

## British Gossip

THE subject of man's ugly attire is engaging the attention of Mr. Louis N. Parker, the pageant specialist who assuredly ought to know the philosophy of picturesque clothes. "The dress of mere man when he is not playing games or soldiering is an eyesore from his horrible hat to his ghastly boots," says Mr. Parker. "Let him go back to the beautiful clothes of old, let him wear rich velvets, heavy brocades, snowy frills, and, above all, feathers." The passion for pageants which seized upon England this year may do something towards restoring the picturesque garments of the past. Black is a deadly depressing color to most observers and a less monotonous prospect might be seen at a reception if the crimson velvets of the eighteenth century were to bloom again. It cannot be successfully argued that the rich costumes of the past were worn by a more effeminate race of British Islanders than the men of this age. Chatham, Sheridan, Fox, to say nothing of Nelson, were not lacking in the manly qualities and they would probably be dismayed by the dreary dress of the modern Englishman. But the demands of modern business life and the swift ways of the up-to-date motor car give us pause. Certainly the emerald velvet and rare lace ruffles of "Simon Ingots" would be out of place at the meeting of a Twentieth Century Board of Directors.

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There are some matters concerning which the English magistrate shows a commendable sternness. Recently a street milk vendor was brought before Mr. Horace Smith at Westminster Police Court, charged on a warrant with failure to appear to a summons for selling milk which was unwholesome and unfit for food. The medical officer of health for the City of Westminster testified that he had found a large quantity of very filthy material at the bottom of the can; whereupon the magistrate imposed the extreme penalty, a sentence of six months with hard labour. Of course it is known that filthy milk means high infant mortality. But it will be a long day before a Canadian magistrate will consider the health of the community so important that "milk murder" will receive its due punishment.

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"The letters of Queen Victoria," a selection of Her Majesty's correspondence from 1837 to 1861, is a publication of more than ordinary interest. Everyone was aware of her devotion to the Prince Consort and of the simple happiness of the Royal home circle. But in these letters there is a revelation of the shrewd observation and statesmanlike judgment of the born ruler. Strangely enough some of these Victorian paragraphs bring back the "spacious days" of great Elizabeth. It must be remembered that Queen Victoria was the daughter of a soldier and that in the hour of danger hers was not the part of repining. Nothing could have been farther from the truth than the reports circulated industriously by foreign papers that the Queen was weakly, depressed during the whole course of the Boer War. She was too much of a woman not to regret the terrible consequences of the conflict but too much of a queen to lose heart over the early defeats in the last great war of the reign. The letter she wrote in 1854 to Lord Aberdeen regarding the day of humiliation on the outbreak of the Crimean War is a sturdy bit of repudiation of an act of hypocrisy. The suggestion that prayer should be substituted for humiliation is supplemented by a spirited declaration which has the genuine ring of Queen Bess, that princess of Politicians.

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There is much indignation over the threatened disappearance of the picturesque old house at Wanstead, the birthplace of Thomas Hood, whose lines regarding it have a permanent place in English literature. One readily sympathises with the reviewer who protests against the "outrage in red brick" which will probably take its place. The old-fashioned garden with its lilac and

laburnum may be trodden under foot to make way for the vulgar fancies of the very-new rich, but its fragrance lives in the verse of the man who knew the secret springs of tears and laughter. The fond glamour of childhood memories lingers in the lines:

"I remember, I remember  
The house where I was born,  
The little window where the sun  
Came peeping in at morn;  
He never came a wink too soon  
Nor brought too long a day;  
But now I often wish the night  
Had borne my breath away."

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Occasionally an English journal gets transatlantic anecdotes badly twisted. There is naturally much talk in England society papers about the engagement of Miss Gladys Vanderbilt to the Hungarian Count with the barbed-wire-fence name. Very few Englishwomen have such immense fortunes as many American girls possess and Miss Vanderbilt's tidy inheritance, amounting to six million pounds, is stated in italics and with exclamation marks in certain publications, while the Count's pet name of "Lalla" is freely and widely mentioned. It is not a nickname which most men would desire but even "Fido" would be better than the bridegroom-elect's official name. That entertaining journal, M.A.P., tells an amusing but inaccurate yarn concerning the Count's fiancée.

"Once at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel she noticed her father, the Old Commodore as he was called, talking affably to a lady whom he had formerly known as one of the tradespeople. 'Why, father,' protested the girl afterwards, 'fancy talking to that woman in a public

hotel! Don't you remember she used to sell us poultry?' 'Certainly, my dear,' responded the old man imperturbably, 'of course I do. And I remember your mother when she sold root beer while I peddled oysters way up in Jersey.'"

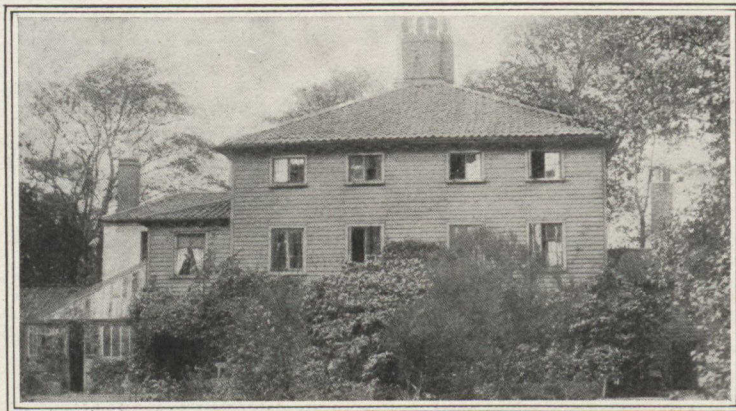
Now, this is an interesting yarn but it isn't the least bit true. The "Commodore" died more than thirty years ago while Miss Gladys Vanderbilt is only twenty-one years of age. Then the "Commodore" could not possibly have been spending a few

days at the Waldorf-Astoria, as that magnificent affair was built many years after the Commodore had departed for a fairer world. The United States papers are criticised for their weird accounts of the British aristocracy. But M.A.P. should get hold of the right "Cornelius."

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A remarkable spectacle was seen at the Adelphi Theatre, London, on a certain glad Tuesday afternoon in October. The American play, "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," dramatised from the popular novel by Alice Hegan Rice, has won the people by its naive and crude humanity. "Mrs. Wiggs," uncouth as she may be, is decidedly amusing and does not fracture the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not bore." Mrs. Madge Carr Cooke, whose daughter, Miss Eleanor Robinson, is such a captivating "Merely Mary Ann" has made a notable success of "Mrs. Wiggs" and in the goodness of her heart, Mrs. Cooke invited 1500 charwomen of much-scrubbed London to attend a matinee performance of the comedy. They came, they saw, they laughed in the heartiest glee over the amiable absurdities of the play. Most of all, it is said, they enjoyed the wedding of "Miss Hazy" and regarded that lady's bridegroom with positive friendliness. Never did a more appreciative audience gather in the Adelphi Theatre nor demand the re-appearance of favoured members of the company. Fifteen hundred Mrs. Wigginses remind one in some strange way of the benevolent fancies of Charles Dickens. How that novelist of the humble Londoners would have beamed on such an audience!

It is to be hoped that Mrs. Cooke's kindly act will find many imitators. The lives of these toilers are brightened wonderfully by this glimpse of an amusing though struggling household, not so very different from their own after all.



Tom Hood's Birthplace at Wanstead.

From the "Bystander."