

however, was a feat of legislation very much of a piece with that performed by the renowned progress bating King Canute, at the beginning of the year 1000; since it is quite as absurd for would-be rulers to say, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther," to the metropolitan bricks and mortar, as to the waves of the ocean. Indeed, the celebrated bean-stalk planted by the aspiring Jack in the nursery story was hardly more rapid in its growth than has been that of this giant mushroom of a British capital of ours. At the commencement of the year 1600 the legal limits of London, "within and without the wall, were but little better than two square miles in extent, or hardly bigger than the tiny island of Gibraltar; whereas, in the next century, the metropolis, according to law, had swollen to rather more than thirty square miles. Then, at the beginning of the present century, the area was further enlarged to just upon fifty square miles; after which, in 1837, it was again increased to sixty odd square miles; and latterly, in 1852, as we have said, it was still further extended by special Act of Parliament to nearly double the size it was fifteen years previously; so that it now has a superficies of exactly 117½ square miles. And who can say but that at its recent rate of expansion, the huge brick-and-mortar fungus may not by the end of the present century spread into a civic toadstool, of even double its present dimensions?

Nevertheless, in the Burial Act it is expressly laid down that the term "metropolis" is to be understood to mean and include "the cities and liberties of London and Westminster, the borough of Southwark, and the parishes, precincts, townships, and places," thereafter duly specified and recorded. And, accordingly, we find that London by law is made to extend into Middlesex as far as north as Hampstead, and into Surrey as far as south as Tooting; whilst it stretches into Kent as far east as Plumstead, and thence back again into Middlesex and Surrey as far west as Hammersmith on one side of the Thames, and Barnes on the other.

These, then, are the extreme legal limits of the metropolis proper. From east to west it ranges on the Middlesex side of the river almost from Blackwall to Brentford, and on the Kent and Surrey side from Woolwich to Wimbledon; whilst north and south it runs very nearly from Crouch End to Clapham. Moreover, so directly connected are these diametrically-opposite point of the compass of the capital that there is one continuous street of houses joining the several metropolitan polar regions, and measuring about fourteen miles in length from Chiswick to Stratford, and about thirteen miles from Highgate to Dulwich. So that this same inner circle of urban London (as contradistinguished from the larger outer disc of the suburban metropolis, guarded by the police of the capital) is found to have a radius of just about 8½ miles, whilst its circumference is within a fraction fifty-five miles in extent; and thus the one gigantic town is made to cover a territory which is very nearly as large as that of the entire county of Rutland!

Now this immense monster of a city, which is as big as a county, country-people delight to call ironically the "little village." But though we may gain some notion of its size from learning that the ground on which London stands is just about as extensive as the whole area of the Isle of Wight,—still what can impress us with a sense of the seemingly-countless crowd of houses which are packed within its boundaries almost as close as figs in a "drum"? A coral reef hardly consists of a more solid mass of habitable walls; nor do the ant-hills of India teem with a denser or busier swarm of living creatures. Were it possible to count the grains of sand in the Sahara, the infinite host of numerals representing the sum of the collective particles would no more give one an idea of the Great Desert, than the fact that the enormous habitable honeycomb of this huge of a town is made up of some half a million of distinct domiciliary cells all walled together in the close contiguity of geometrical compactness.

Such numerical statements, however, are the mere sawdust of statistics,—the pedantic foppery of figures. How can the mind possibly comprehend half a million in one simple thought? It is as difficult to grasp large numbers as it is to clutch water.

How, then, can we conjure up an adequate conception of the mighty multitude of buildings with which this bricken county of a capital is covered? Well, if we have but a misty idea of mass in its integrity, at least we can arrive at a clearer sense of length in its continuity. Spin an ounce of platinum which would hardly fill a nutshell in the lump, into a thou-

sand miles of wire as fine as a silkworm's thread, and the wondrous extent of the fibre will give one a more or less vivid notion of the original bulk of the metal. Now, half a million houses having an average frontage of five yards each would form an unbroken line of buildings which would be just upon 1,200 miles long; and 1,200 miles of dwellings would be nearly sufficient to form one continuous row right round the entire island of Great Britain, from John O'Groats to the Land's End, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and from the North Foreland back again to John O'Groats. Or, what is more striking still, such a line of buildings would be more than enough to make one long street stretching right across Scotland, England, France and Switzerland from Dunnet Head in Caithness, to the banks of the Mediterranean.

If, then, such be the mere length of the aggregate houses in London, it may be readily conceived that the streets of the monster metropolis which, on looking at the map, seem to be a perfect maze of highways and byways,—a closely knitted network of thoroughfares,—should be some thousands in number; and accordingly we find that there are upwards of 10,500 different streets, roads, lanes, gardens, and parks, squares, ovals, polygons, crescents, circuses, and terraces, villas, buildings, rows, and places; particularised in that voluminous civic cyclopaedia, the "London Post-office Directory." Many of these thoroughfares, too, are of non inconsiderable dimensions. The New-road, for instance (exclusive of its City appendage) is very nearly three miles long; Oxford street, more than a mile and a quarter; and Regent-street from Langham Church to Carlton-terrace within a few yards of a mile in length; whilst the two great lines of thoroughfare running parallel to the river,—the one extending from Bayswater along Oxford-street, Holborn, Cheapside, Cornhill, and Whitechapel, to Mile-end, and which is really but one continuous street with different names; and the other stretching from Kensington, along Knightsbridge, Piccadilly, the Haymarket, Pall-mall East, the Strand, Fleet-street, Cannon-street, Tower-street, and so on by Ratcliffe-highway to the West-India Docks, are each, from one end to the other, just upon ten miles in length.

Indeed, the gross extent of the London streets, small as well as great, is almost incredible; for by a return made by the police as far back as the year 1850, the aggregate length of the metropolitan thoroughfares, in the "inner" police district alone, amounted to not less than 1,850 miles, while those within the boundaries of the "Registration District," or metropolis proper, made up as many as 1,820 miles. In 1861, however, they had increased to 2,100 miles; whilst in 1871, these same collective thoroughfares of London as regulated by law had become extended to 2,500 miles. So that not only are they now a third of the earth's diameter; but would, if stretched into one long line, just about span the Atlantic, and reach from Liverpool to New York!

But prodigious as this vast amount of roadway may seem, it dwindles down into the mere dimensions of a rope-walk in comparison with the total length of streets patrolled by the Metropolitan Police; for by a recent return which has been specially prepared for us by the kindness of Colonel Henderson, we find that the aggregate extent of the thoroughfares included within the entire Police District amounts to not less than 6,612 miles, or more than one-fourth of the earth's circumference! Hence, it would appear that the roadways of this same Police District, which were hardly more than 3,500 long in the year 1850, have been nearly doubled in length the last quarter of a century.

And who can wonder? seeing that the same return informs us that between January 1st, 1864, and December 31st, 1873, there were as many as 133,808 houses built within the Metropolitan Police District, comprising 28 new squares, and 2,952 new streets! so that, as this is just about one-third of the gross number of the houses there were in London at the time of taking the last census, it follows that at such a rate of expansion the Monster Metropolis,—monstrous as its present dimension may appear,—will assuredly be twice the size it now is by the end of the present century.

*To be continued.)*

The surveyors are said to be at work on the Dresden and Oil Springs Rail road. Mr. Sisk proposes to have the road running this fall, and an extension to Sarnia next spring.