

London as a Piece of Mosaic

moustache are sparse and straw-coloured, his face not noticeably differing from them in hue. He is decently and even warmly clothed, yet he cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be called well dressed. Age and position can only be guessed approximately, for he may be anything from five-and-twenty to forty, and in position from a plumber to a clerk. Multiply him by the million, and you have the men who make the wheels go round, with so little pleasure or profit to themselves in the process that the wonder is that the momentum which started them is sufficient to keep them running. And yet perhaps the exertion required to come to a full stop would be greater.

Here comes a boy in buttons pulling on white thread gloves as he walks, a putty-faced lad with abnormally smooth hair, and an expression which may be termed unwholesome. Two elderly ladies in passing hold up their skirts unnecessarily high, and display square-toed boots the worse for wear; they are of a better class than the young man who jumped on to the 'bus before them, "ladies" in the usual, not the shop-girl's, sense of the word. In every line of their clothes, in every movement they make, they betray the price they have paid for this gentility, namely, the loss of freedom and the narrowness of the stultified lives they lead. A bold girl comes next, with her hair in curl papers, her eyes bright and roving; you feel she is ready, on the smallest provocation, to emit the scream which with her is the sign of enjoyment; over her arm she carries a black linen cloth concealing some finished clothes which she