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LONDON ECHOING

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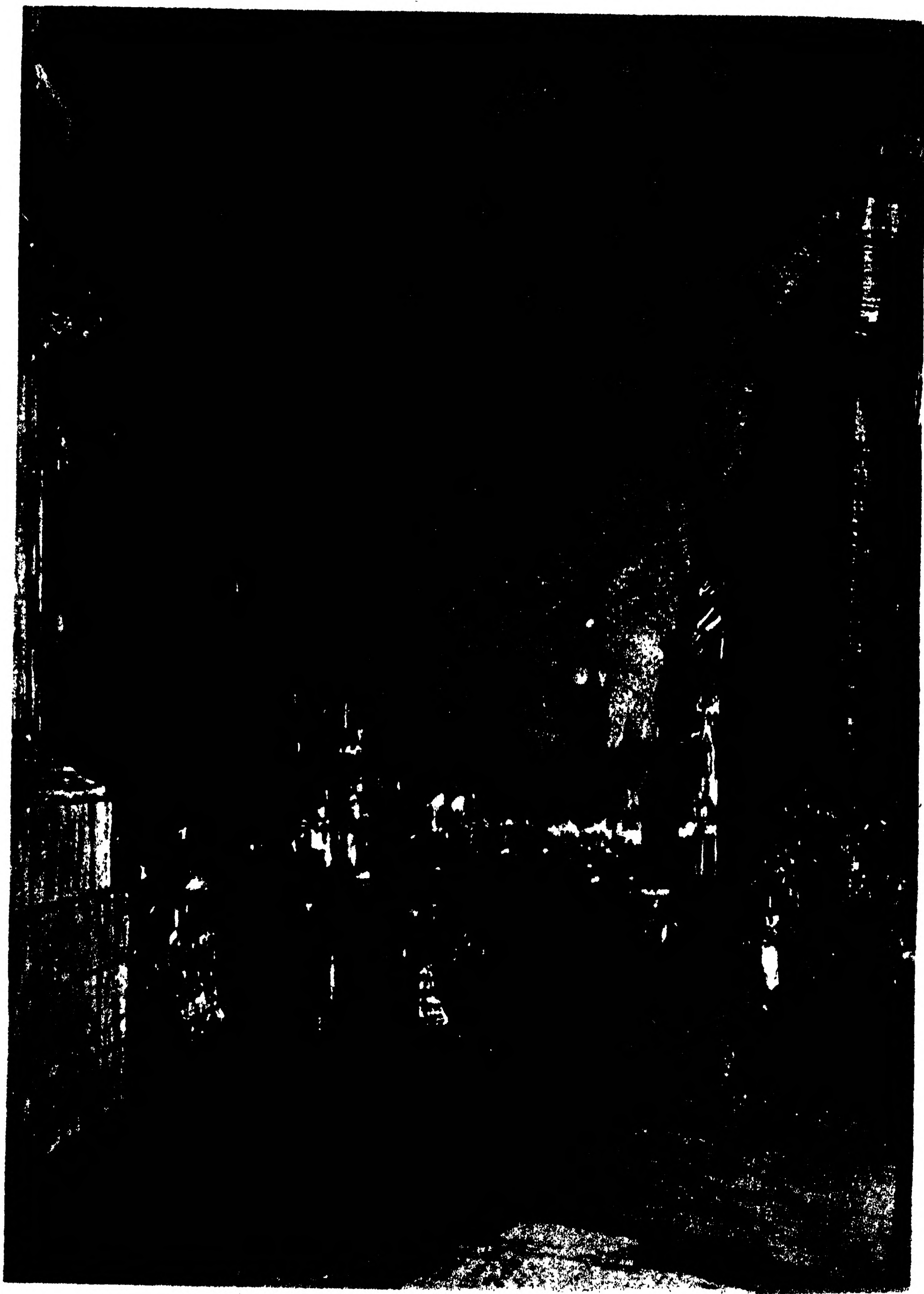
THE LONDON PERAMBULATOR

THE PERAMBULATOR IN EDINBURGH



WHITEHALL LIGHTS

JAMES BONE

LONDON ECHOING

But if once the mind has been dipped in Fleet Street
let the meads be never so sweet, the mountain-top
never so exalted, still to Fleet Street the mind will
return, because there is the other mind, without
whose sympathy even success is nothing—
the Mind of the World.

RICHARD JEFFERIES

with Pictures by

MUIRHEAD BONE

LONDON

JONATHAN CAPE 30 BEDFORD SQUARE

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To

THE MEN OF FLEET STREET AND
THE MEN OF BALTIMORE
who sojourned in Fleet Street

PREFACE

NEARLY fifty years ago when the writer and artist first came to London they decided to produce a book about the great city. In a year or two the book was thought out, its plan prepared, chapters and pictures thoughtfully conceived, title agreed upon — *The Stones of London* — a publisher interviewed and almost interested. But by the time all that was done, the writer discovered that he then knew far too much about London to think that he could write a book about it. After a quarter of a century, however, he believed that he knew enough to outline his London impressions and experience and so, with the artist's collaboration, *The London Perambulator* appeared. Now, many years later, again with the mighty collaboration of the artist, a second London book is presented.

The author is, of course, well aware that much is untouched in this book, even in the provinces of newspaperland, of London's foreign visitors and of its old shops, hotels and taverns, subjects to which he had given some particular study. In *The London Perambulator* the part that Portland stone plays in the character and scenery of London was examined and proclaimed. If the text of the present book has merit it should lie in the observation of ordinary life in the centre of London in the first half of the twentieth century and of the endurance of its citizens throughout the two great wars.

In a Surrey hamlet out of sight of London stone and brick and the hearing of London's roar and London's bells, and away from the daily perambulating of its streets, the writer hears London echoing in his mind and memory and here recalls some of these echoes.

The artist's drawings were made between 1901 and 1942, and many of them, too, are echoes of a London that has passed away or been lost to us in the War.

CHAPTER I

Cheshire Cheesescape

THE narrow undistinguished thoroughfare that runs downhill from the Strand to the foot of Ludgate Hill although it may be the best known, indeed the only famous newspaper street in the world, is only seven hundred paces long. How many eager feet have paced them in Fleet Street's centuries! How many of the shining ones of the world have been among those pacers! Sometimes one thinks of Fleet Street as a voice loud enough to reach and trouble all mankind: recorder, admonisher, evangelist, awakener, panderer, bully, money-grubber, sower of wheat and tares, seer, huckster, stargazer, astronomer of the skies of humanity — the Law in her High Court at one end and St. Paul's and the Prophets at the other. When I first went there youths with scoops went darting among the traffic to gather horses' droppings, and Mr. W. T. Stead was running his crusade against the immorality of this modern Babylon. There were preachers then in the pulpits and in the press that all sensible visitors to London desired to see and hear.

The old established newspapers were about to be shaken and some of them overthrown by the explosions and typhoons of the new press which at first sought a new public that the newspaper had hardly reached before. There were seven evening papers instead of the three into which the London public is now channelled. *The Morning Post* and *The Standard* then seemed as permanent as anything in England. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 'written by gentlemen for gentlemen', was also, to my respectful eyes, sold by gentlemen, anyway the old parties who sold them in the streets wore tall hats and well-brushed overcoats and *The Westminster Gazette* seller in Fleet Street at the mouth of Mitre Court was usually so engrossed in reading Mr. Spender's admirably balanced leader or studying Mr. Carruthers Gould's biting cartoons (the originals of which his victims bought) that one hesitated to interrupt with overtures for a purchase.

The world came much to Fleet Street in those halcyon days when all wars were, as a Lord Chancellor of the time once put it in all seriousness,

'sort of wars', and moderately prosperous Americans were following their richer brethren and touring Europe. When a policeman saw a group of neatly dressed spectacled middle-aged ladies pause and look about in Fleet Street he would point with a genial finger in a certain direction and say 'Yes, the Cheshire Cheese is just over there, missus,' and smile beneficently. One day Mr. Henry Ford, lifelong abstainer though he was, had a model of the Cheshire Cheese made for his Deerborn collection of eminent buildings, and at the Chicago Centenary World Fair of 1932 another replica was set up and its pudding served by an old servitor from the Fleet Street house on leave for the exhibition.

Yes, I am going to write about the Cheshire Cheese. Warning has been given, as Saint Beuve gave warning when he announced that on that day he was going to write about Hamlet. It may be the most banal beginning to a London book. J. M. Barrie at a little gathering in that very house gave his friends this admonishment. 'When the time comes,' he said, 'as come it must, when I depart, I hope this will be written on my tombstone:

HE HAD MANY FAULTS
BUT HE NEVER WROTE AN ARTICLE
ABOUT THE CHESHIRE CHEESE!'

And in reply to a pertinent question he struck deeper: 'Or a paragraph.'

But it is necessary here to write on this worn subject for it was an experience there that decided for me that life had narrowed down to Fleet Street and that I should never leave it until my working days were over. I had come to the seven hundred paces.

That was settled on my first visit there one warm June day in 1898. It was my first jaunt to London. My elder brother met me at Euston and bundled me into a hansom before I could make any social mistake that might embarrass him, and off we went clip-clop through the leafy London streets. We stopped at last in a crowded thoroughfare and he led me up a passage and into a busy beery tavern. I felt hot, for I was wearing a tall hat and a frock coat (but without silk lapels, which were the fashion at that time); at home they said that I did not really look a bit like an undertaker. The place seemed to me rather small and frowsy and dark. My elder brother put a tankard of beer before me and said with infinite zest: 'There! Now you're in the Cheshire Cheese!' I was

disappointed and after some talk asked where Dr. Johnson sat, and, being told, I went into the dining-room.

I did not think much of its low roof and pews and small blue plates and steel three-pronged forks, and I thought it was a little like a cabman's eating-house in Scotland. Then I saw a party of eight at one of the tables. There could be no mistake; I had studied the illustrated press too well for that. Six of them were:

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain
Mr. Asquith
Mrs. Asquith
Sir Edward Grey
Mr. Haldane
Mr. Augustine Birrell.

There they were, eating their lunch in that crowded little public room and talking away just as if they were nobody at all! Breathless, I returned to my brother at the bar and told him what I had beheld. He smiled tolerantly, having been three years in London at that time, and replied: 'Yes, Joe and Asquith and that lot lunch here regularly. It's in the middle of Fleet Street, so they are handy to the newspapers if the pressmen want to ask them anything.' I pondered over this. I was deeply impressed. What a place was this London! I had heard that the streets were paved with gold, but this was much more exciting. 'We had better be getting on,' said my brother, 'and don't go gaping about or they'll think you are up from the country.' We forced our way through the crowd, and I went on to St. Paul's expecting to see the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York strolling out of the cathedral; arm in arm, sights like that. It is a long time ago, but I can still remember the shock to my ideas of the normal course of things that sunny day as we came out of that dark by-court of Fleet Street, where the great were so amazingly forgathered.

Some twenty years after that I met Lord Haldane, and, talking of old London, he said that he had only been once in the Cheshire Cheese; when I told him of that vision I had in 1898 he told me about the lunch. It was a remarkable enough event, and it had a relation to Fleet Street, for it was the most public place Mr. Joseph Chamberlain could think of to stage a meeting of himself with the Liberal Imperialists.

The lunch was indeed a political event of some importance. Lord Haldane remembered remarking to Mr. Chamberlain that the room seemed very crowded, and Chamberlain replied: 'It got about that we were coming, and the landlord is charging five shillings a head extra to let them lunch here today.' Later in the lunch Haldane remarked to Chamberlain that it was getting very dark, looked like a storm. Chamberlain said: 'Oh, that's not a storm, that's the public with their noses against the windows. There's a crowd outside now, and the landlord, I believe, is charging them a shilling a head to look in at us.' The lunch, however, seems to have been a happy one. The other two ladies were Chamberlain's wife and his sister. There was talk of another lunch at the Cheshire Cheese, but it never happened. Haldane never visited the house again, and he did not think any of the others had been there before or since.

The third version of this political lunch at the Cheshire Cheese was given to me fifteen years ago by the late Mr. Charles Moore, the old landlord of the tavern. His story was that Mr. Haldane came to him and arranged to have the big table for a party at lunch. Mr. Haldane told him to keep it all secret, but Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Edward Grey were coming. Mr. Moore said that he would give up the whole room for Joe Chamberlain — Chamberlain was the great name in the City in those days. Well, they came, and enjoyed the lunch very much. There was — and here Mr. Moore gave the whole menu. What about the crowd? 'Well, everyone got in that could,' said old Mr. Moore. 'I had to take pretty strict measures. They kept coming in from the bar.'

A footnote about Charles Moore is called for here. He helped to make the tavern to the Anglo-Saxon world as only one other tavern is — Robert Burns's Tam o' Shanter Inn in Ayr. Moore was born in 1849 and died in 1934. His father was landlord before him, having bought the house from the Dolamores who had owned it since the eighteenth century. Moore's mother was a friend of Dickens and he himself remembered Dickens in the tavern. In those days there was no bar, only the service hatch which became the 'omnibus box' with the big punch bowls round it until the fire in the Second War. The smaller

ST. BRIDE'S, FLEET STREET

OLD PARK LANE

room, now the bar, was called the 'House of Lords'. Many men hung about the hatch drinking, so when Moore succeeded to the house, he made the smaller room the bar and put a counter in it.

An oil-painting over the fireplace shows the room as it was with the presiding deity 'William' Simpson, its waiter, gracefully posed in the centre. The picture was 'subscribed for and presented by the gentlemen of the room to be handed down to all successive landlords of the Cheshire Cheese as an heirloom of the house'. There is something unusual, expressive and monitory to the transient life of Fleet Street in this secular reliquary. Here time stands still for a little — where time is most precious of all — and we enter this old decorous room presided over by 'William' Simpson. The quotation marks are because William was not his name but was given to him by the customers because the room was known as 'William's Room', William having been his predecessor! You feel that a selected customer who had gazed long on the picture might some foggy day pass through the glass into the picture and take his place in the pew and live on quietly and respectedly, reading *The Times* about the Corn Laws, and be comforted by chops and steaks set before him by the impeccable 'William'.

Old Moore had his own right to smoke one of the Cheshire Cheese churchwardens that on occasion appeared there, for he was a churchwarden of St. Bride's over the way when Anthony Hope's father was Vicar. After business misfortunes Moore parted from the Cheese but for twenty years he would drop in, look on, drink a tankard of beer and watch how the new parrot was shaping and talk of ancient forgotten customers and waiters and of the famous old parrot who drew a hundred corks without stopping amid the din on Armistice Night 1918 and then fell down in a faint. George Augustus Sala was a patron of the house and when reverent visitors would ask about Sala's chair Moore would smile a wry smile and say 'Ah, interested in Sala? I could have shown you a room papered with his I.O.U.s but we've done away with it now.' Moore's successor was a rare and devoted accountant called in to handle its financial problems. He remained to manage the house for about twenty prosperous years and to give it almost a religious dignity that Washington Irving would have liked.

So that incident in the old Cheshire Cheese settled my path in life. A journalist is one who not only looks for news — Whistler defined him

as 'one who chases the *à propos* in a hansom cab' — but one to whom news and events come. It was clear, as Fate had stage-managed the signal gathering of the Eminent at this house to entertain my sight on my first visit to London, that my vocation was the press. I left the shipping business with as little compunction as did Mr. Micawber and four years later I was living by the pen with rooms in King's Bench Walk in the kindly companionship of the Inner Temple and so remained until the German airmen poured fire on the Temple in the Christmas week of 1940 and my tenancy and all I had gathered there in the years came to an end.

CHAPTER II

A Monarch

IN King Edward's reign London changed gear from the horse to the motor and with the motor car's cramped economy of space went the men's tall hat, the frock coat, the smart umbrella and the malacca cane and even the buttonhole, while women began the shortening of skirts and reduction of millinery grandeurs that went with victorias and short strolls in the Park. The Victorians fought a gallant rearguard action. Family prayers at home and Sunday parade in Hyde Park lingered with the landaus, and the cavalcades in Rotten Row still delighted Mr. Henry James. 'The season' began with the Private View of the Royal Academy at the beginning of May and ended in time for Goodwood and the beginning of grouse shooting. In 'the season' West London was a spectacle of glitter and ordered luxury quite different from all other cities in the country and on a scale so vast that it had no rival even in Paris. Whatever foreign visitors had to criticize, it was not its social grandeurs or the scale of its entertainment.

Queen Victoria's eldest son came to the throne with all the preparation that a life almost without responsible public duties or general experience of state affairs could equip him, but with a real desire to serve the nation with what skill he had acquired from his own adventures in life and the shrewdness and amiability in his character. Many Londoners then of different classes saw him as a symbol of themselves, or of what they would have been themselves in a properly constituted world. He had race-horses that had won the Derby and the Oaks, he yachted at Cowes, his presence graced the boxing matches at the National Sporting Club and the royal box at the Opera at Covent Garden; he relished the theatre, the music hall, billiard championships, four-in-hand meets, Continental visits with a discreet bias for his French and Austrian friends and a full social life in London with a broadening of court conventions to include American beauties and British captains of industry, finance and entertainment.

At the same time there was little noticeable relaxation at Court in the

Sunday observances of the time. It was King Edward's decision that the head of the Salvation Army should be invited to his Coronation. In his public engagements he was scrupulously punctual. The clocks at Buckingham Palace were kept half an hour fast and there was a charming legend in the Royal Mews that the King had said to Queen Alexandra (who had not the virtues of punctuality) 'If you're not ready in time on Coronation day, my dear, you shan't be crowned at all!' Queen Alexandra was in time and they were duly crowned on Monday, August 11th, 1902.

Let me recall, with the notes I made at the time, not the event at the Abbey but the face of London on the eve and on the dawn of that Coronation.

The tide of traffic did not altogether flow out of Westminster that night as it usually did. Little parties of stragglers were coming northward over the bridge, and in the recesses and the corners of the Whitehall buildings men were sleeping without fear and without reproach from the police. Near the great railing of Buckingham Palace, where the sentries were moving briskly, some men and women were waiting. The Palace lights went out, and the people kept their vigil under the gate lamps. The King was sleeping away in the back wing; the blinds were down everywhere, except at the north side, where one of the French windows was half-open. The watchers speculated on this, and gazed upwards on 'London's smokeless resurrection-light' and wondered what the dawn would bring! Would there be a second postponement?

In the streets there was no peace, and as the normal night-life decreased, signs of the big day began to stir. Pall Mall, all wood and bunting, had known many coronations and proceeded leisurely. The sound of the hammer struck persistently on the ear; the cry of joiner to joiner, the hoarse voice of the foreman, the noise of broken glass were heard. Illuminations were being rehearsed. A few companies passed, some singing, some attempting to sing. There were little rounded fellows who moved warily along, as though prepared to jump any way that the police were not. The plain-faced clock in the Holbein tower of St. James struck one. In Piccadilly a few muffled men sat on the door-

steps of the mighty; a group of boys with one mouth-organ practised solemnly, one after another, an inappropriate air; and along the street people were gathering. A boy and a pretty girl who seemed to have stolen off from some suburban home sat hand in hand against the railing with a packet of chocolate to sustain and cheer them against parental wrath to come. A few most reputable-looking matrons very much at their ease, but not nearly so much as their daughters, sat on waterproofs and waited for dawn. Besides them were cheery, free-spoken stout women who joked with everyone, and others, timid and silent, who called the policemen 'sir'. But most of the watchers sat with head bent and hands clasped behind it. Round the base of the Wellington Statue many sat thus, immobile, silent, significant. One was startled for a moment by the vision of the little bent waiting figures and the four iron soldiers above them, and higher still, the Iron Duke on his horse.

Dawn was already far on its way and the housetops were growing dark against the sky. The place to await a London dawn is on Westminster Bridge, and there I found, with their faces turned to the east, a night policeman and a foreign waiter, and a reveller in the guise of a clown who had strayed from the ball at Covent Garden. We watched the heavy plum-coloured sky over Surrey grow to a dove hue in the heights above, and pass into a faint blue. Then the dark clouds cracked into a long wide streak of dull gold that looked bright beside the purple but was faded when one looked at the blue. The lights along the Charing Cross Bridge turned sickly, and the Thames was a dead glazed grey. Pale rose and saffron washed the façades of the two great hotels on the Embankment and tinted Somerset House. The dark lines of the far churches behind turned fainter as their sides caught the light. The sun was still hidden, but the dawn that so many millions awaited had come at last with splendid promise. I turned to the Abbey as it stood a miracle of delicate slate in a glorious flush of rose. One more dawn. One more Coronation in England's history.

An all-night coffee stall was drawn up in the most businesslike fashion in front of the Abbey itself, for, as Henry James noted, in England there is always at historic spots 'something to be consumed on the premises'. Here, if you had time to spare (as everyone had), you could get a cup of very bad coffee and a bun that was much less nasty, and

here you heard remarkable stories about the habits of the King in early life and received hints how to circumvent the police in the matter of box-stands. And here in the London of our day, stories old as Arabia were being told about the King's visits in disguise to the poor quarters. 'There ain't, I should say,' said one stout woman, 'a slum in Whitechapel that he ain't been in!' It seemed that the King (when Prince of Wales) had once in these adventures been recognized by a coster who sold him some apples and later claimed by a sign on his barrow the title of 'Fruiterer to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales'. 'And a pretty sum o' money he had to pay to get 'im to tike it off, I can tell you!' she added.

St. James's Park at four on a summer morning is a sight that can make one bless Charles the Second. The green undulating avenues, the water rippling round Game Island, the violet recesses of the trees had an amazing freshness which even one's state of being up all night could not dim. A late bat flew in eccentric rings over the bridge, and a gay little fleet of ducks put out from the Admiralty corner of the lake. One lanky youth, who had been watching them, aroused his four companions who were sleeping at the bridge end and bade them look. There were many people who had spent the night in the Park. The Mall had been a bed to scores. Some even made it a breakfast-room, for several oil-stoves were undeniably in action. The two queer little refreshment stalls at the Spring Gardens' end, which are said to have been there in some form or other since Charles the Second was King, had their cows out at an incredible hour, and a crowd waited their turn for a glass of fresh milk as crowds had done here at many and many a coronation since Charles the First drank his last glass here on his way to his execution.

As Big Ben rang out four, one noticed signs of anxiety among the people, and strangers turned to one another with the same question, for the suspicion of another postponement had not altogether died. At last the first gun of the salute sounded sharply from Hyde Park, and everyone felt relieved. All was well. A slight cheer was raised. The sun, now a bright disc that seemed re-minted for the day, was high over the Horse Guards. The guns boomed on and on. Yes, it was that Coronation Day at last! I turned into Jermyn Street for a glass of milk and a bun at the old court milk shop there. The pony, silk-groomed for the

day, champed at the door and the milk-float was all tinkling and polished. How the sun shone that morning so long ago! Later I glimpsed the Coronation procession from an eddy in the crowd at Charing Cross, and then with a Coronation yawn back to the Temple to bed.

King Edward's reign rolled peacefully on and London changed in a million ways. The Coronation state parties saw the last of the noblemen's coaches with embroidered hammer-cloths and footmen and coachmen with powdered hair and white stockings, although they linger on in the Royal retinue and at the Mansion House. At a Whitehall reception then one can remember the grand family coaches with emblazoned arms docked side by side facing the thoroughfare, the horses out, the lamps shining and the coachmen and footmen in the Whitehall taverns which still take their licences from the Lord Chamberlain. The Row still had its endless cohorts of riders, the women in long habits; town mansions were built in London for the last time; our hotels sloughed some of their Victorian dowdiness and Caligulan dinners with an eminent horse or dog as chief guests added sensations to the new 'sensational press' which (little as its founders guessed it at the time) was beginning to make the underpaid and overworked millions who had just become newspaper readers, conscious of what the rich did with their money. In those days the dress of a lady of fashion was elaborate with a variety of rich materials and millinery work that only the rich could buy or wear. A man of fashion had his tall hat blocked and hot-brushed every day — the barber at the Temple entrance had a hat man whose sole job was to 'do' the hats of the Temple gents while their wearers were being shaved.

In the autumn the King and his friends went to Homburg, Wiesbaden, Baden Baden or Austria 'for the cure'. It was assumed that your proper West End middle-ager ate and drank so much in the season that he must by medicinal waters and dieting recover his capacities for the winter banquets. Never did money speak more loudly (the income tax being a nominal 6d. to 1s. 6d.) or its expenditure get more public attention. To the Haves at any rate if not to the Have-Nots the world seemed stabilized at last:

It seemed just like the fulfilment of prophecies
When all the Best People had all the best offices.

But there was one anxiety that haunted the informed people behind the gay scenes and that was the health of King Edward. It was known, particularly by the Court, by the City and by Fleet Street, that his lease of life was not at all secure. Rumours of sudden illness spread and vanished from time to time over the town. Fleet Street zealously attended his progresses at home and abroad. The new press camera squad saw themselves as messengers of History. It was under these circumstances that many newspapermen were sent down to Cowes one August to describe the yachting in which the King's yacht *Britannia* took a comfortable and solemn part, and to watch over the King's health.

It was then that fate decreed that the King and I should meet. These were the circumstances. It had been intimated that the King would not be in his yacht at the big race that day and rumours of sudden illness were about again. The best thing to do was to go over to Osborne to see and hear what one could. It was a sunny August afternoon as I walked up the wide empty road from the Ferry to the Osborne gates. Luck was at hand — I heard the sound of hoofs and a royal carriage swung round the bend. The King and Queen were in it with a court man; coachman and footman on the box; no escort. On they came. It was a grand day and just after luncheon. The King seemed well and pleased with the world and seeing one of his subjects alone in the road he was moved to raise the royal hand to acknowledge an obeisance. Alack there was none! The figure in the road was so concentrated in scrutiny to see exactly the clinical condition of the royal countenance and form that he was only a staring recorder. He did not remove his hat, he did not bow. He only stared. A fleeting look of distaste was added to the recorder's observation as the carriage thundered on.

Yet another occasion arrived when history again brought Edward the Seventh and the figure of the press into *rapport*, although in result the encounters were much the same. It was at Rugby in 1909. The King had come down to open a new school building. Everything was admirably done, new flags, smiling dominies, happy parents, and the

bright faces and fresh cheering of the boys and possibly a very good luncheon had brought satisfaction and heart's ease to the elderly King. He was conferring an unforgettable day to the lives of these enthusiastic, learned and eager people. But as it happened the newspapermen had been taken to see some special feature of the new buildings and were smuggled into their places after the great scene was set. The quick eye of King Edward, however, discerned us, a little string of rather shabby gentlemen with our pencils ready (for the speech was coming), edging into our places with our work-a-day look, unfestive mien; men doing their day-by-day job, contrasting damnably with the fresh dilated aspect of everybody else. Again, I caught that glance of royal distaste. We had reminded him of something. He may have forgotten for the moment that though it was a day of days to the others it was just a working day like the rest to a king. And here were the shabby gentlemen of the press with their dry ho-hum looks on their diurnal task just like himself! Like the Browning gentleman in the 'Toccato' the King may for the moment have felt weary, grown old.

Next day, the monarch was again doing his job before another scene of the brightest and we were again doing ours.

The writer is aware that he has not taken his readers to Court and that, as he has confessed, his connections with monarchs were not close. He fears that this further glimpse of King Edward is even more remote but it may have some novelty as a footnote to a classic — to Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*.

In Stevenson's book, written in 1878, appears the figure of Prince Florizel of Bohemia for whom, Mrs. R. L. Stevenson says, the Prince of Wales was taken as a model. *The Dynamiter*, published under the title of *More Arabian Nights* in 1885, has its prologue set in a cigar divan, which is thus described:

> The entrance was adorned with one of those gigantic Highlanders of wood which have almost risen to the standing of antiquities; and across the window glass, which sheltered the usual display of pipes, tobacco and cigars there ran the gilded legend: 'Bohemian Cigar

Divan by T. Godall.' The interior of the shop was small but commodious and ornate, the salesman grave, smiling and urbane.

How Prince Florizel became the tobacconist is rather heartlessly told by Stevenson at the conclusion of the tale of *The Rajah's Diamond*. The passage runs:

> As for the Prince, that sublime person, I am happy to say that a recent revolt hurled him from the throne of Bohemia in consequence of his continued absence and edifying neglect of public business; and that his Highness now keeps a cigar store in Rupert Street, much frequented by foreign refugees. I go there from time to time to smoke and have a chat and find him as great a creature as in the days of his prosperity; he has an Olympian air behind the counter; and although a sedentary life is beginning to tell upon his waistcoat, he is probably, take him for all in all, the handsomest tobacconist in London.

In *The Dynamiter* Mr. Godall is secularly mentioned as 'old Happy and Glorious'. For that and other passages the *New Arabian Night* books are reported to have been rather frowned on at the time in high quarters.

Early in my wanderings in Soho I went to see what sort of place it was that Stevenson had chosen for his fantasy of a dethroned Prince of Bohemia turned tobacconist. I found the shop itself! It gave me a thrill rather like that of Robinson Crusoe on the Island. Was it not Stevenson's very footprint? It was, too, King Edward's footprint. There was no doubt about it. The shop had a high-skirted quiet Victorian front but in the doorway was a fading photograph of King Edward in top hat and frock coat and another of a large comfortable horsehair easy chair and the legend beneath said that portly king had sat there. Inside the shop was a small (not a gigantic) wooden Highlander. In the back room of the divan were the very easy chair, a pedestal table and small chairs and steel engravings.

Inquiries at the shop did not at first yield much information but later from various contemporaries, and from an elderly man who had served in the shop, I pieced together the source of the legend.

In the days when Captain Shaw was chief of the London Fire

Brigade, as all attenders of *Iolanthe* know, King Edward, then Prince of Wales, had a whim to go with the firemen to the fires. After such adventures it was his desire that he and his gentleman should refresh themselves on their way back to Marlborough House and how to do so with propriety was a problem that was solved in this way. It was clearly impossible for a Prince of Wales in mufti to call at a hotel or restaurant without attracting undesired attention. It happened, however, that a discreet and courteous cigar merchant who had the royal custom kept a small quiet divan in Soho with a comfortable room behind the shop with a large easy chair. Arrangements seem to have been made, plans set, and when the Prince and his gentleman drove up from the Fire Brigade headquarters probably in the royal hansom, the tobacconist, doubtlessly with an obeisance and a wave of his cheroot, welcomed and conducted them to the back room where brandy and seltzer were assembled on the pedestal table. There the two amateur firemen would solace themselves and muse over their adventures of the night while the nocturnal life of Leicester Square roared near them with the clip-clopping of hansom cabs and the 'Tommy make room for your Uncle' choruses and the cries of whiskered men fisticuffing in the Soho side-streets.

The elderly man who had been a youth in the shop at the time remembered being sent out on certain days for bottles of seltzer water and that he had once seen the Prince 'but it was all kept very Q.T.' Nobody blabbed. He had never heard tell of anyone called Stevenson. All the man remembered of the Prince was that he was an affable gent. The name of the tobacconist was Carreras which became a great one in the trade. Carreras had another famous customer, J. M. Barrie, whose footprint too was on the Rupert Street shop in the form of a framed letter in the doorway declaring that the Arcadia mixture mentioned in *My Lady Nicotine* was the mixture he bought in this shop. He, too, must have known the divan.

Of how young Robert Louis Stevenson came to know of this chosen shop and these romantic happenings there is, so far as I know, no record. He had after all so little time in London for such discoveries. Possibly his cousin, R. A. M. Stevenson, that rare art critic and journalist who, according to Mrs. R. L. Stevenson, was in at the invention of the Suicide Club, figuring in the beginning as the Young Man with the Cream

Tarts, put him on the track. R. A. M. Stevenson was much more about London than his cousin and in these years was well in the way of hearing club gossip about the Prince's amiable adventures, so it is not improbable that Robert Louis heard of the Soho tobacconist from Robert Alan.

As to the cigar divan, it changed before King Edward's death into another trade and in its last days it dwindled into a blouse-shop. The photographs of the Prince and of the sofa appeared for a time in a little tobacco shop in Whitcomb Street near the Hand and Ball Tavern and then vanished.

And now to the last scene in King Edward's reign, when the rumours flocked back like shadows and were justified by the event. Here is, as I wrote of it at the time, the scene at the Palace when that King died:

A crowd of about a thousand had gathered at the Palace gates after the theatres had emptied. There were many people in evening clothes, and it was altogether as motley an assembly as London can gather — West Enders, waiters, street-walkers, suburban young men and women on their way to Victoria Station, and a few half-drunken men. Many motor cars, hansoms, and carriages hung about, the police not allowing them to wait at the Palace pavement. Inside the courtyard were some Royal and other carriages. The brilliant lights blotched the dingy, stucco face of the Palace, but one was able to see the lit windows of the northern room where the King lay.

About midnight one of the Royal carriages drew up at the steps, and as it came out from the courtyard the crowd crushed past the policemen, leaving only a lane. As it caught the full glare of the lamps we recognised the Princess of Wales sitting very erect with a handkerchief in hand. The Prince was dimly visible. The light shone on her white silk scarf. She bowed to the crowd, which stood with bare heads. We did not know that it was the King and Queen we saw.

About ten minutes later the decorum of the scene was suddenly shattered. The great carriages and the lackeys in long white cloaks stood motionless, the carriage lamps burning pale in the fierce electric light. The building with its blank white windows showed no sign of

life. The courtyard was empty save for the carriages and four policemen standing motionless at regular intervals round the gate, with an inspector in the gateway. In the stillness a slight noise made us all look, and we beheld two small men in dark coats and bowler hats burst out of the tall door, and, half staggering in their excitement, rush for the gate. They were the messengers of death. There was something so wild and ominous in the appearance and gait of these unexpected figures that the nerves of the crowd responded automatically, and we ran to the gate crying for the news. One of the men ran through, but some of the crowd caught the other. 'What is it?' 'Dead!' cried the man. And they let him go. He darted into a motor cab, which rushed off, the horn tooting full blast. Then another figure, a young man pressing on a grey hat, was seen running from the Palace door, through the gateway, and off.

The crowd turned to the policemen, whose only information was that one of the men was a reporter. But everyone felt that these things could not happen where they did except for one reason. A man near the bulletin-board said he had known it for an hour. He had met a friend at Victoria who worked at a silversmith's in Regent Street, who told him that his people had got their instructions for the coffin plates at eight o'clock.

Then a young man in evening clothes climbed the railings and burst into a speech. 'The King is dead,' he said. 'He was the father of the country. He was our dad. Who was the King of England? Our dad — all of us. I didn't think of it before,' he added; 'it just come to me now. He was our dad. Take off your hats. The King's dead.' Everyone uncovered. Many queer things happened that night, but the one I shall always remember was that a young woman who was crying tried to raise her hat, lifting her veil to do it. The young man continued his speech until someone told him that he meant well, but he had better shut down.

The news affected people greatly. Many women were crying, and men relieved themselves by saying, 'The best King England ever had,' and 'He was a sportsman.' A common thought was the suddenness of it. 'And there he was at the theatre on Tuesday,' was said. 'And his horse won today!' There were many strained faces.

The next incident was the signalling for a motor cab and the appear-

ance at the doorway of three gentlemen with their white ties showing, although their coat collars were turned up. They walked in a leisurely way through the courtyard, talking together, and the crowd looked at them much puzzled. 'The one on the left is Laking,' said someone. The rumour spread. It was the doctors, and an attempt was made to get the news as one of them entered a hansom. Another gentleman left on foot, and he too was challenged by the crowd. It was said to be Mr. Winston Churchill. By this time many of the crowd had rushed away with the tidings, but others had come, and the people went to and fro vainly asking confirmation from the policemen.

I left the place in a hansom, and the driver was so agitated that he kept the trap open and talked all the time as we drove along Pall Mall, past Marlborough House and the club in the narrow house opposite, where the dead King met his intimates, through the avenue of tall half-lit clubs, with their rows of black flambeaux which for sixty-eight years had flamed and shaken in Pall Mall as each of his birthdays came round. The old hansom-driver was talking of him. The burden of what he said was that the King was a good sort and a true sportsman and a friend to the cabman until late years, when the cabman did not think so much of him, as he took to motor cars. The driver remembered his first illness in 1872. He remembered the crowds waiting at Marlborough House and the thanksgiving afterwards. 'No thanksgiving this time, sir. He was a year younger than me, and he's gone off in three days.' Death had glanced for a moment into the eyes of the old cabman as he rattled his white horse through the streets.

We met the newsboys at Trafalgar Square shouting wildly. At the sound people ran out of entries, porters from the station, and waiters from the hotel, and a motor bus was suddenly stopped. News vans with galloping horses rushed past. At each closed tavern door groups were talking. Three tipsy youths came down the streets singing and skipping, and some men ran at them and shook them. Further along groups were dispersing, and the night streets had their usual look. The cyclists and vans were now in the West End and out into the suburbs, and London was awakening to the tidings that the reign of Edward the Seventh was over.

CHAPTER III

Twilight of the Horse

THE whole appearance of the London street suffered a change more sudden and more drastic in Edward the Seventh's short reign than any change in a generation in London's long history. When he was crowned the horse was as necessary and pervading a part of the capital as it had been at any time since Boadicea had driven her team across Londinium. When Edward's reign ended the horse bus had almost vanished and the hansom cab and fourwheeler lingered as curiosities while the cart-horse and van horse were a dwindling remnant of their old strength. The two world wars, particularly, of course, the last with its petrol scarcity, led to revivals in work-horse traffic but never to the horse's return to bus or charabanc or cab.

At King Edward's Coronation the horse was supreme. True, the early motor cars had been relieved in 1896 of the necessity of a chaperon with a red flag, and experimental motor buses had appeared, but the horse-bus driver's saucy remark to the engineers working on the stranded motor bus, 'Didn't I tell you to take it 'ome — and now ye can't!' was thought to cover the situation for good. Hyde Park was then for the horse-lover one of the sights of Europe. Thousands of victorias and landaus and family coaches with sleek horses, coachmen and footmen in livery and cockade, took the air; and the Row at its proper times had its battalions of riders which included Mr. Cunninghame Graham and many children who seemed to have come out of John Leech's albums. Four-in-hands met on appointed days and drove in a stately way to Richmond or Ascot, but these were revivals not survivals. Hansoms, glossy black for three-quarters of the year and in summer with a gay tasselled trapping on top, pervaded the town. These summer trappings were generally made by the drivers' wives as the Venetian gondola cabin-covers are made by the wives of the gondoliers, and one often wondered if that set Disraeli's mind to his famous image of the hansom as the London gondola.

Tattersall's flourished and Mr. Soapy Sponge and the world of fashion

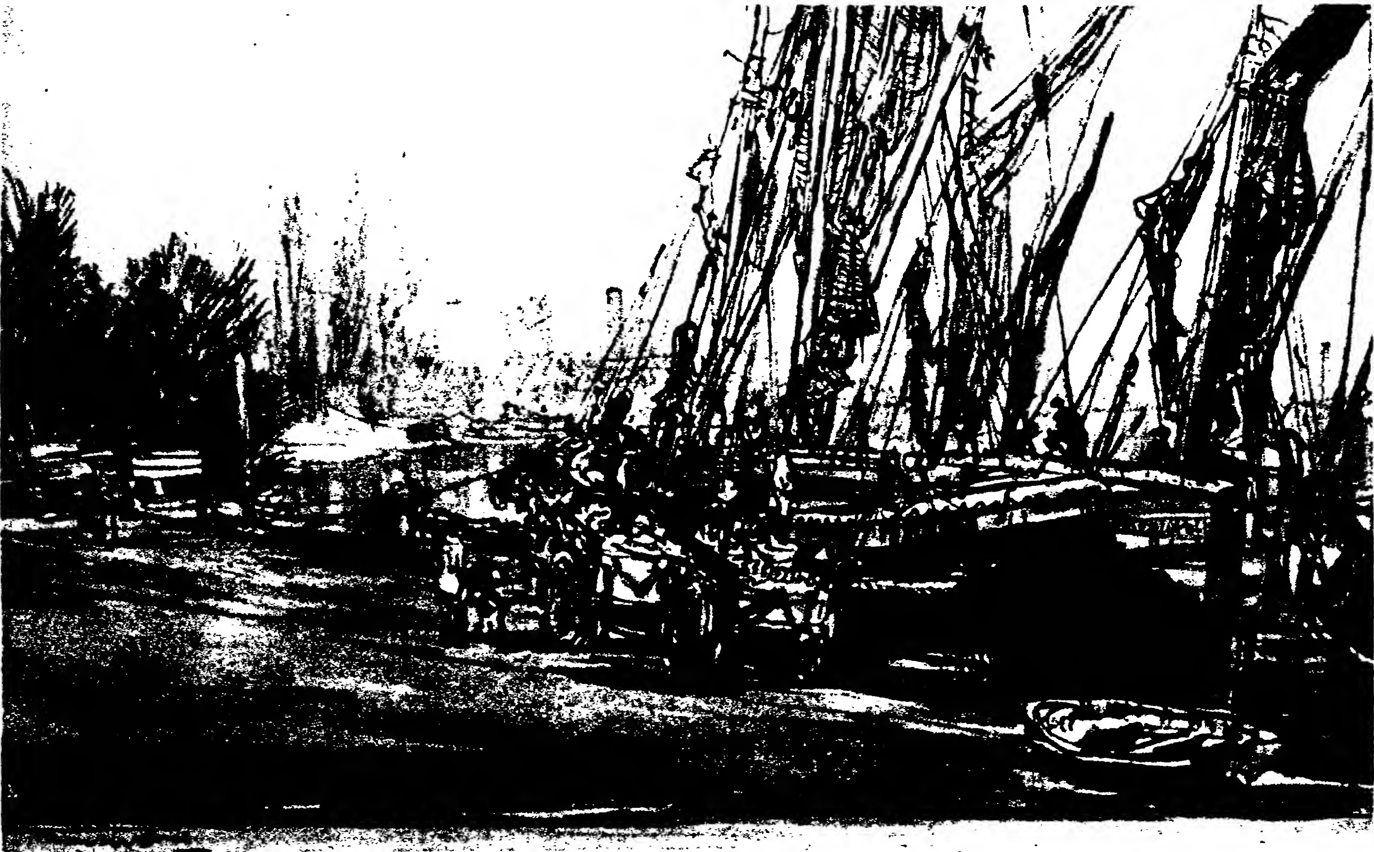
attended there. Donkeys, which seem now to have vanished from the earth and Guildford market, enlivened the poorer streets and songs about them roared through music halls. Lord Lonsdale himself made awards to the owners of the best-looking donkeys. Lord Rothschild presented on his birthday a brace of pheasants or partridges from his big shoots to every London bus-driver, and the bus-drivers wore his colours on their whips that day. On boat-race day they sported dark blue or light blue on their whips according to their fancy. On St. Patrick's Day Irish hansom cabmen had a flick of green ribbon on their whips and nosegays of shamrocks. Householders laid down straw in front of their houses when there was serious illness there and the buses were walked past. An appeal was made for it to be done when Arnold Bennett lay dying in his Baker Street flat. I remember seeing the buses drop piously to a walk as they passed the lit-up church of St. Clement Danes at evening service.

The establishment of the railways in Victorian times, even the London underground railway and the Tuppenny Tube, had not seriously affected anything beyond outer suburban traffic. People still went by horse bus to Streatham and Greenwich and Hampstead. At the foot of Haverstock Hill your Hampstead bus increased its horse power by a 'unicorn' which there was harnessed ahead of the pair 'oss and led the team up the hill. Arriving in the end at the Bird in Hand Tavern in the Hampstead High Street, the 'unicorn' received a handful of shrimps and then trotted downhill past the Sir Richard Steele and the Haverstock to his post near the Adelaide to await his next task.

The first electric motor bus was licensed in 1897 and the first petrol-driven bus in 1899. These were only experiments, but in 1904 the London General Omnibus Company established a regular service and in 1911 it withdrew its last horse bus which moved between Moorgate Street and London Bridge (how I remember my admiration when I first sat next a bus-driver who lit his segar with one match and one hand one blowy day driving across London Bridge!). The last regular horse bus in town ran, I think, from Somerset House to Waterloo in 1916.

Even after the last London General horse bus made its last journey

THE ROW AND THE FRENCH EMBASSY



CHISWICK: LOW TIDE

some other bus companies still held their horses. The Associated Omnibus Company ran their dark green 'Favourites' from The Monster at Pimlico to The Angel at Islington, threading the narrows of Chancery Lane, and their 'Royal Blues' plied up Bond Street ultimately to reach King's Cross, while their yellow buses trotted to Camden Town. They vanished in 1912 and with them went a yet more picturesque cavalcade of the road. Tillings till then ran a four-in-hand bus from Balham to the City every secular morning. It was a satisfactory sight as it trotted over London Bridge at half-past nine of a morning — four spirited horses, the bus loaded with the nearest George the Fifth's London had to the Cheerables and Linklaters and the drivers were of the ripest type. The passengers were a sort of family party who knew one another well and the right things to say on a four-in-hand on a frosty morning. Those passengers petitioned Tillings to continue the service, but that was not to be. 'Old Tom', the driver, drove on for a bit on the Clapham-Richmond route and then vanished. When did the last horse bus stop? No record has come down to us when the last public sedan chair was withdrawn. (One survived at the service of an aged lady in Hampton Court's stony passages long after Victoria's reign.) I think 1916 saw London's last horse bus and when it went the middle-aged felt suddenly much older, for its survival was like something on the stretched elastic of time and when it snapped their epoch seemed shrunken and remote. With the horse bus we parted sharply with the last animate link with Dickens's London.

A last scene in the departure of the bus horse echoes in my memory. Their occupation gone, the London General's horses were sold in the Harrow Road repository, about a hundred and fifty horses a day. The sale was a strange one and the attendance included many types of men that one thought could hardly survive beyond the bus horse era. Many old bus-drivers could be discerned, their knobby hands still wearing their useful stained gloves, and their faces marked and patched by the weather without and the internal toll paid by their cramped bodies. With them were thinner, more active, and even horsier men, the horsekeepers and stable hands, and a few compulsorily retired hansom-cab drivers, a melancholy group in shabby clothes of a buckish cut. One of them wore a high-waisted yellow coat, belcher tie, curly tall hat, dog-skin gloves and brown gaiters, but everything was dirty

and out of gear, and his bold handsome face had a raffish, dangerous look. Seedy men with a horsey cut of a meaner kind stood about raking the tan with their boots and spitting to keep off the bad luck that was already upon them. Some of these carried coils of rope over their shoulder, not to hang themselves with in the empty stables when the last of the horses had gone, but to lead them home for the purchasers.

Everyone seemed to have got up too early that morning to have time for a shave, except a score of broad, comfortably dressed men in blue melton coats who looked like town horse dealers, and the same number of flashier publicans and tradesmen, and about a dozen other placeless men, who did most of the bidding. The horses were run along the hall with a 'Hi! Mind your backs', the groom running beside them with a short whip, which he used unobtrusively with a back-hand flick under the horse's belly, causing unexpected shows of spirit. The sun streamed through the dirty skylight at the far end, and it was curious to see the heavy palpable bus horse as it reached the dust-laden beams become pale and insubstantial as a ghost or a memory, the memory it was so soon to be.

The hansom cab lingered much longer, indeed a magnate of the Cable and Wireless Company had a smart one in the last years of the Second War when petrol restrictions were at their worst, and elderly Londoners would cock their ears as they heard the old clip-clop, clip-clop, jingle jingle, arising on the streets again. But in 1912 there were only four hundred of them in London of the 25,000 that pervaded the town at the turn of the century. Half a dozen stragglers were on the cab rank opposite the Café Royal in Regent Street in the 'twenties, and later and on rainy nights a hansom would wait outside the Garrick Club in Covent Garden, in case Sir Squire Bancroft thought of driving home to Albany.

The drivers were a stiff-necked, sporting class of men, and had they accepted the taximeter they might have made a long fight of it as the Paris *fiacres* drivers did, but prudence was not their style. 'Toss you for the fare — double or quits!' was a challenge they rarely refused. Some of them learnt to drive motor cabs but most of them went down, so to speak, with their whips flying; a few became what they affected most to despise — a gardener! In cabmen's quarrels 'gardener' was the utmost term of contempt. This derived from the days

when the family coachman was ill or had a day off and the gardener drove the carriage and wasn't so good at it. One recalls a fracas with whips in Fetter Lane between two hansom-cab drivers just because the one had called to the other 'Ga on — gardener!'

'Clarences' mechanical power, 19' was how motor cabs first humbly appeared in 1905 in the London statistics. Five years later the hansoms were 2000 and the taxicabs no longer 'Clarences' were 6397. In 1912 a hansom cab was added to the London Museum. One wonders if hansom cabmen — there were 400 of them still driving — came to look at it and scratched their heads! It must have seemed a very palpable hint! There would be sad faces in the snugs in Gray's Inn Road in that year.

Builders of private hansom cabs, once as proud of their 'gondolas' as Fyfe's or Herreshoff's were of their yachts, were closing their shops or turning to motor cars. In 1907, in Birmingham, where Joseph Aloysius Hansom was born, a big hansom-cab builder failed in his business and London's best builder had only one cab in his showroom and no orders for a month. Queen Victoria herself bought one in 1887, but history alas! tells us absolutely nothing of Her Majesty driving in it, nor, for the matter of that, does Sir Maximillian Beerbohm! King Edward, when Prince of Wales, used his own hansom habitually between 1880 and 1890, and many grandees, lords and commoners kept their own hansoms into this century, some even illicitly drove them. Premier Lord Rosebery was the last well-known man in London to sport a cabriolet. There is a story of a French fashionable man visiting London in the 'nineties who recorded his complete impressions of London to a friend in these words, 'I love hansom cabs and they are still playing "Dorothy"!'

The best and the worst of what was once the pride of London were sold off in their hundreds as 'scrap', even those private beauties that had cost two hundred pounds only a few years before. Thirty shillings apiece was the usual price, their elegant shiny bodywork for firewood, the shafts and wheels for traps and vans, the springs for tradesmen's carts.

The horse bus and the hansom had one thing in common that made the London street more human and more public than it has ever been since their passing. In the bus, the driver and the outside passengers sat

high and free over the street, able to see all that went on around them. It was like a seat in a circus or on a grandstand as you sat and had your entertainment through the changing streets. True, there was the rain at times, but there were also the sky and the great buildings and the monuments before you. A swarm of buses with crowded tops held up by the policeman's orchestral hand gave an impressive seated audience for an incident — the passing by of a great visitor or a coster's donkey-cart upset. Crossing the street before such a hold-up you felt the eye of London was upon you, as one has never felt it since.

With the hansom, the driver on his high perch presided over the street, but the fare, or better the fares — for to the young of those days the advantage of the hansom was there was no room for a chaperon — sat high and looked over the horse at the happenings of the street and felt themselves part of it which no one can feel in a taxicab even with the top open. How Piccadilly used to glitter in those days as you looked down or up its gentle hills as the cavalcades pranced before you with the mansions and hotels and shops painted for the season and the window boxes of flowers all ablowing! The passing of the hansom was a peculiar loss, the tall, delicately poised carriage, shining black, with the driver commanding cab and horse from his lofty seat, and the slender whip rising high above all, was one of the most decoratively satisfying things that London has ever produced. It was like an invention from the beautiful attenuated art of Whistler, who always brought a hansom into his lithographs when he could. Its praises have been sung by many a cunning writer. Without the hansom Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* would lose much of its haunting London flavour. Richard Le Gallienne's couplet, too, is haunting as a poetic young man's conception of hansoms at night in the Strand when he first came to town:

> Like dragon-flies the hansoms hover
> With jewelled eyes to catch the lover.

But even after the motor bus was pulsating over all the London streets the most urgent and dramatic of our street services still held to the horse. Not till 1911 was all the Fire Brigade changed to motor traction. I think I can remember the very moment when the need for

transition was publicly manifested. It was one afternoon and the fire engine drawn by two fiery horses had swung round from Theobald's Road into Southampton Row. The firemen, still buttoning their tunics, shouted their 'Hi-hi-hi!', their bell was ringing madly and the horses were rushing at full speed. A grand sight! The traffic drew in to either side of the road and stopped to leave a clear way, but there were so many vehicles that the motor bus I was travelling in had some way to go to reach an empty space at the street side. The driver accelerated hard and on we went. But when we reached a clear berth what was happening? The cries of 'Hi-hi-hi!' and the ringing of the bell were hardly heard. The conductor looked back and took a historic decision. He rang his bell signalling right ahead, the motor bus rushed on leaving the fiery horses and the shouting firemen and the Victorians' last effort far behind. After that the horsepower was in the engines.

The King still drives to open Parliament in the gilded royal coach with its tall horses, and at the last Coronation one seems to remember that the Speaker's coach re-emerged, but owing to its weight and the absence of brakes and the presence of inclines in the Processional Way, it had to take a lonely detour for part of the route.

But only in one proud survival does the horse keep its old supremacy in London City. That is, of course, with the Lord Mayor's coach which will surely be drawn by its six horses as long as that 'mighty carbuncle of valour and worth' still reigns at the Guildhall. The shadow of the motor car, oddly enough, first fell on the Lord Mayor's Show in 1896 just after the red flag attendance had been abolished when a motor car astoundingly appeared in the Procession. But it was nearly a generation after that before the worshipful liverymen and their beadles drove in state in worshipful motor cars.

The most unlikely survival of all horse transport was the Royal Mail Coach to Brighton which took the road at night until the June of 1905. Few people knew of it for it carried no passengers, only Post Office parcels. This old arrangement lingered on in the Post Office economy because it was cheaper up to that time to carry the parcels by coach instead of by rail. Let me repeat from what I wrote at the time about the mail coach's last journey to Brighton for, as it happened, I was on it.

It was the best of nights for the last run of the Brighton Mail Coach, being Derby night in June in King Edward's third year when the old life of the road was flooding back into its empty channels and every decent inn on the southward roads had its string of waiting horses and coaches and traps. On the morrow a new motor van was to take up the run. We rattled down the cobbled yard in the Dickensian region of Guy's Hospital, near London Bridge, that was then the parcels department of the Post Office, with hardly an official word of farewell, and out into the swarming Borough High Street at ten minutes to ten, in a desperate downpour of rain. Charabancs, slap-up four-in-hands, donkey-carts, and all manner of traps were straggling to London Bridge; the driver bore along very carefully until we swung into the Brixton Road and soon we had left the main stream of the Epsom traffic.

The big coach, with the tarpaulin over the hampers on its roof making a shape rather like a haystack, moved up the hill very nicely; you looked down on a tramway car-line with a horse on each side of it, and heard the steady patter of hoofs and movement of the chains. They were old stagers who had served for years on the same road, and the coachman trusted them. Streatham slipped past, then the electric-lit Common and stucco-faced Norwood. The driver and the guard talked together of the places they passed, recalling incidents that were to assist their midnight conversation for the last time. The guard pointed out the duck pond in which the coach had found itself one foggy night ten years ago; a turn of the road here recalled the driver's memory to the second time he had driven the coach, when he had had the misfortune to topple it over. He had been a 'temporary driver' on the coach for some fifteen years, but his main business was with the Tunbridge Wells Coach. The guard, a polite, responsible man, had seen seventeen years of the Brighton road.

We had now left our first team at the Old Windsor Castle at Croydon ('James Selby's stage', said the driver) and were seeing the last of the electric street cars and the lights of London. The rain had ceased, and the night was dark, with a few stars. The villages lay quite dark, and there was no sound on the road but the patter of hoofs and the roll and creak of the coach. After the rain the scent of hawthorn came keenly from the roadside mixed with fainter scents of lilac and laburnum. Our five noble lamps glimmered on the moving quarters of the horses and

blanched the hedges. From the high box seat one looked down on the grey trail of the road and the dark country and breathed in the fresh May night, and agreed with the driver in his views on motor cars. Who could smell hawthorn from a train or a motor car? Our route lay by Horley, Crawley, Cuckfield and Hassocks. We were scheduled to cover it in seven hours, including half-an-hour stoppages, and this had been kept so exactly that people on the route had revived the custom of setting their watch by the appearance of the coach.

At Horley we stopped at the cross-roads beside the old Chequers Inn. As it was the last night the women-folk of the horse-minders were waiting in a sad little body beside the local van to say goodbye to the driver. As we waited the Brighton up-coach came thundering in with its lights shining and horses very fresh and sportive after their twelve-mile stage. The two great coaches, the relays of horses, and the little group of women and ostlers gathered together at the dark cross-roads formed as picturesque a sight as the road could show in its palmiest days, but already it seemed a thing of the past. 'Good nights' and 'Farewells' were shouted to the up-coach, to which our coachman had transferred himself, and it sped away into the darkness.

Our new coachman was telling how Brighton had turned out to see the last of the up-coach and had sung 'Auld Lang Syne', and this had been repeated at the villages on the route. His coat had only two buttons, for his admirers had cut off the others, and also the tab of his collar and other little things, as relics. This coachman, as it could easily be gathered, was a great figure on the road. His appearance recalled an older type than the crop-headed driver of our time. He had a tall, portly figure which he carried with an air, his hair was rather long, with a slight curl, such as one sees in pictures of 'Corinthians', his clean-shaven face was of one pink tone, and altogether he was as hearty-looking a man as one could wish to sit beside; and he handled his cattle like an artist. He was proud of the fact that he never used his whip and asked me to mark how he took his horses up a steep hill with only a word or two, bringing them to the top exactly as they began it. He accepted the question what his whip was for as distinctly a poser, and then smiled and said that you must have a whip, and, holding the whip at an angle, the lash wrapped round the middle, he added slowly, 'Com-plete'.

He was particularly fond of one of his horses called Nigger, which,

like most horses, had a curious personality of his own; he carried his head like the knight on the chess-board, and had an odd quick high action, raising his knees to an absurd height. You thought no horse could keep it up for a mile, but Nigger pranced on without a break for his ten-mile stage. I was told that Nigger did not like anyone to speak to his driver, and he seemed very fidgety during the conversation. The coachman described the kind of punishments he considered suitable to anyone who used a whip on Nigger. With Nigger were Daisy, Nobby and Old Mary, a grand team, and at one bit the coachman — this being the last night — 'set 'em alight', and we had a touch of the great days, racing along for ten minutes at something like sixteen miles an hour, and for twenty minutes at twelve miles, which, with a three-ton coach and load, was something to talk about. He spoke of James Selby's memorable run of the 104 miles to Brighton and back in seven hours fifty seconds, and of Lord Lonsdale's great twenty miles in fifty-five minutes on Lowfield Heath. The coachman pointed out that road.

It was now daylight, and we had heard the first thrush piping her morning song. (Whoever heard the morning song of a thrush from a train or motor?) The sun was bright when we crossed the South Downs and drew down towards Brighton. Famous old coaching and pugilist inns like the rambling King's Head, and a host of other relics of the Regency days and the reign of fancy, old manor-houses, like Cuckfield House, the original of 'Rookwood', crazy fragrant villages and windmills sunk behind us, and we could feel the breath of the sea in the distance. Aged shepherds and cottagers hobbled to the doors, people waited at cross-roads, and early farmers drew up as the great red coach raced along the road for the last time. 'Goodbye, Mr. Garnham — goodbye; farewell to you!' The coachman made his replies with his whip. He was of the third generation of coachmen, and could perhaps express himself best through his whip.

In the excitement of the night the guard had forgotten his horn, so only our wheels and horse-hoofs raised the echoes as we ran into Brighton, where another company were gathered to see the end of the last run of the Brighton Mail Coach.

The last hoof-sounds of the Brighton Mail Coach were heard on the road in 1905. Forty years after, hoofs still beat on the London streets and in the Second War there were more of them than a decade before,

for horses were drummed up from all parts to help in the petrol shortage, though harness and stables were hard to find. Enough horse vans and carts survived, however, to produce a glimmer of the old parade of horses and vehicles on Easter Monday revivals in Regent's Park. At the Lord Mayor's Show cart-horses still pull the weighty gilded coach; the Mounted Police can still find nothing so good and high and mobile as the horse for their work in crowds; Hyde Park has still a few morning riders where squadrons of horsemen used to thump and scamper along and rein up to form equestrian avenues when Victoria drove down the Row. But the Twilight of the Horse is fading fast out of the London scene. In another generation a horse may only be something the average Londoner hears about from a tipster, or sees in the television of a race!

CHAPTER IV

London Period Figures

AT the beginning of the century the ordinary serious visitor to London intended to see two sights, whatever happened to his time or money. These were the Zoo and Madame Tussaud's. The Tower, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, too, but the former I think were sights that a self-respecting visitor could not miss without loss of face. If you came to the capital to see an international football match, or final cup-tie, or hear an oratorio at Crystal Palace, or were chosen to be interviewed by a business chief for a job abroad, you squeezed in enough time to see the beasts of prey and the Chamber of Horrors. If evangelically-minded you went also to hear Mr. Spurgeon at the London Tabernacle. Then there were the British Museum and the National Gallery, Lords and the Oval. For the frivolous there were, of course, the theatres, then shining with actor-managers and star actresses and the music hall in its now legendary greatness, but even the frivolous visitors did not altogether ignore Madame Tussaud's and the Zoo.

Londoners, too, of course, went in multitudes, but they did not have either delectable enclosure to themselves as they had the Crystal Palace on the Fifth of dreary November which Mr. Brock had brightened with his Fireworks Benefits. Tussaud's and Brock's had this common link, that they both sought in their different way to keep alive in our memories the villains of the past. 'Remember, remember, the Fifth of November', the Brocks went on saying, or it would have been a serious thing for them with Benefits forgot.

The Zoo has had many great keepers; everyone remembers Sir Chalmers Mitchell and H. G. Maurice, but you cannot associate its Mount Ararat Gardens with one name or family. You can, however, with Tussaud's and Brock's, whose families are deep in London legend. One cannot conceive a new Crystal Palace without the Brocks and their fireworks.

Before we had our National Gallery or our Albert Hall we had our

Madame Tussaud's. It is nearly a century and a half since that remarkable woman, whose little black-clothed figure with its big black bonnet lined with a white frill framing an ancient spectacled face looked out at you from Fischer's picture as you climbed the stairs from Marylebone Road, came to London and opened an exhibition where the Lyceum Theatre now stands. She was indeed a woman with a past. Her father was a German-Swiss officer named Joseph Gresholtz, her mother the daughter of a Swiss clergyman. When Marie Gresholtz was six years old her widowed mother took her to Paris, where her uncle practised as a surgeon and as a modeller in wax under Royal patronage. The young girl showed great ability for the less dangerous of her uncle's professions, and in course of time she was appointed tutor to the sister of Louis the Sixteenth, and lived in the Palace of Versailles. She made the acquaintance of many of the great figures of the French Revolution. Marat lay hidden in her uncle's house for a week while the King's officers were seeking him. When he left he made to her a very pretty little speech. 'I never saw him again,' says Madame Tussaud dryly in her Memoirs, 'until one day just after he had been stabbed by Charlotte Corday. Two gendarmes came for me to go to his house that I might make a cast of his face.'

The Bastille fell, then the Tuileries, and three half-brothers and two uncles of the girl were among the Swiss Guards who were slaughtered. She herself was thrown into prison, where she shared a cell with Josephine Beauharnais and her daughter Hortense. Through the influence of General Kléber she was released in time to see Marie Antoinette pass to her death, and was summoned by the Assembly to make the cast of the dead Queen's face which you used to see in the underground room of the building. Madame's work was so appreciated by the Revolutionaries that she was retained to commemorate the greatest of the heads which fell into the basket of the Place de la Révolution. Carrier, the Princess de Lamballe, Danton, Hébert, Robespierre, all came under Madame's hands, and later you could see them in grotesque green-lit little cells hard by the images of Charles Peace and John Thurtell.

When more settled times came to France, Mlle Gresholtz married Monsieur Tussaud, but the husband seems to have had too high an appreciation of his wife's talents to divert them from her work in wax

Napoleon and Masséna visited her studio, and it is clear that the tried and talented lady had at last found port after stormy years. But her experience of the Terror had made France hateful to her, and after many delays she was allowed to depart for England in 1802. Her first collection was mostly the work of her own hands. It was not very successful in London, but the country was more appreciative, and as she added to her Napoleonic relics popularity came from a generation to whom Napoleon was more than a name and a sentiment. In 1835 the present exhibition was housed in Baker Street; and in 1850 Madame Tussaud passed out of the company of her images, where she had sat so long, and the business went to her son, Francis Tussaud. She carried her age well till the last, and died in her ninety-first year. Her personality persists in every part of this ghostly mimic world, and is not the least curious sensation one carries away from these gorgeous tawdry halls. It may be a small and an accidental point but I think that something of the impression she has left on the public mind was reflected in the fact that everyone — even the bus-conductors — spoke for a hundred years of '*Madame* Tussaud's'. The dynasty of the Tussauds, for long continued to rule the waxworks. After Francis Tussaud gave up modelling his son Joseph Randall succeeded him, and he in turn was succeeded by his son the late John Theodore, not the least of these artists in wax, who managed the business and modelled the more important new figures.

At Tussaud's centenary in 1903 John Theodore Tussaud threw some light on his work and mission. Dressed in his sculptor's coat and surrounded as he was in his long, low-roofed room with portraits and relics of the Napoleonic legend on which his institution was founded, Mr. Tussaud gave the impression of one who did not lightly regard the cares of his historic business. The development of Madame Tussaud's had been regular and gradual. He did not think that many new ideas had disturbed its even course, although he admitted that the elaborate and wonderful tableaux such as the 'Death of Nelson' and the 'Execution of Mary Queen of Scots' (the work of his own skilful hand) were somewhat novel. But such tableaux were attempted in the earlier waxworks, for it would be observed that most of them were arranged in groups. The public mind seemed to have changed very little in its relation to waxworks. The Chamber of Horrors still attracted all kinds and classes of people. Indeed, it was more popular than ever, and perhaps there was a

greater proportion of women among the visitors to it. He himself had rather directed his attention to famous people and to elaborate tableaux than to the Chamber, but it was, after all, he said, an accepted part of the show.

The Chamber of Horrors, it seemed, had not always been known by that title. In Madame's time it was called, he had heard, 'The Chamber of the Dead', although it was quite true that that did not distinguish it much from the other parts of the exhibition. The new name came from the great giver of nicknames — *Punch*. *Punch* called it the 'Chamber of Horrors', and it was called so ever after. 'At one time,' Mr. Tussaud explained, 'there was no Chamber of Horrors. The figures were all scattered together without order. During an exhibition at Oxford one of the dons pointed out that to have the effigy of Shakespeare between those of Burke and Hare was unfriendly to the moral dignity of man. After this the lawbreakers had a hall to themselves.'

On another point of general policy Mr. Tussaud was emphatic. The attendants in the waxworks, he said, were not encouraged to look like the figures. It would surprise him very much to hear that they did so, or that the public thought that they did. 'Why,' said he, with some feeling, 'it would startle our old lady visitors, and would be very undesirable.' I remarked in a helpful way that there was one commissionaire who sat in the stiffest manner, and but for his hands I could not have told that he was not a figure.

'Ah,' said Mr. Tussaud, slowly. 'I'm afraid nothing can be done with him. You see he *is* a figure!'

Mr. Arthur Brock, the head of the great firework-makers, was well in his seventies when he gave me his own ideas and reflections on the industry — a year or two after the Victory celebrations of 1918, in which fireworks did their historic part. A generation later Brock's were to give all their knowledge and resources in explosives to help in the preservation of the country, and to behold the Crystal Palace itself make a bonfire that was seen all over London beyond any fireworks ever seen there. But that was far from anyone's thoughts as I sat with Mr. Brock one night in the Crystal Palace admiring his fireworks in the rain and talked with him later in his own cabin at his firework citadel at Cheam.

'Well, if we had a patron saint for our industry perhaps it might be Guy Fawkes — although there's St. Catherine, too.' Thus Mr. Brock began. He had explained that seventy-five per cent of his business was for Guy Fawkes Night. So long as England was a country with back gardens fireworks would flourish. This, it seemed, was particularly the case in the North. Lancashire was true to fireworks. Indeed, Lancashire and part of Yorkshire were his best firework regions. There were firework clubs all over the country to which boys gave pennies for two or three months beforehand. A father would say to his boys that if they subscribed half a crown he would subscribe half a crown, and get a fine case of fireworks. In this way, Mr. Brock said, saving habits would be inculcated in the growing boy. 'But, Mr. Brock, can you call it saving to buy something that disappears in an instant?' 'Well,' said Mr. Brock, turning a sharp look of his bright, seventy-odd-year-old eyes on his interlocutor, 'a good habit is a good habit, and the habit of saving is a good one, anyhow. And surely fireworks are good things? What about tobacco? It all goes up in smoke, doesn't it? Fireworks go up in light and glory!'

It was easy to see that old Arthur Brock was an artist as he sat in his studio in South Cheam and reflected on his art with his eyes turning to the many pictures and photographs of the pyrotechnic triumphs of the Brocks in the last hundred years or so of their career. His spreading works were then soon to leave South Cheam for King's Langley. It is an old family business, carried on illegally for about 150 years until the Explosives Act of 1875 made it legal to manufacture fireworks under certain supervision. The Gunpowder Act of 1860 had formally legalized the firework business, but under conditions that made it commercially impossible. But all the time the imperturbable Brocks went on making their fireworks, first in Clerkenwell — where the founder was killed on November 5th, 1720, by his own fireworks — then in Whitechapel — that factory was destroyed by an explosion in 1825; then in Nunhead, then Harold Wood and so to Cheam.

Their fireworks had illuminated the rowdy old Georgian resorts such as the Bear Garden at Hockley-in-the-Hole, and the more grandiose shows at Vauxhall and Ranelagh. There was a bill in their office of a great display at the 'Royal Eagle Coronation Pleasure Grounds and Grecian Saloon, City Road', where 'Pop Goes the Weasel', which was

first sung there, must have made an appropriate accompaniment. Brock's had their first benefit at the Eagle. The great era of the firm began at the Crystal Palace in 1866, when, after a competition, they secured a contract to give displays, and these continued till 1910, when the Festival of Empire was held in the Palace, and at the end of the First War Brock's fireworks began again. The veteran Arthur Brock had not missed a firework benefit at Crystal Palace since 1876. There were at the time of our talk five sons in the business.

Monarchs and presidents of republics, premiers, admirals, field-marshals, and grandees from every part of the world had watched the fireworks that old Arthur Brock had supervised in half a century. He has many stories. One was of the Kaiser Wilhelm's visit in 1896. The Kaiser had seen a firework display at Amsterdam on his way over, and when Brock was presented to him at the end of the Crystal Palace show by King Edward, then Prince of Wales, the Kaiser said that it was good but not so good as the display he had seen in Amsterdam. The undaunted Brock replied pointedly that it should have been. He described the Kaiser as looking at him hard, and when he explained that it was Brock fireworks that the Kaiser had seen in Amsterdam, for the Dutch had been unable to do a display on that scale, and had had to get the English firm to undertake it, the Kaiser said nothing more about that. Instead, he began to tell Mr. Brock about what the colours were made from that were used in fireworks. 'He told me a lot on the subject,' said the Firework King, 'which he must have taken from the encyclopaedia.' Another interesting visitor he recalled was Li Hung Chang, the Chinese Premier, a large, wise man, who knew many things, but could not understand how, when he pressed a button, the word 'Welcome' in Chinese characters leapt out of the sky. Yet the Chinese were supposed to have invented fireworks! Mr. Brock has also been complimented by the Shah of Persia in 1902, and the old Sultan of Turkey ('Abdul the Damned') sat for half an hour watching a great firework display. Once he had given a show at Balmoral, when Crathie Church was rebuilt, but the regulations were so strict at Balmoral in those days that the people who had come to see it were all cleared away and were unable to enjoy the show.

That brought him to another point. Fireworks were at their best in rain, which brought out their colours. But when it was raining people

didn't want to go out and look at them. The biggest pyrotechnic display ever given was the Peace Night show in 1918, but the rain drove the crowds indoors. It was also the most expensive, a £10,000 contract. At the marriage of the Duke of Braganza in 1886 there was a great display on the Tagus, which cost £5000.

What would a decent country party show run a man into?

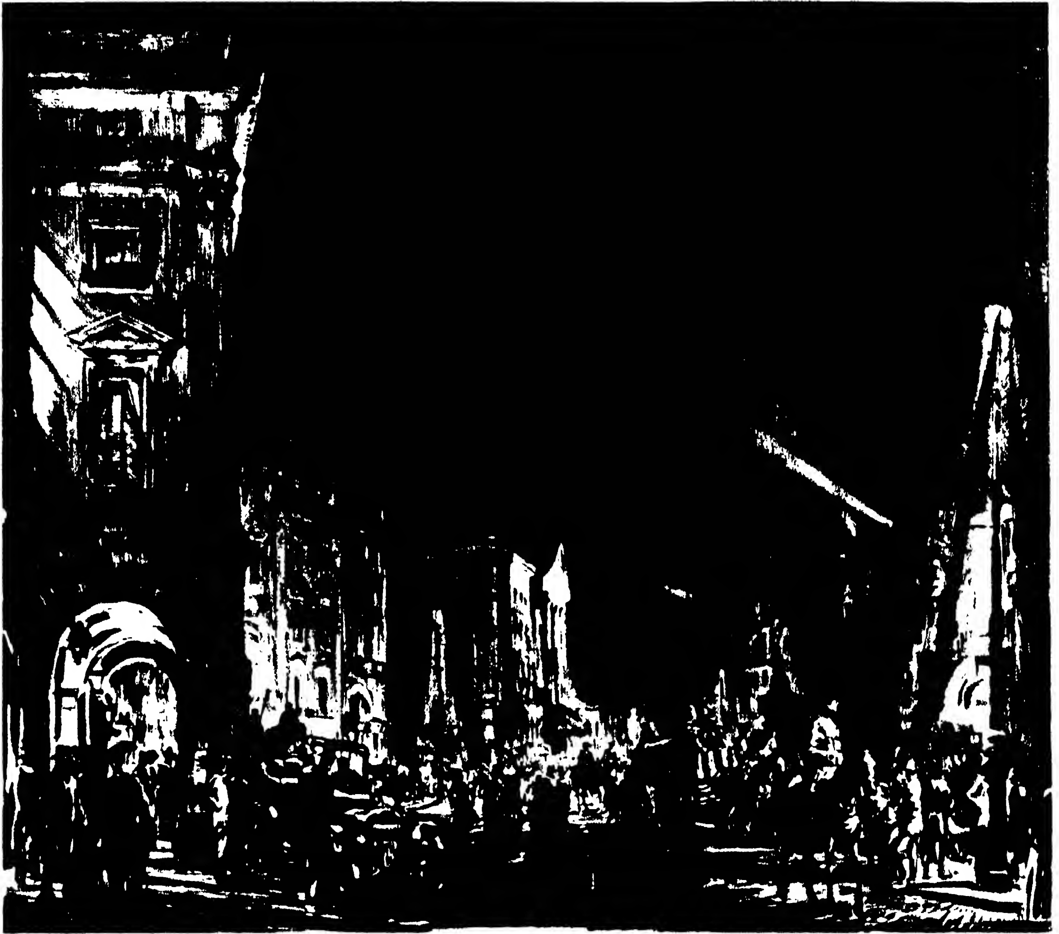
It would depend. A coming-of-age, with a 'long life and happiness', or a marriage with portraits of the bride and bridegroom might cost from £50 to £100. But how could you give more happiness to more people than with fireworks? Think how many people could see them! In a theatre only a thousand or two can see, and many of them not very well. Fireworks could be seen by millions.

Did you like fireworks always?

'When I was a boy,' said Mr. Brock (who, perhaps because of the pleasure he has so long given to boys, had still much of the boy in him), 'I used to prepare charcoal in the oven and fined it with the nutmeg grater. Aluminium bronze made a big change in fireworks in the 'nineties. We have twenty-six gradations in fireworks. It's a big subject. Very few people know all about fireworks. You ask me what are my favourite colours in fireworks. I'll tell you,' said old Mr. Brock with a queer little touch of shyness — 'Orange and mauve, sir — Orange and mauve!'

Thus, old Mr. Brock in 1920, rubbing his hands together.

THE DOOR: NEWGATE



PICCADILLY CIRCUS, 1915

CHAPTER V

The Two Wars

THOSE who were in London through the two World Wars find much confusion as they seek to remember and compute their experiences. At the end of the First War we all felt sure that there could never be another; human nature, we said in our certainty, could never, never stand it. The end of the Second War found humanity far less sure that that was the last war but terribly informed that powers were now unleashed which would make all previous warfare seem like Kriegspiel, and that had Germany's scientists been a year further on with their own atomic research the final clash might have left little of our painfully built-up civilization and its heritage.

London City, which suffered particularly in the Second War from what the German newspapers called their 'Baedeker Raids', in the destruction or terribly damaging of twenty of Wren's churches and all but two of London's best and most ancient City Company halls and many treasured buildings of its Inns of Court, was a constant target up to the end of the war. In the final stages the whole town became accustomed to hear the *chug-chug* of the pilotless projectile bombs and to see them with their red rear-end tearing through the sky. In houses, hotels and flats at night people sat and waited as the noise grew louder, satisfied if the sound did not cut off somewhere overhead, for that meant that the projectiles were diving and nothing could save those in the place they hit. Sometimes the robot plane came in daylight; as with the one that dived in Aldwych and two buses disappeared, the chassis of one being found on the top of a high building; 25 people were killed and 703 injured in that explosion. Happening as it did just after lunch-time when the streets were full it remains clearest in my mind. A stray bomb hit Charing Cross railway bridge over the Thames and held up all but one-line traffic for weeks.

Londoners became more fatalistic than ever. One night arriving late at the Strand hotel where I lodged I heard a *chug-chug* overhead coming nearer and nearer, but a small crowd stood smoking in the street near the hotel entrance. 'She's stopping!' one cried. 'No, she's not!'

cried another, but as he spoke the noise ended in the horrible diving pause. Everyone stood tense till a sharp sound came from the Embankment, but no explosion. The robot had touched the Embankment wall as it fell into the river near Cleopatra's Needle, whose bronze sphinxes bore the holes received from the Gotha's bombs in the earlier war, when a bus was hit and many passengers killed. The Aldwych robot in 1945 hit a building at Kingsway Corner which bore on its granite portal the scars of an old Zeppelin raid. Lincoln's Inn was hit in the two wars, St. Paul's Cathedral had trifling damage in the First and serious loss in the Second; but no Big Bertha shells in the First War reached London as they did Paris. The Kaiser's aerial armada of seven Zeppelins that set out for London in 1917 was scattered like the Spanish sea armada by our island weather as well as by our fighting craft. In those two terrible wars London was invaded for the first time since the coming of the Danes.

One can still remember the shock of the actual appearance of the first invader and the incredulous look of the populace as they swarmed out to see the Zeppelin. In Fleet Street and its lanes the bulky engine-men in their blue dungarees issued up from the printing houses, staring at the lustrous shape in the sky caught in the crossed searchlights to the north. 'Christ!' yelled one of the men, 'Look at the Zeppelin—going up Fetter Lane!' It was the indignity of the thing that struck him. In London! After a thousand inviolate years!

How distant those days came to be, how trifling those raids were that then seemed so momentous! People then went on the rooftops to see the Zeppelins and the Gothas, although our shrapnel rattled down and had victims. One remembers, after a Cheapside raid that set up a big blaze, hearing cocks crowing on Fleet Street roofs by which we learnt that many City office caretakers kept fowls. A bomb came through an upper storey in Pump Court, dived to the cellar and shot up into Hare Court a few yards from the great porch of the Temple's Round Church. The shell, about seven inches in diameter, broke in two revealing its ugly yellow filling. The watchman showed it to me that early summer morning as I returned from fire watch at St. Paul's. 'Strange doings in the Temple, sir!' he said rather indignantly. In the Second War most of Pump Court went with much else and the Temple Church was gutted and its ancient black marble effigies of Templars shattered.

Let me set down some of the London memories of the First War now slipping out of mind, for the enemy of the bad is the worse. The British ultimatum expired at midnight that apocalyptic August night. It was full moon blanching the stone of Trafalgar Square and the myriad faces there, most of them turned upward, as the fatal hour grew near, as though expecting some message from the skies. The shouting had died as people waited for the hour to strike. One thought then of Bright's words at the beginning of the Crimean War, in which some of the statue men there in the Square, had fought: 'The Angel of Death is abroad. You may almost hear the beating of his wings!' Six years after that I waited in that Square for the hour to be struck and again silence fell on the multitude there, the only sound the spray of the fountains and the murmur of the doves as the people stood like stone facing towards the Cenotaph thinking of their dead who had fallen in the years between.

Before that beginning, before Britain was in the war, there were strange sights as the Germans and Frenchmen responded to their mobilization orders and departed, most of them from the same station, Charing Cross. The station resounded with national anthems and taunts and curses and farewells. Insults were chalked on carriage doors, yet there were some links to be broken between mates, French and German, who had worked together in stockbrokers' offices, in banks, in hotels, in the press. The French and German waiters in one big Regent Street restaurant, the story went, decided to 'pair' like Parliament men and stay peaceably in London, but in the end the Germans went to detention camps and the French to the war. I noticed at Charing Cross Station that all the Germans wore brand new English boots, a shrewd piece of German mobilization technique. Off they went — German, French and sad-eyed Belgians. 'Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles!' roared from one train; 'Le jour de gloire est arrivé!' from the other.

A following memory is of the arrival of the Belgian refugees, particularly of a group of distinguished-looking nuns gazing dazedly around in the station and of the elderly station policeman coming to them with his friendly words, 'You'll be all right now, missus,' he said to the tall abbess, patting her aristocratic shoulder, 'quite all right. You're safe, in England — England!' And he helped them towards the cab rank, while the indignation faded from the abbess's face as the party vanished into the roaring Strand.

Railway stations were centres of London concern in the First War, with the coming of foreign refugee multitudes, and then of troop departures and the later arrival of unending hospital trains. It was at Victoria where most of those trains arrived and relatives waited in the hope of a glimpse of their men, sometimes the men they had 'seen off' at the station returning from their leave only a few weeks before. Hospitable people would gather at Christmas-time, mainly at Waterloo, to 'adopt' soldiers on leave as their Christmas guests. One remembers many such guests, particularly one lank A.S.C. man who looked down from the bus at horses drinking from the water trough as we passed St. Clement Danes and remarked, 'I wonder wha's feeding ma auld horse Benny the nicht!' and who said after dinner to his fellow soldier-guest, 'Don't anger me — a'm terrible when a'm angered!'

Regiments in that war marched to the station with bands playing, recruits sang in their training marches along the Embankment and the Strand, who, who, who was their lady-friend and that it was a long long way to Tipperary, to pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile. Many lads queued at the Recruiting Office in Whitehall for three days to enlist and, as the first year closed, the courtyard of the War Office was crowded with anxious women inquiring about men on the 'Missing' lists. Lamps were shrouded as the Zeppelins came but there was a deal of light, food coupons came and were required, even in restaurants, but there was no real food scarcity and drink was much as usual though a bottle of whisky soon cost seven shillings and sixpence instead of three shillings and sixpence, bitter beer rose from fourpence to eightpence a pint, and cigarettes from sixpence to a shilling a score. In theatres, music halls and cinemas business was as usual, and that was our trade slogan at the time when the fate of Paris hung on the mobilization of its taxicabs.

How near did we come to defeat in that war? And how near in the next? The only certain thing that can be said about it all is that very few of us conceived such a possibility. How could a nation in an island inviolate for nearly a thousand years and the world's greatest naval power think defeat could ever happen?

Yet on April 12th, 1918, Haig's Order to his Armies had read, 'Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement.' Cocoons of rumours were then abroad — the line was broken,

the line held, Amiens was falling, our reinforcements were too untrained, our reinforcements were too late. Was this then the Critical Day that comes to all nations? But in the Strand that fateful afternoon things seemed as usual. The ache in our minds might be there, no doubt, but to have a vision of what was happening over there that spring day was beyond most of us, and was put aside.

All my young England fell in fight today.

Robert Nichols's line kept on returning. It was in the rhythm of everything, returning and returning. The streets were much as usual and crowded with girls and wounded soldiers; civilian men seemed fewer and older, their steps slower. In their stone sentry-boxes in front of the Horse Guards the Guardsmen in their steel cuirasses sat stolidly on their chargers as in the old Crimean pictures in *Punch*. A small group of new recruits marched along Whitehall, some trying to step out like the soldier who led them, some still arm-in-arm with their women.

In the evening in a Strand side street, a man was singing to a harmonium. 'There's a long, long trail a-winding to the land of my dreams', and the listeners, nearly all girls, were humming the chorus in the darkness. Their voices rose in the air and one had a sense of them uniting with other noises rising from the earth not very far away, the droning of aeroplanes and the whirr of machine guns, the detonation of bombs and the clanging of explosives, the crackling of flames and the cries and panting over there where their young men were. At eleven the streets were almost quiet. People were going sensibly to bed to sleep or to be alone with their thoughts. The decorum of London hung over us all like a gauze curtain.

Another street memory of that war was when a Zeppelin alarm brought me along the Strand and at Wellington Street a flame shot up higher than the columned front of Irving's old Lyceum Theatre which it plucked out of the darkness. I sheltered with some soldiers in a shop doorway as the smashed gas main increased its roar and another bomb detonated. There was some hoarse talking behind me, and as the flame increased, I turned to my neighbour and saw he was a Maori New Zealand soldier! Macaulay's image of the New Zealander brooding over the ruins of London mingled in the mind with the 'All Clear' notes of the bugles.

Then the sudden end of the war in 1918. How different it was from the end of the later war! What we thought we were celebrating then was clear enough — the end of the war, of all wars, as nearly everyone then believed. It was like passing out of darkness into light. At the end of the Second War it was all different. We were happy indeed that the danger was ended, the enemy fallen, but we were passing into a dolorous half-light in which we could not see what lay ahead. In 1918 everyone had one thought — the dragon was slain. It was the end of a horror. Bugles blew. That morning the East End surged up in drays and wagons and carts, cheering and waving. The girls put on their brothers' clothes to symbolize that this day was different. Cheering crowds surged before the War Office. Canadian soldiers brought the captured German guns from the Mall and tried somehow to burn them in Trafalgar Square. The exultant processions went on for three roaring days and nights.

Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary when the war began in 1914, had said, 'The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.' Well, the lights were lit again in London-town in 1918. Young children were carried out to see a lit town for the first time. And when those children were men they were to see these lights go out again in war. And to see them re-lit again; and yet again to see them go out or be dimmed in the hard and difficult peace years that followed the Victory of 1945!

Perhaps the strangest feature of London's losses in the Second War is this. Of its Wren churches two were destroyed, eighteen were so burnt and damaged that only their towers and shells remain; the medieval St. Olave's, Hart Street, St. Giles, Cripplegate, and All Hallow's, Barking, were almost destroyed; Southwark Cathedral, St. Bartholomew the Great, were damaged; while Old Chelsea Church and Austin Friars (the 'Dutch Church') were burnt down. Yet, of the hundred or so theatres, music halls and big cinemas, all but a few not important ones escaped damage. All the big hotels, except Charing Cross Hotel, escaped, including the commandeered ones. London's favourite concert hall, the Queen's Hall, was burnt, but the Albert Hall, for all its size as a target, survived! Buckingham Palace was hit four times, twice when the King

and Queen were in it. The House of Commons was gutted, Westminster School lost its ancient hall. But the story of London's grievous losses in the war is too well recorded for repetition here.

Miracles happened. St. Paul's Cathedral survived, in the devastated city of burnt and roofless churches and halls, and landmarks. With the great Cathedral down, London would have diminished in the mind's eye of the world. It would have been as though the nose had been torn from the face of London and however well we could have provided a substitute or a regrafting, London would never have been the same! We should have been citizens of a meaner city. A glory would have gone from England as though a Shakespeare masterpiece had been blotted out of our literature. The loss of so many of Wren's City Churches seemed like a ransom paid for the preservation of St. Paul's, because the resources in skill, leadership, organization and equipment that saved the Cathedral were not there for those other precious fabrics when the incendiaries poured on the city.

It was hit twice by 500-pound high explosive bombs and about fifty incendiaries, one of which was dislodged from the dome when the lead was beginning to melt. Had the lead melted and run, the inner dome structure of timbers would quickly have been affected and then nothing could have saved the Cathedral! Dean W. R. Matthews inspired and planned (as Canon Alexander had done before him in the First War) its safeguarding which Mr. Godfrey Allen, the surveyor, so thoroughly organized and captained with the gallant St. Paul's watch. Between the raids the Dean slept many nights in the crypt, some nights side by side with the stone effigy of his predecessor in the Deanery, the great John Donne in his grave-clothes, saved from the burning of Old St. Paul's and brought to the crypt to preserve it again if Wren's St. Paul's should burn! The high explosive bomb that hit the north transept and exploded in the interior brought down the inside porch that bore the famous epitaph on Wren:

SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRIS CIRCUMSPICE

When the new tablet is in the repaired porch the names of the Deans and Mr. Allen and the gallant Watch that made that injunction still possible should surely be inset!

The pilotless planes all passed St. Paul's, one missing the west tower

by a few feet. In the summer the Cathedral rose from gardens of wild flowers and weeds and rockeries that had been city buildings.

Many anxious eyes, red with the struggles of the night, must have been turned at daybreak towards St. Paul's that May Sunday morning in 1941 after the great City blitz that committed to the flames so many of London's most precious buildings. I had arrived from Manchester by an early train that unloaded passengers at Wembley, Euston Station having been hit, and so proceeded by a north suburban train, crowded with men carrying spades to dig allotments, and then by great luck got a taxicab to take me to the city. The northern streets were wormed with fire hose but we got to Aldwych before meeting a barricade. St. Clement Danes was a shell, its Portland stone tower and spire blackened and shabby and its lovely little side domes with their lead nipples melted away. I looked down Essex Street and saw only the skeleton of the old Watergate at its end. Fleet Street was laced with fire hose and firemen were shouting and running: the air was charged with particles and smell of burnt paper, and clouds of smoke, orange tinged below, volleyed from the City. A map shop in the Street was a cage of flames. A man and two women carrying half-clad children on their shoulders hurried past like figures in the old pictures of the Great Fire of London. I could not see St. Paul's, the smoke drifting and swelling and my eyes smarting. At Peele's Corner I peered and strained to see the great familiar shape and called to people hurrying past for news of the Cathedral, but they said nothing. Then, through an eddy of the battle-smoke the great dome and the golden cross appeared and my heart leapt up at the sight. The great flagship was safe. But alas for the glorious Fleet of Wren! Some were dismasted, some were left as a tall mast rising over a blackened hull, some were just wrecks in the dolorous lagoons of the City!

From a Fleet Street attic that morning I watched unholy little flames flickering along the roof gutters after the roof of the Temple Church had fallen in, the Master of the Temple's delectable little Wren house was a heap of bricks and rubbish, with tulips showing in the old garden where Canon Ainger gave his tea parties on Temple Flower Show days. Strange it was to see how the plane trees still stood with their spring leafage while the solid buildings on which their shadows had fallen for so many summers had vanished! For long afterwards you could see old briefs and papers, and K.C.'s bags and rags of clothes and even a wig

THE BLITZED CITY (FROM REUTERS)

LONDON CELEBRATES THE SILVER JUBILEE. (FROM BUSH HOUSE)

hanging on the branches where they had been flung by the explosions. In some courts a gable wall remained revealing, one above another, Georgian corner fireplaces round which good company had gathered, perhaps even Lamb himself among them. Not only the Temple's glories of church and hall and library, had gone, but such curious, distinctive and irreplaceable caskets of traditional London life as those chambers, dusty perhaps, and lacking in some things; but who that has lived there can forget those sweet, haunted, mellow purlieus of the law? Now, to some of us, all, all are gone — the dear familiar places!

But enough has already been said in this book about the Temple and too little about the other Inns of Court that suffered as grievously. My only plea for this offence is that living in the Temple for forty years saps one's impartiality. One passes with a contrite bow to other scenes of the blitz.

There was the sight of the Strand one morning after a robot raid when nearly all the shop windows had been blown out and the street cleaners had swept the broken glass into the gutters where it sparkled in the sunshine, as though the streets had been lined with stage diamonds from Drury Lane nearby. Another morning the familiar City thoroughfares were blocked with fallen buildings and the only way to the Bank led through still smoking by-streets, some edged with ruins, and so many prominent buildings gone that even those who had offices there did not recognize their street! Once I set off to find St. Giles, Cripplegate, and for a time did not realize that the poor ruin with the broken tower rising in the empty cut-up acres of clay was all that was left of Milton's church. A road which ran with nothing but ditches on both sides north from the church ruin had been the Grub Street of the pamphleteers, renamed, ironically enough, Milton Street! The Mansion House and the Bank of England were safe, although a bomb killed hundreds in the tube station between them!

Near Waterloo Station in 1944 was a great pyramid of misery that people in passing trains had seen growing through the war years. The bulldozers and relief squads had moved there the debris of broken houses: a great mass of bricks and tiles and slates and corner stones and hearths and all sorts of debris of what were once as pleasant homes as civilization had produced for fifty per cent of her children. As the years went on this mass, a pretty saffron in the sun, grew and grew until a

wide platform, then a great pyramid had risen upon it, towering over the railway trains on their tall embankment. What that pyramid meant in broken homes and broken hopes and lost firesides no man could say. But it was in its way as significant as the Pyramids of Egypt, asking a more vehement question.

As one looks back now on that time, the war is seen to have given us something while it took so terribly much away. The Londoners seemed to become 'Citizens' as Shakespeare's Romans were citizens, perhaps as Londoners were citizens in Shakespeare's time. We spoke plainly to one another without inhibitions of class or kind, or even sex. And this was not only under stress of danger and in action but just because we were of a company 'tuned in' to one another's thoughts and anxieties. What was everybody's business was nobody's business any longer: it was in reality everybody's business whether this or that building or shelter was safe or unsafe, and how people dealt with incendiaries and pumps and all the improvisations and short-cuts in emergencies and what had happened round the corner. And the reminiscences and reflections after ghastly nights! Much compassion was abroad and impatient people listened with heartfelt sympathy to halting stories from poor tellers. Yet the stories were short in my experience and the Londoner stuck to his laconic ways, even when listeners were waiting and eager.

This new comradeship was noticeable even in the big popular hotels where people are usually most wary, and in these war years many Londoners, made homeless by the raids, stayed there, when they were lucky enough to get rooms. The Government had a control over hotels to find beds for its officials and for men of our armed forces and those of our allies and for the swarms of 'executives' in town on government business.

In their new fraternal mood it was noticeable that the Englishmen forced the talking and Americans were usually the taciturn and evasive. Small wonder, perhaps, when one thinks of the adventures in acquaintance and friendship that were being opened abroad between the men from all parts of their enormous country, speaking the same idiom, talking the same politics, eased with much the same way of life.

There seemed less difference between the talk and experience of a man from Texas and a man from Maine than between those of a Devon man and an Aberdeenshire man in this small island. Here the Americans were meeting together in a strange land among people whose lingo and ways took a deal of knowing. But, as time went on, there were many forgatherings, particularly when the British sailors forced the pace, when airmen came together, or when raids were raging. The closest comminglings of the war were over in the years before the Americans came here, the time when the great water-tank on our hotel roof was hit and the water cascaded down the main stairs, when people came down to sleep underground with overcoats and furs over their night clothes, carrying blankets and pillows and chess-boards. Latterly breakfast was served as usual during raids, although the breakfast-room was in an annexe with two glass domes, yet it was rarely that anyone hurried away and the service always went on. One morning I asked my little foreign waitress if the bomb danger never troubled her. She replied, 'I am afraid all the time. But I am accustomed to being afraid, so it does not matter very much!'

Curious company gathered in the underground grill-room and in the vast lounge as the war years went on. Polish officers with worn, patient faces and impatient feet; unplaceable, bulky, mid-European men, nearly always in heavy overcoats, giving the clean smartish lounge the look of a Balkan customhouse; big groups of sailormen seated in a far corner round a table, their heads low, singing quietly late at night Norwegian choruses; silent, thin-faced, sunken-eyed men believed to be of the French Underground Movement and nondescript Continentals who looked so like spies in plays that they clearly could never have made a living by spying. But underground secret agents, one heard afterwards, were there in plenty, Norwegians who had been in Norway two days before and many gallant men who had been risking their lives in missions in France and Belgium. A burly English figure who passed through on his way to bed, or sat for a little at a table with his consulting friends in this low-roofed London cave-hall where so much that was Europe in solution was precipitated together for the time, was later to have greatly to do with the future of most of them when he, Ernest Bevin, was Foreign Secretary of this country.

A few other political leaders who came to Cabinet and Ministerial

rank stayed from time to time in this great gathering place, the Strand Palace Hotel, and forgathered with Trades Union deputations, visitors to London, to work out the production problems and plannings of the war. Sometimes there would be a little quiet singing, usually from Welsh mining parties, or seamen, or French Canadians. Once or twice a party of Chinese naval officers would pass through the lounge. The first Brazilians in uniform almost got a cheer, but latterly uniforms multiplied and became difficult to identify as the world gathered in London for the last fearful grapple of the war.

When the American troops first arrived they changed for a time the look of the lounge, not mingling much with the other nationalities except where sometimes racial affinities, as with Poles and Czechs and Jews, drew men together. As already said, United States troops found in their great European adventure endless interest in their encounters with their own countrymen. But even so they seemed less curious and responsive, more middle class to our idea, than in the First War. Not that they were inherently less friendly, for once the surface was broken there was the old unloosening of idea and personality again, but until the American soldier had been in the European fighting with the rest and had taken on his tremendous part, the war comradeship of the First War was not so clearly present. That was noticeable, too, at that time, with the Americans and Canadians who rarely mingled.

The salient thing at the American camps, however, was their warm, lively interest in the English children, seen not only in the way they gave their money to the adoption of the children of the blitz and their gargantuan entertainments and presents to the children, but in the care and trouble they took to make child friends. It was a happy thought for future Anglo-American friendship that so many of those soldiers had made close friends with Englishmen and Englishwomen so early in life, before our national cussedness had really settled in; and how those children were getting their first impressions of Americans as big kindly 'uncles' in uniform bringing them gifts and fun and seeing in them their own children across the Atlantic.

It was with the airmen that one first noticed the fraternization really begin in my hotel. It was in the air that these allies first saw one another in battle, and the conditions of air fighting made for individual and group combat that could be observed and discussed. Two of many

conversations I had at breakfast in that hotel are probably typical of many that would illustrate the warm comradeship of the airmen. I had lent my newspaper to an American airman sitting beside me one day after a big air raid on Germany. We talked of it and he said that there should not be a heading like that, pointing to the paper. The heading was, 'SEVEN HUNDRED AMERICAN HEAVIES CRIPPLE AIR PLANT'. 'We don't want this "British" or "American" stuff in the headline,' he said, 'they should forget it. It should be "Allied". We're both in the same job!' His companion agreed. The R.A.F. gave it them at night and the Fortresses in the day. There couldn't be much sleep for the German fighters. It was all interlocked — one Allied job. He knew something about the job, for he told me later he had just ended his twenty-fifth mission in bombers and was going home to do instructor's work. He was through! He had been in many long raids and thought big things about the British airmen.

Another American airman I met in the same place, who had been wounded in the leg and hand, said that the Spitfires were the most wonderful things he ever wanted to see. Once he was coming back from Germany with some of the crew hit and the ship losing height steadily. The German fighters were coming in hard — the Goering lot with the yellow heads! — when they saw Spitfires coming along. Were they happy? 'The Spitfires never leave you,' he said, 'and we got back somehow. We didn't think we were going to get back. Every bomber man will tell you the same about the Spitfires.' This American airman had enthusiasm, too, about the Lancasters and said that all his crew had had a trip on a Lancaster and Lancaster men had had a day with them.

These conversations that came about in a casual way in that hotel were probably characteristic of many. While the soldiers of different nations were slow in coming together, the airmen of different countries could, from the first, be seen there sitting and talking together. Sometimes some of the great Canadian and Australian fliers were among them, but they did not come so often to this hotel and had their own social rendezvous, the Australian airmen favouring a tavern in a Fleet Street court which they decorated with their trophies and their flags, while they made their hostess there a toast known to all airmen under the Southern Cross.

How far away these nights seem now in our difficult peace years that

are so different from all we dreamt would come after the war. In the streets and on the roofs the firewardens and their squads, men and women, and at one time or another nearly all of us were hearing the eldritch noises in the air, the rush and roar of the high explosives, the deep bark and yelp of the guns, and watching the twitter in the night sky as if thousands of little fire-shutters of the great furnace of hell had been opened and closed, the evil orange chandeliers and the enemy flares hanging over the town, the daylight sight of London under skies spotted with captive balloons like an old 'foxed' engraving.

Some of the incidents of the Battle of London are so strange that people hesitated to tell them. A young woman in a house struck by a bomb came to herself buried among the ruins but able to move her hands. Her groping fingers touched an alarm clock and she managed to turn the hands round the broken dial until the bell rang and was heard by the men in the demolition squad above who dug till they rescued her. Both her feet were broken. There was a striking absence of self-pity among the elderly women who seemed to be the majority of the sufferers in those ghastly raids. Here is a scene in a poor district as a friend told it to me.

A stoutish little woman dressed neatly except that her dress had been ill-used was watching a mongrel dog being led away by a policeman. 'Their house is gone,' she said, not addressing anyone, 'and his master and missis are gone.' A man approached and said, 'How are you, missis, this morning — all right?' The woman replied, 'Well, my house was knocked down last night. It's flat. Got the furniture pulled out this morning and it was put in two rooms in separate houses with no locks on the doors. I don't hold with that — no locks on the doors! I'm having them put it in one room and the door locked up. I'm going off now to look in the rubble and see if there's anything there. All the kitchen stuff gone, of course; lived there donkey's years!' Clearly she did not think there was anything pathetic about herself, a little stoutish old woman nearing the end of her life.

Another woman who might have been her sister had been rescued after a raid by digging and was looking bad. One of the rescuing squad

noticed a bottle of whisky in the remnant of a cupboard beside her and said: 'There's a bottle of whisky. You had better have a drop, Mother, you need something — you're bad.' The woman opened her eyes and cried, ''Ere, you leave that bottle alone — it's for an emergency!'

A Kensington incident in another station of society also deserves a place in such records. A warden hammered at the door of a house in a Kensington square late at night and when a slightly dishevelled lady appeared, he told her that a light was showing in an upper window. 'I beg your pardon,' said the lady, 'that is not a light — it's an incendiary bomb — and if you don't disturb us again my sister and I will put it out.' It was a Kensington lady, it may be recalled, perhaps the same lady, who, giving evidence in a burglary case, deposed, 'I heard a metallic sound so I arose and went to the top of the stairs and called out, "If there is anyone there, will he say what he is doing in this house?" Of course,' she added, 'I spoke in the third person.'

There were heroes and heroines in nearly every street in the days and nights of the Battle of London, but the greatest of these was surely the elderly working woman who was being dug out, but the rescuers could not move a heavy beam that lay across her legs. As they worked, bombs again began to fall near and the woman urged them to leave her. 'What's the use,' she panted, 'of working on here? Get out of it quick! There's no sense in us all staying here and getting killed. Get out of it — quick!'

We cherish the story of the wounded Sir Philip Sidney's request that the water be passed to his more sorely wounded follower. Is it as worthy of memory as this great Cockney woman's?

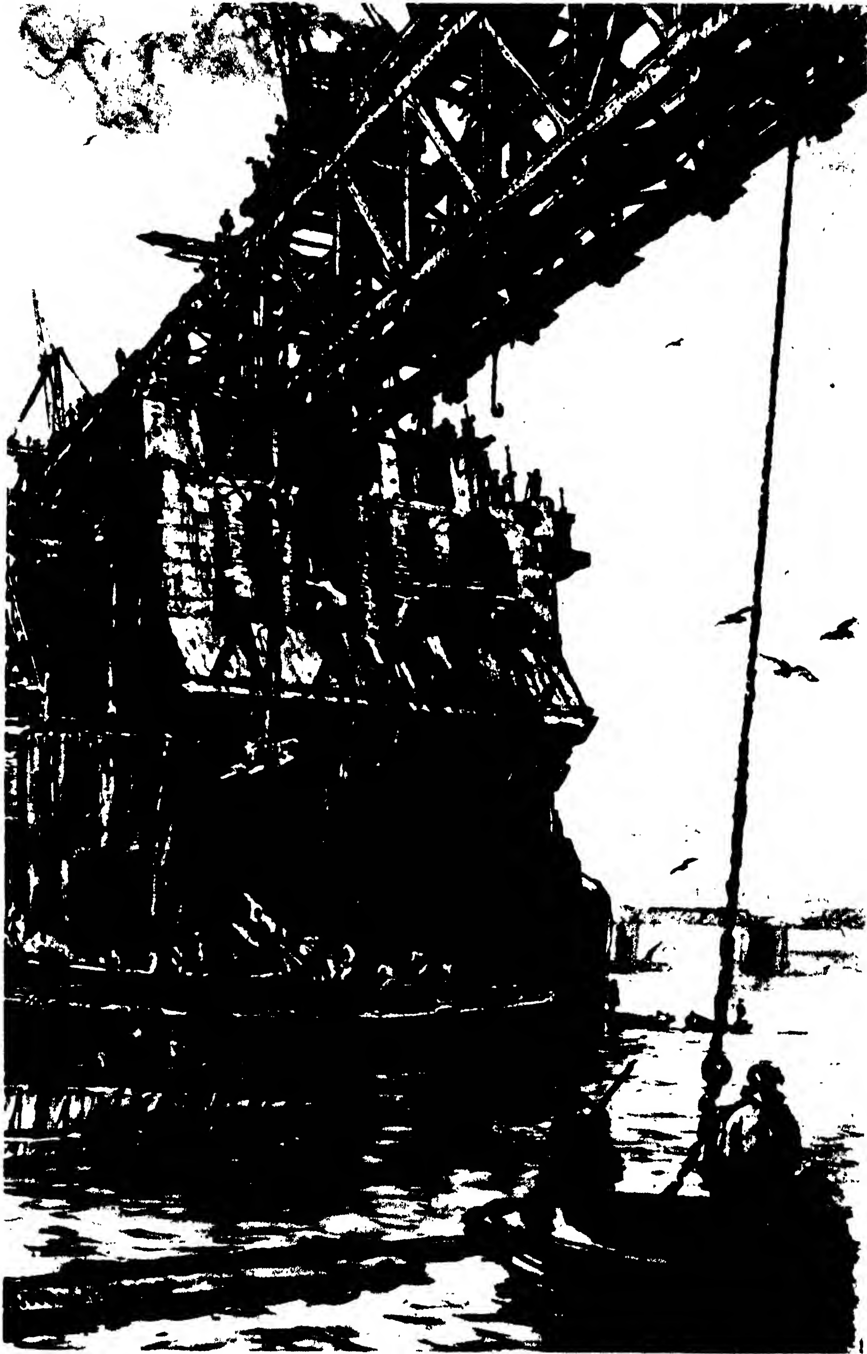
CHAPTER VI

Adelphi

LONDONERS have a way of staging a tremendous fuss over a nonsensical loss such as the departure of the elderly elephant Jumbo to America or such matters as the sale of a secondary Rembrandt to a country that has few and not rumpling a hair over the dispersal of its fleet of river steamers or the continual exile of Wren's Temple Bar to the country, or the destruction and disfiguring of the Temple trees by a Temple Committee whose conscience may have been troubling them because they had not the forethought to remove the great Crusader effigies from their Church and so they were destroyed in the blitz. London did make a fight for old Waterloo Bridge, one of its grander sights which could have been strengthened to do its work till a new Charing Cross bridge at the proper axial point took the traffic increase; but down it came. When the new bridge was opened it was also discovered from the bridge that big business had put up a building to ruin the view of St. Paul's from the north end of the bridge and the Government's Post Office department had bent the law to erect a building that interfered even more blatantly with the view of St. Paul's from the bridge centre. But credit must be given about Crosby Hall, the last of the great historical mansions of the City, which was saved (but alas not *in situ*!) by the citizens putting their hands in their pockets and ransoming it. The Adelphi of the Adam brothers, however, was too expensive for our financial conceptions in peace time, but there were no very loud outcries among our publicists or learned societies or sentimental Londoners when it was destroyed.

It was like nothing else in London: when the Adam brothers built their Adelphi it must have been like a piece of the Paris Palais Royal set upon Diocletian catacombs and subterranean streets that ended in quays on the river. Robert and James Adam's bold speculation of 1768 lasted till 1936. Coutts, the great Whig banker, rented many of its cellars for his strongrooms, threw a bridge across a lane to connect his bank with them and had a treaty with the Adam brothers so that his

'ST. PAUL'S ABOVE THE CITY RIDES'



DEMOLITION: WATERLOO BRIDGE

domestic rooms looked down Robert Street which preserved his view of the Surrey hills. But it was the Tory, sometime Jacobite bankers, the Drummonds, who had the last say with the Adelphi as they acquired the estate when the leases expired in 1867 and parted with it to the syndicate whose tall brick office towers were erected on the Adelphi site just before the Second War.

Its last days had something of the drama and public curiosity of its beginning. The public auction view days brought the curious from many parts of London, some to walk through the rooms where so many eminent persons had lived and died, some to see the Adam mantelpieces and ceilings and panelling and the strange underground dwelling and warehouses with their legends of secret retreats and passages. While the destruction was going on and the special apparatus to sink foundations on the old river sand were at work there was no sleep in the neighbourhood and even the Templars at night heard the long requiem tattoo for the old Adelphi.

A stone's-throw from the Strand, London's best-known street, the Adelphi precinct had a curious privacy of its own. It led to nowhere. Its tenants in its last fifty years were early-closing learned societies and businesses and late-closing Bohemian clubs, a faded Dickensian hotel, some old-fashioned residents, mainly actors, and romantic tenants whose wardrobe was said to consist of evening clothes and pyjamas. In front where the river used to run were the Embankment Gardens, closed at night. Save on the big nights at the old Savage Club, when the West End came to Bohemia, it had a forgotten and derelict look, especially when the two great hotels to the east of it, the Cecil and the Savoy, were blazing with lights. Stevenson clearly chose it for the setting of his Box Court and the Suicide Club.

The Savage Club itself had departed months before, but some of its staunchest members haunted the old quarters until the housebreakers' men, they say, removed most of them. The Club's last Saturday night dinner was a sad, sentimental affair. The big front room was so packed that the soloists had to sing in their seats. There was at the dinner an auction sale. The pineapple (presented by Dr. Livingstone in 1884) and a few other relics were sold by auction, the chairman knocking them down with the Club's big knobkerrie.

At midnight the chairman asked for silence. The lights went out,

the scratching needle of a gramophone could be heard, and suddenly voices from the past came through the mist of blue smoke — old Odell's quavering voice in 'We'll Welcome the Harvest Home', Albert Chevalier in 'My Old Dutch', Lords Roberts and Jellicoe (snatches from speeches), Charles Santley in 'Simon the Cellarer' (a member from behind the stub of a cigar impaled on a toothpick murmured, 'I accompanied Charles in that'), a selection from Elgar's 'Requiem' ended the Savage records. The lights went up. 'Auld Lang Syne' was wailed.

Time to go. The Savages spread into the Terrace. It was March but the night was like June, yet everyone seemed to be looking older although they sang snatches of song as they walked. So the Club went west, past the Athenaeum to its new house which had once been the home of Lord Curzon himself in Carlton House Terrace. And the ghosts of the Club's forty-five years drifted with them. The Club laureate had mind of them and in his menu poem that night had written:

> Where these dear ghosts we love the best
> Will know exactly how to find us.
> We mustn't leave our ghosts behind us.

In that 'Wild World of London' (to use the title of a semi-statistical Victorian book) there were many strange things, but nothing quite so queer as the 'Adelphi Cottages', under the Terrace from which the tenants were clearing out on my last visit there before the great demolition of the Adelphi began. The way to the 'Cottages' lay through the netherland of the Dark Arches under the Adelphi off the Strand. You went down the wide street beside the Tivoli and under the arch at the bottom, taking care not to stumble over the uneven granite setts underfoot or to get too near the sides to catch your head on the curve. The passage darkened and wound off in two directions. The descent was fairly steep. It was the way down to the little wharves on the river shore now covered by the Embankment Gardens.

Nothing was changed till its end in this London Cordova except that there were a few electric lights in these ground arches. Rabbles of thieves, ruffians and poor men and women and homeless children used to sleep in this shadowy underworld, and young Lord Shaftesbury

started his Ragged Schools crusade by taking his incredulous friends straight from his dinner table to prove his words about the outcast children as they huddled in these lairs. Dickens, when a child drudge at the blacking factory, haunted the Arches at meal hours. Sandwichmen used to rally there between their periods of parade, but later they were deserted except for wagons delivering and taking up barrels and cases of wine for the merchants who kept their stocks of precious liquors in these brick caves. The Arches must have fulfilled the darkest expectations of Géricault and Gustave Doré; both made pictures of the scene.

The way to the 'Cottages' was by a narrow stair in a recess in one of the passages just before it debouches into the open below the Adelphi Terrace. Unless you were looking for it you would not see it. The stairs led to a long, narrow alleyway, with doors on one side and niches and gratings into the areas of the terrace on the other. The doors led to the 'Cottages', which were not cottages at all but ten barrel-vaulted rooms, each with a large lunette window formed by the top of the arch, under which were the entrances to the cellars and the passageways of the region. These chambers were used as artists' studios and offices and nondescript residences, and three of them as a foundry and engineers' shop. This was indeed a little blacksmith's shop, with a practicable anvil and winches and all sorts of steel tools, where a locksmith and engineer did repair work for the region. Like everything in this furtive place, it looked a 'property' shop ready for the stage.

I recall in those last days of the Adelphi a visit to one chamber where a young artist and his model and a friend were pausing in their work to have a cup of tea. Works of art were on the floor, the barrel roof had patches of stain and damp, but the side walls were bright with drawings and posters. You expected one of the party to look out of the big lunette window — it has a flower-pot or two — and burst into Bohemian song. It must have been a romantic place at night, with the Embankment Garden trees in front and the hidden lights behind. Overhead, the gentlemen of the Savage Club would be getting out and in taxis and cars, but one thought rather of the old hansom-cab days, when old Odell was young and the Terrace was private houses from end to end. These 'Cottages' may have been part of the servants' quarters or storerooms of the terrace houses up above, and two of them still have little

stairways leading to trapdoors. The workshops were connected with the house in which D'Oyly Carte had lived, and once contained the heating plant for that house. A publisher used the two vaults under his house as a book store. The architect for the property thought that these rooms were as old as the Terrace and that at one time they were let to anyone who wanted to live in them, probably a shy lot of folk, for the accommodation must have been primitive. They would live in a strange half-world, with the homeless world below them in the Arches and the Olympian people above — Garrick (whose widow lived there till 1822), Robert Adam and their friends. Actually, the rooms were under the promenade in front of Adelphi Terrace.

In the cellars under the Arches there was much stirring then, hundreds of thousands of bottles of wine were having their calm disturbed and their molecules disarranged as they were taken away to new storehouses. Several of the big cellars nearest the Gardens were used by a great hotel to keep its champagne, stored in high wrought-iron bins, half-bottles, bottles and magnums. Barrels of port, too, were kept here. The temperature of the Adelphi Arches needed no adjustment, but was suitable and unchanging and safe for such a delicate wine so easily ullaged as champagne.

The strangest series of cellars rambled along from under a building near the Little Theatre under John Street, and under the Adelphi block, finally opening on one of the underground streets near the old river frontage. These were the vaults of Coutts's Bank, designed by the Adams specially for the protection of the family treasures and documents left in the charge of the bank. The Adelphi locksmith found in cutting doors through the brickwork in this part that thin bands of iron had been built into the brick walls to prevent robbers breaking through them. The vaults were connected with Robert Adam's handsome little bridge still in existence over Durham House Street to Coutts's old bank that is now replaced by a modern building. There were in these vaults passages and platforms, and stairs in corner turrets that led nowhere. Some of the cellars were lofty, with narrow entrances, and wooden stairs and ladders and hutches in places. Even with the electric light and the cheerful presence of the bins of bottles and long lines of wine barrels on great teak cradles the place looked uncanny, as though Piranesi had invented it after finishing his prison engravings. The workman declared,

'You never see brick groining like that nowadays.' Robert Adam, it is said, designed these cellars for the Coutts's so that in case of revolution or civic commotion they could move their treasures down the tunnel to their private wharf and get them away by boat to safer parts.

But that did not exhaust all the mysteries of the Dark Arches. Under the two streets that bordered the Adelphi on the east and the west were long vaults, so long that one of them was used until recent times as a shooting gallery and the other as a hall for band practice by an Irish Volunteer regiment. There was a cellar, too, under a building opposite the Adelphi Hotel where Fagin's kitchen was, they say, and a chained skeleton of a man was found — at any rate, when the Adelphi locksmith saw that cellar, there was a chain there, and he certainly knew about chains. That would have made the Fat Boy's own flesh creep in the Adelphi Hotel upstairs! A real hobgoblin place passed from London with the end of the Dark Arches of the Adelphi.

What the curious were most eager to see before the sale of the Adelphi relics was the two-floor flat at No. 10 entered from Robert Street where Mr. George Bernard Shaw had lived for some twenty years. The little wooden gate, with its grill of iron spikes and network on the stairs above the first landing, however, was shut to the public before the Adelphi sale as obdurately as it used to be in Shaw's time, when interviewers and American tourists knocked in vain. Mr. Shaw's Scandinavian housekeeper used to parley over the wicket and mutter final words as she went upstairs again. The rooms on the first floor Shaw let to the *Nation*, and the late Mr. Massingham used to pace the larger room trying to decide the exact adverb to express how discomfited Mr. Balfour or Mr. Churchill looked during a shattering attack from someone on the other side, while Mr. H. M. Tomlinson, occupying the small room next door, was putting literature to rights.

On the other side of Robert Street in Adelphi Terrace House (still existing) J. M. Barrie lived in the two top floors looking over the Embankment Gardens. The topmost had belonged to Joseph Pennell, that sour and talented American artist who denounced and endured London for so many years. Barrie and Shaw could throw biscuits and epigrams at one another from their opposite windows. It puzzled people

to guess how Barrie with his small domestic staff managed to give such parties on the scale he favoured, but somehow he did. At one party he dined about twenty leading Britons including Grey and Baldwin, with more notabilities to coffee.

But the party one likes to think of there was a small one, gathered to see from his corner window the searchlights sweeping over the Thames and an expected air raid. Thomas Hardy was staying with him in October 1917 and he and Shaw, Wells, Arnold Bennett and Barrie sat one night watching the strange spectacle. Alas, there was no Boswell there! All that Barrie tells us of it is in a letter where he mentions that it was an exposed place and after a raid he always found shrapnel on the roof! 'Callers who didn't find me in might have better luck if they tried the cellar.' His letters tell us much of the view from the Adelphi in his time. In one he says, 'I have never seen the outlook here so lovely as it is after sunset these nights. All the world is trembling light blue except for the lamps. Sad it is one has to say goodbye to it.' Barrie watched from his height the dismembering of the Adelphi and the new shadows creeping over his street as the gaunt new buildings went up on its site.

Every room in the Adelphi had a history as well as an Adam mantelpiece, and the inspecting crowd on the view days spread over the Terrace, their steps echoing through the empty rooms and passages, had a mind for both.

Rambling down in the lower row of basement floors in one house at the time I saw a door opening and an old lady coming out. 'Who's there?' she called. 'There's nothing down here,' she added, 'except me and my cat.' She was still living in her two rooms deep down in the under-basement. One room seemed to have been the old kitchen in Garrick's days, with the big fireplace covered over, one part of the room twice as high as the other, with a window near the roof lit from a shaft that ran down into the Adelphi Arches.

It was a queer, romantic room, with odd shadows, and it was strange to think of that old lady down there at night with her cat and her grandfather clock in the bowels of the echoing doomed Adelphi.

The Adelphi Hotel held on longest, as you would expect it to do crammed as it was with immortals. It was there that Mr. Pickwick

announced the dissolution of the Pickwick Club and his retirement into the deeps of Dulwich. It was there that the Fat Boy stuck the sharp instrument into Mr. Tupman's leg and brightened up Mr. Wardle's dinner party. It was the centenary year of the publication of *Pickwick* that London celebrated by knocking down one of the last two hostelries that figure in its pages. Incredible as it may seem, the Adelphi Hotel was at its end much as it was in Dickens's day. The first-floor front room had a four-poster bed and a fine Adam ceiling with little round painted panels in it, probably by Angelica Kauffman.

Some of the furniture in the best rooms seemed to date from the early nineteenth century, but, apart from a few Hogarth prints and sporting paintings, there were no pictures of interest. The place had changed hands several times in its last years. Its kitchen was down in the depths, a sort of pantomime kitchen, with early examples of kitchen ranges and aboriginal gas stoves. There were two floors of cellars and storehouses and dozens of flights of steps and doors and passages.

In late Victorian times the hotel was the rendezvous of pugilists and their patrons. Abingdon Baird, who spent so much money in prize-fighting, kept open house here, and always had a champion or ex-champion or two about the place. Incidents requiring the attention of the police occurred. Later, it resumed its position as a theatrical house, and up to the last, rehearsals were held by small theatrical companies in a downstairs room which on the last day still had a cupboard packed with stage scripts and records of theatrical societies, with lists of possible patrons, dead and gone. The Adelphi Hotel — Osborne's Hotel it was called in Dickens's day — got little attention from the guide-books. The keen Dickens pilgrims from the United States came steadily, but it had a forgotten look.

It was not till the autumn of 1936 that it closed its hospitable old mahogany door, with the classical fret on its panels. The entrance hall, the little rounded brass-grilled office where Dickens had often registered (without registering those permanent guests, who inhabit an Adelphi Hotel not made by hands), and the bar, where generations of actors and playwrights and musicians, sporting men and pugilists had gathered, had been allowed to remain, a little stump of the faubourg balanced over the great yawning of what had been the Adelphi and its Dark Arches now lying open and bare as Pompeii to the harvest moon.

The small office had its board with the keys still hanging on its pegs for rooms that had vanished. The rooms in which the King and Queen of the Sandwich Isles had died, and Crabbe had occupied in his turn, and the room whose key Gibbon had taken as he stamped upstairs to work on his proofs of the *Decline and Fall* were one with yesterday and the Rome of the Caesars. A dingy notice remained on the ghostly board: 'Room keys should be handed in at this office when departing.'

And so the Adelphi departed.

CHAPTER VII

Gentlemen of the Press

'GENTLEMEN – I give you the Press!' Before the First War that toast was drunk at many public dinners, particularly at the annual dinners of political bodies and societies that depended on the general public, and in trial trips of new liners or new train services. It was not so often or so convincingly proposed between the Wars, and in the atomic era there are few public dinners or rejoicings or toasts. In Victorian times papers were separate entities. No London newspaper owned the papers in other cities and the advantages and disadvantages of the syndicated press were unexplored. To appreciate the change that has come over the British press in this century one has to turn to the United States where, mainly owing to great distances, there are still hundreds of reputable papers, many of the first rank, with great importance in their areas and no control connection with one another, except exchange or purchase of certain services. How long that can last under air-transport developments is a question, but to appreciate the scope for local and national reputations running hand in hand we have to think of America's far-flung individual press with its apparently endless opportunity for the journalist of parts.

Even the seven London Victorian evening papers had, with two exceptions, no connection with the dailies. The new syndicated press centred in London brought high wages to all departments thereby laming the finance of the less prosperous papers they sought to acquire and making new papers too costly to start. Pressmen naturally welcomed the new journalism as it gave them higher salaries and by the featuring of their names and personalities raised them to a new prominence and status. At the same time the number of the London daily papers hardly increased with the vastly enlarged reading public, while the London evenings dropped to three. Throughout the country many journals edited by outstanding local men and groups with their own ideas and policies on national and local affairs disappeared or came under London control and much of the mental flavour and local reality disappeared from the British press.

At the century's beginning there was a big rush of young men from all over the country to the new papers in London. Shorthand had become no longer a first essential for pressmen. Big rewards were going to adventurous young men who drove hansom cabs or went to sea as stowaways or took a crossing-sweeper's pitch or spent a night in a grand hotel or a doss-house to get a good story for a newspaper. The interview gave new opportunities for enterprise and audacity. Arnold Bennett, in *What the Public Want*, and other satirists helped the public to apprehend the new spirit in Fleet Street. Legions Lawson never knew in the era when *The Daily Telegraph* tapped the widest popularity in newspaperdom began to buy and read newspapers and with the spread of young women earning money the new readers became millions.

The halfpenny daily press taught their established rivals much in broadening the human interest of their pages and in sub-editing, condensing and in technical production. There was a sharp division at first between the staffs in the new papers and the old. 'We'll try every possible trier once' was said to be the policy of one breathless new paper. But in course of time the London press became fluid again and men were moving back and forth between the old and the new. Many of the old dailies had succumbed or disappeared by amalgamation — *The Standard*, *The Morning Post*, *The Morning Leader*, *The Daily Chronicle* ceased as separate newspapers. *The Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Herald*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Sketch* sought to comfort London for the loss. But it is of the pressmen rather than the press that one is writing here.

In Fleet Street of last century, newspaper proprietors were little known to the public, but that was all altered as the Harmsworths (Lords Northcliffe and Rothermere), Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook), the Berrys (Lords Camrose and Kemsley) and the Hultons established their dynasties. Vast fortunes were accumulated in fairly short periods; quarrels and reconciliations, family clashes, captures and recaptures of strings of provincial papers, big deals with American syndicates set London agog and gave our novelists and playwrights new subject-matter and thaumaturgic Fleet Street figures laid to their hand.

But again my subject is not the London newspapers' overlords, but the newspapermen themselves, particularly the day-to-day reporters and special writers, and those who record the deliberations and affairs

of the Houses of Parliament, the experts on art, science, law, athletics, sport, stock exchange, the markets, motor cars, the North Pole, cross-words and the rest, including the almost extinct species, the Fleet Street 'liners'. To apprehend the range and inclusiveness of the press one may recall the experience of a young pressman travelling in a slow train one morning in the North of England and finding to his excitement a gentleman in the carriage jumping out of the train at each stoppage and rushing to the bookstall and returning discomfited for, it seemed, he wanted the *Daily Blank* and only the *Daily Blank*, and couldn't get it. The young man, a leader-writer, was excited for that was his own paper. Could it be, could it possibly be his leader on . . . ? At last, when the insistent man had failed at another stoppage to get the paper, he flatly asked him why he wanted it so urgently. The man replied, 'Why? — God, it's the only paper in the North of England that gives the full lard market!' Verily, in the kingdom of the press there are many mansions.

Reporters are to dramatists and novelists and to the public in general 'the press'. Until the press barons settled into the peerage, reporters were the obvious side of the press to be blamed and reproached. Most people had seen them at it and few had ever seen in the open an editor, let alone a sub-editor. To many young people, of course, the reporter's life on a big newspaper seemed as near an ideal existence as could fall to the lot of man. There they were sitting in the front seats of everything, from a coronation or a critical political rally to a stupendous boxing match!

You want the BEST SEATS —
WE HAVE THEM

is the slogan of the theatrical ticket agent's window. It might apply to the newspapermen. Many a man who once in a way has the money and time to get a back seat at a big event must have had strong feelings as he saw rather jaded-looking men file into the best seats and settle down with a ho-hum expression as the great ones of the earth appeared on the platform while the rest of the audience roar and cheer.

Ho-hum! out come our notebooks and we look professionally round, size up the audience, consult our wrist watch and glance to see if our messengers are in a place to take our signal. 'He looks a bit tallowy

tonight', one of us will say to another, 'probably he won't run to the column. It'll be the high moral touch and mixed metaphor tonight, you'll see.' The reporters know all the circumstances of the moment that surround the speaker and his subject. There are reporters in London who could write a speech, and a good speech, so like what Mr. Churchill, Mr. Attlee or Mr. Bevin might have said that it could deceive even sub-editors. One great reporter of the old school at intimate press gatherings would put his head through a chair back and make an impassioned speech in the manner of Mr. Gladstone speaking from a railway carriage in his Midlothian campaign, so fiery and rounded in its rhetoric and perfect in its mimicry that even Mrs. Gladstone in another room might have thought that it was her husband speaking!

It is indeed a humbling experience to most politicians when they are guests at the dinner of the Parliamentary Lobby or Gallery pressmen to hear their cogent, witty and finished speeches. Of course, that is not so much a surprise if they remember that Lord Hewart, Edward Clarke, T. P. O'Connor, J. C. Squire, Lord Merrivale and many an eminent King's Counsel were once in the Press Gallery. And Charles Dickens (like Van Dyck in Gainsborough's vision of Heaven) was of the company.

They are a mystic brethren, those House of Parliament pressmen, men of 'the Fourth Estate' as they were often called when the Parliamentary Gentlemen of the Press were toasted.

My first visit to the Press Gallery is easy to recall although it was many years ago. Except an assembly of seamen I had never seen a collection of men who, despite their natural diversity of race and individual, struck one as having so much in common, and that so deeply ingrained. It would be strange if it were otherwise, for the majority were men in their maturity who had spent at least half their existence in the Press Gallery of the House doing a particular duty which entailed a habit of life and poise, physical as well as mental, in an unchanging environment in an unchanging atmosphere. Those who reported from the Gallery or wrote 'sketches' of Parliament looked down on the House as a ship's officer looks down from the bridge, alert and experienced,

with their eye ever on the strain for the changing political weather below them. But there was this difference, that the Gallery man's eye was focused on a space of some sixty feet by forty feet. That was his ocean. On all his working days and nights he was looking down, and looking sharply down. Many of the company there at that time had focused Gladstone, Disraeli, Chamberlain, Parnell, Keir Hardie, Randolph Churchill; figures that had fought like line-of-battle ships and privateers and one day vanished like shadows. They had seen them in exactly the same space and at the same distance as they were then seeing Mr. Joynson-Hicks, Miss Margaret Bondfield and Jack Jones. To the old men peering down, did it seem like looking down at specimens through a microscope?

Then, the Press Gallery is a company like a ship's crew (have they, too, by chance, a 'pier-head jump' or two?) — working closely together every day, changing watches like a ship's company, acting and reacting on one another, talking professionally of the present voyage and Jonahs long ago. One almost sees the patent log aft of them as they watch and record and the ship of State sails on and on through new perils. How is it possible for this tremendously specialized, confined, and engrossing work, with its traditions and etiquette, not to leave its mark on its practitioners? Physically it does. No other white-handed class of men have this look of immobile readiness and concentration that Gallery-men have even at leisure. Beside them an ordinary journalist, with his diversity of work and the ever-changing focus of his eye, looks vague, even romantic. The faces of the Gallery men seem to be fined down to their work. If one may use such a phrase, their faces seem more closely packed, with a suggestion of beetle-brows, peering eyes, firm mouths, and firm cheeks, rarely running to flesh: an extraordinary appearance of definiteness. Accuracy is the reporter's honour, and the sketch-writer, too, who does not know his own mind (or in some cases his newspaper's mind), is in sorry case. Curiously enough, despite the one atmosphere and the one interest, youthfulness surprisingly persisted.

In the end I came away haunted with the image that there was a perfect Gallery-man somewhere whose image one knew well yet somehow could not connect with the Gallery. At last I remembered: beetle-brows, hard impersonal look, firm mouth and well-packed face? Why, of course, Rudyard Kipling!

Here one should turn with a bow to editors, leader-writers, the political specialists, foreign editors and correspondents, financial editors, war and labour correspondents, dramatic, musical and art critics and other high masters in journalism, but these would take a book in themselves and indeed have taken very many books. Let me turn rather to other artificers of the press whose work and personalities are less known outside Fleet Street.

Thinking back through the years one is struck by the number of quietly extraordinary men that somehow had come to Fleet Street, although the destination they had set out for in their youth was very far from those haunted purlieus. One of these was an Irishman who in his boyhood had smuggled into Ireland in a fish basket proscribed papers, printed by his father in Liverpool. Young Denvir also helped his father in hiding Irish-American Fenians fresh from the American Civil War who had come over to give a hand with outrages in England. His father was a devout Roman Catholic and an ardent Temperance man, a follower of Father Mathews, and young Denvir was brought up in an atmosphere of intense piety, Puritanism and defiance of the law. He remembered how the strange-looking Americans in their hiding-place in the vaults under a Liverpool tavern shocked them with their oaths and drinking, and how his father tried to convert them to total abstinence and to give up swearing, in the intervals of planning the blowing up of a jail and the rescuing of condemned men from a prison van. That must have been a scene after Mr. Bernard Shaw's own heart! Shy, serious, witty, learned and kindly, Denvir never slackened in his Irish patriotism during his long law-abiding years as a very responsible sub-editor in Fleet Street where he was liked and respected and much consulted by his colleagues. He shall not soon be forgotten.

Another idiosyncratic Fleet Street figure, also learned, kindly and testy at times, was Oswald Barron, who enriched the London press for thirty-odd years by a causerie six days a week, in the *Evening News*, an unhurried and discriminating feature. He was an antiquary of note and a bold as well as erudite authority on heraldry. It was a great joy to him when he was appointed Maltravers Herald and officiated at the Coronation of George the Sixth. Many a choice pedigree he upset. He had a curious personal humour which he blended with an orderliness of life, a passion for the formalism of heraldry and belief in the virtues of the

past in a way that made one think of the old Templars in Charles Lamb's books. I happened to succeed him in residential chambers in King's Bench Walk and soon realized some of the difficulties of adjusting his ways to those of everyday life. Barron had convinced himself that most of the evils of modern life were due to an absence of contact between the big companies and the consumer; he thought that they ought to get together and know one another, perhaps crack a bottle of wine together and have social meetings. He began by suggestions on these lines to a great gas corporation, but as they never replied he thought the shortest way of getting closer contact was not to pay their bill, and when they sent in the account he replied with delightful letters about 'getting together'. They were signed:

Your affectionate consumer,
OSWALD BARRON.

The only result, he told me, was that they ignored his invitations, threatened to cut off his gas, although he continued his mission by talking to the company's myrmidons with his chambers' door 'on the chain'. Ultimately they most unfairly managed to cut off his gas from rooms below, and that was why there was no gas when I moved into his chambers. He affected a very stout Toryism. Once at a committee meeting of a certain society someone proposed that Lord Eustace Percy should be asked to join the committee, adding that he was 'good on education'. 'Good on education!' ejaculated Barron much shocked. 'Why, he wants to spread it!'

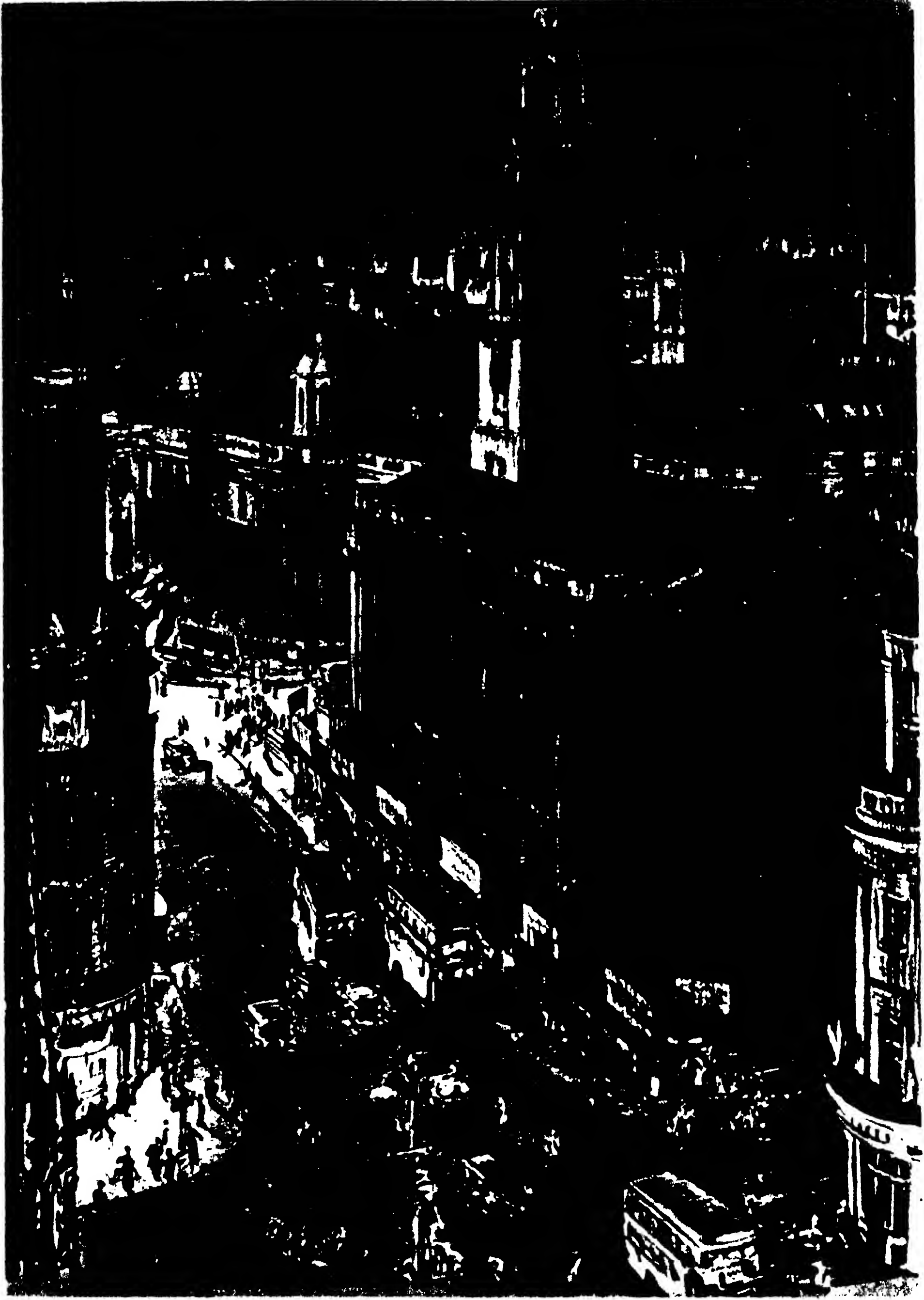
Olympian figures I recall, physically remote from Fleet Street, but nevertheless of it, in that they drew some of their sustenance and gave much of mind and admonishment to it, sat over the press. Such a one was Mr. G. W. E. Russell, at one time Mr. Gladstone's personal secretary, long his intimate friend. At times Russell was oddly like a figure from the world of Thackeray, an author he never liked for he would not forgive Thackeray's treatment of men servants. 'My servant does for me things no man should have to ask from another (Russell was somewhat crippled) and Thackeray thinks fit to jeer at men servants.' Dickens was a different story. To those who said Dickens knew little about society Russell asked where there was a better portrait of a gentleman than in Lord Frederick Verisopht. As grandson of a

duke, a denizen of Belgravia and intimate observer of two generations of Victorians, he had certainly a right to speak on the society of the period. 'Pickwick,' he once wrote to me, 'is the book which has given me most pleasure of all single books in the world. Henry Dickens (Charles Dickens's K.C. son) says I know his father's writings better than anyone now living and that I could reconstruct them if they were lost.'

Even at a time when the West End rejoiced in tall, heavy, rounded men Russell always seemed to dominate even the largest rooms, particularly the dining-room of the Reform Club, and he was perfectly in scale with the Whiggish Stafford House. His Jovian confidence had only been shaken by one thing which was that to John Morley, not to himself, was given the precious task of writing Gladstone's biography. As one who was so close in spirit with Gladstone's religious as well as his political life he had been sure that that great work would have fallen to him. It was a blow, and it had not come from his enemies, the Tories, whom he regarded with high scorn and derision. Disraeli's books, however, he knew from front to back and Russell partly forgave him for his misguided politics. In his youth, to the indignation of his father, he refused to hunt or shoot, and his whole mind was in politics and letters, the Church and social raillery. Like W. S. Gilbert and many typical Victorians he thought there was something humorous in an elderly unmarried female. Baronets, he held, were ridiculous.

Matthew Arnold was, after Dickens, his favourite writer, and nothing worried him more than a quotation from Arnold he could not verify. A testing incident once occurred. Writing on the centenary of *The Times*, I had ascribed to Matthew Arnold this quotation: '*The Times* is the Sancho Panza of the English Zeitgeist, always counselling, rebuking, warning, protesting — but following, following.' 'Where did you get that?' asked Russell, next day. I could not remember so I said at a venture '*Friendship's Garland*'. 'Not a bit of it,' cried Russell. 'It's not there. I edited the last edition of *Friendship's Garland*.' I was driven back to the *Letters*. No, it wasn't there; he had edited that, too. So the source had to be given up and Russell worried over this question for years and died without knowing. I think the epigram must have come from a memory of one of those extracts from letters seen in Sotheby's invaluable sale catalogues. When Russell died after writing for many

HIGH TIDE AT WESTMINSTER BRIDGE



ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS

years a Saturday article for the *Manchester Guardian* C. P. Scott thought Cunninghame Graham would be the best man to discourse on the English life from his different point of view, but that was not to be. 'I've as much money as I need now so I'm never going to write any more,' said Cunninghame Graham. It sounded like a cry of the heart from that rare puzzling Cromwellian Cavalier. So latterly Ivor Brown carried on with distinction the Saturday homilies of the journal on a different mental wavelength. Wilfred Scawen Blunt, who was of Russell's world and as anti-Imperialist, had his excursions into journalism but was content with long letters to the editor. Lord Ponsonby, page of Queen Victoria, who lived to speak in the Lords as a Labour peer, was another Olympian of the Left who enlivened this Saturday 'pulpit'.

It is fairly common knowledge that the long obituary notices we read in the press when the eminent die are not written on the intimation of death but are nearly always already in type before the event occurs. It may appear unseemly but to the newspapers it would appear even more so if breathless and inadequate estimates of such persons should have to be scrambled together, often late at night, to go with the morning's announcement. Responsible papers have their own 'graveyards' with an obituary department chief, usually a sub-editor of standing, whose melancholy and incessant duty it is to have such biographies up to date and ready, and even to be generally informed about any important person being on the danger list. Considerable sums are expended on these obituaries. A London daily paper, which began on the grand scale but failed to establish itself, was said to have spent about £9000 on its 'graveyard', most of which was afterwards sold to a news-agency. Many of those biographies remain in the files for a long time, and old Fleet Street hands know cases where the obituarist was dead before his subject, the dead writing on the dead. In the office when such a thing occurs the few that know of it feel very close to the Dance of Death! Naturally there is much secrecy in these matters. The obituaries are sometimes written, or the facts supplied, by relatives. There are legends of some obituaries being written by the subject himself, indeed Sir Edward Clarke is known to have written his.

Important personages, invited by the noble proprietors of the London press to honour their offices by a visit, sometimes have developed an embarrassing curiosity to see the 'graveyards'. Such a request is said to have been made by the Prince of Wales, who is now Duke of Windsor, when he paid a night visit to a notable newspaper office. His hosts were the more embarrassed when he thought he would like to see what would appear about himself in the sad event, and so on. It was hurriedly explained that most unfortunately the 'copy' had been sent to an authority to check some points, so the Prince had to content himself with looking over the photographs to go with his obituary and, according to the Fleet Street story, he discarded several in a somewhat summary manual fashion.

A Fleet Street friend of standing once gave me a striking glimpse into the policy and mechanism of this memorial matter. He was the guest at luncheon at a certain awesome club of an obituary editor and after the meal his host and he sat at coffee at a table with a good view of the grand staircase. Their conversation was desultory, his host rather concentrating his attention on the eminent figures that passed him. A high ecclesiastic, looking very satisfied with things, possibly cheered by a pleasant lunch and a glass of port, visibly shrunk as he caught sight of the appraising eye of the editor who was muttering, 'Don't like his colour, the left foot is dragging a bit — what d'you think, eh? Have to get our stuff refreshed, hasn't been touched for ten years.' Eminent statesmen and dons and donors and doctors, artists, historians and high Civil Servants passed up and down the stairs while the obituary editor, patient and discerning, watched and noted. If they quailed a trifle under his gaze that was natural enough. Appropriate honour, and credit, even at times judgment, would be given (possibly had been given) on each of them before their time came. 'The most lasting monuments,' said the good Thomas Fuller, 'are the paper monuments.'

In my early days in Fleet Street the liners and 'space' men were the picaresque heroes of the Street to the romantic young men then invading the press. They were of all kind and class, from the elderly barrister who as consul in a Chinese port had reached official trouble through kick-

ing a mandarin downstairs, to a cautious farseeing reporter of fires who drew his lineage on a Friday but before settling down at Peele's tavern for the night sent by the tavern runner a note to the newspapers he supplied with the words: 'No more fires tonight. R. R. R.' The barrister was a talented man of Bohemian proclivities, and one of the few weak points from a London Editor's point of view was that in writing of the North-West Frontier he always began 'Afghanistan is like an oyster that can only be opened by the sword'. Another occasional contributor had been a captain of Hussars whose life had strangely changed when, on leave in the Near East, he somehow joined and distinguished himself in Kossuth's army. He ran to rare languages and used to send to me long learned paragraphs throwing new light on the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum and surprising speculations on the unknown Etruscan language. Another plumber of deep waters was an ex-mate of a Black Ball liner who wrote on nothing but messages in bottles put in the sea from lost ships. He had worked out charts to show how many years you must wait to expect a bottle thrown from a lost ship off the Easter Isles or New Caledonia to reach port. A Welsh ecclesiastical barrister could always be relied on to contest any decision of the Dean of Arches, indeed to contest anything affecting that Dean who decided all the knotty questions about altars or sacrament tables or ritual ornament in the Church of England by law established.

There will never again be such scholarly single-minded liners in Fleet Street as in the Edwardian age. There will never again in Fleet Street be such a man as Captain Leonard Bell. A brilliant young officer in the Royal Engineers, he was touched by sunstroke in Malta, and although he recovered all his abilities he could not always co-ordinate them perfectly. He was courteous, independent, Radical-minded, jovial, sporting, learned and poor. To see him at his best you had to frequent the inner room in a dusty tavern near the British Museum where he and the military student of Etruscan, a Shakespearian pundit and a learned historian, an Icelander, met to discuss their problems and their liquor after the Museum library had closed for the day. Bell was a tall, heavy, blue-eyed man who had been a sprinter in his youth and his two passions in middle age were astronomy and the turf; he spoke six languages and a good deal of their argot as well, and he knew something on most subjects. I remember calling on him when he was

reported seriously ill in his lodgings near St. Pancras Station. He lay on a couch at the end of a long, clean, untidy room with three ancestral portraits on the walls, a silver race-cup on the mantelpiece and several high piles of foreign magazines on the floor. He brightened a bit after a talk, got out of bed, opened a bottle of Chianti, produced a guitar and sitting on a pile of Spanish papers strummed and sang huskily a Spanish song. The last of Thackeray's Fleet Street Bohemia went out when Captain Bell was borne to Kensal Green.

The most curious bit of his journalism was an article he somehow foisted on one of those weekly papers concerned with crime which were a feature of the workmen's Sunday reading before they and the great middle class became really engrossed in detective fiction.

In this article entitled 'Famous Crimes at the Royal Academy', he discerned that in all the 788 oil paintings in Burlington House in 1903 there was only one, namely 'Rosamund' by Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, which suggested a famous crime! Consequently the critic made heavy weather, but stuck at it for two columns. He wrote: 'there is a magnificent bust of Cecil Rhodes to remind us of the Jameson Raid'; H. J. Haley's 'The Engraving Apprentice' '(Will the intelligent and gentlemanly-faced boy ever forge bank notes? *Absit omen!*)'; 'Fred Morgan's "Hunt the Slipper" is a charming child study but the game is punishable if played under the name of "coddam" on licensed premises.' But these were plain sailing. The gallant captain got a little desperate with 'A Flower Service' by Percy Tarrant which 'shows the crime of robbing children of their sleep'; and 'Were we going to start a fraudulent company we should buy some landscapes for our office walls but would not like Mr. David Murray's landscape "In the Country of Constable" '. But although crime guides his pen, criticism would keep breaking through as 'This is not a picture we should buy for a whisky almanack'.

In an article defending gipsies on racecourses Bell wrote, 'A prosperous gipsy at Croydon many years ago paid me the highest compliment in his vocabulary. He spoke to me and of me as "Round and Sound" '. Captain Bell was indeed a grand sight as he came down Fleet Street, like a ship in full sail, when on his way to the American Ambassador's Reception on the Fourth of July. Grey tall hat, grey morning coat and trousers, white waistcoat, white spats, shiny boots,

neat umbrella and red shining face. How he managed it no one could guess. It was his one state day. I associated this one grand appearance with the letters he showed me from his old Washington friend, an octogenarian who had been a Confederate naval officer and later had seen service in the Turkish Army. When I was going to Washington in the early 'thirties the Captain called on me and for the first time there seemed a crack in the magnificent surface of the man. He had difficulty in coming to the point but at last he reached it. It was this. He wished me to call on his Washington friend who was, it seemed, a man of means and family, to give him his affectionate regards and 'well . . . well look here . . . well, don't say much about how things are going with me . . . You know . . . dammit he thinks I'm an editor! He hasn't seen me since we met in Malta, thirty years ago'.

One humble liner used to concentrate on the birthday anniversaries. His most ingenious effort was a paragraph beginning: 'Stealing quietly past the porter of the Inner Temple a thin shabbily dressed elderly man might have been seen yesterday making his way to the tomb north of the Inner Temple Church where all that is mortal of Oliver Goldsmith lies and there he placed a little twopenny bunch of violets. It was the — anniversary of the death of the great author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*.' Who was the celebrant? Why, it was the liner himself! Another of his best devices was a paragraph heading 'Strange Letter to the Premier'. It reported an extraordinary letter that had been received the day before by the Premier at No. 10 Downing Street. Who sent that letter? Why, it was again the liner! He deserved the ten shillings that was the paragraph fee at that time. Another unattached man did nothing but the arrival or departures of important or notorious people at the station or docks, another covered only funerals, another hotel news.

One liner raised a good livelihood out of the sub-soil of a single police court. He had a lightning eye for a queer case or an odd saying. His masterpiece was the reply of a witness who had been questioned pointedly where he had been for the last three years. 'Where I've been for the last three years,' the witness replied 'is nobody's business but my own — as Governor said to me when I left.'

Hail and Farewell to those Cadets of Gascony!

CHAPTER VIII

The Stunt Artist

THE new journalism that came in with its full-flared exuberance in the first decade of the century was most characteristic in its romantic moods when its full hustling pressure was turned inventively on some trivial and irrelevant happening or thing until it seemed the all-engrossing matter of the moment. 'The Stunt' as it was then called, the creation of the temporary important, found its way in time into its own little corner or into the discard but it ruled in its day many newspaper pages and many a naive romantic mind among the supermen and humblemen of Fleet Street.

Here is the story of an artist in the Stunt told by himself at the time one rainy day in a Lyons's teashop in Fleet Street, when waiting to give evidence at a case in the Law Courts. 'I came to London in 1900,' he said, ' on a half-promise from a sub-editor on an evening newspaper that he would look at my copy. I did all the sound things without luck. They used the agency stuff. One day I was in Charing Cross Post Office writing a letter to my father for money in order to pay the debt at my lodgings and return home. I had just bought a stamp and was about to put it on the envelope when I noticed that the large black Post Office cat sitting on the counter had its tongue out. I couldn't resist the temptation. The deed was done in a moment, the letter stamped. Something odd and piquant in the affair struck me at the time. I wrote a little story about it which the news-editor accepted. It was headed, I remember:

POST OFFICE NOVELTY
STAMP-LICKING CAT
OF CHARING CROSS

Do you know? — that paragraph brought thousands to the Post Office and the story travelled round the habitable globe. The Post Office girls denied that the cat was there for the convenience of the public. The public could lick their own stamps. The cat itself disappeared in two days, driven half-mad by public attention and the efforts by members of the public to get her to put out her tongue. But the Stunt was on the

march. Officials of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, of the Cat and Dog Home, and the Cruft's Annual Cat Show were interviewed and expressed their indignation from their several points of view about the mean and unwarranted action of the Government in their treatment of cats. Medical experts wrote treatises on cats' tongues, and their unsuitability for the purpose. It went on for three weeks and produced the provision of sponge pads on the Post Office counters. But it did not end there. My friends showed me from the news cuttings how the Stunt moved through England, Scotland and Wales. Many papers published leaders on the subject. *The Oban Times* drew a withering distinction between the tame utilitarian Sassenach cats that licked stamps on shop counters and the Highland wildcats (specimens of which can still be found in the Rothiemurchus Forest), and the article was illustrated by cuts of wildcats in their lairs.

'We traced the Stunt abroad through the press cuttings, and got so expert that we could tell when it would strike a certain country. It reached Australia, I remember, through Canada, *The Seattle Pioneer*, then *The Sentinel*, Newcastle, N.S.W. It reached Shanghai via Colombo, for the paragraph had the same phraseology with a Cingalese misprint. *The Melbourne Argus* had the Newcastle form, for I remember they called it a "coal-black cat". *The Melbourne Age*, however, had the Colombo version. The par had encircled the earth. A Viennese paper published the story long afterwards as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's account of "How I got My First Start".

'After that,' continued the journalist proudly, 'I never looked back. It was I who discovered the sparrow's nest in the Temple built with red tape. That had a good run, but once the Selborne Society had had their say, and Sir Edward Grey refused to reply to our telegram for his views on the question, we had to let it drop. I got a fair gob of work after that and ran an uplift correspondence through a dry summer on "Can a Golfer be a Good Man?" '

The Stunt Artist rambled on, drinking his white tea, talking of old stunts such as 'The Man on the Roof', and 'The Fat Boy of Peckham', and how news editors handle copy and the right way. The rainy November afternoon wore on. A chance word on Art in connection with Art Editors and net circulations set his mind moving on the finer things in Stunt work.

'You must have heard,' he continued with a far-away look in his eyes, 'of the great "Bacchus and Ariadne" Stunt? You will remember that Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" brought 80,000 people to the National Gallery; the picture had been sold to an American for £150,000. Soon afterwards the Venetian Room was opened, the pictures having been re-hung. Not many people, of course, came. Nobody knew the price of the pictures, and they were not leaving England. Still, it seemed a shame. The Gallery people were disappointed and said so. Now, I thought to myself—art can help art. I got my cue quite by accident. I noticed that the canvas of the great "Bacchus and Ariadne" was sagging at one side — near the lady. I inquired about it and the attendant told me a curious thing. This picture was affected by the weather. On dry days the canvas hung loosely; on damp days it was quite taut. The explanation was that the canvas has three linings and the mastic substance that holds them together is affected by the atmosphere. It happens in many old pictures and the risk of treatment of the canvas is too great to be faced. Well, there you had the raw material of a noble stunt. I swam to it and the heading was:

£500,000 HYGROMETER IN NATIONAL GALLERY:
THE TITIAN WEATHERCOCK

'That, of course, did it. Within a week there was a distinct channel worn on the floor from the door to the "Bacchus and Ariadne". Queues that extended half way round Trafalgar Square waited to get in to see the weathercock picture worth half a million pounds. (One of our headings was "Priceless Picture worth £500,000.") The "Blue Boy" record was outdistanced. Art lovers from all parts of the country came to see the masterpiece that could tell as accurately as a human corn a change in the weather. And the greatness of the stunt was this: people had to come twice — once when it was dry to see the furrow on the picture, and once when it was damp to see that it had disappeared. Of course the other papers were jealous as cats and tried to jump our stunt. One of them jeered about it being the origin of the Swiss weather-box, the gentleman (if you can call Bacchus a gentleman) coming out when it was wet and the lady (Ariadne) when it was dry. Two hundred thousand people made pilgrimage to the National in the first month. And that,' he said, turning to me with a proud, glad smile, 'is how art helped art.'

'But,' I cried to the Stunt Artist, 'it never happened. The whole story is preposterous. Nobody goes to see the "Bacchus and Ariadne" — practically nobody! Your story is untrue. It is true that the canvas does sag at one side, but your stunt never happened.'

'Never mind,' said the Stunt Artist calmly. 'It will. I have just been thinking aloud. I think I'll get to it.' He ordered another cup of white tea. He was getting on in years, undaunted and particular about his appearance, never carrying folded newspapers in the side pockets of his jacket.

There was a break in the clouds outside and a spurt of newsboys howled down Fleet Street bearing the secrets of the three-thirty. A little old anxious man came into the teashop and peered around. He had a white paper on his old bowler hat with scrawly writing on it. The writing said:

J. FERGUSSON FROM AUSTRALIA
LOOKING FOR LOST DAUGHTER

'Going to do something with the old 'un some day,' said the Stunt Artist. 'Sort of Dickens's touch somehow about him — Mr. Peggotty sort of style. But that's a sitter,' he said, after ruminating a little. 'All right for a young hand. But there's no real pride out of that sort of stuff.'

We talked on, gentlemen of Fleet Street, daffing over our white tea.

Discussing the come-and-go of Stunt work, year in, year out, the Stunt Artist told his tales. We were talking of the tendency of news to hit back when you took too great a liberty with it, and some instances where the stunt and the advertisement were running against one another were recalled. The subject awakened some curious recollections of his earlier days. One of these which had made a deep impression on him may be related as a sort of predella to the main piece.

'It happened,' said my friend, 'that after being in Fleet Street for some years in a semi-star position, I was sent to Liverpool to freshen up the Liverpool ship-news. One of our Brightest and Best had been over in America, and the ship reporters there had interviewed him. Splendid interviewing at the ship-side, he said, and all that goes to waste here.

So my job was to get good human interest stories, at least one a day. I tried all I knew, but the stuff wasn't there — nothing; nobody could get it. I felt bad. My second week was just as thin. Goodbye, Dolly Gray — the game was up. I expected a wire every night from the News Driver to tell me that *The Daily Blank* was through with me. I had fallen down. I felt so miserable that I even went to the Press Club there to find a human heart that would know what was hurting me. I won't deny that I got sympathy — and help, too. How it took shape I can't remember, but two or three of the lads were in it. The story was a sort of idyll of the old country in the new world. Very simple home-page stuff.

'A young man and a young woman were lovers in a Shropshire village. (It had to be Shropshire, for there are no large towns there and so very few resident newspaper correspondents; you can't trace down a thing in Shropshire, so it's the ideal background for a Stunt.) Well, the young lovers were in Shropshire. Times were bad. He went off to Canada to make his way and prepare a nest for his bride. At first, letters full of hope reached the girl. Things were going well. He was making money. Soon he would be asking her to come and join him. Then the letters stopped. No replies to her anxious trusting letters. What could have happened? She could get no news, and two years passed. She took up typewriting and office work, and latterly she went to Canada herself, where she prospered. One day she went to help in a hospital where there had been illness in the staff. And there, badly ill in a ward, she found her lover, a disappointed and broken man! He had had hard luck since the beginning, and his brave letters to her were only pitiful lies. Well, he recovered, and with new hope tried his fortune again. This time — in the real estate line — he succeeded. They married, and my story was of their happy return on a visit to their old village in Shropshire, and the rejoicings there. It all came out in a talk with the two on board the *Urania* at the Liverpool docks before the ship sailed.

'Well, that was all right. Great! The News Driver in London sent me a fine message. It was the real right stuff with the home interest, and the deep domestic note. Exactly what he wanted. A winner! Get one like that every other week and he'd ask for nothing better. Then came the sentence that hit me cold. "It's so good that I've arranged for our Montreal correspondent to see the couple when they arrive there to

get further interview about their reception at their old Shropshire village, and also a message on Imperial policy and the agricultural worker." That was a stumper. I saw the whole thing. (I've a ready imagination, though I say it who perhaps shouldn't.) The Montreal man would cable back that no such couple was on board, and that they had never been heard of. I would be fired. My God! I shall never forget those days of agonized waiting for the *Urania* to arrive and the blow to fall. My prematurely grey head dates from that time.

'The day arrived. *Urania* was reported at Montreal. Now for it. I sat up all night waiting on *The Daily Blank* in the morning. I opened it. Could I believe my eyes? There — on the main news page — was an interview with them both; the Shropshire man, now a prosperous realtor, as I had said, telling how real estate in Shropshire had gone down, as Saskatchewan real estate had gone up, but there was life in the old country yet so long as everyone pulled together, and so on. The bride told stories of the old people and the wireless in the village, and how the squire's wife asked her if she had many moose in her place, and how she wondered what the whole biling of them would say if they saw the Pink Tea she was going to throw when she got back to Medicine Hat, and the like.

'Of course, you see at once what had happened. The Montreal man, too, had to hold down his job. I wiped the sweat off my brow. You can't keep a good Stunt down. It's got to go on. That's the point about a Stunt.'

CHAPTER IX

Hotels of the Past

IN a street much visited by the pilgrims of the world, where 'Ye Olde' flourishes and advertises itself, where taverns, tobacco shops and even barbers' shops cry up their antiquity, and some of its most strident ultra-modern newspapers feature astrology, there stood till 1939 an ordinary-looking hotel, once rather showy in the late Victorian manner of brick, stone and granite, with nothing to suggest that it had any history at all. Yet if a licensed house has continuity of life Anderton's of Fleet Street was the oldest hostelry in that historic street, if not in London itself. It had certainly been in the business since 1385, and a landlord who died in 1405 left its freehold to the charities of the Goldsmiths' Company, which still owns the site and administers the income.

Anderton's closed its doors for the last time after five and a half centuries' unbroken tavern-keeping and innkeeping. The site was cleared just before the late war began and it remained a gap in Fleet Street. An office block is to be built on it, and probably no plaque will be put on its wall to commemorate Anderton's Hotel, or the Horn Tavern (as it was known till a century ago), as the plaque on Hoare's Bank commemorates the Mitre Tavern or that on Child's Bank the Devil, the Horn's old fellows in Fleet Street. In *Father Hubbard's Tales* (1604) the Horn takes precedence, for the budding lawyer is advised that 'his eating must be in some famous tavern as the Horn, the Mitre, or the Mermaid'. Thus it was the chief tavern of the street about Shakespeare's time, and his eager foot could hardly have missed its threshold. But there was not a sign or date on Anderton's frontage to suggest any connection with its past — no picture of the earlier houses in any room, no old copper bed-warmer, no framed waybill of the coaches that came to its door, no key-bugle or blunderbuss of guards, no old mugs, no tokens (and there are Horn Tavern tokens known to collectors and topographers), no letters of famous Elizabethans or Queen Anne's men who used the house. Nothing. Every trace of the past had been

cleaned away as carefully as other places conserve (or acquire) theirs. In the sale there wasn't a memento that the most sentimental Andertonian could contrive to cherish!

It was difficult to be sentimental about Anderton's, even when in the last days of the hotel one talked with Mr. F. H. Clemow, the landlord, who was born in the house and whose father and grandfather were landlords there before him. An old pewter tankard, not stamped with the name of the house, a discarded old turnspit, and half a dozen spoons were all the objects that Anderton's could show (but did not) of its long past. Johnson's house in Johnson's Court stood at its back, and Anderton's swallowed it up in its last extension, as if to destroy any evidence that Johnson might have visited the inn. The diarists were on Mr. Clemow's side, Pepys used and mentioned the Cock and the Cheshire Cheese but never a word about the Horn! The great printers worked within a stone's-throw, yet there is no evidence that Wynkyn de Worde or Pynson or Jaggard ever drank wine or beer or ate dressed meat there. Mr. Clemow, a tall, stoutish gentleman with the responsible, cautious look of a family solicitor, had no views on the matter. In his neat, businesslike office he produced, rather reluctantly, I thought, a little private jetsam, all the family store. There was a Bradshaw's Railway Guide of 1844, with an advertisement of Anderton's headed 'Notice to Steam Boat Travellers'. The landlord then was the first of the Clemows, 'Francis Clemow (successor to Mr. Harding)', said the advertisement. Lodgings were 10s. 6d. a week, dinner from a shilling upwards, breakfast 1s. 3d. upwards. The charges for liquors are given: 'Splendid Champagne 72s. to 84s. a dozen, Scotch whisky 16s. a gallon, cognac 32s. a gallon.' Claret, however, was '48s. to 84s. a dozen'. Another of these scanty relics was a bill dated 1849. Five gentlemen dined at a cost of 12s. 6d. for all. The *Illustrated London News* of 1882 illustrates whiskered and bearded gentlemen of the Urban Club partaking of their 'Boar's Head Feast' at Anderton's. The earliest record Mr. Clemow had was an announcement of a Freemasons' meeting, the Stewards Lodge, held at the Horn Tavern (later Anderton's) on November 16th, 1763, with Lord Ferrers as the head. Freemasons' lodge meetings had ever since been held at Anderton's. The lodge that is called 'The Builders of the Silent Cities', which consists of the War Graves Commission workers, met at Anderton's.

Fleet Street intruded only a little. The Whitefriars Club, over which Richard Whiteing presided for many years, brought literary journalists to it, and other secret societies held guarded dinners there. At one time, too, it accommodated an Acrostic Club, where tired Fleet Street men could drop in and do an acrostic when the mood was on them.

The cattle show at Smithfield, the Derby, the motor show, the Law Courts, particularly the Admiralty Division, filled the bedrooms of Anderton's with people from all over the land, but chiefly from Cornwall, Yorkshire and from Scotland. It was, I think, the last London hotel to keep the old custom of providing slippers for its guests. Long ago one used to see late at night a row of silent men in shore clothes standing with their backs to Anderton's smoking a last pipe and spitting meditatively on the pavement before turning in for the night. Those were mariners, witnesses in collision cases at the Law Courts, and the spry-looking man that looked after stragglers and kept suspicious strangers away was the solicitor's clerk in charge. ('Now, we'll have it again. What did you see when you came round the bend?' 'We seen the green light, sir,' say the witnesses with dazed voices. 'That's right — you've got it now — the green light,' said the Law. Then, they would all shuffle into the hotel together again.)

Much modest gaiety went out of Fleet Street when Anderton's Hotel closed its doors. For its last half-century it had been the host of a simple sort of junketing, dinners and dances and gatherings of a hearty and unpretentious kind that many did not associate with London, certainly not with London's most cynical and sophisticated street. Some of the jaded denizens of the Street indeed would sometimes turn into Anderton's of a night just to see happy faces. The people who thronged to the gatherings there were not of the sort that dine out every week, or every month, for that part. They came mostly from the outer districts in South London, and they came because they were members of societies of the natives of this or that town or district, or because they were canvassers of some popular careful organization, or had been comrades in some regiment or army department, or had a common interest through such sports as boxing, bowling, tennis, quoits, darts, or coarse fishing, or simply because of their trade. In many cases the head of a manufacturing company was celebrating something by giving a dinner

to his employees. I never attended the Monumental Masons' Annual Dance, but to see the name on the direction board at Anderton's made one's heart leap up; or the Prevention of Premature Burial Society's Annual Dance — if it was an annual dance, for sometimes the signboard did not make it quite clear whether it was a dance or a conference. Masonic entertainments of a modest kind filled the lobbies and bar with comfortable gentlemen nicely displaying gorgeous little aprons and chains and good-fellowship.

For many years the bar was presided over by a mature little lady whose blonde headgear towered like that of the royal princesses of the 'nineties. Her counter and the bottled reredos behind her were always decorated with flowers from her admirers, and she had a large autograph-book with inscriptions and signatures by the eminent of Fleet Street such as would make you hold your breath. Even today you hear old Fleet Street people say in bars, 'I wonder what happened to the Duchess's autograph-book?' She was called the Duchess of Fleet Street. Her heart wavered between a man with a pony and trap and a man with a conservatory. She married the conservatory and passed out of Fleet Street and not long afterwards out of life.

Graveyards make us meditate on the frailty of mankind and human hopes. In places where people have come in sadness, generation after generation, some emanation of it haunts the air. If it be the same with happiness, few places can be more haunted with that quality than the ancient site of this hotel. For nearly every other night in five and a half centuries people have been gathering there to relax and be merry. Surely some emanation of that will remain where the Horn and Anderton's stood? Will it penetrate the commodious office building that is to take its place? Will the typists in it be able, at all times, to keep their feet from dancing? Will the trustiest clerk always be able to keep his elbow from rising as he sits at his desk?

After Anderton's Hotel one would name the Tavistock in the Piazza, Covent Garden, for the same shyness of pedigree. It passed away about ten years before Anderton's. Few people outside the Covent Garden traders, actors, Australian cricket teams, Far East soldiers, and traders of

the old school, boxing men of the National Sporting Club nearby, and Bohemian eccentrics knew the house.

Like several of London's architectural treasures, the Piazza at Covent Garden was little known to Londoners and difficult for strangers to find. Although it was the only remaining fragment of the great arcaded square which Inigo Jones designed, it had somehow avoided the attention of the guide-book writers. Even when the fragment was swept away to make space for the widening of Covent Garden Market its end received little publicity. It was only the eastern portion of the north piazza that was original, the western part, which runs from James Street to the seventeenth-century house (once Evans's Supper Rooms), being a nineteenth-century rebuilding. The part occupied by the Tavistock Hotel had the original Inigo Jones arcade of brick with plaster cover, but the upper part had been partly rebuilt. The dining-room of the hotel, which occupied the whole of the first floor over the arcade, was a long, low room in three parts that suggested the great architect in the grace and dignity of its proportions, although there were no mantelpieces or panelling left, and the aspect of the house generally was Early Victorian. In the ground floor the look of a coaching hotel persisted, and the street buffet had on its worn old brass apron the words 'Cigar Divan' — the last in London to bear that inscription.

The Tavistock Hotel lay behind barricades of wagons piled with the fruits and vegetables of the earth. Covent Garden porters passed carrying on their heads leaning towers of baskets that reached to its first-storey windows. Strayed revellers from the Covent Garden fancy dress balls rambled that way in the early hours of the morning, and danced a measure or two in the piazza, just as masqueraders had done when Hogarth drew them there. For more than a century the hotel had been the London rendezvous for naval officers, and Japhet, in Captain Marryat's diverting book, stayed there. It had always been known as a bachelor hotel, but before the First War the rule was relaxed through circumstances connected with the earlier Australian cricket teams. These teams put up at the Tavistock, and when they brought their wives with them they persuaded the management to relax its rule. But it was till the end almost entirely a masculine hotel. It held to its old ways, and even the First War did not make it quite like other hotels, although it did away with the large Early Victorian bowls in which coffee and tea

TRAFALGAR SQUARE 'UP'

THE THAMES AND THE NEEDLE

were served in the morning to a burly and energetic type of patrons from the Market outside who were usually taking their lunch when other people were coming down to breakfast.

One wonders what became of the old residents of that picturesque and historical caravanserai. It had many bedrooms (some bigger than the chief rooms in the millionaire flats in Mayfair and twice as lofty) in which strange old gentlemen were embedded. The old gentlemen of the Tavistock had long been a legend in Covent Garden.

Some of them, it was said, never came out of their bedrooms at all except at night, when they walked about, sometimes visiting the National Sporting Club but usually perambulating round the Garden, poking the fruit and vegetables as farmers do pigs. What became of the old Crown Colony gentleman who had been there thirty-seven years, and, particularly, what became of his thousand collars, which he is said to have amassed in his cathedral-like bedroom during that period? He never destroyed or gave away a collar, but when he was tired of it, or displeased with it, he placed it in a corner of his bedroom, not to be disturbed. And so the mass grew, and it became a sort of article of pride with him, and no one was allowed to touch the low-toned pyramid. The collars were not in the sale catalogue.

Some other items did not figure there. There was, for instance, Alfred, the famous slim and lordly head-waiter, who had been there for forty years and remembered the early Australian cricketers and fine, whiskered men they were. He could remember Bannerman, Spofforth and all the other heroes. He could remember many famous Manchester gentlemen in the cotton trade, and a good deal about them. He could remember much more than he would care to say. Alfred was quite unperturbed about the end of the hotel.

One wondered if Alfred in the end went to some fine appropriate place where that old anemometer instrument connected with the vane on the top of the Tavistock to tell how the wind was blowing kept him company. One knew of no other hotel with such an instrument. It dated back to the days when the East Indiamen sailed from Gravesend and men of the period sat in the coffee-room watching the instrument for a favourable wind, and possibly dreading it, while they enjoyed their Tom-and-Jerry life in London. It was like a page of Hickey to sit in the coffee-room and look at that round dial. Latterly, it took half a gale

to make the vane move and the instrument register how the wind lay. There is one such instrument in a room in old Kensington Palace where William the Third could tell how the ships were going and coming from Holland, and there is one in the Board Room of the Admiralty where the Lords sat and watched it and wondered what could Nelson be after?

Alfred, the head-waiter, remembered an old retired P. and O. captain who used to live in the hotel and watch the dial, although with purely detached interest. Possibly he liked to see storms that he was not in, perhaps he liked to think of a fair wind down Channel even if he had been a steamboat captain. Japhet when he was in search of his father in Captain Marryat's tale held levees at the Tavistock, and must have known that dial. It was in this room that the Rabelais Club with Walter Besant, novelist and historian of all that was decorous, as chairman, held its first dinner, the Club being intended as 'a declaration of virility' in literature, and Thomas Hardy was one of the diners. Edward Fitzgerald sometimes stayed at the Tavistock but the Omar Khayyam Club wore their garlands elsewhere.

The eighteenth-century portrait of a gentleman in blue and buff, who stolidly regarded the hordes of small dealers at the sale of the Tavistock's things, was catalogued simply as a 'portrait of a gentleman — English school', but it was known to be a portrait of the original Harrison who founded the hotel in the late eighteenth century, and whose family held it till 1886 and his name stood till the end in raised letters over the entrance.

A portrait of a third remarkable hotel must be added to our gallery. The Ship at Greenwich was better known to novel readers than the others. It was blitzed in the War. If the Londoners again have the wit to make any social use of their great river — although there is no whisper in their new campaign for tourist traffic that they intend to do anything so attractively obvious, as revive the old riverside dining parties — the Ship and the Trafalgar at Greenwich should regain their old glories and the aged galleried Angel at Rotherhithe and some other fine riverside inns should be helped to blossom anew. Dickens, Thackeray and Meredith wrote of the Ship and the Trafalgar. In my time the Trafalgar was, so to speak, on its last bins, but its decaying grandeurs in ornament and scale and its sweeping view of the river were impressive. Only the Ship's site remains but that is superb and should tempt enlightened

brewers to launch a new Ship, well found for the opportunities of London's new era when a great restaurant can be as inclusive as it once was exclusive. Here is a sketch of the house written at one of the many times when the Ship was in shoal water.

'It was a heavy, foggy day, such as is occasionally completed in London by an east wind. I entered the Ship at Greenwich, the palace of Quartermaine. A solitary and sad waiter was on the threshold. The ground-floor coffee-room was partitioned off into two small apartments. In one there was a fire, and two — just two — little tables laid in the event of any eccentric Briton or foreigner straying that way. I inquired for Mr. Quartermaine. The waiter answered — as he would say "The whitebait are all gone, sir", — "Mr. Quartermaine died yesterday at three o'clock, sir." The Tory purveyor of whitebait, after a long and useful life, had watched the dishing of his last Ministerial dinner!'

This picture of desolation, limned in 1867 by the talented author of the *Epicure's Year-book and Table Companion*, was almost gaiety compared with the scene when I first visited the Ship in 1908 when after years of slow decay it had almost shut its doors. Its decay did not really begin till long after the great Quartermaine's day. Mr. Gladstone attempted to abolish the Ministerial fish banquet at Greenwich, but Lord Beaconsfield revived it, and its importance was so well understood in 1894 that Lord Rosebery chartered a special boat to take him to the dinner, having missed the regular service. The origin of the dinner seems to have been the custom of Sir Robert Preston, a Scottish baronet, to ask some of his distinguished friends to dine each year at his fishing cottage at Dagenham. Pitt found it inconvenient to go so far as Dagenham, and his host removed his hospitality to Greenwich. As the political character of the banquet increased Sir Robert Preston, while continuing to issue invitations, was allowed to contribute only the buck and the champagne. After Sir Robert's death Tory dinners were still held at the Ship, and the Whigs began the same custom at the Trafalgar nearby.

Descriptions and hints about these Ministerial dinners can be found scattered through the social memoirs of the Victorian era. Greville in his *Memoirs* mentions them more than once. Under the date September 4th, 1839, he writes: 'At the end of the season there is always a fish

dinner at Greenwich, the whipper-in (Secretary of Treasury), Ben Stanley, in the chair, and this is on the plan of the Beefsteak Club, everybody saying what he pleases and dealing out gibes and jests upon his friends and colleagues according to the measure of his humour and capacity.'

Notable dinners unconnected with politics were also held at the Ship. When Dickens returned from America he was entertained here by a company that must have been well worth joining — Captain Marryat, Barham, Hood, Maclise, Milnes Talfourd, Cruikshank, and Foster. Dickens, like a good Londoner, deals sympathetically but loosely in *Our Mutual Friend* with dinner at Greenwich. Thackeray gives the end of a chapter to a dinner at the Ship, in which Major Pendennis, Foker and Blanche Amory took part. From some old menus before me I see that the directors of the Westminster Insurance Company, the Sussex Club, the Cordwainers, Goldsmiths, and a score of other worshipful companies, the chief burgesses of Westminster, and several Indian companies were among those who dined at the Ship in the 'sixties.

The Ship's early history is obscure, but a coin of the reign of Charles the First is mentioned by a local historian on which was stamped a ship in full sail with the words, 'Ship Tavern, 1640', and some of the Lancashire witches are said to have been imprisoned in it in 1664. The last Ship was erected in 1846, in place of an ancient tavern, with a weather-board front and rickety bow-windows such as can still be seen today in a humbler form a little lower down the river. Its old front presented a look of genial pomposity despite traces of decay, but long ago it passed out of the dreams of London citizens. Meredith knew about these dreams, and put them in Victor Radnor's thoughts as he stood on London Bridge — 'And, besides, it is barely possible for our rounded citizen in the mood of meditation to direct his gaze off the bridge along the waterway north-eastward without beholding as an eye the glow of whitebait's bow-window by the riverside, to the front of the summer sunset, a league or so down stream, where he sees, in memory savours, the Elysian end of commerce; frontispiece of a tale to fetch us up the out-wearied spectre of old Apicius; yes, and urge Crispinus to wheel his purse into the market for the purchase of a costlier mullet!'

Let that be the requiem of the Ship at Greenwich, till it has a glorious resurrection!

After these requiems to three remarkable London hotels of the past one turns for a farewell wave to some others that once were household words in London. There was one, Long's Hotel in Bond Street, which Sir Mulberry Hawk must have frequented, where Scott gave Byron a dagger, and where art dealers arranged their major coups. And a wave to De Keyser's on the Embankment, near Blackfriars Bridge, where company promoters in Wells's stories baited their hooks for the City and where foreign gentlemen with astounding secret false information sought to negotiate with the Fleet Street milors and editors. And to Cannon Street Hotel, a gloomy smoke-stained hostelry where Leopold, King of the Belgians, lodged incognito when weaving his Congo deals. Then a sad wave to Charing Cross which since the First Great War has seen the Golden Cross Hotel (rebuilt immediately after *Pickwick* made it immortal), Morley's Hotel, every bedroom of which had its Bible; and to the Northumberland Avenue hotels, the Metropole, the Grand and the Victoria where American tourists hived in summer and Clyde and Tyne shipbuilders perched in their bickerings with the Admiralty. All, all gone! The hotel business has gone west.

Even the Cecil Hotel in the Strand where princes and maharajahs and American magnates stayed, and, night after night, thousand-sitter banquets were held, was sold off at bargain price and a big business office arose in its place. It seemed an uneconomical use of one of the best spectacular sites in Europe with its great view up the river to Westminster Abbey and down the river to St. Paul's, a place surely destined for the leisure hours of Londoners and the delight of tourists, a Venetian balcony of London! Even so, it was handed over to be a big business barracks of busy clerks and managers with their heads over ledgers and files. And at night when the view of that blue nocturne, London river and the odd and picturesque south bank, is spread before the Cecil's successor, there is no one there to see it — only drawn blinds or empty windows! It was the same when Morley's Hotel where Henry James, when a boy, and Gustave Doré stayed, was squeezed out of Trafalgar Square and that monumental piazza was left to official and business windows from which no child looks out. Only the faithful Savoy Hotel holds staunchly to its noble site reminding the outside world and the London citizen that London still has its great riverside inheritance.

The disappearance of well-sited essential hotels indeed calls for

inquiry. Why should there be only two hotels now in the whole of the City and if one of them goes there will be no place in the City to bed an Old Bailey jury! Why should hotels be driven out of the most appropriate sites in the middle-west and only business barracks installed there? Why should the Westminster Palace Hotel in Victoria Street near the Houses of Parliament, for instance, have gone? That seemed indeed an indispensable house; a meeting-place of national and industrial peacemaking which our laureates and dramatists and novelists so curiously overlooked. It was the headquarters of the Miners' executives — the meeting-place of joint conferences in troublous times. Here the Scottish minimum rate question was negotiated to a settlement and many Mines Regulations threshed out. The Engineers Strike of 1897-98 was settled in it, and before Transport House arose almost all the Unions had London headquarters in it. Being close to Parliament and the Government offices, it was the most convenient of all hotels for industrial negotiations. History had touched it many times. A plaque in its wall recorded that in 1867 the Canadian delegates framed the Act of Union 'under which all British North America except Newfoundland is now united under one Government as the Dominion of Canada'. Yes, that Palace of Peace deserves a bow and a wave. Like the Cecil it ended through circumstances that fall on a highly organized hostelry taken over for Government offices in a long war, its contents decayed by years in storage, its expert staff scattered and gone.

And there should be a final salute to the Alexandra Hotel, that prim hotel of suites in Knightsbridge with its stiff, frail Ouidaesque air, which was shockingly bombed in the war. It was probably the very last hotel where country people still came up 'for the season'. And salute to the Langham Hotel — now an office block — whose huge, unwieldy building still stands like an overdressed hall-porter at the entrance to Robert Adam's stately Portland Place. Mark Twain held a sort of court at the Langham and it gave strong-walled boudoirs to diva and basso profondo who sang over the way at Queens Hall.

Before leaving the hotels there must be a word about Claridge's as London's oldest reigning hotel, although this chapter was intended as a record of the houses of the past. Claridge's reached its centenary forty years ago. In Victorian times almost every royal personage who visited London and was not a guest of the Sovereign resided at Claridge's,

which never disturbed its lofty existence or made any effort to improve its mediocre cuisine on their behalf. Modern Claridge's worked on different lines but preserved as far as practicable its old traditions and arranged private entrances and staircases for Royalties on travel. Old Mr. Claridge watched carefully over the privacy of his guests and would not allow, although an admirer of his art, an eminent caricaturist to stay and practise in his hotel. The incident suggests a very different state of affairs from now, showing Claridge's then exclusive of caricaturists, and important people then uneager to be caricatured! Archbishop Temple had a story that when in 1846 the Pope was rumoured to be thinking seriously of taking refuge in England, Mr. Claridge had remarked that he was so full up with kings and royal dukes he could not provide proper accommodation to His Holiness, but then 'as His Holiness was, of course, a bachelor, he might not need so many rooms!'

CHAPTER X

Taverns and Chophouses

THE old City chophouses and taverns in the Bank region hardly exist now outside the after-dinner musings of the elderly. Few of them remained after the First World War for the citizens were leaving the City at night to the rats and the lamplighters, and the houses of entertainment have to live on luncheon profits and faithful drinkers. The ebbing of the licensed hours hit them worse than it did the rest of London and it increased the early homeward tide. Lonely policemen indeed inherited Mark Lane.

One of the first to go in this century was the Albion, that greatest repository of serious City junketing; the City Corporation banquets were often held there as well as the Sheriffs' inauguration dinners and many City Company festivals. Farewell dinners given by the East India Company to the Governor-General of India were partaken at the Albion. One dinner given by a gourmand Victorian Alderman cost about £30 a plate, and many were tabled at £10 before canned foods made rareties cheaper. The Albion was a square dull building in Aldersgate Street where they had formal graces before meals but none to accompany them. Birch's, which still survives elsewhere — its precious little green shop in Cornhill is now in South Kensington Museum — has a rather different story although it has been in the Aldermanic tradition for two and a half centuries (since 1836 with Ring and Brymer, its present owners) and had a little royal crown in its window, a relic of the decorations at the opening of the Royal Exchange by Queen Victoria. Birch was Lord Mayor in the year before Waterloo. He was a pastry-cook and Birch's have always had a leaning to pastry with a famous orange jelly and a three-decker jam sandwich that was classed A.1. by the seniors at Lloyds down the street. At really big dinners they tabled four 'pâtisseries montées'. Whisky jellies were eaten at the counter. There is a story of a careful young artist from the north seeking his fortune who had fixed one shilling and sixpence as the amount of his food expenditure each day. He was prowling in the City and, seeking

a humble meal, his eye was caught by the small eating-house with sawdust on the floor, and he noticed 'Soups' on a lozenge in the window. The very thing! He would have soup and bread. He went in, was directed upstairs and sat down in a plain room and ordered soup and bread. A waiter, dressed rather like a scene-shifter, brought the soup. The metal soup-plate surprised him but he didn't know it was Sheffield plate nor did he know that it was turtle soup he was supping, but he liked it so well he had a struggle with himself not to order a second plateful. His next surprise was the reckoning. He never went to Birch's again till he was a Royal Academician. Birch's always had lady customers and a special lady's room where elderly widow annuitants after drawing their quarterly portion at the Bank of England over the way solaced themselves with a plate of turtle soup and a glass of Madeira.

The George and Vulture also survives, or at least half of it does, for ancient City men have told me that it extended to both sides of the entry leading to Lombard Street. But here is the eternal quiz. When month by month *Pickwick* by the rising young author Charles Dickens was appearing, the proprietor, waiters and patrons of the George and Vulture were reading how Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller and the rest of those vital customers were using their very house and likely to be there any day, what did they do about it — what did they say about it? No modern author ever thinks of setting his characters in a small, well-known house of entertainment, although he may place an episode in one. One could imagine the chief lunchers at the George and Vulture looking up when a stranger entered. And the badinage — 'Looks to me like Pickwick. Yes, you sir!' and the like. But we do know that in 1836 the George and Vulture had a 'Circulating Book Society', composed of the patrons of the house, and when *Pickwick Papers* in its monthly parts was the talk of the town it was proposed that it should be taken in for the Society. But the George and Vulture solid men took the view that the masterpiece was 'vulgar' and it was decided not to take it, although it was agreed that it should be obtained when published in book form.

How long the George and Vulture, how long any of the taverns and chophouses in the middle of the City will be allowed to remain, lies on the knees of the bankers. Most of them are now on ground acquired by the banks and figure in their plans 'For Extension of Premises'. When respectfully admiring the green verdite columns, Siena marble mantel-

pieces, Roman mosaic floors and Irish glass candelabra in the bank palaces one often wonders whether it would not really be a farseeing policy for the banks to keep in existence as humane decorations to interest their clients much more than these expensive embellishments, such historic and redolent little London landmarks as the George and Vulture, Simpson's off Cornhill and one or two other such survivals. The Bank of England had a garden and a grand tree within its walls to its credit, although the valuation of land there is about £45 a square foot. Soon after giving up this hostage to humanity the Bank was nationalized. Let the banks with a fiat of life and death over historic easeful places ponder over that!

Does not indeed something rare, indigenous and precious go from the heart of London City when such a place as the Pickwick shrine vanishes? To hundreds of thousands of ordinary people from all over the country the London of Dickens is a warm part of their conception of London and the sight of such a veritable piece of it, no, not in a Museum but going on with its business, is a surprising joy. It is so, too, to our American visitors who will find two-thirds of London's old Baedeker sights destroyed or ruined by Baedeker's countrymen, and that much of the savour of the London their fathers knew has gone. One remembers the patient queues of American tourists, mainly women, waiting to enter the Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street, and most of those ladies were teetotallers to whom the Bacchic side of that relic did not appeal at all.

Those who have taken American visitors down the river to share the dusky Whistlerian pleasures of a visit to such ripe old balconied inns as the Angel at Rotherhithe, or the Prospect of Whitby at Wapping, know what sights of London would be best described and most listened to in Baltimore and Cleveland. It would really be worth the most energetic consideration of the British Council or the Pilgrim Trust to take a hand in safeguarding the future of these few curious evocative little places that are among the everyman tourist sights of London. Let some actuary work out their potential value as tourist magnets in the century to come. And set that against the tourist value of our bank buildings' decorations.

Another sort of City tavern, humbler and more intimate, with no

particular tourist value is also fading out, or changing character, as the big breweries take control and standardize them after their own multiple pattern. The Fleet Street quarter had many of those independent or semi-independent houses. When their adherents muse about them their thoughts turn to the farewells there when this or that old landlord or landlady departed and a tradition snapped. Such a house, for instance, was the Red Lion, in a Fleet Street court.

It was a family house run by Mr. McDonald with his wife and daughters, and his customers were workers in the printing trade and journalists, making a sort of family party that must have had resemblances to that of the taverns there when Johnson lived nearby. The Red Lion was, till a 1941 air raid, in a congested neighbourhood; after that horror it stood almost alone with ruins around it. 'You're seeing more daylight now than you've seen for years,' said a consoling patron to Mrs. McDonald. 'That's right,' said Mrs. McDonald, 'but it will be colder in winter-time.' The landlord had once been a Fire Brigade man and in the big raid he had fought hard for his house and helped to save it. A man of substance, not a brewer's employee, he had, till the war, rows of fine York hams hanging from the ceiling in his bar and men of taste came distances to discuss and eat them. Upstairs were hung cases of stuffed fish caught in the rivers and ponds round London, and you could lunch very well there and hear good talk of coarse fishing. A *Baltimore Sun* cutting which hung framed in the bar had told the United States about the Red Lion under the heading 'The Unofficial Peace Palace'.

The patrons of the house presented Mr. McDonald on his departure with a silver salver swirlingly engraved with their names by one of themselves, a copperplate engraver. The landlord was leaving because he and his wife were getting on in years and could not get the help to run the house as he thought it should be run. That day his moustaches had been trimmed like horns but he was too affected to reply to the presentation speech. He had always stood by his regulars in those difficult days. 'I can't let down my regulars,' he had said, and he served them with what he could at cost price. But the task had been too much for his reduced family. So he was retiring, his patrons said, to breed goldfish and grow mushrooms down Chingford way.

He took with him a stuffed nine-pound trout caught in Loch Leven,

the American newspaper cutting and a wonderful clock which strikes the Bow Bells and the Westminster Chimes. The clock was to have been delivered at a popular bank the very day the bank suspended payment, so the clockmaker, a customer, all shaken by the disaster, sold it to Mr. McDonald for £100. The host took also the good wishes of an old and worthy part of Fleet Street craftsmanship.

Then there was the parting at the Bell in Fleet Street. There the old parish character of the Street came out even more strongly. A staunch and thirsty body of parishioners in 1946 gathered at the inn to say goodbye to Mrs. Nellie Bear who had been its landlady for forty years. Its back room shaded by the trees of St. Bride's Church had been the haunt of journalists and printers for generations. Possibly Wynkyn de Worde had drunk his ale there in the old house before Wren, as tradition says, rebuilt it for his workmen when they were erecting St. Bride's after the Great Fire. Izaak Walton who lived near must have known it. Pepys who was born round the corner — on the site of his birthplace is a tavern called The White Swan (recalling the cautionary poem which he set to music 'Gaze Not on Swans') — and came often to St. Bride's, must have had his morning glass at the Bell. A large rusty bell which till recently surmounted the inn's red tiles commemorated the bell that was rung at the end of meal-times to summon the St. Bride's workmen back to their task. Whatever the reason, it was a house of meeting for London Church bellringers and the venerable Society of College Youths still has gatherings in it, while a great bellfounder whose house made bells for ships that fought the Spanish Armada still on occasion goes there.

Mrs. Bear used to start her work in the morning before eight when the brewers' drays arrived, and the house closed half an hour after midnight. She and her niece — presentations were made to both by the regulars — kept the house open all through the raids and never closed during licensed hours even when St. Bride's was all in blaze and smoke — the Church is now a shell. Mrs. Bear was married in St. Bride's and her six children were christened there. Her five sons were all in the Services.

The region has other striking and idiosyncratic landlords and landladies of taverns with traditions. There is the Clachan, a Scots house that used to have the unlikely adornment of a bust of Dr. Johnson in the bar. Upstairs, a secret Scottish fraternity of writers and pressmen

used to sup. Pipers would play in the little court if the policeman was sensible, and at one time it was the only place in London where a Scot could change a banknote of his country after banking hours. Another public house in Fleet Street had, like Mr. McDonald's house, the name of the Red Lion. One end of the counter by consent became a sort of quarterdeck where the staff and supporters of the *London Mercury* met and discussed affairs, J. C. Squire (not yet Sir John), Hilaire Belloc, J. B. Priestley, Edward Shanks, Bohun Lynch, Bevan Wyndham Lewis, J. B. Morton, Vernon Bartlett were the chief figures. One favourite member of the group died and his friends decided to produce a book to help his dependants. Twenty men agreed to write stories and sketches. No plan was laid down. When the book was produced it was found that about half of the authors had had the bright idea of writing about the Red Lion and calling it the 'Compositors' Arms', which was its folk-name, dealing with the talk and rencounters there! Nevertheless the book sold well and brought some succour to a needful family.

Then, there is The Cock. It is on the southern side of the Street now, but it is the same business with the Grinling Gibbons carven cock and a grotesquely carved mantelpiece, old crowded pews and some of the other relics of The Cock that Pepys frequented and where Dr. Johnson entertained divine company and where ministered the Plump Head Waiter of whom Tennyson wrote. The Cock moved south when its site and many other sites were required for the building of the new Royal Courts of Justice. There was indeed a plump head-waiter upstairs forty years ago, a worthy successor of Will Waterproof's. He had been a choir boy and took a real interest in the singing of the Temple choir and a pride in his house. 'Cheshire Cheese, sir? Yes, some say it's a good house. But the linen, sir' — Henry stroked the tablecloth with his well-kept fingers — 'the linen, well you wouldn't like it, sir.'

Time came with the vicissitudes of ownership when The Cock was not doing itself justice and Henry suffered tortures: 'Serving port, sir, in a tumbler, . . . well I'm not used to it. Coarse glass, too! I can't go on, can't go on. It's not right!' As the result of 'words' Henry got his notice. He said nothing to anyone but the Templars heard of it and drew up a memorandum to the new proprietors. If Henry went they would come no more to The Cock. The management yielded but Henry could not bear the new ways. He became lachrymose and

settled in Torquay. Downstairs was Sidney, a strong, stringy character, grim as Henry was cheerful. One remembers how when a volatile customer had changed his mind and said he would not have the mackerel he had ordered, Sidney marched to the kitchen entry with a hand raised and declared: 'Keep back the mackerel!' in an intonation like that of 'They Shall Not Pass'.

The old taverns are still rich in character among their staff. It was in one ripe City house with screens of corks from champagne bottles that had popped in some forgotten Stock Exchange boom that the most inclusive toast ever drunk was given by the head barman, acting as temporary manager, one Christmas Eve. Near closing hour he filled all the glasses of the people in the little lunch bar and himself proposed a toast, 'Here's to all the people in the world,' he cried, 'who are in this bar tonight! And here's to all the people in the world who are not in this bar tonight!'

There survives, too, in Fleet Street a wineshop of character with a rare atmosphere of hush. This quality exists, of course, in houses frequented by racing men who seek to mislead one another as to which horse is practically certain to win this or that great race, but at this wineshop horse racing is only incidental. The hush comes from the quality of the management and its clients. No Lord Mayor, even Sir Richard Whittington himself, could ever have conducted with more aplomb and dignity a session of the Common Council than its stately manager presides over the long bar and sedate parlour of his house. Lawyers, even K.C.s, the upper fry of journalism, particularly its management side, with an occasional starry figure, even a foreign king or a crown prince have been discerned at these little round tables. Mainly the customers are the 'executives' of journalism and of the film-script and the publishing world who find their clubs too far away from Fleet Street or incompatible with the business in hand. It is a curious little island, this wine-house, inheriting a pregnant side of Fleet Street's past.

The landlords, waiters and drawers, barmen and barmaids and pannier boys of Fleet Street — what a body of witnesses they must be on Judgment Day as they give their evidence on the press through the ages, from Wynkyn de Worde and Defoe's pamphlet printer on to the *Television Times*!

Let me here recall two of the last minstrels of Fleet Street, stragglers

of a long vociferous tuneful company. The two were known as 'Melody and Harmony' and they played and sang at tavern entrances, one foot unobtrusively keeping the swing-door open during their performances. Once upon a time they, like their predecessors, were welcomed into the taverns but in these enlightened days, the magistrates and brewers discourage such distractions from serious drinking. So only on Christmas Eve and Lord Mayor's Show nights were these Sons of Apollo admitted even to the Public Bar! Melody was a short, stout, earnest, cherry-faced musician who played the guitar and sang the solos, Harmony, long and saddened, played the violin and sang in chorus. They gave their patrons 'Red Sails at Sunset,' 'Two Lovely Black Eyes,' 'The Bonny, Bonny Banks' and 'Roll out the Barrel' and, when asked for an up-to-dater, Melody would say 'Well, we'll do it, but I'll have to la-la the words.' He had wit. Once when counselled to do really high-class stuff as the music-critic, Neville Cardus, was of the company and everyone wished the twain to do Fleet Street credit, little Melody spoke up. 'M'yes,' he cogitated, 'how would you like one of Beethoven's "*Tomatoes*"? Or, Shoolbred's "*Unfurnished Symphony*"? Or, would you like us to give you Mendelssohn's "*Gin Song*"?' Melody and Harmony passed out of Fleet Street during the Second War leaving the Street thinner and duller and more efficient. Some said that they were making big money in the high-up West End cabarets; others that Melody had passed out suddenly from this world he had tried so hard to cheer, and that his ruddy countenance had been a sign of something quite other than health and jollity.

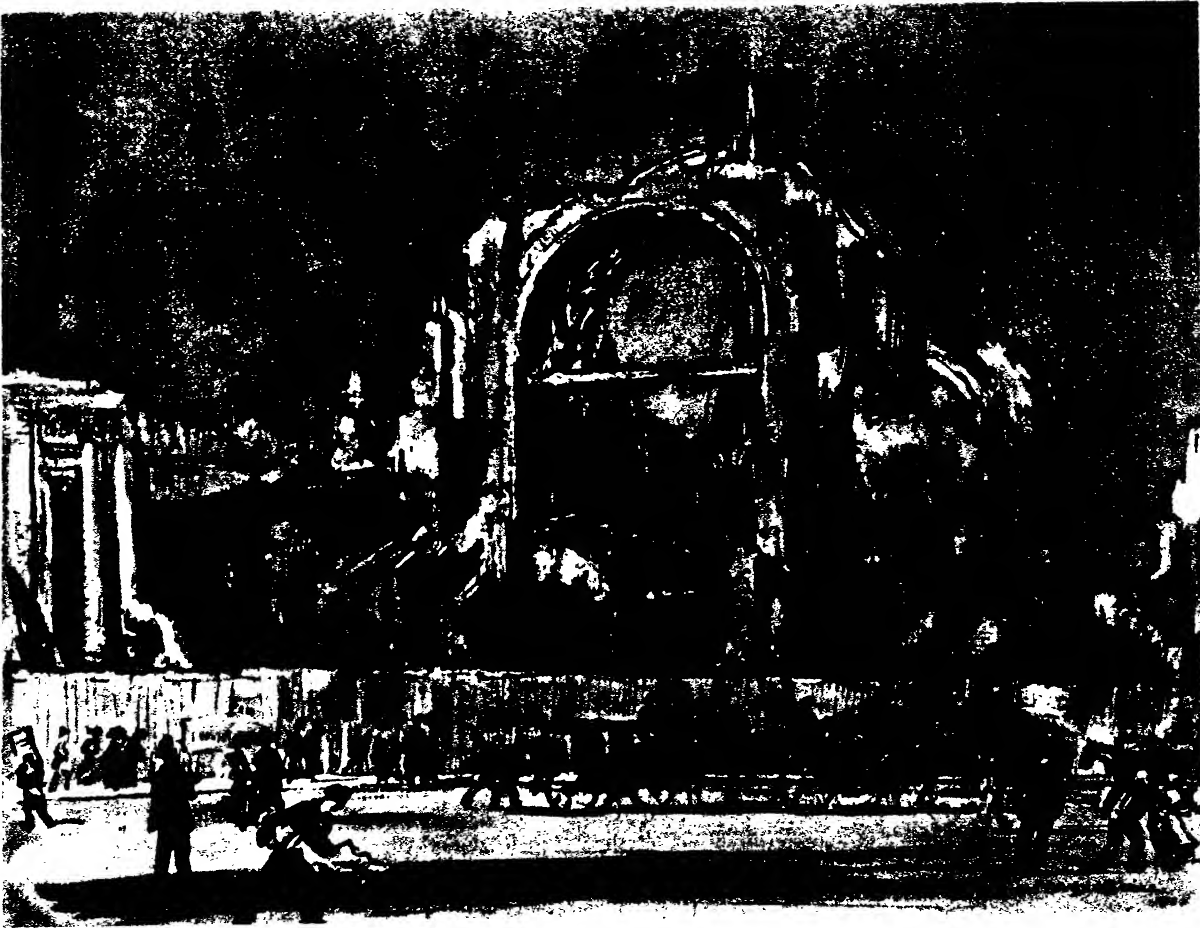
It is only in Fleet Street that all the memorial tablets commemorate the sites of taverns. One eminent bank proclaims that it is on the site of the Devil Tavern, another that it is on the site of the Mitre Tavern, while Clark's Commercial College honestly announces that it is on the site of the Red Lion Tavern. Small wonder if Fleet Street is a somewhat thirsty place!

But before leaving the Square Mile of the City, or rather before leaving its spirit of Lord Mayordom, a word is called for on the minor Lord Mayor's Show that is held in a tavern near the Law Courts and is known only to the few. For nearly half a century now the coachman

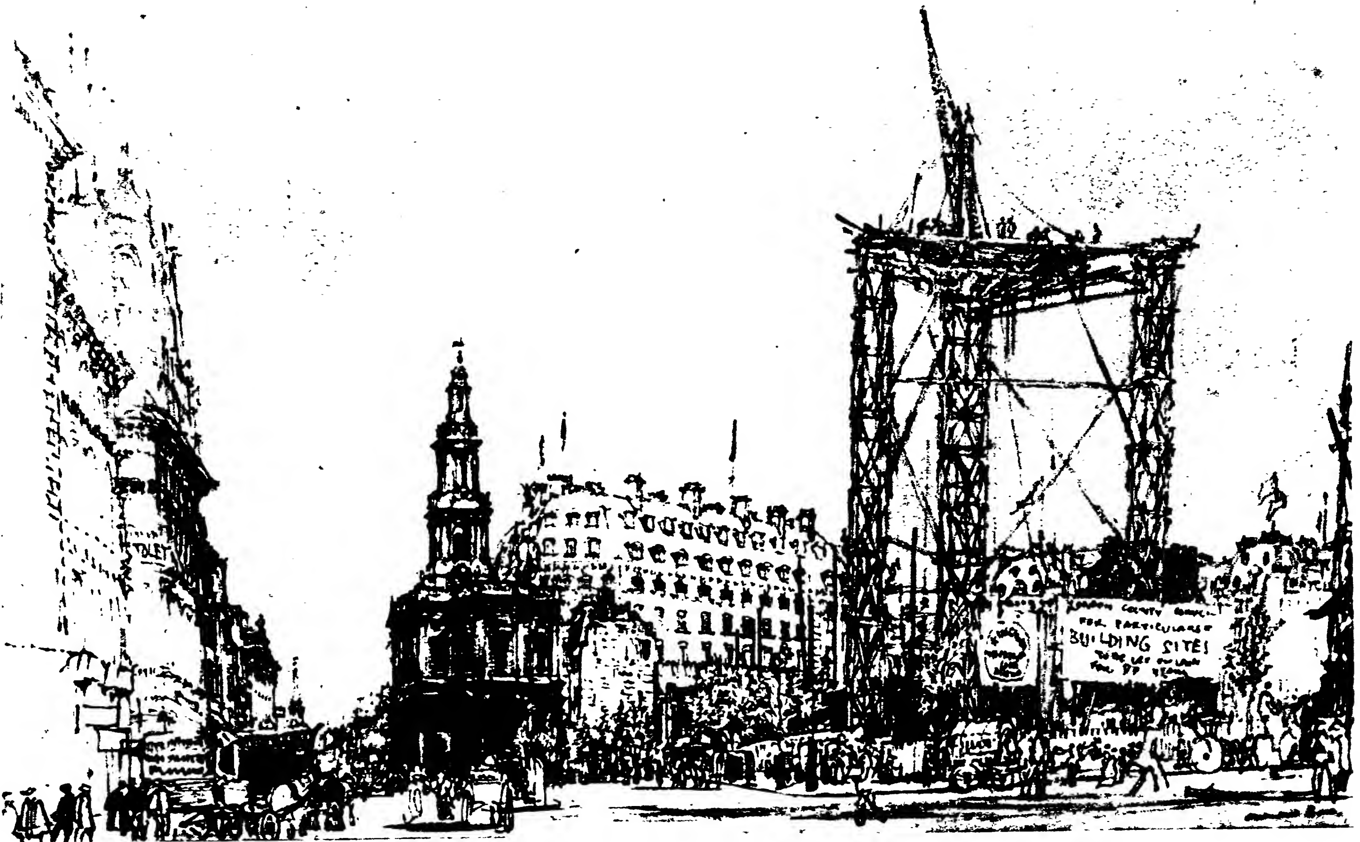
and lackeys of the Lord Mayor have gone there on the Lord Mayor's Show Day to take drink and sandwiches while their dignitaries are swearing themselves in and refreshing themselves at the Law Courts. Many of them, to speak strictly, are lemonaders and ciderers, but certainly the whisky which some of them used to drink harmonized beautifully with their golden costumes.

The scene inside the tavern was a curious one in these levelling days. The handsome, broad-shouldered lackeys, whose powdered hair made finer their youthful complexions, and the more wizened coachmen, with faces like crab-apples under their closely curled wigs, were joined by men of the Lifeguards' band in their golden-braided uniform and velvet jockey caps (unchanged since the Tudor days) and by a Lifeguardsman or two in Waterloo steel cuirass. Sometimes there was a prepossessing man with a Gauguin robe of crimson and blue, no less than a Sergeant-at-Arms of, say, Gunnersbury Borough Council, when its Mayor was a Worshipful Turner and that happened to be the new Lord Mayor's Company. Again, there might be policemen, one of whom was evidently retiring, for the gorgeous company and the other policemen formed a circle round him and sang that he was a jolly good fellow — at twenty minutes to three in the afternoon if you please! It was quite like a fancy dress ball, only more fancy. The lackeys clustered and glistened and glowed in a dim compartment where they ate ham sandwiches. 'There's richness for you,' as Mr. Squeers said. These perambulating daffodils behaved like very good children, and no wonder, for their liveries cost a mint of money. Two of them wore the liveries of the old Lord Mayor, while the new Lord Mayor's men had their new liveries. In the pre-war days at the end of the year the liveries became the perquisite of the men, who sold them for ten pounds to theatrical clothes men. They kept the arm badges, which bear the crest of the Lord Mayor in delicate embroidery. Some of the old hands had a dozen badges framed and hung in their parlour. But there are no new liveries now!

The bright scene ended when scouts brought word that the dignitaries were on the move, and soon the whole body trooped out of the hostelry to gladden the sunshine and the crowd with a sight of their gold lace, dark blue velvet, white breeches and pink stockings. That was certainly the moment of the Lord Mayor's Show day! And in the tavern, grown strangely dull and dim, the quiet drab-dressed peahens



DEMOLITION OF ST. JAMES'S HALL



REBUILDING THE STRAND, 1907

of those gorgeous peacocks communed together and said 'Ah, well!' and discussed buses to Brixton.

The Strand is a withered place to those who remember it in Victorian and Edwardian days when Richard Le Gallienne wrote of it:

> Alight, alight on either hand —
> The iron lilies of the Strand!

and told us how 'like dragon-flies the hansoms hovered'. Phil May often sat in one of them outside Romano's Restaurant and sketched the Strand crowd, then rumpled with fuzzy old actors, with terrible fur collars on their coats, who called one another 'laddie' and read the *Pink Un*, a sporting paper. More marriages, they say, were then made at Romano's, than in heaven as between 'Gaiety girls' and the peerage. Behind Romano's in narrow Maiden Lane is Rule's which preserves in marble sculpture in glassy niches, old prints of players and boxers and Aladdin lampshades and potpourri in Sheffield plate bowls the last enchantments of mid-Victoria. The Prince of Wales who became Edward the Seventh in history and Prince Florizel of Bohemia in fiction had little parties there, and Miss Gertrude Lawrence has told in her book how his grandson, the Duke of Windsor, ate his supper there with Thespian friends. Turner, painter of sun and sunrise, was born in the lane almost opposite Rule's; Thackeray's 'Coal Hole' where Colonel Newcome brought young Clive and where Captain Shannon and the other gentlemen of the press took their ease was in that shadowed lane, behind the roaring Strand.

Gow's in the Strand was more curious than the grander and many-pewed Simpson's across the way. Gow's was the place where theatrical critics forgathered after a play to eat a sandwich, quaff from a pewter and exchange clichés before going to Fleet Street to write them into their notices in the old leisurely nights before the wars when papers went to press at one. Sala on his return from France, where he had gone to write articles on the cuisine of Paris, cried when he landed at Charing Cross Station, '*Ah* — now for a steak at Gow's!' It was good English food and cooking there and the waiter upstairs when upbraided about the poorness of the coffee said, 'Well, sir, you see we've got to keep up the reputation of an English house!'

Then, there was Gatti's at Charing Cross, established by two Swiss

brothers in 1862, which had a clientele and an air of its own. It was the middle-class house for doing yourself well on a night out in London. Elderly people were happy there after their fashion. I think of its long café room, too, as the home of the lonely man. On a Saturday night you would see them, each sitting under a hat tree smoking a meditative cigar, thinking of the old days when supper at Gatti's was an adventure, and of lost friends, and a scattered family and how it would have been different if the wife had lived. I remember sitting next to one such lonely man on a Derby race night, and he told me he always came to Gatti's on Derby night and ate a steak, drank a pint of bitter and went home to Streatham Hill by a late bus. Always. On Derby nights. He had never been to a race meeting but it made you feel you weren't out of the swim! Before Gatti's vanished from the Strand it provided one vital moment. A new conductor of its orchestra — long before the war — insisted on playing the Fascist '*Giovanezza*' March. The Italian waiters, among them two aged Garibaldians, marched out into the Strand!

All that is to be said of the Grand Buffet at Charing Cross is that it is probably the only street bar where one has heard an old C.B. congratulate a new C.B. on getting that honour. But there you are on the verge of Whitehall where taverns get their licences not from the L.C.C. but from the Board of Green Cloth, at the Palace, and in war time, Lor' bless you, you might be standing next to anybody!

Then there are the public houses which display curiosities as the Daniel Lambert in Ludgate Hill once 'featured' Daniel Lambert himself, London's fattest man, as the landlord. The East End had a tavern whose bar ceiling was hung with bags of mouldering buns hung there yearly since a departing son who never returned begged his widowed mother to hang up a hot-cross bun at Easter against his return. There is one, a place frequented by railwaymen, in a tiny side-passage off the Strand which invites you in by means of a queer little projecting board to 'see the aviary'. But the Edinburgh Castle at Camden Town was in quite another class. It housed a really startling collection of curiosities, gathered there by a Mr. T. G. Middlebrook, who kept the house. He bought at a sale the trumpet which sounded the charge at Balaclava — a well-authenticated relic, with a photograph of the grave of Trumpet-Major Joy who blew it — and the American flag captured in

the fight between *Chesapeake* and *Shannon*, authenticated on every step in its passage from one of the midshipmen of the British ship to the tavern. The spear that killed General Gordon demanded more faith. But besides relics of this sort Mr. Middlebrook had a capital collection of medals, and more than one egg of the Great Auk. A curious crowd gathered in 1909 when the collection was sold.

Among a grand rally of little pot figures and coronation mugs and two-headed freaks there stood a small terracotta 'Bobby Lowe', utterly discomfited, with drawn face. From a rich top-soil of old books and shells and unopened boxes sprang at intervals tall growths of tapestries in rolls, Indian idols, post-horns, armour, pictures, uniforms, and skeletons. The dark oil-paintings whose gilt frames glimmered round the walls might have been a device by Hogarth to add to the wildness of the scene. Lot 1 was 'The Day of Judgment', in carved frame.

Sailortown in the East had several taverns laced with curios brought by seamen from many ports in the Seven Seas, but as the big brewery companies bought up the taverns and made them of a pattern, the queer English idiosyncratic life of the local houses is passing away as the landlord is replaced by a manager and the old framed newspaper cuttings and photographs of local characters and incidents are cleared away and even the racy old names of the signboards disappear under the brewers' names!

Some of these rendezvous houses were small, out-of-the-way places, that did not suggest a rushing business. One such was the Ship and Shovel, a little old tavern tucked away in an alley behind Guy's Hospital. The Ship and Shovel might have been called the Doctors' Rest, for customers in the saloon parlours were mainly medical students or young doctors from the hospital. Conversation was often highly technical, and the layman shuddered over his drink as he overheard a gruesome description of Doctor Blank's latest method of dealing with malignant tumours.

The 'medicals' had also a special snuggery reserved for them, a tiny room, almost filled by a round-topped table about a hundred years old, the surface of which was covered with initials dug deep into the wood with penknives. Or should it be scalpels? Anyway, many a doctor back in London after long service overseas made for this table to see if his initials were still decipherable. It was said that the Ship and Shovel was

there before Guy's was built, and Guy's celebrated its bi-centenary in 1731. One doctor patron there said he had seen an eighteenth-century bill of sale in which the tavern was called the Ship and Sir Cloudesley Shovel. There was an old tradition that Admiral Sir Cloudesley was once a regular customer here — so regular that, as some barbers' customers once kept their own shaving-mugs for daily use, he kept his private tap. Behind the bar was till lately a brass plate and tap inscribed 'Sir Cloudesley Shovel', the letters rubbed faint with polishing. But one has to admit that on the other side of the bar, very disturbingly, was a similar plate and tap dedicated to 'Sir Colin Campbell'. Here certainly was subject for good bar-room discussion, especially if naval doctors, budding Smollets, were of the company.

Also in the Borough is the George, a much more important inn, indeed, the last of the galleried inns of London, brother inn to the White Hart, once its neighbour, where Mr. Pickwick found Mr. Weller, and a descendant of the very inn of very inns, Chaucer's Tabard, that was nearby in the Borough High Street! Its respected proprietrix, Miss Agnes Murray, died at 81, a few years before the Second War. She had been in the George since her 'teens and had ruled it with a firm quiet hand.

The hop trade kept it going, and at one time the old bedrooms, with their four-post beds, were occupied every night; but that was long ago. They have been more like showplaces in an old castle for many years. I think Miss Murray discouraged guests for the night, just as she latterly discouraged customers coming into the coffee-room for drinks at night and always let its fire go out. Towards the end, indeed, she discouraged all but the hop factors and others who came for the midday 'ordinary' or the five or six select regulars who came into her little parlour, where were set the canary and the box of pressed hops and the old coach-guards' pistols and bullets.

Once a daring man tried to get her to make a lunch on Sunday for Mr. Scullin, Premier of Australia (once a Borough boy), and some of his Cabinet, but she smiled the idea away. 'I have only a small leg of mutton for myself and the staff,' she said, 'but if your friends come I'll be glad to give them a glass of good sherry.' She received them like a queen, wearing her cameo brooch, as she did on high occasions. She allowed a theatrical party to come every St. George's Day to perform

a Shakespeare scene on a wagon in the yard, while people went up on the two open galleries and looked down through the potted geraniums at the show, just as people had looked down from inn galleries long before there were theatres.

In her later years the George drifted into the guide-books, and tourist parties, mostly for tea, came to the inn. Miss Murray received them, one fancied, with a faint derision in her welcome. But for many years she had American visitors that she valued, W. D. Howells, Parkinson Smith, Christopher Morley, and Van Lear Black amongst them. E. V. Lucas was one of her English favourites.

It has been said that Miss Murray was a firm character. Everyone who went to the George knew that. A very particular man once brought a luncheon party there and with them a bottle of special port wine, explaining to Miss Murray that he had remembered being there before when she was short of port. Miss Murray accepted this with her quiet smile. When the bill was made up it contained an item in her tall Italian hand — 'Corkage 1s. 6d.' Probably this was the last time 'corkage' ever appeared in a London tavern bill. After her death the old house continued its traditions under the Public House Trust.

A few taverns of character still withstand the brewers but theirs is now a lost cause. Here and there a manager turns traitor, so to speak, and tries to preserve some of the character and continuity of the old untied houses and even gives expression to it by showing some cuttings or prints or relics that suggest house-pride and interest in the regulars who frequent it. One manager made his place the rendezvous of the Australian airmen and decorated his walls with their trophies, and symbols and photographs. What tales of split-second escapes and terrible farewells were told in that bar! A few other places still retain signs of what their customers thought about and talked about, as well as the blatant house advertisement signs of what they drank as they took their ease at their inns. To realize how far big firms are from the ordinary concerns of their customers one has only to notice how after the two terrific World Wars that raged above and around them there is rarely to be seen in the surviving public houses any picture, photograph, framed newspaper cutting or queer fragment of something to recall what the men who used these houses had lived through and wanted to remember and what relics they prized.

CHAPTER XI

Shops and Shopkeepers

THIS nation of shopkeepers has never greatly cried up its shopkeepers. The shopkeeper, however big and original his character and business, was to the literary Victorians mainly a figure of fun, even when the Prince Consort was blessing the stupendous effort of the Crystal Palace to make England the shopwindow of the world. Surtees to increase the farce of Mr. Jorrocks made him a shopkeeper. When a great 'storeskeeper' from the United States established an immense shop here and leased one of London's grandest seignorial mansions the Wiggs and Wags of Mayfair declared that it was the first time a shopkeeper had ever sat upstairs in that house. To indicate the mean vulgarity of his chief character in contrast with the real pedigree swells, Samuel Warren in *Ten Thousand a Year* made his dingy hero a shop salesman. Thackeray, Trollope, Lever and Bulwer Lytton rarely admitted a shopkeeper to their pages and although the innocent Mr. Pickwick was — I think somehow — a retired drysalter, even Dickens kept his big men as 'merchants'. Dombey was a merchant with ships rather than shops.

Browning's shopkeeper, a big man plainly, for his neighbours little suspected that he 'makes Rothschild tremble on his throne', is pictured as living in a cupboard behind his shop because he saw no use of life but when roaring trade and customers were rife. 'Sell and scud home' was the poet's idea of shopkeeping. 'Shop all day and all day long' was to wrong yourself while your good angel slept. Still, he was the poet who wrote a poem entitled 'Shop'. That there should be shopkeepers whose mind was on the shop all day long is undeniable. I remember one of our biggest shopkeepers, speaking of the design for his store front with its grand row of immense Corinthian columns, complaining that the columns needed some decoration half-way down, they looked too bare: indeed he had drawn some frilly lines himself on them in the design spread before him: 'They need more *frou-frou*,' he said — 'more *frou-frou*!' So he put it in. For people do see things, even architecture,

in the idiom of their trade. At Dalwhinnie in the Scottish Highlands a Bristol linen-draper (who had motored there in patent leather shoes) said politely to a woman climber, who was regarding Ben Alder with the idea of a day's climb, 'I fear, Madam, there's no Regent Street or Bond Street here to amuse the ladies!' W. S. Gilbert knew a lot about shops and 'Patience' is full of them, but the only shopkeeper he drew in full length was Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., based on a famous bookseller and newsagent, who became First Lord of the Admiralty, 'Ruler of the Queen's Navee', and he was made a figure of fun and melody. But then that was Gilbert, the satirist's business; he made fun even of the head of the London Fire Brigade!

Eminent French authors have made shopkeepers romantic and impressive figures, and the great American storeskeeper has been a mighty figure in American later fiction, as in real life, but even in our modern poetry and fiction — Arnold Bennett slightly excepted — our writers have preferred the professions or the manufacturer, squire, farmer, engineer, or the artist, actor, criminal or detective, journalist or stockbroker, tobacconist or marine engineer, jockey or tramp. Gissing makes one of his needy author-heroes plan a completely objective masterpiece to be called 'Mr. Bailey, Greengrocer', but he never himself gave us that book. Even Mr. Shaw shied off and denied immortality to the shopkeepers as he did — with one exception, his Highland clergyman in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* — to Scotsmen, although he made heroes of Irishmen, Swiss, munition-makers, artists, soldier-hotelier, prize-fighter, politicians and pirate. Shakespeare, being long before the age of the multiple shopkeepers, was content with bankers and other moneylenders, tanners, and unspecified 'citizens' for characters, but he has one unfriendly reference to tradesmen when Hamlet spreadeagles Polonius with:

'You are a Fishmonger!'

No, the nation had been browbeaten by Napoleon into the idea that its shopkeepers are not men to be proud of, deserving only fortunes and titles! Only one Victorian printseller, I think, had the courage to publish a series of coloured plates of the great London emporia of his time, although nearly every foreign visitor wrote of those shops praising Regent Street as the centre of the world's shopping. Regent Street itself, based on the Rue de Rivoli, with at first a pillared arcade in front

of the shops, was conceived as London's effort to show the world her shops; and with a romantic flavour, too, for Nash designed it as the great avenue for the Prince Regent's drive to his northern pleasaunce and palace and the avenue was to be of applauding shops and not of dumb trees like the Champs Elysees. Nash's Regent Street, alas! is gone and its successor is in the late spasmodic style reminding one absurdly enough of the A.B.C. teashop girl who, after rejecting an order for tea and poached egg ('No poached egg') — well, tea and Welsh rarebit ('No Welsh rarebit') — well, tea and toast, returned after a long interval to ask, 'What was it you changed your mind to?' Despite all its official architectural authority could do, Regent Street was always at odds with itself in its merchants' efforts to find what the public had changed its mind to. Its dignity is only mass without grace, even without *frou-frou.*

But if our writers and artists and dramatists gave little but satirical thought to our shops and shopkeepers there has always been in London a pride of shop apart from the fortunes and titles accruing from shops, and in its pedigree as well as its turnover. It is quietly hinted in the declaration of foundation date in the fascia, usually over the entrance and on its account sheets and latterly by great rallies of pedigreed shopkeepers in the correspondence columns in the London press and in brochures and serious books on the history of notable shops and traders. In a previous work the present writer has touched on the subject, particularly on those businesses which had met the requirements of an American visitor by flourishing or at any rate existing for at least two hundred years. Let me now go into this entrancing subject again and note generally, while there is still time, some of the pedigreed and more curious tradesmen of London before the co-operative societies or nationalization put them on the tumbril.

Such an approach to this vast subject has, of course, the objection that founders are more important than descendants or successors, and to write of pedigreed shops is to begin at the tail, but in the republic of the shop it is not quite like that. There must be virtue in a house that has survived through centuries of competition and changing conditions

which argues a body of sagacious courage and technical resources within it. The founder of a great new enterprise deserves and usually gets honours and rewards and contemporaries know all about him; the founders of many of our most distinguished old shops are only names in dim ledgers or in old memories recording disconcerting replies to noble and fatuous customers.

Now and then it is the other way as with the eminent Savile Row tailor who lent money to his clients and was sometimes asked to dine at their houses. He told one of his clients how he had been dining with Lord So-and-so but the company was rather mixed. 'Damn it all, Goole,' said the customer, 'you didn't expect them all to be tailors!' But one likes to think rather of Hoby, the great bootmaker of Savile Row, who on an occasion when a young officer threatened to withdraw his custom, called to his assistant: 'Up with the shutters, Alfred, Ensign Blanky isn't coming any more!' There are still London shops so established and legendary that when you hear that one of them has been sold, you can't help thinking 'so they've cut the entail!'

On a subject to which so many London journals have given attention and space without reaching definite conclusions it would be unwise for an uncertified observer to declare which is London's oldest surviving business. Even the Council for the Preservation of Business Archives leaves that proud point to future research. London, it seems, has between eight and nine hundred businesses established a century ago or longer and among those are fifty or so with partners directly descended from the founder. This is particularly to be noted in banks, wine merchants, tea dealers, caterers, tobacconists, tailors, hatters, grocers, chemists, jewellers, book publishers and booksellers and printers of government private papers and other businesses that imply a more or less confidential relationship with customers. Private bankers as a body are probably the oldest houses. Child's had Mistress Eleanor Gwynn, as well as Charles the Second, on their ledgers, Hoare's (still with nearly all its partners of the family) had Pepys, and Drummond the Jacobite lords, while Coutts had the great Whigs. The famous Whitechapel Bell Foundry claims with much support that they made cannon as well as bells for Drake's ships and also the hour bell of St. Paul's — many of the Whitechapel Foundry's bells fell with the City churches in the German raids — and with the bellmakers (as lawyers

say) is a Lambeth candlemaker who claims that his house made candles for the ships that fought the Spanish Armada and a firm that supplied emery for polishing the bores of the cannon used in that great encounter. Some firms trace their beginnings to shops on Old London Bridge. One such soapmaker has the first account book of its founder which he inscribed: 'This is George Betjemann's Account Book; hopes for work to fill it.' That hope was clearly fulfilled.

History of course was always shopping. Brittle of Wood Street made the identical waistcoat Nelson wore when he was shot at Trafalgar, and the stockings young Queen Victoria wore on her coronation day. Davison, Newman and Company, the teabrokers of Creechurch Lane, owned sixteen of the twenty-eight chests of tea which the revolutionary Americans disguised as Indians threw into Boston Harbour. In St. Olave's, Hart Street, before it was bombed in the Second War, you could see a monument to two of the partners showing a symbolic marble Commerce reclining patiently on chests of tea, addressing her mind to the Hereafter. One of those two partners buried there who left £600,000, retired from trade four years before his death, but so forcible was his habit that he came every day to the shop and ate his mutton-chop at two o'clock with his successors.

Robert Twining of the great tea firm in the Strand was consulted by Pitt on the tea tax; Gieve's in Bond Street made uniforms for Nelson, and when Russian Soviet naval officers visited London in 1944 several of them got uniforms there. Charles Laughton, the actor, when about to be filmed as Captain Bligh of *The Bounty*, went to Gieve's for particulars of the uniforms of Bligh's day and was shown in the ledgers the very entries for Bligh's uniforms. Many of Gieve's books went with most of their shop in a German air raid, the news spreading dismay throughout the Seven Seas among senior officers of the British Navy who could no longer as in the past order a uniform and cap to be sent out to them for their measurements too had gone in the fire.

Wicker linings for the bearskins the Guards wore at Waterloo as well as hoops for the ladies of Queen Anne's court were made by Scott's of Charing Cross Road. Fortnum and Mason, who have been in Piccadilly for two centuries, provided comforts for the Peninsular warriors and beef tea for the Crimean wounded at Scutari. Hatchard's, the big booksellers in Piccadilly, only recently discarded their footmen's bench

outside their shop. Barkers, who built the state coach for the Duke of Wellington, also built the body of Sir Malcolm Campbell's record-breaking motor car 'The Blue Bird'; Harrison's of St. Martin's Lane have been the Amanuenses of History as confidential printers to the British Government for generations. And in Tottenham Court Road is the pedigreed and lively Heal's with at its head that distinguished designer and craftsman, Ambrose Heal, who is also a final authority on shop-tokens and trade-cards.

Berry's, the legendary wine merchants in St. James's Street, whose vaults touch those of the Palace, have been weighing the makers of history on their ancient scales for a hundred and fifty years or so, from Fox and Pitt and Warren Hastings to Lord John Russell and Salisbury and George the Sixth and his brothers. In Chancery Lane is Ede and Ravencroft's shop where lawyers buy wigs and peers buy or store their robes. They made robes for Marlborough, Nelson and Wellington, and the Coronation robes of Queen Anne. They made a wig for the first woman barrister. The oldest pewterer's business, Burn and Englefield, has a woman as its chief, the only woman member for centuries of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers.

Near Berry's is Lock's the hat-maker whose business was established at Atherstone more than two centuries ago. Lock's is credited with inventing, among other things, the billycock hat. Mrs. A. M. Stirling, in her *Coke of Norfolk and his Friends*, says that the great Coke instructed the Lock of that day to make a hat for him after the style of the hat designed by William Bowler in the Borough, and it was built very strongly so that it would serve something like a crash-helmet in the hunting field. The hat was made and William Coke tested it in the shop by simply standing on it; this test he applied to all his succeeding hats. One likes to think of the scene — Coke not on Lyttelton but on a hat — in that little aged shop! Its low front has two small square double windows each with a dozen quartering, its black paint raised in old blisters, increased by newer ones when St. James's Palace was on fire in the air raid of 1944. There is, or was, in the window till the Second War, a late eighteenth-century soldier's brimless hat, a Waterloo shako, a military hat invented by the Prince Consort but never adopted, and a queer red hat with a faint resemblance to a Cardinal's that the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh designed for his gamekeepers, and a tall furry

curly yellow hat said to be a relic of a famous whip. An old trimmer of Lock's when I came to London there remembered in his youth an ancient trimmer who had worked on Nelson's hats and that old woman used to go when she could to see Nelson's effigy at Westminster and muse over the hat she had trimmed. That hat is now, I think, in the Service museum in Whitehall. Lock's succeeded in escaping the custom of the Prince Regent.

Lock's, like Fribourg and Treyer, the ancient Haymarket tobacconists, carries its antiquity on its shop face, but Bewlay's, the Strand tobacconist, has had its shop rebuilt too often for that distinction. 'His Majesty is partial to tonquin with his rapee' is an entry in Bewlay's books about George the Third's snuff. A great judge's rapee 'must be kept moist in port wine' is another entry. Bewlay's Strand shop has a good wooden highlander who does not roam with the students in their frolics like his brother Caledonian in Tottenham Court Road. Wishart's in Panton Street is a tobacco shop that began business in London in the year when the Old Pretender was born, and uses his portrait as a sign. Although not a pedigreed shop it belonged to a man of long pedigree, so perhaps inclusion may be permitted here of Lord Harrington's little greengrocery shop that discreetly embellished the top of Whitehall. The Harrington town house of Queen Anne's date in Craig's Court was then occupied by the family and the dowager lady used to drive out in a lumbering coach, not very different from the coaches drawn by Hogarth who used Craig's Court for the scene in his print of 'Evening'. Now the façade of the house remains masking a busy telephone exchange. The shop appeared early in the century. It was very bare and clean, with a Cheshire cheese in halves on a shelf, two baskets of eggs on the counter, and small green-leaved baskets holding apples or pears or plums in the window. Behind the counter was a very tall, pale man and an elderly stout man, obviously a retired footman and a retired butler or majordomo. Discreet little cards beside the baskets told us that the fruit was from the Elvaston estate in Cheshire, and I think there was a notice over the door that the shop was run by the Elvaston tenants.

The cheese and the eggs and the fruit were perfect and reasonable in price, but it was rather a trial to ordinary people to explain to these dignified, slightly deaf shopkeepers that you wanted to buy their wares. The little fruit baskets of selected fruit looked the sort of thing that

agricultural lords would carry in their coat pockets to show to one another in the House of Peers. They never suggested the bustle of commerce. The shop, after a few years, stopped business. After some months people in Whitehall noticed that it was not open, and so the Harrington shop faded out of Charing Cross with the Harrington family.

There are streets with brotherhoods of little distinguished shops that delight me. Panton Street off Haymarket was one such which held its character till the blitz shattered it. It was only about 100 yards long, a great sprinter could have run it in ten seconds. Others might take an afternoon. Every second shop had a special ware of its own or a legend. One shop sold braces only and its braces, strong but unseen, could be found throughout the world wherever a British officer went in uniform or in mufti. Nearly opposite was a notable print dealer's shop where Baltimore or Cleveland or Winnipeg magnates came for old prints of their cities and M.C.C. men came for paintings of ancient and eminent cricket teams and sailors for portraits of old ships. Old Mr. MacMaster had been a crack bootmaker before he made his print-collecting hobby his livelihood, and for a time Francis Thompson in his misery helped in the shop and delivered shoes. Farlows', the angler's shop, moved here from Temple Bar early in the century, and eminent fishers bent on tarpon off Florida or trout in the Test frequent it. At its eastern end Panton Street had its redoubtable gunshop with Kipling tradition and across the way was the shop you went to when you were really out of sharks' fins and bêche-de-mer and edible birds' nests and Saragossa seaweed, and suchlike delicacies. At the opposite end was the tropical outfitter's shop to rig you out to get such things at their source and for supplies for pilgrimages anywhere short of the moon.

Of the three taverns in the little street one was the model to Conan Doyle for the bruisers' concourse in *Rodney Stone*; another (alas! only cinders since 1944!) was Stone's, which kept its early Victorian state and Corinthian traditions till near its flaming end; and the third, on the word of bookmakers in Tattersall's Ring itself, had until these strict days the best rump steak in London, and opposite it is a high vegetarian restaurant. That should be enough glory for any street without bringing

in a lively little theatre and an Italian restaurant infested by civil servants!

But to be fair a nearby street challenges it. Jermyn Street, it must be admitted, has a big case for the connoisseur of streets and it is not much longer. To begin with there's the unique little shop which makes and sells the scent of the English countryside, a family shop that has been at it for two hundred years. There you may buy the scent of new-mown hay, of bluebells, honeysuckle, wallflower, roses, wood violets and a score of other garden and wildwood fragrances. Near it your nose is greeted (or used to be greeted when English cheese was with us) with varied long lost flavours of Stilton and Double Gloucester, of Wensleydale, Cottesmore, Caerphilly, Blue Lancashire as well as of prime Cheddar and Cheshire and the little brothers of the great cheeses, the sage cheeses of the Peak district and of Lancashire. Then, there is the shop of the Old School Tie, every one of them that is fit to be printed, and most of the Army ties, an artists' colour shop that sells toy models and a score of other little shops in this Eleusinian street, each with queer specialities of its own.

Another favourite street of mine is of course Vigo Street, though it is not now quite what it was. It was the most narrow, inconvenient, curious and in some ways the most alluring little street in London. It has three little old goldsmith shops bursting like black pods with their richness of treasure, and had a fine print shop. Then, at a little inlet near Albany gateway, was Mr. Elkins Mathews's bookshop, cunningly contrived so that if you got to its many-paned window at a busy time you had to fight your way back again into the traffic stream after peering at W. B. Yeats's latest book or Max Beerbohm's oldest caricature. In the narrows of Vigo Street the pavement is such that a Frenchman on it cannot take off his hat to greet an acquaintance. There used to be a sub-post office in a little grocer's shop there which might have been the one in Henry James's *In a Cage*, where the telegraph girl so forgot herself as to prompt the code word to the grand young man who had forgotten it in the middle of his conduct of an intrigue which she had been following with sympathetic and technical interest. You could buy *Ruff's Turf Guide*, key-hole finders, timetables and the Red Book there and the stamps had a slight taste of ham.

As a footnote to the high pedigreed shops of these pages a mention

may be made of the shop of a founder who took all possible precaution that not only his surname but his Christian name should survive, but alas! in vain. This was William Harris, 'The Sausage King' (as he styled himself), who died in 1912. A shrewd and energetic tradesman, he had forty shops to his name in all parts of London and he decided early in life that his best advertising medium was himself. He would appear some time through the day in evening dress and he wore his largest diamonds at his work. He announced feats he intended to perform, such as driving a pig to Brighton and winning the Derby on a horse nurtured on his commodity, and even got such boasts into the newspapers, but none of them happened. His seven sons were all called 'William' — 'William I', 'William II', 'William III', and so on. His politics were expressed in a poem he published when he stood as a Parliamentary candidate:

> As onion is strength in the caterer's trade,
> And the restaurant-keeper's vocation,
> So union is strength in the Empire that's made
> From fragments of every nation.

The connoisseur of shops, by the way, must have noticed in London the casualness of the street numbering. Many shops in notable streets indeed show no number at all. 'Everybody surely knows Tipper and Topper?' is the village attitude of the deeply established. Possibly in their traditional habit of mind they think of shops as being known by their repute and their swinging sign. But by many, particularly to visitors from more pernickety cities, the absence of street numbers is resented.

One elderly gentleman from the north, looking in vain for a particular number in Cheapside, at last entered a shop and asked politely what was its number? The proprietor, a grave-looking man, could not remember. 'You don't know the number of your own shop?' said the visitor, keeping his temper well in hand, 'Your own number?' No, the Cheapside shopkeeper couldn't remember but — just a minute and he'd get it from his assistant. The visitor looked at him closely and said, 'You don't know your own number and it's not outside your shop! Do you know what they'd do with you in Glasgow?' No, the Cheapside merchant didn't know what they would do with him in Glasgow. 'They

would fine you,' cried the visitor triumphantly — 'that's what they would do with you in Glasgow! Good day to you. Come along, boys.' And he marched out of the shop with his two sons.

Even apart from the absence of street numbers on many shops, other difficulties face the earnest searcher. Many London streets have no Number 13 although Friday Street had a 13 at which a bold bedding manufacturer did good business for many years. Fleet Street, Park Lane, Oxford Street, Praed Street, St. James's Street, Haymarket and Grosvenor Street kept themselves clear of '13'.

Every other year some old small particular business does end in this era of changing taste and conditions without aid of tumbril. Small paragraphs at the foot of a newspaper column is their obituary. The shop of this kind of widest fame that closed its doors for ever with a sad little bow was Pollock's, the makers of toy theatres, in Hoxton. This dingy cave-like shop smelling of size and glue Stevenson had touched with his fairy gold. 'If you love art, folly or the bright eyes of children, speed to Pollock's', wrote Stevenson in his *Penny Plain, Twopence Coloured.* Benjamin Pollock died aged 81 in 1937. His eightieth birthday was celebrated by the British Puppet and Model Makers Theatre Guild at the George Inn in the Borough by an exhibition of his and his master Remington's works, and Mr. J. B. Priestley said many just and thoughtful things about him and his art. Eminent writers, artists and connoisseurs went to Pollock's little shop next to the Old Britannia music hall at Hoxton. But you can't run a business on such customers, and Miss Louisa Pollock, who had long been her father's expert assistant, found it too thin a living even for one, so the doors of that inspirationary shop had to close.

An explorer in the dead halls of Alexandra Palace in 1930 discovered Mrs. Paul, the glass-spinner, working on one of her last glass-spun frigates with all flags flying and sailors in the riggings, a glory of shining glass threads. Beside her were her bright gossamer wares — swan, cradle, candelabra, birds of paradise. This lady of glassy wonders sat like Cinderella beside her furnace in a rough hut in the deserted Palace which was later to be the hive of yet more miraculous visions of pictures

THE OLD STRAND

LIBERTY'S CLOCK

woven through the air. She had spun her glass at the Palace for thirty years. Her husband's family had spun glass for a century and a half. When he died she carried on and taught her son, now dead, and so that art seems to have come to its end.

And who is to make our harps if Mr. J. G. Morley goes? Perhaps he is gone for it is long since I heard of him. The last of three generations of London harpmakers, all his later time then was given to repair work, some of it on harps his forebears had made last century. Gone are the days when Welsh miners would spend up to £50 on a new harp. Practically no one takes her harp to a party now. No new harps, Mr. Morley said in the 'thirties, were being made in London. The harps that once . . . !

Then there are the artists who painted the decorations on ice-cream barrows. One such artist was proudly lamenting his solitude ten years ago in his shop in Little Italy off Farringdon Road. His apocalyptic renderings of Garibaldi, Victor Emanuel, Queen Victoria, Roberts, Kitchener and scriptural figures were the pride of Leather Lane. One barrow of his showed six crowned heads on its sides! This artist, Charles Albertganti, a born Londoner, scorned to use a transfer and considered those who did as little better than signwriters. He himself signed only his best works.

If not the last, Mr. Gray Barton of Peckham must be one of the last quill penmakers in London. Solicitors in a traditional line of business, actors, cinema stars and their producers who like their detail right, poets, ornamental script writers, certain kinds of forgers use quills. Goose quills for ordinary work, turkey quills for heavy jobs such as illuminated signwriting, swan quills for showy folk and a peacock quill for a great occasion are his trade stock. And then, of course, there is the by-product, toothpicks. The clay-pipers are probably on their last pipes, although many a citizen can remember when any regular attender could get a clay pipe for the asking at his tavern, where colouring competitions in clay pipes were common entertainment. Fifty shapes of clay pipes were known to Mr. Henry Hawley of Bow, some of them invented by his family. Fine names many of them had: the Marine, the Small Nigger, the Burns' Cutty, the Derry Castle, the Raleigh, the Hoof, the Bulldog, the Long Irish, the Mines. Some counties demanded shapes and sizes of their own, the larger for the north.

Another craftsman, the last of his particular school, was that fine hand cork-carver who had a tiny shop near the Elephant twenty years ago. His masterpiece was 'The Escape of Napoleon from Elba' which he hung in his little window and would not sell. His ordinary work was cutting corks for physicians and wine merchants. He had a cork sign over his door, a *macédoine* of cork chips welded into his name, and the song of six canaries accompanied his cutting. The five thousand hand cork-cutters of his youth had dwindled to himself and his sisters. Who can do a 'Windsor Castle' in cork for us now?

But while many of those distinguished little specialist shops pass away newer ones are establishing themselves. In the dingy neighbourhood of Camden Town, for instance, is a small chemist's shop known to etchers in many parts of the world. The chemist began to stock nitric acid for artists of the neighbourhood who took up etching, and by and by he was supplying all sorts of acids, 'grounds', tools, ink and so on to etchers all over Europe and the United States, and his parlour behind the shop was hung with etchings and engravings given to him by his grateful clients. His widow continues the business in this rather slummy neighbourhood and there is still an old patent medicine sign or two in the window. Another exciting out-of-the-way shop is the goldbeater's in Whitfield Street, off Tottenham Court Road.

Then, there are taxidermists who desire a section to themselves, especially the one near Regent's Park who stuffs animals from the Zoo and from other collections, and can even at times provide a piece of leopard skin from an old favourite at the Zoo to mend a lady's leopard-skin coat. From the point of view of the real shop-fancier, however, London falters when you come to the glass-eye trade. Only in Shakespeare's shire, it seems, is there a shop that can supply the glass eyes for all stuffed animals — from the eyes of elephants and giraffes to the eyes of mice. This expert confided to a friend that he found it difficult to get the sly look into foxes' eyes till he had the happy thought of making the eyes squint!

And la! if I haven't left out Bond Street! Bond Street, that Eleusinian street where 'man's follies bud forth into flower'! Somehow it had never seemed to me so enticing as St. James's Street or shy leafy little Jermyn

Street or the old Strand, although the ladies of Jane Austen and Ouida, the gentlemen of Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton, Thackeray and Henry James haunt the street wherein Sterne died in a house now part of Agnew's art galleries. It smacks of art and money, as Lombard Street smacks of money. Christie's lay just south of Bond Street in King Street, and after the blitz which burnt its Chippendale rostrum and its halls it moved just north of Bond Street to Stratford Place. Sotheby's great salerooms came here from Wellington Street after the First War. A good deal of the loot of the world has passed through Bond Street. Off Bond Street, in Grafton Street, is one of the world shops much concerned with salerooms, the great Quaritch's, which has completed its first century of bookselling. Its 1888 catalogue had 4,066 pages. Quaritch's published, too, some famous books but even its imprint could not save Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* from the penny-box. In 1929, however, the house had the satisfaction of selling a copy of it for £1,410.

Bond Street means to shoppers a place where you pay a good price for something worth having. It is to shoppers the street of great jewellers and furriers and bootmakers, of photographers for persons presented at Court, of hairdressers who know the hairs of the peerage, of enticing old chemists' shops with rails in front like popular pictures at the Royal Academy when there were popular pictures there, of a beautiful fish shop (alas now gone!) with its mongers wearing straw hats all the year round, a poulterer's which sold you chickens 'packed for use in voyage to America', fruiterers whose wares were any fruit so long as it was not in season, and a violin shop where you took your Strad or Cremorna to be reverently mended, where Mr. Pepys had been a customer.

Until Edwardian days some people used to go to Bond Street to see how the beaux and belles of the Grand World really walked and talked. These were mostly young actors, new to London, and were often taken by each other for the thing they went out for to see. But in my experience the point about Bond Street in those days was not that it was peopled by well-dressed persons, for half of the people you saw there were as ordinary as oneself, and many of them not really so smart; but now and then at memorable moments you might come upon little groups of grand ladies whose toilets alone might be worth, as Lewis

Carroll's Passenger had it, 'a hundred pounds a minute'. Bond Street was then the only street in London where ladies of fashion came out of their carriages and walked about for a little. It was that, even more than its precious shops, its crookedness and narrowness and old Tory red brick buildings that gave Bond Street its genteel old Georgian air. There were and are, of course, other ways of looking at Bond Street. I recall a young precocious visitor whose reading lay chiefly in the popular Sunday press, saying to a friend — 'Let's go to Bond Street and watch the co-respondents walking up and down.' Another way of looking at it was the way the hunger processions of the unemployed saw it after the First War as they shuffled slowly through in sad procession.

To most Londoners Bond Street means art dealers' and antique dealers' shops. Dynasties of dealers have made fortunes here and it must be said, too, that many of their clients have been able to sell back in Bond Street their purchases at immensely higher figures. Treasures come there that have been found in service staircases in country houses. A popular George R. Sims recipe for a story was of an ancient house going fast to ruin being saved by the young lord or squire riding home at great odds a winner from his despised stable. Bond Street's modern version of this is the house being saved by the mere picture of a horse by Ben Marshall or other of the once forgotten horse painters whose works suddenly rushed into four or even five figures at the finish at salerooms and art dealers' and so paid the mortgage and saved the old manor house! What a subject for Mr. Sachs and Miss Anderson of the Late Joys Victorian Revivals!

The Bond Street picture shops that now sell Modiglianos and Derain and Matisse and Utrillo, Birket Forster (yes), Matthew Smith and Sickert used to make a grand trade in English contemporary paintings from the Royal Academy and the old Water Colour Society, and even the steel engravings of Royal Academy favourites provided a good income to worthy men and their families. You have to be warier than ever now when you enter a Bond Street gallery. It's little use, for instance, when waylaid in an average water-colour exhibition to try to make a graceful exit by remarking airily that a middle-period Zoffany, not one of his theatrical or musical party pieces, is the thing you like. Just as you have given the art dealer that shot and are moving out of range satisfac-

torily, he pins you with the remark — 'Now that's very odd. D'you know we just happen to have a little work in the cellar that I'm sure is the very thing you're looking for. Zoffany only did six or so pictures in that period that had nothing to do with the stage. We had one sent in from an old house the other day. I think you're right to go in for that sort of thing. We'd much rather have to do with the real collector than with just . . . picture buyers — you know what I mean? Henry! run downstairs and bring up the fourth case on the left — next the door.'

Bond Street is the street of the world for a surprising number of unique shops and unique technicians. Here in one hushed chapel of art a Rembrandt was split, that is to say a sheet of paper on which Rembrandt, in a hurry or in an economical mood, had printed separate etchings on its two sides, was split into two sheets and the etchings freed from one another. That was in Colnaghi's old business. Precious violins from all over the world are sent to Hill's famous modest-looking violin shop on the other side of the street, whose certificate of the authenticity of a Stradivarius or an Amati, or other magic violin, is received with reverence, one is told, wherever violins are heard or sold. Violins are heard indeed in this mellow shop, sometimes in the hands of the masters, for many moderns, Kreisler among them, have often tried a fiddle or fiddlestick here.

But their old musical temple was in Wardour Street, Soho, until this century, and it was there that Paganini (whose portrait in his later years, with nothing of the devil about him, presides over the portraits of Victorian musicians in the chief music-room) and the long line of great and lesser violinists and 'cellists came through the centuries. They have no documentary proof that the 'Hill's' where Pepys had his violin mended was their Caroline shop, but have grounds of their own for believing it to be so — and if Hill's find grounds for believing anything the world respectfully accepts it. Musicians come here from faraway places and when they go back their fellows in the great cities of the world expect to hear of an attendance at this legendary music shop as one of the highlights of the London visit.

The street has other shops unique in their kind where a long tradition of expert knowledge is stored. There is a fan shop where folk bring precious ancient fans to be identified or repaired with contemporary

material. And there are repositories of Eastern curios with knowledgeable men whose word is accepted in the great museums and even in China and India.

Round the corner from Bond Street is Oxford Street, which in some parts looks like a handsome mass of Regent Street that has broken adrift, and in others suggests fragments of a country town. It has gigantic shops but the shop to linger in is the lair of a great bookseller who is very difficult to see at all for the eminent writers — and not all British — who seem always to be conferring with John Wilson, much as in Queen Anne's time the authors circled Jacob Tonson.

CHAPTER XII

The London Scots

IT was not till last century that Scots came in strength to London. The Union of the Crowns, of course, brought such characteristic Scots as the canny James the First and the uncanny Charles the First (who, like his grandmother, that other characteristic Scot, Mary Queen of Scots, was beheaded by the English), but Scotland held most of its best brains at home and Edinburgh was a capital, till the tremendous expansion and other causes in Victoria's reign made the United Kingdom more fluid with the results that the new Scots nationalism has risen to deplore. Scott, Adam Smith and James Watt were only visitors to London; Hume came more often but Burns never came there at all. Apart from the inconspicuous Bute, the Scots contributed no prime minister born in Scotland until Rosebery arrived at the end of last century.

Then, Scotland sent a spate of four prime ministers in thirty-five years — Campbell-Bannerman, Balfour, Bonar Law and Ramsay MacDonald. (What a platform they would have made with Rosebery at Euston had a bill for the Repatriation of the Scots been passed and 'implemented'!) The London Scots, remembering London's hospitality to them, like to recall too that Rennie gave London its noblest bridge (alas! now gone!), Chambers designed Somerset House, Robert Adam the Adelphi and Portland Place, and Gibbs St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and St. Mary-le-Strand, while William Paterson founded the Bank of England and the first steamboat London saw came from the Clyde. Yet apart from Robert Burns on the Embankment, the Scots do not figure in London public statuary save for the warriors, Haig, Napier, Clyde, Strathnairn and Gordon. But then, London memorial committees and sculptors have been mainly concerned with statues of royalties and military men. Most of the great Englishmen, even Wren, Newton and Purcell, have no public memorials and the feeble statue of Shakespeare in Leicester Square was the gift of a foreign company promoter.

The legacy of distaste for the Scot which had its historical roots in the sudden accession of a Scots King and its accompanying effects, the long

menace of the Jacobites in the north and the bitter trade rivalry till the Commercial Union was effected, was active up to mid-Victorian times. Johnson affected it although he paid Scotland the rare compliment then of visiting it, and he accepted a Scots writer to make surer his immortality. Swift compared Scots conversation to the drone of their own bagpipes. Lamb knew exactly what was wrong with us from the beginning. 'I have a great respect for Scotsmen,' he said to one of them, 'if — if — if they did not think such a damned deal of themselves!' Charles Knight, the mid-Victorian writer of an exhaustive book on London, who confessed to a sub-repulsion against the Scots, argued that you meet more intense Scottish nationalism in London than in Scotland for in Edinburgh and Glasgow the clannish spirit of the people from different localities prevents them mixing. Knight, resenting the success of the Scots in business, explained it in this way. 'Scots are in demand,' he wrote, 'not merely when accidents happen but in all times that they may be ready against emergencies. They are first-rate second-rate men.'

The London Scot, however, likes to note the great names and records of his countrymen in London particularly as bankers, architects, surgeons, artists, writers, shipowners and world traders. In proportion to their numbers they seem to have pulled more than their weight, although there were in Inner London in 1921 some 50,000 of Scottish birth. The Scots, of course, sometimes return to their native land, but they do not go back more often than English settlers return from Australia or British Columbia or South Africa.

When James the First came to England he was accompanied and followed by a number of his countrymen, some of them possibly hoping for preferment in the new state of things. But not all hopes had fulfilment for in that reign was established a body (later styled The Scottish Corporation) for the repatriation and assistance of necessitous Scots and Scots orphans, and it has been busy with its good work ever since. It acquired the ancient hall of the Royal Society in Crane Court, Fleet Street, in 1782, but that was burnt down in 1877 and the present hall built on the site. It gives pensions and grants to the aged and the unfortunate, maintains a good school with a bagpipe band and gives help to Scots fallen on evil days who need tools, clothing and furniture. This worthy charity is supported by the recipients' successful fellow-countrymen. Once a year its pensioners gather to get special gifts and

a bunch of heather from Scotland, in some cases from their own shire in Scotland. The skirling of bagpipes in its hall, when the classes assemble in the winter, at times penetrate the Fleet Street gloaming, and not all of the pipers now are male and not all the teachers. In the old days pipers and near-pipers, when the lessons were over, would cross Fleet Street with a lilt in their walk to the Clachan Tavern in Mitre Court and wet their whistles and maybe try their chanters; and Fleet Street for the moment would take on a Caledonian tinge.

Pipers playing nowadays in the London streets are rare as the wooden Highlanders that once were to be seen outside many tobacco shops. One can think of only three of these tobacco Highlanders today in London. But there are bagpipe-makers in Kentish Town who in the Second War made two hundred sets of pipes for Scottish regiments, and they had been making them since Queen Victoria's time. The skins of their bags come from Highland sheep, the wood for the drones and chanters from African logs cut up in Kentish Town and the reeds are from Spanish cane. The London Scottish Regiment has a full pipe band and as it has been in existence for three-quarters of a century there must be many of its pipers outside the regiment. The Royal Caledonian Asylum has had its boy pipers for many years and most of them are likely to have kept up their playing when they became men. Some London Scottish Boy Scouts took up the pipes and a Hampstead patrol once had four pipers.

Before the First War you often heard pipers in London streets, but they were gradually warned off the West End. One very decent player who used to skirl in the East Central district told me that he had twice tried to play in front of the Duke of Argyll's big house (which Sassenachs called Kensington Palace), but he had been sent to the right-about, although he was playing — while no Campbell himself — 'The Campbells are coming'. A piper named Campbell however was charged in a London Police Court in 1910 with drunkenness and disorder and making a screeching noise on the pipes, and Mr. Plowden, the magistrate, after laying down the axiom that the 'Bagpipes are not a nightingale', dismissed the Campbell with these words: 'The heather is the place for the pipes.'

A piper who used to play in a Tudor Street lane near the Temple admitted to me that he had learnt to play in China. He had been in the China Police and among his mates there was a clever one with the pipes and in the dull hours then in Shanghai the one Scot had taught the other to play the pipes; but he was no Macrimmon. Another piper I knew was an Englishman, driver of a Clapham Junction blue bus. A Scotsman, a baker in the Scottish bakery in Battersea, had lodged in the same house and they had become friendly. The baker had pipes and a kilt and on Saturday nights he tried his music and his luck in the Scots quarters in South London. He taught the bus-driver to play and when he came to an untimely death it was found that he had bequeathed his pipes and his kilt to his friend. Thereupon the bus-driver took up the Scotsman's burden and sometimes made fifteen shillings of a Saturday night. He told me that he never took any risks and when a Scotsman spoke to him on these occasions he always said, 'Awfu' sair throat!'

Another piper of my acquaintance was the real thing, a MacIntosh who had good Gaelic and, early in the evening before he had whisky taken, he could play divinely. He had a large repertory, had been piper in a Highland regiment, and once a domestic piper to a chief in the shooting season. One day at Barnet Fair I saw this piper with a graceful young man in Highland costume who was dancing the Highland fling to his playing. Later in the evening I looked for the piper, but saw only the young man. I asked for MacIntosh, and the son of MacIntosh replied in the softest Whitechapel accent, 'Fawrther's in the Blue Bawr and three parts bawmy.' He was the second generation but a good piper as I afterwards heard.

The strangest story of a street piper in London happened in Belgravia in January 1913. The then Marquis of Hamilton inserted an advertisement in *The Times* thanking 'the street piper who played a lament outside the house in which the Duke of Abercorn was lying dead on Friday evening'. The Hamiltons certainly are a Lowland family to whose ancestors the sound of the pipes must often have been alien and unwelcome music; they can never, like some of the old Highland families, have had a lament of their own. But the pipes have been accepted as the national Scottish instrument for a long time now and the playing of the lament by the wandering piper in the street at that time no doubt brought with it a sense of the pride of nationality that

may have been a support to sorrow. The piper at any rate did not call at the house for vails and no answer ever came to the advertisement. Perhaps a ghostly piper playing when the head of the house is dead is now an established legend in that branch of the Hamilton family.

Fleet Street indeed has taken on many national tinges through the ages, but apart from Boswell it has had few Scots among its outstanding figures. Its heroes are the writers, Chaucer, Milton, Jonson, Izaak Walton, Richardson, Defoe, Johnson, Goldsmith, Lamb, Dickens, Thackeray; and the journalists, Barnes, Delane, William Russell, Jerrold, Mudford, Bagehot, Stead, Greenwood, Lawson, Sala, Labouchere, Chesterton, the Harmsworths, Massingham, Nevinson, Hutton, Strachey, Edgar Wallace, T. P. O'Connor, Charles Hands and J. L. Garvin — to mention only the dead. But there has always been a talented, hardworking and devoted body of Scots journalists and newspaper-makers who have given much to the London press, Algernon Borthwick, Robertson Nichol, Robert Donald, Nichol Dunn among the editors, William Archer among critics, Ian Colvin among leader-writers, and a multitude of expert workers in every department of it. Queer to think that Robert Burns might have been of the company had his application to the *Morning Post* been accepted!

The three Scots authors of high distinction who in my time lived and worked most of their lives in London were James Barrie, James Frazer and John Buchan. Barrie was to two generations the London-Scot best known to Londoners; although personally he was known to few outside the circle he had chosen for himself. Like Shaw, he lived in the Adelphi, and the presence of these two famous wayward figures in that Adamic eyrie enriched the vision of London in the eyes of young Scots and Irishmen with letters in their blood. Barrie in one of his last letters wrote: 'In being able to live in London by my pen I achieved my one literary ambition; I never sought popularity for that is mainly mostly fluke . . . London that eternally thrills me and has been to me all the bright wishes of my youth conceived.' Barrie left his leader-writing in the *Nottingham Journal* to freelance in London for a year or two, bearing the tall hat he bought to impress Editor Greenwood, but he never worked as a regular in Fleet Street.

When I came to London early in the century it was the period before hero-worship died, the days when the students of three art schools awaited excitedly the arrival of Rodin in London and pulled his carriage down Regent Street to the Café Royal. We line up in our thousands to see Picasso in his latest, most enigmatic phase and to wonder whatever can it all be about, but we draw a firm line now against lionizing.

Sir James Frazer of the 'Golden Bough' lived many years in the Temple. Latterly when his sight was failing he used to be seen on the arm of a friend walking in the Temple courts in the evening. Famous men from many parts of the world visited him. John Buchan had chambers in the Temple when he was working on *The Spectator* and wrote some of his earlier books there. Once or twice a piper in his rooms made himself heard in Middle Temple Lane, for in those days the Temple was less conventional than it became.

Cunninghame Graham was a shy figure in Fleet Street although he put posers to it whenever he sent a letter to an Editor, for his handwriting was worse than Claverhouse's, but he kept his Scots tongue for his Scots visitors. In the Socialist demonstration in Trafalgar Square in 1887 he and John Burns were arrested but in his later years he became less concerned in the movement and ultimately wrote little, although his mother, Mrs. Bontine, wore a ring like an old-fashioned mourning ring but instead of a lock of hair she had in it some of the oakum her son had picked in prison when serving his sentence. Coming upon him in a restaurant car going south one day, as the train was panting up to the Beattock summit I repeated the refrain of his story, 'Beattock for Moffat — Beattock for Moffat' and he turned with surprise and pleasure, crying — 'Well, I didn't think anyone remembered that old thing nowadays!' That was the last time I saw him. He lives in the memory of many as the great horseman riding his Arab in the Row.

Arthur Keith, anthropologist and secretary to the Royal College of Surgeons, where the great John Hunter's portrait presides, was one of the many notable Scots scientists and physicians who flavoured these quarters. In the College Museum was a fractured rib-bone of King Robert the Bruce, labelled as a specimen of medieval surgery, which Keith intended to replace in Dunfermline Abbey but the German raiders in 1941 destroyed that precious bone, with more surgically

important things. The Royal Society in this year of grace harbours only 27 Scots out of its 471 Fellows, but several of them are truly eminent. Not long ago the two Archbishops were Scots, but there are few Scots now high set in the Anglican Church.

In the pictorial arts they have particularly distinguished themselves in one department — as etchers. Wilkie and Geddes were the discoverers of the right approach to Rembrandt's art, and although D. Y. Cameron and William Strang have gone, two Scots etchers still rank as international masters. In painting, at the moment, things are not so bright. Duncan Grant, Ethel Walker and James Gunn are among the few Scots leading painters in London. In sculpture a stronger case can be made out in the more conventional side with two eminent Scots, if their convention endures to satisfy modern taste. But perhaps the best way to focus eminence among London Scots is to glance at the London Scottish Societies, and the guests they select to honour.

Of course, there were and are in London Scottish Societies of all sorts and convictions including many Burns Clubs, some of these of such high respectability that their very chairmen are teetotallers. Old boys of Scottish Schools, graduates of Scottish Universities, men whose link is their native clan or county, old soldiers of Scottish regiments, and Scottish trade sections have their gatherings and many clubs and fraternities have their Scottish nights. One of the most characteristic of these Scots assemblings was that of the Fleet Street Scots, composed of journalists of Scottish birth, usually held in the taverns of the Street. Their suppers were private and 'no reporters were present', so the speeches and talk had scope and character. There were probably no more curious assemblies in London than these, expressive as they were of common characteristics of race and occupation in a very diversified pattern.

The journalists included all the ranks from the young reporters or sub-editors to political correspondents, foreign experts and editors, while the guests ranged from premiers to Miners' Union secretaries, which, in the early years of the century was thought to be a very far cry. The members at the suppers would be any number between fifteen and fifty. For the first ten years the gatherings were held in the upstairs

room of the Clachan Tavern which took thirty at a squeeze. The fare was usually Scots broth, haggis, chicken, bannocks and cheese, and as the licensing hours then stretched to after midnight the party got well acquainted. At times a piper would play in the court outside, notably when the Duke of Atholl or Bob Smillie, the miners' leader, were guests. Later the suppers were held at Anderton's Hotel, the Cheshire Cheese, or Carr's Restaurant, or the Wellington in Fleet Street. The members were drawn from nearly all the London papers and all the Scots papers with offices in London, and most of the news agencies. Scotland has almost as many accents as it has tartans, and most of them were heard from guests and members at those symposia.

One of the founders was an Englishman, son of a Brixham skipper (later he wore a kilt as a gallant fighter in a Scottish regiment), and as national fervour grew in the Club that was felt embarrassing, so he was asked to become honorary chaplain. That he refused on the plea that it meant too much work for one man, so it was suggested that he might be appointed Honorary Waiter of the Club. That this pernickety man refused, too, holding in a nasty way that the Honorary Waiter in a Scots Club was merely a tautological expression! So he was elected an honorary adviser.

One liked to think that some of the revelling wit and topical racy cut-and-thrust humour and humanity of the Mitre and the Mermaid and the Devil of Old Fleet of Elizabeth and the Georges sparkled and glowed in these Fleet Street tavern gatherings of our century. Certainly Ian Colvin, George Mair, J. D. Irvine, J. M. Bulloch, and later J. M. Barrie, Archie Macdonell, Ivor Brown, Walter Elliot and Ian MacKay left much spice and glow in our memories.

One recollects particularly Lord Balfour just back from the Naval Convention at Washington where Britannia had handed over the trident to a Council of Three. When Balfour before his speech was told that there were 'no reporters present' and that the proceedings were private he had a word with Barrie who sat next to him and then told us frankly what had happened before the American proposal and why he had met it as he did. Later, Barrie told me that Balfour had turned to him with a sceptical inquiry when the announcement was made that he could rely on the secrecy of the company, and Barrie said that he pledged his honour for the Club. 'I won't sleep tonight,' said Barrie in

my office that night after the supper, 'not till I've seen the morning papers.' Barrie's sleep next night was assured for nothing about the disclosure appeared in any paper. Nor did anything reach print when Barrie himself made one of his rare speeches with some curious autobiographical detail, although a waiter of the house was offered a sovereign if the briber could take his place after dinner.

That night at my office Barrie told an odd story about Fleet Street. He had known a boot reviewer, editor of a boot and shoe trade weekly, and it was the custom of the trade to send in for review one boot, the left boot, of any new series of boots they were producing. Now, this editor and reviewer had seven children who, like himself and his wife, all needed boots and his salary was small. So he was continually writing leaders and articles to prove that any sound opinion of a new boot could only, for technical reasons he gave at length, be based on examination of a right boot, and so on. However, said Barrie, he never was able to change the system and his cupboards were still crammed with left boots!

Some of the best nights were the cut-and-thrust ones when guests and members 'mixed it' as they say in the Prize Ring. Ian Colvin of the *Morning Post* and Maxton of the I.L.P. made one sharp and gay encounter. Bob Smillie, McCallum Scott and J. D. Irvine of the *Morning Post* made another. Auckland Geddes on the eve of his departure to be our Ambassador at Washington sang a good racy Scots song and his old schoolmate, the landlord of the Clachan, helped with ready chorus. Sir Walter Runciman, a Dunbar Scot, concerned in many a great steamship line, sang sea shanties so vigorously that a crowd gathered under the window of the Wellington and joined in the refrain:

Blow, my bully boys, blow!

A good night for Fleet Street.

Another queer night was early in the Club's history when the Duke of Atholl in his family coach and pair drove up and down the Street, the tall footman shouting for the Clachan Hotel! Lord Baldwin — he had a Scottish mother — was one of the three premiers the Club entertained. Ramsay MacDonald came twice and talked well of his school and school-mastering days. Lord Haldane was a great guest. He couldn't understand why journalists neglected the most philosophic and curious court of all — the Privy Council. Of all our lawyer guests he

and Lord Dunedin, who gave some bright broad Scots stories, and Lord Chancellors Finlay and Reid left the brightest memories. Sir Richard Muir, the Public Prosecutor, musing over one of the ugly new florins of that time, remarked at the table that he had got a man five years for making a better one.

Scots actors and singers in speech and song gave us of their best. Forbes Robertson, Norman Mackinnell, Matheson Lang, Harry Lauder, Will Fyffe were among them.

Painters and sculptors and etchers were among our most entertaining guests, for somehow artists, like seamen, generally speak and write well. John Lavery, a Belfast-born man who had spent his early working life in Glasgow, and George Henry, both leaders of the 'Glasgow School', David Murray, the Academician, who had no good word to say for that way of painting; D. Y. Cameron, Muirhead Bone, William Strang and James McBey, the etchers, John Tweed, William Reid Dick, William McMillan, among the sculptors contributed to evenings that old members like to remember. James McBey who painted in the Club tartan the wooden Highlander that figured as mascot at these dinners, had a distinction apart from his famous etchings, for he was the only Scot, certainly the only Aberdeeen man, known to have arrived in London with a hundred thousand pounds or so in gold.

After the excitement over that historical announcement one evening had subsided in the Club, McBey explained how it happened. The Bank of England, it seems, sometimes requires additions to its gold stock and the gold is summoned and sent on to it from banks in the country. The responsible courier-clerk in the Aberdeen bank where McBey was then employed was unwell, and his substitute unavailable, so young McBey and another junior were entrusted with the mission of conveying the gold to London. Conceive the scene that morning on the Euston platform when McBey and his associate with railway attendants and police stood there with the gold and the Bank of England's special van never appeared! Something had gone amiss in the communications between the banks. Something had to be done and at once! The railway couldn't have all that gold in wooden boxes lying on the platform. So the gallant clerks got a four-wheeler cab, packed the boxes into it; one of themselves got inside the cab and the other sat beside the cabman. On the box seat sat McBey, then a burly active youth, in his hand a

SOMERSET HOUSE, STRAND

KING CHARLES RIDES

London street map by which he checked off every street as they went through it on the way to the Bank. No mistake or dodge was made by the cabby and in due course the cab, the cabby and the two Aberdeen men arrived at the Bank of England with the hundred thousand pounds or so in gold! That scene should surely have been commemorated by Boris Anrep in his unique mosaic panels on the floor of the Bank! Or by James McBey himself in a great sunny etching.

Not all the guests were eminent, indeed not all the guests were real, for one bejewelled, dark-hued rajah who kept the Club on tenterhooks all evening because of his scruples about smoking and drinking and the questionable religious basis of the Club songs turned out to be a disguised club member of Dundee origin, and another guest who claimed to have developed the Fearless Fish that attacked the German submarines and drove them from our shores was discovered also to be from that same famous whaling centre.

'It was,' wrote Boswell, 'a delightful day; as we walked to St. Clement's Church I again remarked that Fleet Street was the most cheerful scene in the world. "Fleet Street," said I, "is to my mind more delightful than Tempe." Johnson, "Ay, sir, but let it be compared with Mull!" '

Well, it was compared with Mull or at any rate with the Highlands every meeting night at the Scots Club in Fleet Street, for it was part of the ritual to read an admonishing metrical address, indeed what Dunbar and John Knox would have called a 'Flyting', by Neil Munro, Glasgow editor and Highland novelist. The reader read:

> For Scotland they hadna the heart for 't — the heid for 't!
> Weel are we rid o' them,
>   Lang may they bide!
> They're far better fitted
> For English pock-puddins
> Than here among Scotsmen —
>   The trusty and tried!

This was one of the milder verses in his *Address to Our Renegades*. Did it have any effect? Did it send Scots newspapermen home to assist in the nationalist movement a generation later? The Club historian

knows of none. On the contrary, *counter-blasts* were written and one of them was decreed to be read after Neil Munro's *blast* at all meetings. After denouncing him for his Highland obduracy it put forward as justification for our emigration some staggering claims:

> To folk like us it mainly fa's
> To guide the State and mend its laws,
> To dress the English tongue in braws
>   Wi' practised hand.
> Yet we're the folk that Neil misca's
>   A feckless band!

Thus the Club laureate, editor of an electrical journal and a poet of parts.

There will always be, I think, more gaiety and laughter and possibly more hard work in Fleet Street than anywhere else in London, for life there has a sharp spice and variety, youth can justify itself more spectacularly, rewards are quicker and a man there can make his mark on his generation if he has a mark to make. It is a centre, too, of real international conflict of views and exciting personal relationships, for much of the world press is always there. It is in the tradition of the Scot that his brigade should be gathered in such a place and that it should hold its own in that mighty unruly company.

There are, of course, other Scots clubs of greater state with houses of their own, the Caledonian Club at their head, and there is the august Highland Society with its annual ball where great Highland families sport jewelled *skean-dhus* and dance the Eightsome Reel. Life is getting grimmer to those families since stag forests and grouse moors and even salmon rivers have lost their lure to Americans, and the once rich Sassenach passes on his riches to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It falls particularly hard on their higher ranks who in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sent their daughters to the Court in London. That was usually rather an effort and when it came to the court portrait of the beauty, the money would not run to Reynolds and Romney, but to much lesser men such as Humphreys and the like, who now cut rather a shy figure at Christie's, whereas the lesser families, particularly the lairds of Fife and Dumfries, who sent their daughters to Edinburgh for the season, had them painted by Raeburn, greatly to the comfort and glory now of their thankful family descendants.

CHAPTER XIII

A Jacobite

ONE of the good things that has resulted from the beheading of Charles the First is the decorating of his statue at Charing Cross every thirtieth of January. It is London's best monument, Lesueur's masterpiece, and it is a good thing that at least once a year the passer-by should be given an excuse to look at it. A pleasing fancy of the Jacobites is to have red roses, carnations and ranunculus in their wreaths, so that the romantic mind can conceive the statue of this lost king on his day of memory with red drops on his bays. In fog or snow the flowers on Joshua Marshall's noble Portland Stone base glow and gladden the dreary Square.

This observance is characteristic of London's live-and-let-live ways. It began in the 'nineties. One or two odd little societies — spurred probably by the French legitimists and Napoleonic demonstrations in Paris — on the anniversary of the death of James the Second, the last Stuart monarch, began to place wreaths on his statue, then in Whitehall. After a year or two the wreaths were hung on King Charles's statue on the anniversary of his beheadment. This practice was maintained until the late war, with the exception of the year when Queen Victoria died, when there was a chivalrous pause of respect. In King Edward's reign the Stuart wreaths were not only permitted but suffered the indignity of being officially welcomed. The police accepted them and hung them decoratively on the White King's monument.

The early wreaths mainly came from convinced Jacobites; from the late Theodore Napier, a Jacobite from Australia who always wore authentic antique Highland costume and never despaired till the end that he would in time learn to speak the Gaelic tongue; from a gentleman with an English name who apparently lived on dark Loch Goil, although 'twas the land of the Whiggish Campbells; from the Order of the White Rose and the Royal Stuart Society and the Thames Valley Legitimist Club who invariably sent their tributes and laments, some with hopes for the restoration of the Stuart line in the ample form of the Princess Mary of Bavaria, hailed as Mary III and IV. Sometimes a

serious elderly gentleman would demonstrate against these disloyalties and hand out a pamphlet headed 'The Throne in Danger' to the delight of another shabbier yet more clerical-looking gentleman who had under his cloak legitimist pamphlets of his own with a cut of Charles, King and Martyr, and a pedigree leading to Mary of Modena and Bavaria. The Legitimist I came to know as I liked to see the wreaths and read the inscriptions on Anniversary Day.

One day he spoke and asked me plainly was I on the right side? To this I replied, no usurpers for me, I was for the rightful heir to the throne, the descendant of the Saxon kings — no Williams the Conqueror or upstart Stuarts for me! I was a Legitimist. 'Ah,' he cried, with a flash of interest, 'you're for, of course, the Duke of Parma? Well, there's much to be said for the Duke of Parma's claim — his descent from Alfred the Great seems all right; indeed it crosses our own somewhere in the fourteenth century. But the claim is wrong, quite wrong, for until Henry the Second's time kings, in theory, were really elective within the family, although in practice they were not.' We had a long neutral chat.

On several commemorations I met this curious figure who reminded me a little of Lavengro's Man in Black. Once he confided to me that Charlie-Over-The-Waterism was ruining The Cause. People they ought to be able to count on, satisfied themselves by singing Jacobite songs and writing about Mary Queen of Scots. Mr. Andrew Lang, he declared, was one of the worst for that sort of thing. It was all the past with them, he said bitterly — they would do nothing for the present!

Who this lonely little Jacobite was and what he did for a living I never knew. He was a man of education and, I think, of ecclesiastical training and he was never accompanied, except once, when I met him with a red-bearded man speaking with a Highland accent who had little to say. We went to a Charing Cross tavern which, up to 1914, kept a bowl of water on its counter on King Charles's Day for such gentlemen to drink to the King or Queen Over the Water, just as it kept a bowl of shamrocks for Irish gentlemen on St. Patrick's Day. What the Man in Black did in ordinary life he gave no hint, but he led me to think that he was a figure in some Chelsea circles, and that his wife did not share his legitimist views, indeed was troublesome. He vanished in the 'twenties. Perhaps he went over to the Duke of Parma's side!

CHAPTER XIV

Visitors

A LONDONER, even more than a Parisian, is much exposed to visitors, and that is one of the chief attractions of London life. The language tie connects him with the rest of the British Commonwealth and with the United States of America. More Londoners certainly go to Paris than Parisians to London, but despite the best Entente, the Parisians rarely permit strangers to see much of their home life. It is going that way here in the war time and after, with domestic austerities in food and drink and household service that crippled the substantial side of English hospitality, but in pre-war days most London households had their foreign guests and relatives from overseas. American tourists, they say, go to Paris more often than they go to London, but there is support for the tourist agents' axiom that the average American tourist on a thirty days' tour of Europe spends five days in London. Despite all we have done in the past in hasty licensing laws, hotel shortage and general inadequacy, Sunday conventions and in our weather, the tourists will stream in and even the scarcities that have descended on us do not deter them. It was so in bountiful mid-Victorian times when only the prosperous travelled so far and a foreign visitor even after the big influx of the Great Exhibition of 1851 was thought rather an intruder.

Like many Londoners my life has been enriched by visitors from overseas, particularly from the United States and Canada. My Continental friends have been mainly Italians, Scandinavians, Dutch, Serbians (before Yugoslavia arrived), and Czechs. The unforgettable Czech was Karl Capek with his frail body and face of extraordinary brightness and his correct, curious English, which he had learnt from books. He has left the impressions of his first visit to England in his book with its queer, gay, tingling essence in text and illustrations. He had a national explanation for everything. One remembers his pristine delight in the London scene. Walking in Bond Street one very rainy day he noticed a bowler hat which had probably fallen from a bus passenger and been placed on a street bollard by a helpful passer-by. 'See,' cried Capek,

'the hat! The Englishman — the irascible — the head boils! Away with the hat!' He made a gesture. He generalized on everything.

He missed the train when he was to visit me in a Surrey village, and not feeling sure that I could return in time for the next train, I described him at the station to the porter and told him that Capek was an author who had written the play *R.U.R.* When I picked up Capek at the station he was all enthusiasm about the railway porters who were the intelligentsia of England. 'The porters at your small station know all about me and my play. Wonderful!' He arrived an hour late at the lunch I had arranged for a party of writers to meet him at the Caledonian Club for he had been walking about the Caledonian Market looking for the Caledonian Club. But I'm sure he enjoyed the Market as much as the party. His sweet, shrewd and simplified ways grew out of a life of frail health and grim experience. His upbringing was in a mining region where his father was a surgeon and in his boyhood the sight of broken men being brought up after pit explosions haunted his mind and found expression in his robot plays. How strange it would have been to him had he lived to know that hard-driven, anxious Londoners looking up at horrible visitants in the war skies at night had cried, 'It's a robot!'

It was a many-gifted Spanish visitor, once an Oxford don, who gave me the best insight into how difficult our colloquial language is (and must have been to Capek) and how well it could be mastered. I had asked about a friend — was he a fool? 'Oh no,' said the Spaniard, 'Blank is a damned fool — but he's no fool, mind you! There,' he added, 'don't I understand your confounded language now?' He was right. A fool is a stupid man, a damned fool only a headstrong man.

One recalls the greatly gifted sculptors, Mestrovic, the Serbian and Carl Milles, the Swedish master of the fountain, who with Baron Palmstierna's aid planned to give London (at Portland Place) a surprising monument to Swedenborg. Milles also hoped to give London a fountain dedicated to the dancer Pavlova, to be set in Regent's Park, and the scheme had gone so far that the design had been approved by the Office of Works, the sculptor guaranteeing that none of the figures in it would be a representation of Pavlova (although all of them had something of Pavlova in them), which would contravene some official regulation. The money for the fountain was understood to be in sight,

but unhappily the prospective donor had bad financial luck so London never rejoiced in a Milles fountain. I thought of that lost fountain when I saw in Baltimore in 1940 an odd vivacious ballet founded on Milles's fountains with the sculptor there as the guest of honour.

Norwegians come much to London in business and for cultural study and Ibsen brought Norway near to my generation, although not so near perhaps as Hans Christian Andersen brought Denmark when we were younger and more impressionable. A cultured Norwegian lady who had been in biological stations in many countries was a frequent visitor here and one of her calls was always made to the Natural History Museum at South Kensington to see how the great fish she had modelled and mounted were standing the Museum climate! The visits of the Danish author, Steen Rasmussen, the author of one of the best books on London, were always events to his English friends, for he had new theories or fancies about the architecture as expressive of the people and their development that demanded agreement or refutation. His combination of wide, expert learning and agile dialectics was extraordinarily informing and entertaining, and there were moments when his superior London lore was humiliating to the Londoner. At times he recalled Taine in his detailed observation, but being deeply informed on the history and development of our domestic architecture, he made fewer wild generalizations than the Frenchman.

Icelandic visitors came in war time and one recalls especially that brawny chief of a fishing fleet who, as we drove round the bomb havoc of the East End, quoted compassionate words from Robert Burns whose poems he had translated into Icelandic.

My memories of Italian visitors echo back from the years before the First War and end with the packing-up of Soho Italians when Italy joined Germany in 1940. A learned and single-minded Italian lecturer in Glasgow, who sought to influence his countrymen there who were mainly in the ice-cream trade and itinerary image hawkers, with a sense of the grandeur and dignity of their country (even establishing a weekly journal there for them, *La Riscossa Latina*), comes to mind. My sitting-room in the Temple he admired as true gothic — 'books, china, pictures, bread, butter, hats, gloves, eggs, flowers — all together — everything! Like the gothic. Not classic, not renaissance — that is order, exclusive; your room is inclusive.'

He arrived one day with a piece of silver plate from the Glasgow Italians to be presented to the Italian Ambassador and it was necessary for him on that occasion to be rénaissance and formal so he must have a tall hat for his Embassy call. Unhappily, my hat was much too small for his head and Florentine hair. *Disastro!* One must have a hat of ceremony to go to an embassy! Home resources failing, the Professor thought of a plan, so we combed the streets till he saw a hansom-cab driver with a tall hat that he calculated would be capacious enough for himself. He hailed the man and climbed into the hansom and waved me a triumphant adieu. On his return he told me how when he reached the Embassy he ordered the cabby to change hats and wait. A brisk argument seemed to have followed, but a half-crown prevailed, the hat exchange was made and my friend entered the Embassy with the hat of ceremony. True, it was too small, but he carried it into the room, as was the custom then, and the Ambassador was doubtlessly convinced by the cabby's hat that all was in order and the presentation was properly and poetically made. This professor came first to Scotland as an exile, being too revolutionary a student for his time, but later, coming under the influence of D'Annunzio, some of whose poems he translated into English, he turned Fascist in his middle age and his end was obscure.

Other Italian visitors that come to mind were an Italian geographical admiral and suite of three, all in grand uniform, carrying elegant map cases and atlases, who came to my office in Fleet Street just before the Versailles Conference. After a very courteous opening the Admiral disclosed his mission. It was to get support in the English press for the Italian contention that as not only the flora but the very fauna of Italy extended to some twenty miles east of Vienna, the decision of the Allied powers as to the partition of Austria was surely crystal clear. The rolled maps and atlases and ethnological and biological books were at my service. I cannot remember that this short way with Austria was ever proposed at Versailles but that old conversation rang strange enough when Italy drew in a lowly chair at another peace conference!

London without Americans is almost inconceivable, especially to Americans. In King Edward's time they established themselves in Court and Society. A Vanderbilt tooled a coach and four pedigree

horses to Brighton and Windsor, an Astor ran the *Pall Mall Gazette* ('written by gentlemen for gentlemen') and built a sort of Petit Trianon office-home on the Embankment, while American yachtsmen won races and sported grand Clyde-built steam yachts at Cowes. A great meat-packer brought over a champion team of Clydesdale horses. The London scene was vastly enlivened by their presence and by the swarm of sprightly American press-men who then augmented the established American newspaper colony. Before contemporary American writers had made us conscious of the assets and defects of our way of life, Washington Irving, Emerson and Henry James had made their discoveries in what was best in us and Benjamin Franklin and Nathaniel Hawthorne in what was not so good. Whistler scourged us with scorpions but then he paid us a major compliment by preferring to live here, never going home.

In King Edward's reign with quicker and cheaper travel American tourists of all sorts began to come to England in great numbers, and London itself was not big enough to absorb them into its anonymous stream as their charabancs crowded the streets, their vivacious parties the hotels and restaurants, and their pilgrims swarmed at the Abbey and St. Paul's. Their research scholars made their raids and snatched fresh Shakespearean and Johnsonian and Dudley Ryder discoveries under our learned men's noses. The films at first inaudibly and delightfully French and Italian and searchingly Swedish, turned all American, though we got what satisfaction we could from the knowledge that Charlie Chaplin was a Londoner. Then the youth of England saw little but Hollywood films for a generation, for our cinema houses became till this decade an occupied territory of the United States.

Out of the happy mist of old familiar faces that arises when I think of my trans-Atlantic visitors come figures of strange, heavy, tall men in 'stands of black' as we used to say in Scotland, cousins, or friends of cousins, of my father, whose arrivals and departures in Glasgow were accompanied with pedigree arguments and new phrases that hung about the family for a time. 'I've sure looked in and had a smile from the widow' was how a rusty Cincinatti cousin broke to us how he had called and had a Scotch whisky with a widowed lady who lived in a flat below us whose acquaintance he had made on his first call when our place was closed. A first cousin, a young lad from Newhaven, Conn., excited our

surprise and admiration when we were on a long country walk by calling at a farm and asking the farmer's wife if he could eat a piece of that coal over there as he had had nothing to eat since morning. The literal farmer's wife was surprised and just said to help himself, but we still thought he was a man of resource. In those days nearly every Scots family had dozens of relatives in America.

In London, owing to my newspaper connections and that my brother David was a shipmaster on trans-Atlantic liners for many years and my brother Muirhead's etchings were much collected in the United States, my American associations were vastly increased. The delightful thing was that many of those visitors were seeing London for the first time, so as the quick was passing out of my vision of London it was being constantly and poignantly revivified by the bright particular reactions of these visitors.

In the years between the Great Wars many Americans took their first holiday in England and Anglo-American friendship deepened and extended, while Prohibition in America gave a fresh edge to the experiences here of old visitors. There was, despite everything, a light-heartedness in the early 'twenties when everyone thought that the Allied victory had ended war, and the coming depressions were not in sight. Even the elderly danced and the young gate-crashed into parties; Noel Coward's bitter-sweet frustrations ('Leave Tomorrow Behind!') quickened the pace. In the background were the empty places in nearly every household and the graves over there, but life in the sun was plain and precious again. The great masquerade balls at the Albert Hall were on a scale and grandeur beyond precedent, big hotels sprang up in Park Lane that was coming to look a little like Park Avenue, New York, and smart new restaurants disconcerted discreet Mayfair streets, while the streets themselves brimmed with new motor cars. In New York they had a playboy Mayor and much of America was set on gaiety abroad. They had worked hard enough.

One remembers how eager those prosperous Americans were to share their 'good time' with as many people here as possible. One Caliph of the Eastern Seaboard bought a chateau in Burgundy with great wine-cellars. He brought over a band of American authors and gathered here a number of British authors and they had memorable sessions together of reason and wine in his Thélème.

Another American Maecenas, Van Lear Black of Baltimore, keeping clear of country houses and his 'opposite numbers' in England, found his pleasure in arranging exciting parties in planes and cars and steam yachts and special trains for people, to most of whom it was all 'the world elsewhere'. An engaging idea of this visitor was that all London taverns of renown ought to have a talking parrot. One recalls adventures in the search for parrots and in the conversion of landlords and landladies to the big parrot idea. A particular memory is of an interview after much difficulty with a theatre manager at the end of a long run of a musical piece in which was a parrot that spoke with the tongue of men and angels. After a short wrangle the manager asked the inquirer if he would pay fifty pounds for the parrot. He replied that he would ask his client. 'And what about the man?' the manager asked. The inquirer couldn't understand — what man? 'Why, the ventriloquist, you darn fool!' cried the manager, and his associates did not spare their laughter.

But some parrots were bought and installed. The spectacle of Frank Morley, author and publisher, and H. M. Tomlinson who had written so nobly of the lands where parrots flash, bearing between them down Silver Street — surely Stevenson got his name for Long John Silver with his parrot from this parrot-market street? — a sort of small Crystal Palace in which sat an obdurate parrot, is a better memory. Miss Murray, the landlady of the galleried George Inn in the Borough, welcomed the parrot, whose name was 'Joey', gave him a small room next the dining-room where the old-fashioned 'ordinary' is served, and smiled her thanks. The understanding was that if Joey did not speak in three weeks he would be returned to Silver Street Market and a better parrot provided. After three weeks Joey was still silent, but Miss Murray would not have him taken away. 'All the men who think they understand parrots come here to make him talk, some of them from as far as Canterbury,' she said. 'He brings good trade to the house. That parrot that won't talk is the talk of South London. Indeed, and you won't take away Joey!' So the taciturn Joey stayed until the house changed hands and he went to live at Brighton.

Yet another of this large-hearted Baltimorean's ideas was to get a Thames sailing barge to come to the Chesapeake to race the best oyster boat there. He thought a race between work-boats would be better fun

all round than any big yacht races. But could he get the Thames barge-owners to agree? No. Not even though he offered to pay the cost of taking over boat and crew. The offer was made during the annual Thames barge race on the Committee steamer that accompanied the race. The American who knew about boat sailing was delighted with the barge racing, and the skilful use of the barge-boards which was new to him. He thought the bug-eye boatmen on the Chesapeake would be tickled to death to see them! But the barge-masters would hardly discuss the matter. 'These barges are work-boats — see. They're not going gallivanting for no Chesapeake Cup — see! They've got their job to do!' It was an abrupt snubbing interchange, but the Baltimorean didn't mind. 'They told me everything was for sale here,' he said, 'but I've met John Bull this time.' He seemed even pleased about it and often recalled that incident. He gave a great party at the Trocadero at which every lady was presented with a fan of ostrich feathers. These fans were red or yellow or white, the colours, with black, of the State flag of Maryland, and were skilfully distributed to harmonize with the ladies' dresses so that with the black clothes of the men, the dance floor at moments echoed the Maryland flag. Van Lear Black, however, failed to induce the reigning City toastmaster in his red coat to go with him to Baltimore.

Another unforgettable visitor was the late Don Marquis who had published his *Archie and Mehitabel*, written thirty of his humorous columns in advance for the New York *Herald-Tribune*, and reached London for a long-delayed holiday. It was at a time when a number of American missions were in town on grim business. One mission was searching the vaults of Deptford Church for the skull of Pocahontas, another was seeking to exhume and bear to North Carolina the body of General Oglethorpe to re-bury it in honour in the University campus, and there were other relic-searches afoot. Sir John Squire had written an ironic letter to the Editor of *The Manchester Guardian* announcing that he was concerned in a company (shortly to go to allotment) entitled 'The Exhumation Exports Corporation', to put these matters on an effective business footing.

Don Marquis, who could never keep out of the fun, wrote at once to

the paper beginning his letter with these words: 'Sir, I am an American of immense wealth but no ancestors to speak of. I desire to have ancestors to speak of. The aim and scope of the Corporation mentioned in your organ by J. C. Squire just fits me. I should like to contact him and get from his Corporation a Crusader or two. To meet the susceptibilities of your national church, I would undertake to have them buried in my oil lands in Oklahoma with the full ritual of the Ku-Klux-Klan', and so on. It was gay nonsense and amused many. But what our visitor did not apprehend was the undying trading spirit of our City. When he tried to get out of his room in the morning he found the hotel corridor blocked by persons bearing suits of armour, family portraits, family silver plate, and the like. All they were concerned in was that he was an 'American of immense wealth and no family to speak of'. The telephone never stopped ringing and life became so difficult that he had to escape by the service-lift and depart elsewhere.

Another of his light-hearted pranks Don recounted in this way. He was telephoning a friend when he found that through some faulty connection he was overhearing an official in Buckingham Palace give an order to a royal fishmonger. Don, by habit, could not refrain from noting down the items and the time ordered for delivery and the fishmonger's name. After the time appointed for delivery he telephoned the fishmonger and said, 'Buckingham Palace speaking — what about the fish — hey? It's not here, not a fin of it! I ordered' (Don repeated the list) 'D'ye hear? Buckingham Palace speaking — damme, the King speaking! Am I not to get my fish?' Then, still according to the great columnist, he heard a dull sickening thud such as a royal fishmonger makes as he falls on his wet, white marble floor. 'At that,' said Mr. Marquis, 'I rang off.'

Royalty was a constant interest to him. He sailed back from Liverpool and in his last letter to me he wrote that he had been impressed particularly by the name of a company that had the highest building in Liverpool. He knew, of course, the importance to Britain of the health of the Royal Family. Illness meant postponement and as the King was always opening a town hall or museum or some such ceremony and much money was spent in decoration and transport and all sorts of things it was natural that there should be a business side to such occasions. Still, he little expected, he said, to see big business concerned with the

detail of the royal health. But now he was looking at a huge building with a big sign — The Royal Liver* Insurance Society! 'It makes you think!' wrote Don Marquis.

It is never wise to take anything for granted about an American visitor. An early jolt to my easy assumptions about America saved me from many embarrassments later. A young New Yorker on his first visit to my Temple rooms was duly impressed by their Wren panelling and chimney-pieces, but when I told him the date (1684) when they were built he said that they were nearly ten years later than his own house in Brooklyn. Thinking, as one does in such cases, that my visitor's hearing was not very good, I repeated the date very loudly. 'Yes,' he said, 'my place in Brooklyn is about 1675.' Brooklyn of all places — it didn't make sense! But it was so. It was Newtown, the old Perry mansion, where he told me the 'Newtown pippin' was born in the ancestral orchard, and my visitor had Oliver Hazard Perry (whose name he bore), the victor of a naval engagement against us in Lake Erie, and Benjamin Franklin among his ancestors. The marble bust of Franklin in his home had a broken nose which I remarked on when visiting the old house in Brooklyn some years later, and I was told this story. Young Oliver and his brother, when they arrived at reading years, learnt the facts of Franklin's life and of his legitimate and illegitimate children, and Oliver opened the subject with his father by saying that 'it was a damn close thing with the family — only an even chance of us being born on the right side of the blanket, and yet we were!' So their father leathered the two inquiring lads who took it out of Franklin by throwing his bust down the bow-well in the garden, and that was how the nose of their ancestral Franklin bust came to be broken. Oliver Perry, a rare refreshing figure, was an ambulance-driver in the First War before America was in it, and died before the Second came.

He was one of several American visitors who had ancient houses at home. Hulbert Footner, the detective story writer, had in 'Charlesgift', on the Potomac, Maryland, a house built in the reign of Charles the First. William MacFee, the sea novelist, who was born at sea and his birth registered at Stepney, had an eighteenth-century house in Connecticut, and one met many Marylanders and Virginians who had fine Colonial houses with contemporary furniture. Anyone who has

* The liver is a legendary bird that frequents Liverpool's coat of arms.

been in Annapolis and seen its Queen Anne and Georgian mansions steps warily when crying up all our own old houses — and now London's historic buildings are sadly the fewer! Pity we could not send them over the seas in the War as we did Magna Charta and Domesday Book!

Many American visitors to London spent much of their time at the Tower, a show place little visited by the natives. Some go there with too sanguinary ideas for, unlikely as it may seem, a Chicago crime reporter of the old school who had never before been abroad, asked me for a line to the Chief Warden at the Tower so that he could get a good seat at an execution! He had never seen a beheading, he said, and sure we had something on Chicago there! Hard as it is to believe it, he was quite serious. Another American friend with an equal curiosity about the Tower gave me these items from his researches:

(1) There is room for sixteen traitors, walking abreast, to enter through the Traitors' Gate in the Tower.

(2) This notice is in the Crown Jewels' chamber in the Tower — BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS.

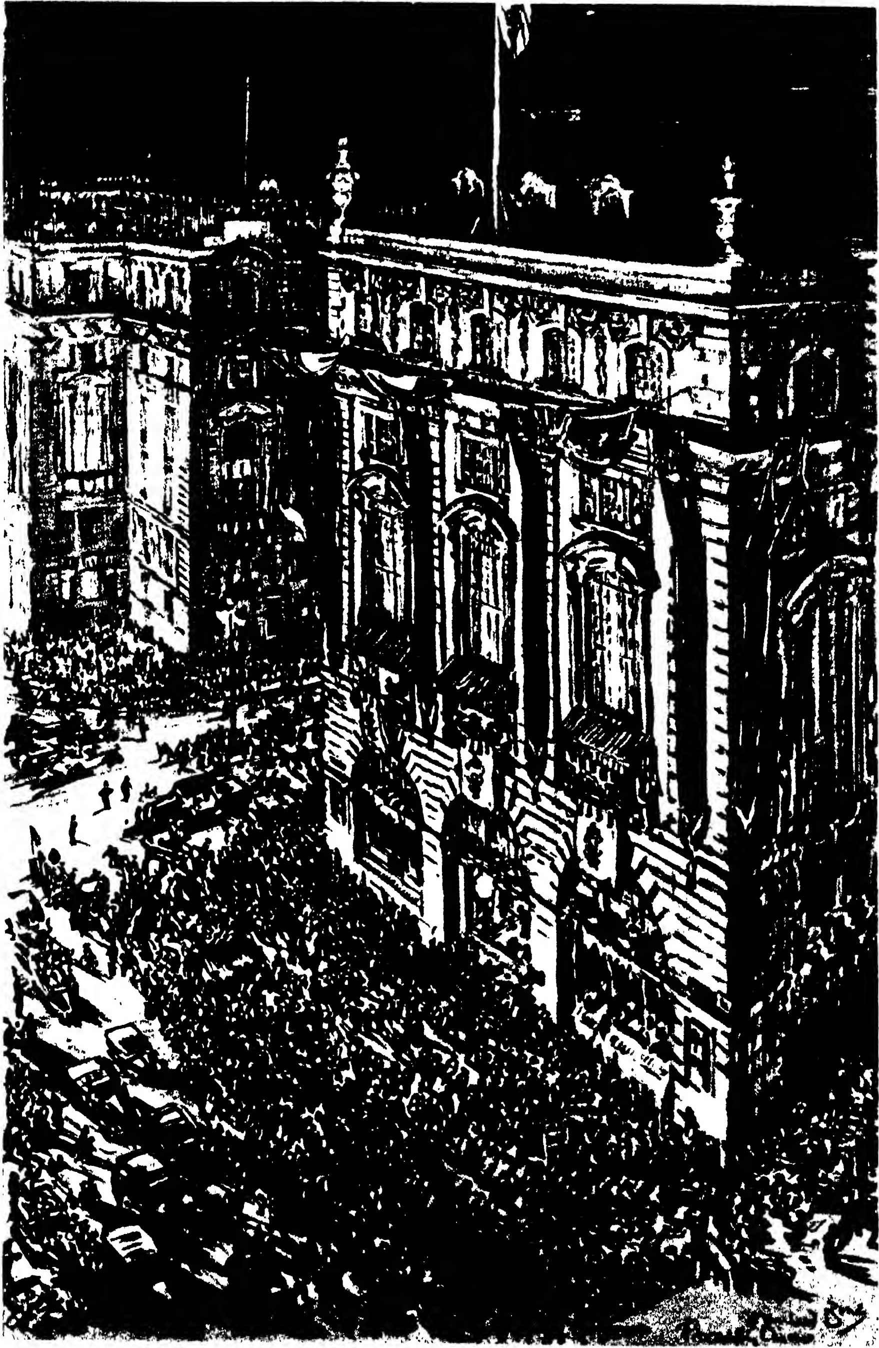
(3) On the side of the Monument, near the Tower, is the warning that anyone beating carpets or rugs against the Monument will be fined.

Like most men of my craft in London, I had met American diplomatists, journalists and judges, and have had the friendship of a few of them, but there is little there that comes within the register of these London echoes.

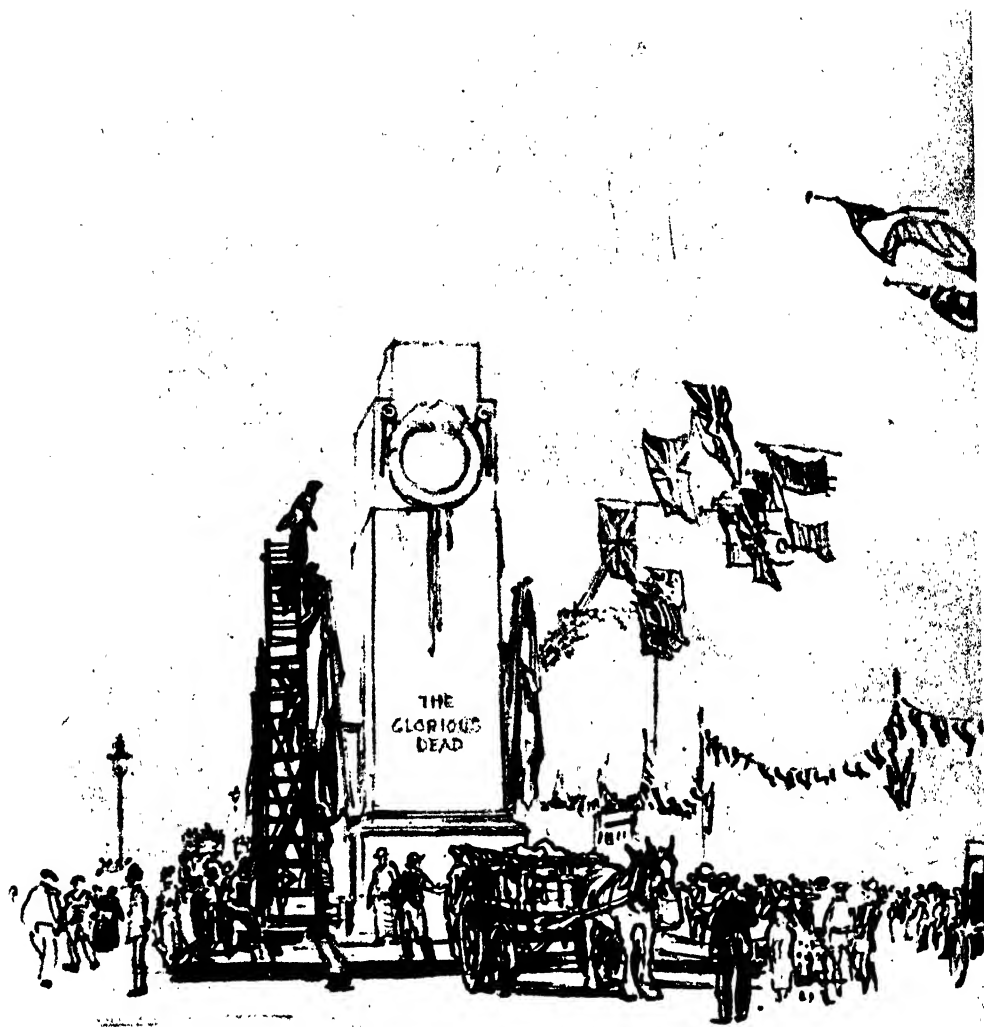
Canadians until recent years were rarer visitors except to those Londoners who had formed war friendships in the First War. Among the United States men one often came on Britons one or two generations removed; with Canadians one met many born in Great Britain. It always seemed odd to find so many Canadians surprised when they heard that their most popular poet, Robert Service, had been my schoolmate in Glasgow. Or that one of their most virile and virulent journalists, who never spared the shortcomings of England in his writings, was Ayrshire born. Or that their brilliant, courageous and characteristic broadcaster, Leonard Brockington, hailed from Cardiff. It was my good luck to meet many Canadian journalists and to no one did we in Fleet Street turn with more expectation for penetrating tolerant common sense on our problems than to the Canadian correspondents in

London. The names of John Dafoe and Grant Dexter of the *Winnipeg Free Press* are still well remembered in Fleet Street, as the chief of many disturbingly keen, practical and idealist Canadians.

The undiscourageable spirit of Canada gleamed out so often and unexpectedly in the affairs or life-stories of Canadians in London that one came to be always looking for it among those visitors. Some of the best instances were among the women. One remembers particularly a lady who, not in her first youth, started a small business in lace and veiling, and when she had a little success she came to England and France to study seriously good lace-making and repair work and historic lace. Returning to Canada she induced a big general stores to rent her a little section, where she soon had a distinctive business that became a major attraction of the establishment. She travelled much, studied many things — even, knowing much about horses, became a good four-in-hand whip — and was always ready for new experience so long as it taught her something. She was one of many Canadians who impressed us with their magnificent confidence in themselves which events justified. One wonders if it was not a Canadian who, when asked if he could play the violin, said that he didn't know — he had never tried.



PICCADILLY CIRCUS: CORONATION EVE, 1937



THE FIRST CENOTAPH, 1919

CHAPTER XV

London Predella

PREDELLA is the word used in Italy for the small panels at the base of a painting or sculpture forming the appendage to the work above them. Under an altar-piece the panels often represent the more intimate life of the saint in the main picture. I have given the title Predella to these short notes at the end of my devotional London-piece as each of them renders a single image intended to enrich the main theme.

CENOTAPH. The unforgettable moment at the Unveiling of the Cenotaph as though a rent had opened in the veil of our material world, came to pass in this way. The women relatives of the slain were gathered that misty November morning on the south side of Whitehall opposite the Cenotaph. After the official ceremony was over, three mounted policemen rode along crying, 'People with flowers come through. Hold up your flowers!' From a stand on the top of the outbuilding of Whitehall Terrace I was looking down on the crowd in black, packed close and orderly like slates on a roof. 'Hold up your flowers!' the constables on horseback cried. The women then raised their flowers over their heads so that they could be seen and helped to reach the roadway. And so, suddenly, there in the twinkling of an eye, the black mass was transfigured into whiteness like hedgerows in May! We on the roof saw nothing beneath us but white flowers where a black crowd had been. Then this white vision changed into mourning women bowing down as they laid their flowers at the foot of the Cenotaph.

The new Portland stone of the monument was a pale lemon as it rose before us unveiled, naked, beautiful, focusing the growing light that was coming through the mist, drawing the significance of the moment to itself. Its creator, Edwin Lutyens, stood near it.

Before that the great procession had passed and the Silence had been observed, not a complete silence for there was a high monotonous screaming from some boat on the river like a far-away keening for the

dead. 'The Last Post' had been sounded and the gun-carriage with the Unknown Warrior's body had gone on to the Abbey with King George and the princes, the statesmen and the generals and the admirals walking after it. The V.C.s marching together, naval captains, soldiers, sailors, airmen, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, had passed.

Six green motor coaches filled with men in hospital blue came out of the mist. In one coach were men who had lost limbs and were still in hospital; in another were blinded soldiers; in another soldiers with terrible injuries who could not, like the others, rise in their coach as they came to the Cenotaph. Some of them may have envied their comrade who was buried in Westminster Abbey that day, some of them may have envied any man who was dead.

A LORD MAYOR PASSES. 'Waiting for the Lord Mayor?' Every November for centuries the Londoners had said that to one another in the city streets. That day in October 1920 the Londoners in their thousands were again waiting for a Lord Mayor. The hawkers were selling 'souvenirs of the Lord Mayor' just as usual. The police lined the streets, traffic was stopped, and the business of the town was interrupted, but there were no bells ringing and no flags. There were no maskers, no aldermen with furred robes, and no gaudy flunkeys, no gilded coach. But the Lord Mayor who passed that day was greeted as never Lord Mayor before in London, for every head was uncovered, and the mind of the crowd was pondering over the deed he had done. Lord Mayors were associated with feasting and jovial life; this Lord Mayor, who lay so still in his black coach, had to do only with fasting and death.

The circumstances were extraordinary, and it is difficult to imagine a parallel of them in any other country. The Lord Mayor of Cork, whose funeral procession it was, was an officer of Sinn Fein, which had declared itself at war with England. When a prisoner in London he had gone on hunger strike and starved to death. Now with all the assistance of the police and the city authorities to carry through a great demonstration, he was borne on the first stage of his journey to Ireland with rebel flags and rebel uniforms, and the whole greeted with respect by the London people.

The procession passed over Blackfriars Bridge, along the Embankment, across the Strand and up Kingsway and so by the most public route to Euston. Traffic was stopped.

The first thing that impressed the crowd was the official character which the procession seemed to have. It was not the party of mounted police, for that attends all demonstrations, but the six policemen marching in front with great solemnity and a ceremonial step as though an actual part of the affair. The next interest was the Sinn Fein flags which were unknown to most people, and the kilted pipers playing 'Let Erin Remember', sounding piercing and small from the distance. The intensity of expression among the mourners struck everyone as they filed along — Irishmen of all types and classes, some like successful provision dealers and publicans, others the lantern-cheeked, deep-eyed peasants and fishermen you see in Jack Yeats's pictures; others like young clerks or students, with irregular delicate faces, and large-framed, fleshy-faced men of the navvy type. A few of the crowd uncovered when the priests passed bearing the Cross, but when the hearse came near the uncovering was general. The only sort of criticism one heard in the crowd was: 'Well, if he was a soldier killed in France he wouldn't have had all this!'

The long processions of women, some with green sashes, all with some Irish symbol, who marched past were impressive by their unconsciousness and absorption in their mission. The procession marched on for an hour, the strange flags soon fading into the hazy sunshine. The crowd broke up with unusual quietude, not as a city crowd usually takes up its interrupted business, but like human beings who had seen a strange thing, and each man was thinking his own thoughts about it.

WATERLOO BRIDGE ROAD STORY. Waterloo Bridge Road had often seemed to me London's last word in the sinister and 'no questions asked'. The tattooer's shop there was like a desperate effort to give some sort of assistance to the police and the coroner in establishing permanent personal identity, which the 'Lodgings for the Night' sign on the dingy houses and the old suicide legends of the Bridge seemed to deny. Conrad chose that furtive region for his horrible night drive of the woman with her idiot son in *The Secret Agent*. This imagery was in my

mind as I heard the story of a man who had lived in one of those Waterloo Bridge Road lodgings. He was a waiter in a hill restaurant overlooking Linz in Austria, which is not far from the home of Hitler. The time was in June 1937; the waiter was proud of his English and eager to use it for us. It was a busy day for Linz was celebrating the centenary of the first steamship on the Danube, and the Austrian Premier was being dined by the town at the restaurant. During an interval caused by a little commotion when a motor-police detachment was being sent off to put out a bonfire swastika blazing on the hillside some miles away, the little waiter told me about his landlady in Waterloo Bridge Road, and he wept as he told his story.

When the First War began he was a waiter at the Hotel Metropole in London and he was interned in the Isle of Man. His landlady carefully kept for him his money and his things; she would not give up anything — never! He had left £60 in gold with her. When he was deported to Austria at the end of the war she sent him so much of his money each month and with the exchange he was a rich man in Austria for more than a year. He had tried to go back three years ago to see her, to thank her, but could not get the permits. Now she was dead! She was very old — sixty-three! Her son had sent him a photograph of her grave. She was very good, very kind, and now he will never see her again! The waiter wept and hastened away. The flaming swastika had been damped down on the far hill and the Austrian Premier began his speech.

A LAST SCENE. The last scene on the stage at the Gaiety was like a bit of a Galsworthy play with the same uncomfortable realism. The auctioneer on his high seat over the throng could hardly be heard, and the crowd included a bald-headed coughing man eating cough-drops, a postman off duty, a stout woman in a flowered dress, and a child, and the main crowd were heavy, self-contained 'humble men' of the Galsworthy personae. The stage was lit with the grim realistic daylight of September 1939. A few people sat in the crimson plush stalls where the 'Johnnies' used to sit and sigh at Gertie Millar. In the dress circle were a few dressers and aged actresses, and in the twelve boxes was a sprinkling of sad-faced, effectively-dressed, actor-like persons.

The sale went on. A row of the red stalls, for each of which people had paid a pound to sit on each night, were sold for six shillings the row, and, as a dealer said, that would not pay for the cast iron. The green-room furniture, Leslie Henson's suite — nothing thrilled them! Even the Strand stage-door entrance, the outside of which was once decorated by representatives of most of the embassies and legations in London, all in beautiful evening dress (tails) and fur coats, with bouquets of orchids, in the days of the great Gaiety chorus (as Miss Constance Collier has told us) went for half a crown. It even included the 'door-keeper's office with rising window and hatch door'.

It was even more grisly than the sale of the Lyceum Theatre across the way. What hopes the new Gaiety started with! King Edward and Queen Alexandra came there. George Grossmith, Alfred Lester, Nelson Keys, Gertie Millar, José Collins, Constance Collier, and Marie Studholme brought the town to the Gaiety and, later, Leslie Henson, Evelyn Laye, and a gay, vivacious host of others. Marriages of Gaiety girls into Debrett became less numerous than in George Edwardes's glorious days, but it seemed the last of the London theatres likely to go. However, new regulations and demands by the L.C.C. meant reconstruction on the most expensive scale, and the management could not face it.

The Gaiety went and the tradition died. It did not die dramatically; the stage nowadays will not be dramatic. One looked for bevies of peeresses and their offspring sitting in the boxes beholding the last act. But there was no one noticeable except on the stage — one stray juvenile lead in the white yachting suit that recalled *The Geisha*, bidding for heavy, gorgeous curtains which he wanted to black out his windows in Bloomsbury.

FACES AT THE WINDOW. At the top of the Baroness Burdett Coutts's old house at the corner of Piccadilly and Stratton Street was a room with a rounded window from which Piccadilly could be seen eastward beyond the Ritz — if that hotel had existed in Queen Victoria's reign. It was the one place in London from which that Queen saw the traffic moving in the street. Queen Victoria sometimes honoured the Baroness by a visit and when she saw the roadway from that upper room she was thrilled, for it was the first time she had seen London in motion

since she was a girl, for all traffic stopped when Victoria drove out. Several times the old Queen climbed the stairs to the room which had once been the Burdett nursery, sat there and watched the omnibuses, carriages, drays and traps as they sped along Piccadilly — the one woman in England who only by stealth could see moving traffic in the street!

Many living Londoners have seen at a window in Eaton Square the face of a lady who was married to a man who was born a British subject in Boston! She died in 1901. She was Lady Lyndhurst whose husband, son of the painter J. S. Copley, was born in Boston in 1772, while round his infant head the historic tea-cup storm was brewing, but he was brought to England when he was two years old. He was well on in his sixties when he married the lady as his second wife. What a thrill it must have been to Americans who met her to know that they were speaking to the widow of a Colonial American born before the Declaration of Independence!

An aged lady who often sat at her window in South Audley Street, and later in Sloane Street, was remembered by many people in my early days in London. She was Lady Charlotte Campbell whose mother was the beautiful Gunning who married the Duke of Argyll. She sometimes was seen in a high gauze mob cap like the one she wore when Hoppner painted her as 'Aurora' fingering pink roses among grey clouds. Scott had written verses to her and the poet Campbell had read to her his 'Copenhagen'. Hers must indeed have been a face to see, framed in a London window!

In a Bayswater window on bright days in the early 'thirties you could sometimes see an active-looking aged man, now seat-ridden at last, reading his newspaper and occasionally looking out with a sporting eye on the weather. His father had been Governor of Malta, and Sir Fitzroy Maclean could himself remember the days when a steamship was the exception on the Mediterranean. When a young military attaché in Canada he had visited the United States and shot game where great cities now stand in the years before the American Civil War. He got his commission in the Army from the great Duke of Wellington. He wore his kilt on occasion and led the Grand March at gatherings of the Macleans when well over eighty. Once he showed me his father's notched duelling pistols and mentioned casually that he himself had never had to use them! He was a centenarian when he died at Duart in Mull.

A SPRING NIGHT WALK. On a lovely spring night in 1905, with a young moon overhead and the river that poignant misty blue that sets the lamps to ring out their deepest golden notes, when the density of the tree-shadows on the Embankment flags makes you look up to find that the leaves have come again to these dingy sticks, it was not surprising to see the Prime Minister about and enjoying it. As I turned to the Embankment from Parliament Street that evening after seven I recognized that the tall gentleman in front of me was Mr. Balfour. He walked along close to the wall, looking in a meditative way at the water, and sometimes at the lights. He wandered absently on the top of the Embankment pavement artist's 'Salmon on a Plate', glanced down a moment, and passed quietly on. Did he note the legend below it:

Sympathy without relief
Is like mustard without beef?

Out of a hundred or so people on the Embankment only a dozen recognized him. He paused irresolutely near Charing Cross Bridge, then marched more briskly up Northumberland Avenue, stopping for a second attracted by the Religious Tract Society's window — the one with the Botticelli in it. Another pause in front of the old woman who sells newspapers in Whitehall. It may be true that he did not read the newspapers, but he certainly read the bills of two evening newspapers which announced with perfect unanimity, 'Great speech by Mr. Chamberlain'. I watched the lonely figure cross the road and pass into the quiet lane off Drummond's Bank, making for the Spring Gardens entrance to St. James's Park. The deserted lane (long gone!) was badly lit, but I could see the Premier remove his hat and wander bareheaded into the night.

ROMAN BATH. There used to be two men in London whose personality fascinated me. It was impossible to think of them without the mind being roused to curiosity and speculation. They were the two men who bathed in the Roman Bath in the Strand. The Roman Bath itself is a wild little antiquity, tucked away in an ancient lane that staggers out of the Strand and creeps somehow down to the river. There used to be a stile — a wooden stile — at the bottom, and if you climbed over

it you found yourself on the Embankment. The Bath is in guide-books, and so known to all Americans, but no ordinary Londoner seems to discover it. It was lost in David Copperfield's time. He wrote: 'There was an old Roman bath in those days at the bottom of one of the streets out of the Strand — it may be there still — in which I have had many a cold plunge.'

But it is there still, and every Saturday for an hour or two it used to hold a levee of tourists. Then the door was closed, and the fortunate draper in Oxford Street who then owned the Roman Bath shared his secret with the two men I mentioned. They were termed by the draper 'subscribers'; for two guineas a year anyone could have become one of them, but nobody else did. Out of the millions of Londoners only those two went down that obscure little lane to the dingy house with its rusty little front railing and opened the door with their keys and entered the dim arched room. I liked to think of one of them all alone taking his plunge into the cold clear water that wells up from the bottom just as it did when there may have been togas on the stone where he had put his boots. Then out again, the old door slammed, and up under the archway and away among the buses! Nobody bathes there now and its ownership — even its Roman origin — is in dispute!

THE CAPTAIN'S CAR. Even in 1910 when the tenth anniversary of the first long-distance road trial for motor cars in Britain was being celebrated, there lay in state in a southern garage a car that had an archaeological interest to the motorists of that time whose own cars have so archaeological an interest to motorists of today.

It was a 1901 model of an obsolete make with high frame, large back wheels, open back of spindle pillars and rail to the seats, and all the other characteristics that seem so amusing to us nowadays. The date, however, did not explain the steering-wheel of double the ordinary size nor the windscreen of unusual strength of woodwork ornamented with a carved rope pattern. Strange, too, was the stoutly built man in a blue jersey who was scrubbing away with soap and water with extraordinary energy. (Whoever sees a man in a garage nowadays scrubbing a motor car with soap and water?) The garage-keeper said, 'Oh, that's the captain's car', and told his story about it.

The captain commanded a liner on the New Zealand trade, and he used his car every time he was in town — that is to say, at intervals of six months. When he bought the car, he thought the original wheel rather finicky, and had the new one made. The windscreen was built by the ship's carpenter, and did him credit — it would do for a raft if the car ran into the river. The garage folk knew of the captain's arrival by the appearance of two sailors, who set to work to put the car shipshape according to their ideas. They attended the captain and his wife (who would appear next day), saw fair between the captain and the car, giving a hand if it missed stays at a crossing or blew a tyre. The latter misfortune seemed to happen rather often on these excursions, perhaps because the tyres deteriorated without use and perhaps because the seamen blew them up too thoroughly. Anyway, a tyre went nearly every trip after the interval. 'I've counted up,' said the garage-keeper impersonally, 'that between garage fees, tyres and everything it costs him about £5 a mile what he does have of it.' I asked him whether the captain noticed that any changes in motor cars had crept in during the ten years. It turned out that a procession of delighted boys that attended him back to the garage after his last burst tyre had caused him some misgivings. He had told the garage-keeper that he thought his car was beginning to look a bit old-fashioned.

A MAN OF DESTINY. My first barber in the street of Sweeney Todd was a patient, quiet-mannered little man who said little beyond 'Fine morning' or 'Very wet today' to his customers, and his sole pleasure seemed to be in his work. Sunday was a happy day to him, for then he would come into his shop and lock the door and work away mounting glass frames over his white walls and in odd little ways making his room seem cleaner and brighter. One afternoon when things were quiet he told me something of his story as he clipped my hair into proper neatness. I had asked him jokingly if he was a member of the Barber-Surgeons' Company. The question interested him, for he was, he said, the only barber-surgeon in London. He then told how in his youth there was a strong barber-surgeon guild in Hamburg, and he determined to pass the not very difficult examinations and take his licence.

By the time he had done so events had marched, and the barber-surgeons were abolished and Germany was brought into line with the rest of Europe.

He then thought of dentistry, in which he had had some practice, and learning that in America he could qualify cheaply in eighteen months he scraped up sufficient money and sailed for New York. After he had had a few months' study a change was made in the American dental system, and three years' study was required. He had not sufficient means for this, and again he fell into the common shaving round of a barber.

Ambition awoke again with the idea of becoming a ladies' hairdresser in Paris, and after a stiff payment he was accepted by a fashionable house. He learnt quickly, but, alas! before he was proficient the fashion changed, and the delicate structures, with their hundred clever coquetries of the time, were given up for plain 'buns'. I have forgotten the barber's explanation of the temporary change in fashion. Anyhow, he was again under the bludgeoning of fate. He gave up all his ambitions, and determined to hold to the humbler walks of barbering; he settled in Fleet Street, unmarried and friendless, but quite contented, although gradually weakening under a disease brought on by confined life. Then he faded out of Fleet Street, and his white underground bower was dominated by an Italian accent, in which I heard the news that the old barber had left behind him thirteen pounds.

THE RIDING JUDGE. A decade ago Bouverie Street had in it the stately plaster façade of an old stable with a stag's antlers over its archway where the young gentlemen of the Temple kept their horses, and latterly the *Star* kept its motor delivery vans. Dickens may have kept his gig there when he was editor of the *Daily News.* John Thadeus Delane, editor of *The Times*, inscrutable, olympian and florid, is said to have kept his horse in that stable when he lived in his secret old brick house in the stagnant Sergeant's Inn that was destroyed in the Blitz. Delane used to say that he was the last gentleman to ride out of the City into the West End.

But till 1911 Justice Grantham rode from the West End into the City and he was probably the last man to do so. His tall, firm figure and

aquiline head, on which he wore a squarish hat of a hunting cut, were familiar sights near the Law Courts on fine days. On the Proclamation of King George the Fifth at Temple Bar Justice Grantham on his brown horse appeared in the midst of the turmoil in Fleet Street. Apparently he had not considered the difficulties of the day, and, headed off by troops, heralds and crowds, he found his field of action growing smaller and smaller till at last he had to back into the Middle Temple entrance at Temple Bar, and there he sat his horse, like the Horse Guardsmen in their boxes in Whitehall. His horsemanship in the trying circumstances was admired.

When the ceremony was over he came out from the archway and rode at a trot along the Strand and away to the west. Many of us who watched him felt that we were seeing the last ride of the last rider trotting out of the City on his ordinary lawful occasion. Attending him that day must have been a ghostly cavalcade of old judges and lawyers and their clerks, and perhaps Mr. Pepys in his coach putting it all down in a ghostly diary.

THE UNFADING VISION. Everything about the lonely island of Tristan da Cunha is strange, but surely there is nothing more curiously romantic, in Conrad's vein of romance, than the relation between that far island and the late Mr. Douglas M. Gane, a grave elderly solicitor in Chancery Lane. One July day in his boyhood Mr. Gane was a passenger in the barque *Ellora* which called at the island, but the sea was too high to allow anyone to land.

Tristan lies 1500 miles SSW. of St. Helena and 4000 miles NE. of Cape Horn. It was annexed to Britain in 1816 when Napoleon was at St. Helena and a garrison of sixteen was placed on it to prevent any attempt to use the island in schemes for Napoleon's escape. The force was withdrawn but a Corporal Glass with his wife and children remained with two masons who built the settlement, which had also at the time some castaways and sealers; and coloured women came from St. Helena and South Africa. This community of mixed blood numbered 185 in 1937, and despite all official offers in times of distress of transport and land in South Africa, the inhabitants stoutly refused to desert Tristan.

Some of the islanders came on board the *Ellora* and the boy saw them and heard their story. From that time till he died Mr. Gane never forgot the far island, nor allowed other people to forget it. Mainly through his efforts warships and whalers called with stores for the island in times of need; again and again he raised funds to succour the islanders, he was the inspirer of schemes for missionaries to serve there; the newspapers were never long free of Mr. Gane's writings to remind the world of Tristan da Cunha. He was throughout his life a visible providence to the people of that island which he had never visited. He wrote a book on the island and its royalties went to the Tristan da Cunha Fund.

He described in that book how in 1884 he saw the island. 'We approached in the night so that when we came on deck in the early hours of the morning we were near enough to appreciate the full majesty of it. It rose sheer out of the sea for 1000 feet, and on the tableland rested its gigantic peak towering to a height of 8326 feet above the sea level, with no minor peaks surrounding to diminish its effect. The sheer wonder of the sight remains my most vivid impression. My interest in this solitary South Atlantic island has remained unabated since I saw it thirty-eight years ago.'

He remembered it till his death some twelve years after that, when still a providence to Tristan. Surely we have here in this grey persistent solicitor in Chancery Lane a case of a man who by the vision splendid was on his way attended, and never let it fade away into the life of common day?

P.P.C. Many people waited one night in Berkeley Square to see the dead Lord Rosebery borne past his house in the Square on his way to the grave in Scotland. It was a place very near to the spirit of that strange statesman; and over it, too, hung the shadow of dissolution, for Lansdowne House, which Bute, the only Scottish Prime Minister before Rosebery, had built, was soon to be dust and ashes and the old grandee Square, which had housed so many Prime Ministers in the past, was to be changed out of recognition.

Many years before, in a paper he read on disappearing London, Rosebery spoke of those little unchanged parts of old London that you

LONDON, GOOD-NIGHT!

sometimes come on hidden behind regions of new buildings, giving you the same surprise that you had when you came on patches of snow long after a frost. Berkeley Square seemed one of those survivals, and the man who for a generation had himself appeared to be a survival of another era, seemed to be lingering there as his funeral coach came slowly by the red-brick mansion with the carved primroses on its façade.

The crowd that waited there included many tall men like footmen and some little men like jockeys. The great doors of the mansion stood open as though a caller was in sight. When the procession of funeral cars came slowly round the bend of the Square, their lamps gilding the sashes of the windows, the household staff appeared on the steps, the crowd uncovered, the policemen stood at the salute. Lord Rosebery in his oaken coffin crowned with flowers went very slowly past his doorstep with never a stop. Then the funeral coach moved on quickly through the familiar sallow Mayfair streets and on to King's Cross where the familiar train was to bear him for the last time to the home of his ancestors.

In the far 'eighties young James Barrie, leaving Edinburgh University, wrote *An Edinburgh Eleven*, a study of the notable Edinburgh figures of that time. Stevenson, Masson and Rosebery were among them. Rosebery was the last of that Eleven to go. All Out? Yes, 'All Out!'

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