

desk, you find sifting dust which once was Man, drifted from those open chasms. The sanitary commissioners, who couldn't imagine what ailed the place that people should turn sick and faint at their prayers, soon found the reason. And the sextoness as she tells, with her duster brightening the altar rails dull from the touch of these invisible fingers, gives me in a dozen words the history of the ill-health of All Hallows the Great. "And now they are going to pull down the dear old church (she says). I was married here; my children were all christened here. I can't bear to think of it. But go it must. The vaults are a sight, and I daren't even clean the floor of the aisles."

Wren came after the fire and designed the new building, using the services of the skilfullest carver (believed to be the ubiquitous Grinling Gibbons) who has hung oak garlands of flowers and fruit and set beautiful lattice-work as a frieze in some of the pews; and the Hanse merchants came from the Steelyard next door with their offering of the choir screen crowned with their crest, the German eagle, in grateful remembrance of Sundays spent in a foreign land. Of these same Hanse merchants my guide has something to say, for she recollects the old Steelyard before it was pulled down in '53—Cannon street railway now covers the site—and describes how the warehouses looked to her "like nunneries with low peeping windows;" and tells me how grass grew between the chinks of the stones and how great gates shut off the sacred quadrangle from Thames street and great eagles fronted the river side. She knows the merchants settled here first in the thirteenth century were turned out of London by Elizabeth for presuming on their privileges and attempting to keep the handy little stream of Walbrook for their sole use, but re-instated themselves again in their old quarters in a very few years, with commendable perseverance. When the property was sold in '53, it was still in the possession of the Hanse towns, Lubeck, Bremen and Hamburg. "I can recollect the Steelyard watchman, old Soldier Jimmy (she declares), he'd have been a good way over a hundred if he was here to-day. There isn't a hole or corner of this part of the city I don't know, for I've lived here since I was a child; but there have been so many changes it's quite disheartening."

The sextoness loves the old church she was married in, and lingers over its various points of view with great affection, showing me the brass candle-holders screwed on all the pews and in use till the vulgar upstart gas came in with a flare fourteen years ago, and the Lord Mayor's pew with the wrought-iron sword-rest; and the fine carvings in which the cherries look good to eat and the flowers fit to pick, and the blurred dim epitaphs on dead and gone citizens, and the graceful font where those citizens were christened; these are possessions common to all city churches. But there is something else—beyond the yawning chasms in the aisle and the heaps of bones and dust that make All Hallows unique—consisting of a collection of autographs and drawings cut on the ledge of the prentices' seat, autographs most of them dated in the early part of the last century, drawings of ships and flags and hearts and such like bravery with which to beguile the weary sermon hour. W. F. in 1717, with his sharp clasp knife, took much trouble over his designs, and William Clarke in 1721 and T. Bird in 1741, rounded their capital letters with precision and dotted their i's with care, and there are any number of initials and any number of dates beside, records of the idle apprentices' Sabbath-day recreation.

"Very neglectful of the verger," said the sextoness. "If the young rascals had been properly looked after this wouldn't have happened." Yet only two years ago in her own time of office a certain John Mason cut his name, and for him and for herself she has no rebuke. "He was all for foreign lands, that boy. I used to give him nice hymn books to read, and ask him not to waste his time over stupid adventures. But no. So they emigrated him, and now he's in Canada doing well." And if Johnny in Canada should by any wild chance come across this it must please him to know how tenderly his old friend rubbed the dust from his signature in All Hallows the Great and vituperated a youthful enemy who had ruined an extra finely-wrought monogram of Mason's "out of spite."

These notes on a city church are best illustrated by a portrait, or an impression rather, of one of our chief story tellers, Mr. Walter Besant (a hasty Kitcat Impression is I know an injustice, deserving as is Mr. Besant of careful Holbein-like treatment and of a full length), whose books are peculiarly appreciated by the Cockney who loves his London, and whose name is as great a power, I take it, with you as it is with us. The author of "The Bell of St. Pauls" is an authority on the city and its customs. The author of "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," of "The Children of Gibeon" is an authority on city dwellers. One owes to his energy introductions to places one would never have found for oneself, and to his kind and gentle hand countless truthful sketches of men and women living extraordinary lives under extraordinary conditions, of whose existence, to be honest, one never troubled oneself to think.

It's a far cry from Thames street to Hampstead, yet as I lounge in the pleasant sunshiny churchyard of All Hallows the Great, the grey walls seem to melt, and in their place I see Mr. Besant's gabled roadside villa in Gayton Crescent. The multitudinous city noises cease, instead I hear a thrush calling from the cherry blossoms on the garden-lawn. The narrow city street widens to a country road which turns from the picturesque hill-town down towards the common. And my sober-tongued guide, full of regret

for the past, with no love for the present and no belief in the future, vanishes, leaving me in the presence of the most cheerful, hopeful and helpful of our modern writers.

Picture to yourself a small library crowded with books. Through the low window decorated with the quotation, "The Night Cometh," you can reach the garden; there are pictures on the walls, a beautiful pen and ink illustration by Mr. Forestier for "The World went very well then," and another of the Abbess dying before the altar in "The Last Mass." There are books on the floor, on the chairs; open books by the side of carefully written manuscript on the study table. It is plain I have come at a busy time, yet Mr. Besant takes pains to hide the fact and I am shown many a treasure and told many an interesting fact, as if he had nothing in the world to do with those chapters waiting by the inkstand. As he stoops over a drawer to find Wilkie Collins' manuscript of "Blind Love," or a collection of autograph letters from writers who joined the First Society of Authors in 1843 (that back-boneless society which came to an end in six months and about which Mr. Besant wrote last year in the *Contemporary Review*) I think how typical is my velvet-coated host with his frank hearty manner and genial voice of the literary man of thirty years back. I can recollect Shirley Brooks looking just so. Are there many of the rising school of this type? I don't believe it; how often with all the superfluous culture of the modern Men of Letters are they not narrow and hard and cruel with pens as sharp as their tongues.

Mr. Besant's beard is streaked with grey, but that is his only sign of age. He has always been short-sighted ("I knew I never saw very clearly, and I can remember when I was about thirteen picking up a broken eye-glass, and on looking through it how astonished I was to find that things had distinct outlines," he says), a fact that doesn't trouble him except that he must wear glasses habitually. He has the healthy look of a man who lives most of his days away from town, the cheerful look of a man who finds life exceedingly interesting. He cannot be harsh even over the iniquities of publishers, though he speaks strongly enough on the subject of the Authors' Society. "We have six hundred members," he says. "We have just started a magazine. We don't wish any harm to publishers; they are as necessary to us as we are to them. But we want, and will have, fair dealing, and we set our faces against the vile system of secret profits. If we succeed America must follow our example; and I say that in carrying our points we shall be doing far more good to our fellow creatures than if we wrote fifty novels."

To be the author of a shelf-full of delightful books, to have inspired the building of the People's Palace, that Star in the East, would have contented most of us. But Mr. Besant is never content. "Still achieving, still pursuing" is his motto; with a sound mind in a sound body what can not be done? All day long and every day Mr. Besant's labour never ceases; but look at him and hear him speak and you will know how impossible it is that his sympathy should ever grow cold or his friendly hand tire. They say the personality of a great man is always disappointing, and they give you a score of reasons why this should be so. Disregard these croakers, disbelieve in the truth of this captious notion. Mr. Walter Besant (among others) is a proof—and he is not an exception—of a worker, his work being one and indivisible. WALTER POWELL.

EVENING IN MUSKOKA.

LIKE shrouded stars within a shrouded sky
The lilies lie upon the lonely lake
And gleam among the rushes. Slowly break
The last faint dying flashes from on high.
Around the island lies a purple sheen
Of mist and twilight folding it from view,
While far within the narrows, passing through,
The shadowy glimmer of a sail is seen.

A kingfisher, shrill chattering, swiftly flies
Far down the lake more lonely haunts to seek;
The night winds from the deepening shadows rise,
And whisper slumber songs that softly creep
From point to point, until the echo dies
Far o'er the lake, and night folds all in sleep.

STUART LIVINGSTON.

PARIS LETTER.

CRIMINAL responsibility has been so whittled down to natural unconsciousness, and the play of circumstances, that an accused will soon be regarded only as a suffering patient, fitted, not for a prison, but for some variety of moral *hospice*. The coming trial of Eyraud, for the murder of the usurer bailiff, Gouffé, will be a landmark in the history of criminal proceedings. Eyraud's decoy-duck and associate is the now rather celebrated Gabrielle Bompard, aged 22, the daughter of an ironmonger at Lille, whose antecedents, eccentricities, and caprices fix public attention more than any other event. The girl asserts that for her share in the commission of the crime, she acted as Eyraud ordered her, having no power to refuse, and possessing a will only capable to execute what she was told, or suggested to do.

Drs. Brouardel, Ballet, and Mottet, the most eminent "medico-legists" in France, have been ordered by the legal authorities to report on the mental conformation of the female accused—who is cunningly lucid, and extraordinarily *bizarre*. These gentlemen have practised suggestive

hypnotism on Gabrielle Bompard, in the end to test her ability to resist crime. The results are said to have been extraordinary, and revealed extreme nervous phenomena. Her counsel, M. Robert, is at Nancy conferring with Dr. Bernheim on the moral condition of his client, and he will demand for defence purposes that that scientist and Prof. Charcot hypnotize Gabrielle Bompard and so test her irresponsibility. Hence the trial will raise the question of nerves, plastic to criminal suggestions, as responsible causes for violations of the Decalogue.

The Panama share-holders have addressed a petition to the Minister of Justice, demanding that a criminal prosecution be instituted against the ex-directors for deceiving them by false statements, and misappropriation of the capital. They also pray that the liquidator of the Company should allow a most thorough investigation of the accounts to ascertain into whose pockets the capital has gone. Of 1,500,000,000 of francs subscribed, only one-third of this sum has been actually expended on the works. The petitioners desire that the directors be placed in the dock like those of the Comptoir d'Escompte and the Copper Society, and be made responsible to their last farthing for the wreckage they have wrought.

Apart from any petition the public prosecutor will examine the liquidator's report, and act accordingly. For the moment the liquidator desires to utilize the plant and interest of the old, in the establishment of a new Company. The shares have dropped as low as 24 francs last week. M. Bonaparte Wyse has been delegated to solicit from the Columbian Government an extension of the period—which expires in 1893—for completing the Canal. If refused, there is an end to the matter. The Columbian Government has a first charge of five per cent. on the gross earnings of the Canal. In the financial world the definite judgment is, that the Panama Company cannot be put on its legs.

The fashion of private balloon voyages has taken. A company has produced its first aerial ship, as prosaically as if it were a summer cab. The acrostats are careful navigators. Nadar was the originator of parties of pleasure in space, and his first and last trip, when Madame Georges Sand and other celebrities were among the travellers, had a well-nigh fatal ending in Belgium; that balloon hangs on the wall of his studio. A gentleman or lady now engages a balloon for a day-trip and invites friends. The cost is 1,200 francs; if the trip be continued during the night—said to be the most romantic part of the ascension—the price is 500 francs more. All the comforts of a home are secured in the capacious car, and pigeons are liberated in the empyrean regions with quill-tail despatches for friends below. The higher the rise, the safer and pleasanter the trip. To sail independent of the currents is as far as ever from a practical solution.

Assassinations, robberies and suicides are unusually rife. Paris has had well-nigh a daily murder of late. Criminals would do well to note that the new Detective Police Office has just been opened. The Paris Scotland yard is an imposing structure facing the Quai des Orfèvres, and skirting that gem of architecture—La Sainte Chapelle. The chief of the Detective service, M. Goron, has rather a small office, but how Madame Tussaud's representatives would covet its wealth of curiosities. It is a drawing-room lined with a chamber of horrors.

M. Goron himself is a remarkable man, a native of Rennes, and aged 40. Being a Breton explains his tenacity of temperament. He has been endowed by nature with a *finesse*, a specialty for detecting crime. He has seen a good deal of the world and this has contributed to sharpen his peculiar abilities. He is the type of a real "Saviour of Society," independent of having been destined by his family to be an apothecary. M. Goron can scent crime. Courageous, as a matter of course, his upright and perspicacious character has raised him to his present position. He joined the army when seventeen years of age, rapidly became sergeant, but left the line to enter the marines. When the 1870 war came, he volunteered—having returned to civil life—as a Turco; his feet during the campaign were frost bitten from exposure. Loving adventure, after peace was signed, he emigrated to found a colony in the new world; unsuccessful, he returned to France in 1881, entered the police administration and rose by sheer force of talent, step by step, to his present post.

Round M. Goron's office hang portraits of murderers, thieves, swindlers, and their victims—living and dead. There is a Zolaism in the grouping indicative of business, rather than art. Over the chimney-piece are the portraits of President Carnot, and the Prefet de Police; another portion of the wall is occupied by the portraits of M. Goron's predecessors. On the office table is a pile of papers, each bundle being the history of a crime. There is an artistic inkstand, elegant pen tray, stationery, etc., but these are only secondary in the eyes of the *chef*. He is a gentleman very hasty to learn what you have to say, and listens while walking up and down in his office, for then he is close to a series of telephones at any moment announcing a crime just committed, a conflagration, etc. Instantly he telephones his instructions, orders his carriage, which is always ready yoked; in a few seconds it comes round; he jumps in with his right hand man, Monsieur Jaume, or some favourite inspector and pupil, such as M. Homilier.

There is a large album full of portraits of murderers, Pranzini, Prado, Troppman, etc.; above it, naturally, the photo of executioners; the present Deibler looks as pleasant a mannered man as ever worked a guillotine. There too are all the implements and instruments employed in the commission of crime. Also "toys" in plenty, one