

James Ewing Ritchie

About London



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«Public Domain»

Ritchie J.

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Ritchie J. Ewing James Ewing

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CHAPTER I.

NEWSPAPER PEOPLE

What would the Englishman do without his newspaper I cannot imagine. The sun might just as well refuse to shine, as the press refuse to turn out its myriads of newspapers. Conversation would cease at once. Brown, with his morning paper in his hand, has very decided opinions indeed, – can tell you what the French Emperor is about, – what the Pope will be compelled to do, – what is the aim of Sardinia, – and what is Austria’s little game. I dined at Jenkins’s yesterday, and for three hours over the wine I was compelled to listen to what I had read in that morning’s *Times*. The worst of it was, that when I joined the ladies I was no better off, as the dear creatures were full of the particulars of the grand Rifle Ball. When I travel by the rail, I am gratified with details of divorce cases – of terrible accidents – of dreadful shipwrecks – of atrocious murders – of ingenious swindling, all brought to light by means of the press. What people could have found to talk about before the invention of newspapers, is beyond my limited comprehension. They must have been a dull set in those dark days; I suppose the farmers and country gentlemen talked of bullocks, and tradespeople about trade; the ladies about fashions, and cookery, and the plague of bad servants. We are wonderfully smarter now, and shine, though it be with a borrowed light.

A daily newspaper is, to a man of my way of thinking, one of the most wonderful phenomena of these latter days. It is a crown of glory to our land. It is true, in some quarters, a contrary opinion is held. “The press,” Mr. David Urquhart very seriously tells us, “is an invention for the development of original sin.” In the opinion of that amiable cynic, the late Mr. Henry Drummond, a newspaper is but a medium for the circulation of gossip; but, in spite of individuals, the general fact remains that the press is not merely a wonderful organization, but an enormous power in any land – in ours most of all, where public opinion rules more or less directly. Our army in the Crimea was saved by the *Times*. When the *Times* turned, free-trade was carried. The *Times* not long since made a panic, and securities became in some cases utterly unsaleable, and some seventy stockbrokers were ruined. The *Times* says we don’t want a Reform Bill, and Lord John can scarce drag his measure through the Commons. But it is not of the power, but of the organization of the press I would speak. According to geologists, ages passed away before this earth of ours became fit for human habitation; volcanic agencies were previously to be in action – plants and animals, that exist not now, were to be born, and live, and die – tropical climates were to become temperate, and oceans, solid land. In a similar way, the newspaper is the result of agencies and antecedents almost equally wondrous and remote. For ages have science, and nature, and man been preparing its way. Society had to become intellectual – letters had to be invented – types had to be formed – paper had to be substituted for papyrus – the printing-press had to become wedded to steam – the electric-telegraph had to be discovered, and the problem of liberty had to be solved, in a manner more or less satisfactory, before a newspaper, as we understand the word, could be; and that we have the fruit of all this laid on our breakfast-table every morning, for at the most five-pence, and at the least one-penny, is wonderful indeed. But, instead of dwelling on manifest truisms, let us think awhile of a newspaper-office, and those who do business there. Externally, there is nothing remarkable in a newspaper-office. You pass by at night, and see many windows lighted with gas, that is all. By daylight there is nothing to attract curiosity, indeed, in the early part of the day, there is little going on at a newspaper-office. When you and I are hard at work, newspaper people are enjoying their night; when you and I are asleep, they are hard at work for

us. They have a hot-house appearance, and are rarely octogenarians. The conscientious editor of a daily newspaper can never be free from anxiety. He has enough to do to keep all to their post; he must see that the leader-writers are all up to the mark – that the reporters do their duty – that the literary critic, and the theatrical critic, and the musical critic, and the city correspondent, and the special reporter, and the host of nameless contributors, do not disappoint or deceive the public, and that every day the daily sheet shall have something in it to excite, or inform, or improve. But while you and I are standing outside, the editor, in some remote suburb, is, it may be, dreaming of pleasanter things than politics and papers. One man, however, is on the premises, and that is the manager. He represents the proprietors, and is, in his sphere, as great a man as the editor. It is well to be deferential to the manager. He is a wonder in his way, – literary man, yet man of business. He must know everybody, be able at a moment's notice to pick the right man out, and send him, it may be, to the Antipodes. Of all events that are to come off in the course of the year, unexpected or the reverse, he must have a clear and distinct perception, that he may have eye-witnesses there for the benefit of the British public. He, too, must contrive, so that out-goings shall not exceed receipts, and that the paper pays. He must be active, wide-awake, possessed of considerable tact, and if, when an Irish gentleman, with a big stick, calls and asks to see the editor or manager, he knows how to knock a man down, so much the better. Of course, managers are not required for the smaller weeklies. In some of the offices there is very little subdivision of labour. The editor writes the leaders and reviews, and the sub-editor does the paste-and-scissors work. But let us return to the daily paper; – outside of the office of which we have been so rude as to leave the reader standing all this while.

At present there is no sign of life. It is true, already the postman has delivered innumerable letters from all quarters of the globe – that the electric telegraph has sent its messages – that the railways have brought their despatches – that the publishers have furnished books of all sorts and sizes for review – and that tickets from all the London exhibitions are soliciting a friendly notice. There let them lie unheeded, till the coming man appears. Even the publisher, who was here at five o'clock in the morning, has gone home: only a few clerks, connected with the financial department of the paper, or to receive advertisements, are on the spot. We may suppose that somewhere between one and two the first editorial visit will be paid, and that then this chaos is reduced to order; and that the ideas, which are to be represented in the paper of to-morrow, are discussed, and the daily organs received, and gossip of all sorts from the clubs – from the house – from the city – collected and condensed; a little later perhaps assistants arrive – one to cull all the sweets from the provincial journals – another to look over the files of foreign papers – another it may be to translate important documents. The great machine is now getting steadily at work. Up in the composing-room are printers already fingering their types.

In the law-courts, a briefless barrister is taking notes – in the police-courts, reporters are at work, and far away in the city, “our city correspondent” is collecting the commercial news of the hour – and in all parts of London penny-a-liners, like eagles scenting carrion, are ferreting out for the particulars of the last “extraordinary elopement,” or “romantic suicide.” The later it grows the more gigantic becomes the pressure. The parliamentary reporters are now furnishing their quota; gentlemen who have been assisting at public-dinners come redolent of post-prandial eloquence, which has to be reduced to sense and grammar. It is now midnight, and yet we have to wait the arrival of the close of the parliamentary debate, on which the editor must write a leader before he leaves; and the theatrical critic's verdict on the new play. In the meanwhile the foreman of the printers takes stock, being perfectly aware that he cannot perform the wonderful feat of making a pint bottle hold a quart. Woe is me! he has already half a dozen columns in excess. What is to be done? Well, the literature must stand over, that's very clear, then those translations from the French will do to-morrow, and this report will also not hurt by delay – as to the rest, that must be cut down and still further condensed; but quickly, for time is passing, and we must be on the machine at three. Quickly fly the minutes – hotter becomes the gas-lit room – wearier the editorial staff. But the hours bring relief. The principal

editor has done his leader and departed – the assistants have done the same – so have the reporters, only the sub-editor remains, and as daylight is glimmering in the east, and even fast London is asleep, he quietly lights a cigar, and likewise departs; the printers will follow as soon as the forms have gone down, and the movements below indicate that the machine, by the aid of steam, is printing.

We have thus seen most of the newspaper people off the premises. As we go out into the open air, we may yet find a few of them scorning an ignoble repose. For instance, there is a penny-a-liner – literally he is not a penny-a-liner, as he is generally paid three-farthings a line, and very good pay that is, as the same account, written on very thin paper, called flimsy, is left at all the newspaper-offices, which, if they all insert, they all pay for, and one short tale may put the penny-a-liner in funds for a week. The penny-a-liner has long been the butt of a heartless world. He ought to be a cynic, and I fear is but an indifferent Christian, and very so-so as head of a family. His appearance is somewhat against him, and his antecedents are eccentric; his face has a beery appearance; his clothes are worn in defiance of fashion; neither his hat nor his boots would be considered by a swell as the correct stilton; you would scarce take him as the representative of the potent fourth estate. Yet penny-a-liner's rise; one of them is now the editor of a morning paper; another is the manager of a commercial establishment, with a salary of almost a thousand a year; but chiefly, I imagine, they are jolly good fellows going down the hill. Charles Lamb said he never greatly cared for the society of what are called good people. The penny-a-liners have a similar weakness; they are true Bohemians, and are prone to hear the chimes at midnight. Literally, they take no thought for to-morrow, and occasionally are put to hard shifts. Hence it is sub-editors have to be on their guard with their dealings with them. Their powers of imagination and description are great. They are prone to harrow up your souls with horrors that never existed; and as they are paid by the line, a harsh prosaic brevity is by no means their fault. Occasionally they take in the papers. Not long since a most extraordinary breach of promise case went the round of the evening papers, which was entirely a fiction of the penny-a-liners. Yet let us not think disparagingly of them – of a daily newspaper no small part is the result of their diligent research. And if they do occasionally indulge in fiction, their fictions are generally founded on fact. The reader, if he be a wise man, will smile and pass on – a dull dog will take the matter seriously and make an ass of himself. For instance, only this very year, there was a serious controversy about Disraeli's literary piracies, as they were called in the *Manchester Examiner*. It appears a paragraph was inserted in an obscure London journal giving an account of an evening party at Mr. Gladstone's, at which Mr. Disraeli had been present – an event just as probable as that the Bishop of Oxford would take tea at Mr. Spurgeon's. Mr. Disraeli's remarks were reported, and the paragraph – notwithstanding its glaring absurdity – was quoted in the *Manchester Examiner*. Some acute reader remembered to have read a similar conversation attributed to Coleridge, and immediately wrote to the *Examiner* to that effect. The letter was unhandsomely inserted with a bold heading, – several letters were inserted on the same subject, and hence, just because a poor penny-a-liner at his wits' end doctored up a little par, and attributed a very old conversation to Mr. Disraeli, the latter is believed in Cottonopolis guilty of a piracy, Cottonopolis being all the more ready to believe this of Mr. Disraeli, as the latter gentleman is at the head of a party not supposed to be particularly attached to the doctrines of what are termed the Manchester School. Really editors and correspondents should be up to these little dodges, and not believe all they see in print.

I would also speak of another class of newspaper people – the newspaper boy, agile as a lamp-lighter, sharp in his glances as a cat. The newspaper boy is of all ages, from twelve to forty, but they are all alike, very disorderly, and very ardent politicians; and while they are waiting in the publishing-office for their papers they are prone to indulge in political gossip, after the manner of their betters at the west-end clubs. On the trial of Bernard, the excitement among the newspaper boys was very great. I heard some of them, on the last day of the trial, confess to having been too excited all that day to do anything; their admiration of the speech of Edwin James was intense. A small enthusiast near me said to another, "That ere James is the fellow to work 'em; didn't he pitch hin to the hemperor?"

“Yes,” said a sadder and wiser boy; “yes, he’s all werry well, but he’d a spoke on t’other side just as well if he’d been paid.”

“No; would he?”

“Yes, to be sure.”

“Well, that’s wot I call swindling.”

“No, it ain’t. They does their best. Them as pays you, you works for.”

Whether the explanation was satisfactory I can’t say, as the small boy’s master’s name was called, and he vanished with “two quire” on his youthful head. But generally these small boys prefer wit to politics; they are much given to practical jokes at each other’s expense, and have no mercy for individual peculiarities. Theirs is a hard life, from five in the morning, when the daily papers commence publishing, to seven in the evening, when the second edition of the *Sun* with the *Gazette* appears. What becomes of them when they cease to be newspaper boys, must be left to conjecture. Surely such riotous youths can never become tradesmen in a small way, retailers of greens, itinerant dealers in coal. Do not offend these gentry if you are a newspaper proprietor. Their power for mischief is great. At the *Illustrated News* office I have seen a policeman required to reduce them to order.

Finally, of all newspaper people, high or low, let me ask the public to speak charitably. They are hard-worked, they are not over-paid, and some of them die prematurely old. Ten years of night-work in the office of a daily newspaper is enough to kill any man, even if he has the constitution of a horse; one can’t get on without them; and it is a sad day for his family when Paterfamilias misses his paper. Whigs, Tories, prelates, princes, valiant warriors, and great lawyers, are not so essential to the daily weal of the public, as newspaper people. In other ways they are useful – the great British naturalist, Mr. Yarell, was a newspaper vendor.

CHAPTER II. SPIRITUALISM

In the *Morning Star*, a few months since, appeared a letter from William Howitt, intimating that if the religious public wished to hear a man truly eloquent and religious, a Christian and a genius, they could not do better than go and hear the Rev. Mr. Harris. Accordingly, one Sunday in January, we found ourselves part of a respectable congregation, chiefly males, assembled to hear the gentleman aforesaid. The place of meeting was the Music Hall, Store-street; the reverend gentleman occupying the platform, and the audience filling up the rest of the room. It is difficult to judge of numbers, but there must have been four or five hundred persons present. Mr. Harris evidently is an American, is, we should imagine, between thirty and forty, and with his low black eye-brows, and black beard, and sallow countenance, has not a very prepossessing appearance. He had very much of the conventional idea of the methodist parson. I do not by this imply that the conventional idea is correct, but simply that we have such a conventional idea, and that Mr. Harris answers to it. As I have intimated that I believe Mr. Harris is an American, I need not add that he is thin, and that his figure is of moderate height. The subject on which he preached was the axe being laid at the foot of the tree, and at considerable length – the sermon lasted more than an hour – the reverend gentleman endeavoured to show that men lived as God was in them, and that we were not to judge from a few outward signs that God was in them, and, as instances of men filled and inspired by God’s Spirit, we had our Saxon Alfred, Oliver Cromwell, and Florence Nightingale. In the prayer and sermon of the preacher there was very little to indicate that he was preaching a new gospel. The principal thing about him was his action, which, in some respects, resembled that of the great American Temperance orator, Mr. Gough. Mr. Harris endeavours as much as possible to dramatise his sermon. He stands on tiptoe, or he sinks down into his desk, he points his finger, and shrugs up his shoulders. He has a considerable share of poetical and oratorical power, but he does not give you an idea of much literary culture. He does not bear you away “far, far above this lower world, up where eternal ages roll.” You find that it was scarce worth while coming all the way from New York to London, unless the Rev. Gentleman has much more to say, and in a better manner, than the sermon delivered in Store-street. Of course I am not a Spiritualist. I am one of the profane – I am little better than one of the wicked, though I, and all men who are not beasts, feel that man is spirit as well as flesh; that he is made in the image of his Maker; that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. Spiritualism in this sense is old as Adam and Eve, old as the day when Jehovah, resting from his labours, pronounced them to be good. But this is not the Spiritualism of Mr. Harris, and of the organ of his denomination, *The Spiritual Magazine*. That spirits appear to us – that they move tables – that they express their meaning by knocks, form the great distinctive peculiarity of Spiritualism, and they are things which people in our days are many of them more and more beginning to believe. At any rate the Spiritualists of the new school ought not to be angry with us. Mr. Howitt writes, “Moles don’t believe in eagles, nor even skylarks; they believe in the solid earth and earth-worms; – things which soar up into the air, and look full at the noon sun, and perch on the tops of mountains, and see wide prospect of the earth and air, of men and things, are utterly incomprehensible, and therefore don’t exist, to moles. Things which, like skylarks, mount also in the air, to bathe their tremulous pinions in the living æther, and in the floods of golden sunshine, and behold the earth beneath; the more green, and soft, and beautiful, because they see the heavens above them, and pour out exulting melodies which are the fruits and streaming delights of and in these things, are equally incomprehensible to moles, which, having only eyes of the size of pins’ heads, and no ears that ordinary eyes can discover, neither *can* see the face of heaven, nor hear the music of the spheres, nor any other music. Learned pigs don’t believe in pneumatology, nor in astronomy, but in gastronomy. They believe in troughs, pig-nuts, and substantial potatoes. Learned

pigs *see* the wind, or have credit for it – but that other Πνευμα, which we translate Spirit, they most learnedly ignore. Moles and learned pigs were contemporaries of Adam, and have existed in all ages, and, therefore, they *know* that there are no such things as eagles, or skylarks and their songs; no suns, skies, heavens, and their orbs, or even such sublunary objects as those we call men and things. They *know* that there is nothing real, and that there are no genuine entities, but comfortable dark burrows, earthworms, pig-troughs, pig-nuts, potatoes, and the like substantial.” If this be so, – and Mr. Howitt is an old man and ought to know, especially when he says there are not in London at this time half-a-dozen literary or scientific men who, had they lived in Christ’s time, would have believed in him – well, there is no hope for us. Spiritualism is beyond our reach; it is a thing too bright for us. It is high, we cannot attain unto it. The other Sunday night, Mr. Harris was very spiritual, at any rate, very impractical and unworldly. At the close of the service he informed us that some few of his sermons, containing an outline of his religious convictions, were for sale at the doors, and would be sold at one penny and a half, a mere insignificant sum, just sufficient to cover the expense of paper and printing. On inquiring, we found, of the three sermons, one was published at three-halfpence, one at twopence, and one at fourpence, prices which, if we may judge by the copy we purchased, would yield a fair profit, if the sale were as great as it seemed to be on Sunday night.

But Mr. Harris is a poet – there is not such another in the universe. *The Golden Age* opens thus: —

“As many ages as it took to form
 The world, it takes to form the human race.
 Humanity was injured at its birth,
 And its existence in the past has been
 That of a suffering infant. God through Christ
 Appearing, healed that sickness, pouring down
 Interior life: so Christ our Lord became
 The second Adam, through whom all shall live.
 This is our faith. The world shall yet become
 The home of that great second Adam’s seed;
 Christ-forms, both male and female, who from Him
 Derive their ever-growing perfectness,
 Eventually shall possess the earth,
 And speak the rhythmic language of the skies,
 And mightier miracles than His perform;
 They shall remove all sickness from the race,
 Cast out all devils from the church and state,
 And hurl into oblivion’s hollow sea
 The mountains of depravity. Then earth,
 From the Antarctic to the Arctic Pole,
 Shall blush with flowers; the isles and continents
 Teem with harmonic forms of bird and beast,
 And fruit, and glogious shapes of art more fair
 Than man’s imagination yet conceived,
 Adorn the stately temples of a new
 Divine religion. Every human soul
 A second Adam, and a second Eve,
 Shall dwell with its pure counterpart, conjoined
 In sacramental marriage of the heart.
 God shall be everywhere, and not, as now,

Guessed at, but apprehended, felt and known.” – p. 1.

I will take, says Mr. Howitt, as a fair specimen of the poetry and broad Christian philosophy of this spiritual epic, the recipe for writing a poem. In this, we see how far the requirements of Spiritualism are beyond the standard of the requirements of the world in poetry. They include the widest gatherings of knowledge, and still wider and loftier virtues and sympathies.

“To write a poem, man should be as pure
As frost-flowers; every thought should be in tune
To heavenly truth, and Nature’s perfect law,
Bathing the soul in beauty, joy, and peace.
His heart should ripen like the purple grape;
His country should be all the universe;
His friends the best and wisest of all time.
He should be universal as the light,
And rich as summer in ripe-fruited love.
He should have power to draw from common things
Essential truth! – and, rising o’er all fear
Of papal devils and of pagan gods,
Of ancient Satans, and of modern ghosts,
Should recognise all spirits as his friends,
And see the worst but harps of golden strings
Discordant now, but destined at the last
To thrill, inspired with God’s own harmony,
And make sweet music with the heavenly host.
He should forget his private preference
Of country or religion, and should see
All parties and all creeds with equal eye;
His the religion of true harmony;
Christ the ideal of his lofty aim;
The viewless Friend, the Comforter, and Guide,
The joy in grief, whose every element
Of life received in child-like faith,
Becomes a part of impulse, feeling, thought —
The central fire that lights his being’s sun.
He should not limit Nature by the known;
Nor limit God by what is known of him;
Nor limit man by present states and moods;
But see mankind at liberty to draw
Into their lives all Nature’s wealth, and all
Harmonious essences of life from God,
And so, becoming god-like in their souls,
And universal in their faculties,
Informing all their age, enriching time,
And blinding up the temple of the world
With massive structures of eternity.
He shall not fail to see how infinite
God is above humanity, nor yet
That God is throned in universal man,

The greater mind of pure intelligence,
Unlimited by states, moods, periods, creeds,
Self-adequate, self-balanced in his love,
And needing nothing and conferring all,
And asking nothing and receiving all,
Akin by love to every loving heart,
By nobleness to every noble mind,
By truth to all who look through natural forms,
And feel the throbbing arteries of law
In every pulse of nature and of man.”

The peculiar doctrine of the Spiritualists seems to be the belief in Spiritual intercourse, and in mediums; as *The Spiritual Magazine* tells us “the only media we know accessible to the public are Mrs. Marshal and her niece, of 22, Red Lion-street, Holborn,” we need not give ourselves much trouble about them. Concerning intercourse with departed spirits, an American Judge writes, “The first thing demonstrated to us is that we can commune with the spirits of the departed; that such communion is through the instrumentality of persons yet living; that the fact of mediumship is the result of physical organization; that the kind of communion is affected by moral causes, and that the power, like our other faculties, is possessed in different degrees, and is capable of improvement by cultivation,” and from this doctrine the believers gather comfortable assurances. The Judge adds, “These things being established, by means which show a settled purpose and an intelligent design, they demonstrate man’s immortality, and that in the simplest way, by appeals alike to his reason, to his affections, and to his senses. They thus show that they whom we once knew as living on earth do yet live, after having passed the gates of death, and leave in our minds the irresistible conclusion, that if they thus live we shall. This task Spiritualism has already performed on its thousands and its tens of thousands – more, indeed, in the last ten years than by all the pulpits in the land – and still the work goes bravely on. God speed it; for it is doing what man’s unaided reason has for ages tried in vain to do, and what, in this age of infidelity, seemed impossible to accomplish. Thus, too, is confirmed to us the Christian religion, which so many have questioned or denied. Not, indeed, that which sectarianism gives us, nor that which descends to us from the dark ages, corrupted by selfishness or distorted by ignorance, but that which was proclaimed through the spiritualism of Jesus of Nazareth in the simple injunction – ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it – Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’”

In the case of Mr. Harris, it seems to us, he lays his stress upon these peculiar doctrines, and rather aims at a universal Christianity; in all sects he sees goodness, and he would combine them all into his own. He and his disciples have found what all the rest are seeking after. His Christianity is the faith which all good spirits own, which all angels reverence. Christ came to reveal this faith: the whole world is but an expression of it; the whole universe but an illustration of it; and as we become Christ-like, in the renunciation of self, and the acceptance of the great law of service in the Lord and to the Lord, more and more we attain to an internal perception of the verities of that faith. The Word is opened before us, and the natural universe is perceived to be its outward illustration. The new church takes its stand upon this fundamental doctrine of regeneration, and it is to the putting forth of this in art, science, literature, poetry, preaching, in all the uses of an ordered life, that the energy of the true churchman is continually, in the Divine Providence, directed. And to those thus regenerated it is given to become mediums. Mr. Harris, in his sermon preached at the Marylebone Literary and Scientific Institution, May 29, 1859, says: “Any man, good or bad, can become a medium for spirits. I have seen the vilest and the most degraded made the organs through which spirits utterly lost, yet with something of the beams of the fallen archangel’s faded brightness lingering in the intellect – I say I

have seen such, as well as others, earnest, sincere, and worthy, become the organs of communication between the visible and invisible spirits. But no man can become a medium, an organ or oracle for the Spirit, for the Word made flesh, giving to every man according to his will, until he hath passed through the door of penitence – until he hath gone up through the gateway of a sincere conversion, or turning from his evil – until he hath consecrated himself to the great law of right – until he hath voluntarily taken up all the burdens which God in his providence, whether social, or domestic, or moral, has imposed upon him – until, at any cost or any hazard, he hath sought to do, in his daily life, those things which God in His word doth most authoritatively and continually command. All such may, all such do, become, all such are, the *mediums* of the Lord Christ, omnipotent, omnipresent, and eternal, walking, as the Divine Man, in the midst of the paradise of the angels. Breathing forth His breath, and so vivifying the very air which the angels respire and live, He breathes down that great *aura* upon us continually. In prayer, and in the good self-sacrificing life, we drink in that *aura*. The breath of God inflows into the lungs; the thought of God streams into consciousness; the energies of God are directed to the will; man, weak, becomes strong; man, ignorant, becomes wise; man, narrow, becomes broad; man, sectarian, becomes catholic and liberal; man, self-conceited, becomes reverent and humble; man, transformed from the image of the tiger, the ape, the serpent, takes upon himself, in Christ, the angels' image. And as we drink in more and more of this Divine Spirit, our path in life – the path of humble uses (not the path of self-seeking ambition; not the path of prying curiosity), groweth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.”

CHAPTER III. ABOUT COAL

I am sitting by my sea-coal fire, and, from the clear way in which it burns, and the peculiarly pleasant warmth it seems to give out, I have every reason to believe that the thermometer is below the freezing point, that the ground is hard as iron, and that before to-morrow's sun rises, Jack Frost will not only have lavishly strewn the earth with pearls, but have sketched fairy landscapes innumerable on my window-panes. Ah, well, it matters little to me:

“The storm without might rain and ristle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.”

The respected partner of my joys and sorrows has retired to roost, far away in the nursery the maternal pledges of our affection have done ditto. Unless an amorous member of that inestimable class of public servants – the metropolitan police – be at this moment engaged in a furtive flirtation with the cook, I have no reason to believe that, beside myself, any of my limited establishment is awake. My boots are off – I have an old coat on – I have done my day's work – I don't owe anybody any money (the reader need not believe this) – I poke the fire – I light a cigar – and think there is nothing like a good fire after all.

I am thankful I am not in Paris now: I take down my French Pocket Dictionary, published by Orr in 1850, and cannot find the French for fire-place; I find firearms, fire-ball, fire-brand, fire-brush, fire-cross, fire-lock, but no fire-place. Ah, here it is (fire-side, *foyer*– substantive, masculine); but, to make quite sure, I turn to the French-English, and I turn up *foyer* there; and, here, I find it means, “heat, tiring-room, green-room,” and so on. Well, am I not right? there is nothing like an English fire-place after all. The Germans are not much better off than the French; the German porcelain stove, for instance, standing in the middle of the room, like a monument, and nearly filling it, is not for a second to be compared with a jolly English fire; besides, it is very dangerous, and, when the flue gets stopped is, I was going to write, as great a murderer as a medical man. Can I ever forget how when I lived in the Kirchen Strasse of a far-famed and delightful city, distant about 700 miles from where I write, how one morning I came down-stairs to have my *frühstück*, and how, in the very middle of my meal, I felt an uncomfortable sensation, as a gigantic Dane was reading to me a memorial he was about to address to the British government? May I tell the reader how at first I thought the document to which I have referred might have something to do with it? Will he forgive me, if I narrate how, at length, I gradually came to the conclusion that the cause was in the atmosphere, which seemed to be splitting my head, and swelling out my body to the point of bursting? can he imagine my deplorable situation when I became insensible, and when I recovered consciousness found that I had been poisoned by the fumes of charcoal, and that I should then and there have shuffled off this mortal coil, had not my Danish friend, for a wonder, lifted up his eyes from his precious document, and, seeing me go off, thrown open the window, and, in a polyglottic way, called for help? Truly, then, may I say, that, for comfort, and for safety, and for warmth, if you can have it pretty nearly all to yourself, and do one side thoroughly first before you roast the other, there is nothing like an English fireplace in the world.

Woe is me! the present generation, – a generation most assuredly wise in its own eyes, can never know what I, and others verging on forty, know – the real luxury of an English fire after travelling all night as an outside passenger on the top, say, for instance, of the Royal London and Yarmouth mail. Pardon my emotion, but I must shut my eyes, and endeavour to recall the past. It is six o'clock on a night cold as that in which I now write; I am at the ancient hostelry, now gone to the dogs, known as the White Horse, Fetter Lane, on the top of the mail aforesaid. The many-caped coachman, has

clambered up into his seat; I sit by his side, perched somewhat like a mummy; outside and in we are full of passengers. The red-coated guard blows cheerily on the far-resounding horn. "Let them go," says the coachman, and four faultless greys, impatient of restraint, rush forth with their living load: in a twinkling we stoop under the ancient gateway, and turn into Fetter Lane; now we cautiously descend Holborn Hill, skilfully we are steered through Cheapside, past the Mansion House, through Cornhill, along dark and sullen Leadenhall, Whitechapel, all glaring with gas and butcher's meat; our driver gives the horses their heads, and our pace becomes pleasant. We pass Bow Church, and the bridge at Stratford, and now we have left the gaslights far behind, above us is the grand dome of heaven studded with its myriads of stars. Hedge and field far and near are covered with a mantle of virgin snow. The traffic on the road has trodden it into firmness, and on we speed till we reach Romford, not then as now known all over London for its ales. I believe these ales are the occasion of an anecdote, which I may here repeat: – Two friends went into a public-house and were regaled plentifully with them, but not finding them so strong as they wished were much disgusted, and rose to go; however, they had not gone far before the ale began to tell; one traveller soon found himself in a ditch on one side of the road, while his friend was prostrate in another. "Holloa," said the one to the other, "that ale war'nt so bad as I thought." "No, no," was the reply of his now apparently-satisfied friend. But here we are at Romford. Fresh cattle are standing ready to take the place of the four who have gallantly drawn us hither. But there is time to jump down, and "have a drop of summut short," to catch a glimpse from the most glorious of fires, and to feel for the buxom landlady, and her clean and rosy-cheeked Hebes, very strong feelings of personal regard. "All ready," cries the ostler, and away we rush from this fairy land, as it seems to us, out into the cold dark night; the guard blows his horn; curtains are drawn on one side as we pass, that, out of warm rooms, curious eyes may look on us. The pikekeeper bids us, for him, an unusually cheerful good-night, and by this time some of the old pilots returning to Southwold, or Lowestoft, or Yarmouth, after having been with vessels up the Thames, cheered by the contents of various libations, wake the dull ear of night with songs occasionally amatory, but chiefly of a nautical character; and if there is a chorus, – why, we can all join in that; are we not jolly companions, every one? Does not this beat railway travelling? "I believe you, my boys." I say the present race of men have no conception of this. Why, look at a London omnibus; for nine months out of the twelve a cockney can't ride, even from the Bank to Pimlico, without getting inside. A friend of mine, one of the good old sort, rides into town winter and summer outside a distance of about nine miles. "Of course you wear a respirator," said a young cockney to him. My friend only laughed. When the Royal Yarmouth Mail ran its gay career, there were no respirators then. What if the night were cold – what if snow laid heavily on the ground – what if railway rugs were not; did we not sit close together and keep each other warm – did we not smoke the most fragrant of weeds – did we not, while the coach changed horses, jump down, and, rushing into the cosiest of bar-parlours (forgive us, J. B. Gough), swallow brandy-and-water till our faces were as scarlet peonies, and we tingled, down to the very soles of our feet, with an unwonted heat? A coal fire then was a sight to cheer the cockles of one's heart, to look forward to for one long stage, and to think of for another. But times change, and we with them. The other day I met one of our mail-coachmen ingloriously driving a two-pair buss between the City and Norwood; he looked down at his horses and then up at us with an expression Robson might have envied. Let me return to coal. Gentle reader, did you ever go down a coal-pit? – I once did, and I think, with Sheridan, it is hardly worth while going down one, when you might just as well say you had been. I was a stranger then to coal-pits and collieries, rather greener then than I am now, and had on a bran-new suit of clothes and patent-leather boots, and thus accoutred I was let down into the bowels of the earth, wandered along little ways in beds of coal, past little nooks where black men were at work, or resting on lumps of coal dining on bread-and-bacon, and drinking cold tea; and then there were tramways, and horses drawing the coal to the mouth of the pit, and boys to drive the horses, and boys to hold lamps, and all around you was black coal, save where it shone with the reflection of your light, and beneath you trod in mud, all made

of coal-dust and water, of a character to ruin patent-leather for ever. I was not sorry, I assure you, when I left the lower regions, and was hauled up to the light of day. Once upon a time, an exciseman at Merthyr Tydvil was overcome by liquor (for excisemen are but men) and fell asleep. Excisemen are not generally a very popular class of Her Majesty's subjects, and there are many who owe them a grudge. This was the case with our hero. Accordingly, the enemy, in the shape of half-a-dozen dusky colliers, made their appearance, and deposited their unconscious prize,

“Full many a fathom deep,”

as Mr. Campbell says, in a coal pit. Alas! the inspiration of wine is but short-lived. From his glorious dreams of marble halls the exciseman awoke; wonderingly he opened his eyes and looked around. Where was he? To what dark and dolorous shades had he been conveyed? That conscience which does make cowards of us all answered the question: – he had been for his sins conveyed to that fearful locality which a popular clergyman once told his hearers he would not shock their feelings by naming in so well-bred and respectable an assembly; there he was, far away from the light of the sun and the haunts of men. Everything around him was dark and drear. At length a faint glimmer of light appeared in the distance. It came nearer and nearer, by its light he saw a form he thought resembled the human, but of that he was not quite sure. The exciseman felt with Hamlet:

“Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned.
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.”

Accordingly he spoke, and very naturally asked the new-corner, “Who are you?” “Why, I was when I lived on earth an exciseman, but now I am – ” “You don't say so,” exclaimed the interrogator, as sober as he ever was in his life. But the joke had now been carried far enough, and the exciseman gladly returned to the light of day, and the society of his fellow-man.

A coal pit, or rather a coal country, such as that you see around Merthyr Tydvil, or as you speed on by the Great Northern to Newcastle, does not give you a bad idea of Pandemonium. A coal pit is generally situated by the side of some bleak hill where there are but few signs of life. A cloud of smoke from the engine, or engines, hangs heavily all round. The workmen, of whom there may be hundreds, with the exception of a few boys, who stand at the mouth of the pit to unload the coal waggons as they come up, or to run them into the tram-road that connects them with the neighbouring railroad, or canal, are all under-ground. If you descend, a lighted candle is put into your hand, and you must grope your way as best you can. If the vein of coal be a pretty good one you will be able to walk comfortably without much trouble, but you must mind and not be run over by the coal waggons always passing along. As you proceed you will observe numerous passages on each side which lead to the stalls in which the men work, and hard work it is, I can assure you: a great block is first undermined, and then cut out by wedges driven into the solid coal; I believe the work is chiefly contracted for at so much a ton. In these little stalls the men sit, and dine, and smoke. Little else is to be seen in a coal pit. There are doors by which the air is forced along the different passages; there are engines by which the water is drained off; there is constant communication between the upper and the lower world, all going on with a methodical exactness which can only be violated with loss of life. Let the engines cease, and possibly in a couple of hours the pit may be filled with water. Let a workman, as is too often the case, enter his stall with a candle instead of with a safety lamp, and an explosion may occur which may be attended with the loss of many lives; but the rule is care and regularity, each man doing his part in a general whole. The mortality in coal mining is still unusually great. It is ascertained that of the total number of 220,000 persons employed as colliers, 1000 are

killed annually – that is to say, the poor collier has 1000 more chances of being killed at his work than any one of the whole travelling public has of being killed or injured on English railways. Dr. Philip Holland read a paper on the subject at a recent meeting of the Society of Arts. He stated that out of 8015 deaths by accidents in eight years, 1984 (or about one-fourth) were caused by explosions. Remarkable it is, that in the northern counties of Durham and Northumberland (in which one-fourth of the coal is raised, and one-fifth of the collier population employed) the average deaths per annum from explosions do not exceed 21 out of 248; and as the average of such deaths for the whole country, including the Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Staffordshire districts, is 105, so 143 lives yearly are lost because the precautions against explosion proved to be effectual in the extreme north are neglected in all the other districts. Equally remarkable it is that falls of roof have caused nearly 1000 more deaths in the eight years than explosions, although the latter chiefly excite public feeling. Here, again, the extreme northern district affords a gratifying contrast with the others, as, out of an average of 371 such accidents yearly, only 49 occur there. It is suggested that the comparative immunity of the north from this cause of accident is attributable to the fact, that one man in six belongs to the safety staff, who are charged with the superintendence of ventilation, road, and prop making, &c. In other parts no such person is employed, and the men in their anxiety to get coal neglect these salutary means of safety. The next greatest number of fatal accidents occurs in the shafts, 1734 in the eight years. Here, again, the cautious north exhibits its superiority, its proportion of fatalities from this source not being more than a fifth part of the proportion throughout the country. Other fatalities there are, principally the result of bad discipline, the employment of too large a proportion of boys under fifteen years, the use of machinery where hand-pulling would be preferable, the narrowness of the galleries, and such like. Dr. Holland notices that the system of government inspection has, in the southern coal districts, led to the discontinuance of the services of “viewers,” or mine engineers, to direct the operations, which it never was intended to do. Either these viewers must, as a rule, be reinstated, or the government system of inspection must be enormously increased. Among the means suggested to prevent accidents is that of making the coal owner civilly responsible for accidents caused by the obvious neglect of reasonable precautions in the working. In the course of the discussion which followed, it was urged that the workers should no more be exempted from the penal consequences of neglect than the employers.

Fancy – I can do it easily, over my sea-coal fire – fancy the coal dug out of the pit, put into a waggon, that waggon put on a railway – travelling, it may be, some distance, and depositing its precious burden in a collier’s hold; imagine this collier put to sea, and safely arrived in the Thames. As Mr. Cobden said, “What next, and next?” Here a new agency comes into play, the coal cannot come right to my fire. We leave the collier at Gravesend and land, let us say, at Billingsgate – never mind the fish, nor the porters, nor the fair dealers in marine products. Come right away into Thames Street – cross it if you can, for this street, of all London streets, bears away the palm for being blocked up at all times and seasons, and this morning there has been a block lasting a couple of hours; but the people here are used to it, and do not think it worth while to have recourse to hard words, nor to repeat sounds very much like oaths, nor to grow red in the face and threaten each other, as is the case with the angry Jehus of Cheapside and Holborn Hill. We enter a handsome building by a semi-circular portico, with Roman Doric columns, and a tower 106 feet high. A beadle in magnificent livery, and of an unusually civil character – for beadlehood is generally a terror to our species – meets us. We wish to see our friend; right into the middle of a busy group of coal dealers and factors the beadle rushes, and repeats the name of our friend; up one story, and then another, and then another, the sound ascends; our friend hears it, and, rapidly descending, gives us a welcome as warm as his own fire-side. We begin our voyage of discovery: – first we descend and examine a Roman well, in excellent preservation, discovered in excavating the foundation of the new building. The water looks thick and muddy, but they tell you it is clear: but the fact that it ebbs and flows seems to connect it with the Thames; and Thames water, when taken opposite Billingsgate, is not generally considered

clear. We again ascend to the ground-floor, which is a rotunda sixty feet in diameter, covered by a glazed dome seventy-four feet from the floor. This circular hall has three tiers of projecting galleries running round it; the floor is composed of 4000 pieces of inlaid wood, in the form of a mariner's compass; in the centre is the city shield, anchor, &c., the dagger blade in the arms being a piece of mulberry tree, planted by Peter the Great when he worked as a shipwright in Deptford Dockyard. The place is worth coming to see – country cousins ought to look at it; the entrance vestibule, Mr. Timbs, in his "Curiosities of London," informs us, is richly embellished with vases of fruit, arabesque foliage, terminal figures, &c. In the rotunda, between the Raphaelesque scroll-supports, are panels painted with impersonations of the coal-bearing rivers of England – the Thames, Mersey, Severn, Trent, Humber, Aire, Tyne, &c.: and above them, within flower borders, are figures of Wisdom, Fortitude, Vigilance, Temperance, Perseverance, Watchfulness, Justice, and Faith. The arabesques in the first story are views of coal mines – Wallsend, Percy, Pit Main, Regent's Pit, &c. The second and third storey panels are painted with miners at work; and the twenty-four ovals at the springing of the dome have, upon a turquoise blue ground, figures of fossil plants found in coal formations. The minor ornamentation is flowers, shells, snakes, lizards, and other reptiles, miners' tools and nautical subjects; – there you can see all the process of coal mining, without troubling yourself to go down a mine, and in a small museum, too small for such a grand building and such a wealthy trade, curious specimens of fossil products and coal will make the observer still more learned; but let us look at the living mass beneath. Some of the men below are famous city names. There sometimes you may see Sir James Duke, who came to London a clerk, poor and under-paid, on board a man-of-war, and who on this Coal Exchange has made a colossal fortune, and who was made a baronet, he being at the time Lord Mayor, when the New Exchange was opened by Prince Albert, on the 29th Oct., 1849, accompanied by the Prince of Wales and the Princess Royal. Here oftener you may see Hugh Taylor, M.P., who began life as a cabin-boy, then became a captain, then was developed into a coal-owner, and who is said to be a perfect Midas, and possesses an art, very much, thought of by city people, of turning everything he touches into gold. On a door just below where we stand is inscribed the name of Lord Ward, for even noblemen don't mind sullyng their fingers with vulgar trade, if anything is to be made by it. And there is the name of a Welsh coal-owner, who, some fifty years back, was a clerk in a certain timber merchant's, at a guinea a week, and who now, I believe, can raise and ship a couple of thousand tons of coal a day. Depend upon it there is some money made by these black diamonds, and the corporation of London know it, for they have managed to get a tax levied of one penny on every ton of coals, whether brought by sea or rail within thirty miles of where we stand. What they do with the enormous sum thus collected it is impossible to say; it is true they built this handsome Exchange, at a cost altogether of £91,167. 11s. 8d., but that is a small part of their receipts. When the tax was first levied it did not much matter; about the year 1550 one or two ships sufficed for the coal trade of London. On Friday, December 2nd, 1859, the number of ships with cargoes for sale on that day was not less than 340 – and on an average each ship employed in the coal trade carries 300 tons of coal. In the month of October alone there were brought into the London markets 283,849 tons by sea, and by rail 95,195 tons and three-quarters. Of course in winter time the trade is very brisk. The retail dealers in the metropolis will tell you that a few cold days make an enormous difference in the sale of coals, and the large dealers are driven to their wits' end as to how they can find enough waggons and horses to enable them to supply their customers. In the large coal-yards in the winter time the men are at work from five in the morning till late, very late, at night. I am thankful for their industry, I hope they are well paid.

But I have not yet said how the business at the Coal Exchange is carried on. There are two classes of men connected with the place, – the factors, who have a handsomely furnished room up above, and who elect each other by ballot, – and the merchants, who have a room below, to which they pay so much a year, and to the use of which they also are elected by ballot. On the topmost story of all are the offices of the gentlemen who collect the city dues, and render themselves useful in

similar ways. When the colliers arrive at Gravesend, a messenger is sent up with their names and the number of coals on board, and so on. Each ship is consigned to a London factor, and in the official room is a large case full of pigeon-holes, in which the papers for each factor are deposited; these papers are collected by the factor's clerks, and with these the factor goes into the market to sell; for if he does not sell – unless the charter party permit him to wait for a second market day – he has to pay a demurrage of three-halfpence a ton, a demurrage, however, often submitted to rather than the coals should be sold at a loss of a shilling per ton. A bell rings at twelve, and all at once you see, by the sudden apparition of merchants and factors from the surrounding offices, that business has commenced; however, little is done till towards the close at two, the factors till then holding out for high prices, and the merchants holding back. I may add that there is very little speculation in this trade, all is fair and above-board. In the rooms of the factors, as well as of the merchants, is a daily list of what vessels have arrived at Gravesend, with what amount of cargo, and what vessels are on their way, and how many are going up to the north in ballast; thus the buyer knows as much about the state of the trade as the seller – and as he thinks the factor must sell before the market is over, he waits till the very last before he concludes his bargain. At the end of the market, when there is a heavy sale, people get a little excited. They are also rather more numerous and noisy than when you first entered, and, besides the regular dealers, a good many others are present: sailors out of curiosity, captains who want to know who are the purchasers of their coals, and where they are to deliver them to; general dealers, who do not belong either to the Factor's Society or that of the Coal Merchants'; and here and there a lady may be seen gazing with curious eyes on the groups below. When the sales are effected, the broker pays the city dues – for bulk must not be broken till then under a penalty of five hundred pounds – and a gentleman attests the purchases, and publishes them in a list, sent that evening to all subscribers as the real authenticated state of the markets for that day. I may as well say that the market-days are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. By way of compendium, I add, that the price of coals, as given in the daily newspapers, is the price up to the time when the coals are *whipped* from the ship to the merchants' barges. It includes, 1st, the value of the coals at the pit's mouth; 2nd, the expense of transit from the pit to the ship; 3rd, the freight of the ship to London; 4th, the dues; and 5th, the whipping. The public then has to pay, 6th, the merchant for taking it to his wharf and keeping it there, and his profit; and, 7th, the retailer for fetching it from the merchant's, and bringing it to their doors. Of course you may save something by going at once to the merchant's. The poor cannot do this, and have to pay an extra price on this, as on almost everything they consume.

And now once more I am by my sea-coal fire, burning up cheerily in this bleak winter night. Let me light up another cigar, and indulge in a reverie. I am in a Welsh port on the Bristol Channel. Yesterday it was a small borough, with an ancient castle, and an appearance of dirt, and poverty, and age. To-day its moors have become docks, or covered with iron roads, its few streets, but lately deserted, now stretch far away and are teeming with busy life. Where the heron flew with heavy wings, – where the sportsman wandered in search of fowl, – where idle boys played, thousands of habitations and warehouses have been planted. There the snort of the iron horse is heard morning, noon, and night. There the ships of almost every country under heaven float. There you meet German, and French, and Dane, and American, and Italian, and Greek. What collects that many-coloured and many-language-speaking crowd? Where has come the money to build those big warehouses, to excavate those capacious docks, to plant those iron rails, to make on this ancient desert a Babel busier and more populous than Tyre or Sidon of old? The answer is soon given. Up those bleak hills, a few miles away, are the coal-works, a little further still are more, a little further still are more, beyond them are the iron-works, and thus we go on, coal and iron everywhere, all fast being changed by magic industry into gold. Nature has destined England to be the workshop of the world. She sent here the Saxon race, she filled the bowels of the land with ores more valuable than those of Potosi. To France and Spain she gave wine; to the countries lying on the Baltic, timber and grain; to Russia, hemp and tallow; to Lombardy, its rich silk; to Calabria, its oil; to Ceylon, its spices; to Persia, its

pearls; to America, its cotton; to China, its tea; to California, its glittering gold; but she has given us the iron and the coal – without which all her other gifts were vain – and with which all the others can be bought. To the rank we take amidst the nations of the earth, from the first we were destined. Ours is not the blue sky of Italy, nor the warm breath of the sunny south, but it is an atmosphere that fits man for persevering industry and daily toil. Let us, then, brace ourselves up for our mission. Let us proclaim the dignity of labour – its beneficent effects – its more than magical results. Let us honour the workman, whether he stand at the loom or plough the field – or sail

“ – Beyond the sunset
Or the baths of all the western stars,”

or labour in the dark and dangerous recesses of the mine. Thus shall we build up a barricade against the murderous art of war, teach all the world the advantages of peace, and make manifest to the nations how to live.

One word more – don't let the reader go away with the idea that there is likely to be a dearth of coals in his time. Let him make merry by his own fireside, and not vex his small brain about what the world will be when the years have died away. A writer in the *Times*, of May 24th, 1860, says, “As a good deal of anxiety has been recently shown regarding the probable extinction of the resources of steam coal in Wales, it may be interesting to state that, by the successful results of the prosecution for the last five years of the operations of the Navigation Works at Aberdare, near Merthyr, all fears upon the subject may be discarded. This pit is the largest in the world, being 18 feet in diameter and 370 yards in depth. The estimate of its workings is 1000 tons per day. The expenses thus far have been £130,000, exclusive of the value of waggons, &c. – £35,000. The ground is of a most difficult nature, the layers often extending 15 feet without a bed, crack, fissure, or any opening whatever. The rock had all to be blasted with gunpowder. The resources of the seam are comparatively boundless, the property extending seven miles from Taff up to Cwm Neal, and three miles in width, covering 4000 to 5000 acres of ‘4 foot coal.’ The royalty is for 99 years, and is held by a firm, composed of Mr. John Nixon, the well-known colliery proprietor at Merthyr; Mr. Hugh Taylor, M.P. for Tynemouth; and Mr. W. Cory, the large coal contractor of London. The commencement of the use of this smokeless coal afloat began about 1840, on board the Thames steamboats, to work Penn's engines. In the same year a cargo was shipped to Nantes, and given away to the French for trial, with the sole condition that the engineer should throw it into the furnaces and leave it alone to stoke itself. Next, the sugar refiners adopted it, as they suffered considerably if the steam was not kept up to a pressure of 50lbs., and if allowed to fall below that rate their works were completely stopped. With the Welsh coal they cleaned out their fires but once instead of twice, and thereby effected a saving in the working day of three hours and a half. The French river steamers followed, and here the only objection raised was, that without the long trail of smoke from the funnel their customers would not be able to see their vessels approaching from a distance. The French Government then became convinced of its efficiency, and, adopting it, have adhered to its exclusive use ever since. Other Governments have likewise profited by its advantages: but, although it is consumed in the Peninsular and Oriental Company's fleet, the Royal Mail, Cunard's, and others, the English Government has not hitherto availed itself of it. The embryo town of Mountain Ash, with already a population of 5,000, has recently been the scene of great rejoicings, as the ‘winning’ or striking of so enormous a seam it is expected will bring with it additional prosperity and considerable increase to its neighbourhood.”

CHAPTER IV. HIGHGATE

If I were inclined to be dull, I would say Highgate is a village to the north of London, with an ancient history, a great deal of which the reader, if he be not a fool, can imagine, and with a very fine geological formation, indicative of salt-water where it is now very difficult to find fresh. In order, also, that I may not weary my reader, and establish a cheap reputation for a great deal of learning, I will frankly confess that Highgate, means High Gate, and nothing more. In old times, right away from Islington Turnpike-Gate to Enfield Chase, there was a magnificent forest, and part of this forest extended as far as Highgate. Down in the very heart of it, in Hornsey, the Bishop of London had a castle, and of the Park attached to it Highgate formed a part. When the old road to the north was found impassable, a new one was formed over the hill, and through the Bishop's Park. In those days pious bishops levied toll; to collect this toll a gate was erected, and here was Highgate, and truly does it deserve the name. It is said the hill is 400 feet above the top of St. Paul's. Be this as it may, near London, a lovelier spot is rarely to be met with. Artists, poets, parties in search of the picturesque, cannot do better than visit Highgate. At every turn you come to the most beautiful prospects. When London will consume its own smoke, if that time ever does arrive, the view from Highgate, across the great city, will be the grandest in the world. On a clear day, standing in the Archway Road – that road esteemed such a wonder of engineering in its day, and forming such a disastrous property for its shareholders (the £50 shares may be bought at about 18s. a share) – you may see across the valley of the Thames as far as the Kent and Surrey hills looming obscurely in the distance. Close to the Archway Tavern, but on the other side of the road, is a lofty old-fashioned brick mansion, said to have been inhabited by Marshal Wade, the military hero who did so much for the wars of Scotland, and whose memory is still preserved in the following very remarkable couplet:

“Had you seen these roads before they were made,
You would lift up your hands and bless General Wade.”

Well, from the top of this mansion you can see no less than seven English counties. The number seems almost fabulous, and if, in accordance with a well-established rule in such cases, we only believe half we hear, enough is left to convince us that the view is one of no common kind; all that is wanted to make the scene perfect is a little bit of water. From every part of the hill, in spite of builders and buildings, views of exquisite beauty may be obtained. Going down towards Kentish Town, the hill where her Majesty was nearly dashed to pieces by the running away of the horses of her carriage (her royal arms on a public-house still preserves the tradition and the memory of the man who saved her at the peril of his life), past where Mr. Bodkin the Barrister lives, past where William and Mary Howitt live, past where the rich Miss Burdett Coutts has a stately mansion, which, however, to the great grief of the neighbourhood, she rarely adorns with her presence, what pleasant views we have before us. It is the same going down past St. Joseph's Retreat to Holloway; and in Swain's Lane, another lane leading back to Kentish Town, you might fancy you were in Arcady itself. Again, stand on the brow of the hill, with your backs to London, looking far away to distant Harrow, or ancient Barnet, what a fair plain lies at your feet, clothed with cheerful villas, and looking bright and warm. “Upon this hill,” says Norden, “is most pleasant dwelling, yet not so pleasant as healthful, for the expert inhabitants there report that divers who have been long visited with sicknesse not curable by physicke, have in a short time repaired their health by that sweet salutary air.” In 1661, the Spanish Ambassador, Count Gondomar, excuses his absence from the English court on the plea that he had gone to his retreat in Highgate “to take the fresh aire.” The associations connected with Highgate are of the most interesting

character. It was coming up Highgate Hill that Dick Whittington heard the bells prophesying that if he would return he would be Lord Mayor of London; a public-house still marks the spot. It was at the bottom of Highgate Hill that the great Bacon – the wisest and not the meanest of mankind, that lie is at length exploded, and must disappear from history – caught the cold of which he died. “The cause of his Lordship’s death,” writes Aubrey, who professed to have received the information from Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, “was trying an experiment as he was taking the air in the coach with Dr. Winterbourne, a Scotchman, physician to the king. Towards Highgate snow lay on the ground, and it came into my Lord’s thoughts why flesh might not be preserved in snow as in salt. They were resolved they would try the experiment presently. They alighted out of the coach, and went into a poor woman’s house at the bottom of Highgate Hill, and bought a hen and stuffed the body with snow, and my Lord did help to do it himself. The snow so chilled him that he immediately fell so ill that he could not return to his lodgings, but went to the Earl of Arundel’s house at Highgate, where they put him into a good bed warmed with a pan, but it was a damp bed, that had not been laid in for about a year before, which gave him such a cold, that in two or three days, as I remember, he (Hobbes) told me he died of suffocation.” The Arundel house here referred to does not seem to be the Arundel House still existing in Highgate, on the left-hand side as you come up the main road from Islington. The house now bearing that name is said to have been a residence of Nell Gwynne, and during that period was visited by the merry monarch himself. The creation of the title of Duke of St. Albans, which is related to have been obtained by Nell Gwynne in so extraordinary a manner from King Charles, is said to have taken place at this house. A marble bath, surrounded by curious and antique oak-work, is there associated with her name. As the house is now in the possession of a celebrated antiquarian, the Rev. James Yates, M.A., it is to be hoped that it will be as little modernised as possible. More hallowed memories appertain to the next house we come to.

Andrew Marvel, patriot, was born, 1620, at Kingston-upon-Hull. After taking his degree of B.A. at Trinity College, Cambridge, he went abroad, and at Rome he wrote the first of those satirical poems which obtained him such celebrity. In 1635, Marvel returned to England, rich in the friendship of Milton, who a couple of years after, thus introduced him to Bradshaw: “I present to you Mr. Marvel, laying aside those jealousies and that emulation which mine own condition might suggest to me by bringing in such a coadjutor.” “It was most likely,” writes Mrs. S. C. Hall, “during this period that he inhabited the cottage at Highgate, opposite to the house in which lived part of the family of Cromwell.” How Marvel became M.P. for his native town – how he was probably the last representative paid by his constituents, (a much better practice than ours of representatives paying their constituents) – how his “Rehearsal Transposed,” a witty and sarcastic poem, not only humbled Parker, but, in the language of Bishop Burnet, “the whole party, for from the king down to the tradesman the book was read with pleasure,” – how he spurned the smiles of the venal court, and sleeps the sleep of the just in St. Giles-in-the-Fields, are facts known to all. Mason has made Marvel the hero of his “Ode to Independence,” and thus alludes to his incorruptible integrity:

“In awful poverty his honest muse
Walks forth vindictive through a venal land;
In vain corruption sheds her golden dews,
In vain oppression lifts her iron hand, —
He scorns them both, and armed with truth alone,
Bids lust and folly tremble on the throne.”

On the other side of the way is an old stately red-brick building, now a school, and well known as Cromwell House. I don’t find that Cromwell lived there, but assuredly his son-in-law, Ireton, did. His arms are elaborately carved on the ceiling of the state-rooms, the antique stair-case and apartments retain their originality of character, and the mansion is altogether one of very great interest. Mr.

Prickett, in his History of Highgate, tells us Cromwell House is supposed to have been built by the Protector, whose name it bears, about the year 1630, as a residence for General Ireton, who married his daughter, and was one of the commanders of his army; it is, however, said to have been the residence of Oliver Cromwell himself, but no mention is made, either in history or his biography, of his ever having lived at Highgate. Tradition states there was a subterraneous passage from this house to the Mansion House, which stood where the new church now stands, but of its reality no proof has hitherto been adduced. Cromwell House was evidently built and internally ornamented in accordance with the taste of its military occupant. The staircase, which is of handsome proportions, is richly decorated with oaken carved figures, supposed to have been of persons in the General's army, in their costumes, and the balustrades filled in with devices emblematical of warfare. From the platform on the top of the mansion may be seen a perfect panorama of the surrounding country.

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