

"AS OTHERS SEE US."

THE EXPERIENCES OF A NORWEGIAN IN LONDON.



SOME little time ago a series of letters appeared in *Morgen-bladet*, a Norwegian newspaper, published in Christiania, which occupies in the Norwegian Press much the same position as *The Times* in England. The writer was, we understand, a Norwegian lady of culture

and education, who, by means of these letters, conveyed to the Press of her native land her impressions of English life.

To see ourselves as others see us is a useful exercise, and it will probably interest our many readers to see the light in which we and our surroundings are regarded by stray visitors from other lands.

In her opening letter the writer describes the impressions produced on her mind by the various sights and sounds of the streets of the Great Metropolis.

"How wonderfully London may be seen from the top of a 'bus! Every morning saw us ascending the comfortable stairs of one of these various coloured monsters, and taking our seats on the top. Then, off we started to enjoy—thanks to the never-failing omnibus—the various sights of London.

"First we drove through endless streets of villas and houses, and then through less populous ones, often driving for a couple of hours at a stretch to arrive at our destination, and during which we changed omnibuses several times.

"There is no great or excessive traffic in the suburbs—more like what we see at home in Christiania, but on all sides the shops seem endless, and contain the greatest variety of goods, the whole effect being that of a market; the shops spreading their goods over part of the pathways—chairs, tables, sofas, mirrors, in fact furniture for a whole room being spread out under the large awnings. Thus we have a complete kitchen with all its pots and pans and saucepans and china all spread out in long low rows, also extending over the pathway.

"In another place we see pretty terraces formed of large flat baskets, filled with vegetables—cauliflowers, cherries, strawberries and pineapples, with a border of golden lemons and oranges, bananas, radishes, asparagus and new potatoes, mountains of white lilies and pink hyacinths, roses and heliotropes. After these marvellous flowers comes the fishmonger with his stores of every imaginable and unimaginable fish displayed on his marble slabs—mussels, oysters and crabs, whilst whole stalls are full of plucked fowl, slices of ham and meat already carved and cut up. In the street a man pushes along a sort of white-painted chest or box, from which he lifts out a steaming saucepan, the sight of which seems to produce a magical effect on the younger members of society, by whom he is immediately surrounded.

"The air is filled with the melodious sounds produced from the ever-present barrel-organs, through which are heard, from time to time, the shrill and penetrating cries which seem the peculiar property of a Punch and Judy show, and which never fail to attract a large and appreciative audience."

The writer goes on to describe Trafalgar

Square, with which she is much impressed; but what seems to astonish her more than anything else is the crowded streets, filled with "all sorts and conditions of men," and with a still greater and more heterogeneous mass of vehicles, ranging from the coster's cart to the coroneted carriage; through which apparently impassable crowd each driver holds his course with an amazing air of indifference. "It is a perfect miracle," declares the astonished foreigner, "that anyone can escape being run over either in the streets (especially at those agonizing crossings where but for the friendly policeman's aid the timid traveller would become a fixture), or being knocked down on the pathways."

But to continue her narrative in her own words, we next find her at St. Paul's, where she says, "We now left the omnibus and took the steamer up the Thames to Westminster Abbey. We glided along in warm sunshine, past the unique Thames Embankment, which somewhat resembles a quay, a part of the Thames being enclosed in a beautiful frame of granite, whilst facing us stand stately buildings bearing historic names.

"A strange effect is produced by the great Egyptian obelisk, with its ancient hieroglyphics inscribed on it long before the time of Moses, and now placed amongst such incongruous surroundings.

"Before us lay Waterloo Bridge like a beautiful gate, whilst behind it rose the towers of the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.

"On our steamer a German band played a triumphant march as if joining in the general chorus of praise to England's power and glory.

"It is something to have even seen Westminster Abbey. How small and insignificant does poor ordinary child of man become at the mere sight of anything so sublime!

"We began our wanderings through the Abbey at the Poets' Corner—where they also ended—and thus it should be, for are they not the very soul and heart of the world!

"How many suffering, tried mortals have stood here, and as they read the familiar and beloved names, have felt that life would have been still harder had it not been for the poets' work! And they have gone from tomb to tomb, thanking them—as one would thank a dear friend—for the light and freedom shed by them over their life.

"The sceptre of these men reaches further than that of any of the kings and queens near whom they rest."

After thus describing some of the sights of the London streets, she gives some particulars of her visit to some English friends in London. The two things which seem to strike her most in this "truly comfortable home" are, first, the abundant supply of hot water, which she declares seems to an ordinary Norwegian *Husmoder* (mother of the house) simply incredible, but most delightful; and secondly the servants' rooms and furniture.

She admires the trim appearance of the maids in their fresh pink print gowns, white caps and aprons, and the quiet way in which the work of the house is managed, everything done so thoroughly and noiselessly, without any apparent trouble or fuss. The servants' sitting-room and bedrooms are—in her opinion—as pretty and comfortably furnished as if they were meant for their mistresses' use. She is charmed with the profusion of flowers in the window-boxes, and also in the garden at the back of the house, "where, enclosed by ivy-clad walls, the flowering trees and shrubs

and gay flower-beds make a perfect bower of fresh beauty, looking at which you can scarcely believe you are only half-an-hour from the heart of London." She adds: "It struck me as wonderful that every evening we should sit at a blazing fire, and look at the garden from that point of view, but that seems to be the way my friends like to enjoy it."

She mentions stories she has heard from her hostess of the demands now frequently made by servants who are "up to date," for time to practice music and drawing and to learn French, and in one case of a lady whose violin would go out of tune in an unaccountable manner, the mystery of which was solved one day, when she found her maid playing on it during her mistress's supposed absence.

"So," she says, "even in England, in these luxurious homes of comfort and wealth, the head of the household has her own trials and troubles; but these are not allowed to appear to the guests, or to interfere in any way with their comfort."

In an article entitled a "Whitsuntide in Kent," she describes some of the beauties of the country close to London.

Going out of town by the S. E. R., she is struck with wonder at the endless sea of roofs of houses by which the train passes. *En route* she describes Woolwich as a "soldier's city," barracks and soldiers seeming to occupy all available space. Passing the house on the common where Gordon was born, she was amazed to find that it bore no distinguishing sign to mark the hero's birthplace.

Passing the Royal Military Academy, she says "the green sward was full of young cadets in their white flannels, playing tennis, and moving with an amount of speed and ease which bore ample testimony to well-developed muscles. It was a real pleasure to watch them, and so the grey-bearded officers seemed to think, as they lounged on the benches smoking their short pipes." We wonder if the grey-bearded officers would recognise the picture!

The wonderful view of London from the top of Shooter's Hill—which has been enshrined in English literature—so little known even to Londoners, naturally attracts her attention, and is described by her in the following words:—

"Far away against the horizon lay a Fata Morgana, a beautiful city—London itself—the Thames with its thousands of shipping, whilst Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's seemed to rise up as a connecting link between the millions of roofs and the sky, whilst last of all the Crystal Palace sparkled in the distance, bathed in rosy light."

She next describes a walk to the neighbouring village of Eltham in the following manner:—

"We took our way through a wood of young oaks and fragrant limes, to visit some old ruins to be found in the neighbourhood. The Palace was built at a very remote period, as a dwelling for the English monarchs, up to Edward the Third's reign, and as recently as Elizabeth's time it was used as a banqueting hall.

"The cuckoo's note echoed through the wood in a charming and familiar manner, but it was too early for the nightingale, whose song I longed to hear. I was struck by the number of churches to be found in the country districts of England; here in about six kilometres we passed three, all of which were grey and venerable, with stained glass windows, and in the churchyards moss-covered tombstones.

"We sauntered down the village street, past an old inn, whose signboard, with The Old Kent Arms painted on it, swung to and fro in the fresh morning air; then through lanes,

sweet with may and privet hedges, and so reached our destination. We crossed the ancient castle bridge, on which are inscribed the arms of Edward the Third, and admired the old moat, with its snow-white swans sailing so gracefully on the water. Behind the moat rose the modern Manor House, in the midst of charming gardens; but the ruins, where were they?

"At the side of the house we perceived the ruins of the ancient castle—but, alas! built in and surrounded by stables and coach-houses.

"A wall was still standing, with a bow window and pillars, from which we were enabled to form some idea of the vast size of the banqueting hall."

After this protest against this inartistic treatment of the venerable ruins of Prince John's Palace, she gives her experiences of an English Church service; the reverent, and at the same time bright, manner in which it was conducted affording her much pleasure. In speaking of the Psalms and Hymns, she says:

"How sweetly sounded the grand old hymns and Psalms of David (with which we are all so familiar), when joined to sweet and solemn airs, and which have for successive generations been sung within these same grey walls! As the solemn melody rang through the little country church, it seemed to me as if the voices of all the members of the 'Church Militant' mingled in one full chorus of prayer and praise to the Church's Head and Father of us all."

After thus describing the Church services, she next speaks of Whit Monday, and we shall translate the passages in which the Bank Holiday is described by her:—

"The second Whitsun day is kept over here merely as a holiday, not a holy day; and in consequence of this all the trains were overcrowded, and every place near London was positively swarming with people, of whom Kent had a fair share for its own benefit, whilst all the roads were covered with bicyclists like grasshoppers.

"Drags and coaches crowded with outside and inside passengers, all apparently in a most jovial frame of mind, drove along at a rapid pace; followed by vehicles of every description, filled with a motley collection of people, 'business people,' chiefly of every degree and kind, from John Bull himself, fat and thriving, to the thinnest little clerk.

"Shooter's Hill did not escape; groups of these lively holiday-makers flung themselves down on the common, beside the evergreen gorse, with its golden-coloured blossoms, and passed round bottles, whose contents were emptied *con amore*; whilst my friends and I preferred remaining in our garden, with its ivy-clad walls, where we sat and enjoyed our afternoon tea, under an old oak tree, and surrounded by fragrant briar roses.

"The next day all the noisy crowds had vanished, and Shooter's Hill lay quietly and peacefully bathed in the golden sunshine, when I bade farewell to the 'Garden of England,' and retraced my steps to London, on my way back to my own dear country."

VARIETIES.

A FAMOUS PERSIAN CARPET.

What is probably the finest Persian carpet in Europe became British national property a year or two ago, being purchased for the South Kensington Museum. It measures thirty-four feet six inches in length, and seventeen feet six inches in breadth.

The fineness of its texture may be gathered from the fact that there are 380 (hand-tied) knots to the square inch, which gives 33,000,000 knots in the whole carpet.

The design consists of a large central medallion in pale yellow, surrounded by cartouches of various colours, symmetrically disposed on a dark-blue ground, covered with floral tracery. Each of the corners is filled with a section of a large medallion, similar to the one in the centre, surrounded by cartouches. The large border is composed of long and circular panels alternating, with lobed outline, on a brown ground covered with floral work.

At the top of the carpet is a panel bearing an inscription, of which the following is a translation: "I have no refuge in the world other than thy threshold. My head has no protection other than this porchway. The work of the slave of the Holy Place, Maksoud of Kashan, in the year 942" (A.D. 1535).

This wonderful carpet and remarkable work of art, owing to its enormous size, fineness of texture, beauty of colour, and splendour of design, is of the greatest value not only to carpet-manufacturers but to all art amateurs.

WHAT IS A SMILE?—Little Daisy's mamma was trying to explain to her the meaning of a smile. "Oh, yes! I know," said the child, "it's the whisper of a laugh."

THE NOBLE LIFE.—"Would you be noble? Look to the noble, and follow the noble. Would you teach others to be noble? First learn to be noble yourself."—*Helps*.

THE REWARD.

You may never sing like David,
You may never preach like Paul;
But if you do your duty
God will crown you after all.

SOWING AND REAPING.

Sow an act, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny.

DISCOVER TRUTH AND THEN COMMUNICATE IT.—To discover truth is the best happiness of an individual; to communicate it the greatest blessing she can bestow upon society.

ANSWER TO WORD PUZZLE.—"MADAM" (p. 283).

- MA. My first's a word oft lisped by baby lips.
- DAM. My last makes streams impassable to ships,
Or is the mother of a lowly brood,
Giving to poor blind whelps both life and food.
- "MADAM." The same from right to left or left to right;
When writ in letters, or when judged by sight.
- MAD. A lady always, though my head lacks sense!
- AM. My end, no end has, in the present tense.
- ADAM. The first sad parent of the human race,
Exists with me in name, though not in place.*
- MADAM. I am a word beloved in many a land,
And noblest men have offered me their hand.
No grander title e'er on earth hath been,
For when you mention me you may address a queen.†

DOUBLE ACROSTIC II.

- A great benefactor; the gift that he brought
Into England, now nearly three centuries
since,
Has been valued and prized for the good it
has wrought,
And is used as a solace by peasant and
prince.
- 1. A monarch, who lived in most barbarous
times,
And as "king of himself and his people"
was famed;

* "Adam" does not commence the word, and therefore is not in its appropriate place.
† Queens and Princesses are always addressed as "Madam."

For his charities, patience, forgiveness of crimes,
As "the Pious" have made him in history named.

Folks talk of the *Victory*, that famous old ship,

Of the gallant *Revenge*, of *Great Harry*,
of yore,

But I'll tell of a vessel that made but one trip,

And never was taken to sea any more.
And yet though tradition has thrown a thick haze

O'er that ship and her crew and the course they had run,

Their country's prosperity dates from those days

When her commerce with foreigners thus had begun.

- 3. A dear little animal, playful and tame,
Which sometimes at home on our table we view;

On your shelves among authors you'll see the same name,

Whose writings are playful and innocent, too.

- 4. A terrible mountain, that vomits forth fire,
Red-hot stones, molten lava and sulphurous fumes;

Yet, as bachelors often refreshment require,

It is frequently found in the humblest of rooms.

- 5. Of lovable character, tender and kind,
To his father submissive when death had seemed near;

Yet cruelly cheated, when aged and blind,
By those his affection had rendered so dear.

- 6. A bulb that is oft in a kitchen employed
To impart to made-dishes a delicate zest;

In France, Italy, Spain, it is greatly enjoyed,

And its flavour is one that the people like best.

- 7. A beautiful queen, sometimes wears a white veil,
Obscuring her beauty by hiding her face;

And whenever you see it, you'll know without fail

That the pic-nic to-morrow had best not take place.