

LONDON LIFE.

Its Lights and Shadows.

Look at the immense development of the population of London. You have there at this time about three millions of persons, but we are adding to that population every year upwards of 45,000 persons, and in a few years it will be 50,000, and in a few more we shall be adding 55,000 or 60,000 persons a year; so that, in addition to a vast, active, wonderful population, you have 45,000 people pouring into that city and settling there every year. What is to be done with this vast population? It is one thing for London to draw to itself this population, and it is another thing to solve the problem, how are they to be governed, educated, clothed, fed, civilized, and brought under the influence of all manner of great principles and feelings, to be led to Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. My knowledge leads me to say this problem becomes more appalling and difficult than ever. You will say, Why? Were you to furnish the population of London at this moment with as many churches and chapels as they need, you would have to build 2,000 to-day, and then you would not have church, chapel, or school accommodation for the 45,000 who will pour into London this year. Now, you say, if you have that vast population, and if you have so many pouring in, what is being done to meet their educational and spiritual wants? Have you churches and schools for them? Have you bands of hope, temperance societies, Bible women, missionaries, Sunday-school teachers, for them? Have you all the appliances of civilization and Christian labour for that mighty population? Alas, I am sorry to say we have not. We have plenty of public-houses, gin-shops, gambling hells for them, but we have not what we ought to have—temperance halls, bands of hope, missionaries, Bible women, and voluntary Christian labourers everywhere. The Government, or rather the magistrates, give us any number of public-houses, but when we ask them to keep the public-houses in proper order, that is a favour they are not willing to bestow. Then the rich, the refined, the educated, and the religious are leaving the centre of London (the poorer parts of London), and going, through the medium of railways and steamers, to the beautiful suburbs, to live in the midst of green fields, and under the shade of charming trees, where they can breathe the perfume of flowers, where there is no profligacy, drunkenness, or crime. They are leaving the poor and working class to fester together in filth, ignorance, misery and crime, and that state of things gets worse and worse every year. One clergyman says, a few years ago he could get any amount of money from his parishioners for schools and charities, but now he can scarcely get a farthing, because his rich people are fifteen or twenty miles away, and the poor are left together in a mass. But, you will say, you have missionaries. How many? Four hundred, and Satan has a missionary society in 10,000 publicans. You ought to have 10,000 missionaries for God, and as for Satan, who is the opponent of missions, the sooner you break up his missionary society the better.

I now and then explore a part of London not worse than other parts. I go into a street containing 88 houses, and 1,200 people, there are 19 children in some of the houses, and some day we shall have the twentieth. I found my way into a dark, filthy, underground cellar. I can assure ministers that it is a good thing for their health to go into cellars, and it is a capital thing for their health and morals to talk with the poor people who live there. And they would preach capital sermons if they did that once a week. I do it myself, and if I prescribe medicine for my brother minis-

ters it is because I know its efficacy. In that cellar I found a man whose ignorance was deplorable. I invited him to supper. You say, do you ask such men to supper, a man who sits upon a harper because he has not a chair? If you give me one reason why I should not, I will give you twenty reasons why I should. What are ministers' houses for, but for the poor, the needy, the lame, the halt, and the blind? He came to supper. After supper my wife retired, and we were left alone, and we had a little talk. 'Well, John, how do you get a living?' 'In the garden [Covent Garden]. I sells hurbs, I does, I walks twenty miles for 'em, I does.' 'What do you do with them?' 'I brings 'em home, sells 'em in the garden. I many times starts off at two or three in the morning to get the hurbs, and I havn't got a copper to bless myself with.' 'And when you come home without a penny and it rains and blows, what then?' 'Sir, I many times sits down under the hedge, I does, and crys to myself, I does.' And so should we if we had that to do. You should weep with those that weep, as well as rejoice with those that rejoice. So I talked a little more to him, and said, 'John, who was Lord Nelson?' 'Who's that ar' chap, sir?' 'Do you mean to say you never heard of a man called Moses?' 'Oh yes, sir, he's the great tailor.' I am not going to tell you what he said about Christ, because I never associate laughter with my blessed Saviour's name. But I found he knew as little about Christ as he did about Moses.

One day I talked with a man who had lost his wife. I said, 'I hope your wife died in peace.' 'Yesh, she died in peace, she did, she only asked for a pork sausage.' This was the only notion this man had of dying in peace.

In a house I found a man making soldier's garments. After some conversation he said, 'Did those things we read of in the Bible happen in this or some other world?' I did not answer him immediately, but asked him where he had been. 'In Arabia.' I turned to that part of St. Paul's writings where he speaks of Arabia. When I had done reading, he said, 'He knew more of the Bible than he ever did in his life.'

I am rather fond of thieves; I love to shake an honest man by the hand, but I have a particular fancy for a thief. If a lad should have become a thief, you really ought to give him a chance to do better, and if a girl becomes so, you ought to give her two chances. If a man fall among thieves, or become one, and we find him there, we ought to throw off our dignity of character, bend down and try to lift him up. If a man or woman seeks my sympathy it is given, and, if necessary, rather more. Practical sympathy is the best. Passing over a street one day I saw six lads, whom I knew to be thieves, they all followed me. Turning round, I said to one, 'William, what is it you want?' 'I want to speak to you, sir.' 'Well?' 'We are all alike, sir.' 'Yes, I see you are.' He said, 'You see, sir, we heard that you were sending lads to Canada, don't y'see? We aint got no chance here; the bobbies are always down upon us. We should like to do right, and we thought, sir, if you would send us to Canada we would try to do better there.' I thought that a fair statement, and made up my mind they should have a chance. They were vagabonds, but it was my business to destroy that, and make them Christians if I could. All went to Canada. A few years passed away, and going along the same street I saw a respectable looking gentleman, quite as respectable looking as you have in Portsea. He took off his hat to me, and I to him. 'Don't you know me?' 'No, I don't, but I am glad to see you.' 'I'm William —.' 'Bless you, my boy, how are you? How have you been doing?' 'Very well.' 'What brought you back?' He blushed, and tears

brightened his eyes as he said, 'I had a letter from England to say that my sister was leading a bad life. My stepmother turned me to the door, and I became a thief; she turned my sister to the door, and she walked the Haymarket, and I could not bear to think my sister was living such a life; so when I got the letter I went to my master in Montreal, and said, "I am going to England to see my sister." He said, "You shall have your situation when you come back." So I came over to try and rescue my sister.' Was it not worth sending him to Canada, to get that state of mind? He said, 'I landed at Liverpool two days ago, and last night I began to look for my sister. I found her going up the Haymarket. I said to her, "You will leave this life, won't you?" She threw up her head, and said, "I won't." Then I walked after her, and talked about our mother, that's dead and in heaven. She burst into tears, and said, "William, I will go with you anywhere." Blessings on the memory of a good mother. "What more, William?" "She's with my uncle. I want to take her to Canada in a steamer; I won't take her in a sailing vessel; and so I want you to take care of this purse, containing £11.' 'But, William, that won't take you; you want me to get the rest?' 'Yes, sir.' So I got the rest of the money, and a fortnight afterwards William and his sister bade me farewell. William said, as he went off, 'I won't get married; my little sister shall be my housekeeper.' That is the only sort of bachelorhood which I tolerate in this world.

I am sorry to say that my experience of the worst drunkards I have met with in London testifies that they are persons who formerly moved in respectable, refined, and even religious society, but who through strong drink have so degraded themselves that you now find them in the slums of St. Giles's, Westminster, and Whitechapel, without decent attire, reputation, or friends, and many times without a home. The worst drunkards are not the children of the poor, born in Somers Town, Whitechapel, or St. Giles's. Judge for yourselves.

My bell was rung one Sunday morning at seven o'clock. I went down into the lobby, and found there a man. I looked at him, not because I did not know him, but because I did. He had a battered hat upon his head, beaten with London weather, and that is very rough. He had an old gray paletot fastened under his chin, poor and filthy under garments, no stockings, his shoes were full of holes, and I could see his feet through almost every part of them. He shivered with the wet and cold. 'Ah,' he said, 'I remember, not many years ago, riding my horse in Tottenham Court Road, followed by my servant upon his horse, and last Saturday I sold old magazines in that road to get myself a bed.' Who was he? The deputy-corer for one of our largest counties, a splendid young fellow, who led to the altar a young lady who brought him £6,000. A wretched drunkard now, who two or three years ago was promised by his brother £1,000 if he would keep the pledge for a year. He kept it for eight months, and then broke it. If there is any man here who begins to feel a love of drink creeping upon him, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Here is another case. I was out very late one night, as I often am, to my great discomfort, and a poor woman came up to me, and said, 'Mr. McCree, I think, sir, if you go along that street there you will find something to do.' I thought it was a fight, because I am sometimes sent to pacify the Irish Fenians. I came to a door with a lot of people round it. They parted in their kind way, and I saw upon a door-step a little boy asleep in one corner, and a

little girl in another. I woke them up, and said to the girl, 'My dear, where is your mother?' 'Mother's in prison, sir.' 'How come she to get there, dear?' 'Please, sir, she got drunk, and she was locked up.' 'How come you here?' 'Please, sir, when the landlady found my mother locked up she turned us into the streets.' 'Come along with me,' I said, and I took them by the hand and led them to our refuge, and there in a short time they had all the comforts they needed. In a few days the mother came out of prison, and, having gained access to the refuge, she demanded her children. We said, 'You had better leave them; we will feed, clothe, and educate them, and you may come once a month and see them.' 'No, sir, I cannot do that,' said she, speaking in a lady-like manner—for she really had been such—I want that girl to assist me in my needle-work.' 'No, mother,' said the girl, 'all you want me to do is to get up at six o'clock to get you gin to drink in bed.' 'I never did that before,' she said, and took them away. At six o'clock in the evening the children came and knocked at our door. The mother was locked up a second time. When she came out again she came and demanded her children, and because we would not give them up, she tried to smash our windows, so we let them go, and she took that girl, fourteen years old, into a house which I decline to characterise before this audience. Who was she? A wretched woman born in St. Giles's? She was the wife of a physician from the West-end of London. So if anybody says to me, O, teetotalism is a capital thing for the navy, thief, fallen women, Irish hodman, and a dissenting parson or two, I say it is an excellent thing for the most highly educated and accomplished lady in this town. It is a good thing for the most devoted Sunday-school teacher in these towns, and if the clergymen and dissenting ministers in this borough signed the pledge and kept it (for that is another thing), teetotalism would confer a greater honour upon them than they would confer upon it. That is a specimen of my mildness. A man who has been a teetotaler for twenty-five years, does now and then feel that there are some men standing aside who ought to bear the banner of total abstinence.

I rejoice in the progress and usefulness of Bible Women in London. If there is any man who ought to rejoice, I am that man, inasmuch as I was made the means of leading the first Bible woman in London to Christ. Those of you who have read the 'Missing Link' are familiar with her. I will give her history in brief. Many years ago a drunken soldier drank himself into a fever and died in the workhouse. He left two little girls who slept in lodging-houses when they had the money to pay for them, and under gravestones, in shutter boxes, and hampers, when they had none. I could lay my hand upon a boy who slept in an unfinished sewer last winter. They met a German, a man of some position in his own country, who was a profligate, who gave them an occasional penny and piece of bread, and taught them that there was no God in heaven, and no truth in the Bible. So they grew up into life in that terrible state. Many years passed away. One died and the other was left alone. A few more years passed away and a gentleman fell in love with her. He was a gentleman although he had only one eye, no coat, and a very shaky temper. He proposed and was accepted. They got married. When they got married, he married her in his shirt sleeves, and she had neither bonnet nor shawl—it was a fashionable wedding. They went on their wedding tour—down a street, up a court, into a second floor back. Married life brought trouble with it; everything did not run smooth, especially when