acquainted with an actor in the sorry drama. One of the witnesses who gave important evidence about the doctor's betting transactions, which helped not a little to hang him, a mere clerk then, but in after-life a very well-known City man and reputed millionaire—George Herring—I came to know in the early '90s. He was of gipsy origin, went on the turf in post-Palmer days, made money, and developed into a financier and company promoter. He was quiet and unassuming, and, I believe, strictly honourable, although in the course of business, playing for what at the time he conceived to be his and our advantage, he did me and some of his other friends a shrewdly bad turn. That was in connection with the flotation of the New Telephone Company in 1892. The action he took with the best intentions proved the undertaking's ultimate ruin and confirmed the monopoly of the National Telephone Company which Herring himself sincerely desired to end. He interested himself in General Booth and the Salvation Army, of which he was a generous benefactor. The newspaper reports of May 1856, stated that George Herring was a "youngish man, not regular features, black hair which curls slightly. Rather gentlemanly, in brown uppercoat and dark trousers. While judges took notes he paused in his evidence and looked slily round at prisoner out of corners of his eyes." Thus in 1856 was the City millionaire financier of the '90s. The Palmer trial occurred just after the conclusion of peace with Russia.

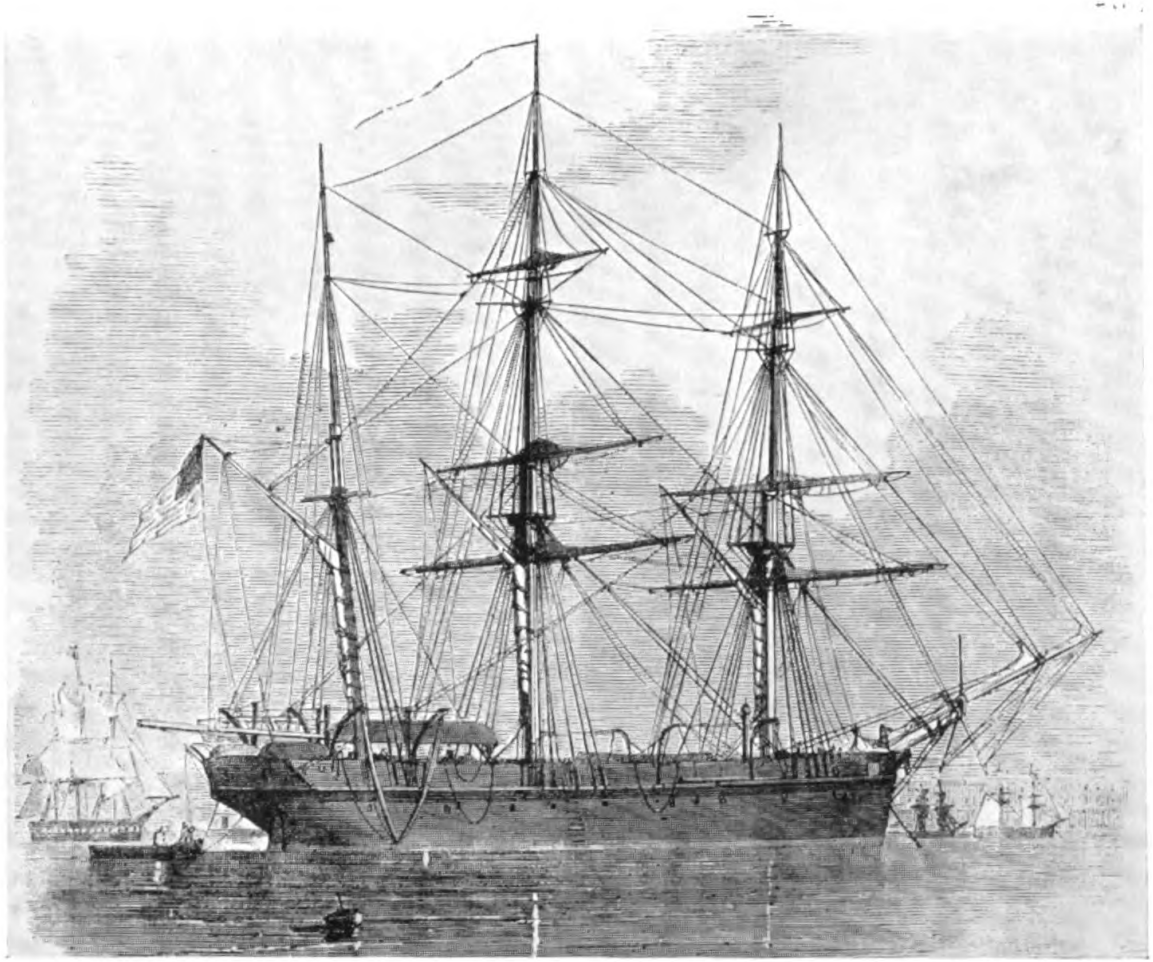
Very few people to-day know much about Sir John Franklin, but during the whole of the '50s his name was familiar in even the poorest homes. This was due to the mystery in which the fate of his expedition in search of the

North-West Passage was enveloped for many years and the persistence with which his devoted wife refused to abandon hope of his ultimate return.

Sir John sailed in 1845 in the sailing-ships *Erebus* and *Terror* with which Sir James Clark Ross only a few years previously—in 1841—had discovered the Antarctic Continent and the names of which are preserved in the twin volcanoes he there located. The romance of that great discovery has always struck me as exceeding all others. The ships had been pushing their way steadily southward for many days through a wilderness of ice floe and berg, until they were hundreds of miles farther south than ever navigator had been before, when one dark night a light was sighted. What! A light—there—in that howling waste, where no man was nor could be? Well might the sailors marvel! And it proved a volcano in eruption, guiding them from an elevation of 12,000 feet to perhaps the grandest geographical discovery ever made, or ever likely to be made, on this globe. And so Victorialand and Mounts Erebus and Terror were added to the map—and coloured red. On the happy occasion Ross's second-in-command was Captain Crozier, and he now sailed northwards with Franklin in the same capacity and in his old ship, the *Terror*.

The stupendous southern feat had been accomplished by sail alone, but when they left the Thames for the North-West quest, never more to be seen of men, the comrade vessels did so under steam, for auxiliary screw-engines had been provided. Years elapsed, and, nothing being heard, relief expeditions were fitted out, and between 1847 and 1857 nearly forty were despatched, both Government and private, for the affair became a national one. At last it was ascertained that the men had perished, that their gallant keels had succumbed to the ice, but not before the North-West Passage had been found although probably never actually entered.

The talks we had, the articles I read, the maps and pictures I examined, must have in themselves constituted no mean education. At the age of nine or ten I knew much about the multifarious things bound up in a Polar Expedition: of ships and sailors; of ice, glaciers, floes and bergs, of



(Illustrated London News.)

A FINE EXPRESSION OF INTERNATIONAL AMITY: SIR JOHN FRANKLIN SEARCH SHIP "RESOLUTE."

Abandoned as hopelessly frozen in, found floating derelict by an American whaler, and, after
164] complete renovation, presented by the United States to the British Government, 1856.

sleighs and draught dogs, of Esquimaux and musk oxen, of whales, seals, white bears, Arctic foxes, of polar stars and pemmican, of the true north and magnetic meridian, of Aurora Borealis, midnight suns, solar haloes and snow-shoes! But who wots of Franklin in 1924?

One of the would-be relief ships, *Resolute*, was frozen in and in May, 1854, was abandoned in latitude 77° N. In September, 1855, she was found by an American whaler floating 1,200 miles away, but still rigid with ice. The U.S. Government bought her for $40,000 and spent a lot more in repairing and refitting, after which they presented her, "a floating Pompeii," to the British Government, complete down to the officers' musical-boxes and pictures of ballet-girls on their cabin walls. She had a great welcome on arriving at Portsmouth, whence she proceeded to Cowes and, in December, 1856, was visited with great interchange of courtesies by the Queen, Prince Consort and royal family. That derided Victorian poet, Martin F. Tupper, wrote "An International Ballad" of six stanzas, the first and last of which were quite good, breathing John Bull's gratitude and amity. What a pity this great American effort of good-will did not persist! What a difference its substitution for the more popular pastime of tail-twisting would have made in the subsequent history of the two nations!

It would be curious to discover what our Government or Admiralty did with their magnificent present. Records are silent. Probably—judging from their ordinary procedure—sold her to the Germans for breaking-up purposes.

The Crimean War had scarcely faded when the Indian Mutiny sprang up. This we were able to follow day by day, for father frequently read from the papers in the evening and sometimes had further information culled in the City to impart. But the telegraphic link with India had not been forged in those days, and news was stale as well as terrifying.

The tension was terrible. The Government appointed a day of prayer and humiliation for October 7th, 1857. All places of business being closed, I went for a walk with

papa, who, to please me, directed our steps to where railways ran most thickly. We came to the viaduct carrying the London, Brighton and South Coast and London and Greenwich Railways near Corbett's Lane, the point where the two separate. The signal-box we saw there, in the space left vacant by the diverging lines, was famous as the first ever erected anywhere.

We noticed a constant stream of trains traversing the Brighton line, the down ones full of people, the up ones mostly empty. Every three or four minutes a crowded train steamed south. The explanation was that the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon was to preach at the Crystal Palace on the absorbing topic of the day. He did so from Micah vi. 9, to 23,500 persons, the largest congregation ever assembled, in modern times at least. The sum of £475 was collected for the victims' Relief Fund, averaging nearly fivepence per person present. Such was the power of a popular preacher in the '50s.

Spurgeon was a forceful speaker and a witty man, full of pungent illustrations, with no great admiration for the Church of England and decidedly no use for Popes or Cardinals. He was as thorough-going in his belief as the late General Booth, and one wonders what position he would occupy to-day when times have so much changed. But he has left a substantial and enduring monument in his Orphanage at Stockwell.

The Day of Humiliation was fine but windy, and at one point papa's top-hat suddenly started an independent career in the Crystal Palace direction; but, being cleverly fielded and restored by a working lad, a couple of "joeys," or four-penny bits, expeditiously changed owners. The South-Eastern Railway, which ran over the same arches, but had no connection with the Crystal Palace, made a very poor show that day in comparison with the Brighton, but we did notice one train with an engine, No. 44 by Stephenson's, which, in after-years I became aware preserved a certain historic interest owing to experiments to which she had been subjected when new. She looked dowdy and low-spirited that day in contrast with the many gaudy

Brighton engines flitting about in their uniform (of that period) of bright green, red and polished brass or copper.

Close by, the Brighton Railway had vast coke-ovens in which coal was converted into smokeless fuel for locomotives as required by statute. A costly process, since the precious coal gases and residues—more valuable than the coke manufactured—were lost in the air. Engineers knew no better: chemists—like Mr. "Aniline" Perkin—were beginning to perceive.

Well, we followed the Indian Mutiny from Cawnpore to Lucknow, and knew the names and deeds of Havelock, Outram, Colin Campbell, Peel, Neil, Lawrence, even as we knew our nightly orisons; and, I'm afraid, exulted in the many pictures of mutineers being blown from guns, savage grimaces still imprinted on the whirling heads, and of other scenes of blood and desolation, all more or less authentic. At a fair on Peckham Rye there was a cock-shy stand flanked with rude paintings of this description. We thought them all true—indeed they accorded with details published in the press—but pity for British women and children so treacherously and savagely slaughtered at Cawnpore rendered it difficult to generate sympathy for the rebels.

In 1898 I came to know in Guernsey the noted antiquary, Captain Francis Dubois Lukis, who, on his death in 1907, bequeathed his interesting museum to the Island States for the public weal. In 1857 he belonged to the old 64th Regiment and was one of the first to enter the fatal building at Cawnpore after the massacre. He gave me gruesome and heartrending details of what he saw, and showed me a few relics gathered on the spot—some blood-stained, half-finished knitting and a similarly besmudged page from a child's drawing-book.

CHAPTER XX

1857—A GOOD MAN GETS HIS CHANCE—LONDON'S ODOURS

Burning of s.s. *Sarah Sands*—Captain Castle—P.s. *Nyanza*—At Sunderland—Cleopatra's Needle—Atlantic cable, first attempt—Chinese and Persian Wars—General Tom Thumb—London, S.—Insanitary London—Foulness of Thames and Serpentine—Chloride of lime.

ONE of the most outstanding recollections of the Mutiny is the burning of the troop-ship *Sarah Sands* and the gallant conduct of all concerned—captain, officers, crew and troops. It was an affair my mother was especially enthusiastic about. The *Sarah Sands* was an iron merchant screw-steamer of about 2,000 tons register, usually trading between England and America, but chartered by the East India Company to carry troops to India in the Mutiny emergency. She left Portsmouth for Calcutta August 16th, 1857, commanded by Captain J. S. Castle, and carrying 306 rank and file of the 54th Regiment, 8 women and 7 children, besides a number of lady relatives of the officers.

On November 11th at 3 p.m. when 400 miles from Mauritius, during a heavy gale, fire was discovered in a store on the after orlop deck. The soldiers made gallant efforts to clear the magazine, and, although several were overcome by fumes, ultimately succeeded in getting out all but two barrels of powder. They also relieved the sailors by climbing aloft and extinguishing fires that continually caught the main rigging. The ladies, women and children were put into boats and three rafts were prepared.

All efforts to extinguish the fire were unavailing, but it was confined to the after part of the hull by the fortunate staunchness of a bulkhead which, continually kept wet on one side by volunteers, never got weak enough to yield to

the flames raging on the other. All abaft this bulkhead was destroyed, including the mizzen rigging, but the ship being kept nose to wind the fire swept sternwards. Had the vessel paid off all would have been involved. About 2 a.m. next day the fire began to diminish through want of material, and by daylight was got under control.

But the position was deplorable. The upper plates of the hull abaft were red hot and holed by the explosion of the gunpowder not removed; she was burnt out down to the propeller-shaft, and there were fifteen feet of water in the hold. Besides, the gale continued and the steamer rolled desperately, with water-tanks loose and dashing about in the hull. The men, already exhausted, were put to pumping and baling, and as soon as the plates were sufficiently cool two hawsers were got round the ship aft to keep the shell together. The boats were recalled, and by the 13th the chief leaks had been stopped and steerage way got on the vessel, which had drifted as far as 13° 12′ South. She passed between the pier-heads at Mauritius on November 21st under sail and at the rate of 1 knot an hour. There her arrival and miraculous escape caused great excitement.

Everybody, crew and soldiers, had behaved with devoted intrepidity, but the chief merit was unanimously accorded to Captain Castle, whose unfailing resource in every succeeding difficulty had been the admiration of all and whose example had encouraged both crew and passengers in circumstances that would have daunted all but the stoutest hearts. The behaviour of the troops equalled that of the historic heroes of the *Birkenhead* [1]; like them the 54th fell in at the bugle-call, and, like them, would have sunk in their ranks had no happier issue been possible. Captain Castle became a national hero for a time, and we were glad to know that the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company had offered him a command in their fleet of mail steamers—an unparalleled compliment to an outsider, the

[1] Paddle-wheel troop-ship *Birkenhead* ran on a rock off Danger Point, Algoa Bay, February 27th, 1852, and was totally wrecked with great loss of life.

master of a mere merchant steamer—I had almost written tramp, but the expression was not known in those days.

In May 1869, I went to India viâ Egypt and at Marseilles boarded the P. and O. steamer *Nyanza* of some 2,500 tons, one of the finest of the fleet and moreover the last paddle-wheel ship built for that company. In after-years she was converted to a screw and plied between Cape Town and Durban. No sooner were we at sea than I discovered that our commander was Captain Castle, of *Sarah Sands* fame. Never had I been so close to a hero before—and here was one of my own pet heroes —possessor of the hall-mark of my mother's especial approval! During the passage to Alexandria no opportunity occurred for conversation, and I was too junior and too bashful to presume to seek one. But I often saw him and noted that he was tall, upright, brisk and quite good-looking. Not a Romeo, perhaps, but for a hero—I saw others later in life—quite passable. It was pleasant to hear the good opinions of him that prevailed on board.

Some forty years later I was spending several days in Sunderland, at the Grand Hotel, and, coming in one evening towards bed-time, found the sole occupant of the coffee-room was a pleasant-looking elderly gentleman. We got into conversation, and it transpired that he was a retired master mariner and was acting as assessor in a Board of Trade wreck enquiry, then proceeding in the town. So naturally we talked of ships and wrecks. He told me of a salvage case he had once been interested in. Starting to salve a steamer wrecked in an inlet of Newfoundland, it was found that she was lying embedded right on the top of another previously sunk, straightly stem to stem and stern to stern.

I thought that pretty salt and deserving of a true story in return, so I told him how I had once been on a British India Navigation Company's steamer in the Persian Gulf when a fire started in the coal-bunkers and made some plates red-hot, although the captain, to avoid possible panic, swore by Davy Jones that the slight haze and thicker smell that hung about came from a hot bearing. He hadn't observed

that I was standing with my hands projecting over the rail, in which position they could feel the radiation from the hot plates below with quite convincing distinctness. We steamed into Bushire roads at sunset, just as one of Her Majesty's gunboats, the name of which I forget, lowered her flag and the marine sentry on the bridge fired off his rifle.

They got the fire under, and when going down the gangway next morning I noticed some of the iron plates discoloured and brown. I shouted to the captain, "That was a devil of a hot bearing of yours, captain, yesterday; it's eaten the paint quite off most of the ship's side!" My companion smiled at this, and I went on to say that the incident reminded me a little of the *Sarah Sands*, which he would no doubt recollect. He nodded.

Then I spoke of Captain Castle and his achievement, and how I had once sailed with that gallant seaman from Marseilles to Alexandria. "In what year was that?" I told him, mentioning also the name of the ship and other particulars. While I was speaking he had been fingering his watch-chain, and when I had done handed me a fine gold time-piece with the case open. I took it and read an inscription inside, in substance: "Presented to Captain Castle of the s.s. *Sarah Sands* by the officers and other passengers whose lives he preserved by his skill, courage and devotion," etc., etc. Whereupon we both stood up and without hesitation shook hands most cordially.

"Yes," he said, "we must have been fellow-voyagers, for it was the only trip I ever made on the *Nyanza*. My ship was the *Masillia*, but coming from Alexandria to Marseilles she broke her paddle-shaft in the Straits of Messina. I brought her in with one wheel, but as she was unable to make the return trip for which she was booked I was given the *Nyanza*, then preparing to start for Southampton for overhaul. On getting back to Marseilles I gave her up and was never aboard her afterwards."

I had noticed on my voyage to Alexandria a great pile of bricks on the forward deck, tarpaulined over, and, wondering at the apparent incongruity of sending bricks to the land

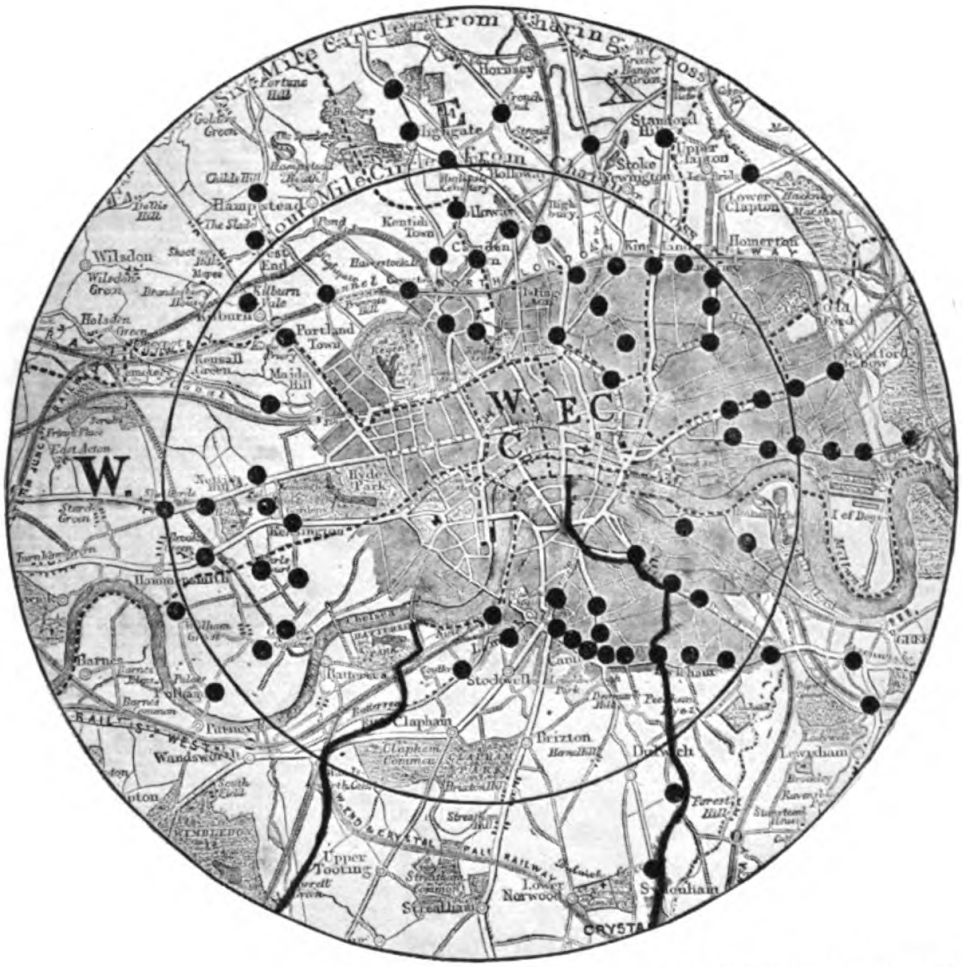
of the Pharaohs, had asked one of the officers, "Is there no straw in Egypt?" "Oh," he replied, "the company is building an extension to one of its sheds at Alexandria, and these are for it." So I thought I would test Captain Castle's memory by enquiring whether he recollected any unusual deck cargo on the *Nyanza*. But he could not, not even when I had explained.

We spliced the main-brace before retiring and parted next morning, he saying that if ever I came to Sidcup, where he lived, I was to be sure to look him up. But the chance did not come, and not many years afterwards I heard that he had at last struck to the grim enemy he had so gallantly defied and out-manœuvred in the Indian Ocean fifty-four years before.

The testimonial Captain Castle showed me was not the only one he received. The Admiralty declined to grant any reward for fear of setting a precedent, although the *Times* urged that the episode of the *Sarah Sands* "would form an epoch in the naval annals of any other nation." So some 450 influential persons banded themselves together and raised a very handsome testimonial, the particulars of which I do not remember, and this was presented in 1859.

Amongst the interesting things I found in the land of Egypt when the *Nyanza* made her port was Cleopatra's Needle lying prone on the sands at Alexandria. I walked along the granite shaft and heard how it had been presented to the British Government and by them left there to take pot luck. In after-years I came across it again, this time when moored in its special tubular ship, after its very adventurous voyage, off St. Thomas's Hospital, where it was awaiting completion of the preparations to erect it on the Thames Embankment.

In August 1857, the first attempt to lay an Atlantic telegraph was made, but the cable broke in two miles of water after 335 knots had been paid out. Two ships were engaged—H.M.S. *Agamemnon* and the U.S. screw corvette *Niagara*, and it was the latter which met with the disaster that compelled postponement of the work for a year. This *Niagara* has already been referred to as the largest ship



(*Illustrated London News.*)

MAP OF LONDON, 1857.

Showing the 78 principal toll-bars. In addition there were 100 side or auxiliary bars designed to prevent the chief ones being evaded.
Between the dark lines in the south was the Southern, or S. Postal District.

afloat while the *Great Eastern* was still on the stocks. Quite new, she was still without armament when she came to the Thames to ship cable, and was visited at Tilbury by many thousands of curious sight-seers. It was noted in the press that close by was lying the famous American yacht *America*, winner of the Cup so much and vainly yearned for by Sir Thomas Lipton in after-years, in a dreadful condition from dry-rot. She must have been successfully repaired, however, as I believe she was still afloat quite recently. At all events, there has been no dry-rot about her fame.

We had war with China in 1857-8, but it does not stand out in my memory. I do remember papa reading out the account of our attack on the Taku forts and the assertion of some of the storming party that they heard orders to the defenders given in Russian, the inference being that the Muscovites were bearing in mind what we had done for them in the Crimea and were endeavouring to get some of their own back. We felt very indignant, not considering such conduct in the least sportsmanlike. In one sense the Chinese War was lucky, as troops on their way to it were intercepted and diverted to India with very valuable results.

There was also the small war with Persia in 1856 and 1857, which was over just in time for the Indian Mutiny. It did not impress me forcibly then, but some thirteen years later I visited both Bushire and Mahommerah, near which the chief fighting had taken place, and then heard a great many yarns about it. The Persians, by their own reckoning, were very gallant warriors indeed, and it was lucky for the British that they left off when they did.

The tiny American dwarf known as General Tom Thumb made his first visit to England this year, and was much talked about. We became familiar with his history and pictures, but never actually saw him.

In 1857, it is interesting to recall, London had a South postal division, which comprised Lambeth, Walworth, Clapham, Brixton, Tooting, Croydon and Sutton. As late as 1904, when surveying for the southern approaches of my proposed new bridge and County Hall, I noticed that some

of the turnings out of Stamford Street—including Coin Street—had S. still in evidence after the names painted on the walls. Later the S. division was abolished and divided between South-East and South-Western districts.

The insanitary condition of London, the foulness of the Thames, Serpentine and other water-courses and the consequent danger of cholera engaged newspaper writers' attention a good deal this year, and the responsible authorities were urged on to reckless investment in the newly discovered disinfectant, chloride of lime. I remember great tubs of it being mixed and allowed to empty slowly into a black sewer-like stream that meandered, openly and unashamed, between the Old Kent Road and the Bricklayers' Arms Branch of the South-Eastern Railway; and I heard that Father Thames and his various tributaries were being treated in the same manner. In those days and for long afterwards mud-banks in the river exposed at low water swarmed with bright red worms, which lent quite a charming tint to the landscape, especially when the sun shone on them. The boys called them blood-worms, and it was no misnomer.

The state of the Serpentine and of the lake in St. James's Park, practically under the Queen's windows, was especially commented upon. Animalcules caught in them—to judge by published illustrations—assumed almost the bigness of crocodiles and certainly looked a great deal fiercer.

CHAPTER XXI

1858—THE PANTOMIME JOGS ON—INVADING THE OCEAN BED

Don Quixote—Astley's—St. James's Theatre—Prestidigitation—Dinner at Leicester Square—Orsini—Perim—Queen at Cherbourg—First Atlantic cable laid—Whales, American barque and Irish steamer—Disaster and disappointment—Jersey-Coutances cable.

DURING 1857 the Gates of Janus had persistently stood open and England had felt the thrills and sorrows of war in no common degree: yet when Christmas came it brought the usual crop of festivities and pantomimes. My younger brother and I were attracted by the press notices of one of these. It was *Don Quixote and his Steed Rosinante; or, Harlequin Sancho Panza*, at Astley's Amphitheatre. It so happened that we had just made the acquaintance of the Knight of the Woeful Countenance through a book with many pictures, one of which, and that which appealed to us most, represented the Don charging the windmills.

Now the critics alleged that the best scene in the pantomime was based on this very incident: so we put up a petition to be taken to the famous circus in the Westminster Bridge Road. One Saturday afternoon in January, 1858, we went, but, being somewhat late, failed to get in. Sympathising with our natural disappointment, papa hailed a cab and drove over Old Westminster Bridge (it was on this occasion that I noticed its mountainous appearance) to the St. James's Theatre, where we were just in time to see the beginning of a conjuring performance by a foreigner with a terrible name that in itself suggested conjuring to anybody trying to pronounce it, and who from his speech we judged, perhaps erroneously, to be French. He did many wonderful things quite new to us—producing globes

of goldfish from his coat-tail pockets, smashing with a hammer and afterwards restoring watches, and so on. In connection with the last-named trick and others he several times said, "Now I vill fetch my little ham-mar′," going behind a screen for the purpose. This phrase caught our fancy, and we mimicked it and its accent for months afterwards whenever a Frenchman came into our conversation.

After the performance we went, father, mother and two boys, to dinner on the first floor of a building at the corner of Leicester Square and Wardour Street, which has long since been rebuilt. This was also a new experience, as we were waited on for the first time by servitors in bob-tail coats and white ties who, I think, were English. The German waiter may have existed then, but the native article still preponderated.

The following Saturday, papa having taken the precaution to book seats, we got in to *Don Quixote* and saw the windmills duly charged. There were three mills, but, as it was evident that Astley's scene-painter had, by some mistake, not sketched the same machines as the illustrator of our book, and as they were, moreover, comparatively diminutive, we did not think much of the feat. We liked Sancho Panza better than the gloomy Don. The box we occupied on the right of the proscenium was apparently located over a stable, for the prevailing smell was not of rosemary.

The same month Orsini tried to blow up the Emperor Napoleon III, but only succeeded in killing his coachman and some spectators. One of the papers had an illustration of the bomb exploding under the carriage, which implied passably rapid sketching on the part of the artist. This was the first bomb outrage I knew anything about. But I got near several others in after-life, finishing up (at least I hope so) with a pretty thorough experience of the German raids over London, at most of which it was my fortune to "assist."

This year the British took possession of the island of Perim at the mouth of the Red Sea. The story went that

a French expedition with sealed orders to annex the island put into Aden, where the Governor, without any knowledge of the fact but at a loss to account for the Frenchman's presence in those waters, and suspicious—telepathy perhaps—invited the commandant to dinner while he despatched a boat to hoist the British flag. The next day the French sighted Perim all right and also the flag. "*Sacrés tonnerres!*" echoed amongst the rocks, but the ensign is there to this day. Good Governor!

This little incident did not prevent Napoleon from inviting the Queen and Prince Consort to Paris. They landed at Cherbourg in August and had a splendid reception. The Emperor was naturally gratified at such a recognition of his not too secure position, and in his enthusiasm kissed Her Majesty. Like his impudence! A chorus of indignation ran round England like a fiery cross. My mother, with whom the erstwhile prisoner of Ham was no great favourite, wondered how the Queen could have brought herself to permit it. I think the railway to Cherbourg must have been just opened—it had been built by Brassey and his English navvies—as part of the festive proceedings was a blessing of locomotives at the terminus there. The *Illustrated London News* had several pictures of such events. I remember two—blessing the engines at Strasbourg and again at Toulouse. These illustrations excited our unmeasured contempt, the locomotives depicted were so extremely unlike the real article. And the bishops—bless them!—knew so very little about oiling engines that they invariably applied the unguent or lubrication where it could not possibly be of any earthly use.

And August, too, saw the completion of a grand work—the Atlantic telegraph cable, a first attempt at which had been made the previous year. It was greatly talked about, especially as the expedition had been harassed by terrible weather. The cable had been manufactured entirely in England with capital that was mainly British, yet the wish expressed that America should participate in the laying was willingly acceded to. So two men-of-war, *Agamemnon* British, and *Niagara* American, were each to ship half;

steam to mid-Atlantic; splice the cable and pay out, one to the east, the other to the west.

The ships encountered a bad south-west gale on their passage to the starting-point. *Agamemnon* had a deck cargo of coal, which broke loose, and the cable in the tanks shifted with the rolling, so that the loss of the ship by capsizing at one time appeared imminent, and her escort, the paddle-wheel frigate *Valorous*, and *Niagara*, stood by to pick up the pieces. Fortunately she recovered, but the damage sustained was so serious that a return to port was necessary. A month later the expedition was restarted, and this time finished the work. Soon after paying out had commenced a huge whale was seen making, apparently, straight for the cable and, passing astern, just grazed the precious filament as it entered the water. And as *Agamemnon* was nearing Ireland an American barque failed to see the cable and steered dangerously close. *Valorous* fired a blank cartridge, and then, as she took no notice, a shot across her bows. Whereupon the barque hove to but evidently without understanding affairs, and so remained until out of sight.

I can quite comprehend the Yankee skipper's failure to notice the cable. To begin with, such a thing as cable-laying was new to the Atlantic and the ships probably did not carry the signals familiar to-day; and, secondly, when the offing is otherwise clear an obstacle of the kind is apt to be overlooked. I was a passenger from New York in the Cunarder *Aurania* in 1898 when she broke her crank-shaft and was towed into Queenstown by the Elder Dempster steamer *Marino*. Entering the harbour, the *Aurania* was deflected by a current and for a time the two ships were wide apart with the massive chain tow cable across the fairway between them. A City of Cork Company's steamer proceeding to sea failed to notice the obstruction, which was many times bigger than the 1858 Atlantic cable, and ran into it full speed, practically at right angles. The hawser broke, its linked ends flying high in the air, and the Corker was brought up standing for an appreciable time. There was nobody on deck: for the obstacle had been noticed a few seconds

before striking and every man Pat, captain included—he was indeed a skipper on that occasion—had run below, justly fearing that the cable might slip up the stem and sweep the deck. So I can appreciate the Yankee's surprise at being popped at on that August morning.

The cable was laid and Queen and President exchanged congratulations, and many other messages—altogether 732—were passed, including the news of peace with China and the end of the Indian Mutiny; but whether there had been a defect in manufacture—it was a tremendous undertaking for that date, the first submarine telegraph cable, Dover and Calais, being then only seven years old—or the cable had been damaged in the storm, a fault in the insulation soon appeared, got steadily worse and put a stop to communication after a few weeks' use. Eight more years were to elapse before the *Great Eastern* successfully accomplished the telegraphic linking of the two hemispheres. A more advanced knowledge on the part of the electricians in charge would probably have extended the life of the 1858 cable—it is said that it received its final quietus from the injudicious application of the very excessive pressure of 2,000 volts in an attempt to quicken the signalling, whereas with the Thomson mirror galvanometer, which was available, something like 2 volts would have been nearer the mark—but that had to come with experience. The best that can be written is that the attempt was a glorious failure.

The general quality was excellent; a length, recovered from the Atlantic, was laid between Jersey and Coutances in the early '60s and is still (1924) in use. The fiasco led to much experiment and study, and the next attempt, in 1865, was made under the direction of a group of British engineers and electricians who have never been rivalled for genius, skill and courage. How little did I foresee, when hearing about this unique expedition and studying the published pictures, that my own life was destined to be linked up with electric cables!

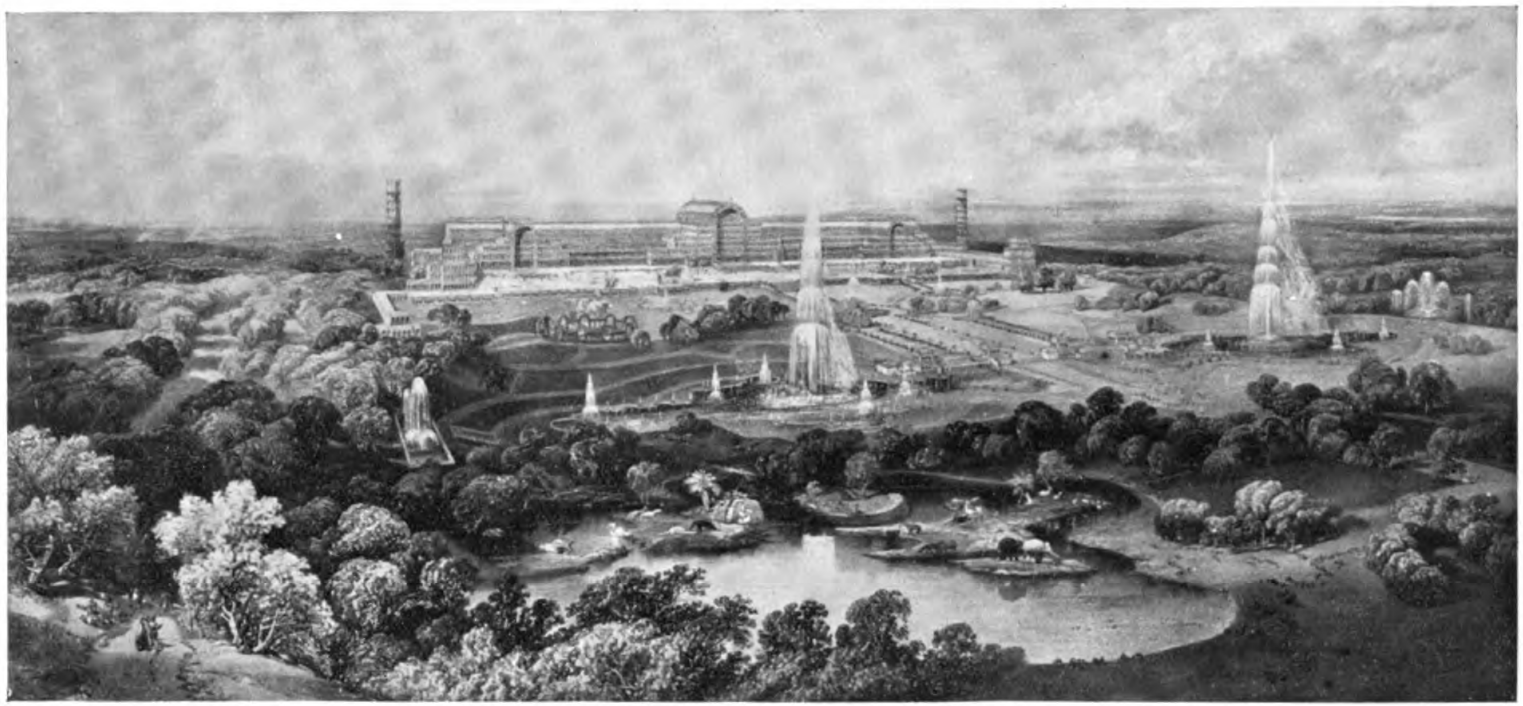
CHAPTER XXII

1858-9—CRYSTAL PALACE—SPAIN POISES THE JAVELIN

Crystal Palace—History—Sir Joseph Paxton—Fountains—Balloons—Antediluvians—Railways to—When the Crystal Palace owned a railway—Crystal Palace Station—Divers attractions—Court of Lions—Protest from the Moorish Ambassador—Refreshments—Photographs—Flying machines—Later visits—Dangerous bridge—Colonel Burnaby—Shadow Show—Perfect Cure—Green's Balloon—Pepper's Ghost—Handel Festival—Concerts—Express trains to Palace—Declaration of war by Spain—Bad business—*Royal Charter.*

THE remaining incident I have to chronicle in 1858 constituted a land-mark in my personal history—my first visit to the Crystal Palace; often longed for, come at last! The Crystal Palace formed a great feature of metropolitan life in the late 1850s and '60s. It was the Exhibition building of 1851 re-erected, with additions of transepts and water-towers on a beautiful elevated site at Sydenham, where its glistening expanse could be discerned counties away. I have seen it shining, even in winter, from Wormwood Scrubs, in spite of intervening miles of roofs and smoking chimneys. Alas! during the air raids it served as a beacon to the Huns—it, old Father Thames and Lady Moon, all three turned traitors and coalesced to direct their evil flight. It would have formed one of the safest shelters, for great care was taken not to injure such a guiding mark.

A magnified and glorified green-house essentially, the idea of Sir Joseph Paxton, it had been adopted for the Great Exhibition with some misgiving, but in practice had proved so successful and commanded such admiration that its destruction seemed a sort of sacrilege, and public opinion rejoiced when a limited company acquired the material with the intention of re-endowing it with life and splendour.



THE CRYSTAL PALACE AND PARK, 1854.
From a picture signed by Sir Joseph Paxton, the architect and designer.

I am fortunate in possessing a large picture, signed by Sir Joseph Paxton, showing the Palace as it appeared when first put up at Sydenham. It would seem that the tops of the water-towers—which are likewise chimneys—were then finished off flush, so the sloping caps with which we are familiar must have been the fruits of after-thought. It was from the northernmost of these towers that a poor fellow intent on suicide jumped in February, 1868.

Only a year or two ago I read that the famous greenhouse, an acre in extent, at Chatsworth, designed and built by Sir Joseph Paxton for the Duke of Devonshire of his time, had been blown up as too expensive to maintain. I have an idea that the Great Exhibition design originated from this vast greenhouse. Blown up when the growers under glass in Guernsey and elsewhere were busy making fortunes and unable to secure sufficient carriage to transport their products to the English markets!

The Sydenham Palace was inaugurated with great ceremony by Queen Victoria on June 10th, 1854. Chaucer, in his *House of Fame*, written nearly five hundred years before this event, speaks of "The Queen in her Crystal Palace." Well, Londoners saw her there on this occasion. Paxton's great structure remained a leading popular attraction for many years, pleasant to everybody but the poor shareholders who truly found that "all is not gold that glitters," for they secured but few and inadequate dividends from their shining investment.

One of the great glories at Versailles of the *Grand Monarque* was revived and surpassed in the beautiful grounds, for there were installed the greatest fountains ever seen. Fountains have quite gone as popular attractions in 1924, but in the '50s the taste for multiplied watersquirts, the bigger the better, survived, and with fireworks—also pretty moribund in these later days—charmed the public fancy and were worth catering for. There were also several beautiful fountains inside the Palace, and advertisements that the grand fountains would play on a special day would be sure to attract crowds. Sometimes the *jets d'eau* and their auxiliary cascades would be started during fireworks

and coloured lights turned on them, yielding a magnificent, fairy-like spectacle, although not so varied and gorgeous as Colonel Bolton produced in the late '80s by locating his tinted lights under and within tumbling waters.

Balloons were often sent up from the grounds, and the names of Glaisher, Green and Coxwell became famous in connection with such ascents. In the '60s Nadar's great balloon, *Le Géant*, with which he had ascended from Paris with some six or eight passengers in a regular cabin, was on show after that exploit.

There was a lake in the grounds, and on peninsulas jutting into it were placed reproductions in stone of antediluvian animals and extinct monsters, which are still there, although once more well on the road to extinction, for, splendid and impressive in 1854, they are shabby and more prehistoric than ever in 1924.

Then there were terraces and grand flights of steps up or down which the Queen of Sheba, with her peacocks and apes and all, might have approached Solomon in his glory without the slightest loss of dignity.

In the '50s there was only one railway to the Palace, a branch from the L.B. and S.C. line from London Bridge, which took off near Sydenham Station and accomplished a pretty smart climb up to its destination. The local down-trains, on leaving the main line, ascended an embankment and passed over the trunk metals by a bridge, thus avoiding the danger incidental to the usual crossings on the level: it was one of the first examples of this expensive but eminently safe method. At first passengers from the main line had to get out at Penge or Anerley and tramp up the hill, there being no facilities for changing trains at Sydenham. To remedy this the Crystal Palace Company bought an engine and some carriages from the Brighton Company and with them themselves worked a passenger service between Norwood Junction and the Palace over a branch which had been made for the conveyance of material during construction. The engine was one of the small Sharp Roberts type; the Crystal Palace Company painted it bright blue. They only employed one driver and fireman, and when, on one

occasion, the former had to go to Lewes to give evidence at an inquest, they had to borrow a man from the Brighton staff. Ultimately the Brighton Company took over the line, which has for many years past formed part of the important link by which the London and North-Western Railway service to Croydon is conducted.

The Crystal Palace Station, at first a terminus, was of substantial character, with wide stone platforms and staircases, all on a scale commensurate with the crowds which were expected and duly came. At the beginning the station was entirely covered by a fine glass roof, but this was removed many years since. The platforms were at a considerable distance from the Palace proper, but, being joined to it by long glass corridors embellished with flowers and climbing plants and affording views of the beautiful grounds, the hiatus was not much felt; indeed, it served to heighten expectation by avoiding a too rapid transition between the prosaic puffer and fairyland.

It was from London Bridge Station that I made my first trip to Sydenham. The Crystal Palace trains then invariably used the platform on the extreme left, still there, for the 1858 station, apart from a new, greatly improved roof, with increases in the lengths and height of the platforms, together with a big expansion of the gathering space for passengers, has altered little. There was a separate booking-office for the Crystal Palace situated in the centre of the corresponding left-hand entrance hall, the wooden carcass or box of which is still *in situ*, although no longer employed for booking. There were exactly similar boxes in the other approach halls for Croydon and main-line tickets; but these disappeared many years ago.

To us boys the Palace seemed indeed little short of Fairyland. The figures of various outlandish tribes brandishing spears in their native jungles, then new and bright, were startlingly realistic, but at the same time educative; the marble-rimmed ponds, with their water-lilies and gold-fish that followed one round for crumbs; the high-perched organ, with its mountainous amphitheatre; the statuary, past some of which we were conducted rather hastily (there

was a group called *The Three Graces*, which I once heard a young lady refer to as *The Three Disgraces*); there was a *Venus*, mute and unashamed but yet eloquent; a replica of the Court of Lions at the Alhambra—my elder brother had told us some of Washington Irving's Tales; the warm atmosphere, the murmur of distant music sounding weirdly and soothingly under the vast roof; the ripple of the fountains, commingling with the perfumes of flowers,—all these united to produce a feeling of pleasure not unqualified by awe.

The Court of Lions reproduction was so realistic that, some years later, a Mahomedan pundit visiting London, wrote to the *Times* protesting against the name of God, inscribed in Arabic on one of the flooring tiles, being trodden underfoot daily by hordes of unbelieving Christians. And I think the Moorish Ambassador—we haven't seen *him* lately—made representations to the same effect. It was sought to excuse the fact by alleging that the Moors who built the Alhambra were not so strict in such matters as their latter-day successors; but more probably the tile was not one of the originals but had been innocently used by the Spaniards to replace a broken or worn piece—and so copied without its import being realised.

And then, the refreshments! It was here that I tasted my first ice-cream, and a jolly big one it was. They used to put the creams in glasses in vertical strips of pink and white, and we wondered how this could be managed without mixing the colours. Round-bottomed soda-water bottles were likewise novelties in our eyes, and again we marvelled why they were made so that they wouldn't stand up.

The refreshment contractor was a Mr. Strange, and strange some of his arrangements were. One had to decide how much one was going to spend for lunch, tea, or dinner, pay the amount at a window, obtain checks for the value and hand these to the waiter, who rationed accordingly in meal or malt—usually beef, mutton, chicken and ham, and bottled beer. Drinks meant checks of another colour. But checks were necessary—the reddest gold tendered direct would not procure sustenance sufficient for a lady-

bird. It was no use fancying pickles after sitting down to one's cold meat unless prepared to travel to the window for the necessary voucher. How tips were managed did not come within my purview, but I feel pretty certain that they were—somehow. If Strange did not make a fortune it was neither for want of customers nor customs.

There was a photographic artist who made you stare unblinkingly (if you could) for some two minutes while Father Sol was busy transferring your image to the slow wet plate. Then you took away your portrait on glass—printing on paper not having yet been evolved—framed according to fancy and financial resources, and generally smelling heavily of collodion. Some of the work was quite good, however, and I still cherish a picture taken in this studio on that very visit of my dear mother arrayed in bonnet and mantle and crinoline.

Then there was a French magician who sold mystery toys and conjuring tricks. One of his productions was quite interesting in view of modern aeroplane developments. He launched a light disc from a handle, giving it a high rotative velocity by drawing out a wound-up string, and the thing flew round about the stall and neighbourhood for quite a distance. With a purchased specimen we succeeded in effecting flights at home; but, as the machine developed an uncanny instinct in finding out articles specially liable to breakage and in clearing the mantlepiece of vases and odds and ends it was soon confiscated.

I went often to the Palace during the following years, and noted changes and additions. In the '60s there was in the Central Transept a model under glass of Gulliver asleep being tied down by the Lilliputians which we never failed to visit. And after the Danish War of 1864 a good model of Duppel, the fortress which the Danes defended so stubbornly against the Germans, was exhibited in the same Transept and remained many years on view. That also was interesting, for I sympathised with the Danes very much.

One of my most enjoyable visits was in January 1861, while the seasonable festivities were in full swing. We went from New Cross Station over a snow-besprinkled railway.

Then and for a long time afterwards the next bridge south from New Cross was a dangerous one, several passengers, it was reported, having been killed through knocking their heads, incautiously protruded from the carriages, against its brick piers. The bridge was of two arches, one wide, spanning three of the four tracks in the rather deep cutting, and the other narrow, accommodating only the down slow metals. This latter arch gave no proper clearance between the carriages and its piers, and anybody happening to look out even a few inches was liable to be trapped.

The Company put bars across the windows of the first- and second-class coaches; but, as many of the third-class were windowless trucks with roofs supported on stanchions, the remedy was only partial and ultimately the bridge had to come down. How any engineer could have had the conscience to design such an arch or any licensing authority the temerity or carelessness to pass it when erected, defied comprehension. We were on that down slow track that morning and held our breaths until the dangerous piers had almost scraped past. The Folkestone entrance to the Shakespeare Cliff tunnel on the South-Eastern Railway used to be similarly closely cut.

The engine drawing our train was No. 131, which some three years later went off the road and blew up near Streatham while travelling at sixty miles an hour with a troop-train carrying Grenadier Guards commanded by the subsequently celebrated Colonel Burnaby, the hero of Khiva, who, escaping scatheless from the slaughter at Streatham and many another peril, was many years afterwards killed by an Arab lance at the battle of Abu Klea. However, No. 131 was on her good behaviour that Christmas time, and got us to the Crystal Palace safely. No one could have anticipated, that happy day, that in a few years' time she would do what the French and Russians had never accomplished—burst up one of Her Majesty's crack regiments of Guards.

The delectations provided included a shadow show in which the action of an acrobatic sort of pantomime could be followed by the figures of the actors being cast on a big sheet by powerful lights behind. It might appropriately

have been called a phantom-mine, and was quite good fun. Then there was Mr. Stead, who sang and danced *The Perfect Cure.* And he was all that. He sprang a couple of feet in the air at every bar, and never paused for some ten minutes. The words were the merest drivel, the attraction consisting solely in the eccentric appearance of the singer, his antics, agility, and endurance. There was a splendid Christmas tree and a jolly old Father Christmas who, to the tune of *Jenny Jones,* dismissed us with "I wish all here present a happy New Year!" Mr. Green's great balloon, *Le Continent,* hero of dozens of ascents, stood inflated in the north nave, and in the grounds there was plenty of ice for skating and sliding, some fourteen degrees of frost having been registered the previous night.

On a subsequent visit I witnessed a good performance of *Pepper's Ghost,* and eerie it was; and of course did not miss the famous Handel Festival in which massed choirs from all parts of the kingdom aggregating, it was said, to 10,000 voices, annually attracted vast crowds. A member of one of these choirs once told me that there was a deal of humbug about it all. Some of the choirs were too imperfectly trained to be trusted, and stood mute the whole time, the noise made by the others and the organ sufficing to cover up the gaps cunningly distributed. A German, Augustus Manns, was Musical Director for many years and had hosts of admirers. Afternoon concerts, for which the most talented artistes were engaged, formed a long-standing feature of the Palace entertainments. These were so well patronised that the Brighton Railway in the '60s ran an express train from Addison Road, Kensington, straight to the Palace for the accommodation of West-End enthusiasts. Fancy an express train to the Crystal Palace nowadays!

The 24th of October, 1859, I shall never forget. Going to school that morning I noticed on a *Morning Herald* contents placard, "Declaration of War by Spain," in big letters. I had not heard anything about a quarrel with Spain, and wondered whether she had at last made up her mind to avenge the Armada, our English Salamis, and to take Tilbury Fort, which I hoped Queen Victoria would find in

proper defensible condition should she review troops there even as her great forerunner Elizabeth had done. Little did I dream that that brief and obscure announcement contained any special signification for myself. But it did.

In the evening papa informed us that Spain had declared war against Morocco in consequence of repeated outrages by the Riff and other tribes and that he was anxious about the event. For, let it be known, at that time his chief business was with Mogador and other Moorish ports. The Spanish Generalissimo (a word I became acquainted with for the first time), Marshal Prim, beat the Moors after some smart fighting, with the consequence, amongst others, that many Moorish merchants declared themselves ruined and unable to pay for goods already delivered. Which might, or might not, have been the case. Amongst them were several with whom my father had done business for years and trusted implicitly, and his loss was serious. I have never thought much of Othello since, and should any enlightened student start out to prove him an undischarged bankrupt from Mogador skulking in the Venetian army, such an investigator would command my respectful and sympathetic attention.

Two days afterwards occurred the dreadful wreck of the *Royal Charter*, a fully rigged auxiliary screw steamship of 2,700 tons and 200 horse-power. Two months out from Melbourne for Liverpool with 498 passengers and half a million of gold on board, she was driven on the rocks of north-east Anglesey in a very violent gale while lying-to for a pilot. She dragged all anchors and got knocked to pieces, only thirty-nine souls being saved in spite of most gallant attempts at rescue. I well remember the sensation this sad event occasioned and the pictures which professed to represent it. Truly the name *Royal Charter* became even as a household one throughout the land. She had been built in 1856, and when new once ran under sail and steam 352 knots in twenty-four hours. Not all the gold in her treasure room was salved, and fully half a century afterwards sovereigns were still being found about the site of her destruction.

CHAPTER XXIII

1860—GLADIATORS, HA'PENCE, MURDERS, WRECKS, AND TRAMS

Sayers and Heenan—One arm *versus* No eyes—National enthusiasm—Heenan in railway accident—Marries a poetess—Heenan's backers presented at Court—New bronze coinage—Old coppers—Victoria Station—Approach through glass tunnel—Constance Kent—Repercussion of Grace Darling—First street tramways—George Francis Train—Eccentric telegram.

ON April 17th, 1860, occurred an event which stirred England to its depths—the Sayers-Heenan fight. What a sensation it caused! Tom Sayers, Champion of England, conqueror of Tom Paddock and Bob Brettle, and a prime public favourite, aged thirty-eight, five feet eight inches, bricklayer by trade, had been challenged by Jack Heenan, surnamed the Benecia Boy, from California, aged twenty-two, 6 feet 2 inches, Irish-American, and the best bruiser in the United States. Sayers had become champion without an actual contest. His intended opponent, the famous Ben Caunt, kept a tavern in St. Martin's Lane, of which the Middlesex magistrates threatened to cancel the licence if he fought: so, rather than lose his counter and beer-pumps, he forfeited his stakes.

The meeting took place at Farnborough, on the borders of Surrey and Hampshire, whither fared by a special train from London Bridge at 4 a.m. some ten hundred admirers of the sport, including many persons well known in society—lords, lawyers, soldiers, sailors, poets, painters, authors, artists—even, it was whispered, churchmen.

Sayers had the sun in his face, but drew first blood and punished his gigantic and, it must be owned, gallant opponent severely. But in the seventh round Sayers got his right arm injured in stopping a vicious punch and for the rest of the

encounter was unable to use it; nevertheless, the plucky little Englishman, with one arm out of action, stood up to the giant Irish-American round after round, until the Benecia Boy's eyes were of little more use than a newly born kitten's. It was reported that he hit one of his own seconds in mistake for Sayers.

How the fight would have ended had the police not interfered cannot, of course, be certainly known; but that Tom Sayers had proved himself staunch amongst the staunchest could not be denied and there was national (and natural) jubilation accordingly.

My father was no great admirer of the prize-ring, but he brought the news home with radiant face and enlarged on the doughty Tom's performance for days. Oh, that national spirit, that pride in one's country, was good! Why have we not got it still? Clergymen, and even bishops, so it was said, contributed to the subscriptions raised for the champion. The Stock Exchange gave him a grand reception, and underwrote £3,000 with which an annuity for the champion was purchased.

Sayers attended the stakeholder's office on the 18th when his arm was still useless. The Benecia Boy was too ill to appear. One of the Englishman's backers was a Mr. Bennett, but not of our circle.

Poor Tom Sayers derived but brief and doubtful benefit from all this glory. The "*Ultimus Romanorum* of the prize-ring," was carried to his last resting-place in Kensal Green some five and a half years later.

And hard fortunes attended Heenan too. He was badly hurt in the collision on the London and South-Western Railway at Egham on June 7th, 1864, between trains coming home from Ascot races. He, however, retained sufficient vitality to marry, later on, Miss Adah Isaacs Menken, the famous *Mazeppa* of Astley's Circus and of some renown as a poetess. If Tom Sayers did close the Benecia Boy's eyes it may pretty safely be conjectured that she helped to open them again.

A curious and almost inconceivable echo of the Sayers-Heenan fight occurred at the Queen's Levee of April 24th,

when the American Minister presented to Her Majesty two of Heenan's backers, American journalists, one of whom had acted as correspondent to the New York papers on the great occasion. The Lord Chamberlain's wits were surely fooling around somewhere at a distance that day. The London papers naturally wanted to know when the Englishman's seconds were going to St. James's. Fancy the British Minister at Washington presenting Tom Sayers at the White House!

The year 1860 was notable in the history of British coinage, for then the bronze "coppers" with which we are familiar were first issued. One evening my father brought home several sets of brilliant pennies, halfpennies, and farthings, drawn that day from the Bank, which appeared absolutely beautiful in comparison with the dingy, greasy, half-obliterated coins to which we were habituated, and announced that such were to form the circulating medium for sweets, etc., as soon as the old and mouldy—the street boys' adjective was no misnomer when applied to the ancient coinage—counters could be got in. To encourage the public to exchange their old coins for new, a premium of 2 per cent. was allowed.

My elder brother started collecting examples of the more interesting coppers then in use, and succeeded in preserving a good many specimens, which are in my possession to-day. As they have never been cleaned they are just as withdrawn from circulation, with the dirt of 1860 thick upon them. There is a twopenny piece of George III dated 1797, a very fine coin weighing exactly 2 ounces; a penny of the same date weighing 1 ounce; a milled penny of 1807 weighing ¾ ounce; a milled halfpenny of 1799 weighing exactly ½ ounce (such was our ancestors' idea of small change); other halfpennies going back to George I, and seven farthings of George III, II, and I, William and Mary, James II and Charles II. None of Queen Anne.

The coins, worn and dirty, comprised fine specimens of numismatic art; their age and diversity constituted an ever-present reminder of the mutability of human kind—a trousers-pocket edition of English history. An Irish halfpenny of 1723 with George II's head; and a coin, dated

1783, that looked like a halfpenny, bearing Washington's head on one side and Britannia on the other, the latter a copy of the British coin except that the trident was replaced by a cap of liberty, were amongst them. The worn state of most of the "coppers" favoured the circulation of anything resembling them, for nobody took the trouble to scrutinise closely: so such intruders were not uncommon.

The new bronze coins bore a ship and lighthouse in the background to sustain fitly Britannia's rôle as Mrs. Neptune and lend support to her trident, just as the old coppers had done, and these emblems, so appropriate to a maritime nation, "whose home is on the deep," were continued for many years until some official possessed, one must think, of a very low co-efficient of understanding—I am sorry to be rude to a civil servant—removed them without consultation with anybody or anything but his own poor wit.

Victoria Station, Pimlico, covering eleven acres and costing £675,000, was opened this year by the London, Brighton and South Coast and London, Chatham and Dover Railways. Great opposition had been offered to the Bill in Parliament by neighbouring property owners, who feared the effects of smoke and noise, and the promoters had been put under the obligation to roof the railway in with iron and glass practically all the way from the Thames at Grosvenor Road Bridge. The trains therefore appeared to be travelling through a glass tunnel for half a mile or so before reaching the station. As engines drawing outward trains had to work hard to get up the steep 1 in 70 incline to the bridge, passengers had the wisdom of their elected legislators rather noisily brought to their notice in that confined space. The superstructure was removed some twenty years ago, but vestiges can still be detected by old stagers, for instance, the Hole-in-the-Wall signal-box which was originally really built in a recess in the wall supporting the glass roof. One effect of Victoria Station has been to almost abolish the word Pimlico, once so familiar, as the name of a London district. The station was the property of a separate Company and only last year (1923) was sold to the new Southern railway in pursuance of the grouping scheme.



COPPER COINS WITHDRAWN FROM CIRCULATION IN 1860.

Actual size.

Left.	*Right.*
Two-penny piece, 1797, weight 2 oz.	Penny (worn), 1797, weight 1 oz.
Milled halfpenny, 1799.	Halfpenny, George II, 1745.
Milled penny, 1807.	Farthing, George II, 1734.

Three modern bronze pennies = 1 oz.

In 1860, too, occurred one of those crimes which excite "our especial wonder"—the Constance Kent murder. A widower of Road, Somerset, with several children, married again and had an infant son born to him. His eldest daughter, Constance, about fifteen years of age, resented her father's remarriage and repelled the new wife's attempts to establish friendly relations. One morning the infant was found cruelly murdered in a garden lavatory. The affair attracted great attention, the more so as the local police, aided by Scotland Yard detectives, failed to find the murderer in spite of very persistent efforts. Their suspicions fell on a nursemaid; but, do all they could, no evidence sufficient to justify a conviction was procurable.

This was still the position in 1863 when the investigation was given up as hopeless. But in 1865, by which time the affair had got well on the road to oblivion, a tremendous sensation was awakened by the news that Constance Kent had confessed to her brother's murder. It was true. Remorse had driven her to confide in a Brighton clergyman (so it was said) who advised her to make the only reparation in her power and confess publicly.

It seems that resentment and jealousy had moved her to rise from bed after midnight when all was quiet, take the sleeping boy from his cradle, get out of the nursery window, kill him with her father's razor, and hide the body in the drain. She afterwards washed out two spots of blood from her nightdress and returned to bed, but later she burned the dress and restored the razor to its place. That was the pretty story pretty Constance had to tell. She was disposed to be erratic, for when thirteen years old she had cut her hair short and run away dressed in a brother's clothes. Sentence of death followed in due course, but public opinion was not prepared to allow it to be carried out: penal servitude for life was substituted, and she was transferred to Fremantle, West Australia. I remember reading of her release after serving some twenty years.

It is interesting to recall that one detective, cleverer than the rest, Inspector Whicher of Scotland Yard, had been astute enough to deduce the identity of the culprit at a very

early stage. He discovered the absence of the burnt night-dress, and, dissatisfied with the explanations tendered, wished to arrest Miss Constance; but his superiors had made up their minds about the nursemaid and disallowed any such action.

Mother found this crime peculiarly shocking, and had to admit that, however naughty her boys were, and they were certainly often sufficiently trying, none of them quite came up to the Constance Kent standard. *Place aux dames!*

Some years before—in 1857—had occurred the, if possible, still more famous case of Madeleine Smith, another pretty girl of nineteen, who was accused of poisoning her sweetheart with whom she had fallen out of love. But that happened in Scotland, and I knew nothing about it until 1881.

When I was a boy Grace Darling was still a national heroine. Everybody knew how, in 1838, she had put off in a small boat from Longstone Lighthouse, Northumberland, with her uncle, the keeper, and in spite of a raging sea rescued the survivors from the steamer *Forfarshire* wrecked on one of the Farne Islands, and everybody could tell how, after being lionised and even petted by duchesses, she had died of consumption while still quite a girl.

In October, 1860, the memories of some twenty years before were revived in a singular manner. A steamer called the *Trio* went ashore only a few yards from the spot which had proved fatal to the *Forfarshire*. The crew got on to a rock with difficulty, the wind and sea being terrific. Fortunately, James Darling the co-hero of 1838, who was still keeper of Longstone and now seventy-five years of age, perceived their perilous position, put off in a boat, this time single-handed, and rescued them. The old man found himself famous once again, and I believe was given something more substantial than a laurel crown. The credit of originating regular life-boats rests with England; although dating from 1789, they were both new and few before Grace Darling's time. Forth of Britain there was none at all.

It was in August, 1860, that the first street horse-car tramway in England was inaugurated at Birkenhead and

shortly afterwards followed by one along the Bayswater Road from near the Marble Arch almost to Notting Hill, and other short sections in Westminster and the Kennington Road. Such lines had been working successfully in the United States for years, and Mr. George Francis Train of Boston undertook to introduce the facility to England and the Continent of Europe. He obtained leave to construct these routes experimentally, although the suitability of tramways for English cities was much debated and the Board of Trade had its doubts. The track used was that common in the United States, consisting of a "step" rail which could only be crossed at right angles by ordinary vehicles at the expense of rough jolting and diagonally scarcely at all. In America, where roads were very hummocky at best, this counted for little, but in England it was otherwise, and, although the cars were largely patronised, owners of road carriages objected strenuously. Friction was constant, and when the daring projector wanted to double the line and extend it through Notting Hill High Street, there was a regular rebellion of tradesmen and others, and Train was ordered to take up his trams and begone by October 4th, 1861. A similar result was avoided at Birkenhead by promptly substituting flat grooved rails for the step ones.

So the enterprising Train got badly shunted, in Yankee parlance side-tracked, to the great damage of his banking account. Naturally he felt angry with the unprogressive Briton, and conceived an animus against England which nothing could assuage. It was unhappily accentuated by an accusation brought against him by a woman, which was only dismissed after a long police court investigation. Returning to America, he spoke often and bitterly against John Bull, so that when, in January, 1868, he honoured us with a second visit, he was arrested at Queenstown in the belief that he probably intended to translate some of his vehement speeches into practice. He acquired another grievance by being taken second-class on the railway and being told, when he offered to pay the difference for himself and captors, that such a course ill became an ardent republican. Eventu-

ally he was released on the American Minister vouching for his harmlessness.

I had not been oblivious to this tramway controversy—in fact, as a very small boy, knowing nothing of American achievements, I had dreamed dreams of street railways to take the place of the knife-board omnibuses, and had even pictured a favourite locomotive, No. 46 of the Brighton Railway, puffing along the Old Kent Road in front of a long string of carriages, whistling every now and then to get costermongers and their donkeys out of the way—and I regretted the failure and pitied G. F. Train. Later on, however, his animosity against Great Britain roused my ire—and amusement as well.

In 1870, when the Franco-German War broke out, I was in Mesopotamia, at a place where telegrams between Europe and India by the Turkish route were retransmitted. One day, I was shown a message which had just passed. It was from Colombo, and addressed to the Emperor Napoleon, Tuileries, Paris. It said in English, "Drop Germany and fight England.—George Francis Train." The eccentric American, who had formerly interviewed Napoleon-le-Petit about tramways, travelling in Ceylon, heard of the impending war and had promptly availed himself of the British cables and telegraphs to vent his spite on the contemners of step-rail tramways. However, Louis did not take the sage advice—and Sedan and the capture of Paris were the awful consequences. Poor G. F. T. got more and more eccentric as the years went on, and in his old age became a greater butt for his own countrymen than he had ever been for Britons.

It is worthy of note that Paris had a horse tramway as early as 1853. It extended from the Place de la Concorde to Passy, 2½ miles, and was superior to those introduced by Train inasmuch as the rails were grooved and presented no obstacle to ordinary wheeled traffic.

CHAPTER XXIV

1860—LONGITUDE 0° 0′ 0″

Family removal—Greenwich in 1860—River path to Woolwich—Derelict steamers—Angerstein's Wharf—A good *Fairy*—Yarn of a rope—Marooned off Blackwall—Churchwardens.

NOVEMBER, 1860, witnessed a great family transformation scene—we removed to Greenwich, and thenceforth I did what falls to the lot of very few boys: dwelt in W., and went to school in E., longitude, crossing the meridian every day and sometimes several times a day. That wore out shoe-leather, I suppose, but probably did not perceptibly affect the meridian.

The change of scene was great and the surroundings vastly more interesting, historically and otherwise, than those we had left. The beautiful and famous Park, with its docile deer; the renowned Observatory, with its time-staff and ball, its twenty-four-hour clock, and its standard measures; the Hospital, with its quaintly dressed inmates —stiff square-cut blue coat with great cuffs, long waistcoat, white cravat, three-cornered hat; its Painted Hall, with stately battle pictures and relics of Nelson; the Naval School, with its full-rigged ship firmly fixed on dry land, like Noah's ark on Ararat; the noble river, with its never-ending stream of ships as well as of water; the old heart-of-oak *Dreadnought,* moored in the tideway and used as a seamen's hospital; Blackheath, with its past legends of Wat Tyler, of highwaymen, and now with its modern attractions of donkey-rides and cocoa-nut shies; the celebrated hostelries, *Ship* and *Trafalgar*; the Parish Church, with its memories of Wolfe, the conqueror of Canada; the wooden houses, narrow streets, steamer pier, railway viaduct and station, alms-houses, toll-bridges over Deptford Creek, and

general flavour of a bygone age, and that age one not too particular about smells and cleanliness. Such was the Greenwich of 1860. Even the very partial understanding of its characteristics, their origins and meanings, at which I was able (with guidance) to arrive helped me not a little in learning the practical lessons of life.

The town was already decayed in those days. Its industries were few, and did not compensate for its vanished maritime importance. There were streets of good houses leading up to and fringing the Park and Blackheath, for the supply of which many shops were necessary; but the chief life of the real Greenwichers gyrated round the river, the Hospital, and the big Government establishments at Deptford.

The path along the river to Charlton and Woolwich, now an almost continuous throng of Works of various kinds and under which the Blackwall Tunnel passes, was then a desolate embankment overgrown with wild vegetation of a luxuriance I have never since seen equalled in this country. A rhubarb-like plant, whose leaves attained enormous size, abounded, and there were other huge and coarse weeds. Here and there, separated by great distances, would be found a chemical works, a foundry, or a rope-walk. Some way east of Greenwich was the celebrated Cable Manufactory, and an Engineering Works, in front of which the hulls of two small partially dismantled iron screw-steamers were moored stem and stern on the foreshore, alternately floated and left stranded by every tide.

They were there for a long period and formed a great attraction for boys. We used to pretend that they were French or Russian gunboats, or pirates, and would organise cutting-out expeditions against them. The smaller we could board without much difficulty, but the smoothly-plated sides of the larger presented a different problem and it was long before I succeeded in reaching her deck. When I eventually did, the gratification was naturally great and the zest with which I explored the bare and dingy interior—cabin, forecastle, engine-room—was keen indeed. There were remnants of coal in the stoke-hole and bunker, the boilers and machinery looked all right, and the vision of

boarding the vessel as the tide came in, getting up steam, casting off the moorings (on investigation I found that was more easily imagined than done, the existence of boys not having remained unsuspected by those who arranged them), and going for a surreptitious cruise with my brothers and special chums as crew, crossed my mind—nay, more, haunted it. But there were difficulties. I couldn't find a compass: there were certainly neither charts nor chronometer; and, supposing a vigilant Thames Police boat came alongside and demanded a view of my captain's certificate? I couldn't well run her down and have blood and the tears of wives and orphans on my soul, so that an ignominious striking of my flag and perhaps six months in jail for suspected piracy—with contingent ruin of the family name—seemed the not unlikely, if humiliating, alternative. Otherwise I could, perhaps, have towed a few sailing vessels up and down the river or out to sea and gone home with my pockets full of gold and bank-notes after honestly bringing the steamer back to her moorings and blowing off steam. But it was not to be!

About half-way to Charlton the scene on the pathway changed dramatically for a short distance, for there we came to Angerstein's Wharf, a landing-place for goods of quite modern appearance, with railway sidings, trucks, sheds, and labourers. It was served by a single-track branch from the North Kent Line of the South-Eastern Railway. At that time the business done was not great, and one goods train a day, which came about 11 a.m., sufficed for the traffic. Whether the existence of the Wharf was due to the enterprise of Mr. Angerstein, M.P. (already mentioned in connection with birds' nests), or was named because of proximity to his estate, which the branch line either crossed or skirted, I never learned.

Thence to Charlton the river path was desolation. I do not remember a single building, and it was rarely that any way-farer was met as we plodded along the embankment, the construction of which some antiquaries have ascribed to the Romans. The only company we had was that of the steamers, ships and barges. Owing to the

winding of the Thames the river-side route was perhaps three times as long as the direct road between Greenwich and Woolwich, and few were the disturbers of its solitude.

I witnessed a little marine incident on this deserted section one windy day. A brig had managed to run ashore and stick fast on the slope of the embankment at or near high water, and, as the tide was now running out, she was canted towards the river, and I fancy was in some danger of capsizing, for, as the Woolwich diamond-funnelled steamer *Fairy* approached on a trip up-river the crew waved and shouted excitedly to her. Like a good *Fairy* she stopped, and, after some hoarse palaver, backed slowly towards the brig until one of her men caught a line by means of which a rope was hove on board. This being made fast, the steamer pulled softly. The sailer quivered, slid gently off the bank, and quietly came upright. *Fairy* then tugged her into mid-stream, cast off, and went away. All this occupied only a few minutes. I have since wondered whether it was simply a kindly action by one skipper to another, or whether the Diamond Funnel Company lodged a claim for salvage or services rendered.

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Such things are usually charged for, but not always. In 1898 I had some pleasant conversations at Guernsey with the late Captain H. D. Mortimer, then not very long retired from the L. and S. W. R. service, and amongst other things he told me that some years before, when approaching the Needles from the Channel Islands in one of the old paddle-wheel mail steamers, he observed signals of distress from a German barque in a perilous position at the base of the chalk cliffs. He stopped; the German sent a boat with a hawser, which broke as soon as he put on steam to tow her off. He then passed a cable of his own, and this time pulled her into deep water and safety. He reported the occurrence at Southampton, but, as little time had been lost, it was decided not to claim anything. Later a letter came from the barque's owners at Hamburg. Tendering thanks or offering compensation? Oh, no! Asking for the return of the remnant of their broken rope which the mail-steamer had taken away.

At one point of the river-side path a splendid view was had of Blackwall Pier across on the Essex shore. Steamers continually called at the landing-stage and near the top of the tide tugs passed every few minutes with sailing vessels, many of considerable size, in tow. In the early 'sixties wind-jammers were plentiful, and all but the smallest took steam assistance in the upper river reaches. The Thames makes a big bend here and Blackwall Pier with the terminus of the Blackwall Railway occupies the bight of the curve. On the Kentish side, immediately opposite the pier, there was in those days, forming the nose of the promontory known as Blackwall Point, a detached piece of land which for some two hours before and after every high water became an island. The books say that "opposite Blackwall on the banks of the Thames a good many pirates usually hung in chains, looking like scarecrows." It was the locality marked Bugsby's Marsh, or Bugsby's Hole, on the old maps, and probably this conspicuous islet was the cheerful spot alluded to.

I thought it would be good fun to become a Robinson Crusoe for four or five hours and one day, when the tides were moderate, for I realised that the island might become submerged when they were at their highest, I walked across the very muddy channel and allowed myself to be cut off. There wasn't much fun to be extracted from the situation, however, about half a minute sufficing for a complete inspection of the domain of which for the time being I was "monarch of all I surveyed"—to wit, one-eighth of an acre of rank vegetation. Fortunately, I knew nothing of the pirates in chains. When the rising water reached the edge of the flat islet and started to lipper amongst the grass and flags boredom vanished, for I began to apprehend that the almanac might be wrong and that my refuge was about to be covered. I got my handkerchief ready to tie to my stick in case it should become necessary to signal to passing craft for aid; but, happily, just as I was asking myself whether I ought to delay longer, I noticed some anchored barges near the opposite shore begin to swing and then I knew that Father Thames had shot his bolt and that I had

won the hazard. But it was weary work waiting for the channel to become passable, especially as I had turned exceedingly hungry. My isolated position had attracted attention on more than one passing vessel, but, excepting some lightermen, nobody had hailed me. Those bargees termed me a something young fool with a directness that could not have been excelled by dwellers in the "street that is called Straight." And, moreover, the epithet was surely deserved.

I had observed something during my brief Crusoe experience that might be looked for in vain in 1924. Some of the skippers and mates of the smaller craft calmly sailing or drifting past were gravely smoking long churchwarden clay pipes. These were greatly—may I say to the fore?—in those days. Greenwich watermen smoked them when on shore, in their pubs, in the street, and when talking in groups at the river-side. The 1860 workman would as soon have smoked *narghiles* as cigarettes, which were rare, and when used—chiefly by foreigners—were rolled as required, the ready-made-up article being unknown.

CHAPTER XXV

1861—GREENWICH SIXTY YEARS SINCE

A straight road—Southern outfall sewer—Live British workmen—Winding and pumping engines—New Cross Road—Greenwich Hospital and its pensioners—Collegemen's chapel—Characteristic hymns—Hospital wards—Trafalgar model—Painted Hall—Changes in Hospital—Out-pensions—Deplorable results—Empty Hospital—Removal of the *Dreadnought*.

GREENWICH is a peculiar town. It is longitudinal in a sense quite distinct from the meridional, inasmuch as only one road for vehicular traffic traverses it from west to east. If that should become blocked a detour of miles viâ the Dover Road, Blackheath, and Maze Hill, would be obligatory in order to travel on wheels between the western and the eastern hemispheres. The widely-flung Park and Observatory would have to be doubled. This solitary highway passes for about one-third of a mile between the Hospital with the river behind it and the Naval School backed by the Park: a nice wide road bordered by neither houses nor shops.

So, when the great southern outfall sewer was constructed along it in the early 1860s a rare upset of traffic was experienced for three weeks or a month. Yet the work was carried on with vigour by swarms of sturdy navvies and willing—note the fact in 1924—bricklayers. There was life in the British workman of those days, and the present generation—or degeneration—are simply consumers of the stores of prosperity he, by his hardihood, laid up.

In the short length from the Parish Church to East (now Eastney) Street were employed four winding-engines to pull up and tip into carts the soil excavated in the trench below; and two pumping-engines going day and night, for

there was plenty of water to be got rid of. The winding-engines had vertical boilers, and two of them oscillating cylinders, like the Thames steamboats, which moved so fast when at full speed that they could not be followed by the eye. Such oscillating winding engines are quite unknown to-day. One of the pumps was also of unusual construction; it was by Tuxford and Sons, Boston, Lincolnshire, and had a kind of side-lever engine in a domed closed compartment, the doors of which had to be opened for oiling purposes, occupying the usual position of the smoke-box. This machine must have had a return flue, for the chimney was at the same end as the furnace. She pumped at the corner of the classical Tea Pot Row (now Park Row) for several weeks. As the work proceeded through Greenwich towards Charlton, these half-dozen engines were shifted along and remained under my observation for several months.

The huge brick sewer culvert was sometimes built up with single bricks over wooden centering, but also, at places, of curved segments containing many bricks (already set in wooden moulds) which were lowered and mortared into place. As a rule, the spoil was removed in carts, but in the New Cross Road near its junction with the Lewisham Road rails on sleepers were laid and the rubbish taken away in trucks up the Lewisham Road. The *Marquis of Granby* tavern standing at this point was for weeks the centre of an active though temporary railway system.

Interest centred quite naturally a good deal round the Hospital and its quaintly dressed denizens, then some thirteen hundred in number, including a few survivors from Trafalgar. Many had lost a limb. Indeed, there used to be an annual cricket-match between one-armed and one-legged Collegemen, as the pensioners were termed locally. Some were quite vigorous and followed odd employments in the town. A few married men even maintained a little household outside the Hospital. One of these I came to know slightly. He had a wife and one room in the now-demolished Clark's Buildings, East Street; but, in my estimation, was chiefly remarkable for the possession of a

grey-and-white Tom-cat of exceptional intelligence and (when so minded) docility, which he had had the patience to train in various un-cat-like directions. The animal was eventually lost or stolen and the poor Collegeman was inconsolable.

There were many stages of senile decay, mental and physical, among the pensioners; but most were able to go about, and of these specimens were always to be found in the Park, down by the river, or on Blackheath, ready to earn a little by yarning of battle, wreckage, and sudden death. Some did so quite well and with every semblance of truth. Sad to say, many were also untiring patrons of the numerous taverns in the vicinity—little pubs, some of them, hidden up courts and alleys and often owning names calculated to attract the old-time tars. I remember one, in East Street, called the *Fortune of War*, which displayed a decently painted sign swinging over the doorway, representing a jovial pensioner with two wooden legs quaffing from a foam-surmounted quart pot clutched in his one remaining hand. In such places Jack Collegeman would dowse his glim in liquor until quite broached to. But there was strict discipline for drunkards within the Hospital gates. After a seafaring life in the early 1800s predilections towards grog and 'bacca were understandable and excusable; it would have been almost as reasonable to blame the needle for turning to the pole as the poor stranded Collegeman for loving his beer, pipe and quid.

They were of all kinds, however. Many were religious, and of their own free will went to church or chapel outside the Hospital, although their spiritual wants were supposed to be catered for inside. There was a little chapel in East Street—dissenting, of course, but I don't remember its special sect—constructed apparently out of an old-time barn, which was affected principally by Collegemen. It contained an enormous pulpit, so big in comparison with the very moderate size of the room that the preacher might almost have used a bo'sun's rattan round the congregation in the event of signs of somnolence or punctuated precepts with taps of a belaying-pin. It was indeed an imposing

quarter-deck, and, I fancy, must have been purchased second-hand from some place of worship of much larger measurement, for it was altogether too grand for an otherwise extremely humble domicile. The poor worshippers appeared very much in earnest, and made the neighbourhood resound with their hymns. Their special favourite was Cowper's well-known—

> "There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
> And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
> Lose all their guilty stains."

The old tars used to roar out the six or seven verses to the original well-marked melody, which accentuates admirably the words calling for emphasis, with right good-will, so that passers-by had to hear whether they wanted to or not. It seemed a part of every service, so much so that the tune became known locally as the Collegemen's hymn. What could have been its attraction for the old salts? Why did they consider it a likely ratlin for their climb to heaven? The blood flavour? Accustomed as they had been to desperate fighting, warfare and carnage for the best years of their lives; to think, talk and dream about it; to regard it as the mainspring of their prize-money, fortunes and ambitions: I imagined that very likely the habit had persisted and engrossed them so much that now, in the "sere and yellow leaf," it came natural and comforting to associate blood with religion and redemption. Poor old chaps!

Others of their favourites were—

> "On the other side of Jordan, in the sweet fields of Eden,
> Where the Tree of Life is blooming, there is rest for you";

and,

> "We sing of the realms of the blest,
> That country so bright and so fair;
> And oft are its glories confessed—
> But what must it be to be there?"

Although not ostensibly open to the public, the various wards of the Hospital were accessible to those with sufficient assurance to assume a pretence of having business there.

I wandered about them often and was never once challenged. Under the buildings are long arched stone corridors yielding long vistas and giving a suggestion of interminability. Along these we boys sometimes raced neck-and-neck. In King Charles's Ward was the great model under glass of the Battle of Trafalgar which now stands in the United Service Museum, Whitehall, not improved by its transfer, since the ocean waves are now much more distinctly divided into squares than they were at Greenwich. Nelson knew how to join battle apparently better than others know how to join the mere model of it. We saw it often and listened deferentially to descriptions of the momentous engagement by those who professed to have been there all the while. In the Painted Hall were the Nelson relics: the coat in which the hero was killed, his decorations, etc. Some, such as the custodians of these national treasures have not allowed to be stolen, are there to this day. One of the yarns connected with the Hall was that the ornate ceiling was painted by the artist lying on his back on a scaffolding, and that he contracted some dreadful spinal disease in consequence.

There was a kindly atmosphere about the Hospital. The nurses were evidently on good terms with their old and suffering charges; visitors were freely allowed, and although discipline was, of course, necessary, it was only what the tars had been accustomed to. There were no outward signs of harshness, nor did the Collegemen complain.

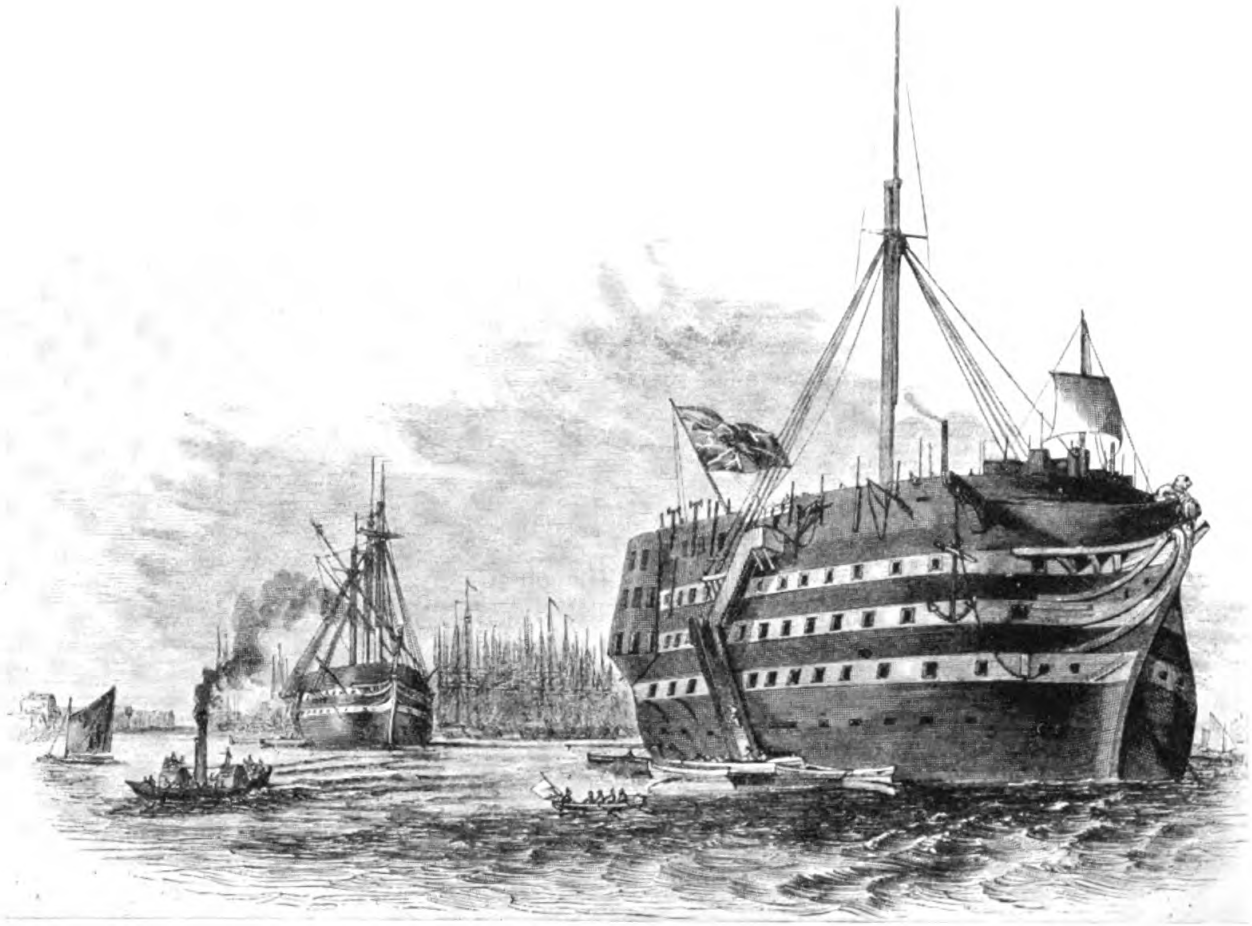
Alas! in 1865 all this happiness and contentment was put an end to by Act of Parliament. At the instigation, it was said, of the Duke of Somerset, it was resolved to take only infirm and helpless sailors and marines into the Hospital and to assign out-pensions to all others. Moreover, inmates already there were to be offered out-pensions if able-bodied enough to leave. It was argued that such out-pensions would enable many to live with relatives or friends, and by relieving them from the (assumed) ignominy of wearing uniform and submitting to the restrictions of what was, after all, only a glorified pauperdom, gratify their sense of independence. Unfortunately, Mr. Gladstone and his lieutenants were won over by the huge economies promised.

Out of some 1,350 inmates largely of dubious capacity to look after themselves in a world from which they had long been secluded, some 950 accepted out-pensions, to the great jubilation of the politicians or cranks who had engineered the cruel and dishonourable renunciation of the nation's promises and engagements with its seamen and marines.

The fateful day came, on September 26th. Each man was given an advance or bonus in cash—there was no meanness about Great Britain !—and at the gates he found his friends, and lots of 'em. The manner in which uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces, not to mention wives, sprang out of nowhere to welcome the dear old salts with money in their pockets and weekly stipends of 14*s*. to follow on was remarkable. And there were worse. Brazen-faced hussies walked off with doddering old sillies, while male harpies were not lacking. That same night some of the men were penniless and slept in casual wards ; others got locked up for drunkenness. And those who escaped such snags were not always better off. Instead of the roomy, airy wards and dormitories of the Hospital and its wholesome and regular, if plain, food, very many had to pig in with already crowded families in insanitary houses and to take pot-luck of whatever happened to be going. Those inclined to drink lost the beneficent restraint of the Hospital and went to the bad by the nearest road. No doubt there were lucky ones to whom the change meant improvement, but they must have been exceptional, for the tales of the mortality which followed the reform (!) were appalling. John Bull had to pay but few of the allowances long. God preserve Chelsea Hospital from such reform !

These deplorable effects had been foreseen by local men who understood the Collegeman and his ways, and pointed out in good time to the Government, but in vain.

Having emptied the Hospital, the authorities were at a loss what to do with it. Yet when, in 1867, it was desired to abolish the floating seamen's hospital *Dreadnought* and transfer the patients to part of the empty premises, the Lords of the Admiralty made all sorts of difficulties. In 1868 the *Pall Mall Gazette* rated them soundly : " Buildings



DREADNOUGHT HOSPITAL SHIP.

Moored for many years off West Greenwich.

capable of accommodating 3,000 have only 350 inmates, which cost £120 per annum each, instead of £60 in the old, in-pension days—splendid revenues misapplied and diverted." The *Lancet* found "the smell of desolation about the place." The *Times*, in 1869, said that "except for the Governor, who draws £3,000 a year, and a lot of officials mostly doing nothing, the Hospital is practically empty." I paid a farewell visit there in May, 1869, before starting for India and learned that it was the intention to remove the remainder of the infirm pensioners to Netley! And so the job was completed. The impulse may be an unjust one, but I rarely pass a statue or picture of Gladstone without my thoughts involuntarily reverting to the poor Greenwich Collegemen,

I regretted the disappearance of the picturesque old *Dreadnought* keenly, for I had known her at the same old moorings since childhood, and without her towering bulk and black-and-white streaks the Thames hardly looked the same. She was famous throughout the world, for no sick seaman, whatever his nationality, was ever refused admission to her hospitable 'tween decks. She was run by the Seamen's Hospital Society on voluntary contributions.

The original Hospital ship, placed in position about 1837, was the actual *Dreadnought* of 98 guns which fought at Trafalgar, where she captured the Spanish three-decker *San Juan* and sustained a loss of seven killed and twenty-six wounded. She had been removed in 1857 and replaced by another three-decker of very similar appearance, to which the old name was transferred. Her real one I do not remember. In twenty years over 63,000 patients had been accommodated, and the charity was a very noble one.

CHAPTER XXVI

1861 (*continued*)—SCULL AND OAR

Regattas—George Everson—Bob Chambers—Harry Kelly—A popular win—A dark horse in light blue—Sport at Horsleydown—Something like an umpire—Living to fight another day.

ONE of the local matters that soon engaged my youthful attention was the regattas, of which I found there were three at Greenwich every year. They all consisted of sculling competitions in out-rigger racing skiffs with covered-in ends, locally called wager-boats—there were no sliding seats then—between six local men of three different categories: landsmen, for a silver cup; apprentice watermen, for a coat-and-badge and freedom of the Waterman's Guild; and licensed watermen for a brand-new boat or wherry. Several weeks intervened between each regatta, so that rowing interest was sustained during the greater part of the summer and autumn. The competitors wore calico blouses gaudily coloured in red, pink, yellow, green, and dark and light blue, so that they could readily be identified at any part of the course.

There were two trial heats, three men each, during the forenoon; about dinner-time the four losers—known as "the worst four"—met and two were permanently ruled out. In the afternoon the four winners—"the best four"—rowed, and in the evening the two survivors came together for the final heat, or "best two." Men being at work, women cooking, and boys at school, the preliminary heats were not very largely attended, but many spectators mustered for the best four, and in the evening for the grand heat—my word!—what a crowd, what a concourse! The river was covered with boats, and every point ashore was a packed mass of humanity, women almost as numerous as men.

The Hospital grounds were thrown open; the pier enclosure was crammed at 1*d.* per head; the wharves, and vessels that happened to lie alongside them (including the rigging if the skippers were propitious); the hotel and tavern windows and balconies; the Harbour Master's pretty paddle-wheel yacht, usually moored off the *Trafalgar*, and especially the pathway in front of the Hospital and its central landing-steps,—all, all, packed to suffocation. Strange to say, I never knew a regatta to be spoiled by bad weather.

It must be recollected that in those days rowing was a much more popular sport than it is now, and to Greenwich belonged Georgie Everson, an aspirant for championship honours. It was the day of English pre-eminence in rowing. Bob Chambers, who long preserved the blue ribbon for his native river the Tyne, and with whose name I had been familiar from earliest boyhood, was still to the fore, but whose death—it occurred in 1868—was not so very far off. He was only thirty-eight when he died, through, it was alleged, the effects of over-training. He was honest and simple-minded, and so greatly respected that some 60,000 people attended his funeral at Newcastle—a mass meeting likewise eloquent of the popularity of the sport. He had latterly lost the chief honours to Harry Kelly, who, in after-years, kept a tavern on the banks of the river, at Putney I think, where I once, when out rowing in one of my club boats, put in for a rest and had the gratification of consuming a glass of "bitter" drawn from the beer-engine by that champion's own sinewy hands.

Rowing in the early 'sixties was considered, like boxing and cricket, a peculiarly British sport, although pretenders from afar were already shoving in their oars. Green from Australia and Hammill from America came on laurels intent, but found nothing better than cypress to carry home.

The regatta course was a long one, commencing, according to the tide, at East or West Greenwich. In the former case the competitors rowed the whole length of the town in mid-stream, round the *Dreadnought*; against the tide, near in to the Kentish shore so as to pass close in front of

the Hospital and its massed spectators, round a moored boat, up-stream again, round the *Dreadnought* a second time, to finish at the Hospital landing-steps, where the umpire fired a pistol as the leader passed his boat, and a band crowded into a wherry struck up *See, the Conquering Hero Comes!* At the regatta for a new boat that craft, all gaudy in fresh paint and varnish, was waiting at the winning point of the final heat, and the winner would get into it from his racing skiff and so take possession of the prize without any ceremonious delay. But sometimes he was too exhausted to do so.

The enthusiasm at this stage was delirious, especially if the winner happened to be a favourite. This occurred notably one year, 1861 or 1862 I think, when a mature waterman named Cook was left in the final with Charlie Everson, younger brother of George Everson, the Championship candidate, not long out of his time. Cook's wherry, the means of livelihood of his numerous family, was known to be old and shabby, and the popular will was all for his success against a member of a comparatively opulent family, to whom a new boat, apart from the honour of winning it, was of no great account.

The struggle proved an exciting one. They passed in front of the Hospital, stem and stem, each followed by an eight-oared cutter with a pilot kneeling in the bows conning and encouraging his man, and were lost to view behind the *Dreadnought*. When sight was regained it was evident that Cook—yellow—was leading with Everson—pink—very close up. Against the tide they pulled and it was seen that in rounding the Hospital ship they had come close together and Cook was now rowing with his left scull over the fore part of Everson's skiff so that it was impossible for the latter to pass without sheering out and losing ground. They were pulling desperately, although I think that Cook would have been wiser to have taken things easily and left developments to his rival.

Very markedly different were their styles. Cook's was not pretty—he seemed to finish every stroke with a short, hesitating catch or jerk, while Everson had a long, clear,

steady reach which struck one as obviously superior. But the rule about pudding-eating applies likewise to rowing. Going up-stream on the second turn Yellow led by a length, probably sacrificed by Pink in getting free from his opponent's scull. Coming round the *Dreadnought* he made up, but Cook finally won by half a length or so, in the midst of storms of cheering, "Bravo, old 'un!" "Well done, old man!" and the frantic waving of handkerchiefs. Poor chap! As soon as the pistol fired his sculls stopped, his head sank on his chest and he had to be helped into the prize wherry by the crew of his conning cutter. But no evil effects followed, for a few days later I saw him rowing his new boat opposite the Hospital with a woman with a parasol and several children in the stern-sheets. Doubtlessly Mrs. C. and family enjoying together the combined sunshine of summer and of fame.

But the regatta I remember best, for it took place during the holidays and I followed it heat by heat, was a special one due to the enterprise of a tavern-keeper, landlord of the *Three Crowns*—a hostelry no longer extant in 1924—at which "house" coal-heavers working at wharves in East Greenwich were wont to congregate. He offered a new suit of clothes and a purse of gold to be rowed for by six landsmen in the usual regatta style. So many coal-heavers (most men at Greenwich in those days knew something about rowing) entered that the ballot had to be resorted to. The suit of clothes and purse of gold were on view in a glass case in the bar of the *Three Crowns* for a month or so before the match and, depend upon it, well was that taverner repaid for his enterprise by the crowds that went to inspect them, and to look at the champions at their nightly training—which consisted chiefly, I imagine, of beer and skittles. Of course, I never got a sight of the prizes, pubs, on any pretence whatever, being absolutely taboo, but the probable amount of gold in the purse exercised my wit not a little. Whatever it was, Mr. Barleycorn doubtlessly extracted many purses of many times its value from his customers from first to last. The race conditions were exactly as in the usual regattas, except that

open in-rigged skiffs were used, the canvas-covered out-rigged wager-boats being too tricky, perhaps, for the unaccustomed coaly sons of toil.

The first trial heat was noteworthy for the bad form exhibited by Light Blue, a gigantic heaver, who paddled in last, a long way last, very last, after catching several crabs, amidst the derision of the spectators. People wondered how such a ninny could have had the temerity—cheek they called it—to enter himself for the race. I thought that perhaps he had not quite recovered from his training of the night before. When the "worst four" came to be rowed Light Blue did better, for he finished second, a long way behind the winner, it is true, and only just in front of No. 3—but second. That entitled him to row in the "best four," of course, and row he did, although certain spectators advised him to go home and wash the kids—not to speak of his own face, which certainly revealed traces of the honest labour by which his bread and butter were ordinarily won.

There was a lively tussle, with varying fortune, but in the end Light Blue again came in second—not a good second—but still second. People marvelled. It was funny such a duffer should have managed to get into the grand heat after all. He seemed to have forgotten how to catch crabs, but then the other fellow would be sure to give him a good licking. Evening came and with it the usual crowds. Off went the "best two." On the first round Light Blue was behind, as, of course, everybody knew he would be. Not much behind certainly—but behind. Round the *Dreadnought* they went and the trying bit, against the tide, close to the foreshore and packed spectators, was negotiated. Light Blue came behind the leader, labouring and panting, but catching no crabs. Round the moored boat and upstream again, Light Blue still behind—but close. They disappeared behind the huge bulk of the *Dreadnought* for several minutes when—what's that shout? "Light Blue in front?" No, it can't be! But it was. Past the steamboat pier the procession came, past the Bellot monument, past the Hospital steps (for the winning point this time had been fixed at the *Trafalgar*, behind which, at the distance

of a short street, lay the generous publican's own hostelry), Light Blue leading, Green overlapping his stern. And so they kept till the pistol spoke and Light Blue became the legal owner of the raiment and its auriferous accompaniment.

Towards the finish Green, also a big man, in the midst of a continuous inarticulate roar from the multitude, made a plucky and sustained effort to pass his adversary, but Light Blue, although he likewise had to work hard, never gave him a chance and I wondered how the—as I had thought silly—man I had seen in the trial heat in the morning could become so transformed by the evening. It was not for years afterwards, when the ways of racing men had become more familiar, that I realised what the game had probably been and how cleverly it had been played. Givers of odds against Light Blue, and they were no doubt numerous, went to bed that night unhappier if wiser men. I heard that several pugilistic encounters occurred amongst the coal-heavers over the race, and that Light Blue had to demonstrate his superiority on that side of his sporting nature more than once before the purse of gold was spent and certainly before the new suit wore out—John Barleycorn obligingly acting as stakeholder. *Vive le Sport!*

During the course of my regatta enthusiasm I by chance learnt that one was to be held at Horsleydown in which, instead of the Greenwich light and dark blue, one of the competitors was to be Blue and another Stripes. I thought I would like to see that variation, and after many enquiries succeeded in finding the hitherto unknown precincts of Horsleydown, an indescribably mean locality as it proved. The regatta was in progress, but spectators were few and, in fact, I could find only one point of vantage—a wharf of forlorn aspect—from which the race could possibly be viewed, the rest of the river front being occupied by warehouses or wharves from which the unprivileged public was excluded. There was not one decently clad person on this wharf, and my arrival immediately attracted the attention of some young ragamuffins playing on and about a deserted coal-van. After consultation one, two or three years my

senior, approached and said, "Guv'nor, I'll fight yer for yer cap," while his companions formed a ring close around, one trying to snatch my cap, shouting, "I'll hold it for yer." But that did not meet my views. I had made this excursion on my own responsibility, and a nice youth I should have looked had I gone home with a tale of having lost my cap in an encounter with the junior chivalry of Horsleydown. So I held on to my tester firmly, and saying, "I came to see the race," began to edge past the coal-van toward the gate. The crowd followed, and my challenger said, "This gentleman will see all fair," indicating a poor beery wretch leaning against the van shafts—a pasty-faced, sore-eyed, ragged, under-sized, absolutely broken-down wreck of a man, trembling in all his limbs and twitching in his face—such a one as would be expected to answer instinctively to the initials D.T. Hearing himself referred to, this sporting specimen said, "Yes, I'll see it's all fair. Don't be a Bernard Shaw cur; fight the young gentlemun!" Instead, I put up my left arm as a guard, broke the ring, and escaped through the gate into the—probably High Street. A chase immediately commenced, but the sight of a top-hatted policeman not far off acted as a sore discouragement, and, retreating in good order, I got back safely to Greenwich.

CHAPTER XXVII

1861 (*continued*)—MOSTLY ECCLESIASTICAL

Religious life—Methodists—St. Alphege's—Reverend W. A. Soames—St. Mary's—A didactic preacher—Mothers' meetings—Tea-urns—A priestly uncle—Our Lady's, Croom's Hill—A Brazilian broad road to heaven—*Maid of the Mist*—Big Ben again—Death of the Prince Consort—Hartley colliery—Sale of honours.

OUR religious life in the City of the Meridian was varied if not intense. As a rule, we attended either the parish church of St. Alphege or St. Mary's, alongside the Park gates in King William Street. But a local aunt was well in with the Methodists, and this led to acquaintance with one of their leading ministers and occasional attendance at his chapel. He was undoubtedly a pious, earnest, charitable man, with a good word for everybody except Roman Catholics, of whom his opinion was distinctly unflattering. But those were days when the cry of "No popery" was by no means extinct, so his intolerance was not inexcusable. He considered the Romish Church a political rather than a religious institution, to which view the persistence of the Pope in clinging to temporal sovereignty, then a source of great disturbance in Europe, lent colour; still, he would give a distressed R.C. a pound of moist sugar or a ticket for soup without difficulty if deserving.

At St. Alphege's we occupied, about half-way along the aisle, on the left, a square pew with seats all round so that some worshippers had perforce to turn their backs on the preacher and experienced considerable difficulty in bobbing towards the East during the recital of the Creed. It was the only one of its kind and had, perhaps, formerly been the dug-out of a Lord High Admiral or Governor of Greenwich Hospital.

Mr. W. A. Soames, the vicar, of whom no man spoke evil and who certainly, as Tacitus phrased it, "had the God within him," was another ardent minister, ever in the forefront of charitable works and a veritable cornucopia of tickets for bread, for meat, for soup, for coal. There was a dread under-current of poverty in the town, which Soames did his best, and it was a very good best, to stem. But he was a poor preacher. Decidedly that was my opinion. He spoke rapidly, and to a boy, at least, far from lucidly; and when his spare black-gowned figure appeared in the pulpit I usually began to think of things far away, for I could never follow him well enough to develop an interest in his topic.

Very different was the gentleman who usually conducted the services at St. Mary's, and who was, I suppose, the senior curate. His name I forget, but we boys generously designated him "the pretty man." He had a pale, classical countenance, shaven chin and upper lip, and cheeks adorned with moderate brown whiskers. Serenity, repose and cleanliness were the notes struck. He spoke somewhat slowly, in simple English and always with great distinctness and a certain peculiar emphasis. His sermons were unemotional, even a charity appeal being approached from the logical rather than the sentimental side, so that the threepenny and four-penny pieces were argued rather than charmed into the plate. He would often explain a difficult phrase or obscure text, its surrounding meanings and applications, in language all could understand and follow with attention. When he took a turn at St. Alphege's, which he did occasionally, my wits made fewer excursions into realms mundane. I feel that I owe something to the pretty man.

In those days the metrical version of the psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins was always printed at the end of the Prayer-book, although I never knew it to be used, and a perusal of the quaint verses sometimes formed a refuge from a dull preacher. At Greenwich, the old-time clerk, whom I have noted as giving out the hymns at St. George's, Camberwell, had disappeared in 1861. There were only two pulpits, one for the service and a loftier one for the sermon. The lessons were read from the former, for separate lecterns had

not yet come into fashion, at all events not in the remote regions of which I write. That the fair sex still persisted in their well-known devotion to religious exercises was made fairly obvious by a prevailing aromatic odour of peppermint. Mr. Soames was not High Church, but he couldn't avoid that kind of incense—especially at sermon time.

My Methodistic aunt was active in the promotion and management of Mothers' Meetings and tea-fights, as they are called in Scotland, and small functions of that sort. At some of these I was allowed to be present conditionally on making myself useful. This obligation I found on one occasion to be susceptible of rather elastic interpretation. With a boy friend I presented myself by agreement at a tea-meeting in course of preparation. My aunt had not arrived, but another lady of the committee said, "These lads may as well fetch the urns Mrs. Dash has promised to lend," and despatched us to Blackheath Hill, a mile or more away. Mrs. Dash was urbanity itself—but the urns! They were of highly burnished copper, almost as big as ourselves and very heavy. But to admirers of Nelson duty loomed larger and weightier still, so we hugged and dandled our charges and set our faces tea-fight-ward. Fortunately the road was down-hill, so by resting occasionally we made progress until suddenly we found ourselves surrounded by children emerging from a ragged school or some educational establishment of the kind. The urns of course attracted immediate attention; the boys became insulting and aggressive, and we had actually to defend them by force of arms. Luckily a master came out and dispersed his rowdy pupils, standing guard until we had got away. After that we found handing round bread and butter and cake easy work enough. Our urns operated so well that I was afterwards told that one lady had had thirteen cups of tea out of them and looked like wanting more.

The attitude of our Methodist friend towards the Roman Catholics unexpectedly assumed some importance at home. My father's youngest brother had been ordained a priest and then held the post of chaplain to the Roman Catholic portion of Kensal Green Cemetery, where, after many years'

faithful ministry, he now lies amongst those he had helped to lay to rest. But Father Richard Bennett was still affectionately remembered in the neighbourhood when I lived at Stonebridge Park in the 1890s, and perhaps is to this day. Although disagreeing with his views, I cannot imagine him otherwise than an entirely good, earnest, modest and well-meaning man, who would have wrought harm or injustice on no account whatever.

Naturally he would have liked to have made proselytes of us, and no doubt with that idea, obtained father's permission to give or lend his elder boys a few Roman Catholic books for perusal and consideration. This resulted in the receipt of two small volumes, one of which dealt exclusively with cases of the marks of the passion becoming miraculously imprinted on the hands, feet and sides of extra-devout Catholics, chiefly young girls, and all foreigners of sorts. This I found very interesting, for such a phenomenon was new to me. There was a picture of a child kneeling on a bed in an attitude that not even a professor of athletics could have maintained for many minutes, her wrists and ankles exhibiting gashes that evidently groaned aloud for balsam and sticking-plaster. With joined hands she was looking ecstatically at nothing. The text gave particulars of several cases, perhaps eight or ten, with names and dates and places. Nevertheless, having read of the Cock Lane ghost and how the great, sober-headed lexicographer, Dr. Johnson, had been fooled by a little girl, I decided that the stories might either be entirely fictitious or the wounds have been simulated for profit (for pilgrims, it was stated, came from all parts to visit the beatific damsels and of course left offerings) to the deception of innocent priests, like my Uncle Richard. I don't think the hysteria theory had been broached in those days to account for happenings of this nature. The book did not convert me.

We also made the acquaintance of one of the priests at the Church of our Lady, Croom's Hill, and even attended the services there twice or thrice, finding, from the literature provided, that there was a St. Benet in the Calendar, a family honour hitherto unsuspected, for I had not then come

across St. Benet's in Leadenhall Street. And I once witnessed a baptism, long-drawn-out, with much Latin and anointing.

Many years later, in 1909, a similar baptism intervened to thwart a project I had formed. This was at Santos in Brazil. Some months previously I had been in the chief church in the grand square there and had particularly noticed something which I imagine would have greatly astonished my good uncle. On a wall was a box and on its right a wire basket with sundry small slips of blank paper and a pencil attached by a string. Alongside was a printed notice and list, in Portuguese, of course, but, as I knew Spanish, fully understandable. It invited persons having relatives or friends in, or suspected of being in, purgatory, to write the name of the delinquent and the sin from which they would like him absolved on one of the slips of paper and drop it in the box, together with the sum noted against the transgression in the price-list below. Then, it was said, the sin would be struck out from his account and delivery from purgatory hastened. The catalogue enumerated most sins to which poor humanity is liable, to the number of, perhaps, one hundred, each with its price in milreis marked against it. So, I suppose, a well-disposed person with plenty of cash could get a friend out of limbo and into paradise in a minute or two, simply by writing all the sins on slips of paper, adding up the column of milreis and dropping the lot into the box. Eminently practical!

Passing that way from up-country some months later I determined to make a detour by the Grand Plaza on my road from the railway-station to the Royal Mail steamer for Southampton, and take one or two photographs of the box, basket and catalogue. I got to the church and had my camera out, when, to my disgust, a priest and two acolytes advanced up the side-aisle, while three women, a man and a baby met them from the opposite direction. They stopped exactly in front of, and close to, the box and the priest commenced the baptismal service, the group completely hiding my objectives. I had only a few minutes to spare, so, rather than miss my ship, decided to forgo the snaps. I

remembered the prolonged ceremony at Greenwich. It was a pity, for there are Roman Catholics here in England who treat the matter as a joke. But it is the simple truth. Of course Santos is not London, but the Roman Church, being one and indivisible, purgatory prescriptions good in one place ought to answer equally well in the other.

Shortly after our transfer to Greenwich we read of an incident that I never forgot and came to be forcibly reminded of in later years. A little screw-steamer called *Maid of the Mist*, which took tourists at Niagara to almost within touching distance of the American Fall, was about to be arrested for debt, when the proprietor and skipper determined to make a dash for British territory and escape the Sheriff. So, when that officer approached with his myrmidons, she shoved off the landing-stage, turned her nose down-stream, and, to everybody's horror, entered the rapids and whirlpools. She was several times apparently submerged and lost her funnel, but got safely through to Lake Ontario with the stars and stripes, for which, however, her people clearly had no further use, fluttering over the stern.

In 1898 I visited Niagara—which I was there told ought to be pronounced Nia-gara—and lo! there was a *Maid of the Mist*, stars and stripes and all, plying to within a few feet of the mighty cascade. The crew were quite willing to let you imagine that she was the identical heroine of 1861, but I learnt that she was probably the third of the name and occupation.

On March 21st, 1861, our old friend Big Ben caused much amazement and some consternation by striking twenty at 3 o'clock in the morning. Of course we did not hear it, but of it we did. The papers recalled that it had long been a tradition that anything going wrong with Great Paul meant calamity for the Royal Family. Big Ben having succeeded to the crown of metropolitan bells, such a lapse on his part might more or less reasonably be held to mean something—and had not the Duchess of Kent, mother of Queen Victoria, died on the 16th, only five days before? The two occurrences certainly seemed somewhat out of order, but—there was the fact.

Towards the end of the year two events commanded universal attention—the death of the Prince Consort and the dreadful disaster at Hartley's Colliery, involving the lives of several hundred men. "Albert the Good" was much talked of and great pity expressed for the Queen. I remember that the *British Workman*, a 1*d.* weekly periodical which always had a well-drawn full-page engraving—sometimes by Gilbert, R.A.—illustrated both occurrences very effectively. For the Hartley Colliery victims there were collections and subscriptions, even down to the school-children. And a Mansion House Fund was started, an institution of which no other nation possessed then, nor for many years afterwards, a parallel. Wherever, in any part of the world, disaster happened, a Mansion House Fund was Britain's prompt specific. Instead of the usual "charity begins at home," foreigners might more truthfully have said, "Charity begins in London."

At my Christmas school examinations this year, it may be interesting, in view of certain modern developments, to mention that our history book, in dealing with the reign of James I, rather emphasised that monarch's thrifty conduct in selling baronetcies; and that our good master, Mr. Turner, took the occasion to express his horror of such baseness and to opine *that by no possibility could practices of that kind obtain in our own times* (*!*).

CHAPTER XXVIII

1861 (*continued*)—FEDERALS AND CONFEDERATES—PERILOUS MOMENTS

American Civil War—*Nashville* at Southampton—*Trent* affair—Commodore Wilkes—*Great Eastern* for Canada—Army Medical Board—Record railway run—War pictures—*Monitor*—Ericsson—Blockade runners—Midhat Pasha—Fredericksburg.

THE American Civil War broke out early in 1861, and the figures of Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Lee, Beauregard, Stonewall Jackson, Wilkes, McLellan and Grant began to defile across the scene; Fort Sumter, Harper's Ferry, Richmond, Mobile, Charleston, New Orleans, Virginia and Maryland became commonplace words, and the Confederate hymn *The Bonnie Blue Flag* floated on the London air from numberless barrel-organs. Without understanding much of the merits of the quarrel, my sympathies, nearly always with the under-dog, instinctively went out to the South. Americans nowadays are prone to blame us, the countrymen of Wilberforce, who were still, entirely at their own expense, chasing and capturing slavers (some flying the stars and stripes amongst them) and liberating captives, for siding with slavery against the enlightened North, but they forget that, as a distinguished authority has said, "the war was not ostensibly begun for extinction of slavery but for maintenance of the Union, and even Lincoln failed to declare himself at the outset an abolitionist."

Then Gladstone, certainly no friend of slavery, got himself fathoms deep in hot water (the American Minister threatened to demand his passports), by saying publicly that "Jefferson Davis has made an army, a navy and a nation: the reunion of North and South has become impossible."

All of which facts ill-instructed Radicals of to-day forget or ignore when they are out to deplore the imaginary British advocacy of slavery. They have waited but not seen.

As American jurists have admitted, the Southern States had a right to secede under the United States constitution; but it was not convenient to allow them to do so, and they were restrained from exercising that right by main force for which, more or less as an after-thought, or at least as a development brought about by events, slavery was put forward as justification.

And Americans of to-day forget how obnoxious the Federals made themselves to England in the early days of the War and the many insults they levelled at us. And perhaps some Englishmen remembered how unfriendly they had been during the Crimean War, and the popularity enjoyed by the New York couplet:

> "John Bull pretends the waves to rule,
> But why don't he take Sebastopool?"

which was ungracious as well as ungrammatical. And American memories overlook the fact that, only a few years before, hot-blooded champions of the equality of man wanted to go to war because we would not give up runaway slaves who took refuge in Canada. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that many sincere and active advocates of negro freedom existed in the North who never ceased to make their voices heard. Mrs. Beecher Stowe was one of them, and her famous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, had long been a potent factor in the fight. Longfellow, too, had testified in the same good cause. Still, they were not the United States Government, to which such enthusiasts were at first an embarrassment rather than an aid. With a voting power enormously in excess of that of the South the North had never given a mandate, by the election of a President or otherwise, for slavery abolition. The most that could be said was that events were trending that way.

Then there was an attractive dash and picturesqueness and, at all events seeming, chivalry about the Confederate leaders that appeared lacking in the Northerners. They had nobody to parallel the Federal General Butler, who was

accused of flogging women at New Orleans and never satisfactorily exonerated.

Was it surprising, therefore, that when, at the first engagement at Bull Run, the Federal Army stampeded, there were souls in England that did not bleed for the American Eagle ?

In November, 1861, a Confederate privateer, the paddle-wheel steamer *Nashville*, docked at Southampton and was followed into port by a Federal man-of-war called, if I recollect aright, *Tuscacora*, or something to that effect. The crews met and fought on shore and got run in by the local police for breach of the peace. After a time the British Government ordered *Nashville* to clear out, but kept the Yankee back for twenty-four hours. So the Confederate got clear away, but later in the war was caught up a river by the Federals and burned. One of the papers had a double-page illustration showing the enemy ships cruising in the Solent with H.M.S. *Shannon* in between keeping them from mutual assault and battery. Not the first time in history that a *Shannon* had restrained American naval ardour.

But while this drama was enacting a much graver marine incident, news of which was retarded by lack of the Atlantic telegraph, was happening in the West Indies.

Messrs. Slidell and Mason, appointed by the Confederate Government as their representatives at London and Paris, took passage at Jamaica on the Royal Mail Steamer *Trent*. A Federal man-of-war, the *San Jacinto*, way-laid this vessel on the high seas near Cuba on November 8th, fired shots across her bows, sent armed marines on board, and forcibly took the Confederate deputies from under the British flag.

Commodore Wilkes, commander of the *San Jacinto*, was supposed to have been prompted, at least partly, by vindictiveness, as he was known to nourish a grudge against the British for an offence they had unwittingly given him. Wilkes had been leader of an American exploring expedition to the South Seas some twenty years before, and in a book he wrote about it he claimed to have discovered new land, supposed to be part of an Antarctic Continent. An account of the classic expedition of Ross and Crozier in the *Erebus*

and *Terror* was afterwards published, in which, when describing his return voyage, Ross gave his ships' track as crossing the position assigned to Wilkes's Land. This attracted attention at Washington, and Wilkes was suspected of fooling Uncle Sam with a pretended discovery. Ultimately he was court-martialled and at the request of the United States Government a British officer attended with a copy of Captain Ross's log.[1] The Commodore was acquitted of intentional deceit, it being considered probable that he had been misled by fog and towering icebergs; but Wilkes's Land had to come off the chart.

And Ross had remarked rather caustically on the fact that Wilkes had pushed his explorations in the Antarctic on the very route that the British expedition had announced they were to follow. Said he, "I should have expected that national pride would have caused the choice of any other path in the wide-open field than one thus pointed out, if no higher consideration had power to prevent such an interference." Such candour had not pleased the American Commodore—he seemed to suspect there was something personal about it—and had had his bowie-knife in John Bull ever since. A naval George Francis Train.

The news of the *Trent* outrage created a great sensation. Lord Palmerston at once sent a demand for the release of the envoys and an apology to the flag. There was no cable and before the ultimatum reached Washington matters had become complicated by Congress passing a vote of thanks to the gallant Commodore for his patriotic conduct, a proceeding fervently acclaimed by the American Press. Palmerston, who knew the importance of being in earnest, did not wait for developments but despatched the *Great Eastern* with Guards, Rifle Brigade, and Royal Artillery, and a full cargo of war material, to Canada, although it was the middle of a rather severe winter. Never had the Guards found their bear-skins so comfortable.

[1] Extract from Captain Ross's log, 1841: "At noon our observations placed us in lat. 64° 51′ S, 164° 45′ E., dip 83° 30′. We were therefore very nearly in the centre of the mountainous patch of land laid down in Lieut. Wilkes's chart as forming a part of the Antarctic Continent."

An echo of this episode which showed that Palmerston was really serious came to me so late as 1917, when a friend related how his father, chief of a surgical appliance firm, had been sent for in haste and a contract for a million surgical dressings offered him at his own price, celerity being the one essential. Promptitude being of such importance, he pointed out that by adopting a more modern form of pin a simple alteration whereby much time would be saved would become feasible without any harm to efficiency; but the soul of the Army Medical Board was hugely vexed at the suggestion, and he was peremptorily told to manufacture to sample—which dated from the Peninsular War or beyond—or not at all.

Had a less able and level-headed man than Lincoln been at the helm of American affairs, war would in all probability have followed, but that wise ruler was not going to give the Confederates such an ally as Great Britain, and he made Congress climb down, eat their own words, and surrender the representatives. But not without mistrust. He knew the Americans were in the wrong, but, as he afterwards admitted, feared the effect of telling them so.

Until the Washington decision was known, excitement reigned in England. There was only one mail a week, and it was considered likely that the boat due at Queenstown on January 1st, 1862, would carry peace or war amongst her cargo, and locomotives were kept in steam there and at Holyhead in readiness to run the Queen's messenger to London without delay. But the reply did not come until January 7th, when Mr. Ramsbottom's express engine *Watt* made a non-stop run from Holyhead to Stafford, 130½ miles in two hours twenty-five minutes, whence the carriages were taken straight to Euston, 133½ miles, by *Bloomer* No. 372 in two hours thirty-five minutes. Before the train had quite stopped the Queen's messenger was in a hansom and racing to the Foreign Office. Peace!

The illustrated journals were full of American war pictures, some of which, I'm afraid, did not come from farther afield than Fleet Street; but still they conveyed a general idea of the scrimmage. The fight between *Monitor* and *Merri-*

mac in 1864 mystified pictorial artists a good deal. The ships were of novel and distinctive types, *Monitor* being a new vessel, with very low free-board—she was afterwards lost in a storm—and one high gun mounted in a central revolving turret, designed by that erratic genius, the Swedish engineer, Ericsson, already mentioned in connection with fire and railway engines and hot-air ships; *Merrimac*, a wooden three-decker of 4,000 tons and 60 guns built in 1856, in which year she paid a visit to Southampton, had been captured from the Federals, cut down and protected by slanting railway iron, from which shot was expected to glance harmlessly. *Merrimac*, which had already done much damage, one day came into Hampton Roads and with great gusto and success proceeded to sink the Yankee squadron of wooden ships anchored there, when *Monitor* hove in sight. A battle royal—I mean republican—ensued, of which *Merrimac* got the worse and fled. Great was the glory of *Monitor* and its designer, and sooner or later her distinguishing feature, the revolving turret, was imitated by all Christendom. But no illustrations of these mystery ships had come to England, so the artists had to interpret the word pictures of the scribes as best they could. The results were sometimes comical. But the public wanted *Monitors* and *Merrimacs*, and duly got them.

Ericsson, whose acquaintance we first made in the Marylebone Road, was very eccentric. He was said to have slept on his drawing-table. He was concerned in designing locomotives in the very early days, but in his old age he took offence at railway whistles being sounded close to his house near New York and expended much energy in trying to get them stopped. He claimed to be the inventor of the screw-propeller. He had truly worked at the problem early, but an Englishman, Smith,[1] had unquestionably

[1] Francis Pettit Smith, of Hythe, Kent, son of the local postmaster, made a first working model of a screw propeller boat in 1834, a second in 1835, and took out a patent in 1836. The following year the first actual screw-steamer, of 10 tons and 6 horse-power, was tried on the canal at Paddington. It was afterwards transferred to the Thames, and made a voyage to Dover, where it was inspected and proved on behalf of the Admiralty. As a consequence *Archimedes*, 237 tons, 90 horse-power, was

anticipated him, and, as he employed paddles for his *Caloric* in 1853, his pretensions were not unnaturally regarded as "hot air."

The blockade of Charleston by the Federal fleet attracted much attention in this country because the great majority, if not all, of the steamers evading it were British. A cargo of necessaries for the Confederates successfully run brought much profit, and two or three such trips meant a modest fortune notwithstanding the liberal wages and bonuses paid to the officers and crews in consideration of the risk they ran. In 1891 it fell to my lot to lease in Portland Street, Manchester, a big building which had been erected out of the proceeds of a lucky run into Charleston.

Laird & Co., Birkenhead, built with great rapidity a small fleet of swift paddle-steamers of light scantling for venturesome trading spirits—real merchant adventurers these—a good many of which vessels survived the war although not a few were captured or sunk. In Mesopotamia, in 1870-1, I made the acquaintance of one of these blockade-runners which had been bought and renamed *Assour* by the Turks. Her original name I unfortunately forget. That enlightened and energetic Ottoman, Midhat Pasha, afterwards imprisoned, exiled, and, it is said, ultimately murdered for suspected participation in the death of Sultan Abdul Aziz, was then at Bagdad as Governor of Irak. He had a reformative and progressive bee buzzing under his fez which made its presence felt in several ways, one of which was steamers—here, there, and everywhere. He established a line of Turkish river-boats between Bagdad and Busra, in opposition to the old-time English line of Lynch & Co.; he ran a weekly trip between Busra and Bushire in Persia (this

launched at Millwall in 1838. The five miles an hour stipulated for was doubled. In 1841 the Admiralty built *Bee* at Chatham, which, in order to test the two methods of propulsion in the same hull, was fitted with both screw and paddles. It is usual to say that the *Great Eastern* was the only steamer so provided, but such claimants reckon without their *Bee*. In 1844 *Rattler*, 800 tons, was built at Sheerness. Being tied stern to stern with the *Alecto*, paddle-wheel vessel of equal tonnage, she towed her backwards in spite of her best efforts. This drastic test established the screw propeller. Smith, however, had become impoverished and was granted a pension of £200 per annum.

was the *Assour's* turn); and bought several screw-steamers for trading down the Persian Gulf. The old blockade-runner had a bad time coming round from Constantinople under the command of a Greek whose only previous maritime experience had been gained as captain of a dredger on the Suez Canal. Neptune kicked at this affront to his dignity, and *Assour* only got to Busra by burning her paddle-boxes, bulwarks, and part of the deck.

Recollections of the early 1860s crowded on me in 1898 when, making a tour in the United States, an American engineer who had fought in the Civil War took me to Fredericksburg, the scene of one of its fiercest battles. He showed me a position he had held all the day with the battery under his command. He said that he had sent his wounded to a house close by, which he indicated, and during a pause paid them a visit. He found the lower floors covered with injured men with only a negro, a white woman and several little girls in attendance. Suddenly the Confederates, who had hitherto let the house alone, began to drop shells all round it. Bang! bang! bang! they went, and some earth was thrown violently against the windows. The woman let fall the pan she was using and began to scream, while the children clung round her and howled in various soprano keys. Every bang was echoed by a volley of shrieks. Vainly my friend tried to calm them. "There is no danger," he cried; "the enemy won't waste shells on this house; dear madam, go on helping the poor wounded —I assure you there is no danger!" At that moment there was a terrific explosion overhead; the ceiling caved in and in an instant he, the woman, children and nigger, as well as the wounded, were covered with white dust, as if they had been suddenly rolled in flour by some energetic demon much pressed for time. A shell had burst in the roof, pulverised the plaster, and projected it over them. The woman and children screamed the louder when the magic transformation scene stood revealed, and my friend ran back to his battery, where he was at first mistaken for his own ghost.

CHAPTER XXIX

1861 (*continued*) VANISHED INDUSTRIES

Locomotive building in London—Shipbuilding in London—Last days of—Blackwall (Germany)—Greenwich again—Trinity House Almshouse —Old Woolwich Road—Park—Blackheath—Circus—Dick Turpin—Panoramas—Monte Video—Magic-lanterns—Modern "penny dreadfuls"—Scarlet fever—Saffron and tamarinds—"Walk on Jenkins."

NOT far from Greenwich—at Hatcham—existed until the late 1860s the locomotive-building factory of George England and Company, the last of the kind in London. In the early days of railways several such firms had existed, Braithwaite and Ericsson, already referred to; Rennie and Company at Blackfriars, and W. B. Adams at Bow. But all had disappeared except England. He started about 1845; attracted attention at the Great Exhibition of 1851 with an engine called *Little England*, and likewise did well at the Exhibition of 1862. This was creditable as his factory was a full mile from the nearest railway-station, so that all material and fuel had to be carted to the works, and the locomotives, when built, carted away from them. As some weighed thirty tons, this was no light undertaking. England and Company came to a sad end. Their men, many of whom were from Lancashire, struck while an important contract was in course of execution and dealt the firm a blow from which it could not rally. The works were closed and locomotive building in London came to an end. Eno and Company, of Fruit Salt fame, now occupy a part of their factory in Pomeroy Street.

This strike simulated on a small scale the disastrous one which extinguished ship-building as a Thames industry. About 1880 I saw in the Isle of Dogs rows of workmen's cottages, and good cottages too, standing unoccupied and

desolate, their gardens and the paths and roadways in front obliterated by weeds. The erstwhile occupants had had to emigrate to the Clyde and elsewhere—to less genial climates and inferior accommodation—often to earn reduced wages. And now in 1924 it looks as if Old Father Time, bent on another of his usual revenges, and very effectively aided by the trade unions, is driving shipbuilding from the Clyde to the Tyne, the Wear and the Lagan.

It was in 1866 that I got my last views of Thames shipbuilding activity. With other members of my rowing club I made a down-river excursion one afternoon—it was the day on which the news of the battle of Sadowa was received—in a four-oared gig and passed close to the ironclad *Northumberland* just launched from, I think, the Thames Iron Works. She was a monster for that date. On a similar outing another day we passed a shipbuilding works near Blackwall just as a steamer for a South American Government was launched with steam up and stores and crew on board. Almost as soon as she was afloat the screw began to revolve and her nose turned down the river. After a very brief interval she glided away amidst cheers and dipping of flags.

An amusing reflex of Thames shipbuilding came to me in 1891, when, with Mr. Anthony Reckenzaun, a Hungarian electrical engineer of some fame domiciled in England and a German friend of his, I joined the paddle-steamer *Kaiser* at Coblenz for a trip up the Rhine. The boat was a double-funnelled, powerful craft, and stemmed the rapid current masterfully. Our Deutscher called attention to the fact and took occasion to praise the efficiency of German ships and machine building with considerable complacency. Later we walked round the lower deck and, passing the engine-room, came upon a brass plate bearing the makers' names: "Ravenhill and Miller, Blackwall." "In what part of Germany is Blackwall?" I innocently enquired. Reckenzaun was surprised and delighted. "It was with that firm that I served my engineering apprenticeship!" he exclaimed. Reckenzaun specialised in electric traction

and navigated the first electro-motor launch across the Channel. On the occasion of the Rhine trip he was going home to Hungary, where he contracted an illness of which he ultimately died.

One of the quaint institutions of Greenwich was (and still is) the Trinity House Almshouse for respectable aged Greenwich men which stands on the river front at the end of the passage of funny wooden houses leading eastward from the *Trafalgar Tavern*. It is a Greenwich Hospital on a small scale for poor men generally instead of for seamen.

Despite its name it has no connection with the Trinity Brethren, and, although it has occasionally formed a last port of refuge for weather-worn pilots, has no special duties towards them. Founded by an Earl of Northampton in 1616, the charity has long been administered by the Mercers Company, whose Managing Committee still pay an annual visit of inspection. Formerly they were rowed down from London in the Company's state barge by gorgeously liveried watermen, but in 1817 that mode of transport was abandoned and the stone steps at which they used to land were covered with massive slabs like another pyramid of Gizeh. The resulting slope still forms at low water a source of delight to river-side urchins, for whose skill in climbing acclivities it constitutes a severe test. The Almshouse has an old-world appearance and would look well enough with its square tower and clock were it not dwarfed and overshadowed by the monstrous, in taste as well as size, Electricity Generating Station which the London County Council have been permitted to inflict on the classic neighbourhood, ghoulishly spoiling the much-admired view of the Hospital from Observatory Hill and other points. A Limited Company is popularly supposed to have no soul: what shall we say of a County Council?

The old house has an extensive and well-kept garden attached, and with its sun-dial and fountain must seem an anticipatory slice of Paradise to the poor old men whose haven it is. The garden extends as far as the Old Woolwich Road, which anciently, before the opening of Trafalgar Road, formed the main highway through East Greenwich;

it has a door leading into this thoroughfare which bears the date of 1616 inside and 1798 outside, of which anomaly I never heard any adequate explanation. Trinity House boasts no centenarian on its roll but has, on more than one occasion, preserved an inmate up to ninety-eight. The delicious scent of a favourite dish of mine—Irish Stew—which often pervaded the cloisters at dinner-time, probably contributed, I used to think, to this Methuselahism. As a boy I knew something of Trinity House; as an old man I respect it still.

The Old Woolwich Road has been greatly rebuilt since the 1860s. It then contained many quaint houses, with wells in their back gardens; several old-fashioned inns, one of which, the *Princess Alice*, had an inner courtyard; "National" schools, built in 1839, for boys and girls, with the foundation of which the Rev. W. A. Soames had had a good deal to do. The boy scholars wore a grey uniform with Glengarry cap. The term National School generally meant Charity School, i.e. a place where education was given free at the cost of voluntary subscribers. Farther down the road was a Ragged School for boys and girls, similarly supported, of which Mr. Angerstein, M.P., was a fast friend. The scholars were of the poorest, and those who had no expectation of dinner at home could stay in and banquet modestly. The master, Mr. Newton, was an accomplished and kindly man. Being a staunch Churchman, he was grieved that the Governors let the schoolroom on Sundays for Methodist services and during the vacations for Methodist tea-fights and mothers' meetings. But religious feeling ran high in Greenwich in those days; not nice to record, perhaps, but at all events a fact that evinced interest in the higher order of things.

Greenwich Park was quieter than now except on the riotous days of public holiday, when trains, steamers and omnibuses poured an unintermittent stream of humanity into it from morning till evening. Then it was by far livelier, for the Cockney had fewer places to fly to and Greenwich as a haven of pleasure stood high in his esteem. The flower-garden near the Blackheath Gate did not exist and there was no bandstand. The deer had a greater expanse

of glade and sward. We boys traversed the Park very often on our way to and from cricket and football on Blackheath. In the Park itself no formal games were allowed, but we gloried in the avenues of ancient chestnut-trees, whose swelling boles afforded foothold for feats of dexterity and whose copious yields of fruit were famous near and far; and there were gravel-pits with steep sides in which we formed and stormed fortifications. It was indeed a jolly place to live near to.

Amusements in Greenwich were neither numerous nor elaborate. The excellent railway service brought the London theatres very close and it was not till the late 1860s that the town boasted a playhouse of its own. Where it stands, next the Baths and Wash-houses (which Greenwich, to its credit, established in the 1850s) used to be a vacant plot which was a favourite pitch for circuses and other wandering shows. These I did not patronise, as a rule, but on one occasion was tempted to invest my coppers by unusually elaborate and persistent pictorial advertisements billed over the whole town—"Dick Turpin's Ride to York and the Affecting Death of Black Bess, Represented by the Leading Equestrians of the Day."

It proved very disappointing after the high expectations raised by the posters. The fugitive highwayman, wearing a red coat, knee-breeches, buckled shoes and three-cornered hat, all very shabby, shot Tom King and rode several times round the ring, jumping over ordinary hurdles, followed by two or three highly supposititious Bow Street runners doing the same and shouting. After a time these officers stumbled and fell out one by one, distanced by Dick Turpin's matchless steed. That hero pulled up after a few more rounds, and Black Bess, who looked suspiciously like a piebald colt blackened over, lay down. The man sat on her and threw down his whip despairingly. Then a pistol was fired. Dick started, picked up the whip, hid his face in the ample cuff of his coat, and cried (or laughed) himself out. And the circus was crowded at 3*d*. a head, and never a word of remonstrance!

There was a Hall on Royal Hill next to the Baths where quite nice entertainments were given. These sometimes

included a panorama. I doubt whether the picture-surfeited children of 1924 know exactly what that was, and quite sure that after the "movies" they would vote it slow and babyish. It was a series of pictures wound on huge rollers operated by a winch or other device, so that they could be successively presented to an audience. A lecturer—sometimes competent, sometimes much the reverse—described each scene as displayed. I remember a panorama, about 1862, which dealt with Palestine, one of the tableaux showing the celebration of Christmas Midnight Mass in the Church of the Nativity. There was an organ in the Hall and this was played softly and solemnly while the gas was turned low and the brilliantly illuminated altar, surmounted by a huge cross, shown up by lights behind. The sombre church, the shadowy congregation, the glittering crucifix, the subtle music, impressed me powerfully and I felt that I should like to be, oh, so good!—that I could never be naughty again!

Whether that came to pass it would not become me to say; but being in Monte Video at Christmas, 1907, and hearing that a Midnight Mass was to be celebrated at the Cathedral, memories of the Royal Hill picture came upon me and I determined to be present. The scene was quite like that depicted in the old panorama—gloomy arches, indistinct worshippers, shining altar, solemn organ—but the heart of the beholder was changed somehow. I had a Kodak in my pocket, and, finding a convenient niche, took a 15-minute exposure of the mystic scene. It showed the altar up well, but little else. Panoramas like that at Greenwich were instructive in a high degree. I am sure that I came away knowing much more about the Holy Land than when I went in, and as for midnight masses I had never suspected that such things existed, although I had got a Roman Catholic priest for an uncle.

Magic-lantern exhibitions of voyages and travels with spoken explanations of the slides were likewise frequent at Greenwich and no doubt helped to lighten the darkness enveloping the masses. There was a Society which distributed free tickets for them to poor children.

What a magnificent educative medium we possess in the Cinema if it were only intelligently used instead of debased as at present. In the Victorian days we used to deplore the existence of "penny dreadfuls"—tales of crime, violence and vice dished up attractively for boys—but which were never very numerous. Now we present our children—both boys and girls—with animated "penny dreadfuls" in unlimited quantity and see no harm in it. Worthy pictures and good lecturers would be even as high-voltage lamps in the murkiest grottoes of Ignorance.

There was another kind of panorama occasionally seen in London—a set scene or big picture built in with rock-work or other accessories which the spectator viewed from a (supposed) roof or brow of a hill. Of such I remember the *Siege of Paris* at the Crystal Palace, with which the late Mr. E. A. Vizetelly, translator of Zola's books, had something to do. Also *Ancient Rome* (I wondered where the chimney-pots were, and thought the artist must have forgotten them) with a Triumph in progress; and the *Battle of Trafalgar* (painted by a German !).

One evening in 1861 I was reading a tale by Greenwood, in after-years the Amateur Casual and Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in which the dark arches of the Adelphi and the nightly concourse there of street arabs and homeless children were vividly depicted—Dr. Barnardo, destined to disperse such congregations, was not yet—when I suddenly felt sick and had to put it aside. An attack of scarlet fever developed and kept me a prisoner for several weeks. I mention this because, under the doctor's orders, I had to take saffron and a drink made from tamarinds, both, I believe, obsolete remedies to-day; and furthermore, during convalescence read for the first time *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and the *Adventures of Peter Wilkins*. *Robinson Crusoe* I had familiarly known for at least six years, but Peter, with his flying men, I thought ran him close in interest, although I noted a likeness between the cavern into which he was drawn and one of the experiences of Sinbad the Sailor. A coloured picture showed Wilkins navigating his boat, tiller in hand, through the tossing waves of the cavern which the

text described as being pitch dark. The colours were bright, the waves being particularly green (where they didn't consist of foam), and, although I thought it strange that Peter could steer so deftly in the dark, especially as there was no way on the boat except that imparted by the stream, it never struck me that without light there could be no colour and no picture to sketch, and that a truer presentment of the scene would have been a blotch of printer's ink.

Another reminiscence of my early Greenwich days relates to "Walk on Jenkins," whose phantom occasionally intrudes even yet on my remembrance. He was the policeman of our immediate neighbourhood, and was held in detestation by children for his inflexibility about games in the public streets, and his habit of impounding hoops bowled on footpaths, which had to be reclaimed at the station at the expense of a lecture from the grey-haired Inspector in which hints of dire penalties to be incurred in the event of future breaches of the regulations were freely scattered. Constable Jenkins rarely passed a group of boys at a street corner or elsewhere without saying, "Walk on there!" This he did so often that "Walk on Jenkins" became his nickname, and he knew it, for it was frequently bawled after him from a safe distance by daring and irreverent urchins.

When "Walk on Jenkins" interfered once in a fight and got his eyes blackened and his tall leathern hat bashed over his face by a local pugilist known as Slogger Ward, there was rejoicing round the walls of the ancient Park and the sun seemed to shine a bit brighter that day. Poor man! It was said that having a wife and children at home, once a week, after his spell of duty on the streets, he had to doff the blue uniform of the Queen, top-hat, truncheon and rattle, tuck up his shirt-sleeves and do the family washing. He had certainly been seen hanging "things" out to dry. We thought that both funny and derogatory and despised him accordingly; but I can now see that if such majestically formed soap-suds were necessary to make ends meet or to relieve a weakly wife (a policeman's wife could scarcely be lazy in the nature of things), then his spells at the washtub were very much to his credit.

CHAPTER XXX

1861 (*continued*)—THE FIRST LONDON RAILWAY

Greenwich Railway—First London terminus—Boulevard—Prince of Orange—"Kiss me, Hardy"—Captain Marryat—George Stephenson—Leased by S.E.R.—Enormous holiday traffic—Early poems and prognostications—And results—Enter the gorilla.

THE railway to Greenwich did not escape my attention. It was an interesting line in several ways. To begin with, it was the first in London, having been opened from Spa Road to Deptford on February 8th, 1836. It is comical to think that from that date until December 14th, 1836, when the section to London Bridge became available, the only railway terminus in the metropolis (Deptford for the nonce being reckoned provincial) was located in a back slum in Bermondsey, in West Street, now known as Rouel Road, for although there has been a Spa Road—so called—station since 1836, and still is, there has never been one actually entered from that thoroughfare. The access to this primeval terminus was through the first archway on the left coming from Jamaica Road. This entrance now appears very low, but I believe the street level has been raised since the 'sixties. The arch in which the old booking-office was situated may be identified to this day by its large ornamental window; it and some adjacent ones are now tenanted by Messrs. Lipton.

Secondly, the railway was unique, being constructed on a brick viaduct 22 feet high from end to end, that method of building facilitating the crossing of the many intersecting thoroughfares. It was designed by Colonel G. T. Landmann, a retired Royal Engineer who had served with distinction in the Peninsula and Canada and had turned his attention to railway building only after his life's work might have been

reasonably reckoned as finished. In the Greenwich Railway he left an enduring monument. Completed in 1836, it is, in 1924, as substantial as ever and busy carrying locomotives and trains many times heavier than those he provided for. It has been imitated the world over. Landmann left four volumes of *Recollections* which are replete with interest of many sorts.

In the third place, this railway afforded a striking instance of an undertaking sound in itself being entirely and irretrievably ruined by the possession by its promoters and managers, in a quite unusual degree, of those admirable qualities—ambition, initiative, foresight, enterprise, courage, energy, grit, tenacity, perseverance—which the old copy-books asserted were the infallible keys to success. Had the line been made at anything like a reasonable cost and restricted to serving London, Deptford, and Greenwich, the magnificent traffic developed would have resulted in splendid dividends; but, alas! such a circumscribed usefulness only formed a tiny morsel of the promoters' grandiose plans.

Colonel Landmann's splendid viaduct, nearly four miles long and comprising over 900 arches and bridges, was in itself very costly, but immense sums were squandered in acquiring three times as much property as was needed for the railway in order to form a double road or boulevard on either side of the viaduct, to be planted with trees and made an attractive promenade. This was to create a new, direct and agreeable highway between London and Greenwich and to serve as approach to the dwelling-houses and shops the directors vainly imagined taking root under the arches. Strange enterprise for a railway company to oppose their own undertaking by providing special facilities for avoiding the use of it! It is true they levied tolls, but the amounts collected were derisory in view of the huge capital cost. This bizarre Boulevard proved a veritable Queer Street, for when the line was finished it had cost £733,000 instead of the estimated £400,000.

Shortly before the opening the Prince of Orange, heir to the throne of Holland, rode over the arches on an engine, an event commemorated by the *Prince of Orange* public-house

which stands by the Greenwich Station to this day. Although the railway was largely used, there were some who distrusted it, even as aeroplanes are viewed askance by the multitude of our times. Amongst these was Sir Thomas Hardy, then Governor of Greenwich Hospital, one of Nelson's dare-devil captains and hero of the pathetic "Kiss me, Hardy" episode of the cock-pit of the *Victory*. Lady Hardy tried the new facility early and apparently enjoyed the experience, but Sir Thomas, no! He had gone through Trafalgar's trying day, and many another, with every possible credit, but the line must be drawn somewhere, and with him that line was the Greenwich Railway! His life was at his country's service at any hour of the day or night, but to risk it uselessly on the new-fangled railroad was not his intention. *That* was not included in the duty England expected every man to do; or, if it were, then England might expect to be disappointed.

Very differently did another veteran of the cerulean deep welcome the locomotive. Captain Marryat, R.N., author of *Mr. Midshipman Easy* and numerous other stories of the brine, was a guest at the opening of the first Belgian Railway on May 5th, 1835, travelled in the first trains, and wrote an amusing account of his novel journeyings in *Olla Podrida*. He called the engines steam-tugs and thought the priests, although good enough to bless the new concern, really in their hearts considered the *chemin de fer* as a *chemin d'enfer*. George Stephenson, who had supplied the tugs and engineered the line, drove one of them in person that day and was created a *Chevalier de l'Ordre Leopold*. Good old Geordie! Seeing it was a steam-horse he rode *Chevalier à vapeur de l'Ordre Leopold* would have been even more to the point. It is noteworthy that little Belgium not only had the first continental railway, but that that railway ante-dated the first one in London by about nine months. She also built the first locomotive—a replica of one of those from Newcastle—produced across the Channel. Both the Germans and French were behindhand in opening railways and building engines.

The permanent way of the Greenwich Railway proved too

rigid and had to be relaid at great cost. The arches could not be used as houses, for they were not water-tight and had to be stripped and coated with asphalte. Nevertheless, the *Halfway House* tavern established under an arch in 1835, close to what is now the Rotherhithe New Road, has preserved its licence to this day. The foresight of the promoters included an extension to Woolwich; the line, therefore, was stopped short in a part of Greenwich convenient for that purpose and the terminus buildings arranged accordingly, whereas the railway would have benefited enormously had it been carried to the river-side and connection established with the down-river steam-boats. The London and Blackwall Railway afterwards tapped that business with great success; very few people wanted to go to Blackwall itself, for, indeed, its natural beauties were few, if select, but myriads used the Blackwall pier.

Another admirable piece of acumen which, in the end, proved the extinguisher of the poor Greenwich Company, was a scheme for making their arches the London approach for the London and Croydon Railway (afterwards merged in the Brighton Railway) and the South-Eastern Railway. These lines were made to join the arches at Corbett's Lane and run over them to London Bridge, paying a toll of fourpence per passenger. This those companies soon tired of doing, and conspired against the little Greenwich Company so successfully that it had to hand over its undertaking to the South-Eastern Company on a 1,000-year lease from January 1st, 1845. The warfare was very bitter, and the Croydon Company was accused of deliberately engineering a collision for the purpose of inducing a Select Committee then sitting to imagine that the existing arrangements were insufficient and dangerous. The London and Greenwich Railway Company continued to exist, but merely for the purpose of receiving and distributing the rent payable under the lease, until December 31st, 1922, when, under the Railway Grouping Act, it was compulsorily absorbed by the Southern Railway.

When, in the early 1860s, I came to know the line familiarly, the traffic carried was great and the service of three eight-coach trains per hour clock-like in its punctuality.

The only serious opposition came from the smart river steam-boats. Trams did not exist and the omnibuses, although named after the great Nelson, were small, slow and infrequent. On general holidays trains were run as quickly as they could be loaded and got away, and that with a celerity not inferior to the hustling on our present-day Tubes, for the carriages were well adapted for rapidly filling and emptying. Our forefathers of the iron roads knew better than to force jostling crowds through end doors when they could have a separate portal for every ten. On such occasions overcrowding was quite the rule, although there were no straps to hang to.

So a train came into the imposing and convenient Greenwich terminus every three or four minutes, disgorging multitudes of good-tempered trippers who thronged to the Park, Painted Hall, Blackheath, Tea-pot Row or riverside and enjoyed themselves mightily. The old Collegeman liked these holidays, for could he not talk about Nelson and Hardy; about the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake*; about Navarino, Trafalgar, Camperdown, the Nile? Might he not even have seen the boy who "stood on the burning deck"? So he tacked and filled and manœuvred to gain the weather-gage of the visitors; and shivered his timbers and spliced the main-brace in strict conformity with the gospel according to Marryat; and was happy, poor simple soul!

In view of the part played by railways in the late Great War—which, indeed, could never have occurred on the scale it did without them—heed ye, shades of Trevithick and Stephenson!—it would be amusing, if the theme were not so sad, to reflect that the iron road was hailed as a God-sent agent of peace and good-will. Early notices of railways develop this idea abundantly. A certain Mr. George Ponsford of Pentonville waxed eloquent on the subject, and was sure that the new invention would convert swords into reaping-hooks quicker than a French cook could make omelettes; and Charles Mackay, a well-known poet of the period, sang in 1845:

"Lay down your rails, ye nations, near and far;
Yoke your full trains to steam's triumphant car;

Link town to town : and in these iron bands
Unite th' estranged and oft-embattled lands.
Peace and improvement round each train shall soar,
And knowledge light the ignorance of yore.
. . . . . .
Blessings on Science and her handmaid Steam !
They make Utopia only half a dream."

Which only proves the prudence of the modern politician's maxim, " Wait and see ! "

How shocked the amiable Mackay would have been with some of the railway sights of 1917! One afternoon at Addison Road Station, Kensington, I saw a terribly long ambulance train draw up from the south, crowded with wounded : while, alongside it, on the middle down track, stood, stopped by signal, an ammunition train, *en route* for Woolwich Arsenal, of some forty closed vans stuffed with high explosives for charging shells. Cause and effect—seed and harvest—side by side ! Had that nice little lot exploded, Olympia—think of it, ye gods !—would have gone skyward and the whole neighbourhood followed in chase. Scarcely the agricultural machinery effect contemplated by the sanguine Ponsford.

Du Chaillu, discoverer of the gorilla, hitherto more or less a fabled monster, was much talked and joked about this year (1861). He claimed to have fought a duel with and killed a gigantic tree-man whose skin he brought home by way of circumstantial evidence. But a taxidermic expert, Dr. Grey, said the beast had been shot behind, which was not one of the locations recognised by the code of honour. Professor Owen and Sir Philip Egerton, two other specialists, were equally positive that Sylvanus had taken his wound in front like an old Roman. Who could decide ? So there were partisans and pictures and skits ; but Du Chaillu certainly brought home the skin.

In 1861 the gorilla materialised out of more or less discredited story : in 1924 I read appeals to big game hunters to stay their hands, seeing that he is on the verge of extinction. Man, thou art the most destructive force in Nature—volcanoes are as nothing to thee !

CHAPTER XXXI

1862–3—GREAT EXHIBITION—PRINCESS ALEXANDRA

1862—Exhibition—Disappointing buildings—Mr. Gladstone defeated—Splendid exhibits—Locomotives—Ships—Colonies—Aniline dyes—Armstrong and Krupp guns—Candlesticks—Koh-i-noor—Strand Theatre—Lady of Lyons—1863—Prince of Wales's marriage—Woolwich—Illuminations—London Bridge unapproachable—Successful manœuvre.

I HAVE vivid recollections of the Great Exhibition of 1862, the much-criticised buildings of which were erected between Cromwell, Prince Albert and Exhibition Roads, South Kensington, or, as it was then more commonly called, Brompton. Instead of inviting competitive plans the Exhibition Commissioners entrusted the designs to a gentleman esteemed by them as a "born architect." His detractors, while willing to admit the adjective, were emphatic in substituting something else for the noun.

Accustomed as I was to the Crystal Palace, it is not surprising that I failed to find the 1862 edifice imposing, although it did boast a dome 200 feet high. Very likely the same sense of shortcoming, similarly excited in others, unfairly prejudiced the new man's work: his was the difficult task of following on after a universally admired model. And he complained that the Commissioners had altered some of his details without authority. According to one caustic commentator the general result was "a building, the ugliness and absurd unsuitability of which have disgraced the architectural knowledge and taste of England in the eyes of the whole world." Rather a sad Exhibition, that, for England! It had been intended to preserve the chief structure for utilisation as a permanent museum, but the wholesale condemnation it met with put the project out of sight. Mr. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer,

burned his fingers in handling the matter. He proposed to Parliament to purchase the Exhibition buildings for £105,000, but was defeated by 287 votes to 121.

There were, however, grand things inside. I recollect specially the locomotives, of which there was a fine display, including specimens from France and Austria ; the models of ships, marine engines and floating docks ; the lighthouse lanterns and lenses ; the agricultural machinery,—in all these England led the world by a whole boxful of long chalks. The Australian Colonies showed up well with trophies illustrating their gold and wool productions. In a conspicuous position was a towering and glittering obelisk representing the mass of gold won from the Southern Continent since the discovery there of the lustrous metal.

Aniline dyes, Mr. Perkin's epoch-marking discovery of six years before, had an attractive exhibit ; perhaps it was that which first caused the Germans to take up a matter which they afterwards pushed with such extraordinary success. One of the greatest shows was of guns—Armstrong, Whitworth, Krupp. Rifling and breech-loading of cannon were then receiving special attention and all three firms—Armstrong and Whitworth were rivals in those days—had many samples, large and small, on view. Our recent kind friend, Herr Krupp of Essen, specially shone. His guns, and portions thereof, were so highly polished that the fair sex, in search of mirrors, had only to gather at his stall and admire what they saw. A contrast, illuminative of the state of domestic lighting of the period, was a fine show of candlesticks, snuffers and extinguishers, comprising all modern improvements and some special patents by the exhibitor. I imagine that specifications relating to candlesticks do not bring much grist to the Patent Office mill in 1924.

This was my first International Exhibition. It is true that I had been present at the 1851 Hyde Park show as a baby, where, according to the family records, I had conceived a great admiration for the Crown Jewels, even putting out a hand to clutch the Koh-i-noor ; but of this adventure I had no knowledge of my own.

We finished an exciting day at the Strand Theatre, where was presented a burlesque on Lord Lytton's romantic play, *The Lady of Lyons*, in which Claude Melnotte's mother, an actor in female accoutrements, pelted Pauline's father with uncooked dumplings. Then an omnibus took us to London Bridge Station in time for the last train; we sat on the knife-board, passed beneath the ugly and obstructive Temple Bar, and in St. Paul's Churchyard closely skirted the Sussex-iron railings of the Cathedral.

Of the many events of 1863 which live in my memory the marriage of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, for whom I had been accustomed to pray every Sunday, stands out prominently. Denmark and things Danish had been booming in the press for some time, and Alexandra and Dagmar, names hitherto unknown of the average person, had become almost as familiar as Betsy and Jane. The Princess had a great reception at Gravesend, where some ultra-loyal citizens proposed to change the cognomen of their township to Alexandra in perpetual remembrance of the auspicious event. But they got well sat upon for their trouble, the good-will residing in the old title being considered too valuable to be set aside. Had they proposed to supersede the somewhat lugubrious Gravesend by what it really means, Grovesend, better success might have been wished to their efforts.

That day, March 7th, my father and I walked to Woolwich Common, where a grand salute was to be fired to notify the passage through the town over the North Kent Railway of the train conveying the Princess to Bricklayers' Arms terminus. The news was signalled from the Arsenal station by a long line of soldiers carrying lances tipped with red-and-white flags. We saw the last three or four drop practically simultaneously and at the same instant the first gun flashed and banged. Telephones could not have conveyed the news more promptly. An officer's horse was led close to the battery during the salute, probably to accustom him to the firing, which, indeed, he took very philosophically.

The Princess received a grand ovation at Bricklayers'

Arms, where the scene I have described in connection with the arrival there of the Crown Prince of Prussia some five years previously was repeated, but with larger crowds and much greater enthusiasm. And how marvellously different have the two marriages eventuated!

Before leaving the Common we visited the Rotunda, a museum chiefly of military objects, and, not for the first time, admired the puzzling balance clock which worked by a ball running in zigzag grooves under the influence of gravity.

Woolwich, apart from the Common, was a mean and dirty place, with a big churchyard dominating the principal thoroughfare. The Arsenal and Dockyard hid the river, and were themselves concealed by sombre walls, while the South-Eastern Railway Company's North Kent branch traversed the town in a deep walled cutting interspersed with tunnels. The two stations were approached by many steps and the top of the cutting was everywhere walled off from the adjacent roads; so altogether Woolwich was a disgusting place for boys who wanted to study ships and trains.

At the pier, however, we could get a glimpse of Father Thames, and as it was largely used by steamers and about a dozen of them, spare or undergoing repair, lay moored or anchored close by, we found the spot interesting. The ferry to North Woolwich then belonged, I think, to the Great Eastern Railway and was worked by two steam-boats with twin red funnels called *Kent* and *Essex*. This was, of course, long before the era of the London County Council's free ferries and tunnels, and I think the fare for crossing was one penny.

On March 10th the Prince and Princess were wedded and I formed one of a party of adventurers bent upon seeing the illuminations, which, according to the prophets, were to be of unparalleled magnificence. Starting from the Marble Arch soon after dark, we made our way along Oxford Street, Holborn, Holborn Hill (there was no viaduct then) and Newgate Street to the City. The crowds were immense, especially in the vicinity of any exceptional show, and, although vehicular traffic was suspended, the whole thorough-

fare was packed and our progress tortoise-like and spasmodic.

Electricity as a practicable illuminant had not come in, although to send a beam from an electric arc lamp along Oxford Street was already within the resources of science, and, I am told, was actually accomplished that evening. Gas-jets formed the foundation of most of the devices, although the old-fashioned oil, burning in glasses of many colours, reared its ancient front here and there. Some of the most effective crowns and plumes of feathers were so built up. All firms and shops of any pretension advertised their burning and steadfast loyalty in terms of flickering light. Some had larger shows than others, but there was scant variety in plan, and when the first dozen had been passed in review there was little to wonder at afterwards.

I marvelled at the simplicity of the country yokels—amongst whom I should in justice classify myself—hailing as I did from Kent—who gasped at and admired such simple devices. Close to Day and Martin's Temple of Blacking, the classic façade of which was picked out in luminous fringes, an omnibus had overturned earlier in the day and reposed partly on the northern pavement, where it formed an obstruction of no mean effectiveness. The crowds surged round it and got entangled in the wheels, men swore mightily, while women screamed, and we had difficulty in navigating through the Charybdis thus created.

About 10 o'clock we reached Cheapside, where John Bennett, clockmaker, in years to come Alderman and Sheriff, but never Mayor, had his chime-striking giants embowered in effulgence such as Aladdin had not known in his garden of jewels, and began to feel anxious regarding our last train, due to leave London Bridge soon after 11. All attempts to win through to the Mansion House, where His Worshipful the Lord Mayor was casting back to the sky no mean portion of the shine ordinarily received from it, proved abortive; but we had a strategist with us who, finding a frontal attack impracticable, determined to turn the enemy's flank. We got into Bow Lane and under the gracious protection, perchance, of St. Dick Whittington, threaded our way through

many by-ways (there was then no Queen Victoria Street) to Southwark Bridge.

Here was a good sprinkling of people, despite the half-penny toll, many more than that Cinderella amongst bridges was accustomed to at any time of an ordinary day or night, but no embarrassing crowd. A burly old gentleman was coming across with his top-hat in one hand and stick in the other calling out at every few steps, "The Prince of Wales, God bless him! Bless him!" emphasising every "bless" with a sounding thwack on the foot-path with his stick. There were no dissentients.

On the Surrey side all was peace and strange quietude and we soon reached London Bridge, where turmoil re-asserted itself, crowds thronging over the river to the stations. The Greenwich platform was crowded, but when the train came in—the last that night—room was found somehow for the lot. In our compartment we were like the Wandering Jew pedlar's tiara—three deep at least. The engine was No. 2, already immortalised in these pages, and she had a heavy, if light-hearted, load. At Greenwich the streets were quiet, with here and there a sorry illumination—so we thought after our grand Oxford Street pilgrimage—flickering on its way to extinction. "And so to bed."

Had I in my sleep been vouchsafed a pre-vision of London streets in 1924 with their electric signs and wonders, exceeding the festal splendours of 1863 even as Donati's comet outshone the polar star, I should doubtlessly have deemed it simply one of the eccentric and impossible fantasies of dreamland.

CHAPTER XXXII

1863—THE FIRST UNDERGROUND

Metropolitan Railway—Sir John Fowler—Forth Bridge—Special engines for underground—Broad-gauge—First gas-lit carriages—Great Western Railway—Edinburgh Exhibition, 1890—Supine Museum authorities—M.R. quarrels with G.W.R.—Great Northern called in—Boiler explosion at Bishop's Road—Metropolitan work their own line—R. H. Burnett.

ONLY a few days later, March 14th, 1863, on my thirteenth birthday, I made my first journey on the Underground—the Metropolitan Railway—which had been opened on the previous January 10th, and was still a public wonder. It had been projected and talked about for many years, and during construction had kept well in popular view, especially when the Demon of the Fleet Ditch (in reality the little river Fleet) had broken into and flooded the half-finished tunnels on more than one vexatious occasion. I had kept my small eye on the proceedings and read the accounts of the opening with great interest and admiration for the talented engineer, Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Fowler, destined to become even more famous in later years by the share he bore in the design and erection of the great Forth Bridge.

Little did I, the small boy of 1863, realise that, in the unfathomable future that lay before me, I should one day come to know the eminent engineer and talk over with him the early days of the Metropolitan Railway in the beautiful mansion he built for himself at Braemore near Ullapool, right away in the Scottish Highlands, where, as he once remarked, not an ounce of chalk was to be found unless it were in his own and other (if any) billiard-rooms; and that I should be one of the very few to travel with him and his renowned co-worker, Sir Benjamin Baker, in the first train

that ever crossed the Forth Bridge from end to end—a "pug" engine and one 3rd class coach. Were these future events already on the cylinder of the Ages to be reeled off when reached by the inscrutable and inevitable stylus of Old Father Time? *Quién sabe?*

The limits of the Underground were at first Farringdon Street and Bishop's Road, Paddington, immediately alongside the terminus of the Great Western Railway, the intermediate stations being as at present. Although laid with the mixed gauge of the standard 4 feet 8½ inches and the Brunel broad-gauge of 7 feet, it was originally worked exclusively on the latter, the G.W.R. providing locomotives and carriages comprising new features. The engines were arranged to condense the steam they used, or the greater part of it, cold water being carried for the purpose in special tanks, which Sir Daniel Gooch, the designer, placed under the boilers, putting the cylinders outside (an almost unparalleled thing on the broad-gauge), to make room for them. For many years the resulting hot water was discharged on the completion of each journey at Farringdon (subsequently also at Moorgate Street and the Mansion House) and replaced by cold. So long as this plan was followed the tunnels were comparatively fresh and clean, but after the Inner Circle was completed and engines ran right round, this frequent change and waste of water was found irksome and expensive and was discontinued, fresh water only sufficient for boiler requirements being taken. This got hot before use, and so ineffective for condensing. The foulness of the tunnels in the later days of steam was quite avoidable, but the Companies found it cheaper to defy public opinion than to trouble about the necessary precautions.

I discovered many things worthy of attention at Farringdon Street terminus when I started for Bishop's Road. It was my first introduction to the broad-gauge I had read so much about; the form of Daniel Gooch's special engines was quite novel and a bit grotesque; the carriages were gas-lighted—the first example of the kind in the world, I believe—the necessary gas being carried compressed in reservoirs on the roofs—or "rooves," as I once heard them termed by an

official; and I found that seats were provided in the guards' compartments for any overflow of passengers. Of course I immediately constituted myself an overflow for the occasion and travelled in the front guard's van, whence a splendid view was had of the engine foot-plate and its grimy occupants as well as of the line and signals ahead. These signals were worked on the block system on a special plan devised by Mr. C. E. Spagnoletti, the Telegraph Engineer of the G.W.R., who, in after-years I came to know quite well and had the pleasure of entertaining at the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1890—twenty-seven years ahead. The stations were visible from afar, owing to the patch of light they threw across the cavernous track, and the shining rails sometimes revealed curves which to my inexperienced eye appeared dangerous—alarmingly sharper than any on the Greenwich Railway.

In the afternoon I returned from Bishop's Road and was lucky enough to encounter yet another experience. The up-platform projects beyond the down and from its extremity a view is had of the G.W.R. main-line and its entrance to Paddington Terminus. To this point I of course gravitated while waiting for my train. Scarcely had I got there when some broad-gauge carriages began to defile before my gaze, pushed from behind by an invisible engine still under the adjacent station roof. They passed slowly, up to eight or nine in number, and then came a low tender followed by the biggest locomotive I had ever seen, carrying on its arched frame, beneath the 8-feet driving wheel splasher in large brass letters, the name *Lord of the Isles*. I had read of this machine—how it had taken a gold medal at the 1851 Exhibition and how it was often employed in running the Queen between Slough and Paddington; and it was certainly somewhat of a chance that it should be the very first to greet my introduction to the G.W.R. main line, more especially as, twenty-seven years later, my own name, by a vagary of fortune, was to appear on that same frame in juxtaposition to the brazen cognomen.

In 1890, as a Member of the Engineering Committee of

the Edinburgh International Exhibition, I was delegated to organise the Railway Annex designed to form a prominent feature of that fine show, and in that capacity arranged for exhibits from several leading railways, and amongst them was the *Lord of the Isles* from the Great Western. A broad-gauge engine had never been seen in Scotland, and it was thought, rightly as it turned out, that she would prove an attraction. The engine came by the Caledonian Railway, dismantled and loaded on several trucks. She was consigned to me and my name had been affixed by the careful packers to the various parts. A gang of fitters came from Swindon to put her together, with a foreman who told me that his father had turned the *Lord's* crank-axle when she was built in 1851. Although nearly forty years had elapsed and in the Annex she stood in proximity to express engines of the largest and most modern types, the *Lord of the Isles* was inferior to none in size, showing how very far ahead the Great Western Railway, thanks to the broad-gauge and the talented foresight of Daniel Gooch, its first locomotive designer, had been in the early days of railways.

The abolition of the broad-gauge in 1892 induced me to make an effort to preserve adequate mementoes of it in the South Kensington Museum, and I addressed a letter to the *National Observer* of June 11th, 1892, suggesting that the *Lord of the Isles* and the *North Star*, the engine which had taken the first train out of Paddington when the G.W.R. was opened in 1837, should be given to the Museum by the Railway. The letter interested Professor A. C. Elliott, D.Sc., Professor of Engineering at the University College, Cardiff, and Sir Edward Reed, lately Chief Naval Constructor, and our joint representations induced the company to present, and the museum authorities to accept, the *North Star* and a comprehensive selection of other broad-gauge plant. The company preferred not to give *Lord of the Isles* as they intended (they said) to preserve her themselves at Paddington.

The museum people wrote in February, 1893, that the mementoes "would be placed in the Museum as soon as arrangements could be made for their proper display."

That time never came. They would not receive and store them in a temporary shed or under tarpaulins in the grounds, where there was plenty of room, and in 1906, after thirteen years of official procrastination, it was suddenly announced in the Press that the Great Western Railway were breaking the engines up, as the room they occupied at Swindon was wanted. Had it occurred to either party to notify the original movers in the matter arrangements would certainly have been made to store the machines. In fact, as soon as the breaking-up news appeared, I wrote to Swindon offering to buy both engines at their scrap value, but was informed that it was too late. An unfortunate lapse on the part of the Museum officials! It was bad business for the G.W.R. also, as the American Railway Museum Authorities at Chicago would have given much more than break-up price for such famous specimens of early railway days.

The working of the Metropolitan Railway by the Great Western Railway endured but a short time. The companies quarrelled over the latter's subscription to the capital needed for the extension to Moorgate Street that public opinion immediately demanded, and on August 10th the G.W.R. withdrew their engines and carriages and left the Metropolitan to work their own local services. This they commenced to do on the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge the next morning by the aid of engines, to which condensing gear was fitted in a hurry, lent by the Great Northern Railway. On May 9th, 1864, one of these locomotives burst its boiler when just starting with a train from Bishop's Road, causing wide-spread destruction to the station, but nothing very serious by way of personal injury. The enginemen had narrow escapes, and an omnibus in the Harrow Road, 200 yards away, was nearly hit by the dome of the boiler which had been sent skyward like a rocket.

A train arrived at the opposite platform at the instant of the explosion and in it was Mr. R. H. Burnett, who had just been appointed Locomotive Superintendent to the Metropolitan, he having been actively concerned in the building of the engines they had ordered for themselves from Beyer, Peacock & Co. Seeing a train starting and possessed by a

natural curiosity about the locomotives used by his new employers, he lowered the window of his compartment to have a look. At that moment, when he was only some sixteen feet away from the Great Northern engine, its boiler exploded, and he thought the end of the world had come. Fortunately it was the top plates that blew out and the destructive force and escaping steam were directed upwards through the station roof, which then arched right over the permanent way.

Burnett was afterwards Locomotive Superintendent to the New South Wales State Railways. He remained in the business all his long life, but no boiler of his ever exploded. The Paddington blow-up was, after all, a blessing in disguise, for it demonstrated, as nothing else could have done, what a devil it is that lurks in every steam-boiler and how thoroughly the fetters which keep the demon within bounds must be forged.

Many years afterwards Mr. Burnett became one of my best friends—although, strange to relate, we first got acquainted through taking opposite sides in a newspaper controversy—and his death in 1916 hit me hard. It is said that new friends are never made late in life, but this experience surely discredits that sardonic allegation—or, peradventure, constitutes the proverbial exception that proves it.

CHAPTER XXXIII

1863 (*continued*)—TRAGEDY, PATHOS AND FARCE

Ionian Isles cession—Donnybrookopolis—Everything declines except taxes—Pathos in Houndsditch—Steam fire-engines competition—*Manhattan* defeated—Baked potato-can—American leveller in the Philippines—Moonshine blindness—Catastrophe at Santiago—Cardinal Manning's exorcism—Accident at New Cross—Sources of the Nile—Mr. Banting—William Crookes and thallium.

IN January, 1863, was completed the cession of the Ionian Isles to Greece, an act which met with my distinct disapproval, for the political sagacity incidental to my thirteenth year could find no health in any dismemberment of the British Empire. My opposition had no origin in party proclivities. The islands were ceded by a Liberal Ministry, Mr. Gladstone being particularly concerned; but in later years I was even more indignant at the surrender of Heligoland—of which islet and its inhabitants I had some first-hand knowledge—by Lord Salisbury and his Conservatives. We had been in the Ionian Islands since 1809. The people had multiplied and communities prospered under our rule although the patriotic or pro-Greek enthusiasts were very unwilling to admit the fact, and great rejoicings took place when the news of the magnanimous renunciation arrived. But the immediate fruits were deplorable. The scenes that took place were almost foreshadowings of those in Ireland in 1923 when the Hibernians were left to govern themselves. Donnybrookopolis would not have been a bad name for the capital. Two years later and the *Times* reported: Perfect anarchy; homicides and assaults; fights and loss of life with pistols, knives, stilettos, yataghans; police don't interfere; old post

office employees replaced by incompetents and service disorganised, etc., etc.

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war!"

Well, that tug came along all right as soon as the British ships of war had gone—and took the islanders in tow! Population and prosperity—indeed everything except taxes—declined as soon as Britannia's shield had been withdrawn, and to this day there are Ionian Islanders who would like to nestle under it again.

In 1892 it was my fortune to meet an ex-military officer who once, in the absence of the Governor, had had charge of one of the principal islands and for a period reigned in his stead. He had fallen on very evil times, and had become a canvasser for telephone subscriptions. One day his duty led him to Houndsditch, to call on a Jewish dealer in old clothes (there are several in the neighbourhood). On entering the shop he saw displayed for sale a complete uniform and equipment of an officer of his old corps, and, moreover, of his old rank. Tears came into the poor fellow's eyes as he told me. (And he failed to secure Aaron as a subscriber.)

This much may be said for the Ionian Isles cession—it constitutes, I believe, the sole example on record of one nation voluntarily ceding valuable territory to another. And this was done by the very people denounced by Germans and others as the champion land-grabbers of the universe.

This summer an event which interested me greatly—a trial of steam fire-engines—took place at the Crystal Palace. It was a matter in which much progress had been made since the Tooley Street catastrophe of 1861, and on this occasion the Americans, thinking they could show the British a wrinkle or two, sent three engines to compete. The New York Fire Brigade, esteemed the smartest of all, entered their best machine, *Manhattan*. The engines had to draw water from an 18-feet well and deliver it to elevated points through 400 feet of hose. The Americans were nowhere, their best being a vertical jet 50 feet in the air as against 190 feet British. Several pictures appeared of the Yankee

steamers, and one irreverent reporter likened Uncle Sam's *Manhattan* to a baked potato-can.

I once met in Baltimore a steam fire-engine maker who had recently returned from England after a vain attempt to persuade the authorities there that his squirts were better than theirs. One of his arguments was that, when the Americans took the Philippine Islands, Manila was served by British machines of such feeble capabilities that he had no difficulty in proving the superiority of his own American brand. That, in a sense, was true, but I afterwards heard that the English pumps were designedly of limited power, as the Manila buildings were mostly very flimsy and couldn't stand much battering. In fact, the first time the Baltimore engine was turned on a fire it flattened out all the houses involved and left the proprietors wondering which had proved the worse affliction—the fire or its extinguisher.

In the autumn a misfortune which attracted wide-spread attention occurred to a boy of normal sight who went to sleep in a field, the harvest moon full on his face, and woke up—blind. Without being able to account for such an effect, the doctors said that cases had been reported before, although not completely credited by the faculty. Result: solemn injunctions to boys never to indulge in moonlight naps. "'Tis sixty years since," but to-day I should not neglect this warning without misgiving, although I cannot understand how the feeble reflected rays from our satellite can affect the eyes so powerfully through closed lids.

This was the year of the fearful fire in the cathedral at Santiago, Chili, when some two thousand women and girls were burned, smothered and crushed to death. On the occasion of the Festival of the Virgin the church was packed with worshippers, nearly all females, when some of the festooned decorations suddenly blazed up. The fire ran rapidly along the paper chains, dropping burning fragments on the crinoline-clad ladies beneath. A terrible stampede ensued, the doorways were blocked by wedged-in victims, and one of the record holocausts of history resulted. A few were saved by being lassoed by *vaqueros* and dragged out

over the heads of the immovable throngs and through the windows. A wave of pity ran round the world and the British applied their usual panacea—a subscription-list of goodly proportions. The Cathedral priests were subjected to outspoken censure for their assumed carelessness in permitting such decorations and selfishness in not getting burned themselves. This did not please good Cardinal Manning. He sent "for his candle, his bell and his book," and the daring censors learned too late, and no doubt much to their dismay, that they were no better than so many jackdaws of Rheims and mere utterers of disrespectful and ineffective blasphemies.

On October 30th occurred a lesser tragedy of which I should have been a witness had I been on the scene one short hour earlier. During a heavy south-west gale I left London Bridge by the 4.15 p.m. Croydon train; as it ran into New Cross I was startled to perceive that one of the big engine-sheds at the northern end of the platforms had disappeared and in its stead lay heaps of bricks, slates and broken timber piled confusedly on the top of seven or eight locomotives, one of which was derailed and displaced, while numbers of men were working on and around the ruins.

I was out of the train before it had stopped and across the line in a few moments, just in time to meet four navvies bearing a stretcher on which lay the covered-up form of a man. The engines were half-buried, battered, dented and dusty. Water was being played into the fire-box of the derailed one, and I gathered that a fitter had been crushed to death between her sand-box and edge of the ash-pit over which she had been standing.

It appeared that at 3.30 a tremendous blast of wind had entered the shed at its open end, and, finding no exit, had lifted the roof, which collapsed, and in falling had knocked down the walls. The building had been 145 feet long by 42 wide, with 14-inch brick walls strengthened by 23-inch piers. Yet Titus fresh from levelling Jerusalem could not have made a more thorough job, certainly not in the time.

At the inquest the driver of No. 111, the derailed machine,

said that, seeing the roof rising, he with his fireman and a fitter had dropped into the ash-pit under his engine. They immediately heard a crash and saw the locomotive sink upon them. Had it come a little farther he and the others must have been crushed; as it was, they were imprisoned and had to be dug out. The deceased had probably tried to follow their example, but was caught. Three other men were seriously and many slightly injured.

On tearing myself away from the dismal but fascinating scene and running home—being far too excited to walk—I noticed several houses unslated and trees blown over along the New Cross Road.

The shed was rebuilt and is the one which stands with its entrance opposite the end of the up slow platform; alongside this platform is another shed which dates from the 1840s and was unscathed by the gale.

Another event of 1863 was the discovery of the sources of the Nile by Speke and Grant. Almost forgotten now, the question of where the Nile came from had from remote antiquity been a perennial subject of speculation and discussion, and its solution by two Britons was naturally gratifying. But we regretted that the grand result was marred by a quarrel between the able and gallant discoverers.

At the end of 1863 these serious matters were set off by one that provided merriment for many a day and year. A Mr. Banting, who was so fat that he could not tie his shoestrings, had to descend stairs backwards and involuntarily provided cheap entertainment for street boys, wrote to the papers (and he afterwards also published a pamphlet) that, after taking innumerable Turkish baths, drenching himself at mineral springs and rowing until he was not only fat but dripping, all in vain and more, he had rid himself of a fabulous number of stones by following a simple course of diet. A big discussion followed, many imitators adopted his plans with varied results, and "doing Banting" became a household expression. I doubt whether it is quite extinct yet. The comic papers and singers made themselves merry; every burlesque and pantomime scored its joke,

and Banting found himself great in fame as well as in person, rivalling (for a time) even those weighty immortals, Falstaff and Sancho Panza.

In 1924 the name of Banting is again famous, and this time without any aid from facetiousness. All honour to this London doctor, the inventor of Insulin, and to Canada, whose authorities enabled him to demonstrate its potency!

An English chemist, William Crookes—in after-years Sir William, and one of our most famous scientists—had discovered a new metal in 1861 which he named thallium, from the Greek word for green owing to the colour of its line in the spectrum. This year a German chemist, who was also somewhat of a crank, created amusement by alleging that the ancient Mexicans had known all about Crookes's new metal, which they had used for producing the green fire prescribed in the worship of Vitzliputzli. He apparently did not know that the material from which the first thallium had been recovered had been brought from the Hartz Mountains. Crookes was also the discoverer of that beautiful and mysterious little motor which he called the radiometer, and it was his vacuum experiments and tubes which rendered possible, and led up to, the German discovery of X-rays. It was not my lot ever to work with this distinguished man, but I had the good fortune to meet him in Guernsey in 1908.

CHAPTER XXXIV

1864—MURDER ON SEA AND RAILROAD

Flowery Land pirates—Calcraft—A gibbet for five—Public execution—North London Railway murder—Mr. Briggs—Müller—Chase to New York—Detectives' triumph—Trial and execution—King of Prussia intervenes—*Kreuz Zeitung*—Abolition of public executions—Danish War—Naval battle off Jutland—First German flag in Persian Gulf.

THE year 1864 constitutes a vivid page in my memory. Amongst its events were two murder cases, noteworthy in themselves, and the more so since they led to an important modification of the law.

In February were tried and condemned the *Flowery Land* "pirates"—six Philippine Spaniards and one Levantine—sailors who had mutinied and murdered the captain and mates of the British ship they were serving in, not without provocation if their defence had any substance in it. All were found guilty and sentenced to death, but two were reprieved. The simultaneous hanging of five men was without parallel since the execution of the Cato Street conspirators in 1828, and immense crowds assembled and made the vicinity of Newgate a bear-garden from the previous Sunday evening and onward through the night. Calcraft was the hangman—"a short, thickset shabby man, whose venerable white locks, beard and sinister face belied the cringing and fawning deference of his behaviour." I had been familiar with this expert's name from early boyhood, as well as that of his notorious predecessor, in Judge Jefferys's days, Jack Ketch, and I fancy few were more generally known, if not esteemed. It was said that he had two handsome marriageable daughters who never received either offers or valentines, and that a passenger, on recognising them in an omnibus, had left so precipitately that he had, poor man, forgotten to pay his fare. Mr. Jonas,

Governor of Newgate, another personage well before the public gaze, had general charge of the spectacle.

It was well stage-managed. There were five ropes on the gibbet, to which Calcraft brought out the culprits one by one, adjusting the noose on No. 1 and then going back into the prison for No. 2, and so on. When all appeared to be ready a cry went round the mob, " Hats off ! " and a great groan arose when the drop fell and left all five men struggling in the air. The fall then given was short ; necks were seldom dislocated, and strangulation was the usual result.

The other murder, which did not occur till July, took place in London under what were then entirely novel circumstances, although unfortunately paralleled several times since. Its dramatic developments require a good deal of matching.

Late one Saturday evening, Mr. Thomas Briggs, over sixty years of age, chief clerk in a Lombard Street bank, a season-ticket holder on the North London Railway, took train at Fenchurch Street—then the terminus of that line—where he was recognised by the officials, to proceed to his home at Hackney. A little later the driver of a light engine saw something dark between the tracks—" in the 6-foot," as railwaymen phrase it—near the canal bridge between Bow and Hackney Wick Stations. He stopped and found the body of Mr. Briggs battered and gashed, and lying where it had evidently fallen from a train. The deceased's watch, chain, ring and hat were missing and an examination of the carriages disclosed a bloodstained first-class compartment presenting evidence of a desperate struggle. Murder had without doubt been committed ; but by whom ?

At first the detectives were baffled, but a Mr. Death, jeweller, of Cheapside, gave information that a short foreigner had exchanged a gold chain for another chain and a ring at his shop, while a hatter detailed how a top-hat had been brought to him by a similar personage for whom he had altered and shortened it. A cabman likewise came forward, and their combined testimony directed suspicion to a young German tailor named Müller, who, however, had disappeared from his usual haunts. Ultimately it was found that he had embarked for New York on the sailing-ship

Victoria—we are writing of times when wind and canvas still claimed no small proportion of the Atlantic passenger traffic. Detectives, with Death, the Jehu and other witnesses, followed in hot pursuit by the next mail-steamer, *City of Cork*, and before *Victoria* arrived in the offing had obtained a warrant of arrest.

When the sailer at last appeared the London and New York detectives met her on a tug, mustered the passengers and duly found their man. Luggage was next examined, and Mr. Briggs's hat and watch were found in the German's box. Of course he had become the innocent possessor of the goods by purchase, and so he confided to the American magistrates; but they were not exactly marines, and showed their appreciation of the story by granting extradition. So the detectives (and Death) led him back to London in triumph, and they were considered to have done very well. As there was then no Atlantic cable we may concede so much. Müller was tried, found guilty, and executed on November 14th, saying at the last moment to his German pastor, "I did it." A short time before, when taking the sacrament, he had reiterated his innocence.

The low flat-crowned hats which were coming into vogue about the time of the murder became popularly known as "Müller-cut-downs."

Interest in the case was heightened by the efforts of the German community, convinced of the innocence of their countryman, to secure an acquittal. The King of Prussia, he who afterwards became the first German Kaiser, tried to move Queen Victoria to delay the execution, as he believed there was new evidence which, if produced, would put a different complexion on Müller's proceedings; but British justice was inexorable, and Calcraft got his victim at the place and time originally appointed.

The *Kreuz Zeitung* of Berlin shed tears, saying, in reference to the attempt of the King of Prussia to stay execution, "What a sad illustration of the constitutional monarchy is it that the 'ruler' of about 200,000,000 of the human race is unable, even upon the petition of princes most nearly related to her, to keep the rope from the neck of a poor Ger-

man journeyman tailor for so brief a period as three or four days!" The *Kreuz Zeitung* was evidently anxious to equip Buckingham Palace with an autocrat of the approved German variety.

The Briggs murder caused a press campaign against the English plan of separate compartments in railway carriages, it being urged that with undivided cars as in America such a crime would be impossible. Some of the railway companies, including the North London, bowed to public opinion so far as to insert windows in the partitions between compartments, above the passengers' heads, so that in the event of a disturbance, observation by a traveller next door would not be impossible.

Owing to the disturbances caused by mobs gathering on Sunday evenings to be in time for Monday morning's show, hanging day was changed to Wednesday early in 1865. But this was only a first fruit of the Pirates and Müller episodes. Abolition of public executions, which had been urged perfunctorily for several years, was now pressed for in earnest, with the result that some four years later the reform received parliamentary sanction. Private executions in London in accordance with the present system were inaugurated September 8th, 1868. The first person to take advantage of the Act was Alexander Mackay from over-Tweed, so that Scotland was well to the front as usual. But I imagine that but few Caledonians will willingly concede that he was "the real Mackay."

The war of Germany and Austria against Denmark on the subject of Schleswig-Holstein broke out early in the year. Popular sympathy in England was almost wholly with the Scandinavians, and intervention in their favour would have commanded wide approval. But the Queen was adverse, and, although both France and Russia had formerly joined with Great Britain in recognising the integrity of Denmark, neither would now do anything. Napoleon III urged that the brunt of war would necessarily fall on France owing to the military feebleness of Britain, although the latter's interests were much more deeply concerned. So Lord Palmerston wisely refrained from

single-handed interference. It was not a decision, however, that shed any particular glory on our country.

So Denmark fought her fight single-handed and was of course beaten in spite of her gallant defence of Düppel. A Danish guide misled some enemy troops, thereby causing Prussians and Austrians to fire on each other with fatal results: for which he paid in kind. In May three Danish frigates, in a small battle of Jutland, engaged and defeated two frigates and three gunboats belonging to Austria. One of these caught fire and ran to Heligoland—then a British possession—for shelter. The Danes also vindicated their Viking blood in several other little naval victories, news of which was always well received in London. Attention had been strongly directed towards Denmark by the Prince of Wales's marriage to Princess Alexandra the previous year, and sympathy with the Princess, who had been popular from the first, was very freely expressed.

I was acquainted with a Dane, named Kaarsberg, who still suffered from a wound received in the former Danish-German War of 1848. He was furious against the Teutons, and the news of their repeated successes made him quite ill. It is noteworthy that Flensborg, which, after the Great War, voted for inclusion in Germany, was Danish to the core in 1864. In 1870, during the Franco-German War, I met at Busra the skipper of a German barque which had been chased by a French gunboat, the *Bruat*, into the Persian Gulf and subsequently into the Shatt-el-Arab. He was a Flensborg man, and bearing poor Kaarsberg in mind, I asked him how he liked being a Prussian. He replied that, although against the transfer in the first instance, he had found advantage in belonging to a great Power, but that now he was afraid to put to sea on account of the French gunboat, he wasn't so sure about it. I believe his ship flew the first German flag ever seen in the Persian Gulf. Forty years later, in the decade preceding the Great War, matters had changed. The Germans' trade with the Gulf had become an important item; they had established "rights" there, and were evidently aiming at eventual domination in connection with their expected possession and control of the Euphrates Valley Railway.

CHAPTER XXXV

1864 (*continued*)—THE HERO OF ITALY

Garibaldi—Barclay Perkins—Kisses—Red blouses—Austrian double-faced eagle—For France in 1870—Old Garibaldians in Mesopotamia and Inverness—Foolish protest by Common Council—Last of the Fleet prison—Penny parcel-post—Sinking of *Alabama*—Gallant fight—Belvedere explosion.

THE visit of Garibaldi was the next event I remember. The red-shirted hero landed at Southampton amid general enthusiasm and travelled by train to the Queen's private station at Vauxhall, whence he drove to Stafford House as the guest of the Duke of Sutherland. Never before, I will venture to say, had a foreigner received such a universal welcome. His reception was super-regal. His campaigns against Naples and Rome, assisted by a corps of English volunteers—and especially by "Garibaldi's Englishman," a Mr. Peard, of Looe, Cornwall, who was always at his side and to whose counsel he ever hearkened—and his subsequent gallant efforts to burst asunder the fetters which bound his native Italy were known to, and admired by, all—all Englishmen I mean, for Garibaldi's antagonism to the Papal States had so incensed the Irish Catholics that his life would not have been safe in the southern portions of the Emerald Isle. They had even raised an Irish Brigade to help the Pope to combat him. So he basked in British smiles and smiled at Hibernian sulks. The visit of the Italian patriot was a continuous triumph, so monotonously so, that ditto ditto is all that need be said about his reception at every stage. Of course he went to the Crystal Palace and to that other National show of those days—Barlaay Perkins's Brewery, where his entertainment was very different from that of the Austrian

general previously recorded. Young ladies kissed him, and when one reflects that they were mid-Victorian damsels it can be guessed that he *was* a favourite—the "jolly good fellow" of the song *in propria persona*, no less. We had Garibaldi biscuits before he came; when he had gone there was an epidemic of Garibaldi shirts. The girls especially went in for red blouses, so that any assembly of them resembled a field of poppies. And the craze endured in a modified form for years. Garibaldi was one of my own special heroes, and, although school tyrannically deprived me of any chance of seeing him, I followed his movements with great attention. In 1907 I visited at Monte Video the house in which he lived while battling for the freedom of Uruguay.

Very soon after his friendly call on Britannia he was fighting the Austrian double-faced eagle on the foot-hills of the Alps, striving to win back Venice to its fatherland; and he was again in arms in 1870, chivalrously aiding his old enemy France against the Teuton, when he was the first of its generals—I am not sure that he was not also the only one—to capture a German flag.

Garibaldi's championship of France in 1870 had one rather comical effect. Gratitude for what Napoleon III had done to support the Pope's temporal power induced many of the Papal military force, including the Papal Zouaves and some of the Irish Brigade, to volunteer for service against the Germans and so to become brothers-in-arms of the hated red-shirted patriot they had so often fought against. The Papal troops did gallant service for France.

What a strange contrast was the situation in 1914! Then, instead of being the favourite son of the Church as in 1870, France had become, owing to its anti-clerical legislation, little short of anathema, and Papal sympathies were clearly with Berlin. Belgian priests were slaughtered and Belgian prelates imprisoned, but Rome had nothing to say. Was there a bargain, I wonder? In the event of German victory was such forbearance to have been rewarded by a restoration of temporal power?

And it was in 1870 that I met in Mesopotamia a Levantine named Sabit who had worn the red shirt and marched with Garibaldi to Naples and Rome. He told me many things about the hero and his ways, but unfortunately I cannot be sure that they were all strictly true. Another Garibaldian I came to know in the flux of years was Signor Cesari, manager in the 1880s of the Highland Railway Hotel at Inverness, a very good fellow, who had been wounded and made prisoner by the Austrians at Custozza in 1866. He helped me not a little in establishing the Inverness Telephone Exchange in 1885.

The success of the one-year-old Metropolitan Railway caused several projects for lines into the City to be mooted. Certain merchants and shopkeepers conceived that such an invasion of railways could only result in mischief to the citizens of the sacred square mile and moved the Common Council to petition Parliament against them. This the Common Council in solemn conclave assembled was silly enough to do. The old Lady of Threadneedle Street with a broom trying to sweep back the rising tide of railways! How foolish does such failure to appreciate the ever-changing moods of circumstances appear to-day! Clearly Gog and Magog were not the only denizens of Guildhall that might reasonably be suspected of possessing wooden heads.

In June, 1864, was announced the sale to the London, Chatham and Dover Railway for £60,000 of the Fleet Prison site which had lain waste for some twenty years. This enabled that very pushing company, to whose enterprise London owed its first really urban railways, to extend from Ludgate Hill to Snow Hill and join up with the Metropolitan underground system. I was a traveller on the first day that the L.C. and D.R. ran into Moorgate Street over this extension. The locomotives employed were tender passenger engines fitted with condensing apparatus for use in the tunnels, and for a short time some small tank engines were kept to help trains up the very steep incline from Snow Hill to Ludgate, but aid was soon found to be unnecessary. From this development sprang later on Holborn Viaduct terminus and hotel. The whole of the purchased site was

not, however, required for railway purposes, and in 1868 the portion at the corner of Ludgate Hill and Farringdon Street, which included the last remnants left standing of the historical Fleet Prison and a part of its boundary wall, was disposed of for building purposes.

About this time London was greatly interested by a proposal to institute an express parcel collection and transport service, with a delivery every hour to a distance up to twelve miles from Cornhill: charge, one penny per parcel, payable by the sender! This was putting Rowland Hill and his penny post somewhat in the shade, and the matter was at first treated as a joke. But a prospectus was actually issued, and with it the project ended. In those days a penny, properly managed, would go a long way, but not quite so far as this scheme implied.

The year 1864 was memorable, too, for the sinking of the celebrated Confederate privateer *Alabama* by the U.S. war-ship *Kearsarge* off Cherbourg after a gallant action. At first sight the connection of this incident with London may not be very apparent, but when it is recollected that subsequently the *Alabama* claims had to be dealt with at Westminster and Whitehall and some £3,000,000 raised in the City to pay them withal, first impressions may well be corrected. *Alabama* was only an ordinary merchant screw-steamer armed with a few small guns, which the U.S. alleged—and their contention was upheld by the International Arbitration Court to which Mr. Gladstone agreed to refer the matter—that the British Government had negligently allowed to leave the Mersey and gain the high seas, where for a year or so she preyed on American commerce with rightdown American freedom.

She was at last cornered in Cherbourg by *Kearsarge*, a regular man-of-war, much larger and better armed, and moreover specially protected by chain cables hung from rail to water-mark. Nevertheless, Captain Raphael Semmes, the Confederate Commander, announced that he would go out and fight; and, what is more, courageously did so on June 19th. The action was brisk but brief, *Alabama* being sunk after losing nine killed and twenty-one wounded,

Captain Semmes was taken out of the water and brought to England by the English yacht *Deerhound*, belonging to Mr. J. Lancaster. Everybody, including my humble self, admired his bravery, and the pictorial papers did not lack exciting illustrations.

Some two years later we were mildly surprised to read that Captain Semmes had been appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy and English Literature (good that they should go together !) to the Louisiana State Seminary. History is rarely original. It is recorded that, before he took definitely to piracy, the Viking Hastings, Alfred the Great's old opponent, spent a year or two in England studying law—which, after all, is of course only moral philosophy highly magnified.

Captain Semmes's application of moral philosophic maxims to modern commerce destroying cost this country a pretty penny. We paid over £3,000,000 without demur—the Americans had claimed £130,000,000 or so—honouring the finding of the judges we had accepted ; but that the amount was excessive there can be little doubt. The Washington authorities, after satisfying all claims, found themselves, it was reported, with a good balance in hand. This, one would have thought, ought to have been politely handed back to England. But Uncle Sam didn't like to affront the judges by slighting their decision in that way, and I never heard that any restitution was made. The verdict was for some 3¼ millions certainly ; but, when it was shown to be excessive, moral philosophy—as Captain Semmes would certainly have taught them—required that it should be repaid.

The remaining incident of 1864 to which I shall refer commenced with a personal experience. I was sitting at breakfast on Saturday, October 1st, when the windows rattled loudly, articles on the table became endowed with life, the cat leaped off the hearth-rug, and then came a resounding bang which seemed to roll and linger like thunder sometimes does. Evidently an explosion, and a big one too ; but where ? Later in the day, we learned that Messrs. Hall & Sons' gunpowder mills at Belvedere, near Erith, had blown up with fatal consequences. It seemed that a powder-

laden barge alongside their wharf had led the way, and the mills had promptly followed skywards. Numbers of windows in Woolwich and Charlton fell out, but Greenwich had escaped with comparatively light casualties. Erith church was reported wrecked, and at the Crystal Palace, in addition to breaking a fair quantity of glass, the explosion had very considerately, but rather superfluously, rung the fireman's alarm-bell.

It came into my head that the scene would be worth seeing, so next day, Sunday, instead of going to church, I walked to the New Cross Station of the South-Eastern Railway—Greenwich then possessing no rail connection with Charlton, Woolwich or Erith—and booked for Belvedere. It appeared that the same idea had occurred to several thousand others, with the result that special trains were being run. At Belvedere I found a big crowd already assembled, with hawkers of fruits and refreshments in attendance. But there was nothing to see. The mills had been entirely dispersed, with the exception of a few fragments of wall, while trees, and a few cottages and out-buildings (the powder-mills had stood, as was fitting, in a somewhat secluded position) had been levelled for a considerable distance around. I could only discern two or three haystacks erect in the distance, and wondered why they should have escaped while much more substantial structures had departed. In reading and endeavouring to realise the effects of mines and monster shells on the French front during the Great War this Belvedere experience stood me in good stead.

I soon returned to the station and home. It was lucky that I did so, for later in the day great delays and crushes occurred, one man being pushed under a train and killed. The railway company failed to rise to the occasion as they might have done, and the last load of returning sightseers did not leave Erith until three o'clock on Monday morning.

CHAPTER XXXVI

1865—JUSTICE OFF HER BALANCE—FIRST LONDON TUBES

Wreck of *San Jacinto*—Saffron Hill murder—Pneumatic tubes—Electrical Parcel Exchange—Thames Tunnel—Thames subways—Serpentine bridge statuary—Cobden and Bright—Paxton—President Lincoln's assassination—Desolate cotton-fields.

THE year 1865 opened with an incident that sent no tremor of sorrow round the country. The American war-ship *San Jacinto*, which, under Commodore Wilkes, had stopped the R.M.S. *Trent* and taken the Confederate envoys from under the British flag, nearly causing war between the nations, was totally wrecked on the Bahama Banks on January 1st. A British gunboat stood by and heaped coals of fire on her—I mean, generously lent her aid. We cordially wished Davy Jones luck with his prize, although of opinion that he must often have bagged a more reputable one.

The feeling aroused by the next event was very different indeed, for it tended to discredit English justice—judges, juries, jurisprudence, and all. One man shone brightly and earned universal commendation, but he was a foreigner. I allude to the notorious Saffron Hill murder case. Groups of Englishmen and Italians were assembled in different rooms at a public-house on Saffron Hill, the classical resort of Italian organ-grinders and others of that type. One of these entered the English room, stabbed a member of the party and escaped. A man named Pelizzioni was arrested and identified by the victim on his death-bed as his murderer. Others testified similarly, but there were several who spoke very strongly to the contrary. The prisoner was found guilty, the judge concurring strongly in the verdict, and sentenced to death.

Now came a dramatic surprise. Mr. Negretti, of the well-known firm of Negretti and Zambra, opticians of Hatton Garden, wrote to the *Times* analysing the evidence, showing how witnesses for the prosecution had disagreed, and alleging that the crime had been committed by another Italian, Gregorio Mogri. The police, he said, had been told so immediately after the murder, but had preferred to suppress evidence and press the case against the wrong man.

Naturally this was received with much incredulity and was energetically denied, but Negretti produced Mogri, who had gone into hiding, but had been found and induced to come forward and confess. He was convicted of manslaughter, while Pelizzioni was "pardoned" and released. Sir Richard Mayne, Chief of Police, defended his myrmidons, but Negretti stuck to his guns and carried the weight of public opinion with him. As in the famous Adolph Beck case many years later, the police appear to have judged the matter for themselves at the first go-off, found Pelizzioni guilty, and thereafter shut their eyes to anything tending to the contrary. It was a sorry business. Signor Negretti's share in it commanded admiration and respect, feelings which I found that I still personally cherished when I came to have dealings with his firm thirty years afterwards.

Early this year I saw at the Crystal Palace a tunnel 10 feet by 9 feet in diameter and 60 yards long, with some very sharp gradients, through which a large railway carriage containing sightseers (if they who travelled in darkness should so be called) at sixpence each, was blown by compressed air in the one direction and sucked back by vacuum in the other. This was an illustration of the principle of transport then being exploited by the Pneumatic Despatch Company which had already laid down an underground iron tube 33 inches by 30 inches in diameter for the conveyance of mails and parcels between Euston Station and the N.W. District Post Office, and were busily constructing a tube 4 feet 6 inches high and 4 feet wide, from the same terminus to St. Martin's-le-Grand.

This was eventually completed but never seemed to work satisfactorily, great difficulty being experienced in keeping

the joints air-tight; so, after carrying parcels for some eight years, with intervals of quiescence, the traffic was closed down and the enterprise abandoned. As the years went on few remembered the existence of such a tube, although reminders came now and then when the papers chronicled that excavators had lit upon some or other portion of it.

I had not forgotten, however, and impressed with the importance and possibilities of such a mode of transport, I amplified the old scheme, substituting electric power, which does not require an absolutely air-tight tube, for pneumatic, and in 1891 read a Paper at the British Association Meeting at Cardiff, entitled, *An Electrical Parcel Exchange.* It was well received by all but the Post Office officials, one of whom was a member of the Engineering Committee which accepted my paper, and another present when it was discussed. The position taken by these gentlemen was that the excellent horse-van service between the General Post Office and the various railway termini met all requirements and that my proposals savoured of Utopia, while the failure of the Pneumatic Tube eighteen years before was solemnly held before me as a warning. However, other engineers present, and eminent ones too, thought very differently.

But a great change of opinion developed twenty-two years later, when, shortly before the war, the Post Office went to Parliament for leave to construct electrical tubes between the chief metropolitan postal and railway centres, practically borrowing my Cardiff proposals but in an unnecessarily expensive manner, using two tubes where one would suffice. From the evidence of one of their witnesses before the Select Committee to which the scheme was referred, who said that the only previous proposal of the kind had been made by an Austrian engineer in regard to Vienna, it would appear that the Post Office had utterly forgotten both the pneumatic tube of the 'sixties and my Cardiff Paper of 1891.

The grand finale came in 1923, when the Post Office apparently suddenly rediscovered the existence of the

old pneumatic tube and set about trying to acquire what remained of it for use as a telephone cable conduit.

The enormous and ever-growing congestion of London streets will eventually render an underground service for goods and parcels imperative, and I am fully certain that some such scheme as my 1891 Electrical Parcel Exchange will have to be adopted. I concluded my Paper by predicting that modern London would ultimately have to be in two stories and it has already, with its numerous burrowings during the intervening thirty-three years, got an appreciable distance on the road.

Being on subterranean topics, I will now mention the passing of an old and famous London institution—the Thames Tunnel—which, in September, 1865, was handed over to its purchasers of a year before, the East London Railway Company. "One up, t'other down"; some are born as others die, so, while the brand-new pneumatic tube was being pressed towards completion the old under-river burrow was passing the last customers through its turnstiles.

The undertaking dated from the early years of the century, when the need of a crossing lower than London Bridge began to assert itself. Another bridge was impracticable owing to the shipping traffic, so a tunnel was decided upon, to be situated about one and a half miles below London Bridge, between Wapping and Rotherhithe. The soil to be penetrated proved treacherous and progress extremely slow. In 1807-8 the famous Cornish Engineer, Richard Trevithick, inventor of the high-pressure steam-engine and of the rail locomotive—and who ultimately found a pauper's grave at Dartford—made a strenuous effort to carry the driftway through; but old Father Thames, as if resentful of the attempt to undermine his time-honoured channel, placed there by Providence itself, kept breaking in and drowning the works. Rennie, builder of Waterloo, Southwark and new London Bridges, as well as of the graceful stone structure over the Serpentine, was another famous man who tried and failed.

At last, in 1843, Sir Mark Isambard Brunel, father of the celebrated engineer of the broad-gauge Great Western

Railway (who himself acted for a time as Resident Engineer at the tunnel), after working on the problem since 1825, completed two brick sub-ways side by side. These were opened for passenger traffic, but, as lifts on the requisite scale had not been perfected, patrons had to descend one very steep shaft by means of a grand stairway, and ascend another—it must have been like climbing a buried Monument—so that, after all, little relief was afforded to the pressure on London Bridge, and visitors were made up largely of country people and foreigners "doing" one of the recognised London sights. For their delectation stalls were opened—the tunnels being lighted with gas—for the sale of refreshments, pictures, keepsakes, etc. A note in the *London Journal* of April 7th, 1849, states that the visitors averaged 18,000 per week.

The Tunnel Company's accounts for 1863 showed a profit of only £1,875, which on the capital cost of the work must have been a bagatelle. I am sorry to say that, except as a railway passenger after the East London Railway had got their line open, I was never through the Thames Tunnel, although frequent references to it at home had rendered its leading features quite familiar.

My next younger brother and I made several attempts to get to it from Camberwell in 1860, but the journey was long and the approach by intricate and dirty streets frequented by rough people, and we never won through. A lady neighbour, who, I remember, was celebrated for her brew of elderberry wine, once kindly volunteered to take us and by means of an omnibus got close to Rotherhithe; but, on nearing the tunnel, we became enveloped in a disorderly crowd excited by some arrests just made by the police, and our conductress became so frightened that our excursion was incontinently abandoned even on the verge of accomplishment.

The Thames Tunnel was the only London show place that I failed to explore, and therefore may claim a good record as compared with many Cockneys. I once met a retired official of the Fishmongers' Company who had sat in front of a window of their Hall for some forty-seven years so that

he could not help seeing the Monument every time he raised his eyes, and yet confessed that he had never ascended it.

The Brighton Railway Company worked the Thames Tunnel Railway, by steam, first from New Cross to Wapping and then all the way to Liverpool Street. Later on the Metropolitan and Metropolitan District Companies participated. Now the steam-horse has been superseded and a constant traffic is conducted by electric traction. Brunel's substantial structure has given no trouble since opened in 1843.

But the need of a tunnel for foot passengers below bridge persisted and in 1869 the Thames Sub-way from Tower Hill to Tooley Street was inaugurated. It consisted of a cast-iron tube seven feet in diameter, put together in pieces, Mr. Barlow being the engineer. It was expeditiously constructed without a hitch, in that respect forming a remarkable contrast to its unlucky forerunner. This sub-way was closed for traffic on the opening of the adjacent Tower Bridge, but remains intact, and I believe was usefully employed during the Great War. Its entrance kiosk still stands near the Tower gates. The London County Council have since made several sub-river tunnels, one at Rotherhithe itself, so justifying the old idea, but now they have expeditious lifts instead of wearying stairs, and moreover charge nothing for all their trouble.

I have mentioned Rennie's handsome bridge over the Serpentine. Not many present-day Londoners, I imagine, are aware that it used to be adorned by four groups of statuary, one at each corner. These were emblematic of England's greatness and rather suggested the Playing-grounds of Eton point of view. The groups were: three young ladies in classical attire, presumably Graces, three cricketers, three grenadiers, and three Highlanders. Unfortunately, the stone chosen proved inferior and in the 1880s the weather, seconded by mischievous youths, had produced such dilapidations that it was discovered that the statues were no longer ornamental and they were removed to the St. James's Recreation Gardens situated between the

Hampstead Road and Cardington Street, N.W., under the shadow of Euston Station, where they have steadily gone on reverting to their elemental conditions as blocks of stone. The young ladies, who now preside over the flower-beds at the Gardener's Cottage, are—as is fit and proper and to be expected—by far the best preserved. The other groups forlornly distributed about the grounds are in evil case. A Scottish proverb declares that it is "ill takin' the breeks af a Hielan' man"; that is as it may be, but the London weather has clearly contrived to possess itself of these particular Highlanders' kilts.

Several distinguished men finished their careers in 1865. Cobden, of whose doings I knew little beyond his championship of Free Trade (which all nations were to clamour for after a brief experience!) "Cobden and Bright"—never Bright and Cobden—was a current phrase familiar even to school-boys.

Sir Joseph Paxton, whose work I knew and admired, followed. Although not by training an architect, he contrived to produce one of the most renowned of buildings, unique in its conception, unrivalled in its effects. Even such a specialist in fairy palaces as Aladdin, son of Mustapha, might have been proud of the edifice which rendered Sydenham Hill the Palatine Mount of London.

President Lincoln's assassination caused a wave of genuine sorrow. He had sometimes stroked the British lion the wrong way, and ruffled his main; but the British lion likes a man of grit, and the task Lincoln tackled was generally recognised as a tremendous one. Coming, as it did, at the end of the Civil War, his fate was felt to be especially hard. The finish of the fratricidal struggle was welcomed in England, where the stoppage of cotton from the Confederate States had occasioned terrible distress. In 1898 I travelled extensively in Georgia and the South, and was shown forests growing where the slave-worked cotton-fields had existed thirty-five years before—and that for miles and miles and miles.

CHAPTER XXXVII

1865 (*continued*)—EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS

Jersey—P.s. *Normandy*—Harvey monument—Sark—French p.s. *Comète*—Langham Hotel—Dr. Pritchard—Fun in Rotten Row—Chignons—Cheap Sunday excursions—Boulogne-sur-Mer—A venturesome Cornishman—Science Museum—Spain *v.* Chili—First bombs—Rabies, Cholera and Fenianism—Jamaican insurrection—Governor Eyre—*Samphire* collision—"Free" Trade.

IN July I made my first sea voyage and spent an agreeable and interesting fortnight in Jersey. There I saw the paddle-wheel mail-steamer *Normandy*, belonging to the London and South-Western Railway, which on the previous May 31st had made a record passage from Guernsey to Southampton. She left at 9.25 a.m., passed the Caskets at 10.35, Needles at 2.55, and arrived in dock at 4.35 p.m. Speed 14·75 knots (nearly 17 miles) an hour. The engines made 34 revolutions per minute, while the steam pressure per square inch was only 23 lb. This performance is not greatly excelled in 1924, when twin-screws are used and the pressure carried is not far short of 200 lb. per square inch. In 1922 I crossed in one of the best modern steamers, which likewise took one hour ten minutes between Guernsey and the Caskets.

Alas! *Normandy* had a tragic end. In the early morning of March 17th, 1870, in a dense fog, she collided with another vessel in the Channel and went down. Her gallant captain, H. B. Harvey, with his chief mate, J. Ockleford, the engineers and most of the crew, got the passengers into the boats, stood by their ship and sank with her. A granite obelisk to their memory stands on the eastern pier at Jersey, close to the berth where the *Normandy* was wont to moor. Such were the men of the days when Britannia really ruled the waves!

During my Jersey trip I paid a visit to Sark, travelling

in the French paddle-wheel steamer *Comète*, which had a very ornamental engine of a lever type that I had not seen before. The captain wore a top-hat, and I afterwards heard that his chief steward knew more about Channel Islands navigation than he did. There was no lighthouse on the Corbière in those days, and I have a vivid recollection of the skipper on the bridge holding his topper on as we rounded those foam-beaten rocks. Jersey has altered more than most places during the fifty-nine years since that took place.

The middle of the year was marked by the opening of the Langham Hotel, the first of London's great caravan-serais. The tavern, coffee-house and chop-house era was fast drawing to a close and the day of the big hotel and and tea-shop close at hand.

Dr. Pritchard, the Glasgow poisoner, who murdered his wife and mother-in-law with antimony, was executed about the same time. His crime, as was fit and proper, occasioned great indignation. In 1881 I made the acquaintance of a Scotsman who had waited up all night to see him hanged and told his wife before starting that he would volunteer for the job himself should anything happen to Calcraft. But that old practitioner kept his appointment, and the learned doctor was leisurely but effectively suspended. The gruesome spectacle so affected my valiant friend that he went home feeling too ill to sup his porridge—to the mixed amazement and amusement of his better half, for at break-fast his abilities as a trencherman were usually of no second-rate order.

In June a round of hilarity was caused by a young fellow riding slowly along Rotten Row at its busiest hour holding a chignon on the end of a cane. Every lady he met clapped her hands to the back of her neck, while an expression of alarm crossed her face. In case "chignon" should have ceased to be a dictionary word in 1924 I may explain that the article was a pad of hair worn in the crinoline age by every self-respecting female, whatever her native endow-ments in the hirsute direction might happen to be, on the nape of the neck and upon which was perched the "pork-pie hat and neat little feather" of the popular song. There

was money in chignons. In 1866 one Parisian firm retailed 15,000 at prices ranging from 12 to 70 francs, a few extra superfine, presumably for queens and princesses, fetching 250 francs. Red and flaxen hair, principally, it was said, imported from Scotland, was the most expensive. The total French export totalled up to £45,000 per annum, England and the United States being the best customers.

In August I made another sea trip and honoured the Empire of France with my presence for the first time. Those were the days of cheap Sunday excursions. The Brighton Railway had inaugurated them not many years before with 2*s.* 6*d.* day trips to Brighton and 4*s.* day trips to Hastings and Eastbourne. That company had had the good fortune to possess as Chairman and Managing Director a benevolent philosopher, Mr. Samuel Laing, agnostic of the Spencer and Huxley School, moralist and worker of good deeds, author of *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, and other pithy volumes; and it was primarily to him, if I mistake not, that the toilers of London owed this boon. Preachers of all denominations disapproved of the Sabbath desecration, and when, on an August Sunday in 1861, two of the Brighton Company's trains were involved in the dreadful Clayton tunnel accident, they thumped their pulpits vigorously, but without stopping the excursions.

The South-Eastern Railway followed after a time whit similar facilities to Ramsgate, Margate, Dover, and this year that company advertised a Sunday trip to Boulogne-sur-Mer viâ Folkestone for 7*s.* 6*d.* return. I was permitted, in company with a young friend of seventeen, to avail myself of the opportunity, and a jolly and exciting time we had. Leaving London Bridge at 7.30 a.m., we got to Boulogne about 11.30, and, as the return steamer did not sail until 7 p.m., we had a good long time on shore.

My friend was from Cornwall, and, although older, knew far less about things in general that I did. He had read that the Boulogne fisher-girls were extremely good-looking, and in spite of my protests, for I wanted to go to the railway-station, insisted on clearing up the point by following and inspecting from a respectful distance (he was too shy

to go close) every short-skirted female who hove in sight. Most revealed to our gaze were elderly, however, until an unmistakable girl in *sabots* and with naked legs was discerned ascending a side-street with many steps. Chase was given, but—horror!—the limbs, when near enough, were seen to be covered with pustules! The Cornishman fled, but had some compensation in meeting a little later a procession of snowy-clad maidens on their first communion intent. I was afterwards told that the lass on the steps was no doubt a shrimper, and that, as her limbs represented a common consequence of spending hours daily in salt water, there was nothing to run away from.

We dined in the Rue Pot d'Étain, making merry at that quaint name; at the *menu* with its *ragoûts* and other unaccustomed terms *à la* this and *à la* that; at our waiter, who addressed all remarks to my friend, who understood no French and was invariably replied to by myself who did. We had *gloria*—coffee with *cognac* and sugar—afterwards, the beet-root sugar being sawn up into accurate oblongs like little bricks. And the way in which the tall-hatted lieges of the Emperor pocketed the pieces they did not use was amusing too.

In the afternoon we hired a boat and had a row on the little river Liane; also paying a call at the railway-station, which we found in a state of quietude, only one small locomotive with its boiler sheathed in brass and a tall stove-pipe kind of chimney being visible.

Ultimately we got back to London Bridge about midnight, thoroughly tired but quite satisfied with our outing and unique experiences. I especially so, for I had tried my London-learnt French on real live Frenchmen and found it good—at least in parts! This excursion will show that railway facilities were not quite a minus quantity in the metropolis of Queen Victoria. I fancy the Londoner of 1924 would rather appreciate a 7*s*.6*d*. train to Boulogne and back. The Southern railways, so often sneered at in later times, showed the way to many things in the earlier days.

It was in this year, too, that I paid my first visit to the recently opened Patent (now Science) Museum at South

Kensington. I was now fifteen and a half years old, and personally conducted two of my younger brothers. We were specially interested in the pioneer locomotives, *Puffing Billy* and *Rocket*. This latter I would have liked to see rehabilitated and put to work on the line between London Bridge and Greenwich. The Newcomen pumping-engine and the ancient clock from Glastonbury Abbey were as novelties to us, while the sectional models, set in motion by the visitors themselves, of steam-engine cylinders, pistons and valve-gearing were highly instructive as well as amusing. Altogether a magnificent educational acquisition for the metropolis and our visit was the precursor of many another.

If 1865 had its "excursions" it also had its "alarms." There was the war of Spain against Chili, during which bombs disguised as lumps of coal were discovered in the bunkers of a Spanish war-ship—so the grade of civilisation attained in 1914–18 was already being foreshadowed. I thought that dastardly, and that *all* was not fair in war whatever might obtain in love. There was a hydrophobia epidemic and muzzling of canines, and towards the end of the year outbreaks of cholera and Fenianism—plagues both. The deaths of Tom Sayers and Lord Palmerston have already been noticed. In view of the slighting manner in which most Liberals now speak of this world-renowned Prime Minister, it is interesting to recollect that Gladstone termed the news of his death "appalling."

In October occurred the breaking out and prompt suppression of the Jamaican insurrection, of which the repercussion was destined to endure for years. The rebels, of whom many were so-called Baptists, commanded by one of their preachers—all coloured, of course—committed barbarous murders and outrages. But in Governor Eyre they were up against a Briton worthy of the name. Militia and volunteers turned out, ships were hurried up, and, after sharp fighting, in which some two hundred rioters were killed, the revolt was stamped out and its ring-leader tried and executed. Was the country grateful to Governor Eyre? Did Parliament pass him a vote of thanks? Not a bit. The "Nonconformist conscience" had been lacerated by

the hanging of a Baptist preacher and refused to be pacified. Palmerston had gone, Gladstone had come in, and the policy of deference to clamour, of which we have had such shining examples in recent times, had begun. "Lo! he hath slain a Baptist," they cried; "let him be crucified!" And the Government responded, *Ecce Homo*.

On December 13th, about 11.30 p.m., the night being dark and hazy, the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company's mail-steamer *Samphire*, from Dover to Calais, was run into by an American barque, *Fanny Buck*, and badly damaged, several passengers being drowned. Both ships were towed to Dover, where, the following month, I had the good fortune to see the barque, still with her bows stove in and stem and bowsprit broken away. Such a shivering of timbers would have done the old Greenwich pensioners good to see. The Inquiry turned on whether *Fanny Buck* had shown proper lights, and ultimately it was found that she had not. Still the captain of the *Samphire* was censured for driving his ship so fast on a murky night, but his certificate was not suspended. The skipper's name was Bennett, which heightened my interest in the affair. He had behaved very gallantly by leaping into the sea in an attempt to rescue a passenger, a foreign Count, who lost his head, and, if I remember aright, in his excitement jumped or fell off the starboard paddle-box.

Free Trade was one of the topics much to the fore at this time. The East Indian Railway placed a large order for locomotives with a German firm, an act that greatly pleased the *Times*, which hailed it as a satisfactory demonstration of free trade. But the Germans complained that as the use of English iron had been specified an injustice had been done to the Fatherland. In fact, they made out that, if it was free, it was decidedly not fair, trade. A well-known Leeds firm —Manning, Wardle & Co.—wrote a sarcastic letter suggesting extension of the free trade advocacy to the removal or reduction of the German Customs tariff which practically excluded British locomotive builders from the German markets. Could any sane person imagine anything more fatuous than rejoicing by a leading newspaper at this

diversion of many thousands of pounds in wages from British workmen's pockets? At the age of fifteen I marvelled how a direct transaction between India and Germany, free as it might be, could form a subject of jubilation for Great Britain; and the reason remains obscure even yet.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

1866—KING NEPTUNE FETTERED AT LAST

S.s. *London*—Sentence of death on 200—Amateur casual—Captain Coles—Cigar-ship—Overend and Gurney—Atlantic cables—*Great Eastern* finds her mission—Complete success—Array of British talent—Post Office red tape—King Neptune and the cables.

THE first event in my remembrance of 1866 was a tragedy, and a soul-stirring one. The New Year was only some ten days old when the screw steamer *London*, bound for Australia, was caught in a severe gale in the Bay of Biscay and foundered with the loss of about two hundred lives, only the cutter with a few survivors being picked up after a terrible experience of nearly twenty-four hours. The deeply laden steamer shipped a succession of heavy seas, by which the engine-room hatch was carried away, the engine-room inundated and the boiler fires put out. Thus rendered unmanageable, she was repeatedly pooped and some of the cabin ports burst open. The passengers and crew assembled in the saloon, where the poor captain appeared and with great emotion told the company that he and his crew had done their best; but the ship was sinking and he could hold out no hopes of saving her. Sentence of death on two hundred forlorn creatures, numbering amongst them many women and children! Fortunately it is not on many men that Fate imposes the fulfilment of such a heart-rending task.

Resignation and fortitude characterised the behaviour of the majority. They were fortunate in having two brave ministers of religion on board, Dr. Woolley, Bishop of Sydney, and the Rev. Mr. Draper, both of whom prayed and exhorted, with soothing and calming effect, until the end. Captain Martin refused to leave in the only boat that got

away, but wished it "God speed!" and his prayer was happily answered. There must have been something very wrong about the design or construction of that engine-room hatch. As people dried their eyes they thought that here was a tragedy that ought not to have been. It bore its fruits. Engine-room hatches began to be considerably raised above deck level and strengthened and the old river-steamer style of skylight abandoned.

January was also noted for the Amateur Casual articles of Mr. Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who, got up as a tramp, gained admittance to a casual ward—at Lambeth, I think—and there found material for some remarkably good "copy." Very soon everybody was talking about his adventures, and Old Daddy, one of his co-casuals, became quite famous, receiving attention and even personation at some of the music-halls. Had the manager of one of these had the inspiration to engage Daddy as his chairman he would certainly have scored. Greenwood's experiences constituted a good journalistic "scoop," and led to some small reforms in casual ward administration.

Captain Coles, designer in after-years of the ill-fated warship *Captain*, which, with its inventor in command, capsized off the Spanish coast with the loss of nearly all its crew, attracted attention and some ridicule by exhibiting a model of an iron tripod mast of his contrivance. Quizzed by the quidnuncs and not enthusiastically received by engineers and sailors, it is noteworthy that for a good many years past this style of mast has been standard in the American Navy and has even received exemplification in our own. Captain Coles was an able and patriotic man, *Captain* notwithstanding, and it is but just that this success of his should be put on record.

The arrival in the Thames of the cigar-shaped ship built by Mr. Ross Wynan, an American millionaire, gave rise to a lawsuit for patent infringement, a British seaman, Captain Beadon, alleging that he had protected an identical design in 1852. I don't recollect how it was settled, but the cigar-ships, of which several were built, never did much to justify the great expectations formed of them. However, they

could be worked into effective pictures and accordingly plunged and fended the mighty deep a good deal on paper if nowhere else.

The terrible bank failure of Overend and Gurney occurred in June, the liabilities being eleven millions. I saw a *queue* of unfortunate customers, including many women, outside the closed doors in Threadneedle Street, apparently hoping against drab dismal fact that the exhibited notice of suspended payment might in some miraculous manner become cancelled and the doors opened again. But, alas! there was no "Sesame" potent enough to influence the portals of that Robbers' Cave.

In July was renewed, by the aid of the mighty steamer *Great Eastern*, the effort of 1858 to lay a telegraph line across the Atlantic. In April, 1864, the Telegraph Construction Company (still alive and prosperous in 1924) was formed for the purpose of making and laying the requisite cable, those experienced manufacturing concerns, the Gutta-percha Works Company, and Glass, Elliott and Company being acquired by way of foundation, while the *Great Eastern* was luckily purchased for the unexpectedly small sum of £25,000. She came round to Sheerness to be fitted with cable tanks and laying machinery and sailed with the cable on July 15th, 1865. In spite of a few delays and hitches 1,200 miles had been paid out from Valentia, Ireland, when, on August 2nd, the cable broke in 2,000 fathoms—2¼ miles. Grappled for and hooked several times it could not be brought to the surface, and on the 11th the disappointed expedition shaped its course for the Thames.

The sum of £160,000 was required to repeat the attempt, which seemed at first impossible to raise after the previous failures. Daniel Gooch, the able locomotive engineer of the Great Western Railway, whose name has occurred before in these pages, who had become a director of the Telegraph Construction Company, proposed that each of the ten directors should show his faith in the enterprise by subscribing £10,000. This was done, and the £100,000 so obtained soon attracted the necessary balance from the public.

The *Great Eastern*, fitted with improved picking-up gear, left Sheerness on June 30th, 1866, and began to pay out from Valentia on July 13th. This time no hitches of moment occurred, and on the 26th the cable end was landed at the village of Heart's Content, Newfoundland, amidst fervid rejoicings. Before any cablegram (a word then unthought of) was despatched to England, the chiefs of the expedition attended a thanksgiving service at the little local church, and it may be imagined that the ceremony was not lacking in sincerity and impressiveness. Then the spot of light at Valentia began to dance and to spell out words of modest triumph and earnest congratulation, and soon the news was known to all the world reachable by telegraphs or newspapers.

On August 9th the cable-ship (another term originating with this achievement) sailed, and on the 13th began to grapple for the lost cable of 1865. Numerous difficulties intervened, only to be overcome, and on September 2nd it was brought to the bows from a depth of 2¼ miles and spliced; and on the 8th the *Great Eastern* again entered Heart's Content and landed her second cable. And so the Eastern and Western Hemispheres were joined by two tiny channels through which could be freely transmitted and exchanged the thoughts, great or little; wishes, sentiments, hopes and fears of the civilised world.

When I say "freely" I go perhaps beyond the mark, for messages at first cost £1 per word. Even at that price the traffic was considerable, not only from England, but likewise from the Continent and even India.

In London, where the cable had been made, its carrier built and the enterprise financed, the varying fortunes of the expedition were followed with the closest attention, nearly every day for over two months providing its sensation or excitement, its suspense, doubt, hope or triumph. For most of the time the *Great Eastern* was in touch with Valentia and the nation's nerves seemed to be hooked on there to the slender but magic filament that lay peacefully on the ooze some 2½ miles below the turbulent Atlantic surface.

The expedition had been blessed with an unparalleled

galaxy of talent. Daniel Gooch had charge of the mechanical arrangements, and William Thomson (afterwards Lord Kelvin), Cromwell Varley, Charles Bright, Willoughby Smith, Latimer Clark, all most capable experts, of the electrical. And in the commander, Captain James Anderson, formerly of the Cunard Service, had been found one who was truly a master mariner.

In after-years I met all these doughty pioneers except Anderson. But with him I once exchanged letters. In 1886 I was organising a Telephone Exchange for Dumfries, and, finding that Sir James (as he had become) was residing in the neighbourhood, invited him to join as one of the first subscribers. The negative that he proffered was prompt and emphatic enough to prove that the old commander of the *Great Eastern* was still entitled to rank as a man of quarter-deck decision.

It is a noteworthy fact that this conquest of the Atlantic was achieved by Britons. In the United States Mr. Cyrus Field, the American financier, is often cited as the person to whom success was primarily due. But, apart from a very sincere and untiring advocacy and the fact that he, as one of the ten directors, underwrote £10,000 of the company's stock, his doings were not of the most critical moment. His countrymen subscribed for comparatively few shares, and, as the cable was manufactured in London to British specifications, was laid from a London-built steamer by engineers and technicians who were all English or Scottish, and when completed was worked by instruments designed by Thomson and Varley and made in London, the share of the United States would appear not much larger than a barley-corn viewed through the wrong end of a very powerful telescope. "And that's a fact."

In 1870 the Post Office took over the British telegraphs and the "dead hand of officialdom" soon began to meddle with the Atlantic cables. One day it was found that messages from foreign parts, including India, addressed to Boston (which had to pass over Post Office wires to get to Valentia) were being sent to Boston, Lincolnshire, and that that country station was forwarding numerous "Service"

messages over half the globe to say that such persons as the addressees could not be found and that the cablegrams were undelivered. After a time it transpired that the Post Office, without notice to other administrations, had determined to treat all messages for Boston that way unless the sender had added (and paid for) America, United States or Massachusetts. No such distinction was really required for delivery purposes, the character of the telegrams, which were mostly coded, sufficiently telling their tale; but there was no hesitation in deliberately holding them up for hours and days while the farce was being solemnly played out.

F. C. Burnand introduced the cable business in a prologue to his burlesque of *Black-eyed Susan*, produced at the Royalty Theatre shortly after the successful termination of the expedition. King Neptune, discovered reclining on a submarine rock, disturbed by the descent of grapnels, exclaimed:

> "Good gracious me! What's this a-coming down?
> Where are my glasses? Let me have a look—
> Ah, now I've got my *eye* upon a *hook*!"

But the old gentleman is pacified by the appearance of two fair sea-nymphs, who announce themselves as 'Sixty-five and 'Sixty-six (although they didn't look it), and join the cable through amidst the crackling of electrical sparks, so that the story of Black-eyed Susan and her William could be transmitted for his delectation.

CHAPTER XXXIX

1866 (*continued*)—PLAGUES OF SORTS—PENAL PUNISHMENTS

London's last cholera—Quarantined—Cat-o'-nine-tails—Treadmill—The main point—First public ball—Nellie Power—The old, old story—After-years—Leicester Square—George II in charge—Baron Grant—Meteors—Hyde Park railings—Crystal Palace fire—Mr. Gladstone.

THE completion of the cables was almost coincident with the last outbreak of cholera experienced in the British Isles. It had been bad in various parts of the Continent, and now appeared in the East End of London. Great efforts were made to combat the plague, but it persisted through the autumn, gradually increasing in intensity, until late in August thirty-five deaths were registered daily, with, of course, a much larger number of non-fatal seizures. In October the daily death-rate had decreased to thirty, and thereafter followed a gradual fizzling out. A Mansion House fund was opened to relieve the consequent distress. There were no deaths in our neighbourhood, and my most vivid recollection of the visitation is seeing the London Hospital lighted up in almost every window fronting the Whitechapel Road when I passed there late one evening. I was told that the resources of the Institution were stretched to the utmost, and that a large extra staff could scarcely keep pace with the demands. Much was learned by our medicine-men on this occasion, and the cholera fiend, who had first invaded Britain in 1831, has troubled us no more. But in the influenza demon he certainly has a persistent and vindictive successor.

As already mentioned, a few years later I came cheek by jowl with Cholera Jack in Mesopotamia. My last experience, and that not a close one, of him was in 1892, when the disease was extremely bad at Hamburg. Going from Lon-

don to Gothenburg by the Swedish steamer *Thorsten*, we found on arrival that a case of suspected cholera having been reported from Hull, all shipping from England must undergo three days' quarantine. Our affair was aggravated by one of the stewardesses confessing a stomach-ache to the quarantine doctor. That settled the business, and our steamer was ordered to a bay some miles to the south, where we fished, vegetated and grumbled in various languages for the stipulated period.

In September Legal Practitioner Calcraft had a rather unusual and spectacular show. He flogged three men convicted of robbery with violence at Newgate with the cat-o'-nine-tails. Two powerful Irishmen got forty stripes each, a younger accomplice being let off with twenty at the intercession of the doctor. Philanthropists asked, with pained emotion, "What could possibly become of the self-respect of men so treated?" I don't remember whether this conundrum was ever successfully solved, but I do know that there were not many crimes of the same nature in the next calendar. Being a member of the Old Bailey Grand Jury in 1895, I was shown over Newgate and saw this identical cat-o'-nine-tails handled by a stalwart warder, who flogged a milk-can therewith with resounding effect. Having seen, I could comprehend to a certain extent that after such an experience the Irishmen would be likely to respect other people if not themselves—which, I take it, was the main point.

In those days able-bodied convicts were often put on the treadmill. It was a sort of revolving staircase up which, holding on to a fixed bar, the prisoners were forced to tramp without ever getting any higher. Driven by their weight, it turned a corn or other mill and generally made itself useful. In olden times cranes were often worked by man power so applied. Just before the war I saw several still in position on the banks of the Moselle at Trier, which, I was told, were even yet sometimes used to lift guns from barges, soldiers providing the motive force. And at Mont Saint Michel an old specimen likewise survives.

The progressive softening of prison discipline abolished

the treadmill, which, if one could believe them, was almost as shocking to philanthropists as to *Messieurs* the convicts. Flogging, though very rarely inflicted, has survived it, in spite of the better-founded objections of many earnest persons. Why not revive the mill specially for those prone to conjoin the arts of assault and robbery? Instead of so many stripes let the judge prescribe so many days or weeks on the treadmill. Then may flogging finally disappear from our code and the cat-o'-nine-tails be safely sold to Madame Tussaud.

It would not be necessary to erect a treadmill in every prison, nor for the Judges of Assize to carry a portable one with them on circuit. One or two machines of good capacity in central positions to which malefactors could be consigned from all parts of the kingdom would suffice. Concentrated in this way the power generated might prove of some moment and capable of useful application.

This autumn I attended my first public ball. The occasion was a benefit given for the family of the victim of an accident. He was not known to me, and I took a ticket to oblige a friend, not, at first, intending to be present. The locale was the well-known *Horns Tavern* at Kennington, of which I had vaguely heard as a centre of frequent festivities. I found some two hundred guests assembled in the capacious ballroom, in full enjoyment of waltz, mazurka, polka, schottische and quadrille, all danced with vigour, the scene presented being novel and curious to an unsophisticated youth like myself.

But the event of the evening was an unexpected one. Between the dances it was announced that Miss Nellie Power, the celebrated child artiste, had most kindly given her services, and at 9 o'clock would sing one of her popular songs. At that hour, the musical conductor—a Frenchman got up like Napoleon III—and his orchestra of perhaps half a dozen performers, took station in front of a platform, towards which the guests immediately crowded and packed themselves in a compact mass.

An elderly lady and a little girl of thirteen or so appeared at one side of the daïs; a cloak and hood were laid

aside, and Nellie Power—her real name, I believe, was Lingham—sprang, a cloud of gauzy white drapery, up the steps and smilingly curtsied amidst frantic applause. The Napoleonic conductor, with a gravity and assumption of importance that struck me as almost comical, lifted his baton, and, when silence was finally obtained, started the prelude to *Buy a Broom.* Extremely good-looking and with a powerful yet sweet and sympathetic voice—that in after-years caused people to cry with *'Tis but a Little Faded Flower*—the youthful songstress made the room reverberate with melody, especially when she came to the florid refrain, or *jödel,* as I believe it is called. An *encore* was insisted upon of course, given, and yet another called for. But the M.C. pitilessly announced, "Dancing will now be resumed," and Napoleon III filed back to his original station, while Nellie vanished.

On an adjoining chair to mine sat a young Frenchman from Grenoble, to whom I had been introduced earlier in the evening. He was about twenty years of age, handsome, but very dark, with a tiny silky moustache and slight downy black whiskers. He was evidently much struck with the little singer and asked me rather excitedly, "Do you know Mees Nellie?" "No." "*C'est dommage*; but I will get an introduction." And he disappeared in the throng.

Half an hour later, during a waltz, I noticed a mass of creamy gauze approaching, and in another minute my young Frenchman came past twirling Miss Nellie with tremendous earnestness, looking down on her countenance with an expression of pride and triumph. That countenance, at the moment, was not exactly in repose, for its owner was evidently enjoying sweetmeats of some kind and mastication was keeping time more or less with the music. She was certainly very charming, and my French friend had every reason to be gratified, for he had had the heroine of the evening for the only dance she was permitted to indulge in. I understood afterwards that he had introduced himself as a compatriot to Napoleon III, and through him had managed to score his bull's-eye. I don't think that I had realised up to that time that a little girl could be so clever

and so pretty, and I remember wondering why all girls couldn't be like that and like it all the time.

In after-years I saw Nellie Power often, sometimes on the regular stage, where she played in burlesques and as principal boy in pantomimes with huge acceptance—at the Surrey Theatre she was the star for several seasons in succession—and more rarely at music-halls, where her turns of singing and dancing were ever welcome. It was sad and pathetic indeed that such a bright and amiable personality should have had such a brief career and unfortunate end. Blighted affection—unhappy marriage—broken heart—early death; poor Nellie!

The present Leicester Square garden, with its statue, fountain and flowers, but little resembles the forlorn quadrangle of 1866 and a good many years before. A dilapidated equestrian image of George II presided over a wilderness of grass, nettles, dead cats and broken bottles, the whole enclosed in a hoarding pierced by many a gap. Its condition was often cited as a scandal, but some disputed point of law was understood to stand in the way of improvement. One October night some larkish young men—supposed to be medical students, for most escapades were referred to the faculty in those days—penetrated the circumvallation, whitewashed the statue, spotted the charger with black, tucked a birch broom under the regal arm and placed a foolscap on the curly-wigged head, at the same time splotching the pedestal with red, like a camouflaged steamer during the submarine campaign. So in the morning a comical sight met the gaze of the dwellers in Soho and all the world waxed merry. The authorities gave speedy relief to outraged royalty and mended their fence, but the site remained an eye-sore and a reproach until the advent of Herr Gottheimer, *alias* Baron Grant and his money-bags in 1874. Hey, presto! He waves his cheque-book and the transformation scene shimmers out. Fountains squirt; King George II is dethroned (or unhorsed) and King Will Shakespeare I—and last—reigns in his stead. Truly a princely gift for London. But what, I wonder, became of the King and his mount?

The beneficent donor was elected M.P. for Kidderminster (not inappropriately although Kidder-Westminster would have been better) the same year, but was unseated on petition. He came to grief over the Emma Mine litigation about 1880 and the staircase from the magnificent mansion he had built was transferred to Madame Tussaud's new museum. The wits did not leave him alone. One inquired, in reference to his Soho public garden,

> " What can he hope from this affair
> Save to connect his name with something *Square* ? " ;

and another,



> " Monarchs give titles but honour they can't.
> Rank without honour's a real barren grant ! "

During the night of November 13th–14th occurred the most magnificent display of meteors it has fallen to me to witness. Most fortunately, I was out late and had a splendid view, for the maximum bombardment of Mother Earth by the celestial rocket brigade took place between 12.30 and 1.30 a.m. The falling stars were far too numerous to count, twenty or more often being simultaneously in the field of vision. Eight thousand were reported to have been seen from Greenwich Observatory, but that must have been mere conjecture, and I thought ludicrously below the mark. As a matter of fact, it would only have been possible to keep approximate tally by dividing the sky into numerous small areas and employing as many observers.

The aerolites were of different degrees of brilliancy, some exceeding the splendour of Venus at her best, and lighting up the firmament; of several colours; many leaving a luminous tail or track behind which persisted to the sight for a second or two after the head had disappeared. A faint crackling sound was sometimes audible to country spectators, but the ever-persistent rumble of London prevented me from hearing it. The heavens were much more open-handed with signs and omens and awe-inspiring sights in mid-Victorian days than they are now. Recent generations of youngsters have had neither Donati comets nor cascades of shooting stars to excite their " especial wonder "

and awaken reverence in their souls—perhaps not altogether to their advantage. Sublime manifestations of this order are potent enough to make even the most perverse trifler pause and—perchance—think.

This was the year of the Hyde Park railings affair. Beyond reading about the riot I had no concern in it: only wondering at the reforming zeal which scorned barricades of iron and "mocked itself" at Park Rangers, even although of royal blood. I thought the police unsportsmanlike and even cowardly in using their truncheons, as they were reported to have done, on the limbs of youths who had climbed into the niches of the Marble Arch. The effort to stop railings inside the Park by interposing railings without was never repeated, so that democracy certainly scored a triumph that feverish day.

The last event of 1866 which stands out in my memory is the unlucky fire at the Crystal Palace on Sunday, December 30th, which reduced the Tropical Department to ruins and consumed a whole Zoo of birds and animals, comprising monkeys, chimpanzees, parrots, humming-birds and a hippopotamus. Had it not been for the screen between the Tropical Section and the rest of the mighty building, erected for the purpose of keeping that specially-heated region apart, the whole of Sir Joseph Paxton's masterpiece would have been wrecked that afternoon. Henceforth the Crystal Palace was a lop-sided structure, its beautiful symmetry destroyed, for the company had not the wherewithal to rebuild. I had a good but distant view of the catastrophe. A great column of dark smoke extended from the burning building at an angle of about 45 degrees, the base of which gradually but appreciably crept towards the central transept. It looked as though the whole Palace was doomed, and I was very thankful indeed when the smoke at last grew thinner and whiter, assumed a more vertical and cloud-like aspect, and appeared to make no further advance.

It was just as he was leaving the Tropical Department that, a year or so before, I had had my first view of Mr. Gladstone. He was not yet the Grand Old Man, but his appearance was decidedly intellectual and striking. He carried

his hat in his hand in the midst of a little group of admirers which included several ladies, and was smiling pleasantly. Perhaps he had been enjoying the antics of our lesser brethren from overseas or gauging the voting power of the chimpanzee. I had been on the point of entering the Tropical Department, but had to fall on one side to make room for the crowd that seemed actually to spirt after the great politician through the rather narrow doorway.

CHAPTER XL

1867—STRIKES AND REVOLUTIONS—PARIS UNDER THE EMPIRE—GUNPOWDER TREASON

Martyrdom of Governor Eyre—A disloyal Government—Strikes on the Brighton and North-Eastern Railways—Woburn Square ghost—Emperor Maximilian—The *Tomahawk* and Napoleon III—Empress Charlotte—First visit to Paris—A fascinating chamber-maid—Parisian showmen—P.s. *La Parisienne*—Czar—King of Prussia—Bismarck—Luxembourg dispute—*Fêtes de l'Empereur*—Hard on the English—*Arc de Triomphe*—Grand Exhibition—Clerkenwell Prison explosion—Gunpowder treason—Last public execution—Special constables—Glasgow explosions—German raids—H.M. Theatre fire—A scrimmage—Faraday—Alison—Holborn Viaduct—Tichborne case.

THE year 1867 was full of incident, most of which had some reference to London, for our metropolis was veritably the hub of the universe in those days, and there were few lines of force that did not pass through it even when they did not originate within its borders. My present difficulty is that, recollecting most of its events, I cannot refer to more than a small proportion of them without committing myself to something like a general history of the times, an undertaking both arduous and irreconcilable with the scope of this work. I must therefore confine myself to the matters which interested me most or came directly under my observation.

In January the prosecution of Governor Eyre was decided upon; his persecution had been going on ever since his successful suppression of the Jamaican insurrection. Although the Jamaican Legislature had approved and thanked him for his prompt and effective action in saving the citizens from murder and outrage, the Home Government had not the courage to stand by their man.

The pretext of the action was the alleged invalidity of

an Act of the Legislature indemnifying Governor Eyre for proclaiming martial law without adequate reason.

In March the engine-men on the Brighton Railway struck, choosing the first day of the Epsom Spring Races as a favourable occasion. Only two drivers remained at work, but by supplementing these by locomotive foremen and shed-men, together with a few station-masters and inspectors who had had locomotive experience, eighteen engines were kept in service the first day and a considerable proportion of the traffic dealt with, although some of the less important branches had to be worked by horses. I had to travel on the South London line, then opened only from London Bridge to Brixton, and found that one engine, No. 51, manned by a turner and a cleaner from New Cross Sheds, was doing the whole duty of the branch. The 4 o'clock express to Brighton was only eight minutes late on March 26th, which pleased the passengers so much that they shook hands with and tipped the driver. A fund for the men running the trains was started at Croydon, from which many of them drew £6 to £7. One old man, driver of No. 73, who had been with the company from its opening day, refused to strike, and was called upon to run some of the most important trains, for which purpose one of the more modern and powerful engines was prepared; but he would not abandon his own locomotive, and kept No. 73 throughout, although she was comparatively old and second-rate.

All the men's demands about pay and hours and overtime, which indeed would be reckoned moderate enough nowadays, were granted by the directors; but they would not consent to all men, clever or stupid, diligent or lazy, being put on an equality as regards pay; nor would they yield to another demand—that the men who remained loyal should be dismissed. On the second day many applications to take the strikers' places were received from Wales and the North; some German engine-men were reported to be on their way to London, and one Belgian driver actually started work. This was more than the revolters had bargained for, and those south of Three Bridges accepted the proffered terms. It was then hopeless for the London

men to persist, and the strike fizzled out. It was fought with much forbearance and good temper, although attempts were made to stop two of the working locomotives by placing soft soap in their tanks, and one of the engines was stoned from a bridge near Brockley. In 1916 a pensioned Brighton driver told me that there was nothing in his life he regretted so much as having been induced, against his better judgment, to participate in this strike. In April the engine-men on the North-Eastern Railway indulged in a similar campaign, with no better success.

It is of interest to note that in 1867 a scheme for the amalgamation of the Brighton Railway with the South-Eastern was debated with much acrimony and ultimately rejected by the former company's shareholders. After fifty-six years this fusion became a fact in 1923.

I do not suppose that many Londoners of to-day have heard of the Woburn Square Ghost. In 1867, however, it would have been difficult to have found a Londoner who had not. It was reported that the figure of a woman in white was appearing nightly amongst the trees at the north-east corner of the enclosed garden in Woburn Square, and had been seen of many. The Press noticed the matter, with the result that crowds invaded the Square after night-fall, blocked the thoroughfare and refused to be moved on. But the ghost became coy under such conditions, and although some declared they saw her plainly the majority—including myself—were not so fortunate, and some felt considerably aggrieved. The sensation persisted for a week or two and then died away. What the true facts were never transpired, but the evidence in favour of some sort of apparition was very strong. Some said that medical students (as usual) had a magic lantern in a neighbouring attic; but, as the ghost was only visible at a certain angle, it is probable that the hazy figure was merely the light of an adjacent street-lamp shining through, and taking some form from, the foliage of intervening boughs. This is what the *Lancet* said, but then the theory may have been only a sort of red herring for the purpose of diverting suspicion from medical students. Be all that as it may, Our Lady

of Woburn Square had a good and lively (for a ghost at least) innings.

In June came the news of the slaughter of the unfortunate Emperor (?) of Mexico, the Austrian Archduke Maximilian. Napoleon III, at whose instigation and with whose support he had assumed the perilous dignity, now terminated by an ignominious death—for he was made to turn his back to his executioners—incurred great odium both in his own and foreign countries and endeavoured to suppress discussion of the matter in the French, and particularly the Parisian, press. Sharp watch was kept on foreign publications and few indeed mentioning Maximilian got through the scrutineers. We had then in London a smart satirical weekly called the *Tomahawk*, the chief feature of which was a double-paged cartoon, usually by a clever artist known as Matt Morgan, which turned a limelight, not too kindly a beam as a rule nor excelling in good taste, on passing events. Its comment on the Mexican tragedy was a well-done picture showing Napoleon III as Macbeth shrinking at the feast and saying to the frowning ghost of Maximilian:

> "Thou canst not say I did it; never shake
> Thy gory locks at me!"

Thinking this to the point, I cut out the cartoon and sent it in a letter to a friend in Paris who, I knew, was in touch with those irreconcilable Republicans to whom Napoleon III was as scarlet geraniums to a bull. It pleased immensely, and he wrote asking for fifty copies posted separately as letters to different addresses, but, on applying at the *Tomahawk* office for them the answer came "Sold out." Three years later my friend, in spite of his Republicanism, rallied to Napoleon against the Prussians; helped to fight the guns of Mont Valérien, and in the end lost everything he had save life and honour.

Maximilian's widow, once Empress Charlotte of Mexico, a sister of the late King Leopold II of Belgium, has long afforded one of history's most pathetic spectacles. Her intellect broke down under the strain of her husband's execution, and has remained obscured during the long period

which has since elapsed; insensible, poor thing, to passing events and even unconscious of the shower of disintegrated thrones, dynasties, kingdoms and empires belched forth as debris by the volcano of the Great War.

The next episode to be related was a grand one of my own—my first visit to Paris, where there was that year a great—truly great—Exhibition. I travelled viâ Dieppe and spent a couple of interesting days at Rouen, where, in addition to the well-known antiquarian sights, I discovered many evidences of the early English railway rule in that part of France, where Brassey made the lines and Buddicom, from the Grand Junction Railway, the locomotives. The Parisian friend already mentioned had secured me a comfortable bedroom in the Avenue de la Bourdonnaye, close to the Exhibition, where an elderly chamber-maid from the South of France brought me every morning my polished boots together with coffee, roll and butter. The first time she did this I was truly fascinated by her appearance—for she was the first woman I had ever seen with a moustache. It was dark and well developed—better than mine own at that time—and might have been waxed into points like that of her mighty Emperor. But she was kind, poor soul, and was much taken aback when she learnt that I was only seventeen and had come to Paris across the seas without my mother! Realisation of the fact seemed to threaten dire consequences, for I thereupon thought that I detected symptoms of an intention to dress and wash me and otherwise replace the missing parent. Certainly wonders had begun promptly in Paris! Not far from my lodging, on a vacant plot of ground, some showmen had pitched their booths and their cries to attract custom reached my ears very distinctly. One man called out about twice a minute from 11 a.m. till midnight every day, Sundays included, "*Entrer et voir la belle Parisienne, seulement deux sous!*" The insistence of this phrase so affected me that I found myself repeating it without rhyme or reason while walking about; but I never expended the modest sum requisite for an introduction to the lady.

Reference to this man's cry recalls the fact that I often

saw on the Seine, plying to St. Cloud, an old-fashioned paddle-steamer named *La Parisienne* which, I was informed, had been employed to transport the great Napoleon's body from Le Hâvre to Paris on its road from St. Helena to the Invalides.

The Exhibition was very fine, and Great Britain well represented. The Czar of Russia, Alexander II, was fired at by a Pole while visiting it: he, however, was to die by bomb, not bullet. The King of Prussia came too, with Bismarck, and the pair were laughed at by the Parisians as they rode in an open carriage. There had been a dispute only recently settled about the fortifications of Luxembourg, which had at one time threatened to develop seriously. The Parisians thought their Emperor had scored against Berlin, and were hilarious accordingly. How the laugh was on the other side only three years later when Bismarck proclaimed his King as Kaiser at Versailles!

The French were rather given to risibility at other people's expense in those days, without any great regard for good manners or international amenities. I was in Paris during the *fêtes de l'Empereur*, when Napoleon III, who knew his subjects, provided several free open-air theatres in the *Champs Elysées*. I visited more than one and always found the play contained a character in a red coat, got up more or less like an English soldier, sometimes in shell-jacket and pork-pie castor, who was invariably a fool if he wasn't a poltroon (the poor soul was generally both), and came in for tricks and kicks and contumely at the hands (and feet) of all the rest. At each insult or buffet he suffered the crowd roared with delight, and it was painfully evident that John Bull and his red-coated legions were at a sad discount on the banks of the Seine. And this in spite of the co-operation in the Crimea twelve years before and the Emperor's kiss on Victoria's regal brow at Cherbourg! But Waterloo was then only fifty-two years distant—instead of 109 as at present—and had not yet been forgiven by any means. The *fêtes* finished up with a grand display of fireworks on and about the *Arc de Triomphe*—so soon to be desecrated by the hoofs of the Prussian hussar.

They attracted an immense crowd, but were not equal to the shows I had been accustomed to at Cremorne and the Crystal Palace. I wonder whether, in those high-flying days, the Man of Ham and his beautiful Spanish bride could have located Chislehurst on the map had they been put to it?

On the afternoon of December 13th I was in Threadneedle Street, near the Royal Exchange, about 4 o'clock, when a loud dull bang rose above the din of the traffic. Wayfarers paused and looked interrogatively at each other, but nobody proffered any explanation, not even the Royal Exchange beadles, wise as they looked and doubtlessly were. Later, the evening papers disclosed quite a modern gunpowder plot. With the object of freeing Fenian prisoners, a barrel of black gunpowder had been exploded against the wall of the Clerkenwell House of Detention in Corporation Row by two or three Irishmen, with the result that several inoffensive persons, including a little girl, had been killed and many injured. Further particulars disclosed considerable method in the murder. The barrel had been placed under cover on the end of a costermonger's barrow and wheeled to the site just as the prisoners were known to be exercising in the yard adjacent to the street. The truck was turned across the pavement, tipped up and the cask rolled off against the prison. While two men took the barrow rapidly away, a third lighted a fuse on the barrel and likewise decamped. A big slice of the wall went down, but the warders were not demoralised and were able to prevent any escapes. Four killed and forty wounded was the tally, and indignation raged. A man named Barrett was executed the following May for this cruel outrage. He had been brought from Glasgow specially to fire the barrel. His was the last public hanging in London.

Fenianism had been rampant throughout the year and it was deemed judicious, in view of the many deeds of violence —the famous attack on the police van at Salford and the murder of Sergeant Brett had been one of them—to swear in special constables in London. I was considered too young to be enrolled, but two friends of mine were accepted and duly provided with badges and batons. They attended

drill regularly for some weeks, and, being athletic young fellows, already fair boxers and wrestlers, would have been able on occasion to have argued effectively in Pat's own emphatic style.

The eastern districts of Glasgow, which so obligingly lent Barrett to the metropolis, are much more Irish than Scotch and have long been noted for disloyalty. In the early 1880s a series of outrages occurred, endeavours being made to blow up the Tradeston Gas Works and destroy a viaduct carrying the Forth and Clyde Canal over a principal thoroughfare. My destiny, which has ordained that I should frequently be on the verge of explosions, took me to Glasgow at that time, and I heard both those bombs.

Late one evening, about a week before the evil deed at Clerkenwell, I was with the two athletic friends mentioned, when we heard that Her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket was on fire. This was one of the largest and handsomest playhouses in London, at which one of the two opera seasons then generally provided was located, the other being held at Covent Garden. Her Majesty's was always furnished with a guard of red-coated and bear-skinned grenadiers who marched up and down in front of the building with gleaming bayonets, but who, it was alleged, had to call for the police in the event of any disturbance. It was said that, soon after the theatre had been built, such a guard was requisitioned for a special occasion and was sent. The military authorities forgot about the matter; no cancellation of the order was received at the Guard House, and so the sentries had been continued ever since. But more probably it was considered that the name of the theatre entitled it to royal honours.

Such a sight as a burning opera-house none of us had ever witnessed, so we hastened to the scene and got there shortly before midnight. An immense crowd had assembled, and any approach from the Cockspur Street side was impracticable; but Suffolk Street and Suffolk Place, its short cross-connection with Haymarket, were not so densely occupied, and we managed with some trouble to get very near the burning pile. It was a royal blaze, and it was

evident that the firemen and their engines might go home for any extinguishing they could hope to do. Fortunately there had been no performance that evening and life was not in peril.

After a time the pressure behind us became very great and the front ranks of the crowd were impelled willy-nilly against a line of policemen drawn across the Haymarket end of Suffolk Place. Their formation bulged and they endeavoured to push the people back with more force than ceremony, and got soundly hissed and hooted for their trouble. But they could not restore the line and with some amazement we saw them replaced by Guardsmen in bearskins and overcoats, with bayonets fixed. At first the crowd cheered and called out "Bravo Guards!" but the big soldiers advanced and shoved with even more insistence than the police. The cheers turned to hisses, but the Tommies were impassible and simply went on doing it until, somehow or other, Suffolk Place received all its own again.

Not being in the first dozen or so ranks, we escaped contact with the military and endeavoured to help matters by ourselves backing against those behind and calling upon others to do the same. Whilst so engaged a man roared out that he had lost his watch; and at the same instant several young fellows knocked my friends' tall hats over their eyes and tried to pull open their overcoats. Seldom have thieves, I imagine, made a worse miscalculation. In a moment two of them were holding their jaws and trying to get away, while two others put up their hands and dodged to avoid punishment. I did not sport a topper myself that night and had not been molested, but I fell in alongside my friends and together we sparred in the circular space that, in spite of the tremendous crush, was immediately cleared and which the blazing theatre rendered as light as day. The resistance put up by the four thieves was quite ineffective against my comrades' boxing—I had some slight knowledge of the art myself—and they did not get away without good and solid reasons, well and fairly imprinted, to remember the burning of Her Majesty's Theatre.

The year 1867 saw the death of two celebrated men—Faraday, the man of science and gifted experimenter, and Archibald Alison, author of the *History of Europe*. It likewise witnessed the commencement of Holborn Viaduct; the New Reform Bill; the new dog tax, and heard the first rumblings of the great Tichborne case.

CHAPTER XLI

1868—BY LAND AND SEA

Royal College of Surgeons—Fenian shoots Duke of Edinburgh—Greenwich Hospital scandal—*Victory* and *Bucentaur*—Theseus—Abyssinian War—An earnest wooer—Napier of Magdala—Governor Eyre acquitted—Admiral de Horsey—*Shah* and *Huascar*—Tea clippers—Emigrant ship—Auxiliary screw steamer—East and West India Docks—Ratcliffe Highway—Swedish Church—Wapping Old Stairs—Mahogany Bar—Landseer's lions.

THE year 1868 was distinguished by several important events, with which, apart from the fact that I followed their development with an interest that by this time had come to possess a somewhat critical blend, I can establish no direct personal connection..

Early in the year a medical student friend offered to engineer for me a visit to the Royal College of Surgeons' Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I was under the permissible age, he said, but there were many curious things to be seen there, and if I liked he would "work the oracle." This mysterious operation resulted propitiously, by the grace of Fortuna, and I found that he had not exaggerated the attractiveness of the show. Of the many interesting exhibits I particularly remember the skeleton of the Irish giant, O'Brien, who sold his bones in advance to Dr. Hunter and then (through his executors) tried to evade completion of the bargain—in vain, as it required no label to certify; and the mummies of the two poor ladies, successively embalmed by their sorrowing widower and now (if they are there yet) standing up in scanty raiment and a glass case at the top of the principal staircase. I thought that a shame, and hoped he had found their ghosts, suitably armed with vipers or something, waiting for him on the other side of Styx.

Fenianism continued, and an attempt by a man named

O'Farrell to murder the Duke of Edinburgh in Australia by shooting him in the back from a distance of five or six feet caused general indignation.

When, in 1890, I came to meet the Duke and his Duchess, "Imperial" (and imperious) "Marie, daughter of the Tsars," I recollected this incident with great interest.

The scandal of the eviction of the nation's poor blue-jackets from Greenwich Hospital still echoed around. Wren's vast buildings were vacant and desolate, yet the Admiralty, apparently jealous of the merchant service and seamen, did all it could to prevent any part of the Hospital being devoted to their benefit. The *Times*, to its honour, published a strong leader on the subject, in which England was reminded that Greenwich Hospital had been founded after the battle of La Hogue "for the safe retreat and public maintenance of men who had kept their watches over the public safety." But in this instance Jove thundered in vain. England defaulted.

The fate of Nelson's flag-ship *Victory* has occasioned much discussion of late, and I am glad that the nation has insisted on its preservation. In the '60s the same question was to the fore. It was suddenly found that the old ship's demolition had been decreed on the score of economy, and, if I recollect aright, it had actually been removed from its moorings in Portsmouth Harbour for that fell purpose. Mr. Gladstone's name was associated by popular rumour with this solicitude for the nation's ha'pence, but I do not remember whether justly so or not.

Public opinion, however, raised a breeze of the double-reefed topsail variety, and she had to be brought back—to remain without further molestation for another half-century, when the same cycle of condemnation and reprieve has had once more to be gone through. That the ship was found so rotten in 1922 was very discreditable to the Naval Authorities. Ordinary care, with periodical inspection and repair, would have kept her taut at quite negligible cost; instead, she was allowed to get rotten at her moorings until the only cure our naval architects could prescribe was breaking up. The Venetians kept their *Bucentaur* not only afloat but sea-

worthy for 700 years. Were they more able shipwrights than Britannia's own artificers ? It would almost seem so.

And then, O Lords of the Admiralty, knew ye not of the ship in which Theseus journeyed to Crete on his star-turn Minotaur expedition, a vessel which is recorded to have been preserved by the grateful Athenians from B.C. 1226 until the time of Phocion or thereabouts, say, B.C. 317 ; a matter of 909 years. The debating societies of the day used to discuss the problem whether, seeing that every part of her had been renewed, she was the same vessel or another ; and if so, which ?

The Abyssinian War was brought to a successful conclusion, all its objects being accomplished with very little damage to ourselves. Theodore, King of that classic land, had imprisoned some English missionaries, traders and others, as well as a number of French and German mechanics, and in spite of many representations not only refused to give them up, but threatened to turn his royal executioners loose upon them. It is said that he had sent a letter to Queen Victoria proposing himself as successor to the late Prince Consort, and that the disdainful silence with which the flattering communication was treated reacted badly on his self-esteem. As Englishmen could not be maltreated and murdered in those days with the same impunity as has now come to be the case, a mixed British and Indian force under Sir Robert Napier was landed and marched to the reputed impregnable fortress of Magdala, where his Abyssinian Majesty had located himself, his army, his prisoners and his Jack Ketch.

In April the affair was terminated by the capture of this stronghold and the suicide of the successor of Memnon and Prester John. The British loss was one killed and some fifteen wounded. In the sanguinary—for the Abyssinians—action which preceded the storming British troops used breech-loading rifles (Sniders) for the first time, and Congreve rockets as missiles almost for the last time, in warfare.

The expedition was an example of efficient organisation and Sir Robert Napier (soon to be " of Magdala ") deserved all the credit he got, and it was not a little. Public houses

called after him sprang up all over the country. The *Standard* of May 18th published an admirable description of the final operations by its Special Correspondent.

This same number contained a scathing leader on the prosecution of Governor Eyre, who was accused of having exceeded his powers in proclaiming martial law and suppressing the Jamaican insurgents with a strong hand. He was then before the Bow Street magistrates, the leading counsel for the prosecution being Sir Robert Collier, who had previously stated in the House of Commons that Eyre had legal justification for what he had done. Eyre, whose counsel was the late Lord Halsbury, was committed for trial; but on June 2nd the Old Bailey Grand Jury threw out the bill and so ended the case, after years of anxiety and suspense, with a very decided slap in the face to the Government.

The massacre of Cawnpore has been ascribed to a British general's irresolution. A strong man, it was said, would have cowed the local mutineers and prevented the tragedy. But what would have been *his* subsequent fate? Bad, judging from the recent Indian parallel to Jamaica. John Bull is a difficult master, who has taken to breeding temporisers in lieu of men of action. No Gordian-knot cutters for him nowadays! He wants ducks not Drakes.

Governor Eyre had been materially assisted by Captain de Horsey—afterwards Admiral de Horsey, who died in October 1922, at the age of ninety-six, and who in May 1877, while in command of Her Majesty's unarmoured ship *Shah*, successfully engaged the Peruvian rebel ironclad *Huascar*—who was then in command of the *Wolverine* and senior officer on the Jamaica station. He was not sent to the Old Bailey, but was thanked by the Jamaican Legislature and both Houses of Parliament. Nevertheless, some of the odium seemed to cling, for he was passed over when in 1892 his turn for promotion came, although seniority had never before been ignored, and he had fought the only serious action at sea for nearly half a century. His being denied the highest rank open to officers of his standing and service was a mystery which caused much speculation: the Key was probably a West Indian one.

In those days the annual race home of sailing-ships from China with the earliest consignments of the season's teas was a notable event. Tea is one of the matters in which the custom of 1924 differs essentially from 1868. Then Indian herb was unknown, or nearly so, and practically all our supplies came from China. *Sou-chong*, *bo-hea*, *pe-koe*, *mo-ning*, and other celestial names were truly household words. The coming of Indian tea and the substitution of steam for sails have abolished a competition which was wont to cause the crews, from skipper to cabin-boy, to put forth their best and all of it, without stint or measure.

The prize consisted, for the owners, of ten shillings extra per ton of new tea carried by the first vessel to enter the docks and for the successful commander a bonus of £100.

During the 1850s American clipper ships hailing chiefly from Boston competed actively in the tea races and for a time often succeeded in winning the prizes; but very early in the 1860s the Briton, with the aid of Aberdeen-built clippers, had come into his own and our friends from Massachusetts found themselves run off the course. The Boston craft were built of soft wood which absorbed much water and appeared to render them less efficient as they grew older, whereas British oak suffered no such disability. The Yankee captains were reckoned smart and even prone to take unfair advantage, but in the end the English heart-of-oak got its way—hard-headed skippers failed to compensate for soft-wood hulls. The soft wood, too, was apt to twist out of shape in the strain of heavy seas. 1859 saw the last foreign competitor in the English trade. In that year Captain Whitmore of the American clipper *Sea Serpent* landed at Plymouth, went to London by train and unjustifiably entered his ship as arrived; but found two British clippers—*Fiery Cross* and *Ellen Rodger*—already docked.

The most famous of all the races was in 1866, when sixteen ships sailed from Foochow. The three first, *Ariel* with 1,230,900 lb. of tea, *Taeping* with 1,108,700 lb. and *Serica* with 954,236 lb., dropped their pilots after crossing the bar and hoisted sail in company at 11.10 a.m. on May 30th. After varying fortunes and sighting each other only occa-

sionally, *Ariel* at 1.30 a.m. on September 5th raised the Bishop's Light and made sail up Channel. At daybreak a vessel under press of sail was seen astern. This was the *Taeping*, and all day the two ships raced up Channel together, going 14 knots with a strong W.S.W. breeze astern. *Ariel* led by a few minutes throughout and at 3 a.m. on the sixth was boarded by a pilot off Dungeness and greeted as first ship in. But *Taeping*, only ten minutes behind, had the good luck to get a more powerful tug and reached Gravesend first, ultimately docking twenty minutes ahead. *Ariel* had won the sailing match, however, and, to avoid disputes, the owners met and arranged that *Taeping* should take the tonnage premium, privately agreeing to divide it between them, the captains likewise sharing their gratuity. *Serica* was close up and docked at midnight. A fourth racer, *Fiery Cross*, was only twenty-four hours behind.

So the three ships had left Foochow on the same tide and ninety-nine days afterwards arrived in the Thames on the same tide. Never had a race caused so much excitement, and as everybody concerned—owners, agents, captains and crews—wagered on the result, the sums changing hands were considerable.

The next year, 1867, *Ariel* and *Taeping* sailed an almost equally close match in 102 days, but were beaten by *Sir Lancelot* in ninety-nine.

This year, 1868, *Ariel* arrived in ninety-seven days, and made sure that she had won, but was followed in a few hours by *Spindrift*, which had left Foochow twenty-three hours later and made up some of it on the way. *Sir Lancelot* was third, in ninety-eight, and *Taeping* fourth in a hundred and two days. A week or so after *Ariel* had berthed I went with one of my athletic friends to see her.

She was a full-rigged ship, built 1865, and distinguished from other clippers by being fitted with double top-sail yards on all three masts. We found that she was beautifully painted and decorated and smart and spick-and-span, in spite of her recent tussles with the blusters of Æolus, who had given her a good buffeting off the Cape. The mate who showed us round seemed to think she was a wonderful

craft; in which he probably did himself and his shipmates some injustice, for I believe that in such a trial it is the officers and men who count most, provided their vessel is at all up to the average. I confided this view of the case to the mate, who immediately invited us to his cabin to have a drink.

My idea of the matter seemed borne out by subsequent events, as Captain Kerry, who had engineered *Ariel's* triumphs up to that time, resigned, and she never did anything very noteworthy afterwards.

These flying clippers were much faster than the old bluff-bowed East Indiamen, but not so safe, for the desire for speed led to overmasting and overloading with canvas. Beautiful *Ariel* was lost with all hands in 1872, and her chief rival, *Taeping*, was wrecked off Formosa in 1873. A later famous clipper was *Cutty Sark*. She and another renowned racer, *Lalla Rookh*, are still sailing the oceans in 1924—the latter as a timber-ship under the Finnish flag. One of the clippers was called *Deerfoot*, after the bogus Indian runner to be referred to later; but in racing she lagged a good way astern of the name.

These clippers sometimes beat the steamers of the day. In 1864 the s.s. *Annette* took three days longer than the slowest of the twelve racing sailers and thirty-three days longer than the fastest—*Taeping*. And this was not so very exceptional.

After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 the Tea Derby began to decline, and in a few years steam by this more direct route had replaced sail round the Cape and a great school of British seamanship was closed for ever.

> "They mark our passage as a race of men:
> Earth will not see such ships or skill again."

In 1924 there are still old salts in active life of my acquaintance who sailed as mates in the tea clippers, and proud are they of being able to say so.

We became interested in what was going on on an emigrant ship close at hand, preparing to sail for Australia, and asked permission to go over her, which was willingly granted. She was a wooden, full-rigged ship, larger than the tea

clipper, but not by any means so well furnished. She was taking maize in bulk from a barge alongside, which, we were told, was to form an important part of the emigrants' diet. Carpenters were busy in the holds knocking up tier upon tier of sleeping bunks out of rough deal battens. The cooks' galley was fitted with big coppers and boilers, and there were pens round the decks for milch-cows, sheep and poultry. I forget how many hundred men, women and children she was to carry, but the number was sufficient to start a goodly colony on their own account. That is how the parents and grandparents of our present Australian brethren sought the Southern Cross. What happened when such a ship came to grief was exemplified in later years by the sad case of the *Northfleet* in 1873, run down while at anchor near the Goodwins by the Spanish steamer *Murillo* and sunk with hundreds of her passengers, emigrants for Tasmania. The heroism of poor Knowles, her skipper, dwells with me still. He succeeded in getting his newly-married wife into one of the boats, waved her farewell and waited his turn to be one of the 293 to be drowned. And the dastardly crew of the *Murillo* steamed away, throwing a tarpaulin over their vessel's name in a vain attempt to preserve anonymity. *Northfleet* had been built in 1853, and was no laggard. In 1857, and again in 1858, she went out to Hong-Kong in eighty-eight days and once came home in eighty-two. In 1860 she was second in the tea race, in 114 days.

We also inspected another Australian ship—an auxiliary screw steamer. In those days, before the compound and triple - and quadruple - expansion engine had come in, coal consumption on steamers was much heavier than now, and it was considered scarcely practicable, and certainly not economical, to carry sufficient fuel for a voyage to the Antipodes under continuous steam. So for a good many years there existed a class of vessel, heavily rigged and moderately engined, which sailed when Æolus was favourable and relied on her boilers when he sulked. The *Royal Charter*, mentioned in Chapter XXII, was one. Multiplication of coaling stations has assisted the compound engine

to abolish this type of ship. Nevertheless, I saw a survivor at Guernsey in 1922—the *Pourquoi Pas?*—in which Dr. Charcot conducted his Antarctic expedition. And a bonny craft, too.

The East and West India Docks exhibited a very different aspect from the present in those days. Sailing-ships predominated, and were often moored side by side with their bowsprits projecting over the quay walls and even over the sheds. Being so much smaller than the modern steamer, they were very much more numerous, and must have given employment to many more officers and men.

The changed circumstances of to-day are powerfully evidenced by the forlorn condition of the old sailors' resorts, Ratcliffe Highway in particular. From being crowded, day and night, by the sailors of all nations rioting with their Pollys, they have become comparatively solitary and constrained. More than one of the old world-famed taverns have been turned into mission-halls. The *Mahogany Bar* is there, close to Wapping Old Stairs, famous in song and story, but how changed! how quiet! The Swedish Church, in Prince's Square, where Swedenborg was buried in 1788, built for the special use of Scandinavian sailors and for over a century a theatre of much beneficent activity, is there, but has been closed for years, for tars of that category frequent the Docks and the Pool no more. The last time I saw it, in 1916, some Jewish lads—amongst other changes the neighbourhood has become Hebrewised to no little extent—were climbing in and out through an aperture in a window accessible from the roof of a porch—sky-light larking!

Nowadays, steamers of great tonnage, each equal in carrying capacity to a dozen or so of the old sailing-vessels, arrive, are worked out, reloaded and despatched again with all the celerity possible, for keeping such costly giants idle is not to be thought of. Moreover, they use the down-river Docks to a great extent and their crews are not, as a rule, paid off. In the 1850s and 1860s the major part of the tonnage was carried by sail and the wind-jammers either moored in the Pool or went into the London, St.

Katherine's or other up-river Dock, where they often stayed for weeks, the crews being discharged on arrival, long before the cargoes were. Such times have passed, and with them the class from which the patrons of Ratcliffe Highway (now St. George's Road), the Scandinavian Church and the *Mahogany Bar* were drawn.

It was in 1866 that the whim took some members of my boating club to pay a visit to Wapping Old Stairs in a four-oared cutter, and accordingly one fine Saturday afternoon we turned out in full fig—white jerseys and trousers and dark blue caps—and, with the club pennant fluttering at the stem, dashed through the Pool, I pulling bow, and made for the classic landing-stage, which was dilapidated and patched to an extent calculated to remove any apprehension we might have been under of having struck Wapping New Stairs by some error in navigation. Our arrival created quite a sensation, and there were plenty of willing hands to help us to make fast.

Retaining as caretaker a decent-looking waterman who had his wherry alongside, we passed through a lane of curious onlookers to the *Mahogany Bar* tavern, where the unheralded invasion of five young fellows in boating uniform excited another sensation. The renowned Bar—reference to which has been known to draw tears from sailors' eyes in the most distant parts of the world, more especially after they have been engaged for a week or two in beating round Cape Horn—already contained a fair contingent of customers more or less suggestive of marine types. Silence fell upon them as we filed in, one after the other, through the swinging doorway, and room was civilly made in the centre of the counter, behind which were serving a clean-shaven, rather corpulent man in a white apron, and a quite handsome barmaid—a girl of twenty or so, although she was evidently rather a girl of a thousand to a strapping young sailor in a pilot jacket, a mate probably, who had obviously received a call, and an imperious one, to the Bar—who wore a necklace with black and red pendants. We ordered three quarts—"pots" we were careful to call them—of shandygaff, a mixture of ale and ginger-beer, which, when cool,

was then reputed to possess much power of refreshment for hard-working oarsmen on a hot afternoon.

The host and his fair assistant were civil, if surprised, and became all smiles when our stroke explained that we had voyaged all the way from Putney expressly to—metaphorically—put our feet under the historic mahogany. There was no disturbance or unfriendliness, and we had to excuse ourselves politely from accepting several invitations to drink. At the Stairs our boat was found A1, and we had a quasi-royal send-off from quite a crowd of ragamuffins.

The Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square, itself erected some twenty-five years before, was completed by the addition of Landseer's lions. They had been so long talked of and their proximate advent so often vainly promised over a long series of years, that they had come to be—for all their invisibility—a sort of standing joke. They were inquired for in topical songs, burlesques and pantomimes:

> "And, as you're passing through Trafalgar Square,
> Bring Landseer's lions—if you find 'em there!"

was one couplet I remember. However, they came at last, were seen and greatly admired. Their attitude of majestic though peaceful repose was, so we liked to think, emblematic of this our British Empire. Perhaps it was—in 1868.

CHAPTER XLII

1869—A STORMY VOLUNTEER REVIEW

New Law Courts—Volunteer Review—Storm at Dover—Wreck of H.M.S. *Ferret*—Captain H. M. Carré—After many years—Whisky.

OF 1869 I shall say but little, for I travelled to India in May and thereafter knew London no more for five years. I remember going to see the competitive drawings for the new Law Courts, which were exhibited in a temporary wooden building somewhere on the then vacant site. The successful design was not the one I should have personally selected, but as then presented it was better than the buildings actually erected would lead one to suppose. Alterations were forced on Mr. Street, and the effect ultimately produced was far from universally admired. Law Courts suggest controversy, and these buildings revelled in it, even as the phœnix in her funeral flames, from initiation to completion and a good deal later. The British workman commenced the edifice and then struck for wages far in excess of those on which the tender had been based. Belgian and other foreign masons and craftsmen were brought over by the contractors—resourcefulness which only caused them to be denounced for taking bread and butter out of Englishmen's mouths. The Courts, when finished, were somewhat better than those they supplanted at Westminster Hall, although not to an extent commensurate with the riper knowledge at command. They were long, too, in getting finished, for in 1880 I went to Westminster to attend the hearing of the famous case which decided that the telephone was a telegraph, thereby placing telephone development at the mercy of the Post Office and causing the United Kingdom to lag behind most other countries in adopting the new facility.

In those days the Volunteers had an annual review, usually supplemented by a sham fight, on Easter Monday. It was generally held somewhere on the coast, Brighton being an especially favoured place, and was a very popular institution indeed with the Force, so many thousands attending as to tax severely the resources of the railway conveying them. I was familiar with the arrangements made by the Brighton Railway, founded on years of experience, and had often watched the special trains running at fifteen minutes' intervals, down in the morning, up in the evening.

In 1869, however, the review was held at Dover and the operations were to include giving battle to a force supposed to have been landed from, and supported by, an enemy fleet. Unhappily the Volunteers' weather luck, ordinarily good, failed on this occasion, wind and storm, snow and hail, being the order of the day, occasioning "disappointment on land and disaster on sea." An imposing naval force assembled, which was joined on the Saturday, March 27th, by two companion wooden training brigs from Portland, *Ferret* and *Marten*. These, obeying the Admiral's order, moored to buoys to the east of the Admiralty Pier. *Ferret*, which had been built at Plymouth in 1840, was of 358 tons, and carried eight guns with a crew of twenty-five plus eighty-six boys in training. She was commanded by Captain Hilary M. Carré, an officer of ripe experience in both sailers and steamers. Early on Easter Monday morning the wind went round to E.N.E. and blew with great fury. *Breeze*, one of the Calais mail-boats, came in at 3.30 a.m. with one paddle-box stove in amongst other damage, and moored to westward of the pier. At 4.20 *Ferret* broke loose from her buoy, and, in spite of prompt letting go of the anchors, drifted on to the pier, where she beat heavily and commenced to break up. The officers, tars and lads behaved bravely, and, aided by the crew of the *Breeze*, were eventually all rescued, some mounting the rigging and dropping from the yards as the ship heeled over the pier, the captain being the last to leave. Later, when a tug managed to make fast, the officers returned on board, but *Ferret* could not be shifted and had to be left to her fate. By 10 a.m. the hull

had been beaten to matchwood, the masts tumbled out and the guns sunk. Still the storm raged and it was proposed to abandon the review, but other counsels prevailed and it was carried through. *Marten* held to her buoy, but came in collision with the paddle frigate *Medusa*, moored close at hand, losing her bowsprit and other gear. Of course the captain of the *Ferret* was court-martialled, the plan of burking inquiry into Royal Navy disasters, which became fashionable during the Great War, not having then been dreamt of; but, as it was proved that the swivel of the Admiralty buoy had parted and the anchors failed to hold, Captain Carré was not only acquitted but complimented, it being considered that he had acted with great promptitude and had done the best possible under the very trying circumstances.

This stirring incident impressed me very much, and I never forgot the tragedy of H.M.S. *Ferret*. Twenty-nine years afterwards I was in Guernsey constructing the telephone system for the States there, when one of the Committee in charge of the undertaking and who was also H.M.'s Receiver-General for the island, invited me to take a drive with him to inspect some supposed obstacles. Knowing he was an old naval officer, we talked of ships. He told me interesting anecdotes of his experiences in the Chinese War, in Saghalien and elsewhere. Presently the curious case of the Highland Railway Company's steamer *Ferret*, which had been seized by pirates and taken all the way from Inverness to Australia, was mentioned, and, after discussing it, I asked him if he remembered another *Ferret*—H.M.'s training brig that had been lost in 1869 at the Dover Volunteer Review? "I ought to," he replied, smiling, "for I was her commander." And so it proved. It was Captain Carré, now retired, but active still in the service of his native island. We became firm friends, and so continued until September 1920, when it was my sad privilege to be one of the mourners at his funeral. A noteworthy man indeed; of whom, when the question was one of right or justice, it might truthfully be said, as of John Knox, "He feared not the face of man."

Another prominent incident of 1869 was the amusing and long-drawn-out case of Madame Rachael, the Jewish lady expert in good looks, who made other women, "beautiful for ever" while quickly and drastically decreasing the attractiveness of their banking accounts.

This and the previous year were also marked by several Trade Union outrages at Sheffield and elsewhere, which may be mentioned because the familiar word then used to designate such evil deeds—"rattening"—has quite disappeared in favour of the French *sabotage*.

Before taking leave of the London of the 1860s I may perhaps allude to a glaring want of consonance in one particular between the then and the now. Whisky was as yet unrecognised as an every-day beverage. Gin and rum were the spirituous consolations of the vulgar; brandy that of the mighty. "Pegs" in India owed their vitality to cognac—Martell and Hennessy. No doubt "Scotch" and "Irish" were procurable at most bars and taverns, but only as a sort of speciality. The triumph of Scotia's most potent contribution to modern civilisation was yet to be. There was no expression in posters on every hoarding or full-pages in every journal of Scotland's virile blends. Cockneys were not reminded by flash signs at every street turning of Caledonia's prize boon to humanity. How flattering it must be to the Scotsman of 1924 to wander about London after night-fall and note the electric (and magnetic) writings on the wall—and tantalising, too, should he not possess a sufficiency of currency to sample them withal.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE DRAMA—EARLY RECOLLECTIONS—BURLESQUES

Miss Woolgar—*Porter's Knot*—J. L. Toole—Paul Bedford—Phelps—*Louis XI*—Miss Marriott—Fechter—Miss Bateman—Sothern—Buckstone—Adelina Patti—Mme Tietjens—Santley—Burnand—James and Thorne—Elise Holt—H. J. Byron—W. Brough—*Black-eyed Susan*—Alice Burville—W. S. Gilbert—Burlesques.

THE juvenile theatrical experiences to which I have now and then referred were not quite solitary ones, although my inclination for the stage was never very strong nor uncontrollable. As a small boy, I was taken occasionally to the play, and soon became aware that the resources of the drama were not all comprehended in the antics of the clown—even if he *were* the "great Grimaldi"—and pantaloon.

One of my earliest recollections is of the Adelphi Theatre some time in the late 'fifties when Miss Woolgar (Mrs. Alfred Mellon) was playing a boy's part there. She was the first lady I ever saw in tights, at all events the first I realised to be in that guise. I inquired whether she didn't feel cold, for in the booking-hall I had noticed illustrations of this able actress in parts in which the crinoline of the period was conspicuous and the transition from the dense circumvallations of the pictures to the attenuity of the actual hose strongly suggested draughts and shivers to my untutored understanding.

The same or following year the *Porter's Knot*, played at the Olympic, made a durable impression. In 1877 I saw it again at the Criterion with J. S. Clarke in the title part, on which occasion he made an extraordinary slip of the tongue, causing men to gasp and then to laugh and women to blush and get behind their fans. He immediately corrected him-

self by repeating the proper phrase, " I am not in the habit of picking my words " : a declaration that seemed so incontestably true that another round of merriment ensued.

My next recollection was again of the Adelphi and Miss Woolgar. The piece, the *Pretty Horsebreaker*, gave me my first introduction to J. L. Toole and Paul Bedford.

In 1861 I had the good fortune to see Mr. Phelps in Louis XI at Sadler's Wells. I had not at that time read Scott's *Quentin Durward* or Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame* and the play, if impressive, was a bit beyond me. In after-years Louis XI and I became better acquainted. When Irving produced the piece at the Lyceum about 1878, his musical director, Robert Stoepel, a brother-in-law of Vincent Wallace and a good friend of mine, composed some new music for the occasion, and, as this did not fit in well with the words of two of the lyrics, he asked me if I would write new lines for the Peasants' Chorus and the Orison. This I did, and, after the first few nights, they were sung during the run of the piece.

In 1863 I was again at Sadler's Wells seeing Mr. Phelps and Miss Marriott, a lady who used to play Shakespearian male parts, even Hamlet, Macbeth and Richard III, although it was never my fortune to see her in any of them. After this occasion fifty years were to elapse before I entered the building again.

Recollecting this visit in 1913, the whim took me to seek the old Wells once more, and, faring thither by the new-fangled Rosebery Avenue, I booked for 1*s.* 6*d.* what proved to be a commanding seat indeed—sole possession of one of the largest stage boxes. The way to it lay through dilapidated corridors of a solidity more suggestive of a fortress than a playhouse. The pit and gallery were well filled, but elsewhere the demon who presides over empty benches held unchallenged sway, no other patron having risen to the giddy height of 1*s.* 6*d.* The play was a musical comedy called *Captain Cupid.* It was acted with considerable spirit by a numerous company to a well-behaved audience who did not leave the mummers to bite their nails for lack

of applause. But I was grieved to note the faded dinginess of the theatre, so different from the brightness of former times. Whether the seats were the same I cannot say, but I had no difficulty in locating the place where I had sat fifty years before—about six rows from the front, a little to the right of the centre. Since the war I believe the poor old Wells has further degenerated into a picture-house, so that Joe Grimaldi, his ghost, would be puzzled indeed were he, too, to revisit it.

The year 1864 stands out well in my remembrance, for I saw and was impressed by Kate Terry and Fechter in *Bel Demonio* at the Lyceum and Miss Bateman in *Leah* at the Adelphi. The curse so powerfully uttered by the Jewish maiden in the latter piece was talked of by everybody, and made the actress's name extremely well known. This malediction was for her a blessing in disguise, for it was certainly the foundation of her subsequent prosperous career. When in Jersey the following year, *Leah* was advertised at the old theatre there—the future training place of Mrs. Rousby—and I made a point of seeing it. But, although quite a good piece, telling practically the same story, it was very different from the Adelphi version, the imprecation being extremely mild and homœopathic in comparison.

It was in 1864 too that I made the acquaintance at the Haymarket of Sothern and Buckstone in *Our American Cousin*. Lord Dundreary made me laugh so continuously as to displease a lady sitting near, who turned and regarded me reprovingly. The laugh died from my lips—an eerie feeling crept down my spine: she had a glass eye!

Some years later I saw Sothern in a one-act and one-character piece—its name I forget—which was also amusing. His David Garrick, which some considered his best part, I never witnessed.

Buckstone I liked too. In later years I saw him play, when over eighty years of age, in Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

And '64 introduced me to Grand Opera and the unparalleled Adelina Patti, *La Diva*, then some twenty-one years of age. Jenny Lind was before my time: consequently of her I

cannot speak; but certainly no operatic artist I ever saw or heard, and they were not a few, approached this Adelina, veritable nightingale from Olympus. The best blessings of the gods were hers—beauty in a high degree, voice incomparable, acting excellent, vivacity overflowing. She may have had rivals, in one or other of these gifts but not in all. The last time I heard her was in Aberdeen in the mid 1880s. Passing the Concert Hall one evening I found quite a crowd assembled in attitudes suggestive of expectation. I inquired what was afoot and was told that Patti was singing in the Hall and that if I waited I should hear her voice presently. Sure enough, in a few minutes, through some window or skylight incautiously left open by the management (which ought to have known better in Aberdeen) came the sound of those melodious tones.

Amongst my cherished possessions is a signed portrait of the gifted singer that she was good enough to send me by way of recognition of a slight service I was once enabled to render her.

While Patti was at Covent Garden, Madame Tietjens, a talented German artiste, and Charles Santley were appearing in *Tannhäuser* at Her Majesty's; but I had not the good fortune to hear our own baritone for many years afterwards, and then it was in Vincent Wallace's *Lurline*—somewhat of a contrast to *Tannhäuser*! It was a current wheeze that Madame Tietjens used to find a tankard of London stout a good refresher for the voice in the course of a trying evening.

F. C. Burnand, afterwards editor of *Punch*, came into notice about this time as a writer of burlesques, once an extremely popular but now almost forgotten class of entertainment, which, whatever may be remembered to its demerit, was a more amusing and even brainy affair than the modern so-called revue. He had had a very successful run at the Royalty Theatre with *Ixion*, in which a truly graceful and musical young lady, Miss Furtado, had done well. He followed up with another classical piece—*Paris*, or *Vive Lemprière*! (a pun on *Vive l'Empereur*, a phrase then familiar in connection with Napoleon III) at the old Strand

Theatre, now a Tube-station. In it appeared two actors, James and Thorne, destined to achieve fame in later years, and a pretty and clever little actress called Elise Holt, who sang, danced and kept things going with rarely matched alacrity. She was a great asset at the Strand until, in an unlucky hour, she went to America, and, after touring successfully for a time (during which she horsewhipped an editor), died at the early age of twenty-seven.

Other Strand burlesques which I remember well were *Fra Diavolo, Esmeralda* and *William Tell,* by H. J. Byron; *Caliph of Bagdad* and *Field of the Cloth of Gold,* by W. Brough, brother to the veteran Lionel Brough, who only left us a few years ago. James, Thorne and Elise Holt appeared in most of these. In *Esmeralda* Miss Holt played *Pierre Gringoire,* a part originally taken by Marie Wilton. In the *Entente d' Or* piece Henry VIII and Francis I put on the gloves and had a hearty sparring match. In a revival in the 1870s the part of the French King was taken by M. Marius, a Parisian actor who came to London after the Commune, learned English, and became popular on our stage. He made the boxing scene very funny, and the Strand patrons were much amused at the idea of a Frenchman presuming to stand up at *le boxe* to an Englishman.

Perhaps the most successful of all burlesques was Burnand's *Black-eyed Susan,* already mentioned in connection with the Atlantic cables, which ran at the Royalty for two or three years. In it Miss M. Oliver was encored four or five times nightly in *Pretty Se-usan, don't say no!* a duet in which Charles Wyndham also took part; and Mr. Dewar two or three times in a version of *Champagne Charlie.* I must have seen this burlesque quite half a dozen times. It was performed at the Greenwich Theatre by a different company and I saw it there also. It was revived in the 1870s at one of Mr. Hollingshed's houses, but by that time the charm had fled, although a very charming actress and singer, Miss Alice Burville, did well in the title part. Burlesque had already become old-fashioned—*Opéra Bouffe* had pushed it from its stool.

In 1868 a burlesque, *The Merry Zingara,* by W. S. Gilbert

—a skit on *The Bohemian Girl*—was produced at the Royalty with a bevy of attractive girls—there were pretty girls in every burlesque but they had to be clever ones as well, not merely mannikins—of whom, I think, Miss Emily Fowler, afterwards distinguished in more serious drama, was the chief. She played *Thaddeus*, and got into great trouble over a borrowed umbrella. *Merry Zingara* is not mentioned nowadays in a list of Gilbert's plays, but it had a good run nevertheless.

Burlesques were parodies on plays or stories, written in ten-syllable rhymed lines which, in harmony with the accepted wit of the day, abounded in puns and whimsicalities and were interspersed with songs, choruses and dances borrowed from opera, music-hall or other source. The music was never original. The hero was always a girl, and there was often a female character depicted by a man, in which respects the wont and usage of pantomime were closely followed. It is said that the great Irving had in his early days played the Mother in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and risen to quite sublime heights (I suppose he would be expected to with such a sky-scraping son) with a mop and pail.

Incongruities were frequent in burlesque and puns were sometimes more than verbal. For instance, in Burnand's *Paris*, Orion was got up as an Irishman with knee-breeches and shillelagh, spoke with a brogue and was called O'Ryan—"the only Irish constellation in the skies." Topical allusions likewise abounded. In this piece D. James and T. Thorne were very funny as Castor and Pollux.

A few specimen lines will show at what our fathers deigned to laugh in their hours of ease.

This excerpt from *Paris* was rendered funny by the make-up and delivery of the speaker, a man in female disguise:

> "Last night he smiles on me, my husband do,
> And says 'I'm going out.' Says I, 'Where to?'
> Says he, which ain't polite, 'What's that to you?'
> 'Nothing to me,' I says, 'I only ask;
> Of course, if 'ollow 'arts will wear a mask,
> Then, as the poet says, the time will be
> When, hubby darling, you'll remember me.'"

In *William Tell*, that hero, appealing to his fellow-countrymen against taxation, exclaims (the dog-tax had just been imposed):

"Who
Nobbles your very best October brew,
Grabs it and skips away—upon it pops
And literally takes your malt and *hops*?
Who makes you pay your taxes—who carouses
At home, whilst he shuts the public-houses?
Who, but this most tyrannical of villings
Makes us for every puppy pay five shillings?"

His son (Elise Holt) says to his mother:

"Give me the glorious days of Robin Hood!"

Who replies:

"I haven't got 'em, boy, or else I would."

The same lady, referring to the family washing, declares:

"I gets my *clothes* in early, an improvement
On what is called the *early closin* (*g*) movement."

A verse from a set called "What's a burlesque?" contributed by W. S. Gilbert to one of the magazines, may perhaps fitly wind up this sketch of a by-gone amusement:

"Pretty princess—beautiful dress:
Exquisite eyes—wonderful size:
Dear little dress (couldn't be less):
Story confused—frequently used:
Sillified pun—clumsily done.
Dresses grotesque.
Girls statuesque.
Scene picturesque—
That's a burlesque!"

CHAPTER XLIV

THE DRAMA (*continued*)—FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS—UNITY CLUB

New Standard Theatre—Queen's Theatre—Irving—First telephone in England—Dynamite demonstration—Labouchere—Gaiety Theatre—Nellie Farren—Adah Isaacs Menken—Mazeppa—T. W. Robertson—Marie Wilton—*Grande Duchesse*—Mrs. Howard Paul—Can-can—Miss Furtado—Unity Club—G. R. Sims—Theatrical hours and customs—Music-halls—The chairman—Weston's—Unrehearsed turn—*Poses Plastiques*—Judge and jury—Florentine Venus—Benefits.

IN 1867, I think it was, that the New Standard Theatre, Shoreditch, replacing the one burnt down some time before, was opened with a season of opera in English and a tremendous orchestra, a hundred strong or thereabouts. Most of the popular operas were given, Miss Blanche Cole, a sweet singer, being the principal lady. I attended several times, for a stall at the Standard cost notably less than one at Covent Garden, and the opportunity of making the acquaintance, on such favourable terms, of *Don Giovanni*, *Faust*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, etc., was too good to be neglected. The decorations of the fine new house were magnificent—gold and crimson, but mostly gold.

I forget who the conductor was, but he had a big task to drive a hundred-in-hand. One evening I sat in the front row of the stalls, divided from the orchestra by a railing only, and was amused and also enlightened by several things I witnessed. The conductor worked hard, but rarely looked round, and in such a mass of sound it seemed impossible for him to know whether his team were all doing their duty. In front of me was a man who handled—I can't say played—a flageolet or instrument of that species who was apparently perplexed with his music, fingering the leaves helplessly and ever and anon lifting his pipe to his lips but piping nothing. At last he spoke to a violin-player behind him,

evidently asking for guidance, as this man leaned forward and with his bow over the other's shoulder turned the windy one's music, pointed decisively to a place and then went on with his own fiddling. The disciple of Pan lifted his tube quickly, as if determined to catch opportunity on the wing and make up for lost time, tootled two or three notes —and put it down again. Evidently incompetent, yet the conductor went ahead happily ignorant of the delinquency.

I remember the opening of the new Queen's Theatre, Long Acre (now No. 92), by Mr. Henry Labouchere, afterwards, in the next decade, proprietor of *Truth*, a copy of No. 1 of which ever-veracious journal he was good enough to send me. The Lady with the Lamp was as conspicuous on the cover as she is to this day. Certainly she has shed light into some dark places since then. The company comprised Toole, Irving, Lionel Brough, Alfred Wigan, Clayton, Emery and Henrietta Hodson, afterwards Mrs. Labouchere —a veritable hot-bed of talent. I believe it was Irving's first appearance in London and that his salary—according to a subsequent revelation by the sapient "Labby"—was in the immediate neighbourhood of £2 10*s*. per week. They put on some good pieces, of which *Dearer than Life* and *The Lancashire Lass*, both by H. J. Byron, who was now deserting burlesque and pantomime for comedy, live best in my remembrance. In the former, Irving made up as an outcast starving in the Australian bush with almost terrifying effect.

It was at this Queen's Theatre, in 1877, during a season of Promenade Concerts under Jules Rivière and Alfred Cellier, that the first telephone publicly exhibited on this side of the Atlantic was shown. The news of Bell's wonderful discovery was occupying the Press, and it occurred to the management to vary their concerts with a demonstration of Cromwell Varley's telephone. For this purpose the Queen's Theatre was joined to the Canterbury Music-hall, Westminster Bridge Road, by overhead wires and every evening several simple tunes were transmitted and emitted from a large drum-like apparatus suspended over the proscenium.

It could only manage the melody and was accompanied

softly by the full orchestra directed by M. Rivière, baton in hand. The inventor, Cromwell Varley, was one of the very competent electricians already mentioned in connection with the Atlantic cable. He had a beautiful house at Bexley, where his experiments might very likely have resulted in the first practicable speaking telephone, had not Alexander Graham Bell been in such a hurry in Canada.

It is notable that the wires to Westminster were double, or metallic circuit, a stage of development not reached by the exploiters of the Bell telephone until after some dozen years of experience. And they were also the very first of the legions of overhouse telephone wires which afterwards decorated London and all other British towns.

Hamilton Clarke was in musical charge of the exhibit, the electrical and engineering arrangements being under my own direction. At that time Varley's instrument could transmit music only; subsequently it was made to speak, but never rivalled Bell's in clearness or simplicity.

A special preliminary performance was given for the benefit of the Press at which I delivered a little explanatory lecture. One of the representatives—he of the *Standard*—had just come up from an exhibition of blasting in Kent and had several dynamite cartridges in his pockets. After the performance, when a good many were assembled in the manager's room, he started to demonstrate the safety of dynamite, when properly and discreetly handled, by lighting one of the cartridges in the fireplace. I never saw a room cleared so quickly—the press gentlemen stood not on the order of their going, but went at once—and all at once!

As a scientific man possessed of the knowledge that dynamite *ought* to burn harmlessly if tactfully treated I could hardly run away; nevertheless, I did feel relieved when the cartridge eventually gave a last splutter and went out. I can smell it now.

The management wished my lecture repeated to the first ordinary audience, but they would have none of it. They came to be amused, not instructed. So "Professor" Field, a *prestidigitateur* with a smiling face and loud voice, was retained to "introduce" the telephone, which he did with

one or two more or less apposite jokes which "went" amazingly. Some of the papers very funnily got hold of the idea that he was Cyrus Field, the American financier and prompter of the Atlantic Cable, and instructed their readers accordingly.

Inspired by the Queen's Theatre performance, the comic paper *Funny Folks*, in its number of June 16th, 1877, gave a cartoon in which many of the uses to which the telephone is put in 1924—including loud-speakers and "broadcasting"—were foreshadowed in quite a remarkable manner.

Many years later, in 1892, I met Mr. and Mrs. Labouchere at the house they then occupied in Abingdon Street, under the shade of Westminster Abbey and next door to its Poets' Corner. Their little daughter, now by marriage an Italian Princess, was with them. "Labby" told me a funny story of the dining-room he had had built over what had been the back garden of this house. The level having to be reduced, his contractor, to save himself expense, threw some of the soil over the wall on to what was then vacant ground. The authorities promptly carted it away. More was deposited, with the same result; and finally all the surplus earth, a good many tons, followed the same road. The cynical M.P. thought the fact demonstrated the simplicity of local authorities and their officials and hugely enjoyed the notion of his rubbish being removed at the ratepayers' expense. At the time I was inclined to think this had really happened; but some years later I met a Westminster official who gave the matter a different complexion. "At that time," he said, "we wanted some good soil for an extension we had in hand of a public garden. 'Labby' was good enough to present us with the well-manured top-dressing of his and we gratefully took it. We would have paid him any reasonable sum rather than lose it, but of course didn't like to hurt his feelings by mentioning the fact."

Another event of the late 1860s was the conversion of the unsuccessful Strand Music-hall into the Gaiety Theatre. It also opened with a goodly phalanx of talent, but this time it was the ladies—Nellie Farren, Madge Robertson,

Emily Fowler, Constance Loseby—who preponderated. A burlesque by Reece, *Robert the Devil*, was the first of a very long series of attractions. The curtain-raiser was somewhat of an innovation, a one-act operetta called *The Two Harlequins*, with some pretty music by Émile Jonas. It ran for a long time, and was followed by others of the same character.

During the 'sixties that extraordinary woman, Adah Isaacs Menken, kept Astley's Amphitheatre well to the fore with *Mazeppa, or the Wild Horse of Tartary*—really a well-trained tamed steed. She had a good figure, and hid it not under a bushel, but I imagine that the scantiness of her raiment, then something to wonder at, would make no great sensation now. Every night, bound to the raging courser, she was galloped over the Steppes at Astley's—the said Steppes being zig-zagging inclines amongst mountains —at about half a mile an hour, so that the horizon took a long time to reach and patrons had plenty of anatomy for their money. Menken was a compound of contradictions; she had preserved a good deal of the "sugar and spice and all things nice" of her girlhood, and was a poetess—a published one too—yet content to make a doubtful exhibition of herself and marry Jack Heenan, the prize-fighter. It is to be hoped that her mercurial temperament made the compound a real amalgam. She was friendly with Swinburne and Alexander Dumas (*père*). A photograph was sold for a time showing her sitting on the latter's knee, but it was understood to have been a faked one. Poor Menken! many a worse woman climbed the shaky ladder of public esteem further than she did.

And T. W. Robertson's plays at the Prince of Wales's, with Marie Wilton, Carlotta Addison, Lydia Foote, Hare and Bancroft, must not be forgotten. Of these *Play* and *School* preserve their freshness best in my recollection. *Pandora's Box* in 1867 was another pleasing production at this secluded temple of Thespis off the Tottenham Court Road.

Offenbach's *Grande Duchesse* was produced at the Olympic in 1868 with Mrs. Howard Paul in the principal part and

Odell, an eccentric Irish actor, whose acquaintance I made in after-years, as Baron Grog. It went well and the chief melodies, particularly *Voici le Sabre de mon Sire*, were speedily heard all over London. I remember Miss Furtado, already mentioned in connection with *Ixion* at the Royalty, singing *Dites lui* delightfully and getting encored times out of number. Mrs. Howard Paul either could not or would not dance the Cancan—I believe she had conscientious objections—and a French girl, similarly attired, had to be put on for that moving scene; and she kicked high enough to fully justify the managerial selection.

These are a few of my theatrical reminiscences. Later, in the 1870s, I came to know a good many of the personages I have mentioned, meeting them chiefly at the Unity Club, a sort of junior Junior Garrick, characterised by free-and-easy Bohemianism and much good-fellowship, situated between Wych Street and the Strand, where I was not an infrequent guest. There, also, it was my lot to make the acquaintance of the late G. R. Sims while he was still an unacted author, contemned of managers, and, in occasional despondent moments, doubtful whether he would ever obtain a hearing. This was in 1874 and 1875, shortly after Sims had published anonymously his very faithful translation of Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques*. That Sims was the author was an extremely open secret at the Unity. I once heard Mr. Sims recite a Christmas Carol of his own composition which I have never seen amongst his published writings, the occasion being the presence of a Welsh musician who had a reputation for setting carols—a form of lyric not excessively in vogue at the Unity. I remember that each verse concluded with a line or two in which red holly berries glistened "like drops of His dear blood." Ordinarily laughing and vivacious, finding a joke and founding a pun in and on anything and everything, Sims became grave to impressiveness for this recitation. Tatcho had not yet been conceived, perhaps because that exuberant cranium was not yet in want of thatching.

Of other frequenters of the Unity I specially remember Edward and Arthur Swanborough, managers of the adjacent

Strand Theatre at the corner of Surrey Street; Odell, the Irish actor already mentioned, who wore his hair very long and constituted a sort of butt for the wit of his brother members.

There and elsewhere I met many another theatrical luminary. Augustus Harris, surnamed Druriolanus; Fred Sullivan, brother of Arthur, a quaint little man who was the first Judge in *Trial by Jury*; E. Righton; D'Oyley Carte, good musician and accompanist, slight, active and vivacious; George Dolby, brother of the noted songstress, Madame Sainton Dolby; Fisher, light tenor, a handsome young man with a pleasant voice, both singing and speaking. While playing at the Criterion in the 1870s in Lecocque's *Fleur de Thé*, he went to sleep on a couch while the principal lady, Miss Alice Burville, was working through a double encore; on conclusion, he ought to have jumped up full of love and admiration, but, instead, snored. The couch was luckily close against the scenery, through which the Stage Manager thrust his penknife and effectually put a period to his untimely dreams.

I have specially pleasant recollections of Alfred Cellier, composer of *Dorothy*. Tall, handsome, dignified, with fair moustache and closely brushed hair, he combined with his rare musical ability an intimate acquaintance with the turf. An amiable man, rather given to letting things slide. Although a musical conductor, he belittled the importance of the art, and wielded his baton in lackadaisical fashion, holding that good musicians were little influenced by conducting.

Two other conductors of my acquaintance, R. Stoepel and Jules Rivière, thought and acted very differently, but I doubt whether either achieved better practical results than Cellier.

Playgoers in those days got a deal more for their money than they do now. At most theatres the curtain went up at 7 or 7.30 o'clock and the evening finished no sooner than at present. The performance began with a short piece, farce or operetta, followed at about 8 by the principal attraction, which, if not very long, would be succeeded by a second farce.

Seats and accessories were cheaper, although dress clothes were more insisted upon for stalls and first circle. Serving round of tea, ices, chocolates, etc., by attendants was almost unknown. There was usually a Refreshment Bar, to which pilgrimages had to be made by those in need of nutriment. An exception to this existed in some theatres in favour of pittites and galleryites, to whom oranges and ginger-beer were purveyed even in their seats; and before intoxicants became strictly regulated I believe beer was taken round in big cans and measured out in pints and "halfs" to thirsty patrons. Orange-girls still haunted the entrances to Drury Lane and other theatres, and at pantomime time pirated programmes were hawked at half the inside prices.

Music-halls I was discouraged from attending, and did not see much of, mostly becoming acquainted with the successes of the "lions comiques" as filtered through the burlesques and barrel-organs. Nevertheless, the halls were not entirely put out of bounds, and I made acquaintance with several of them.

The chairman who announced the various "turns," forerunner of the present numbered tablet, was still a great institution. Clad in immaculate evening dress and armed with an ivory hammer, he sat at a table within easy reach of the waiters, and marvellous were the tales of the capacities for stowing away liquor told of this one and that of them. In the late 1860s one of the best of the halls was Weston's in Holborn (now the Holborn Empire), where Nellie Power and other leading artistes were wont to appear. In 1868 it fell to my lot to entertain a young French engineer visiting London, and, as he particularly wished to see a music-hall, I took him to Weston's, getting seats close up to the orchestra. The musical conductor was one of those unfortunates who, while perhaps quite exceptionally abstemious, have been provided by undiscriminating Nature with a countenance of rubicund and inflamed complexion, aggravated in his case by the inclusion of a striking outline and highly bulbous nose. In fact, he looked as though he had become a music-hall conductor only after a long apprenticeship in the capacity of chairman.

My French friend, who was a bit of an artist, took out a pocket-book and in it made a highly comical sketch of the poor musician, in which his peculiar characteristics were not left unemphasised. One of the violinists noticed the sketch and asked permission to take a closer look. The book was handed to him; he laughed and passed it to his nearest neighbour, who smiled and transferred it to the next. It was curious to watch the countenances of the musicians light up with amusement, one after the other, as the book made a complete tour of the orchestra, chief only excepted. Eventually it came back to my friend, but the fiddler who had first taken it motioned that it should be shown to the chairman, located in all his glory, close at hand. This was done, and that worthy nearly collapsed with mirth while he circulated it round the ranks of the admirers surrounding his table. Many compliments were passed, and at one time I really thought that the chairman was going to ask us to have drinks with him—which would have been an honour indeed and a complete reversal of the usual course of music-hall etiquette.

I remember that a young tenor sang the then popular air, *Beautiful Isle of the Sea*, very sweetly, apparently with the help of the song, which he held and turned over with his white-gloved hands. Our friend the violinist, while accompanying, leant over the rail to us and whispered, "Doesn't know a note of music!"

So my French engineer had quite a little insight into London artistic life which he would have enjoyed better had he not been almost entirely ignorant of English.

Other well-known entertainments of the time were shows known as the *Poses Plastiques* and *Judge and Jury*, both, I believe, located in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square; but these were of somewhat evil repute, and I never attempted to see them. The second-named tried pretended divorce and breach-of-promise actions, after the manner of the Dunmow flitch-of-bacon Court, and was said to be often very amusing. Another entertainment of the sort was the *Florentine Venus*, described as a female figure in sections, which an Italian doctor took apart and fitted together

after the manner of a jig-saw puzzle to the accompaniment of a lecture, anatomical in character, although it is questionable whether all who attended it were, strictly speaking, anatomists. Rather funnily, women were not admitted to this demonstration: lady doctors were not yet, and an exhibition of the feminine frame to females was too indelicate to be thought of.

Theatrical benefits were still not infrequent although the custom of paying a part of actors' remuneration in that form was already falling into desuetude.

CHAPTER XLV

SPORT

Leonidas to Tom Sayers—Mills's Field—Cricket—Football—Racing —*Caractacus*—*Bribery Colt*—Running—Deerfoot—Rowing—Boxing—Baden-Powell—Archery.

ALTHOUGH in the foregoing pages I have occasionally touched on rowing and other popular forms of emulative athleticism, I was never a devotee of sport, and followed its records but very perfunctorily. At school I played cricket and football, and was considered a fair runner for my age. I also learnt to row, not, I think, badly; to sail, to swim, and later to box and wrestle a little. But I never tackled anything really seriously.

Nevertheless, I was always interested in deeds of prowess or endurance, whether in peace or war, and any specially successful sportsman or warrior commanded my sincere esteem.

I deem it fortunate that I became acquainted at an early age with the leading facts relating to ancient Sparta and Athens. Leonidas and Miltiades, Thermopylæ and Marathon, with the Olympic Games, inspired me with admiration and respect for courage, manliness, fortitude and determination. Leonidas was my special hero. In his daring and self-sacrifice I found qualities that neither Alexander the Great nor Julius Cæsar had given evidence of, although no doubt they were intellectually his superiors.

From Leonidas to Tom Sayers may seem a big jump, but to my boyish imagination they had a good deal in common; they both held the fort until, as the Spaniard says, *más no poder*.

After Leonidas it was Alfred the Great who captivated my fancy. His obstinate refusal to be beaten by the Danes,

together with the sense of fair play, justice and magnanimity he always displayed, even towards his bitterest opponents, marked him out as a hero and a sportsman of the first order. I failed to find his equal in all British history, and scarcely in any other. Warriors and law-givers combined in one skin are rare in the records of mankind, and, so far as England is concerned, he was our first and our last.

Cricket I learnt at the age of nine or ten. There was a big paddock called Mills's Field near us at Camberwell. Now entirely cut up and built over, it was then merely fringed with houses, but fringed nearly all round. Many of these dwellings had doors in the walls or fences of their back gardens giving access to the grassland across little bridges spanning a ditch or drain that ran round the boundary. Some of these bridges were merely planks, but others had been perhaps unnecessarily elaborated, and one or two were actually draw-bridges that could be raised and secured upright against the garden gates. Not one of these suburban Englishmen's castles sported a portcullis, however.

Mills, a butcher in the Old Kent Road, pastured cattle and sheep in the field, but these occupied but a corner of the big expanse and leave to play games was accorded on easy terms to neighbouring householders. Small cricket clubs were formed to take advantage of the concession, while respectable children sported as they listed. There I scored my first duck's egg, made my first runs, took my first wicket and acquired familiarity with cricket jargon.

I have read that cricketers still sported tall hats in the 'fifties, but that was not my experience in 1858–9. I cannot be sure of details, but those I saw mostly wore cloth caps and dressed chiefly in white. Stay! I do recall top hats in a charity match—but they were assumed for purposes of fun and advertisement.

Bats were flatter and lighter and usually cut out of a sold piece of willow, not spliced; gloves and pads less in evidence. But then the leg-before-wicket rules were very different, and pads were not used to stop balls cutting in from the sides. Bowling was mostly underhand and at the wicket, never being manipulated with intent to in-

timidate the batter. That emphatically was *not* cricket. Neither would "barracking" have been had it been known, which happily it was not.

Round- and over-arm bowling was regarded as throwing and discountenanced. Its first practitioners got into trouble with the umpires. It is said that these innovations were due to a young lady, Miss Wallis. When one considers the anatomy of the female frame and the attitude naturally assumed by girls who try to throw balls this seems not unlikely. And when one reflects that W. G. Grace and his brothers were encouraged in their early cricket by their mother the feminine record in the great pastime must be acknowledged to be no mean one. It suggests that man is as mother makes him, even in cricket.

Nevertheless, at this time the wicket pitch remained practically for women an unexplored Elysium. It was not until the 'seventies, I think, that the comic papers began to set "Rosie Posie" teams in the field and make fun of them. Certainly a little girl offering to join in one of our games would have been regarded as a phenomenon, and not a very proper one at that. Feminine dress was not, of course, in the least suitable for the game; the nearly naked female children now so prominent as cricketers on the sands of various watering-places were no more dreamt of as a possible development than maidens with wings or antennæ were.

In those days the wicket-keeper was usually placed six feet from the stumps, and Long Stop several yards behind him, according to the speed of bowling.

Single-wicket matches were often seen, and were not disdained even by experts. Two prominent players would sometimes meet in battle, bowling and batting in turns. In such contests the boundaries were short and the same fielders would serve both players. Single wicket constituted a searching man-against-man test. Why not revive it?

I used to see cricket news in the papers and became familiar with the names of the principal clubs and players. The I Zingari club was much in evidence in the 1860s, wanderers then as they still are in 1924. Gentlemen *v.* Players, Eleven of England *v.* Twenty-two of Blank-

shire, Married *v.* Single, and One-armed *v.* One-legged were matches which came every year, and always created interest.

As a youth I never saw a first-class match, my experiences being confined to Mills's Field, Peckham Rye, and, later, to Blackheath, where many good teams, including several schools—my own was one—had pitches and afforded instructive illustrations of the game.

I am under the impression that cricket in the '50s and '60s was a livelier and more interesting game than it is at present. It may be the effect of age or of imperfect appreciation of modern points, but the last game I saw at Kennington Oval struck me as slow and devoid of the fire and activity characteristic of the old days. The breast of each player may have been flushed with almost irrepressible zeal, but, if so, the internal volcanoes were very successfully hidden. The game had a made-to-order look and the cricketers suggested trained animals going through trick dancing, not because they loved it, but because it had to be. No chances were taken, and what is sport devoid of chance? I wondered whether the spirit of James Lillywhite was looking on. I am afraid that modern cricket has become finciking and over-educated. And knocking off for a few drops of rain would have been accounted womanish sixty years ago, and a tea interval mawkishly incomprehensible.

While watching this modern game I thought of a modification we sometimes played in my youth called "Touch and Run." Any player touching a ball, however slightly, except by way of a direct block, had to chance a run. A very lively and rapid game invariably resulted. Casualties often ensued, of course, but the risk was usually rewarded, since the score mounted rapidly and there was but scant time for yawning.

Football was played a good deal by schools, as I had opportunity of observing on Blackheath, where my own seminary performed a kind of Rugby game every Saturday afternoon in the season. "Association" was not yet. But as a popular sport football was non-existent, and in view of the attention it now receives in the Press it is curious

to look for football news in the sporting papers of the 'fifties and 'sixties, and, apart from school matches, find it not. But such football as did exist was sport; that of 1924 is, unfortunately, trade—a capitalised gambling counter. The exaggerated importance with which the game is regarded by a large section of the population of Great Britain is nothing less, in my opinion, than a national misfortune. If newspaper notices of English football were few they did not exist at all about Scottish.

Were none but those able to play the game allowed to attend football matches the nation might gain something in physical development: and Sport would smile again.

Cup ties were very modest affairs when "Association" was young. They were often played in public parks, without charge for admission. I have in mind one decided in West Ham Park in the early 1880s. It was between Upton Park and Preston North End, the second or third round in the English Association Cup. There was neither gate nor gate money; no stands, no seats, while the spectators numbered 300 at most. To-day such a match would attract 40,000; but would the sport be any cleaner or better?

It is curious to note that Scotsmen began to disdain porridge about the time that football became an obsession with them, and that many who continued to "sup" the homely fare took sugar with "them." If this does not spell decadence, what does?

The sporting press neglected golf, treating principally of racing, rowing, pedestrianism, swimming, pugilism, wrestling, pigeon-shooting and archery. Chess likewise had a familiar corner. Billiards were not much in evidence.

Racing I can say little about. Apart from sweepstakes I never had one shilling on a horse in my life, and the race meetings I attended might be reckoned without much mental strain by a Zulu, whose limit of enumeration is said not to exceed ten. I was once at Ealing Races, about 1864, once at Croydon and once at Epsom.

The first Derby winner I remember was *Caractacus* in 1859—a name already made familiar by the history books—and him I heard and read a lot about. I recollect a picture

of the horses passing the winning-post in which *Caractacus* was represented with his legs out straight fore-and-aft and his belly almost grazing the sod. Race-horses in those pre-Kodak days never assumed any other attitude. After that I kept touch with the Derby year by year. When Lord Lyon took the ribbon, in 1866 I think, I went through an unusual experience. I had drawn a horse known as the *Bribery Colt* in a small sweepstake, and when the result was known the second horse was variously described by this name and as *Savernake*, with the result that the stakeholder refused to pay out the second prize. It took several days to ascertain that they were really one and the same, the colt having been unnamed when entered and called *Savernake* later. So I ultimately got my prize, and considered it worth taking. This was the year before *Hermit* was popularly supposed to have won the Derby in a snowstorm. I believe, however, that the brief flurry of snow that gave rise to the legend had ceased just before the horses went to the post.

Racing men in the 1860s could not *all* have been quite respectable—at all events not always above board—as the following incident caused me to think. In 1864 I once got into an up-train at New Cross to proceed to London Bridge, and found the compartment pretty full of racing men returning from Epsom. Tickets were taken at New Cross in those days. As soon as my fellow voyagers realised the fact from the shouting of the collectors on the platform two of them got under the seats and were hidden by the legs and overcoats of the others, one of whom turned to me and with an oath bade me look out of the window. The collector came and took our tickets, which he seemed to scrutinise very closely. As soon as the train had started the secluded ones came forth and amid much laughter were dusted down by their comrades.

Running was a more popular sport than at present, the names of its prominent professors being known to the multitude, although not so widely as those of the rowing and boxing champions. In 1861 a runner arrived from America who was said to be a "Seneca" Indian named Deerfoot

and the best sprinter on the Western Continent. He came in the *Great Eastern* and secured a good advertisement in advance by running races in Indian costume round the vessel's vast decks and easily beating all and sundry. He contested matches up to ten miles, still in picturesque Indian dress, with Mills and our other best men, often defeating them, so that in a few weeks Deerfoot had his name well established in sporting circles, while the fleetness of limb ascribed to the Red Indian by Fennimore Cooper, Mayne Reid and other writers was held to be fully demonstrated. He stayed a year or two and made a good pile of dollars. Then furtive rumours, which grew into positive assertions, got about that the whole show was bunkum. Deerfoot was no Red Indian, but an Englishman who had never seen a wigwam in his life! He once attended a gathering of reporters to the sporting press attired as a Seneca Chief, and smoked the pipe of peace with them; they little guessed, poor innocents, how he was "smoking" them too! To what extent our own pedestrians were privy to the affair could not be said, but ugly assertions were not lacking. It had a disagreeable flavour and reacted against the popularity of running. But Deerfoot was certainly a good sprinter.

Rowing, my favourite sport, I have dealt with elsewhere. It, too, degenerated after the death of Bob Chambers and the blue-ribboned sceptre of what was in the early 1860s regarded as a specially English exercise has since gone the round of many a distant clime. Of the older matches, the Oxford and Cambridge race and Doggett's Coat and Badge are the chief races surviving to this day. As in running and boxing, doubts as to the honesty of contests led to rapid degeneration and neglect.

Of boxing I have spoken earlier in the book. So long as Ben Caunt, Tom Sayers and Tom King were its shining lights it maintained its popularity, for nobody ever suspected any of these of selling or prearranging a fight. But their successors commanded no such confidence, and the Ring deservedly shared the decrepitude bad practices had brought upon other sports.

It was a pity. Barbarism was alleged against the old pugilism, but were knock-out blows more drastic or more numerous than in these times of the gloved hand? It is to be doubted. The prize-ring was also said to be a centre of rowdyism, ruffianism and blackguardism—and other isms as well, I've no doubt—but was it worse than were many race meetings of 1922 and 1923? No branch of sport, it is to be feared, cricket excepted, may claim immunity from such taints.

On the other hand, as I have hinted before, pugilism inculcated a spirit of fair play, forbearance and chivalry; a recognition of an opponent's staunchness and his right to win if he could, that were not without their uses in the formation of youthful character. In fact, it did in some degree what Baden-Powell has tried to achieve in our times with his Boy Scouts—to give a moral, manly lead to youthful inexperience. I do not find the same influences in the artificial rules and surroundings of modern boxing. With his book of manly precepts General Baden-Powell is a more eloquent preacher than a bench of Bishops, and a more effective schoolmaster than several Boards of Education rolled into one.

The ladies had no lawn-tennis to develop their innate gracefulness, but they did possess archery; and bending the bow and aiming the shaft found favour with many of them—as might indeed be expected, their close connection with Cupid being considered and given due weight to. There were several Archery Clubs in London—and archery manuals could be bought at the railway bookstalls—which held meetings at the Crystal Palace and elsewhere at which the fair members assumed many a beautiful pose, and no doubt scored many a hit. Their targets might appropriately have been marked with men's hearts instead of bull's-eyes. They were not, as a matter of fact, but probably the hearts didn't escape for all that.

CHAPTER XLVI

CONCLUSION

Education—Curtailed liberty—Englishmen abroad—Workers *v.* Shirkers —Old-time wisdom—*Quo vadimus* ?

IN my first chapter I said that in many respects things are not to-day what they were sixty years ago, and that it is open to doubt whether all changes have been for the best.

The sun rose and set on each day of those six decades and between each rising and setting it would usually have been difficult to perceive any alteration on the previous twenty-four hours. But inappreciable differences nevertheless occurred, and cumulatively they amount to-day to something very formidable. In fact, one is tempted to suspect that the nation has changed fundamentally.

Old fogies are reputed, and often justly, to be incapable of recognising improvements and to think that the country must necessarily be going to His Apollyonic Majesty when views and things they have been brought up to are replaced by new-fangled notions and devices.

That may be my case. I may be wrong, and sincerely trust that I am, but present-day developments and symptoms seem to furnish forth no inconsiderable causes for disquietude as to the future of England, Great Britain and the Empire.

Let me, with many humble apologies to the genius of the twentieth century, set down some of my misgivings. A few only, for a treatise would be required to touch upon them all.

Item : the Englishman's education is defective.

It will scarcely be denied that the mainspring of a modern

civilisation is education. If that be weak or flawed development must be arrested and distorted.

To those who remember with what joy and bright hopes free education was looked forward to in the 1860s—what wonderful results were predicted—how much nearer it was bound to bring us to the Millennium—the results in 1924, after fifty-four years' application of the grand specific, must, I fear, appear extremely inadequate if not entirely disappointing. In modern phraseology, "the goods have not been delivered."

That is not, however, the fault of good Fairy Education, but of the grotesque masks and faces in which she has been doomed to mum. The lamp of knowledge has certainly been lighted, but its combustion is imperfect and it gives off soot as well as light.

It must not be thought that there was no free education prior to 1870. I have referred to National Schools and Ragged Schools at Greenwich, but it was not there alone that they flourished. In 1858 there were 160 Ragged Schools in London and very many more in the provinces—splendid monuments to the good cobbler John Pound of Portsmouth who first devised and established them. And there were free Church of England Schools also, and probably some maintained by other denominations, but of this last item I will not be sure.

These free schools were supported by voluntary contributions and collectively accommodated many thousands of scholars. The subjects taught were not numerous, perhaps, but they were those really required by the future pawns on the Chess-board of Life—the three Rs, with outlines of geography and history. Singing of hymns and glees received attention and the whole flavoured with a strong admixture of the Bible. And lectures on straightforward conduct in life, fair play, etc., were not wanting. In addition, promising boys and girls were often taught at least the smatterings of a trade, so that on leaving school they might become something more than explorers of blind alleys. Free meals were in many instances given to the poorer pupils and, in bad cases, free clothing.

So, prior to the inauguration of State Education, there was free schooling in England for all willing to accept it, and parents unable to pay the charges of proprietary schools had still a chance for their little ones. The efficiency of these private establishments may not have been great, but the few subjects taught were well rubbed in. Unfortunately, compulsory attendance not having been decreed, many children were kept at home, and it was these unfortunates who later in life figured in the statistics as unable to read and write. Had attendance at some school or other been made obligatory, and moderate, not Draconic, supervision set up a system giving good practical results might conceivably have been evolved.

This old plan produced workers, and so responded to the needs of Country and Empire; the existing system gives us every year a great army of incipient ladies and gentlemen, too proud to perform their natural parts as subordinates and yet, in great measure, too imperfectly educated to become anything but mere hewers and drawers. Games of cards (or life) cannot be played with packs that are all aces and kings, nor games of chess without pawns. Strange as the fact may appear, workers are as indispensable as queens in every bee-hive. A crew entirely of officers is a noble aspiration, no doubt, but it, like the 1924 British bricklayer, won't work.

And at what a cost is this delusion pursued? Of the bounding school-rates, potent restrainers of trade and enterprise, a very large proportion is expended on behalf of persons able—and often exceedingly well able—to educate their offspring. A sensible community would not allow this: such children should not be received at public schools except in return for fair payment. The system is unjust to the deserving, for it results in classes of unmanageable size and consequent poor and scamped instruction.

We have been trying to teach too much—more subjects than any but the brightest could hope to master, and to impart them to every grade of intellect. And some of these subjects are such as cannot be of much practical use to ordinary boys or girls about to earn their own living. If

these things could be properly learned and retained the issue might be different, but the vast majority of children acquire them so superficially that six months after leaving school they remember nothing about them.

And for such subjects essentials are neglected. English is so badly taught—if at all—that very many pupils, after passing all the standards, can neither speak nor write with even an approximation to correctness. Yet they are farcically taught French.

And tuition as to conduct in life; duty to country, society and one's neighbour; what constitutes good and honourable conduct, would appear, from my inquiries, to be entirely neglected. Such things in the modern curriculum are replaced by singing and dancing. And no teaching is forthcoming on the organisation of modern civilised life—the constitution and functions of a Parliament, a Government or a Town or County Council—so that boys and girls walk about and grow up in a world of which they know nothing. A lad certified as having passed all standards in a London Council School, applying for employment as office boy, being asked if he knew who the Lord Mayor was, confidently replied, "the gentleman who gives the big show." Not long since a leading newspaper instanced girls leaving school with "excellent knowledge of graphs and square roots, but unable to do housework." And what, in very many cases, do these accomplishments lead up to and end in? Jazz.

Drastic reform is surely called for. Children of different intellects should be sifted into their natural classes at a very early stage and the curriculum adapted to their capacities. The bright ones should be led on and no effort spared to develop their aptitudes. Let no George Stephenson be lost through lack of encouragement. But attempt not to make a Stephenson out of a Quasimodo.

The inferior grades of intelligence should only be taught the most essential subjects—the old National School programme substantially—but taught it well. Moral teaching and information about the world, the land and the town they live in, should be given to all, preferably through the medium of lectures conceived in an entertaining spirit.

An engineer using the same grade of iron or steel for all purposes would soon come to grief: yet that is, in effect, what most School Authorities are doing; and, in my opinion, they *have* come to grief. When their gentlemen graduates go to Canada or Australia—colonies largely built up by the exertions of the men of the 1850–60s—they are too soft or too lazy to work. They are not wanted on the farms, and are avoided by the colonists. So they either loaf about the towns or come home—perchance as stowaways—and take their unemployment doles. Only recently I heard that English were avoided from such widely-separated places as Adelaide and Toronto.

It is very different, however, with boys and girls sent out by Dr. Barnardo's and kindred institutions. But their education has been practical, and not on County Council *cum* Oxford and Cambridge lines.

And the mountain of sins of commission and omission is now liberally added to by the Proletarian Sunday-schools, in which religion, patriotism, morality, everything rendered sacred by the practice of the last 2,000 years, is openly derided. Londoners have erected a statue to good Robert Raikes, founder of Sunday-schools. Were it vocal, like that of Memnon, how it would groan! "Lugubrious, at the setting of the sun!"

Item: Englishmen are not so free as they were.

Police regulations and offences have multiplied; new laws and by-laws been enacted; tax-collectors given authority to conduct inquisitions into a man's business and even private affairs; Trade Unions interfere with the individual's right to work and the amount and manner of his work: so, in effect, the Briton's "mean free path"—to use a technical expression—is considerably more circumscribed and his factor of self-determination notably reduced. The stage of the German *Verboten* has not been reached, but may be discerned looming on the horizon.

Another curtailment of liberty is involved in the destruction of individuality due to the extension of large companies and businesses. Instead of striking out independent careers, beginners now have to become clerks, shopmen, or what not

in some colossal establishment where they obey orders and have no opportunity to originate or improve. A vast fund of that initiative for which our race is famed and which founded our Colonies and Empire thereby becomes submerged and lost.

For this reason railway grouping is much to be deplored, for it extinguishes the efforts of many able men to solve transport problems, engineering and otherwise, for the benefit of their companies and their own credit. Most of these officials now become subordinates, existing only to carry out the plans of the few high chiefs whose jobs will probably prove too big to be attended to properly. Much talent hitherto exercised to good purpose will be sent to sleep. Standardisation—itself a fetter on invention—will be applied as a specific but in an ever-progressive art like the railway service cannot attain any permanent success, for after a time improvements will have to be neglected because the mass of the stock will have become old-fashioned and yet be of too much value to be scrapped.

Item: Englishmen, instead of being respected in foreign countries, are generally contemned.

In the 1850–60s an Englishman abroad was *somebody*. I can scarcely contend that every man-Jack of them was born with a patent of nobility as a caul, but certainly at that period, and considerably later, Englishmen enjoyed a prestige amongst foreigners unequalled by any other nationality. "Natives" of every clime—from Germany to Java or Japan—hastened to accord him the status of a gentleman, in the best meaning of the term. His word was accepted as current cash and justice was supposed to haunt his Dundreary whiskers. This was occasionally embarrassing. As a lad I was sometimes put out by the deference shown as soon as my nationality became known. Even in France, where, as I have noted, England, her army and politics, were not popular with the masses, individuals were always polite and often more. In 1869 I inquired of a fat Frenchman in Marseilles the way to the Post Office. As I spoke he took off his tall hat (the charm of my accent probably!) and with it in his hand walked to the corner of the next

street and profusely indicated the route, afterwards bowing himself out of sight. And in 1866, at Ghent, a Belgian, learning I was English, forced me to accept a cigar, nipped and lighted and all. I shall never forget *that!*

In 1870 I used to be touched by the confidence expressed by Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Persians, Beloochees and what not, in the *Burra Raj*—Great Government. The Crimean War was still green and Englishmen in Turkey were everywhere respected. Had not our Government rejected the Euphrates Valley Railway concession which the Turks literally threw at their heads, Mesopotamia would have become a British preserve automatically and willingly many years ago. Even Greeks, Rumanians and Hungarians of those days considered it an honour to be noticed by a Briton. And now!

The Euphrates Valley Railway scheme to connect the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf was investigated and reported favourably upon by a Select Committee in 1872. Many distinguished men sat on the Committee and appeared as witnesses before it. The Turks offered the necessary land for the line gratis and to grant free transit for all British mails and troops: likewise to assign us a half share in the management. Allowing £75,000 as yearly value of services to be received, the maximum liability for the British Exchequer according to the plan recommended—a 3% guarantee on the capital of the projected Railway Company—was estimated at £225,000 per annum. Although the Indian authorities strongly pressed for the railway, Mr. Gladstone's Government pigeon-holed the Report, and thereby wrote themselves down moles for ever. A disastrous mistake which was a factor in bringing about, and extending the area of, the Great War and caused us dreadful sacrifices in vain efforts to redeem it. And the end is not yet.

The mid-Victorian had his faults, and not a few, but it is to be feared that it fell to him to see the British Empire at its zenith.

Item: Englishmen are not so earnest.

Sixty years ago life and work were taken more seriously. Men shouldered their burdens energetically, not always

without grumbling perhaps, but generally with the wish and will to perform creditably and do both themselves and their employers justice. Skulkers were apt to be ostracised by their mates. A bricklayer restricting himself to 300 bricks per day would have been tolerated by neither master nor man. Although things have improved vastly for the working classes, their progress has not kept pace with the growth of their murmuring. If content be a measure of happiness, then were the people of sixty years since far better off than those of to-day.

In the *Life of Thomas Brassey*, the great contractor, we read of the great pride taken by the English navvy in his work, and how it paid to employ him in France and Italy at twice the remuneration of the native worker. An observer in France wrote: "I think as fine a spectacle as any man could witness is to see the digging of a cutting in full operation, with about twenty wagons being filled, every man at his post, and every man with his shirt open, working in the heat of the day, the gangers looking about and everything going like clockwork."

Frenchmen who came to the railway cuttings in course of excavation attracted by the reputation the navvies had won for themselves, cried "*Mon Dieu! Les Anglais, comme ils travaillent!*" Alas! in 1924 the position is quite reversed, and it is the Frenchman who scores.

I have referred to the refusal of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway directors, on the occasion of the strike of 1867, to concede the men's demands that engine-men, once appointed, should obtain the maximum pay of their grade. The directors pointed out that that would place all, whatever their capacity, on the same level and ultimately be bad for the men themselves, and for that reason the demand was rejected.

But the maleficent concession was granted a few years back, and in 1922, at a discussion of experts at the Institution of Locomotive Engineers, it was declared that the evils foreseen have duly come to pass.

Most railway companies provide classes for the training, instruction and improvement of their engine-men, but it is

now found that, since all must be treated alike, only a few care to attend them. One speaker said, "Since the new conditions of service came in, that in six years the men automatically attain the highest rate, they just sit tight until they get it." Thus the duffer obtains the highest pay and the cleverest can do no more. When the men get off their engines they want to go to football matches, not classes, and, what is perhaps worse, are not ashamed to say so.

The effect in the long run cannot but be disastrous from the efficiency point of view, and signs are not lacking that the spell is already working.

During the last few years there have been several bad accidents in which, reading between the lines of the Government Inspectors' Reports, there were indications of either gross incompetence or very complete indifference on the part of the engine-men, running-shed mechanics and others.

Brassey's navvies belonged to the race of Empire Builders; the latter-day workmen rather to that of Empire smashers. As I write Essex farmers and others are complaining that they cannot obtain labourers, as men who work get less than the unemployment dole paid to those who do not.

Item: Luxury and laziness succeed thrift and industry.

Sixty years ago, and indeed for long afterwards, ideas of thrift, diligence, application, were inculcated everywhere and the wisdom of putting by for a rainy day enjoined. Every child was familiar with Dr. Watts's couplet—

> "How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour?"

and—

> "'Twas the voice of the sluggard!
> I heard him complain—
> 'You have waked me too soon,
> I must slumber again.'"

And the texts these afforded were used to good purpose in forming children's minds.

Such teachings produced the artless folk who took pleasure in fountains and fireworks and Lord Mayors' shows; crowded in tens of thousands to hear a preacher and were ever ready

to fight three Frenchmen. No doubt the maxims were right enough for the period, but we have got far ahead of such simplicity. Legislation and thrift now repel each other.

Item : Quo vadimus ?

I am not complaining that things are no longer what they were. That would indeed be in vain. Change is the unvarying law of all human kind, human institutions, as well as of the globe which constitutes their theatre and the "galaxy of heaven" through which it whirls. And empires are no more exempt from its operation than other works of the human ant.

There were features that no one wants restored. Sixty years ago hours of work were long, factories often insanitary, safety of toilers disregarded, employers exacting, remuneration inadequate: evils that cried for remedy and against which Trade Unions were entitled to fight strenuously and prevail and good men to protest, as Charles Dickens did in his *Hard Times.*

These unfavourable conditions nevertheless had their uses. They brought good men to the front—men bred to hardship and against hardship and odds prepared to battle.

Prairie dwellers cannot be expected to become good climbers. It requires obstacles, and formidable ones, to foster a race of mountaineers.

In all ages conquerors have emerged from places where the natives, after prolonged war with Nature, have ended by turning their poverty-tempered arms against peoples effeminated by civilisation or climate. Hannibal and his hordes, after subduing the Alps, succumbed to the enervations of Italy; Byzantium yielded to the desert Arab; Rome itself to the Gaul, the Goth, the Vandal and the Hun.

Consider the case of the pushful Scotsman, product of a country poor in itself, harried for centuries by foreign foes. He had to fight whether he would or not. Chronic penury in time evolved the corrective habits of earnestness, thrift and diligence, the impulse of which still persistent, although showing pregnant signs of exhaustion, enables him to score plentifully off the softer and more careless Southron. We laugh at his "bawbees" and "saxpences" oblivious

of the stern lesson they carry with them; but had he been blessed (?) with a rich and fertile country and the Englishman inconvenienced by a sterile one, conditions would have been considerably reversed. Very conceivably Alec and Angus would be contemned to-day as sybarites and ne'er-do-weels, and the natives of Kent and Devon notorious for close-fistedness and dourness. There is some advantage in being born close neighbours to an Ice Age.

Spain furnishes another example. For 700 years the Moors had to be faced and fought; the Prince and the peasant equally trained to arms. When at last the barren mountains of Castile and Aragon prevailed over the enchanting plains of Andalusia, and the Moors were defeated and removed, the Spanish nation was a camp of gallant and toughened soldiers under dauntless chiefs. Cortez and Pizarro conquered the Americas; then gold flowed up the Guadalquivir, and soon the phase of fighting-to-live was succeeded by one of living-to-dally: result, the degenerate Spain of the last 300 years.

All of which is in harmony with Charles Darwin's portrait of Dame Nature—cruel, ruthless, effective, decreeing the Survival of the Fittest, and seeing that she gets it. And the law is as true of nations and kingdoms as of Nature.

Empires cannot go on for ever, nor, having reached their limit, stand still at that point. Perpetual motion is their doom—upwards or downwards!

At what point in the flight, then, stand we of Britain?

I cannot say. There have been so many occasions when England has been brought up standing and yet ultimately forged ahead again as if nothing particular had happened that one is encouraged to believe that danger is her element, and that fortune will again mend when apparently at its worst. We have ever excelled as back-to-the-wall fighters, and mayhap some great chief will arise and retrieve the position. That is what we must earnestly hope.

That there will be plenty of retrieving to do seems abundantly evident. We find ourselves much in the position of decadent Rome. Indeed, in some respects, the parallel is surprising. The Cæsars carried on by free doles of grain

(John Bull gives hard cash) and other necessaries; by hocussing the people with games (we substitute votes) and gladiators (our people are encouraged to waste their time watching football). Ultimately the Romans could not be induced to submit to military service; the eagles had to be withdrawn from distant territories and resort made to the ruinous device of placating the Empire's enemies while deserting and sacrificing its own loyalists and friends.

All this is happening with us to-day.

We are no longer the earnest England of the Great Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862. And beyond everything lies the fact that many nations will in the future be our keen competitors in production of every kind, so that, even should a great revival of patriotism and common sense occur, and all classes combine to reassert the national position, the effort will have to be made in a world of bitter commercial rivalry and price-cutting in which there will be no room for short hours, high wages, ca'canny and doles of the merry-go-round order.

Meanwhile, the good ship *Britannia*, with helm adrift surges amongst the rocks, the officers engaged chiefly in scheming to displace their rivals; the crew one half on strike and the other half thinking they ought to be; the passengers mostly dancing the hornpipe; the few who refrain, well, what can they do? Only doubt and hope.

INDEX

A

A B C shop (first), 78
Abyssinian War, 315
Accidents, 18, 22, 32
Acrobats (street), 62
Adelphi dark arches, 238
Adriatic (steamer), 118
Aerated bread, 78
Aerolitic bombardment, 300
Agamemnon (H.M.S.), 172–7
A grateful German, 200
Alabama claims, 272
Alabama v. *Kearsarge*, 272
Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, 248
Alexandra, Princess, 248–51
Alison (Sir Archibald), 312
Amateur Casual, 238–90
  Robinson Crusoe, 201
America (cup yacht), 173
American Civil War, 224–31
  cotton-fields, 281
  gift to England, 165
  songs, 66
Anderson (Sir James), 293
Angel tavern, 17
Angerstein's Wharf, 199
Apple women, 54
Archery, 352
Armageddon (birth of), 93, 105
Artizans' paper caps, 56
Association football, 349
Astley's Amphitheatre, 175, 339
Atlantic cables, 172, 177, 291–4
Austrian General chased, 45
Auxiliary screw-steamers, 320

B

Baden-Powell, General, 352
Baker (Sir Benjamin), 252
Ballad singers, 64
Balloons, 138
Banquet in Brussels, 130
Banting, fat man, 262
Banting (Dr.), 263
Baptism at Santos, 221
Barclay and Perkins, 45–6
Barnardo (Dr.) 238
Bateman (Miss), 330
Bath-rooms, 151
Baths (public), 151, 236
Beadles, 57, 127, 128, 309
Beards and whiskers, 74
Bears' grease, 100
Bedford (Paul), 329
Beds, 75
Beer, 43–6, 95–6
Belgian Civic Guards, 131–3
Belgian *vivandière*, 132–3
Bell-ringers (street), 69
Belvedere explosion, 273
"Benevolence," 148
Bennett (Father Richard), 219–20
Big Ben, 103, 222
Birkenhead (transport) wreck, 169
Blackfriars Bridge, 123
Blackwall (Germany), 233
  Pier, 201
  Point, 201
  Railway, 243
Blessing of locomotives, 177
Blockade runners, 230
Bloomers, 73
Bob Chambers, 211
Boiler explosion on Metropolitan Railway, 256
Boulogne-sur-Mer, 284
Boys' names, 142
Boxing, 143, 189, 345, 351
Braithwaite and Ericsson, 85
Brassey (Thomas), 177, 360
Brazilian road to heaven, 221
Brewers, 95
Brewers' draymen, 44–5
Bricklayers' Arms Terminus, 92–4
Bridge House tavern, 79
Brig ashore, 200
Briggs (Thomas), 265
Britannia (the good ship), 364
British navvies in France, 360
  songs in America, 65
Bronze coinage, 191
Brough (Lionel), 336
Buckstone, 330
Bugsby's Hole, 201
Buildings, 95
Burdett Coutts, Baroness, 133

Burlesques, 331–4
Burnard, F. C., 294, 331, 333
Burnett, R. H., 256
Burning of House Commons, 103
Her Majesty's Theatre, 310
Sarah Sands, 168
Burville (Alice), 332–41
Butchers, 41
Butchers' boys, 41
Byron, H. J., 332, 336

C

Calcraft, 264, 266, 296
Call-boys on steamers, 113
Caloric (hot-air ship), 86–7
Camberwell, 28–126–8
Canal Basin, 19
Can-boys, 43
Cannon Street bridge, 124
Caractacus (Derby winner), 349
Cardinal Manning, 261
Carpet-bags, 149
Carré (Captain H. M.), 325
Castle (Captain J. S.), 168–72
Cat-o'-nine-tails, 296
Cats (varieties), 49
Cats'-meat men, 48
Cat worrying, 144
Cellier (Alfred), 336–41
Chairs to mend, 52
Charleston (blockade), 230
Charlotte (Empress of Mexico), 306
Chaucer and Crystal Palace, 181
Cheap Jacks, 56
Cherbourg Railway, 177
Chignons in Rotten Row, 283
Chimes (street), 69
Chinese War, 173
Cholera, 20, 21, 295
Chop-houses, 79
Christmas waits, 56
Churchwarden pipes, 202
Churchwardens' pews and staves, 127
Cigar ships, 290
City (few women in), 76
offices, 77
Road, 19
Clarke (Hamilton), 337
Clarke (J. S.), 328
Cleopatra's Needle, 172
Clerk at St. George's, 127
Clerkenwell explosion, 309
Cobden and Bright, 281
Cocoa, 153
Coinage (copper and bronze), 191
Coke ovens, 167
Coles (Captain), 290
Colloquialisms, 140–2
Colonel Burnaby, 186
Comet (Donati's), 103–6
Comets (minor of 1858), 105
Commodore Wilkes, 226–7
Common Council and railways, 271
Complexions, 73
Congregations (enormous), 126–66
Constance Kent murder, 193
Costumes (girls'), 74
(men's), 75
Courageous brewer, 96
Cremorne, 125
Cricket, 346–8
Crimean plum-puddings, 97
Crimean War, 26, 161
Crinolines, 72
Crookes (Sir William), 263
Crossing-sweepers, 58
Crown Prince Frederick, 94
Crozier (Captain), 164
Crystal Palace, 166, 180–7, 281, 301
Railway, 182
Cup-tie in 1880, 349
Curtailed British liberty, 357

D

Dancing puppets, 61
Danish War, 267
Dark arches of Adelphi, 238
Darling (Grace), 194
(James), 194
Deerfoot, "Indian" runner, 351
Deerhound (yacht), 273
De Horsey (Admiral), 316
Deserted cottages, 232
Dibdin (Charles), 18
Disaster at Surrey Gardens, 126
Doctors' boys, 33
Dolby (George), 341
Donati's comet, 103–6
Don Quixote, 175
D'Oyley Carte, 341
Draught-bags, 52
Dreadnought, hospital ship, 197, 209, 212–14
Druggists, 22–4, 152
Du Chaillu (Mr.), 245
Duchess of Kent (death of), 222
Dundreary (Lord), 142
Dustmen, 44
Dutch clocks, 38, 150
Dynamite and Press, 337

E

Eagle tavern, 19
Earl of Shaftesbury, 46
Early Days, 17–27
East and West Indian Docks, 321
Education, 353–7

Electrical Parcel Exchange, 277
Tube (Post Office), 277
Elliott (Professor A. C.), 255
Emigrant ships, 319
Englishmen abroad, 358
English Volunteers in Belgium, 129–31
"Entires," 95
Erebus and *Terror* (discovery ships), 164
Ericsson, 86, 229
Euphrates Valley Railway, 359
Everson (George), 211
Exhibition (1862), 246–7
buildings, 246
Edinburgh, 1890, 254–5
Eyre (Governor), 286, 303, 316

F

Famine at Guildhall and Wimbledon, 132–3
Faraday (Professor), 145–312
Farren (Nellie), 338
Fechter, 330
Fenchurch Street Station, 79
Fenian shoots Duke of Edinburgh, 313
Ferret (Training brig), 325
Fêtes de l'Empereur, 308
Field (Cyrus), 293, 338
Fire Brigade, 84
at Crystal Palace, 301
at Santiago Cathedral, 260
engines, 84–6, 259
escapes, 84
First A B C shop, 78
Atlantic cablegrams, 179, 292
bombs in warfare, 286
Continental locomotive, 242
railway, 242
German flag in Persian Gulf, 268
London Railway, 240
Terminus, 240
overhouse telephone wires, 337
private execution, 267
railway signal-box, 166
river trips, 116
telephone in London, 336
train over Forth Bridge, 253
underground railway, 252–7
Fisher, tenor, 341
Fleet Prison (last of), 271
Florentine Venus, 343
Flowery Land pirates, 264
Food prices, 153
Football, 348
Fowler (Emily), 333, 339
Fowler (Sir John), 252
Franklin (Sir John), 161, 163
Fredericksburg (battle of), 231
Free Trade, 287
Frost (severe), 30
Funerals, 59
Funny Folks (journal), 338
Furtado (Miss) 331, 340

G

Games and toys, 158
Gardes Civiques, 131–3
Garibaldi, 269–71
Garibaldi's Englishman, 269
Garibaldi shirts, 270
German bands, 63
support for England, 162
Gibbet for five, 265
Gilbert (W. S.), 332, 334
Gipsies, 49
Girls' names, 142
Gladstone (Mr.), 224, 246, 258, 302, 314, 359
Glasgow explosions, 310
Glass-blower (street), 68
Glengall Road Bridge, 99
Gog and Magog, 80
Gooch (Sir Daniel), 253, 291, 293
Gorilla (the), 245
Goswell Road, 20
Grace Darling, 194
Grace (W. G.), 347
Grand Surrey Canal, 88–90
(boats on), 89
(mussels and pearls), 89
Grande Duchesse (Offenbach's), 339
Grant (Baron), 299
Great Eastern (steam-ship), 117–21, 179, 291–3
Greenwich in 1860, 197
amusements, 236
collegemen, 204–8
Hospital, 197, 204–8, 314
Observatory, 197
Park, 197, 235, 244
railway, 31, 240–5
river path, 198
Greenwood (Amateur Casual), 238
Grimaldi, 18, 23, 330
Grottoes, 70
Groundsel hawkers, 53
Guy Fawkes, 70

H

Hair-brushing by machinery, 101
Halfway House tavern, 243
Hand-bills, 55
Happy families, 67
Hardy (Sir Thomas), 242
Hare- and rabbit-skins, 39
Harper Twelvetrees, 99

Harris (Augustus), 341
Hartley Colliery accident, 223
Harvey (Captain H. B.), 282
Heenan (Jack), 189
Heenan's backers at Court, 191
Heligoland cession, 258
Herring (George), 163
Highland Railway Co.'s s.s. *Ferret*, 326
Hodson (Henrietta), 336
Holden (Sir I.), 145
Holiday traffic to Greenwich, 244
Holt (Elise), 332
Horns Tavern, 297–9
Horsleydown Regatta, 216
Hot-air ship, 86–7
House at Camberwell, 28
Hungerford, 122
Hurdy-gurdy men, 62
Hyde Park railings riot, 301

I

Illumination (household), 155
Illuminations (public, 1862), 249–41
Illustrated papers, 160
Impromptu rhymer, 51
Indian Mutiny, 165–7
(Humiliation Day), 165
Insanitary London, 174
Insurance tokens, 158
Intercession by Prussian King, 266
Ionian Isles cession, 258
Irish Turk (an), 162
Irving (Henry), 329, 333, 336
Islington, 17
Italian Image men, 53

J

Jack-in-the-Green, 69
Jamaican Insurrection, 286, 303, 316
James (David), 333
Jersey, 282
Jersey-Coutances cable, 179
John Ploughman's Talk, 57
Judge and Jury, 343

K

Kelvin (Lord), 179, 293
Kent (Constance), 193
Kreuz Zeitung weeps, 266
Krupp of Essen, 247

L

Labouchere (Henry), 336, 338
Labour Corps for Crimea, 113
Lady of Lyons (burlesque), 248
Laing (Samuel), 284
Lake's Restaurant, 79
Lambeth Bridge, 123
Lamplighters, 57
Landmann (Col. G. T.), 240
Landseer's lions, 323
Langham Hotel, 283
Last public execution, 309
Lavender sellers, 48
Leicester Square, 176, 299
Leopold II., 130
Let-down chimneys, 113
Lincoln (Abraham), 224, 281
Little boys, 76
girls, 74
Locomotive No. 2 S.E.R., 136–251
No. 5 S.E.R., 31
Lord of the Isles, 254
North Star, 255
Novelty, 85
building in London, 232
London Bridge, 25, 98
stations, 79, 97, 183, 240
County Council generating station, 234
and Croydon Railway, 243
District Telegraph Co., 153
Tavern, 79
London (wreck s.s.), 289
Lord Macaulay, 136
Lord Mayor's Show, 80
Lord Palmerston, 134–5, 227–8
Louis XI, 329
Lucifer matches, 145

M

Macaulay (Lord), 136
Mackay (the unreal), 267
Mahogany Bar tavern, 321
Magic-lanterns, 159, 237
Maid of the Mist (s.s.), 222
Manners (street), 143–4
Manning (Cardinal), 261
Manns (Augustus), 187
Mansion House Funds, 223
Marius, M., 332
Market Gardens, 153
Marriott (Miss), 329
Marrow-bones and cleavers, 71
Marryat (Captain), 242
Matches (lucifer), 145
Maximilian (Emperor), 306
Mayors and Reeves, 81
Measles, 20
Menken (Adah Isaacs), 190, 339
Merrimac (ironclad), 86, 228
Meteoric display, 300
Methodists, 219
Mesopotamia, 20

Midhat Pasha, 230
Midnight mass, 237
Milkmen, 40
Mills's Field, 346
Model (Battle of Trafalgar), 207
Monitor (turret ship), 86, 228
Moonlight blindness, 260
Moorish Ambassador, 184
Moral maxims, 273
Moses and Sons, 99
Mothers' meetings, 219
Motor-car radiator, 87
"Mouldy" coppers, 139
Muffins and crumpets, 44
Multiplex musician, 62
Müller (Franz), 265
Murder, North London Railway, 265
Muscat, 119
Museum, South Kensington, 255
Music, 1850–1924, 66
  Halls, 342

N

Napier of Magdala, 315
Napoleon III, 177, 284, 297, 306, 331
Nashville (Confederate privateer), 226
National schools, 235, 354, 356
Naval action off Jutland, 268
Negretti (Mr.), 276
New Cross disaster, 261
New Houses of Parliament, 103
  police, 34
  river, 23
  Standard Theatre, 335
Newspaper items, 148
Newspapers uncut, 149
Niagara (U.S. corvette), 118, 172, 177
Niagara Falls, 222
Normandy (p.s.), 282
North Sea luminosity, 131
Northumberland (H.M.S.), 233
Nyanza (p.s.), 170

O

Odell, 340–1
Old clo' man, 38–9
Old-time Wisdom, 361
Old Woolwich Road, 235
Omnibuses, 81–4
Opening of Parliament, 137
Orange girls, 55
Organ-grinders, 63
Ornaments for fire-grates, 52
Orsini, 176
Our Lady's, Croom's Hill, 220
Overend and Gurney, 291
Oyster stalls (street), 71

P

Painted Hall, 207, 244
Palmer (Dr.), 163
Palmerston (Lord), 134–5, 227–8
Panoramas, 237–8
Pantechnicons, 156
Paper caps (workmen's), 56
Paper knives, 149
Paris Exhibition (1867), 307
Patent Museum, 285
Pathos in Houndsditch, 259
Patti (Adelina), 330
Paul (Mrs. Howard), 340
Pavement pictures, 55–6
Paxton (Sir Joseph), 180, 281
Pearls (diving for), 89
Pedestrianism, 351
Penmanship, 147
Penny Dreadfuls, 238
Penny Parcel Post, 272
Penny steamboats, 107
Pepper's Ghost, 187
Perim (Island of), 176
Perkin (Mr., "Aniline"), 247
Persian War, 173
Pneumatic Tubes, 276–8
Policemen, 34–7
Pony Bell-ringer, 69
Pool (The), 26
Popular songs of 1850s, 64
Popularity of oysters, 71
Poses Plastiques, 343
Postage stamps, 146
Postal Division (Southern), 173
Postmen, 37–8
Post office red-tape, 293
Pot-hats, 76
Potmen (perambulating), 43
Pound (John), 354
Power (Nellie), 297, 342
Prestidigitation, 175
Prince (p.s.), 26
Prince Consort (death of), 223
Prince of Orange, 241
Princess Alexandra, 248
Pritchard (Dr.), 283
Prize Ring, 143, 189, 345, 351
Provisions, 153
Punch and Judy, 61
Puppets (dancing), 61
Purse trick, 50
Putney Bridge, 124

Q

Queen's Theatre, Long Acre, 336
Queen Victoria in France, 177

Quill pens, 77
Quo vadimus? 362

R

Racing, 349
Ragged schools, 235, 354
Raikes (E.), 357
Railway journey, 31
Railwaymen decadent, 360
Railway poetry, 244
  telegraphs, 154
  war scene, 245
Raree shows, 60
Ratcliffe Highway, 321
"Rattening," 327
Red, White and Blue, 64
Reed (Sir Edward), 255
Regattas, 210–16
"Remember the Grotto," 70
Resolute (Arctic search-ship), 165
Respect for funerals, 59
Retailing beer to houses, 43
Rhymer (impromptu), 51
Riding (ladies), 73
Righton, E., 341
River Thames, 25, 107
  (frozen over), 30
Rivière (Jules), 336, 341
Road steamer, 92
Roasted chestnuts, 53
  potatoes, 53
Roasting jacks, 150
Robertson, T. W., 339
Rosherville, 124
Ross (Sir James Clark), 164
Rouen, 307
Roulette (street), 50
Rowing, 210–16, 351
Royal Charter wreck, 188
Royal College of Surgeons' Museum, 313
Rushlights, 156

S

Sadler's Wells, 18–23, 329
Saffron Hill murder, 275
Sailors, 57
St. Alphege's, 217–19
  George's, 126
  James's Park, 138
    Recreation Ground, 280
    Theatre, 175
  Mary's, 217–8
  Paul's Sussex iron rails, 80, 248
Sale of honours, 223
Samphire and *Fanny Buck* collision, 287
San Jacinto (U.S. war-ship), 226, 275
Santiago Cathedral fire, 260
Santley, 331
Sarah Sands fire, 168
Sayers-Heenan fight, 189
Scandinavian Church, 321
Screw propeller, 229–30
Script, 147
Scull and oar, 210–16
Semmes (Captain Raphael), 272
Serapis (Troop-ship), 131
Serpentine (river), 30
  (bridge), 280
Shah v. *Huascar*, 316
Sham sailors, 53
Shaw (D. J.), 64
Shipbuilding in London, 232
Shoeblacks, 58
Shop shutters, 152
Sims (G. R.), 340
Sims Reeves, 19
Sir Hugh Middleton, 23
Sixpenny telegrams, 153
Skating on London Bridge, 98
Skelt's sheets, 159
Skin merchant, 39
Skinning cats alive, 40
Slaughter-houses, 158
Slavery question, 224–5
Slidell and Mason, 226
Smallpox, 155
Smith (Francis Pettit), 229–30
  (Madeleine), 194
  (Rev. Samuel), 128
"Snow-storm," Derby, 350
Soames (Rev. W. A.), 218–19, 235
Soldiers, 56
Songs, 64–7
Sothern, 330
Sources of Nile, 262
Southern Outfall Sewer, 203
Southern Postal District, 173
Southwark Town Hall, 97
Spagnoletti (C. E.), 254
Spanish-Chilean War, 286
Spanish-Moorish War, 187
Spa Road Station, 139
Special constables, 309
Sports, 345
Spurgeon (Rev. C. H.), 57, 126, 166
Spurgeon's Tabernacle, 126
Statuary from Serpentine Bridge, 280
Stead's *Perfect Cure*, 66, 187
Steamboat call boys, 113
  piers, 108–113
Steamboats above and below bridge, 107
Steam fire-engines, 85, 259
  road rollers, 90
Stephenson (George), 242

Stoepel (Robert), 329
Strand Theatre, 248
Strawberries in pottles, 54
Streatham railway accident, 186
Street banter, 42
  manners, 143–4
  passengers, 72
  stalls, 54
  types, 34–42
Strikes on railways, 304
Sullivan (Fred), 341
Sunday-schools, 357
Surrey Gardens, 126
Swanborough (E. and A.), 340
Sweeps and their boys, 46

T

Taku Forts, 173
Tea clippers, 317–19
Tea-meetings, 219
Tea-shops, 78
Terraced Walk, Islington, 17
Terry (Kate), 330
Thallium, 263
Thames paddle-wheel boat, 109
Thames Tunnel and Tubes, 278–80
Theatre customs, 341
Theatrical benefits, 344
Thimble-rig, 50
Thorne (T.), 333
Three-card trick, 50
Thumb (Tom), 173
Tietjens (Madame), 331
Tiger (frigate), 26
Tir National, 129
Toll Bars, 92
Tomahawk (journal), 306
Tom Sayers, 189, 345
Toole (J. L.), 329
Tooley Street fire, 85
Toys and games, 158
Toy theatres, 159
Tradesmen's signs, 96
Trade Union outrages, 327
Trafalgar tavern, 134–5, 139, 197, 211, 214
Train (George Francis), 195
Tramways (street), introduction of, 195
Treadmills, 297
Trent affair, 226–8
Trinity House Almshouse, 234
Tug steamers, 112
Tug *Wonder* snagged, 112
Tumblers, 62
Turret-ship *Monitor*, 86
Tyrolese bag-piper, 62
  broom sellers, 49

U

Uncut newspapers, 149
Undertakers, 58
Unity Club, 340

V

Valorous (H.M.S.), 178
Vanished London industries, 232
Varley (Cromwell), 293, 336
Vauxhall Bridge, 123
Velocipedes, 157
Victorialand, 164
Victorian and modern music, 64–7
Victoria Station, 192
Victory (Nelson's), 314
Vive la Belge ! 133
Volunteers, 41, 57
Volunteers Review at Dover, 324
Vulgar speech, 140–2

W

Waits, 56
Walker (John), 145–6
"Walk on" Jenkins, 239
Wapping Old Stairs, 321
War declared by Spain, 187
Water-carts, 46
Water-cress girls, 47
Waterloo churches, 127
Watermen, 47
Watts (Dr.), 361
Wellington clock tower, 97
Westminster Bridge, 123, 175
Whicher (Inspector), 193
Whisky, 327
Wigan (Alfred), 336
Willow Pattern crockery, 150
Wilton (Marie), 332, 339
Wireless street machine, 63
Wivell (Abraham), 84
Woburn Square ghost, 305
Woolgar (Miss), 328
Woolwich, 249
  Common, 248
Workers v. *Shirkers*, 359
World's First Signal-box, 166
Wreck of p.s. *Birkenhead*, 169
  training brig *Ferret*, 325
  s.s. *London*, 289
  P.S. *Princess Alice*, 126
  s.s. *Royal Charter*, 188
  s.s. *Stella*, 126
Wyndham (Charles), 332

Z

Zealous, p.s., 129, 131

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