

CHAPTER I

PROEM : LONDON AS A PIECE OF MOSAIC

LONDON is not one homogeneous whole, alike in all her parts, but rather a glittering piece of mosaic work, consisting of innumerable facets, each separate in itself yet united with the rest, and forming together a wondrous and intricate pattern. There are mud-coloured lines and dark patches as well as ruby points : seen from one angle the total result is grey confusion, seen from another the radiant points so scintillate as to conceal the darker parts. Both visions are true, both are equally London, yet neither is the whole truth, for neither of mud nor of rubies is the great city made.

The casual visitor, and the foreigner who looks at her from afar, can never know London. To the latter all detail is lost, her majesty only is manifest ; he sees the magnificence of the whole, heightened by the value of her position, and the permanence of her historic setting, but he sees none of the light and shade, the infinite diversity of detail which are really London. The casual visitor sees the detail prominently enough,