

THRUSH AND POET.

THE thrush's song is strongest when he sings  
 Love messages to some entrancing bird ;  
 His eager heart, with inner impulse stirred,  
 Gives untold sweetness to the lay that rings  
 Through the cool wood and by the laughing springs,  
 With melody she ne'er before had heard ;  
 His song is to all other songs preferred,  
 And swift she joins him with love-quicken'd wings.

The poet bird-like sings his keenest strain,  
 When all his being pulses with love's fire,  
 When all his moments feel the thrilling reign  
 Of her who can ennobling thoughts inspire ;  
 Each way he turns, sky, air, and hill, and plain  
 Receive new beauties from his soul's desire.  
 T. G. MARQUIS.

LONDON LETTER.

I HAD the *Century* for December in my hand, the other day, as I sat perched up in the narrow gallery of that dull, dull commission—four winds from heaven blowing round me from innumerable draughty doors and windows, the Irish witnesses' extraordinary jargon confusing my brain—and, turning over the pages, dry as dust for the most part, I tried to take pleasure in Mr. Cable's dull little story, and allowed myself to be interested, absorbed, in Mr. James' *London* in a manner that made me for the time oblivious of anything that occurred in Court. If I speak of the paper more highly than you think it deserves you must remember the place in which it was read (where I should have pored over even *Rasselas*, I am sure, without missing a word), and something should be said, too, for my love of the subject of Mr. James' affection, a love never ceasing, only increasing with a more intimate acquaintance.

It seems to me impossible that any poor soul who has never seen London should read this *Century* article without longing to start off at once to those dear kind streets and houses with their friendly faces and charming old-world names—a longing that would go near to break one's heart if it were likely never to be satisfied. Never to have been here, that must be dreadful ; never to wish to come is beyond my comprehension. Do such people exist ? To listen to Bow Bells for the first time ; to stand on Tower Green with the tame ravens flapping about your feet, the shadows falling as peacefully on Bishop Gundulph's walls, on the low grey church and gabled Tudor houses, as if one were on a village common ; from the roar of Holborn to turn at once into the straight-pathed gardens, steeped in repose, of Gray's Inn, where the tongues in the trees whisper of all sorts of strange forgotten memories, where the ghosts dress in ruff and farthingale ; to loiter in the balconied courtyards of the Southwark posting houses, unchanged since Sam Weller was last there ; to watch the pigeons circle round Guildhall—what delightful experiences ! Cockneys are made of London clay, and, in consequence, to them no other town is so entirely sympathetic (is it not bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh ?) but even to the ordinary visitor within our gates the gold-paved streets must appeal, in many different ways of course. If to a love of solitude you add moments when you desire gaiety, if with an affection for Letters yet you occasionally take a hatred to any sort of booklearning, in any and every mood, in most circumstances of life you must be blind indeed not to discover the great city to be of inestimable value, true as steel, modest, wise, watchful, a friend in the best sense of the word, for it makes one help one's self, the truest kindness—this is the character of the British capital.

It is certainly not to the unappreciative that Mr. James addresses his icily-genial, coldly-warm eulogy of our town, but to those who have "submitted to Londonization," (so he says in his own American language), or having once been here are troubled till they visit us again, and yet again. Often he writes guardedly, as if the praise were wrung unwillingly from him ; he writes unjustly when he says of the London populace in general that a race of more vulgar or abominable tone he knows not of ; he writes with no sense at all of the humorous side of the life of the streets, but all the same he shows at every turn of the sentences how vast is his regard for the picturesque districts, these different lands, with each their own costume and language—the talk of Islington is not like that of May Fair, neither do the inhabitants of Hammersmith dress in a manner resembling the dwellers in Belgrave Square—and in consequence of that regard the paper is pretty much all it should be. There is a desire not to puff us up unduly ; there is a wish that we had made better use of our many advantages, had not gone three on a Nap Land, so to speak, in the matter of the Embankment—or was it Hyde Park corner ? He is pleased when he meets on Ludgate Hill Queen Anne, sceptre in hand ; he is courteous about Piccadilly, the Strand, the parks, he would like to tell us, only he has not the time, all he sees when he strays into Bloomsbury or Kensington ; in passing, he assures us that, personally, he can find no serious fault with our atmosphere ; in a word, Mr. James is content, I think, to take London for better or for worse, and not even a fog, or the "miles of the dreariest, stodgiest commonness" he has discovered on the banks of the Thames can scare him from his purpose. I don't know that I missed a word, and, though I particularly remember that Kensington is called "the once-delightful" (that phrase is wrong, the "once" should be eliminated), and St. James' Palace "queer and shabby" (queer!

when on every brick history has stamped a hundred delightful marks ; shabby ! when within hang priceless treasured pictures in stately saloons, and fine coloured lengths of tapestry decorate Anne Boleyn's own morning room, while without, gorgeous yeomen of the guard keep watch round its battlemented walls), yet I can hardly find it in my heart to wish that anything should be altered. The town charming Mr. James as a whole, he fails to conceal his satisfaction with it, even though his lodging was stuffy, its ornamentation of lithograph and wax-flower not to his taste, and this satisfaction is communicated to the reader.

It is impossible, I know, altogether to please a London lover ; our particular points of view are too apt to be ignored, and we discover that our piece of perfection is for someone else quite ugly and meaningless, oddly enough ; but in this particular case I have little fault to find of any moment. As a last word but one I should like to be told why the famous Hampstead inn is called *The Three Spaniards*. That may be its name, but to those who frequent it, it is never anything but *The Spaniards*, (you will remember Mrs. Bardell), and often to the holiday folk it is *The Spaniards*. As a last word I should like to say I found the article all too short, and wished ardently that so much had not been left unsung. The clever unequal little illustrations—Piccadilly has the effect of an instantaneous photograph—helped me over another half hour, and then at last I had to close my magazine, and devote myself seriously to the business of the Court.

What I was doing in that *galère*—or rather gallery—I know not. It was difficult to get places ; I like to see most things ; everyone else had been or was dying to go ; these, I suppose, were some of the reasons why. At the monstrous hour of a quarter to ten I and a sleepy companion were at the policeman-guarded portals of the Law Courts ready to make a rush for front seats directly we were permitted to pass through the great hall and go up the Gothic staircase to our eyry. The time seemed long, waiting there in the porch, and we were glad when at last, after a deal of unnecessary hurry, we found ourselves, by virtue of our pink tickets, in a sort of private box high up in the wall where no one attempted to dispute our right to the best, and where we and the draughts were alone for the first part of the morning. But business there we had none, for neither of us knew anything much of the cause we had come to try. At first, I am bound to say, we did our duty ; nothing escaped our vigilance. We noted the unpicturesque look of the square room, and wondered what sort of a picture Mr. Calderon will contrive to make with these unsuitable materials, and what point of the trial he will select ; we watched the usher as he filled the inkstands with fresh ink, and likened ourselves to unfashionable guests at a rout who, coming too early, assist at the lighting of the candles : we took a deep interest in every fresh arrival, and could have stood an examination on the personal appearance of most of the people in the crowded public gallery to our left, and in the body of the Court, for nothing was too trivial for our attention. All the counsel came by degrees—we soon learnt to distinguish them by name—and in front of them sat Biggar and Harrington, Davitt and George Lewis, and behind them the *Times* reporters and the small fry. Courteously we all stood as the three grave judges came through the curtains and sat in their great armchairs in front of the piled and littered desks ; breathlessly we waited for Webster's opening words to the remarkably nervous gentleman who crept into the witness-box, and who answered the question asked in a manner that was perfectly unintelligible, at all events as regards ourselves. No one could have found fault with our demeanour for the first hour ; we were deeply and deadly in earnest, and my companion gave way to so many harsh whispers on the subject of the Irish Question that I had to remind her of Johnson's remark "that political asperity is as unbecoming in a woman as a long beard." We listened to a gray-haired old man who had had his right ear cut off by the cruel boycotters ; to another who had lost, to his stupefied amazement, seemingly, his left arm ; to yet a third, who had had terrible armed and masked midnight visitors who had threatened vengeance, but had done nothing further, and we wondered, when at last we grasped the meaning of the words (the awe of the Court was upon us, and we still spoke low), how these things could possibly happen in a Christian country within a few hours of London. *Why are these awful things allowed ?* said D., sorrowfully, to me. It was not long after that, I think, that we had a police inspector as witness, in the middle of whose lengthy examination I noticed an intense desire, both in myself and my companion, not only to yawn but to fidget. That we were still tender-hearted over the victims I can vouch, but we caught each other watching the slow-ticking clock. D. took off her hat about this time to see if it was that which made her feel so tired, and I furtively ran through the pages of the *Century* ; but it was not till an hour and a half of the inspector's cross-examination (he was a charming looking person, Oxford-bred, and at first we had taken much interest in him) that I openly busied myself, with no sort of reserve at all, in the magazine, hearing D. say, half to herself, but still much too loud, *I do hope Balz will have a good dinner*. On and on I read. The Court, listening to the wearisome questions and answers, must, I think, judging by my own feelings, have been pleased when luncheon time arrived—a refreshment of which we partook in a chilly Gothic crypt somewhere out of the hall, and over which we hurried for fear others should take our seats ; I can't tell why ; they might have had mine, and welcome—and the Court, judging again by my own feelings, must have been still more relieved when at the stroke of four,

the judges, bowing to us, retired (like Mr. Chops, the dwarf) behind their curtain, and we were free to complain bitterly of the horror of having to sit still the whole day, and to wonder what on earth made us wish to come to such a gruesome entertainment. Out in the Strand the grey dusk, jewelled with stars of light, made of Holywell Street the most picturesque old-world lane, and caused even prosaic Clement's Inn to assume an appearance of Romance. We turned to the west, and threaded our way back round the familiar turns, along the well-known short cuts, into Piccadilly, and so through Knightsbridge (the very names are music in one's ears), and as we walked we registered a vow that never, never, shall that awful Court be again graced by our presence. Orion, striding across the heavens, looked down upon us, and heard our wrathful words ; the Great Bear listened to our vows. I intend to keep my oath, I think, but already D. is intriguing for more tickets, as her visit has, she says, caused much jealous heartburning among her intimate friends. It may be our duty to hear the other side, in which case, when the Irish gentlemen have their turn I should not wonder if we found ourselves again among the audience.

WALTER POWELL.

MONTREAL LETTER.

PATRIOTISM, like all effervescent conditions of the human mind, is infectious. The echoes of St. Andrew's Day have hardly died away when our French citizens, at a meeting of their St. Jean Baptiste Society, stir the hearts of each other to a sense of the duty they owe to their patron saint. After drafting and passing some new by-laws the members had their patriotic sentiment fanned to white heat by their president, Mr. L. O. David, who, in terms to which his native language so happily lends itself, depicted the inexcusable apathy of his fellow-countrymen in a matter of grave importance in the organizations of the Church to which they are attached. For all great public demonstrations our French brethren have to resort either to an English hall or to nature's free and unlimited accommodation under heaven's ethereal blue. It is possible that for the one emergency we possess no hall capacious enough ; and for the other no weather (now at least) constant enough. At all events, we are to have a magnificent building erected for this society, with large halls and suites of offices as head quarters for various other French communities. Commodious and attractive shops are to occupy the ground floor, and the revenue from this source is expected to reach a high figure. Nevertheless the prospective dividend has been fixed at not more than five per cent, and any surplus is to be set aside for decorating the hall with works of Canadian artists, and for the charitable schemes of the societies which meet under its roof. The site chosen is one of the very finest in the French quarter, the corner of St. Catherine and St. Denis Streets, and overlooking the exquisite Church of Notre Dame de Lourdes. The erection will constitute a feature in the neighbourhood, and an aesthetic addition to the east end. The patriotic sentiment was struck while hot, and some enthusiastic subscriptions were thrown off. The Hon. Mr. Mercier contributed handsomely by telegraph.

Annexation, like Federation, comes in puffs. "L'Electeur" is being dragged over the coals for breathing, not a suspicion of a leaning thitherwards, but a conviction that there is no reason for excluding that, any more than other public questions, from its pages. It fails to see why a man should be considered a traitor to his country for discussing the feasibility and probability of Annexation, instead of unfeasibility and improbability. The day has passed for ever when Imperial Federation is possible, even if advisable. The day may come sooner than many of us dream when we shall have to choose between absolute partnership and absolute responsibility in a limited future, and limited partnership and responsibility in an absolute future. And who dare say which is the choice of the patriot and which of the traitor ? I find no sentiment whatever in Canada which can stand the strain of the stock exchange or the annual dividend. That is to say, individual sentiment, which we are always ready to own. There is much of a kind of conglomerate bombast which men put on with their overcoat on their way to a public meeting, and are content to leave recorded in official minutes. All our schemes for the future are what Mr. Wilfrid Chateaufort would call "crimes of leisure," and lie folded away in a cupboard for perusal with our church magazine. We shall reach our future as a nation as we arrive at it individually, in the most practical and least theoretical fashion. We do not trouble ourselves about the shape and colour of our dollars, so much as about the number of them and the expedition with which they can be secured and multiplied. The question is being gradually but surely solved under our very eyes, while we imagine we are leaving it for pompous legislation. How many thousands of us Canadians have not waited for Annexation but have already arisen and departed, a momentous stride further than Annexation ?

The fame of Gilbert and Sullivan's new opera, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, or *The Merry Man and his Maid*, was wafted across the ocean by October winds, and Montreal has already had an opportunity of judging of the opera itself. The first night in the Savoy in London, though betraying tokens of nervousness and anxiety, was a most brilliant success. The audience comprised most of the indefatigable first-nighters, and the reception was a series of triumphs and encores. That the opera was not so well received in Montreal is but another