

rumble of traffic disturbs your sleep. Your rest is as secluded as that of a friar in his cell. Is not all this the very ideal of liberty and bachelor bliss? To-morrow you may wish to start away to Switzerland or the moors. Your bag is packed; you call a cab and slam your double doors behind you, perfectly assured that all your goods and chattels are safe till you return. Diogenes, even, was not so unencumbered, for had he gone to Switzerland he would have required to take his tub with him.

The peculiarity of this Utopian Bachelorland is that you can pass so readily across its frontier into the big world. In Oxford or Cambridge you cannot breathe any but scholastic air. Here you take but a couple of steps, and out of an atmosphere filled with the past you turn into the exciting din of Fleet Street, alive with echoes of the moment from all quarters of the earth. In meditative mood you may pace about the Temple precincts in summer moonlight—*nunquam minus solus quam cum solus*—and people its hoary courts with fitting figures of the many departed great, whose lives, so to speak, have been built into its walls. Then, by way of a rousing contrast, lounge round the corner, with slippers on feet, into the office of some friendly editor, and listen to the click of the telegraph machines, and the gossip bandied among the leader writers waiting for subjects, and you will realise to the full the sense of delightful anachronism that gives life in any of these ancient Inns so piquant a flavour. The West-end man of fashion, living in a gorgeous suite of rooms near St. James's Street, might as well be the guest of an hotel. The walls of his abode are not clothed with associations stretching back through generations.

We write these lines at an open window, immediately outside which is a hall surmounted with a quaint clock and bell. Beyond the hall is a quadrangle richly carpeted with mossy grass, and studded with a dozen leafy trees, sleepily rocking a few sharp-voiced sparrows on their branches. On the other side of this foliage the red-tiled roofs of a building as old as the Charles's shine with a mellow and cheerful softness in the warm sun; and immediately beyond these

roofs, again, one can see against a blue sky the massive mullions and numerous turrets of a large ecclesiastical looking building designed in the Lombardo-Gothic style. Any painter sitting in our seat could produce a picture that might be taken to represent an exquisite work in some old-world cathedral town. Yet the ecclesiastical-looking building is not a cathedral, but the London Record Office, a fine structure hidden away from the sight of most people. Under the red-tiled roof dwelt George Dyer, and thither Charles Lamb wended his way many a time to enjoy chat with the worthy bibliophile. The same red roof covered the office of the clerks at the Marshalsea Prison; and it has been said that from the room occupied by these worthies emanated more misery than from any other room in the metropolis. The little hall surmounted with the clock and bell is the very hall where Sir Matthew Hale, after the Great Fire of London, sat with a council to determine the new boundaries of the City. It was of our own quarter of this beautiful Inn of Chancery that the old gentleman at the "Magpie and Stump," in "Pickwick," tells the strange ghost stories; and Charles Dickens loved the place well. This little Inn, with a whole history of its own, is as modest as it is delightful. Standing back at the end of a passage leading from Fleet Street, it obtrudes itself so little on the passer-by that not one Londoner in a hundred knows of its existence, and many a cabman will be found to confess he does not know it by name. In such nooks it is that men grow into confirmed old bachelors. Like Elia they "hang posterity," and love antiquity more and more. We will not say that a long life altogether spent like this is well spent. Human sympathies are apt to become musty and wither if they are too long subjected to the test of such an isolated existence. A few years of chamber life, for any thoughtful man in his youth or prime, will probably do him more good than harm. But too long experience of its loneliness tells on the character. Further, a man past his best is subject to actual calamities attendant on this loneliness. It is only recently that a distinguished baronet retired to his rooms in the Temple one evening, and next day was found in bed lifeless. He had passed away in the lonely darkness with no human ear to hear his dying groan. And such cases are far from uncommon.—*Standard.*