

The Inglenook.

The Romance of London.

BY DORA M. JONES.

Not long ago, a young American was airing his views as to the inevitable decline in store for our country, and he pointed his remarks by a comparison between London and any go-ahead American city. He was eloquent on the narrowness of the London streets, the impossibility of getting about rapidly and in comfort, the irregularity and meanness of the houses, and no less on the misplaced tenderness for old associations which could leave, for instance, such mediæval eyecores as the old houses at Holborn Bars to disfigure a modern thoroughfare. He declared that if we benighted Londoners could only once behold one of the new cities of the West, neatly laid out in parallelograms, with every block and every street consecutively numbered, and all the main thoroughfares served by the latest thing in electric cars, we should hide our diminished heads in shame and confusion.

There is much, no doubt, in the criticism of Young America that we might well lay to heart. And yet—and yet—"man does not live by bread alone," and our mother city is more to us than a place to run to and fro and make money in. What is it, after all, that brings our trans-Atlantic cousins over here every autumn by the thousand, to ride on our antiquated omnibuses, and to dwell in our ill-contrived houses—what but that breath of the past, that historic atmosphere, which bathes the dingy streets of London in

"The light that never was on sea or land"?

"London," said Sir Walter Besant, "has had an unbroken history of a thousand years and has never been sacked by an enemy." The Roman fort set on the hill between marsh and river—the little wooden town of the Saxon chiefs—the Plantagenet city with its walls and gates, its bells clanging incessantly from the steeples of a hundred and fifty churches, with the pleasant suburban gardens where now the omnibuses rattle up and down Holborn, and the Thames, alive with pleasure boats and barges, flowing clear and unpolluted past the grounds of the great monastery which is now the Inns of Court—all these images pass before us like pictures in a magic-lantern show as we think of the changing fortunes of the place. What pageants, what tragedies, what strange reverses of fortune these streets have seen!

"Love thou thy land with love far brought
From out the storied past."

And where does the past touch us more intimately than in London? Yet the London of to-day has its romance as well—the romance of vastness, of complexity, of infinite possibilities. We have heard all our lives that London is the greatest city in the world; but have we ever thought what it means to belong to a town which holds within its borders between four and five million people, or nearly a million more than the whole population of the Australian Commonwealth? We know that she is the wealthiest city in the world, but have we realized that a single street in London is worth as much as a whole provincial town; that the houses in Piccadilly for instance, are valued at an annual sum which amounts to nearly twice as much as the annual value of Winchester, and

that Regent Street is worth in current coin of the realm £20,000 more than the whole of Ramegate. Every twenty-four hours in London, three million people are making journeys by road and rail, and at any time of day a million people, more or less, are walking in the streets. It is no wonder that our street traffic is the nightmare and the despair of every progressive Londoner. The food bill of London fairly staggers the imagination and lays the whole world under contribution. To take one small item only, from 800 to 900 millions of oranges are consumed yearly in the area of the Metropolis.

The London of today is more than a city; it is a congeries of cities, a series of worlds within worlds. Its inhabitants are segregated into communities which have no more to do with each other than the Jews and Samaritans of the New Testament. The French colony in Leicester Square, and the Italian can settle down among his kind in Hatton Garden. There are the poor Jews of Petticoat Lane and the rich Jews of Hampstead; there are Greeks and Armenians, Turks and Hindus. In many districts of London you will hear more French or German spoken than English. In few Western cities could you see a Chinaman walking out of doors in his full national costume without exciting the slightest remark; yet the sight is common enough in London. It is, as ancient Rome was, the meeting-place of all nations and civilizations.

It might be thought that in so vast an aggregate of humanity the individual would wither, would become of no account. People talk of the drabness, the dull monotony of city life. Yet it is in London that the strangest things happen—stories as touching as romantic as anything in days of old. Is there anything in the annals of the saints more full of the heroism of Christian chivalry than the story of the Eton lad of our own day, who disguised himself as a shoe-black, and left the luxury of his home to roam the London streets at night and shelter with ragged lads under the arches of a railway bridge on the Embankment in the bitter winter weather, that he might get a chance to read them a few verses of his pocket Testament, and speak to them of the One Hope in the One Name? It is in such things as these, after all, in high renunciation and spiritual adventure, in the warfare of the district nurse with disease and of the mission worker with sin, in the poet's vision of beauty and the reformer's passion for justice, in the flowers of human charity and compassion which bloom in the darkest and most squalid corner of our neglected streets, that we may find, if we will, the Romance of London.

Poisoned Finger-Nails.

The juice of the green and growing pineapple is accredited in Java, the Philippines, and throughout the Far East generally with being a blood poison of a most deadly nature. It is said to be the substance with which the Malays poison their kreeses and daggers, and also the "finger-nail" poison formerly in use among aboriginal Javene women almost universally. These women cultivated a nail on each hand to a long sharp point, and the least scratch from one of these was certain death.

"Start Me."

"Start me!" cries little Alice from her perch in the swing. "I want to go high; start me!"

"Somebody can't be starting you all the time," answers Tommy, half impatient of her demands upon him, half desirous of giving her a bit of instruction. "Put your foot to the ground and start yourself."

It is the same story, the same cry, the world over. People are longing to mount high along many lines, but for the most part they are sitting still and waiting for some body to start them. They want to reach success in literature, in business or professional life, but they want to swing high from the first—to be pushed by some one's money strength or name. Those who are really willing to begin with their feet on the ground and start themselves are comparatively few.

One who has been brought much in contact with young people, young women especially, and has been endeavoring to help them, recently said that her greatest discouragement lay in the fact that they all wanted to begin at the top. They wanted at once the reputation, the pay and the patronage, of those who had been long years in the work. They wanted to be pushed—a good, strong push, that would set them flying at once—instead of putting their own feet to the ground and slowly working up for themselves.—Selected.

Washing in the Orient.

The Japanese rip their garments apart for every washing, and they iron their clothes by spreading them on a flat board, and leaning this up against the house to dry. The sun takes the wrinkles out of the clothes, and some of them have quite a lustre. The Japanese woman does her washing out of doors. Her wash tub is not more than six inches high.

The hardest worked washerwoman in the world are the Coreans. They have to wash about a dozen dresses for their husbands, and they have plenty to do. The washing is usually done in cold water and often in running streams. The clothes are pounded with paddles until they shine like a shirt front from a laundry.

In the Days of Queen Bess.

The setting out of the dinner of Queen Elizabeth was a ceremonious function. First came a gentleman with a rod, followed by a gentleman carrying a tablecloth, which, after they had knelt reverently three times, was spread upon the table. The gentlemen again knelt three times and retired. Then came two others, one with a rod, the other with a salt cellar, a plate and bread. They knelt three times, placed the things on the table, knelt again, and retired. Next came a lady-in-waiting, followed by a second; the first lady dressed in white, after kneeling three times, approached the table and solemnly rubbed the plates with the salt. Then entered twenty-four yeomen of the guard, clad in scarlet, and each carrying a dish of gold. These dishes were placed upon the table while the lady taster gave to each one of the guards a taste from the dish he had brought in, for fear of possible poison. These guards were selected from the tallest and stoutest men in all England. At the close of the ceremony a number of unmarried ladies appeared with great solemnity lifted the various dishes and carried them to the Queen in her private apartments. The Queen dined and supped alone with few attendants, and it was seldom that anyone was admitted at this time, and then only at the intercession of someone in power.