





THE EGREGIOUS ENGLISH

BY

ANGUS McNEILL, *presed.*

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—APOLLO	I
II.—THE SPORTSMAN	13
III.—THE MAN OF BUSINESS	20
IV.—THE JOURNALIST	28
V.—THE EMPLOYED PERSON	37
VI.—CHIFFON	47
VII.—THE SOLDIER	59
VIII.—THE NAVY	71
IX.—THE CHURCHES	79
X.—THE POLITICIAN	90
XI.—POETS	103
XII.—FICTION	113
XIII.—SUBURBANISM	124
XIV.—THE MAN-ABOUT-TOWN	137
XV.—DRINK	144
XVI.—FOOD	153
XVII.—LAW AND ORDER	163
XVIII.—EDUCATION	171
XIX.—RECREATION	183
XX.—STOCK EXCHANGE	192
XXI.—THE BELOVED	199

The Egregious English

CHAPTER I

APOLLO

It has become the Englishman's habit, one might almost say the Englishman's instinct, to take himself for the head and front of the universe. The order of creation began, we are told, in protoplasm. It has achieved at length the Englishman. Herein are the culmination and ultimate glory of evolutionary processes. Nature, like the seventh-standard boy in a board school, "can get no higher." She has made the Englishman, and her work therefore is done. For the continued progress of the world and all that in it is, the Englishman will make due

The Egregious English

provision. He knows exactly what is wanted, and by himself it shall be supplied. There is little that can be considered distinguishingly English which does not reflect this point of view. As an easy-going, entirely confident, imperturbable piece of arrogance, the Englishman has certainly no mammalian compeer. Even in the blackest of his troubles he perceives that he is great. "I shall muddle through," he says. He is expected and understood to muddle through; and, muddle through or not, he invariably believes he has done it. Sheer complacency bolsters him up on every hand. At his going forth the rest of the world is fain to abase itself in the dust. He is the strong man, the white man of white men. He is the rich, clean sportsman, the incomparable, the fearless, the intolerable. And by "Englishman" the world has learned not to mean "Briton." The world has been taught to discriminate. It has regarded the Britannic brotherhood; and though it forgets that the Gael and the Celt are Britons, it takes its Englishman for

a Briton, only with a difference. On the other hand, it is keenly sensible of sundry facts—as that it is the Englishman who rules the waves and the Englishman upon whose dominions the sun never sets; that the British flag is the English flag, the British army the English army, and the British navy the English navy, and that Scotland and Ireland, with Wales, are English appanages. It would be foolish to assert that the Englishman has greatly concerned himself in either the promulgation or the acceptance of these notions. But he holds them dear, and they are ineradicably planted in his subconsciousness.

One is inclined to think, however, that, while the supremacy and superiority of the Englishman have been received without traverse in his own dominions, there are those in outer darkness—on the Continent, in Ireland, and even in Scotland—who admit no such supremacy and no such superiority. Nay, there be persons breathing the breath of life who, so far from looking upon the

Englishman with the eyes with which the early savage must have regarded Captain Cook, look upon him with the eyes with which Captain Cook regarded the early savage. In Ireland, particularly, hatred of the English has become a deep-grounded national characteristic. The French dislike of perfidious Albion may be reckoned to a great extent an intermittent matter. It sputters and flares when a Fashoda or a Boer War comes along, and it has a way of finding its deadliest expression in caricature. But the Irish hatred is as persistent and concrete as it is ancient. In Scotland the feeling about the English amounts in the main to good-humoured tolerance, touched with a certain amazement. The least cultivated of Scotsmen—and such a man is quite a different being from the least cultivated of Englishmen—will tell you that “thae English” are chiefly notable by reason of their profound ignorance and a ridiculous passion for the dissipation of money. The Scot of the middle class thinks his neighbour is a feckless, foolish person

who would pass muster if he could be serious, and who has got what he possesses by good luck rather than by good management. Up to a point both are right, for the English in the mass are at once much more ignorant and much less thrifty than the people of Scotland, and their good-nature and happy-go-luckiness are things to set a Scot moralising.

Years ago Matthew Arnold put the right names on the two more creditable and powerful sections of English society. The aristocracy he set down for Barbarians, the middle class for Philistines. The aristocracy were inaccessible to ideas, he said; the middle class admired and loved the aristocracy. It is so to this day, and so to an extent which is in entire consonance with the circumstance that for sheer stupidity the Englishman of the upper class is without parallel, while the Englishman of the middle class cannot be paralleled for snobbishness. Arnold's complaint that neither class was a reading class or at all devoted to the higher matters still holds. The great, broad-shouldered,

6 The Egregious English

genial Englishman whom Tennyson sang and at whom Arnold gibed is still with us. That he is as great and as broad-shouldered and as genial as ever nobody will deny. And, broadly speaking, his outlook upon life remains exactly what it was. To be ruddy and healthy, to go out mornings with dogs, to dine hilariously and dance evenings, to be generous to the poor, and to honour oneself and the King are the rule of his life if he be a Barbarian; and to ape these things and consider them gifts of price, if he be a Philistine. Since Arnold, however, the Englishman, egregious though he undoubtedly was, has taken unto himself a new and altogether alarming demerit. Out of his love of health and ease and security and pleasure and well-ordered materialism there has sprung up a trouble which is like to cost him exceeding dear—a trouble, in fact, which, if he be not careful, will go far to emasculate him, if not wholly to destroy him. Of the higher matters, as has been said, he has taken but the smallest heed. Writer fellows, painter

fellows, philosopher Johnnies, and so forth are not of his world, except in so far as they may entertain his women-folk, or deck his halls with commercial canvas, or assist him in the eking out of his small talk before dessert. It is not to be expected of him that he should take to his heart persons whom he cannot by any possibility understand. Even Arnold could forgive him that failing. It was the build of the man, the breed and constitution of him, that justified him. But since, being English, he has found his way to the unpardonable sin. It was well that he should despise persons who, however much they might think, did little and got little for doing it. It was well that brains which could not sit a horse, and preferred bed to the moors, and had no rent-roll, should be despised. It would have been well, too, if that other kind of brains, which, beginning with nothing, ends in millionairessdom and flagrant barbarianism, might also have continued to be despised and to be kept at arm's-length. The great, broad-shouldered, genial

Englishman, however, has succumbed. Park Lane has become a Ghetto; my lord's house parties reek of gentlemen with noses, and names ending in "baum"; and the English Houses of Parliament, the finest club in Europe, the mother of parliaments, the most dignified assemblage under the sun, is just a branch of the Stock Exchange. As the exceedingly clever young man who recently wrote a book about the Scot might say, this shows what the English really are.

It has been remarked, and possibly not without truth, that the Scot keeps the Sabbath and everything else he can lay his hands upon. He is credited with being the perfect money-grubber; his desire for competence, we have been told by the clever young man before mentioned, has blighted his soul and brought him into opprobrium among Turks and Chinamen. Well, the Scot does look after money: he desires competence, he loves independence; and, when he can get them, ease and pleasure are gratifying to him. If he comes off the rock and at-

tains affluence, he is not averse to the goodnesses that affluence commands. He will start a castle and a carriage and a coat-of-arms with the best of them; he will lift up his family and leave his children well provided for. In these connections he is just as human as the next man; but he never has played and he never will play the English game of lavishness and wastefulness and swaggering profusion, and, least of all, will he play it on a basis of undesirable association. The Scotsman who has compassed wealth, even though he be the son of a mole-catcher or a sweetie-wife or a Glasgow beer-seller, can always remember that there is such a thing as spiritual integrity. And though he may or may not boo and boo and boo in accordance with the good old kindly English legend, he certainly will not do it in Jews' houses. This, I take it, is where he has some little advantage over Englishmen.

Perhaps no finer indication of the English spirit, and of the greed and corruption that have overtaken it, could have been offered

than has been offered by the trend of recent events in South Africa. To go thoroughly over the ground in such an essay as the present is, of course, impossible; to state the arguments for both sides would be to reproduce writing of which everybody is heartily tired. The battling newspapers have said their say, and we are just beginning to feel the comfort of a more or less reasonable settlement. All that need be said here is that the Englishman has not come out of this war with anything like the honour and the glory and the *éclat* that he has been accustomed to expect of himself in similar undertakings. His bodily prowess, his hardihood, his Spartan capacity for withstanding the rigours of campaigning, his military abilities, and his very patriotism have all had to be called in question during the past two and a half years. When he went out to the fray, his cry was, "Ha! ha!" and the war was to be over in six weeks. He had the finest equipment, the finest munitions, the finest men, the finest system, the world had seen.

He was as fit as a fiddle and as hard as nails, and his love of music prompted him to take a piano with him. Then the English and they that dwell in outer darkness saw many things. They have been learning their lesson ever since. They have learned that in a fight the great, broad-shouldered, genial Englishman, instead of being worth three Frenchmen, is worth about the fiftieth part of a Boer farmer. They have learned that the great, broad-shouldered, genial Englishman is not above selling spavined horses and stinking beef to the country that he loves. And they have learned that when a great, broad-shouldered, genial Englishman is discovered in his incompetence or his culpable negligence or his dishonour, it is the business of all the other great, broad-shouldered, genial Englishmen to get round him and screen him from the public gaze and swear that he is a maligned and misunderstood man. The incidents of the war alone, without any backing or the smallest distortion or exaggeration, have been quite sufficient to show that

there is something rotten in the condition of the English. It has been a tale of shame and ignominy and disaster from beginning to end. It has resulted in a peace which practically settles very little, and an inquiry with closed doors. Verily Apollo must have a care for his reputation in the Pantheon.

CHAPTER II

THE SPORTSMAN

THE Englishman who is not a sportsman dares not mention the circumstance. In the counties he must shoot and hunt, or be for ever damned. In the towns he must have daily dealings with a starting-price book-maker and hourly news from the race-courses and the cricket-pitches, otherwise Englishmen decline to know him. "I am a sportsman, sir," is the English shibboleth. "It is the English love of manly sports that has made the English paramount in every land and on every sea." The Lord Chief Justice of England rowed stroke for his college in Oxford *v.* Cambridge in 1815, otherwise he would not be Lord Chief Justice of England. At eighteen the Lord Chancellor was one of

the best sprinters of his day, otherwise he would never have dandled his little legs on the Woolsack. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman is a keen shot, and was one of a party of seven who made the biggest bag on record in 1865, otherwise he would never have been Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Henry Labouchere is one of our most brilliant and daring steeple-chase riders, otherwise he would never have owned *Truth*. Mrs. Ormiston Chant is a cricket enthusiast; so are the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and Mr. Tommy Bowles. Lord Roberts can take a hand at croquet with the best young woman out of Girton, and Mr. John Morley understands a race-horse almost as well as he understands the Encyclopædists. In fact, the English eminent are either sportsmen or nothing, and all the other English follow suit.

Now and again somebody gets up and points out that betting is a great evil; whereupon the Duke of Devonshire opens one eye and says that he never had a shilling on

a horse in his life. Then everybody says that horse-racing is good for the breed of horses, employing large amounts of capital and large numbers of honest persons, and on the whole a manly and profitable pastime. Incidentally, too, it transpires that fox-hunting is an equally noble and English form of sport, and that when farmers cease from puppy-walking, Britain may very well drop the epithet "Great" from her name. Or perhaps Mr. Kipling, fresh from the unpleasant truths of South Africa, conceives a distich or two as to flannelled fools and muddied oafs. In response there is an immediate and emphatic English howl. Why cannot the little man stick to his Recessionals? How dare he call sportsmen like Ranji and Trott and Bloggs and Biffkin flannelled fools, much less the Tottenham Hotspurs and Sheffield United muddied oafs! Is it not true that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton? Were not flannelled fools and muddied oafs among the first to throw up their home ties and fling themselves into the

16 The Egregious English

imminent breach when the war broke out? Are not cricket and football healthy and admirable old English sports, and pleasantly calculated to keep the youth of the country out of much worse mischief on Saturday afternoons? And so on right down the line. The English are sportsmen. Sport is bred in the bone of them. Less than a century ago they were cock-fighting and man-fighting in the splendid English way. They would be doing it yet, if their own stupid laws did not prevent them. Instead they race horses and pursue the fox, watch cricket and football matches, and play tennis and croquet and ping-pong. It is sport that keeps England sweet. If it were not for sport, the English would cease to have red faces and husky voices and check suits. One presumes, too, that if it were not for sport they would entirely lose their sense of fair play, their love of honest dealing, and that spirit of self-sacrifice which notoriously informs all their actions. It is sport that has made the English the justest as well as the greatest of

the nations. It is sport which keeps her unspotted of the lower vices, such as drunkenness, indolence, and misspent Saturday afternoons. It is sport which gives her a standard of manliness, an all-day press, and a platform upon which prince and pauper, the highest and the lowest, meet as common men. Long live sport!

Perhaps it is pardonable in a Scot to note that the only forms of sport which can be pronounced sane and devoid of offence came out of Scotland. The grand instance in point, of course, is the ancient and royal game of golf. Without attempting to say a word that would tend to exaggerate the value of a pastime which is beloved by all Scotsmen, and not without its appreciators even in England, it seems fitting to remark that in golf you have a game which, while every whit as healthy, as manly, and as invigorating as horse-racing, cricket, football, and the rest of them, can never by any chance become the mere kill-time of the idle, unparticipating spectator or the prey of the

18 The Egregious English

“professional,” the ready-money bookmaker, and the halfpenny journal. As to other Scottish sports, one need not here particularise; but they are all healthy and honest in the broadest sense, and with the single exception of football, which has been corrupted by the English, they have not been allowed to deteriorate into vices. The exploitation of popular pastimes by covetous and unprincipled persons is an unmistakable sign of national decadence. In England that exploitation goes on without let or hindrance and in almost every department. Protest brings merely contempt and objurgation upon the head of the protester, and the national virility continues to be slowly but surely sapped away. That the English notion of sport should permit of the orgies of bloodshed, rowdyism, and partisanship which take place in the coverts and on football-fields, race-courses, and cricket-grounds serves to indicate that, in spite of all that has been said and sung in its praises, the English notion of sport is an exceedingly sad

and sorry one. It is natural that a people given over to display and the getting of money for the sake of the more unnecessary luxuries money can buy should in a great measure lose its taste for outdoor sports of the primal order. The English are losing that taste at a rate which can leave no doubt as to the ultimate upshot. In brief, the Englishman as sportsman worth the name seems to be disappearing; and in his place England will have the adipose, plethoric, mechanical slayer of birds who goes to his shoot in a bath-chair, and the cadaverous, undersized, Saturday-afternoon zealot, the chief joys of whose existence are the cracking of filberts and the kicking of umpires.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN OF BUSINESS

THE English, all the world has heard, are a nation of shopkeepers. They are understood to keep shop and to glory in it. They have kept shop, with the other nations for customers, ever since international shopkeeping became a possibility. In the beginning, one is afraid, their notion of shopkeeping ran neither to fair trade nor honest dealing; but gradually there was built up a system of commercial equity, the main principle of which was the protection of one shopkeeper against another and the security of shopkeepers generally.

In course of time the English man of business arose. He had a silk hat and expansive manners. He lived in a suburb

and read the *Times* on his way to business in the morning. All day at his office he would cheat no man, and his word was as good as his bond. His office day was a day of quite ten hours, and during those ten hours he sweated like the proverbial nigger. At nights he retired to his suburb, and, with the wife and children whom he kept there, ate to repletion from the joint, washed it down with sherry and port supplied to him by merchants of the type of the late Mr. Ruskin's father; and, hey, presto! by eleven of the clock he was deep among the feathers. Twice on Sundays he went to church and held the plate. To Sunday's midday dinner he invited the vicar or a curate, and there was always beef and batter-pudding and improving talk, not to mention cabbage and an extra special "glass of wine, sir." Other recreations the English man of business had none, save and except perhaps an occasional Saturday-afternoon drive in a hired chaise with Mrs. Man-of-Business and the children, and a still more occasional visit

to the theatre. In the long run, by the practice of these virtues he amassed wealth. He put his money into good bottoms; he owed no man a penny; and as he never robbed anybody and always lived miles within his income, he had a conscience so easy that it seemed to sleep. Everybody respected him. He was in demand to take the chair at the meetings of young men's improvement societies, and to explain the secret of his success "free, gratis, and for nothing" to the callow young men thereat assembled. He would tell you unctuously that he attributed his success (1) to early rising, (2) to never wasting time [the split infinitive was his], (3) to always saving at least one third of his income, (4) to never going bond for anybody, and (5) to marrying Mrs. Man-of-Business—this last, of course, with a chortle. So he wagged along and helped to build up the commercial greatness and probity and honour of his country. And when he died he had a magnificent and costly funeral and was attended to his last long

home by his weeping relict and sorrowing sons and daughters. Next day there was an account of Mr. Man-of-Business's obsequies in the local papers, and his sons proceeded to carry on the concern.

That was forty years ago. To-day the English man of business is a bird of an entirely different and altogether more entrancing feather. Indeed, it is a question whether he has not ceased to be a man of business at all. One might perhaps sum him up best by saying that he has begun to have notions. Whereas he was once the bulwark of the Philistine class, he has now gone over, lock, stock, and barrel—particularly barrel—to the Barbarians. He lives in the manner, style, and odour of Barbarism; and the ruling ambition of his existence is to pass for a "county magnate," a man of birth and leisure, rather than for a man of business. So that he has entirely laid aside the characteristics which distinguished his early and middle Victorian prototype. Breadth, girth, weight, the substantial, the ponderous, are

not for him. He does not attribute his success to early rising; he does not boast that his word is his bond; he does not slap his sides when he laughs; he never went to business on a tram-car in his life; and as for his owing all he is to Mrs. Man-of-Business, it is to his association with that charming bechiffoned, bejewelled little lady that he owes all he owes. In other words, the new English man of business has made up his mind that, if life is to be made tolerable at all, it must be made tolerable through social ways. That is to say, if one's income runs to a couple of thousand a year out of a butter business, one must live in precisely the manner of persons whose incomes run to two thousand a year out of lands and hereditaments. "The glass of fashion and the mould of form" for a person who would live is Mayfair. Lords and dukes and the landed gentry have houses in Mayfair; their wives and female relatives flutter round in flashing equipages and brilliant toilettes; there is the theatre, the opera, and other people's houses in the

evening, the Park on Sundays, the river in the summer, Scotland in the autumn, and the Riviera for the winter and early spring. Lords and dukes and the landed gentry tread this pretty round, and find both pleasure and dignity in it. Why not the head of the old-established firm of Margarine, Sons, Bros. & Co.? Why not, indeed? Old Margarine, founder of the house, never missed a day at the office for forty years. Young Margarine will tell you that, "after all, you know, it is rather amusing to drop into the office sometimes and see the fellows sit up." All the same, the business is a beastly bore, and there are moments when he wishes it at the deuce.

As for Mrs. Margarine, Mrs. Man-of-Business, the erstwhile portly mother of daughters and only begetter of her spouse's success, really, if you saw her in her boudoir, in her carriage, at Princes, at the opera, at Brighton, or at Monte Carlo, you would not recognise her. She is young and slim; her hair is of flax; she has rings on her fingers,

26 The Egregious English

and probably bells on her toes; her diamonds are the envy of duchesses; "and as for Margarine, my dear, I never think either about it or him. My little boys are at Eton, and Dickie is going into the Guards." Sometimes even Mr. and Mrs. Man-of-Business manage to get presented. Then, as you may say, their cup runneth over; hand in hand they stand upon their Pisgah and stare at the Pacific as it were. There are no more worlds to conquer. They come down with a light upon their faces, and Margarine, Sons, Bros. & Co. can be hanged. In point of fact, Margarine, Sons, Bros. & Co. sooner or later becomes Margarine, Sons, Bros. & Co., Limited. Margarine himself drops out, taking with him all the money he can get. When he comes to die, if you said "Margarine," he would do his best to insult you.

That is all. Of course, I have taken an extreme case, but apparently the desire of the latter-day English man of business is wholly in these directions. Be he in a great or small way, he is fain to step westward; he

is fain to live as the Barbarians and to be undistinguishable from them. And rather than be beaten he will enter into that kingdom piecemeal. Surpluses that would have gone to consolidation and extension in the old days now go to personal and feminine expenditure. Bond Street captures what the wise would have dumped into Threadneedle Street; and instead of resting our hope upon the business methods of Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Budgett, our heart inclines to the excellent precepts of our millionaire friend "Yeth Indeed." Which is to say that the English man of business, like the English sportsman, is dying out of the land. Whether his loss will be deplored by countless thousands is another question. Anyway, he is going.

CHAPTER IV

THE JOURNALIST

I AM dealing here with the English journalist, because in my opinion, after the English sportsman and the English man of business, there is nothing under the sun so wonderfully English and so fearfully foolish. The elegant and austere writer who gave us *The Unspeakable Scot* has said much which he no doubt hoped would lead people to believe that the British Press was entirely in the hands of Scotsmen, and that this accounted at once for its dulness and its continual advertisement of Scottish virtues. For my own part, I have no hesitation in asserting that Mr. Crosland's view of the situation is quite a mistaken one. In any case, it is obvious that, even if Fleet Street be, as Mr.

Crosland suggests, eaten up with louts from over the Border, the English journalist is not yet wholly extinct, and somewhere in the land the remnant of him stands valiantly to its guns. It is well known, however, that, as a fact, the remnant very largely outnumbered its hated rival, the proportion of Scots to the proportion of Englishmen on the staffs of most newspapers being probably no higher than as one is to three. So that for the stodginess and flat-footedness of the English newspaper—the epithets are Mr. Crosland's own—the Englishman is at least equally to blame with the Scot. Mr. Crosland's main complaint against the newspaper press of his country is that it lacks brilliance. So far as I am aware, it has never before been asserted that the function of a newspaper is to be brilliant. News is news all over the world. To write brilliantly of a dog-fight or of the suicide of a defaulting clerk may be Mr. Crosland's ambition in life, but most persons possessing such an ambition would transfer their finical attentions from the field

of journalism to that of belles-lettres. No doubt, if Mr. Crosland had his way, the morning papers, in which the soul of the average Englishman so delighteth, would be published from the Bodley Head or at the Sign of the Unicorn, or haply at Mr. Grant Richards's.

It is not my intention, however, to enter into a sort of ten nights' discussion with Mr. Crosland. He has had his say and taken the whipping he deserved. My business is with the English journalist; and while I shall not descend to personalities in dealing with him, I hope to show that his brilliance and liveliness and smartness, though much vaunted, are neither a boon nor a blessing either to journalism as a force or to society at large. I think that it may be fairly set down for a fact that the fine flower and consummate expression of English journalism is the halfpenny newspaper. At any rate, nobody would pretend to find in the halfpenny newspaper the sententious dulness and flat-footedness which are supposed to characterise the journalistic work of the Scot. The smartness

of the halfpenny press is indeed not even American. There is but one epithet for it, and that is English. Broadly speaking, its appeal is directly and exclusively to the bathotic. In England the bathotic has always had the majority in its grip. The majority notoriously has no mind. It is a thing of one emotion, an instrument of one stop. On that stop—the bathotic stop—the English journalist makes a point of playing. There has been a time in his history when he believed in the educative possibilities and duties of his profession. He long held with the Scot that the Press was a power, and that it was becoming that it should glory in being a power for the betterment of the race. After many shrewd searchings and commercial gropings, the English journalist discovered that the way to fame and fortune lay in the mastery of the bathotic stop. He learned to sing songs of Araby in one squalid key every morning, and he has since been able to keep a gig and out-circulate everything that considers itself possessed of circulation. He

32 The Egregious English

has played, as one might say, old Harvey with the *Daily Telegraph*. He has put the *Times* to the shame of being a journal that "nobody reads." More than all, he has said flatly to the English people, "You are a rabbit-brained crowd, and here for your delectation and your coppers is the worst that can be written for you."

When England comes to her day of reckoning, in the hour when she shall see her own mischance and is fain to remember the names of her destroyers, none of them will seem to her so flagrant and so to be deprecated as the English journalist. "Behold," she will say, "the monster who convinced me that it was beautiful to split infinitives; that it was elegant to begin six paragraphs on one page with the blessed statement, 'A dramatic scene was enacted in Mr. Thingamybob's court yesterday'; that good books are to be worthily pronounced upon by sub-editors in the intervals of waiting for the three o'clock winner; and that, so far from being a reproach to one,

the bathotic was the only honourable and creditable attitude of mind.”

If a man wish to perceive to what degraded passes the art of writing may come and yet retain the qualities of intelligibility and apparent reasonableness, let him peruse the morning papers and die the death. The reek and offence of them smells to heaven. They are a sure indication of the decadence of the English mind and of the cupidity and unscrupulousness of the English journalist. There has been nothing like them, nothing to compare with them, for cheapness and futility and banality in the history of the world. They are more to be fearful of than the pestilence, inasmuch as they spell intellectual debasement, the corruption of the public taste, and the defilement of the public spirit. Their very literal innocuousness condemns them. It is their boast that they may be read in the family without a blush. Their assumption of morality and puritanical straitlacedness is admirable. Beneath it there lie a licentiousness of purpose, a disregard for what is just,

34 The Egregious English

and a contempt for what is decent and of good report which are calculated to make the angels weep. When one inquires into the personnel of the staffs by which these papers are run, one is confronted with exactly the kind of man one expects to meet. First of all, he is English, and as shallow and flippant and irresponsible as only an Englishman can be. The saving touch of seriousness does not enter into his composition. He neither reads nor thinks. Beer, billiards, and free lunches, free entry to the less edifying places of amusement, a minimum of work and a maximum of pay, constitute his ideal of the journalist's career, and he is always doing his best to live up to it. Of responsibility to anybody save his immediate chief, who, after all, is only himself at a little higher salary, he has not the smallest notion. His duty is neither by himself nor by the public. All that is expected of him is loyalty to his chief and to his paper, and it is his pride and joy that this loyalty is invariably forthcoming.

Very occasionally one hears that, in con-

sequence of a change in the political policy of a newspaper, the editor of that paper has considered it to be his duty to resign his editorship. Probably not more than two such resignations have occurred in English journalism during the past twenty years. In both instances the self-denying editors have been held up by the English papers as sublime examples of honour and martyrdom. That there is nothing extraordinary in sticking to one's principles, even though it means loss of livelihood, does not appear to have dawned upon the lively English mind. Of course, it will be said that, if every member of the staff of a newspaper, down even to the junior reporters, were allowed to have beliefs and principles, and were not expected to write anything in antagonism to them, an exceedingly remarkable kind of newspaper would result. Compromise, at any rate on established matters, must be the rule of the journalist's life. On the other hand, I incline to the opinion that the English journalist is far too swift to acquiesce in

doubtful procedure, and that where the morals, good report, and high character of a paper are concerned it is better to have a Scotch staff than an English one. Nothing is more characteristic of the English journalist of to-day than the circumstance that he is literally without opinions of his own. He takes his opinions from his chiefs, just as his chiefs take their opinions from their proprietors, or from the wire-pullers with whose party the paper happens to be associated. In a sense it is impossible that it should be otherwise. Yet you will find that in the main Scottish journalists do have opinions of their own, and that somehow they manage to be loyal to them. For weal or woe the Scot is immovable and unchangeable as the granite of his own hills. You can never get him to see that half-measures are either desirable or necessary. He will not stretch his conscience nor palter with his soul for any man or any man's money. The Englishman is all the other way—that is why he makes such a nimble and even brilliant journalist.

CHAPTER V

THE EMPLOYED PERSON

THE English are a nation of employed persons. Wherever you go, from Berwick to Land's End, you will find that in the main the men you meet are somebody's employees. The better kind of them possibly write "manager" on their cards; some of them even are managing directors; others, again, are partners in wealthy houses or heads of such houses. Yet, as I have said, they strike you almost to a man as being in somebody's employment. Even the most prosperous of them have the strained, repressed, furtive look which comes of the long turning of other people's little wheels; while the masses, the employed English masses, give you, as regards appearance, physique, and habit of

mind alike, an excellent notion of what a galley-slave must have been. The fact of being employed is indeed the only big and abiding fact in the average Englishman's life. It has its effect on the whole man from the time of his youth to the time of his death; it influences his actions and the trend of his thoughts to a far greater extent than any other force—love and religion included. In the Englishman's view, to be employed is the only road to subsistence, and, if one be ambitious, the only road to honour. He must work for somebody, otherwise he cannot be happy. The notion of working for himself appals him; and if by any chance he be persuaded to take the plunge, the consideration that he has no master weighs so heavily upon him that his end is usually speedy ruin of one sort or another. That is to say, he either takes advantage of his freedom to the extent of doing no work at all, or, in the absence of the guiding hand, he loses his judgment and throws to the winds the caution that kept him his place. It is a pity, there can be no

doubt; but the thing is in the English blood. If you are an Englishman, you must be employed; if you are unemployed, you are unhappy, and worse. For a full century the rich merchants, enterprising manufacturers, colliery-owners, mill-owners, and what not, in whom the English put their trust, have been preaching and fomenting this doctrine by every means in their power. To their aid in spreading the glorious truth they have brought the moralists and the Churches: “ ‘ if a man will not work, neither shall he eat.’ ‘ Servants, obey your masters.’ Punctuality is the soul of business. Be faithful over a few things. Begin at the bottom rung of the ladder. Mr. So-and-so, the notorious billionaire, was once a poor working-boy in Manchester. Furthermore, if you *don't* work and at our price—well, to say the least of it, God will not love you.”

And the English—poor bodies!—carry on their lives accordingly. The whole scheme of things is arranged to fit in with the ideas of employers as to what work means, under

what conditions it should be performed, and what should be its rewards. To live in the manner pronounced to be respectable by the moralists and the Churches, you must take upon yourself exactly the labours, and no others, prescribed by the employers. In other words, to keep an eight-roomed house with a piano in it, a wife with blouses and four new hats a year, and a little family who can go to church on Sunday mornings dressed as well as any of them, you must keep Messrs. Reachemdown's books, and pass through your hands many thousands of Messrs. Reachemdown's moneys, for a salary of £150 a year. When you get old and half blind through years of poring over Reachemdown's figures, they will pension you off at a pound a week, and get a younger man to do the work for the other £2. You, good, easy Englishman, will, in your heart of hearts, be exceedingly grateful to Reachemdown & Reachemdown, and count it not the least of your many blessings that you have never wanted good work and kind employers. You

The Employed Person 41

will say to your English son, "My boy, make up your mind to serve people well, and in your old age they will never forget you. Always be industrious, obliging, and respectful. Remember that a rolling stone gathers no moss, and never forsake the substance for the shadow." And the chances are that your fine English boy will do exactly what you, his fine English father, have done. Indeed, if he be old enough at the time of your "retirement," he might very appropriately take your place at Reachemdown & Reachemdown's; then he will marry, he will live in a house with a piano in it, his wife will have four new hats a year, and his children will go to church on Sundays as well dressed as any of them.

On the whole, I should be sorry to say that this sort of thing was not desirable. If a nation is to be great, it is essential that it should contain a large body of workers, and the more industrious and dependable and trustworthy that body of workers, the better it is for the State and for the pillars and props

42 The Egregious English

of the State, the employers included. But the point is that the English take too much credit for it and get too much ease out of it. It has been complained by Mr. Crosland and other masters of elegant English that the Scot goes to London and the smaller industrial markets and there enters into successful competition with the English employed, and it appears to annoy Mr. Crosland that the Scot should not be content with good work, say book-keeping from nine to six, good wages, say £150 per annum, and kind employers, say Messrs. Reachemdown & Reachemdown, all his life. It seems to annoy him, too, that the Scot never acquires that pathetic satisfaction in being employed which permeates the beautiful spirit of his English competitor. You will meet hoary and bald-headed Englishmen who will tell you with a quaver that they have been in the employment of one and the same house, man and boy, for over half a century, sir! Somehow the Englishman tells you this with a look of pride, and rather expects you to regard him

as a sort of marvel. It never occurs to him that he is really bragging of his own ineptitude,—to use Mr. Crosland's favourite abstraction,—his own lack of enterprise. The number of Scots who have been in the employment of one house for forty years, least of all the number of Scots who brag about it, is probably not a round dozen. As a general rule, when a Scot has been in a house forty years, it is his house.

Another matter in which the English employee appears to me to err mightily is his treatment of his employer. In concerns of great magnitude personal relations between employer and employed are often impossible, because the employer seldom comes near the place where his money is made for him. Quite frequently, however, he is accessible; yet the employee knows him not. He would no more think of walking up and shaking hands with him than he would think of casting himself from the top of the factory chimney-stack. It is the unwritten law of the English that the employer is a better man

44 The Egregious English

than the employed. For the employee to say "How do!" to the employer; for the employee to meet the employer in the street and omit to make respectful obeisances; for the employee to assert anywhere outside his favourite pot-house that Jack's as good as his master, would never do. If you are paid wages, you must be grateful and respectful; and though you know quite well that your employer is paying you just as little as ever he can, you must still respect him. Broadly speaking, we manage these things better in Scotland; and, for that matter, the Scot manages them better in England. The English employee quirks and crawls before his employer, because he knows that his employer can exercise over him powers which, if they do not mean exactly life and death, do mean a possibly long period of out-of-workness. And out-of-workness is, as a rule, the most fearful thing in life that can happen to an Englishman, for the simple reason that he never has anything behind him. If he has been earning fifty pounds a year, he has

spent it all; if he has been earning a thousand a year, he has spent it all and more to it. With the Scot it is different. No matter how small his earnings, he invariably contrives to save a portion of them. When he has saved a hundred pounds, he is practically an independent man, for a Scot with a hundred pounds at his disposal can defy, and can afford to defy, any employer that ever breathed the breath of life. Besides, hundred pounds or no hundred pounds, the Scot will not grovel. He does his work and his duty, and the rest can go hang. His days are not spent in blissful contemplation of the joys of being in good work; he has no anxieties as to how long it is going to last; he admits no superiorities; he is afraid of no man. Some day, perhaps, the Englishman will learn to take a leaf out of his book. The Englishman will learn that to be employed, excepting with a view to greater things than subsistence, is to be in a condition which borders very closely on degradation. He will learn that services rendered and energies

46 The Egregious English

expended for long periods of years without adequate reward, and with only a pretence at advancement, are a discredit and not an honour. He will learn that a man's a man, and that it is no man's business to be so faithful to another man that he cannot be faithful to himself.

CHAPTER VI

CHIFFON

IT pains me beyond measure to say it, but I think there can be no doubt that the accumulated experience and wisdom of mankind goes to show that at the bottom of most troubles there is a woman. Since Eve and the first debacle, it has been woman all along the line. I do not say that it is her fault, but the fact remains. White hands cling to the bridle-rein, and the horse proceeds accordingly. It is woman that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will. She has a delicate finger in everybody's pie. No matter who you are, some woman has got you by a little bit of string. Occasionally you are the better for being so entangled; but nine times out of ten it is a misfortune for you.

48 The Egregious English

When one comes to look closely at the decadence of the English, and endeavours to account for it in a plain way and without fear or prejudice, one cannot help perceiving that here again one has a pronounced case of woman, woman, woman. Further,—and once more I pray that I may not seem impolite,—the woman with whom you have to contend in England, though her hand be full of power, is not, perhaps, a woman, after all. I sometimes think that she may be best and most properly expressed in the word “Chiffon.” Whatever she may have been in the past, however sweet, however demure, however capable, however beautiful, the Englishwoman of to-day is just a foolish doll, a thing of frills and fluff and patchouli, a daughter of vanity, and a worshipper of dressmakers. Under her little foot, under her mild, blue, greedy eye, the Englishman has become a capering carpet-knight, one who dallies at high noon, a buck, a dandy, an unconvinced flippancy, the shadow of his former self. Be he father or merely husband of the fair, his

case is pretty much the same. Both at home (if he can find it in his heart to call his conglomeration of cosey-corners home) and abroad it is Chiffon that runs him. Chiffon must have a house full of fal-lals: so must the Englishman. Chiffon delights in Chippendale that a sixteen-stone male person dare not sit upon: so does the Englishman. Chiffon must dine late off French kickshaws with champagne to them: so must the Englishman. Chiffon must not have more than two children, whom she must visit and kiss once a day: it is the same with the Englishman. Chiffon does not like the way in which you are running your newspaper: the Englishman forthwith runs his newspaper another way. Chiffon does not like that cross-eyed clerk of yours; she is sure there is something wrong about him; she would n't trust him with a hairpin, my dear! He gets fired. Chiffon is fond of motor-cars and tiaras of diamonds and eight-guinea hats and three or four new frocks a week, and she hates to be worried about money matters. "Poor little

Chiffon!" says the good, kind Englishman; "she shall be happy, even though we drift sweetly toward Carey Street. We must keep it up, though the heavens fall; and when I come to think of it, I have read somewhere of a man who had only £500 year, and is now in receipt of £16,000 simply through marrying an expensive wife." Lower down the scale it is just the same: Chiffon will have this, Chiffon will have that, and so will the Englishman. It is only four-three a yard, and it will make up lovely! The Englishman never doubts that it will. Chiffon discovers that Chiffon next door has got an oak parlour-organ and a case of birds on the instalment system. "She is getting them off a Scotsman," says Chiffon; "and I want some too." "Dry those pretty eyes," says the Englishman; "I will apply at once for an extra two-bob a week, and it shall be done." The children of Chiffon next door are "taking music lessons off a lidy in reduced circumstances." Chiffon's children are as good as the children of Chiffon next door any day in

the week—they, too, shall take music lessons. The Englishman concurs.

This, of course, is all when you are married to her. When you are Chiffon's *fiancé* (she would not have you say sweetheart or lover for worlds), you enjoy what is commonly called in England a high old time. First of all, she will flirt with you till your reason rocks upon its throne. Then, when you are about as confused as a little boy who has fallen out of a balloon, she brings you to the idiot-point, informs you that it is so sudden and that she does n't quite know what you mean, and asks you if you do not think it would have been more manly on your part to have spoken first with her papa. Being an Englishman, and having nothing better to do, you put up with it and go guiltily off to Chiffon's delectable male parent. He inquires into your income in pretty much the manner of a person who is going to lend you £20 on note of hand only, grunts a bit, asks to be excused while he has a word with the missis; comes back, says, "Yes, you can have

her," and next morning you find yourself on the same old stool, in front of the same old shiny desk, wondering what in the name of heaven you have done. There is a three-years' courtship, all starch and theatre-tickets and bouquets and fretfulness and anxiety; there is a wedding pageant, got up specially for the purpose of annoying the neighbours; you have a whirling twenty minutes before a company of curates, who persist in calling you by the wrong name; you go home in shivers; you drink soda-water to prevent you from getting drunk; you make a speech in the tone of a man who has just been hung; you find yourself feeling rather queer aboard the Dover packet,—and Chiffon is yours. Such an experience at a time of life when a man is callow, shy, full of nerves, and unversed in the serious matters of life is bound to leave its mark upon the character. It takes the heart out of most men, and some of them never get it back again. It is an English institution and a stupid one. Like many another English institution, it has its

basis in pretentiousness and display, instead of in the vital issues of life. In Scotland we make marriages on different and more serious principles. There are no Chiffons in Scotland, whether maids or matrons. Consequently in Scotland there are precious few fools. Hard heads, sound sense, high spirits, indomitable will, inexhaustible energy, are not the offspring of mammas who know more about cosmetics than about swaddling-clothes, and who suckle their children out of patent-food tins. One of the rebukers of Mr. Crosland has pointed out with some pertinence that the Scotswoman approximates more closely to the Wise Man's view of what a good wife should be than almost any other kind of woman in the world. Here, as Mr. Crosland would say, is Solomon:

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

54 The Egregious English

She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honour are her clothing: and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Yes, Mr. Crosland, it *is* "very, very, very Scotch." What poor little Chiffon would think of it, if it were put before her as a standard of wifely qualification and duty, nobody but the Englishman knows. Perhaps she

would shrug her shoulders and say, "How absurd!" Perhaps she would not understand it at all.

The Englishwoman's love of petty display and cheap fripperies, her desire to outshine the neighbours and to put all she has on her back, and to pass everywhere for a woman of means and station, no doubt had its beginning in a laudable anxiety to make the best of things. Unfortunately, however, the tendency has been developed out of reason, to the neglect of the qualities which make a woman the inspiration and strength of a man's life. To dress, and to talking and thinking about it, the Englishwoman devotes unconscionable hours. The bare business of robing and disrobing takes up pretty well half her waking day. Her transference from the bath to the breakfast-table cannot be accomplished under fifty minutes. Before she will appear in the open she will make yet another toilet. She is a full twenty minutes tidying herself before lunch. In the afternoon there is an hour of getting into tea-gowns; and,

crowning rite of all, my lady "strips" for dinner. From morn to dewy eve her little mind is busy with dress. The shopping, over which she makes such a fuss, is almost invariably a matter of new frocks, new hats, new shoes, new feathers, matching this, exchanging that, sitting on high stools before pomatumed counter-skippers, and dissipating, in the purchase of sheer superfluities, gold that men have toiled for. Her visiting is equally an unmitigatedly dressy matter; she goes to see her friends' frocks, not her friends, and it is the delight of her soul to turn up in toilettes which render her friends frankly and miserably envious. Of the real purport of clothes she knows nothing; and if you endeavour to explain it to her, she will charge you with the wish to make an old frump of her before her time. As for the expense of it all, she never bothers her pretty head about money matters; she tells you in the most childlike way that her account at the bank seems to be perpetually overdrawn, but that "Randall is a dear, kind boy,

though he does swear a bit when some of the bills come in. Besides," she says, "I am sure it helps him in his profession to have a well-dressed wife."

And the pity of it is, that quite frequently the person upon which these adornments are lavished is really not worth the embellishment, and would indeed be far better served and make a far better show in the least elaborate of garments. For, notoriously, the physique of the Englishwoman of the middle and upper classes is not now what it was. In height, in figure, in suppleness and grace of build, the Scottish woman can give her English sister many points. In the matter of facial beauty, too, the Englishwoman cannot be said particularly to shine. At a Drawing-Room, at the opera, the beauty of England spreads itself for your gaze; and the amazing lack both of beauty and the promise of it appals you. If we are to believe the society papers, there is not an ugly nor a plain-featured woman of means in all broad England. Every week the English illustrated journals

58 The Egregious English

give you pages of photographs, beneath which you may read in entrancing capital letters, "The beautiful Miss Snooks," or "Lady Beertap's two beautiful daughters." Yet the merest glance at those photographs convinces you that Miss Snooks is about as good-looking as the average kitchen-wench, while the two beautiful daughters of Lady Beertap have faces like the backs of cabs. The fact is, that the so-called English beauty is a rare thing and a fragile thing. Fully seventy-five per cent. of Englishwomen are not beautiful to look upon. Of the other twenty-five per cent., one here and there—perhaps one in a thousand—could stand beside the Venus of Milo without blenching. For the rest, they have a girlish prettiness which accompanies them into their thirtieth year, and sickens slowly into a sourness. At forty, little Chiffon, who was so pretty at twenty, has crow's-feet and flat cheeks, and a distinct tendency to the nut-cracker type of profile.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOLDIER

“WITH a tow-row-row-row-row for the British Grenadiers!” Which, of course, means the English Grenadiers, inasmuch as there never were any Scottish Grenadiers. To-day, however, the English do not sing this song. Their grandfathers delighted in it, and the tune still survives as a soldierman’s march. But when the modern English wish to celebrate the English soldier vocally, they do it in their own decadent, bathotic way. They have an idiot-song called *Tommy Atkins*. The chorus of it goes somewhat in this wise:

Oh! Tommy, Tommy Atkins,
You’re a good ’un, heart and hand;
You’re a credit to your nation
And to your native land.

The Egregious English

May your hand be ever ready!
May your heart be ever true!
God bless you, Tommy Atkins!
Here 's your country's love to you!

And since the outbreak of the late war, at any rate, the English do not speak of soldiers, but of Tommies; and the principal English poet has gone farther, and dubbed them Absent-Minded Beggars. Since the outbreak of the war, too, it has been necessary to issue from time to time words of caution to the great English public. Lord Roberts—"Little Bobs," I suppose, I should call him, in the choice English fashion—has on two or three occasions deemed it advisable to let it be known that his desire was that the great English public should discontinue the practice of treating Cape-bound or returned Tommies to alcoholic stimulants, and substitute therefor mineral waters or cocoa. This was very wise on Little Bobs's part, and it has no doubt saved at least two Cape-bound or returned Tommies from the degradation of an almighty drunk. I mention this because it illustrates in an exceedingly quaint

way the attitude of the English towards the soldier. When there is war toward, the soldier is absolutely the most popular kind of man in England. In peace-time an English soldier is commonly credited with being socially vile and unpresentable. There is a popular conundrum which runs, "What is the difference between a soldier and a meerschäum pipe?" and the answer, I regret to say, is, "One is the scum of the earth, and the other the scum of the sea." Tommy's place in the piping times of peace is just at the bottom of the social ladder; there he must stay, and drink four ale, and smoke cheap shag, and sit at the back of the gallery in places of amusement. Then war comes along, and the English bosom expands to the sound of the distant drum, and to the rumour of still more distant carnage. Who is it that's a-working this 'ere blooming war? Blest if it ain't our old friend Tommy Atkins! Fetch him out of the four-ale bar at once. The nation's heroes have no business in four-ale bars. The saloon bar is the place for them,

and the barmaid shall smile upon them, and they shall have free drinks and free cigars till all's blue; for they are the nation's heroes, and they deserve well of their country. Furthermore, if they wish to visit those great and glorious centres of enlightened entertainment commonly called the Halls, they shall no longer be stuffed obscurely away in the rear portion of the gallery, but they shall come out into the light of things; they shall come blushing and amid acclaim into the pit or the stalls, or, for that matter, into any part of the 'ouse.

Throughout the war this has been so. It was so till yesterday. But the ancient English smugness has begun to assert itself once more; and Tommy—dear Tommy, God-bless-you Tommy, in fact—finds staring him in the face, as of yore, "Soldiers in uniform not served in this compartment"; "Soldiers in uniform cannot be admitted to any part of this theatre except the gallery." The English Kipling hit the whole matter off in his vulgar way when he wrote *Tommy*:

I went into a theatre as sober as could be;
They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'ad n't none for
me;
They sent me to a gallery, or round the music-'alls;
But when it comes to fightin'—Lord! they'll shove me
in the stalls!

For it's Tommy this and Tommy that, an' "Tommy,
wait outside";
But it's "Special train for Atkins" when the
trooper's on the tide—
The troopship's on the tide, my boys—the troop-
ship's on the tide:
Oh! it's "Special train for Atkins" when the
trooper's on the tide.

We were told that this war, if it were doing England no other good, was at least bringing her to a right understanding of the soldier-man. It was teaching her to take him by the hand, to recognise in him a creditable son and an essential factor in the State. It has ended in the way in which pretty well every English revival does end—namely, in smoke. Though England has as much need of the soldier and is as much dependent upon him for peace and security as any other nation, she has never been able—excepting, as I have said, in time of war—to bring her greedy mind to the pass of doing him the

64 The Egregious English

smallest honour or of rendering to him that measure of social credit which is obviously his by right.

That the English Tommy is not altogether a delectable person, however, goes, I think, without saying. According to General Buller and other more or less competent authorities, the men in South Africa were splendid. I do not doubt it in the least. On the other hand, the "returns" from that country have not struck one as reaching a high standard of savouriness or manliness; and, however splendid he may have been as a campaigner, as an ex-campaigner the English Tommy has scarcely shone; so that in a sense the changed attitude of the English public mind towards him is not to be wondered at.

Elsewhere in this essay I have pointed out that the late war has not reflected any too much credit upon that chiefest of snobs—the English military officer. To go into the army has long been considered good form among the English Barbarians, and to be an officer in a swagger regiment may be reckoned

one of the best passports to English society. It gives a man a tone, and puts him on a footing with the highest, because an officer is a gentleman in a very special sense. But it is well known that, during the past half-century or so, the English Barbarians have been too prone to put their sons into the army for social considerations only, and without regard to their qualification or call for the profession of arms. And in the long result it has come to pass that the English army is officered by men who know as little as possible and care a great deal less about their profession, and are compelled to leave the instruction, and as often as not the leadership, of their men to non-commissioned officers. Over and over again in the South African campaign it was the commissioned officer who blundered and brought about disaster, and the non-commissioned officers and the horse sense of the rank and file that saved whatever of the situation there might be left to save. Probably the true history of the British reverses, major and minor, in

66 The Egregious English

South Africa will never be made public. But I believe it can be shown that in almost every instance it was the incapacity or remissness of the English commissioned officer which lay at the root of the trouble. The fact is, that the monocled mountebank who is in the army, don't you know, seldom or never understands his job. He is too busy messing, and dancing, and flirting, and philandering, and racing, and gambling, and speeding the time merrily, ever to learn it. That the honour of Britain, and the lives of Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen, should be in his listless, damp hand for even as long as five minutes is an intolerable scandal. That he should haw and haw, and yaw and yaw, on the barrack-square, and take a salary out of the public purse for doing it, shows exactly how persistently stupid the English can be. Of course, the common reply to any attack upon these shallow-pated incompetents is that you must have gentlemen for the King's commissions, and that the pay the King's commissions carry is so inadequate that no

gentleman unpossessed of private means can afford to take one. This is a very pretty argument and exceedingly English. The money will not run to capable men; therefore let us fling it away on fools. Army reform, sweeping changes at the War Office, new army regulations, an army on a business footing, and so on and so forth, are always being clamoured for by the English people, and always being promised by the English Government. But until the day when the granting of commissions and promotion are as little dependent upon social influence and the influence of money as advancement in the law or advancement in the arts, the English army will remain just where it is and just as rotten as it is.

For downright childishness the modern English soldier, whether he be officer or fileman, has perhaps no compeer. When the South African War broke out, Tommy and his officers were men of scarlet and pipe-clay and gold lace and magnificent head-dresses. Also all drill was in close order; you were to

shove in your infantry first, supported by your artillery, and deliver your last brilliant stroke with your cavalry. The men should go into the fray with bands playing, flags flying, and dressed as for parade. You commenced operations with move No. 1; the enemy would assuredly reply with move No. 2; you would then rush in with move No. 3; there would be a famous victory, and the streets of London would be illuminated at great expense. In South Africa matters did not quite pan out that way; the enemy declined absolutely to play the stereotyped war-game, for the very simple reason that they did not know it, and that South Africa is not quite of the contour of a chess-board. And so the English had to change their cherished system, and to learn to ride, and to throw their pretty uniforms into the old-clothes baskets, and to get out of their old drill into a drill which was no drill at all, and to give up resting their last hope on the British square, and to get accustomed to deadly conflict with an enemy whom they

never saw and who never took the trouble to inform them whether they had beaten him or not. It was all very trying and all very bewildering, and it is to the credit of the English army that in the course of a year or two it did actually manage to understand the precise nature of the work cut out for it and made some show of dealing with it in a workman-like way.

Here was a lesson for us, and we learned it. An Englishman, you know, can learn anything when he makes up his mind to it. And he has learned this South African lesson thoroughly well; so well, indeed, that it looks like being the only lesson he will be able to repeat any time in the next half-century. For what has he done? Well, to judge by appearances, we must reason this way: "I was not prepared for this South African business. It was a new thing to me. It gave me a new notion of the whole art and practice of war. The old authorities were clean out of it. Therefore I solemnly abjure the old authorities. For the future I wear

slouch-hats and khaki and puttees and a jacket full of pockets, and I drill for the express notion that I may some day meet a Boer farmer. The entire sartorial and general aspect of my army shall be remodelled on lines which might induce one to think that the sole enemy of mankind was Mr. Kruger, and the great military centre of the world was Pretoria." It does not seem to occur to the poor body that his next great trial is not in the least likely to overtake him in South Africa. He has had to fight on the Continent of Europe before to-day, and I shall not be surprised if he has to do it again before many years have passed over his head. Yet, wherever his next large fighting has to be done, you will find that he will sail into it in his good old infantile, stupid English way, armed cap-a-pie for the special destruction of Boers. It is just gross want of sense, and that is all that can be said for it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NAVY

SINCE Trafalgar, the English navy has been the apple of the Englishman's eye. He holds that the English power is a sea-power; that these leviathans afloat, the King's ships, are his first line of defence; and that so long as he keeps the English navy up to the mark he can defy the world. His method of keeping it up to the mark is most singular. It consists of tinkering with old ships generation after generation, laying down new ones which seemingly never get finished, and of being chronically short of men. The naval critics of England may be divided sharply into two camps. In the one we have a number of gentlemen who are naval critics simply because they happen to be connected

with newspapers. These young persons are naturally anxious to do the best that can be done for their papers and for themselves. They recognise that if they are to be in a position to obtain immediate and first-hand information—not to say exclusive information—as to naval doings, they must stand well with the Admiralty and the authorities. The Admiralty and the authorities are not in need of adverse critics. What they like and what they will have are smily, wily reporters, who will swear with the official word, see with the official eye, and take the rest for granted. In the other camp of naval critics you have a bright collection of book-compilers, naval architects, and patent-mongers, all of whom have some sort of fad to exploit or some private axe to grind. Hence the amiable English taxpayer knows just as much at the present moment about his navy as he knew three years ago about his army. In spite of the perfervid assurances of Mr. Kipling, and of the ill-written, anti-scare manifestoes of the morning papers,

the English taxpayer knows in his heart that all is not so well as it might be with the English navy. What is wrong the English taxpayer cannot tell you; but there it is, and he has a sort of feeling that, when the big sea-tussle comes, the English navy, being tried, will be found wanting. Herein I think he shows great prescience. The superstition to the effect that the English rule the waves has of late begun to be known for what it is. There are nowadays other Richmonds in the field, all bent on doing a little wave-ruling on their own account. And after the first start of surprise and astonishment, the sleepy, slack, undiscerning Englishman has just let things go on as they were, and has just dilly-dallied what time the new wave-rulers were building and equipping the finest battle-ships that modern science can put afloat, and making arrangements for the acquisition of as much naval supremacy as they can lay their hands on. And whether the English navy be or be not as efficient as the Admiralty and the admirals would have us believe, it is

74 The Egregious English

quite certain that, in consequence of budding wave-rulers, the English navy is not, on the whole, so formidable a weapon or so impregnable a defence as it ought to be. The fact is, that in the matter of naval strength, offensive and defensive, the English are just a quarter of a century behind. They slept whilst their good friends the French, the Russians, and the Germans were climbing upward in the dark; and when they woke it was to perceive that another navy had sprung into existence by the side of the English navy, and that the task of catching up, of putting the old navy into a position of absolute supremacy over the new, was well-nigh an impossible one. You cannot build line-of-battle ships in an hour. Furthermore, the yards of England, though capable of extraordinary achievements, are not capable of a greater output than the yards of France, Russia, and Germany conjoined. Half a century ago the English had a distinct and preponderating start. When the other powers began to show increased activ-

ity in the matter of shipbuilding, the English said, "It is of no consequence; let 'em build." They threw their start clean away. The probabilities are that they will never be able to regain it.

Quite apart from the large general question, however, and granting that on paper England's sea-power is equal to that of any three powers combined, it cannot have escaped the attention of the interested that the foreign naval experts view our whole flotilla with a singular calm, and appear to be quite amused when we talk of naval efficiency and advancement. It is pretty certain that this calm and this amusement are not based entirely in either ignorance or arrogance. Ships built and fitted in Continental yards may lack the advantage of being English built, but they are fighting-ships nevertheless, and they have not much to lose by comparison with the best English fighting-ships, even when the comparison is made by English experts. Indeed, it is very much open to question whether some of the

76 The Egregious English

Continental ships are not a long way ahead of some of the best English ships in destructive power and possibilities for fight. Of course the common reply to this is, that it is no good having a fine machine unless you have the right man to handle it. And Jack, of course,—the honest English Jack,—is the only man in the world that really knows how to handle fighting-ships. Well, it may be so, or it may not be so. The Englishman will undoubtedly keep his engines going and stick to his guns till chaos engulfs him. It seems possible, too, that he has made himself thoroughly familiar with every detail of the machine he has got to work, and that he knows his business in a way which leaves precious little room for more intimate knowledge. In spite of all this, however, it cannot be denied that the Continental navyman is slowly but surely creeping up to the English standard. That as a rule he is a man of better family than the English navyman, that his conditions of service are more favourable, and that his food and accommo-

dation are better, are all in his favour. He may lack the steadiness and the grit of the old original English hearts of oak. Still, he is coming on and making progress; whereas the old original English hearts of oak do not appear to be getting much "forrader." Besides, it is well known that the English do not possess anything like enough of them, and those whom they do possess have such a love for the service that they take particularly good care to warn would-be recruits off it.

From time immemorial the English have made a point of treating the saviours of their country meanly and shabbily. In the Crimea the English troops were half-starved and went about in rags, while a lot of broad-shouldered, genial Englishmen made fortunes out of army contracts. It was the same in the Transvaal, and it will be the same whenever England is at war. In peace-time she does manage to keep her soldiers and sailors decently dressed, but it is notorious that she nips them in the paunch, and that the roast beef and plum-pudding and flagons of Octo-

78 The Egregious English

ber which are supposed to be the meat and drink of John Bull are not considered good for his brave defenders. A beef-fed army and a beef-fed navy are what Englishmen believe they get for their money. The rank and file of the army and navy are better informed. With a navy that is undersized, undermanned, underfed, and underpaid, the English chances of triumph, when her real strength is put to the test, are problematical. Meanwhile, we may comfort ourselves with Mr. Kipling and the *Daily Telegraph*.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCHES

THE English have one sauce. But the number of their religions is as the sands of the sea. Roughly speaking, they divide themselves religiously into two classes—Anglicans and Nonconformists. The Anglicans, one may say, are reformed Catholics; the Nonconformists, reformed Anglicans. Apparently all English religions—with the exception, of course, of the Catholic religion, which is not counted—date from or since the Reformation. We know what the Reformation means in Scotland, though the English notion of it seems to be a trifle vague. We also know in Scotland what religion means. I doubt if the English have any such knowledge. One has only to visit an average

80 The Egregious English

Anglican or Nonconformist church on the Sabbath to perceive that in England religion is under a cloud and has almost ceased to be a spiritual matter. In the first place, you will notice that the congregation is for the most part composed of women and children. Englishmen are too busy or too bored to go to church on the Sabbath. What little faith, what little religious fervour or feeling, they ever possessed has been knocked out of them, and they no longer go to church. And this change has been accomplished, not by the failure of dogmas, not by the spread of free-thought, not by secularists, anti-clericalists, or philosophers, but simply by an indolent clergy on the one hand and cheap railway fares on the other. The mediocre preacher and the new-fangled English week-end have emptied the churches of England's manhood. The women and children are left, a puling, bemused crowd, and to these the English shepherds and pastors blate^r heir cheap ritual and read their ill-considered sermons.

It is curious to note how easily an English

parson or Nonconformist minister can make a reputation for greatness as a preacher. Let him be just a little more competent than the average, and people flock to hear him. I doubt if there is a really great preacher alive in England to-day. Yet there are three or four who pass for great, and who are supposed to be in line with St. Paul, John Knox, and Wesley. To give instances would be invidious, but I have no hesitation in asserting that the preachments offered in London at the three or four great churches which are supposed to enshrine orators are, as a rule, exceedingly feeble efforts, tricked out with gauds and mannerisms, packed with trite sentiment, and utterly devoid of doctrine, inspiration, and value. There are not three bishops on the English bench that can furnish forth a sermon worth going fifty yards to hear. There is not a Nonconformist minister who has a soul above stodginess, convention, and a convenient if threadbare Scriptural tag. The Salvation Army, perhaps, have the fervour and the courage, but

82 The Egregious English

they lack wisdom, and they have no art. The Congregationalists have some of the wisdom and a touch of the art, but they have no fervour. Indeed, wherever you turn you find that the recognised English religionists have given themselves up to a decadent, Hebraic emotion, and let the solid things of the spirit—the Hebraic culture, the Hebraic vision, the Hebraic passion—pass by them.

Gradually the churches of this remarkable country are ceasing to have anything to do with religion at all. "Religion be hanged!" say those that run them. "Religion no longer appeals to the wayward, stony-hearted, over-driven, half-educated English populace. What is wanted is social brightness and warmth, the religion of brotherhood and the full belly; so that we will give magic-lantern entertainments in our churches on the Lord's Day, we will go in 'bald-headed' for pleasant Sunday afternoons, hot coffee and veal-and-ham pies, and screws of tobacco given away at the doors, wrapped up in a tract, which you are at liberty either to read

or to light your pipe with." As for the English priests that had the authority of God, they are no longer sure whether they have that authority or not. Of course, they believe they have it in a sacerdotal, canonical, and private way; but not one of them dare stand up and swear by his powers publicly. The bishops are all for peace and quietness. "If you please, we are your friends, and not your masters," say they to their clergy; and their clergy, to use an English vulgarism, "wink the other eye." And the clergy, too, in turn are the friends and not the masters of common men; they are so much your friends, indeed, that, providing you mount a silk hat on Sunday and put a penny on the plate, you can depend upon a friendly shake of the hand and a kindly grin of recognition six days in the week, even though you happen to be a bookmaker or the keeper of a bucket-shop. For the Nonconformist clergy, if clergy they may be called, they speak humorously at tea-parties, they enter into hat-trimming competitions at bazaars, and

84 The Egregious English

they play principal guest at the tables of over-fed tradesmen. There is not a man amongst them who can say bo to a goose. There is not a man amongst them who as a social unit is worth the £150 a year and a manse, with £10 per annum for each child, that a glozing, unintellectual English congregation hands over to him. Out of the ease and security and respectability and *dolce far niente* which the Church of England provides for a considerable proportion of her priests, she has managed to evolve a few scholars, a few men of letters, perhaps an odd saint or two, and an odd man of temperament and mark. But what have the English Nonconformists produced? Dr. Horton and Dr. Parker, and that G. R. Sims of religionists, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. To this distinguished triumvirate—though the English Nonconformists will hold up pious hands of horror at the notion—one may add that valiant thumper of the pulpit drum, General Booth, who is doing a work in religious decadence and bathoticism which it

will take centuries to undo. Want of heart and want of mind, coupled with the blessed spirit of tolerance, have indeed played havoc with the English Churches.

The loosening of the grip of the Church on English society has, of course, not been without its results on English morals and on English society at large. There is a general feeling abroad that religion is played out, that the system of Hebrew ethics which has been drilled into the English blood by generations of the faithful was all very well for the faithful, but is altogether impracticable and out of harmony with the present intelligent times. You will find Englishmen nowadays complaining that the taint of spiritualism, ascetism, and ethical faith which they have inherited from their people is a source of hindrance to them in the matter of their commercial or social progress, and their lives are spent in an endeavour to eradicate or to triumph over that taint. The Archbishop of Canterbury could not run a tea-shop by the rules laid down in the Sermon on the Mount,

they will tell you; and, what is worse, the Archbishop of Canterbury agrees with them. "Take all thou hast, and give it to the poor" is out of the question even for Dr. Horton. Since those blessed words were said, we are told, the Poor Law has sprung up; we give all that is necessary for pauperism in the poor-rate; and, thanks to the excellence of our social system, it is now impossible for man, woman, or child to die of starvation, provided only that they will work. I have heard it stated by an English Nonconformist minister that his chief complaint against the Roman Catholic community in his district was their habit of being over-liberal to the poor. "No man is refused," observed my Nonconformist friend, "no matter how dissolute or idle or irreligious he may be."

Then in the large question of the employment of human flesh and blood to make money for you, the modern Englishman finds that he must either tear the effects of his religious bringing-up out of his heart, or forego the possibility of becoming really rich,

don't you know. It is all a matter of supply and demand; and if the mass of humanity live starved lives and die daily in order that I may be fat and warm and cultured and possessed of surpluses at banks, it is not my fault. You must really blame supply and demand. With this fine phrase on his lips, the English capitalist confutes all the philosophies and sets his foot on the majority of the decencies of life. Of course, I shall be told that the prince and chief of all hide-bound industrial capitalists is Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who happens to be a Scot. And I cheerfully admit that Mr. Carnegie is a very serious case in point. But for our one Mr. Carnegie, the English have fifty Mr. Carnegies. They may not be so rich or so famous; but there they are, and the blood and spirit of the English people suffer accordingly. The religion of the wealthy does not prevent them from grinding the face of the poor; and the religion of the middle classes is of pretty much the same order. It is at the hands of the English middle classes that the English poor

suffer a further and a bitterer depredation. For when you have earned money hardly, you want good goods for it; and the English middle classes, who are nearly all shopkeepers, either directly or indirectly, make a point of palming off on you the very worst goods the law will allow them to sell.

And, in spite of all, the churches continue to open their doors, new churches continue to be built, million-pound funds are raised, the missionary speeds over the blue wave to the succour of the 'eathen, and English women and children have their pleasant Sunday afternoons, and bishops keep high-stepping horses; Church and State are grappled together with hooks of steel, and England is a Christian country. Till the churches get out of their slippers and their sloth and their tea-bibbing and their tolerance, matters will go on in the same old futile, scandalous way. If they are to have charge and direction of the soul of man, they must remember that the soul of man is a greater thing than ease, and a greater thing than the Church; they

must not play with the immortal part of humanity, and they must not trifle with the things which they believe to be of God. In no other country save England would such churches and such priests as the English now possess be tolerated or supported; it is the English decadence which has rendered Englishmen blind to the stupidity and banality of their pastors and spiritual guides, and it is the English easy-heartedness which permits the game of cant and cadge and sham to go on unchecked.

CHAPTER X

THE POLITICIAN

THE flower and exemplar of well-nigh everything that is choicely and brutally English may be summed up in the English politician. Such a tub-thumper, such a master of claptrap and the arts and feints and fetches of oratory, has never been known before since the world began. He is English, and therefore he knows his business. He has made a study of it as a business, and without regard to its more serious issues. His position is, that, if he would do himself well, he must tie himself hand and foot to some party, and serve that party through thick and thin. Then in the end, and with good luck, will come reward. You may be born in a chandler's shop. By birth, there-

fore, you belong to the very lower English middle class. Through the practice of a number of commercial virtues, and with the help of considerable speculation outside your own business, you become wealthy. Now, wealth without honour is nothing to an Englishman. He cannot brook that his wealth, his shining, glorious superfluity, should be hidden under a bushel. Therefore he seeks municipal honours; he becomes a town councillor, an alderman, a mayor even.

But these, after all, are not the summits; they lead at best only to a common knighthood, and any fool can get knighted if he wants to. So you determine to seek Parliamentary honours. You subscribe liberally to the funds of your party, and by-and-by a constituency is found for you to contest. You lose the fight and subscribe again; another constituency is found for you, and you win by the skin of your teeth or with a plumping majority, as the case may be. You are now a full-blown member of Parliament; it is worth the money and

much better than being a mayor. Up to this time you have been an orator of sorts. You have held forth from schoolroom platforms and the tops of waggons what time the assembled populace shouted and threw up its sweaty nightcaps. You have been carried shoulder high behind brass bands rendering *See, the Conquering Hero Comes*. Now however, you are really in Parliament; and for the nonce—for several years, in fact—you must give up talking. There is plenty for you to do; you may put questions on the paper, you may get a look in at committee work, you may show electors round the Houses, and you may go on subscribing liberally to the party funds. When you have subscribed enough, it is just within the bounds of possibility that the heads of the party—the Front Bench people, as it were—will begin to discover that there is virtue in you. You will be encouraged to make a speech or two at the slackest part of debates, and some fine day you may be entrusted with the fortunes of a little Bill which your

party wishes to rush through. All the while you are subscribing liberally to the party funds. After many years, when you are least expecting it, the bottom seems to fall out of the universe—that is to say, there is a General Election. You have to fight your seat; you win; you come nobly back; behold, your party is in power. Then comes the grand moment of your life. You are shovelled into the Cabinet on account of services rendered. From this point, if you possess any ability at all, you can have things pretty much your own way; and if your ambition has been to hear yourself called “My lord” before you die, and to see your wife in the Peeresses’ Gallery on great occasions, and your sons swanking about town with “Hon.” before their names, you can manage it. It is a slow job, and it involves many years of hard work and lavish expenditure; but it is politically possible in England for a man to be born on the flags and to die properly set forth in Burke and Debrett.

I do not say for a moment that the end

and aim of every English politician is the peerage; but I do say that, as a rule, his labours are directed towards some end of honour or emolument, and seldom or never to the good of the State. It is ambition, and not patriotism, that fires his bosom; it is self-aggrandisement, and not a desire for the welfare of the English people, that keeps him going; and it is party, and not principle, that guides and rules his legislative actions. Of course, the great art of being a politician is to hide these facts from the public. If you went down to your constituency like an honest man and said, "Gentlemen, I wish you to return me to Parliament in order that I may make a high position for myself, in order that I may become a man of rank and the founder of a family," your constituency would hurl dead cats at you. Therefore you go down with an altogether different tale: "I am going to the House of Commons, gentlemen, in your interests and not in mine. It will cost me large sums of money; besides which, as your member, I shall be expected

to subscribe to all the local cricket clubs. But I have the best interests of Muckington at heart; and, if you honour me by making me your representative, money is no object."

It is a wonderful business, and a great and a glorious. One stands in astonishment before the bright English intelligence which takes so much on promise and gets so little performed. An English party never goes into power with the intention of doing more than half of what it has promised to do. At election times its great business is to capture votes: these must be had at any price short of rank bribery. And, once landed with the blest, the party immediately settles down, not to the work of carrying out its promises, but to the far more serious business of keeping itself in power. From the point of view of the careless lay-observer, the House of Commons is an assemblage for the discussion of Imperial affairs, with a view to their being managed in the best possible way. To the politician it is just an arena in which two

sets of greedy men meet to annoy, thwart, ridicule, and bring about the downfall of each other.

The amount of interest the Englishman is supposed to take in this amazing assemblage and its doings makes it plain that the Englishman himself is well-nigh as foolish and well-nigh as oblique as the person whom he elects to represent him. Next to royalty itself there is nobody in England who can command so much attention and such a prominent place in the picture as the politician. If he be a Cabinet Minister of any standing, it is impossible for him to walk through the streets either of London or of any of the English provincial towns without being immediately recognised and "respectfully saluted"; whereas, if he happens to have come to any metropolitan district or provincial town on political business bent, he may depend upon being received at the proper point by the local authorities, supported by a guard of honour of the local Volunteers, and he may also depend upon

more or less of an ovation on his way to and from the place of meeting.

Year in and year out, too, the illustrated papers of every degree blossom with his latest photograph. Mr. So-and-so in his new motor-car; Mr. So-and-so playing golf; Mr. So-and-so and the King; Mr. So-and-so addressing the mob from the railway train,—these are pictures in which every Englishman has delighted from his youth up, and in which he will always find great artistic and moral satisfaction. As for the journals which live out of the personal paragraph, they must give—or imagine they must give—pride of place to the politician, or perish. Little anecdotes of the sayings and doings of the politically great are always marketable. It is not necessary that they should have the slightest foundation in truth; but they must be neat, reasonably amusing, and flattering to the personage involved.

It is when one turns to the English daily papers, however, that one begins to understand what an extraordinary hold the political interest has upon the English public

98 The Egregious English

mind. It is well known that, in the main, the debates in the House of Commons are quite dull, colourless, and somnolent functions. Half of them take place in the presence only of the Speaker and a quorum. That is to say, nine nights out of ten, members spend the greater portion of their time in the smoke-rooms, dining-rooms, and lobbies, and not in the House itself, the simple reason being that, as a rule, the debates are not interesting. When some reputable champion of either party gets on his legs, or when some wag is up, members manage to attend in force; but it is only at these moments that they do so. Yet, if you pick up an English morning newspaper, you will find six columns of that sheet devoted to a report of the proceedings in Parliament; another three columns of descriptive matter bearing on the same proceedings; and, out of four or five leaders, three at least deal with the political question of the moment. Even when Parliament is not sitting, the first leader is never by any chance other than

political. From the point of view of the dull English mind, nothing more important than a political happening can happen in this world. Mr. Somebody has called Mr. Somebody else a liar across the floor of the House of Commons. It is essential for the well-being of the country at large that the episode should be reported with a separate subhead and great circumstance in the Parliamentary report; that the scene should be described by the lively and picturesque pen of the writer of the Parliamentary sketch; that the appearance of the gentleman who called the other gentleman a liar should be dwelt upon in the notes; that instances of other gentlemen having called gentlemen liars across the floor of the House should also be given in the notes; and, finally, that a rotund and windy leader should be written, wherein is discussed gravely the general advisability of gentlemen calling other gentlemen liars across the floor of the House; wherein one is assured that, in spite of occasional regrettable instances of the kind, the

English Parliament is the most decorous and dignified assemblage under the sun; and wherein we cannot refrain from paying our tribute of respectful admiration to the Right Honourable the Speaker, whose tact, good sense, and gentleman-like spirit, coupled with the firmness, resolution, and knowledge of the procedure of the House becoming to his high position, invariably enable him to still the storm and to repress the angry passions of our heated legislators before any great harm has been done. So that a gentleman who calls another gentleman a liar across the floor of the House of Commons really renders a great service to Englishmen, inasmuch as he provides them with a gratuitous entertainment, about which they may read, talk, and argue for at least twenty-four hours.

Recognising their own love of politics and political strife, and knowing in their hearts that the talk in the House of Commons—not to mention the House of Lords—is, generally speaking, of the flattest and flabbiest, one would imagine that the wise English

would be at some pains to take measures calculated to brighten up the Parliamentary debates and render them of real interest. But no such precautions are taken. When a would-be member of Parliament is heckled, he is never by any chance asked if he is prepared, at the psychological moment, to pull the nose of one of the right honourable gentlemen opposite. Any member of Parliament who, in the middle of a dull debate, would walk across the floor and box the ears of, say, Mr. Balfour, or Lord Hugh Cecil, would thereby earn for himself the distinction of being the best-discussed and best-described man in England for quite half a week. Considering the small amount of exertion required for such a proceeding, and the very large amount of notoriety which would accrue to the person who ventured on it, one wonders that it has never been done.

In spite of the abnormal share of publicity and applause which is extended to the English politician, however, the solemn fact remains that he is seldom a person of any

real force, capacity, understanding, or character. Commonplace, mediocre, insincere, inept, are the epithets which best describe him. He passes through the legislative chamber or chambers, says his say in undistinguished speeches, casts his vote, earns his place, his pension, or his peerage, and passes beyond our echo and our hail. The daily papers manufacture for him an obituary notice varying in length from five lines to a couple of columns, and nobody wants to hear anything more about him. As a matter of fact, he has left the world neither wiser nor wittier nor happier than he found it. If he has made one phrase or uttered one sentiment that sticks in men's minds, he is fortunate. Neither history nor posterity will have anything to say about him, though in his day he kicked up some fuss and took up a lot of room. In short, politics as a career in England is not a career for solid, serious men. It merely serves the turn of the specious, the shallow, the incompetent, and the vainglorious.

CHAPTER XI

POETS

IT may be set down as an axiom that a nation which is in the proper enjoyment of all its faculties, which is healthy, wealthy, wise, and properly conditioned, must be producing a certain amount of poetry. From the beginning this has been so; it will be so to the end. When England was at her highest, when the best in her was having full play, she produced poets. Right down into the Victorian Era she went on producing them. Then she took to the Stock Exchange and an ostentatious way of life, and the supply of poets fell off. If we except Mr. Swinburne, who does not belong rightfully to this present time, there is not a poet of any parts exercising his function in England to-day.

Furthermore, any bookseller will tell you that the demand for poetry-books by new writers has practically ceased to exist.

These statements will be called sweeping by a certain school of critics, and I shall be asked to cast my eye round the English nest of singing-birds, and to answer and say whether Mr. So-and-so be not a poet, and Mr. So-and-so, and Mr. So-and-so, and Mr. So-and-so. I shall also be asked to say if I am prepared to deny that of Mr. So-and-so's last volume of verse three hundred copies were actually sold to the booksellers. For the propounders of such questions I have one answer—namely, it may be so.

In the meantime let us do our best to find an English poet who is worth the name, and who is prescriptively entitled to be mentioned in the category which begins with Chaucer and ends with Mr. Swinburne. Shall we try Mr. Rudyard Kipling? Tested by sales and the amount of dust he has managed to kick up, Mr. Kipling should be a poet of parts. He is still young, and, hap-

pily, among the living; but it cannot be denied that as a poet he has already out-lived his reputation. Two years ago he could set the English-speaking nations humming or reciting whatever he chose to put into metre. Some of his little things looked like lasting. Already the majority of them are forgotten. To the next generation, if he be known at all, he will be known as the author of three pieces — *Recessional*, the *L' Envoi* appended to *Life's Handicap*, and *Mandalay*. What is to become of such verses as the following?

'Ave you 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor,
 With a hairy gold crown on 'er 'ead?
 She 'as ships on the foam—she 'as millions at 'ome,
 An' she pays us poor beggars in red.
 ('Ow poor beggars in red!)

There's 'er nick on the cavalry 'orses,
 There's 'er mark on the medical stores—
 An' 'er troopers you'll find with a fair wind be'ind
 That takes us to various wars.
 (Poor beggars! barbarious wars!)

Then 'ere's to the Widow at Windsor,
 An' 'ere's to the stores and the guns,
 The men an' the 'orses what makes up the forces
 O' Missis Victorier's sons.
 (Poor beggars! Victorier's sons!)

At the time of their appearance these lines and the like of them were vastly admired; everybody read them, most people praised them. They were supposed to stir the English blood like a blast of martial trumpets. Here at length was the poet England had been waiting for. There could be no mistake about him; he had the authentic voice, the incommunicable fire, the master-touch. He had come to stay. At the present moment the bulk of his metrical work is just about as dead and forgotten as the coster-songs of yesteryear. He has not even made a cult; nobody quotes him, nobody believes in him as a poetical master, nobody wants to hear any more of him. His imitators have all gone back to the imitation of better men. If a copy of verses have a flavour of Kipling about it nowadays, editors drop it as they would drop a hot coal. So much for the poet of empire, the poet of the people, the metrical patron of Thomas Atkins, Esq.

Another poet of empire—Mr. W. E. Henley—has fared very little better. “What

can I do for England?" is, I believe, still in request among the makers of a certain class of anthology; but English poetry in the bulk is just the same as if Mr. Henley had never been. Even the balderdash about "my indomitable soul" has fallen out of the *usus loquendi* of young men's Christian associations and young men's debating societies. *The Song of the Sword* is sung no longer; *For England's Sake* has gone the way of all truculent war-poetry; and out of *Hawthorn and Lavender* perhaps a couple of lyrics remain. Mr. Henley attacked Burns when Burns had been a century dead. Who will consider it worth while to attack Mr. Henley in, say, the year 2002?

Possibly the real, true English poet who will in due course put on the laurel of Mr. Austin is Mr. Stephen Phillips. Yet Mr. Stephen Phillips is a purveyor of metrical notions for the stage, and in his last great work—*Ulysses*—I find him writing as follows:

ATHENE. Father, whose oath in hollow hell is heard,
Whose act is lightning after thunder-word,

and-dry style of lyrical architecture. Mr. Watson is believed to have done great things, but his rôle now appears to be one of austere silence; he is what the old writers would have termed a costive poet. And if his *Collected Poems* are to be the end of him, his end will not be long deferred. Or, possibly, the one and only poet our England of to-day would wish to boast is Mr. Arthur Symons. Mr. Symons writes just the kind of poetry one might expect of a versifier who, in early youth, had loved a cigarette-smoking ballet-girl, and could never bring himself to repress his passion. Here is a sample of Mr. Arthur Symons at his choicest:

The feverish room and that white bed,
 The tumbled skirts upon a chair,
 The novel flung half open where
 Hat, hair-pins, puffs, and paints are spread.

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And you, half dressed and half awake,
 Your slant eyes strangely watching me;
 And I, who watch you drowsily,
 With eyes that, having slept not, ache:

110 The Egregious English

This (need one dread? nay, dare one hope?)
Will rise, a ghost of memory, if
Ever again my handkerchief
Is scented with White Heliotrope.

No doubt, if the English continue to descend the moral Avernus at their present rate of speed, Mr. Symons will become, by sheer process of time, the representative poet of the nation. It is part of a poet's duty to look into the future, and Mr. Symons appears to have taken the next two or three generations of Englishmen by the forelock. May he have the reward which is his due!

For the rest, they all mean well, and they all aim high; but one is afraid that nothing will come of them. There are Francis Thompson, and Laurence Housman, and Henry Newbolt, and Laurence Binyon, and F. B. Money-Coutts, and Arthur Christopher Benson, and Victor Plarr—amiable performers all, but each a standing example of poetical shortcoming. Perhaps one ought not to mention Mr. John Davidson and Mr. W. B. Yeats, because Mr. Davidson is a Scot, and Mr. Yeats, putatively, at any rate, an Irish-

man. In some respects these twain may be considered the pick of the basket. I am constrained to admit, however, that neither of them has as yet fulfilled his earlier promise.

So that, on the whole, England is practically without poets of marked or extraordinary attainments. The reason is not far to seek. She is losing the breed of noble bloods; her greed, her luxuriousness, her excesses, her contempt for all but the material, are beginning to find her out. Her youths, who should be fired by the brightest emotions, are bidden not to be fools, and taught that the whole duty of man is to be washed and combed and financially successful. Consequently that section of English adolescence which, in the nature of things, begins with poetry and gladness very speedily throws up the sponge. Consecration to the muse is no longer thought of among Englishmen. They cannot be content to be published and take their chance. The dismal shibboleth, "Poetry does not pay," wears them all down. What is the good of

112 The Egregious English

writing verses which bring you neither reputation nor emolument? One must live, and to live like a gentleman by honest toil, and devote one's leisure instead of one's life to poetry, is the better part. Meanwhile, England jogs along quite comfortably. She can get Keats for a shilling, and Shakespeare for sixpence. Why should she worry herself for a moment with the new men?

CHAPTER XII

FICTION

AFTER much patient thinking, the English have come to the conclusion that there is but one branch of literary art, and that its name is Fiction. And by fiction the English really mean the six-shilling novel. I do not think it is too much to say, that since the six-shilling novel was first thrust upon our delighted attention it has never brought within its covers six shillings' worth of reading. The high priest and the high priestess who serve to the right and left of the altar of six-shillingism are, as every one knows, Mr. Hall Caine and Miss Marie Cor-elli. Each of them wears a golden ephod, with a breastplate of jewels arranged to spell out the magic figures, One Hundred

Thousand. All the other priests of the Tabernacle look with awe and envy upon these two, because the other priests' breast-plates have hard work to spell out fifty thousand, and some of them do not even achieve one thousand five hundred. Burnt-offerings of Caine and Corelli therefore fill the place with savour. A pair of sorrier writers never was on sea or land. Everybody knows it, nobody denies it, and nobody seems sad about it. The six-shilling novel is an established English institution. Caine and Corelli are its prop and stay, and the rest do their best to keep in the running and pick up the minor money-bags.

The perusal of six-shilling fiction is practically a sort of mania. It has seized in its grip the fairest England has to show, particularly matrons, the younger women, and stockbrokers. For the Englishwoman the daily round would lose its saltiness did she not have handy the newest six-shilling novel by Mr. Caine, Miss Corelli, or the next literary bawler in the market-place. There are shops

called "libraries," to which the Englishwoman repairs for her supplies of literary pabulum. Here the six-shilling novel has a great time. Strapped together in sixes, or packed in boxes of dozens, it is handed forth to the carriages of its fair devourers, and taken right away to its repose in the cultured homes of Bayswater and Kensington. From morning till night many Englishwomen do little but read this precious stuff. What they get out of it amounts in the long run to hysteria and anæmia. It brings about a general deadening of the mind and a general jaggedness of the emotions, coupled with an utter incapacity to take any save an exaggerated view of the facts of life. Discontent, disillusionment, ennui, boredom, ill-temper, a sharp tongue, and a cynical spirit are other symptoms which the six-shilling novel is prone to evoke. The habit is worse than opium or haschisch or tea cigarettes. It is just the devil, and that is all you need say about it. The persons employed in the opium traffic are supposed to

be very wicked. To my mind, the persons employed in the fiction traffic are as wicked as wicked can be. When the foul disease began first to make its ravages obvious, there were not wanting persons who would have checked it and provided remedies for it. These persons squeaked somewhat, and nothing more has been heard of them. So the thing goes on unrestrained, and even applauded by press and pulpit alike; and the Englishwoman has become a confirmed, inveterate, and incurable fiction-reader. If a man have an enemy to whom he would do an abiding injury, let him persuade that enemy to obtain the six more popular six-shilling novels of the moment, and read them through. If the man's enemy sticks to his bargain—at which, however, he will probably shy in the middle of the second volume—the chances are that he gets up from that reading a broken and spiritless man. His brain will be as saggy as a sponge full of treacle, and his vision as unreliable as that of the alcoholic who always saw two

cabs, and invariably got into the one that was not there.

Seriously, however, what is there about this English fiction—or, for that matter, about Scottish fiction—that men and women should buy it and devour it to the exclusion of all other literary fare? It is ill-written, it is not original, it is not like life, it is not beautiful, it is not inspiring, it does not touch the profound emotions, it means nothing, and it ends nowhere. The reason of its popularity is, that it appeals to an indolent habit of mind, and, as a general rule, is calculated to excite the passions, and particularly to open up questions which experience has shown to be best left alone. In nine cases out of ten, where a popular work of fiction is concerned, it is always possible to put one's finger on the chapter or passages on which its popularity is based; and in nine cases out of ten that chapter or those passages have to do with sexual matters. The questions which arise out of the relation of man and woman are no doubt vitally important and most

118 The Egregious English

interesting; but that they should be discussed in an unscientific, irresponsible, and catch-penny way by everybody who can trail a pen is something of a scandal. If an author can succeed in inventing a sexual situation which could not by any possible chance exist for a moment in real life, or if he can put a glow and a gloss on the tritenesses of love and lust, his success as a fictionist is to all intents and purposes assured. What is sometimes spoken of as wholesome fiction scarcely exists—anyway, nobody reads it. It is the carefully constructed book about sex that sells and is read. Such a book need not be flagrant, as was once thought to be the case; it can be “a work of art”—a thing of veiled suggestion, delicate, unobjectionable, and seemingly meet to be read.

One has hesitation in asserting that such books ought not to be written or ought not to be circulated. It is difficult to justify any attitude of intolerance in such a matter; yet the fact remains that the maids and matrons of England, together with the men

who have the leisure and sufficient lack of brains to read fiction, are being stuffed season by season and year by year with about the most undesirable kind of sexual philosophy that could well be placed before them. Of any Englishwoman of the leisured class above the age of sixteen years it may be said, as was said of the late Professor Jowett in a different sense, "What I don't know is n't knowledge." And the instructor in all cases is a fictionist. If a man took his notion of business, or politics, or art, out of six-shilling novels, he would be set down for a fool. Yet most Englishwomen get their view of love and the married relation from these extraordinary works, and it is taken for granted that nobody is a penny the worse. For my own part, I should incline to the opinion that the only persons who are a penny, not to say six shillings, the worse, are the English middle and upper classes as a body.

Much has been said in derision of what the English call the Kailyard school of fiction—

120 The Egregious English

Kailyard fiction being, I need scarcely say, a brand of fiction written by Scotsmen usually in Scotland, and sold in the English and the American markets. Everybody of taste and judgment cheerfully admits that Kailyarders are not persons of genius. For the delectation of the Southerner they have made a Scotland of their own, the which, however, is not Scotland. They have made a Scottish sentiment, a Scottish point of view, a Scottish humour, a Scottish pathos, and even a Scottish dialect, which may be reckoned quite doubtful. At the same time, one looks in vain to the Kailyarders for anything that is worse than slobber—anything really noxious and dreadful, that is to say. One might read Kailyard for ever and a day without coming to great moral grief. Indeed, I would point out that, on the whole, the Kailyard system of ethics partakes somewhat of the character of the system of ethics which used to be unfolded in the melodrama of our grandfathers' days. Virtue rewarded, vice punished, is the moral upshot of it.

And in any case, and let it be as bad and as meretricious and as greatly to be deprecated as one will, we must always remember that the Kailyard book is a work invented and manufactured, not for Scotsmen, but for the Anglo-Saxon—the Englishman and his offshoots.

Some months back a considerable hubbub arose in English literary circles because M. Jules Verne had been saying to an interviewer, at Amiens of all places in the world! that the novel as a form of literary expression was doomed, and would gradually die out of popular favour. It is safe to say that, in the eyes of sundry critics of pretty well every nationality, the novel has been doomed any time this last fifty years. Yet the novel comes up smiling every time. Since it was reduced in price to six shillings in England it has undoubtedly deteriorated, not only as a piece of writing, but also in the matter of ethical intention. So long as it remains the prey of some of its latter-day exploiters, so long will it continue to deteriorate. So long

122 The Egregious English

as the English mind continues to be feeble and unwholesome, and to yearn for artificial thrills and undesirable emotions, so long will English fiction continue to be of its present decadent quality. As the capitalist says, it is all a question of supply and demand. The great aim of writers of fiction, or at any rate of ninety-nine per cent. of them, is to produce an article that will sell. You must turn out what the public want, and they will assuredly buy it. The knack of hitting the public taste looks easy to acquire, and the fictionist strives after it with all his might. Many are called to make fortunes out of novel-writing: few are chosen. But nobody can examine the work of those few without perceiving that for weal or woe—principally for woe—they know their business.

Of course, it goes without saying that a very considerable amount of fiction is published in England which is just as mild and just as innocuous as tinned milk. To this puling variety of fiction, however, the English do not appear to be very greatly drawn.

It crops up with great regularity every publishing season, it is solemnly reviewed in the critical journals, and it even stands shoulder by shoulder with stronger meat in the bookshops. But the fact remains that it does not sell; to see "Second Edition" on it is the rarest occurrence. In fine, the English will have their fiction spiced, and highly spiced, or not at all. Mealy mouthed writers, over-reticent, over-blushful, over-austere writers, they do not want; neither have they any admiration for a writer who is plagued with a feeling for style, and who may be reckoned an artist in the collocation of words. Their much-vaunted Meredith has never had the sale of a Crockett or a Barrie or a Hocking, or, for that matter, of a J. K. Jerome. The English have little or no literary taste, little or no literary acumen, and they expect their fictionists to give them anything and everything save what is edifying.

CHAPTER XIII

SUBURBANISM

OF old—that is to say, twenty years ago—the great majority of the English people suffered from a mental and general disability which was termed “provincialism.” If you hailed from Manchester, or Liverpool, or Birmingham, or Edinburgh, or Glasgow, the kind gentlemen in London who size people up and put them in their places assured you that you were a provincial, and that you would have to rub shoulders a great deal with the world—by which they meant London—before you could rightly consider yourself qualified to exist. Against the epithet “provincial,” however, not a few persons rebelled, when it was applied flatly to themselves. Most men of feeling felt hurt when you called

them provincial. In the world of letters and journalism to call a man provincial was the last and unkindest cut of all, and it usually settled him, just as to say that he has no sense of humour settles him to-day. Then up rose Thomas Carlyle and Robert Buchanan and a few lesser lights, who said, "You call us provincials: provincials we undoubtedly are, and we glory in the character." This rather baffled, not to say amazed, the lily-fingered London assessors, and gradually the term "provincial," as a term of opprobrium, passed out of use.

It is admitted now on all hands that the provincial is a very useful kind of fellow; and when the metropolis feels itself running short of talent and energy, the provincial is invariably invited to look in. Latterly, however, the Londoner and the dweller in English provincial cities have begun to exhibit a distinctly modern disorder, which may be called, for want of a better term, "suburbanism." In London, which may be taken as the type of all English cities, suburbanism is

126 The Egregious English

pretty well rampant. It has its origin in what the Americans would call "location." A man's daily work lies, say, in the City or in the central quarters of London. For various reasons—such, for example, as considerations of health, expenditure, and custom—it is practically impossible for him to live near his work. He must live somewhere; so he goes to Balham, or Tooting, or Clapham, or Brondesbury, or Highgate, or Willesden, or Finchley, or Crouch End, or Hampstead, or some other suburban retreat. London is ringed round with these residential quarters, these little towns outside the walls. A visitor to any one of them is at once struck with its striking and painful similarity to all the others. There is a railway station belonging to one of the metropolitan lines; there is a High Street, fronted with lofty and rather gaudy shops; there is a reasonable sprinkling of churches and chapels; there is a brand-new red-brick theatre; and the rest is row on row and row on row of villa residences, each with its dreary pali-

sading and attenuated grass-plot in front, and its curious annex of kitchen, or scullery, behind. Miles and miles of these villas exist in every metropolitan suburb worth the name; and though the rents and sizes of them may vary, they are all built to one architectural formula, and all pinchbeck, ostentatious, and unlovely. No person of judgment, nobody possessed of a ray of the philosophic spirit, can gaze upon them without concluding at once that the English do not know how to live. Take a street of these villas, big or little, and what do you find? You note, first, that nearly every house, be it occupied by clerk, Jew financier, or professional man, has got a highfalutin name of its own. The County Council or local authority has already bestowed upon it a number. But this is not enough for your suburbanist, who must needs appropriate for his house a name which will look swagger on his letter-paper. Hence No. 2, Sandringham Road, Tooting, is not No. 2, Sandringham Road, Tooting, at all; but The Laurels, if

128 The Egregious English

you please. No. 4—not to be outdone—is Holmwood; No. 6 is Hazledene; No. 8, The Pines; No. 10, Sutherland House; and so forth. Then, again, if you walk down a street and keep your eye on the front windows of this thoroughfare of mansions, you will note that every one of those windows has cheap lace curtains to it, and that immediately behind the centre of the window there is a little table, upon which loving hands have placed a green high-art vase, containing a plant of sorts. And right back in the dimness of the parlour there is a sideboard with a high mirrored back.

If you made acquaintance with half a dozen of the occupiers of these houses, and were invited into the half dozen front rooms, you would find in each, in addition to the sideboard before mentioned, a piano of questionable manufacture, a brass music-stool with a red velvet cushion, an over-mantel with mirrored panels, a “saddle-bag suite,” consisting of lady’s and gent’s and six ordinary chairs and a couch; a centre-

table with a velvet-pile cloth upon it, a bamboo bookcase containing a Corelli and a Hall Caine or so, together with some sixpenny Dickenses picked up at drapers' bargain-sales, Nuttall's *Dictionary*, *Mrs. Beeton's House Book*, a Bible, a Prayer Book, some hymn-books, a work-basketful of socks waiting to be darned, and a little pile of music, chiefly pirated. At night, when Spriggs comes home to The Laurels, he has an apology for late dinner, gets into his slippers, and retires with Mrs. Spriggs, and perhaps his elder daughter, into that parlour. There he reads a halfpenny newspaper till there is nothing left in it to read; then he talks to Mrs. Spriggs about that beast So-and-so, his employer; and Mrs. Spriggs tells him not to grumble so much, and asks the elder daughter why she does n't play a chune to 'liven us up a bit. "Yes," says Spriggs, "what is the good of having a piano, and me buying you music every Saturday, if you never play?" Whereupon the elder daughter rattles through *Dolly Gray*, *The Honeysuckle and the Bee*, and

130 The Egregious English

Everybody 's Loved by Some One; and Spriggs beats time with his foot till he grows weary, and thinks we had better have supper and get off to bed.

This kind of thing is going on right down both sides of Sandringham Road—at Holmwood, at Hazledene, at The Pines, and at Sutherland House, as well as at The Laurels—every week-day evening between the hours of eight and midnight. In point of fact, it is going on all over Tooting. It is the suburban notion of an 'appy evening at home; and, hallowed as it is by wont and custom, everybody in Tooting takes it to be the best that life can offer after business hours. Perhaps it is. Just before supper, or haply a little afterwards, however, Spriggs says that he believes he will take a little stroll “round the houses.” He puts on a straw hat in summer and a tweed cap in winter, and proceeds gravely down the Sandringham Road until he reaches a break in the long array of villas, and is aware of a rather flaring public-house. Into the saloon bar of this hostelry

he walks staidly, nods to the company, and asks the barmaid for a drop of the usual. "Let me see," says that sweet lady; "Johnny Walker, is n't it?" "Well, you know it is," says Spriggs, as he hands over threepence. With the glass of whisky in his hand he retires to the nearest red plush settee, and looks listlessly at the illustrated papers on the little table in front of him, drinks somewhat slowly, smokes a pipe, exchanges a word about the weather with the landlord of the establishment, says there's time for another before closing time, has another, and at twelve-thirty trots off home.

The seven or eight other men in the saloon bar being respectively the occupiers of Holmwood, Hazledene, The Pines, Sutherland House, etc., have done almost exactly as Spriggs has done in the way of drinks and nods and illustrated papers and having a final at twenty minutes past twelve. But during the whole evening they have not exchanged a rational word with one another. They have nothing to talk about; therefore

they have not talked. They are neighbours, and they know it; but they all hold themselves to be so much superior to one another that they have scorned to speak to each other, except in the most cursory and casual way. Next morning, at a few minutes to nine o'clock, they will all be scooting anxiously along the Sandringham Road with set faces, damp brows, and a fear at their hearts that they are going to miss their train. They will travel in packed carriages, half of them standing up, while the other half growls, to Ludgate Hill or Moorgate Street, as the case may be, and then rush off again to their respective offices, in fear and trembling this time lest they should be three minutes late and the "governor" might notice it.

This is the life of the males in the Sandringham Road year in and year out. Through living in the same houses, in the midst of the same furniture, listening to the same pianos, drinking at the same public-houses, going to business in the same trains, they become as

like one another as peas. They are all anxious, all dull, all short of sleep, all short of money. In brief, they have become suburbanized. The monotony and snobbery and listlessness of their home life are reflected in their conduct of the working-day's affairs. There is not a man amongst them who has a soul above his job. Each of them sticks at business, not because he loves it or likes it, but simply because he knows that, if he were discovered in a remissness, he would get what he calls "the sack." Each of them "lunches"—oh, this English lunch!—at the bar of a public-house on a glass of bitter beer and a penny Welsh rare-bit. Each of them feels a bit chippy and not a little sleepy of an afternoon, and each of them races for his train in the evening, chock-full of worry and bad-temper. You must live in the suburbs if you are to live in London at all, and there is no escape from it.

The lines of the female suburbanians are cast in more or less pleasant places. They do not need to go to town every day. There

134 The Egregious English

are shops galore, filled with just the goods they want, round the corner; and there is always the next female on both sides to gossip with. For, unlike the male suburban, the female suburban will talk to her neighbours. Her conversation is of babes, and butchers' meat, and the piece at the theatre, and the bargains at the stores in the High Road, and "him." He, or "him," means the good lady's husband. She never by any chance refers to him either by his Christian name, or his surname, or as "my husband." It is always, "He said to me this morning," or, "As I was saying to him before he went to business,"—which, I take it, is a peculiarly English habit. The female suburban goes out to tea sometimes, usually at the house of some suburban relative. Her dress is a curious blend of ostentation and economy. She will be in the fashion; and, being an Englishwoman, "expense is no object," providing she can get the money. She has no notion of thrift; she is perennially in arrears with the milk and the insurance man; and

when money gets very tight indeed, she lectures her husband on his wicked inability to make more than he is getting. The whole life, whether for male or female, is dreary, harried, unrelieved, and destructive of everything that tends to make life affable and tolerable.

In view of the obvious evils suburbanism has brought about in the English metropolis, it might have been expected that the English provincial cities would have done their best to avoid similar troubles in their own areas. So far from this being the case, however, the craze for suburbanism is making itself apparent wherever one turns. City and borough councils lead the way by erecting, at the public expense, artisans' and clerks' dwellings well out of the town. They hold that fresh air, the open country, and cheap railway fares are all that is wanted to make the English citizen's life a perennial joy to him. Yet the dwellings they erect are of the shoddiest and least homelike kind, the fresh-air which is to do the worker and

136 The Egregious English

the children so much good is a doubtful quantity, and the cheap railway fares are bragged about without regard to the time taken up in travelling and the hurry and anxiety to catch trains. Suburbanism as a stereotyped and soul-deadening institution is of purely English origin. In no other country in the world do convention and what other people will say so rule the lives of men as they do in England. Suburbanism is in many ways the most obvious of the many products of English convention. It is at once an indication of brainlessness, want of intelligence, and incipient decay. Apparently there is to be no limit to it. Outside London new suburbs spring up almost weekly. But their newness brings no changes in its train. Each new suburb is mapped out and built exactly on the lines of the old ones; each is destined for the reception of exactly the same kind of stupid people; each will be the living-ground of generations of people still more stupid.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAN-ABOUT-TOWN

THE English man-about-town—and I am not acquainted with any other sort—is, to put it mildly, a devil of a fellow. Who he may be, how he gets a living, whether he gets a living, how and why he became a man-about-town, and whether, after all, he is really a man-about-town, are matters which are wrapt in mystery. Everybody knows him, yet nobody knows much about him. You meet him everywhere, yet nobody can tell you how he gets there. His acquaintance is astonishing, ranging from dustmen to dukes, as it were; he cuts nobody, though he is intimate with nobody; he is familiar with his world and all that it expects of him; and he plays the game skilfully, correctly, and as a

138 The Egregious English

gentleman should. There are droves of him in London; probably no other city in the world could, with comfort, accommodate so many of him. He lives in the sun; he is the joy and pride of the restaurateurs' and the café-keepers' hearts; no billiard-room is complete without him; he shines at bars of onyx; music-halls and theatres could not get on without him; and, on the whole, it is his useful and pleasing function to keep the West End of London and its offshoots going. What the West End of London means to the man about-town is a large question. It means clubs in the morning, with a tailor, a hatter, a bookmaker or two, thrown in; it means expensive lunches, lazy, somnolent afternoons, big dinners, hard drinking, cards, night clubs, and a day that ends at three o'clock in the morning. Nobody but an Englishman could stand the racket; nobody but an Englishman could find satisfaction in so doing.

The man-about-town is the last expression of an unhealthy plutocracy; he is the child

of means, the son of his father, the pampered darling of his mother; and he has never understood that life was anything more than a frivolous holiday. Whether he has money or happens to have spent it all, he sets the standard of expenditure for everybody who would be considered in the movement. He also sets the fashion in hats, coats, trousers, fancy waistcoats, shoes, walking-sticks, and scarf-pins for Englishmen at large. It never occurs to him that he does this, but he does it. He it is, too, who is the prime supporter and patron of the manly English sports, horse-racing, glove-fighting, coaching, moting, polo, shooting, fishing, yachting, and so forth. In these exercises he finds great delight. When he is not busy dining and wining and painting the town red, sport is the mainstay of his existence.

He is usually young till he reaches the age of thirty, when he begins to decline rapidly. But the older he gets the younger he gets. Although he may lose his hair, and be compelled to have resort to false teeth and

elastic stockings, his spirits are invariably of the cheerfullest, his laugh is boisterous, his interest in life acute, and he continues to be passionately fond of food and drink. It is not till his locks become hoar, his purse well-nigh empty, and the number of his years well over threescore-and-ten that he begins to droop. Englishmen will point him out to you in cafés, and say with hushed voices, "You see that man, — the one with the frowsy beard and his hat atilt—well, he spent a hundred and fifty thousand twice! A hundred and fifty thousand, my boy! What did he do with it? Oh, well, what do people do with money? There's a man, sir, that's seen life: used to have a house in Berkeley Square; has owned three Derby winners; built the Thingamybob Theatre for Miss Jumpabouty; knows everybody; has hobnobbed with the King when he was Prince of Wales; used to be hand-in-glove with the Duke of —— and that crowd; and now, damme! he has n't a pennypiece."

All this with the air of a person who is

showing you something worth seeing. It is the English fatuity, first of all, to admire the man who is possessed of wealth; secondly, to admire a man who is throwing his money away; and, thirdly, to look with respectful awe upon the man who has thrown it away. It warms the English heart and fires the English imagination to see the son of a recently deceased provision-dealer playing the prince at the best hotels, plunging at Ascot and Monte Carlo, buying up the stalls at the Frivolity at the behest of Lottie Flutterfast, and generally flinging to the winds the hard-earned and, to a great extent, ill-gotten estate of his late lamented parent. By all the best people—by all the best English people, that is to say—such a youth is received and made welcome, if not exactly taken to the bosom. Englishmen ask him to dinner simply because he has money. They are aware that his courses will not bear examination, that his tastes are gross, that his intellect is none of the brightest. He has nothing to say for himself; he is neither

entertaining, nor amusing, nor instructive. The Englishman has no ulterior designs upon him; he does not hope to get him into this or that financial swim, neither does he desire to marry his daughter to him; he simply feels that it is well to be friendly with money and the man-about-town.

Even a bankrupt or "broke" man-about-town is better to the Englishman than none at all. With such a person he will foregather and be pleasant in the sight of all men. "Old So-and-so," he says, "is a dear old sort. He is broke, of course, and sometimes he rather worries one for sovereigns. But I have never deserted a pal in adversity in my life, and I am not going to begin with Old So-and-so." Thus your good snob Englishman would lead you to believe that he was on terms of intimacy and affection with Old So-and-so in Old So-and-so's palmy money-squandering days. Whereas, in point of fact, he never clapped eyes on the man till he had spent his last farthing.

It is all very English, and to a mere Scot

a trifle astonishing. The Scot, if I know him at all, takes no joys of spendthrifts, however prettily dressed, and, least of all, can he be brought to court the society of a man who has reduced himself to beggary by extravagance and riot. The bare gift of prodigality and the bare reputation of having been wealthy are nothing to the Scot. If he wants men to admire, he can find men of soldier quality. The Englishman, on the other hand, has no great love for either solidity or worth; the first makes him envious; the second bores him. Though he may himself be a person of judgment and sober life, he likes to have about him men who are going or who have gone the whole hog, and who pursue their pleasures without restraint, remorse, or fear. Hence the man-about-town will always figure interestingly in English society. There is romance about him. He has been foolish, and perhaps even wicked; but he belongs to the select coterie of people who, when all is said, make the gay world go round.

CHAPTER XV

DRINK

MR. CROSLAND has very kindly suggested that "under the inspiring tutelage of the national bard Scotland has become one of the drunkenest nations in the world." I shall not retaliate as one might do, but shall content myself by referring the reader to the easily accessible tables of statistics, which render it quite plain that Scotland's drunkenness is very considerably exceeded by the drunkenness of England.

In London, at any rate, strong drink flows like a river. There are 5300 licensed houses in the metropolitan area alone. In Kilburn, a suburb of more or less irreproachable respectability, there are twenty-five churches and chapels and thirty-five public-houses.

During late years public-house property has begun to be looked upon in the light of a gilt-edged investment. Turn where one will, one finds the older inns are being swept away, while on their sites are erected flaring gin-palaces, with plate-glass fronts, elaborate mahogany fittings, gorgeous saloon and private bars, painted ceilings, inlaid floors, and electric light throughout. Behind the bar, instead of mine host of a former day and his wife and daughter, there are half a dozen perked-up barmaids with rouged cheeks and Rossetti hair, and a person called the manager, who for £2 a week runs the place for its proprietors—a Limited Company, which owns, perhaps, twenty or thirty other houses. In the conduct of these mammoth drinking-places three great points are kept in view: namely, that a quick-drinking, stand-up trade pays better than any amount of slow regular custom; that the English drinker of the lower class cannot tell the difference between good drink and bad, often preferring, indeed, the bad to the good;

and that, as bad liquor is cheaper than good, the sound commercial thing to do is to supply bad liquor.

With these admirable axioms continually before it, the English trade has prospered amazingly. More drink and worse drink is sold in England to-day than has ever been sold in England before. Through legislation intended to ensure sound liquor and the proper conduct of licensed houses the proprietors have consistently made a point of driving the usual brewer's dray. "In order to meet the Food and Drugs Adulteration Act, all spirits sold at this establishment, while of the same excellent quality as heretofore, are diluted according to strength." "The same excellent quality as heretofore" is choice, and so is "diluted according to strength." As for the beer, we dilute also the beer according to strength. When we are caught at it, it is a mistake on the part of the cellarman, who has been discharged; and the fine is so small in proportion to the profit on selling water, that we smile at the back of

our necks and keep on diluting according to strength. Our whole system, in fact, is designed to make people drink, and to make them drink the worst that we dare put before them.

Now, the Scot, drunkard or no drunkard, does have something of a taste in liquor. The best clarets have gone to Scotland (in spite of Mr. Crosland) since claret became a dinner wine. You cannot put off a Scot with either bad whisky or bad beer. He knows what whisky should be and what beer should be, and in Scotland, at any rate, he never has any difficulty in getting them. But the English, taking them in the mass, are quite the other way. Any sort of wine, provided it be properly fortified and sophisticated, passes with them for the real thing. Their Scotch whisky is about the most wholesome thing they drink; but large quantities of this are bought by English merchants in a crude state, and rammed down the public throat without a thought to maturing, blending, and otherwise rendering the spirit

148 The Egregious English

potable. English beer, we have been told in song and story, is the finest beer in the world. Yet nobody can visit an English brewery without discovering that English beer is not English beer at all. Glucose in the place of malt, quassia and gentian in the place of hops, finings in the place of storage, are the universal order; and so depraved and perverted has the fine old English taste in beer become that brewers who have set up to provide an honest article and sent it out to their customers have had it returned with the curt comment that "nobody would drink such hog-wash, and what the customers wanted was beer, and not brewer's apron." Every now and again scares crop up in consequence of the use of improper ingredients; there is an inquiry, a Royal Commission, and the Englishman still goes on stolidly drinking. Arsenic will not drive him away from his favourite tippie, neither will *cocculus indicus* or any of the round dozen abominations upon which the brewer's chemist takes his stand.

If there is one thing more than another that is considered the chief necessity of life in the English household of the poorer class, it is beer, and its sister beverage, porter. From morning till night the can is continually going between the house of the artisan and the neighbouring "public." The first thing in the morning the artisan himself must have a couple of goes of rum and milk; by eleven o'clock he is ready for a pint of four-half; at noon, when he knocks off for dinner, he will imbibe a quart or more of the same beverage; and at night, after work, he sits in the taproom till closing-time, and drinks as much as ever he can pay for or chalk up. Meanwhile, his wife must have her drop of porter in the morning, her drop of bitter to dinner, and her drop of something hot before going to bed. Also on Saturday afternoons, when the twain go marketing together, they must have a few drinks, just to show there is no ill-feeling; while on Saturday night the artisan not infrequently improves the shining hours by "getting

blind," to use his own elegant phrase. Thus it quite commonly happens that a third and even a half of the total income of a household of the artisan class is spent in alcohol. Thrift, provision for a rainy day and for old age, become an impossibility. Underfeeding usually walks hand in hand with overdrinking; the man loses his nerve, the woman her comeliness and her capacity; and the end is pauperism and a pauper's grave, if nothing worse.

Among the English middle and upper classes there is distinctly a greater tendency to moderation than among the lower classes. For all that, the middle classes especially can point to a great many brilliant examples of the fine art of soaking. Publicans, bettingmen, commercial travellers, proprietors of businesses, solicitors' clerks, journalists, and the like get through an amount of drinking in the course of a day which would probably appal even themselves if they kept an account of it. "Let's 'ave a drink," is invariably one of the first phrases dropped when

two Englishmen meet. "We'll 'ave another" is sure to follow; and so is, "'Ang it, man! we *must* have a final." Among the middle classes, too, as also among the upper classes, there is a very great deal of secret drinking, particularly among women and persons whose professional or official positions necessitate the maintenance of an appearance of extreme respectability. The grocer's license and his fine stock of carefully selected wines and spirits offer a ready means of supply to the female dipsomaniac, who would not be seen in a public-house for worlds; besides, gin can be charged as tea in a grocery account, and many a bottle of brandy has figured in such accounts under the innocent pseudonym of "rolled ox-tongue."

Though the English upper classes, as I have said, drink with a certain moderation, their moderation really embraces a quantity of liquor which would send the artisan quite off his head. Whiskies-and-sodas at noon, Burgundy at lunch, with cognac to one's

152 The Egregious English

coffee, three kinds of wine at dinner, followed by liqueurs and whisky, make no appreciable mark on a man who is living at his ease and can sleep as long as he likes; but the sum total of alcohol is quite considerable, and probably greater than that consumed by the "drunken sot" for whom my lord has such contempt.

Of English drinking, generally, one may remark that it is done in a very deliberate and unsociable way. The English cannot be said to drink for company's sake. They do not foregather and carry on their drinking merrily. In their cups they are neither witty nor happy, but just dull and dour and inclined to be quarrelsome. They drink for drinking's sake,—for the sake of intoxication, and to drown trouble. I wish them good luck and less of their vile concoctions!

CHAPTER XVI

FOOD

THE subject of diet—he prefers to call it diet—is apparently one of unlimited interest to the Englishman. Meet him where you will, he is ever ready to discuss, first, the weather, and then the things—that is to say, the kinds of food—that agree with him. Indeed, you could almost stake your life on extracting from any strange Englishman you happen to come across some such statement as, “I can’t abide eggs,” or, “Veal always makes me bilious,” within ten minutes of opening up a conversation with him. The Englishman’s house, we are told, is his castle ; and the Englishman’s hobby, surely, is his digestion. In point of fact, ninety-nine per cent. of adolescent and adult English people

suffer from chronic indigestion in a more or less severe form. Flatulence, heartburn, colic, and "liver" are the Englishman's mortal heritage. He is invariably troubled with some of them, and quite commonly with all. If you relieved him of them he would scarcely thank you, because he has nursed them from his youth up, and what he really wants is amelioration, and not cure. Probably this is the reason why in the midst of his wails and his unholy talk about diet he continues to feed in precisely the grossest, greasiest, and least rational manner that generations of bad feeders have been able to develop.

Of mornings, if you sojourn with an English family, you will be invited to breakfast at half-past eight. Promptly at that hour they serve a sort of sickly oatmeal soup, compounded apparently of milk and sugar, which they call porridge. Then follow thick and piping-hot coffee with 'am and eggs, fish, or a chop, and bread and butter and marmalade as a sort of wind-up. The man who tackles this menu goes to business belching like a

torn balloon. By eleven o'clock, however, he is ready for a little snack—oysters and chablis, prawns on toast, a mouthful of bread and cheese and a bottle of Bass, or something of that kind. Then at half-past one there is lunch, practically a dinner of several courses, or a cut from the joint, accompanied by what the English euphoniously term “two veg.” At tea-time your Englishman must needs lave himself in a dish of Orange-Pekoe or Bohea, to the accompaniment of lumps of cake. And at long and last comes dinner, the crowning guzzle of the Englishman's day, and a function usually spread over a couple of hours. It will be perceived that this gustatory programme or routine has been copied from the French. The French put away two good meals per diem, one at noon and the other in the evening, and there is no reason why the English should not do the same. When you come to think of it, dinner in the middle of the day is a low, under-bred, undistinguished arrangement; also not to dine at night is to run the risk of not losing one's

figure, and of having the neighbours say that one cannot afford it.

The French programme would be all very well if it were carried out on French lines all through. But it is not. When you say "soup" in a French restaurant, it means that you will be served with half a dozen table-spoonfuls of *consommé*, or *petite marmite*, or *bisque*, as the case may be. When the Englishman says "soup," he means enough thick stock to wash a bus down. What is more, he gets it and swallows it. And it is so all down the menu—too much of everything, and don't you think you can put me off with your blooming homœopathic portions. A liberal table, no stint, good food, and plenty of it, is one of the bulwarks of English respectability. That bad digestion and talks about diet follow is nobody's fault.

This profusion—this overfood, as it were—has been brought to its noblest expression by the English aristocracy, whose tables literally groan with costly viands, whose spits are always turning, and whose scullions and

kitchen wenches are as an army. It is related that when a certain duke found it necessary to retrench, and was advised by his family solicitor to get rid of his fifth, sixth, and seventh cooks, his grace remarked, "But ——, So-and-so, a man must have a biscuit!" And the English middle class of course faithfully imitates to the best of its powers the English upper class, and so on through the grades. Among all classes there is a rooted prejudice against food that happens to be cheap. To this day people who eat escallops are rather looked down upon, for no other reason than that oysters run you into half a crown a dozen, while you can get excellent escallops at ninepence. So the herring, the whiting, and other kinds of cheap fish are considered little better than offal by persons who can afford to pay for sole and salmon. Turtle soup is infinitely to be preferred to any other soup in the world because it is dearer, and champagne is drunk, not because people like it, but because it looks swagger and testifies to the possession of

158 The Egregious English

means. These gustatory idiosyncrasies are purely English, and obviously they are the offspring of the English love of display and superfluity.

Among the lower classes the general feeding, though cheaper, is just as wasteful and just as gross. Excluding bread, it consists chiefly of inferior cuts of butcher's meat with *charcuterie* and dried fish thrown in. It has been complained against the Scot that he is none too clean a feeder, delighting hugely in inferior meats. Haggis is held forth as a great exemplar in point. But it cannot be denied that throughout England the one kind of emporium for the sale of comestibles which flourishes and is unfailingly popular is the pork or ham-and-beef shop. And here what do you obtain? Why, exactly the meats which gentlemen of the type of Mr. Henley describe as offal. They include, in addition to pork in and out of season, pig's feet, pig's heads, pig's liver and kidneys, pig's blood sausages, the "savoury duck" or mess of seasoned remnants, tripe boiled and raw, and

chitterlings. So that the haggis of Scotland is fairly well balanced. I am not suggesting for a moment that the English display other than a proper judgment in devouring these dainties. But if they will favour the pork shop and its contents, they can scarcely expect to be set down for an angel-bread and manna-eating people.

Perhaps the chief scandal about English feeding lies in the condition of the English hotels. On the Continent an hotel is an establishment for the accommodation of travellers requiring food and rest. In England an hotel is an establishment for the accommodation of landlords and waiters. "High class cuisine," says the tariff card, also "wines and spirits of the best selected quality." Yet one's experience tells one that, though the bill will be heavy, neither the cuisine nor the wines will be more than passable, much less high class. A menu which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, bad cooking, careless service, and a general lack of finish, are the things one may expect

at an English hotel with the tolerable certainty of not being disappointed. To complain is to draw forth the ill-disguised contempt of bibulous head-waiters and the stiff apologies of haughty proprietors. But beyond that mortal man will never get, because the English hotel is an immemorial and conservative institution, and as wise in its own conceit as the ancient sphinx. Of late and in London attempts have been made to organise hotels adapted to the best kind of requirement. So far as I am aware, only two of them have really succeeded, and the charges at both places are quite prohibitive.

Closely identified, one might almost say affiliated, to the English hotel is the English railway-buffet, of which so much has been said in song and story. The sheer horrible-ness of the "refreshments" here provided has passed into a proverb. The English themselves admit that if you wish to know the worst about refreshments, you should drink the railway-buffet tea and partake of the

railway-buffet sandwich. They also admit that for abominations in the way of aerated waters, milk, beer, and whisky, pastry, cakes, hard-boiled eggs, cold meats, boiled chicken and ham, and chops and steaks from the grill, the railway-buffet takes the palm; and they admit further that the Hebes who dispense these comestibles to the hungry and howling mob have the manners of duchesses. Yet the English without their railway-buffets would be an utterly woe-begone and miserable people. Put an Englishman down at a strange railway-station with a half-hour wait before him. He has but one resort: he inquires right off for the buffet, and there he gorges and swizzles till the warning bell advises him of the departure of his train. If there is no buffet, he becomes a dejected, pallid man, and threatens to write to the newspapers. So long as the railway-buffets continue to exist, the English digestion can never aspire to perfection, even though English feeding and cooking outside railway-stations became ideal; for a single

162 The Egregious English

“meal” of railway-buffet viands would permanently disorganise the digestive capabilities of the most ostrichy ostrich that ever walked on two legs.

CHAPTER XVII

LAW AND ORDER

THE English love to be ruled, just as eels are said to take delight in being skinned. They hold that a nation which is properly ruled cannot fail of happiness. Their notion of rule may be summed up in the phrase, "Law and order." The Englishman believes that law and order are heaven-sent blessings especially invented for his behoof. "Where else in the world," he will ask you grandiloquently, "do you get such law and such order as you get in England—the land of the free?" If anybody picks his pocket, or encroaches upon his land, or infringes his patent rights, or diverts his water-courses, the Englishman knows exactly what to do. There is the law. They keep it on tap in great build-

ings called courts, and persons in wigs serve out to you precisely what you may deserve with great gusto and solemnity. The man picked your pocket, did he? Three months' imprisonment for the man. Somebody is making colourable imitations of your patent dolls' eyes. Well, you can apply for an injunction. And so on.

This is law. All Englishmen believe in it, particularly those who have never had any. When it comes to the worst, and the Englishman finds that he really must take on a little of his own beautiful specific, he usually begins by falling into something of a flutter. Those bewigged and sedate persons seated in great chairs, with bouquets in front of them and policemen to bawl "Silence!" for them, begin to have a new meaning for the Englishman. Hitherto he has regarded them complacently as the bodily representatives of the law in a free country. He has smacked his lips over them, rejoiced in their learning, wit, and acumen, warmed at the notion of their dignity, and thanked God that he belonged

to a free people—free England. Now, when it comes to a trifling personal encounter before this mountain of dignity—this mountain of dignity perched on a mountain of precedent, as it were—the Englishman shivers and looks pale. But his solicitor and his counsel and his counsel's clerk—particularly his counsel's clerk—soon put him at his ease, and instead of withdrawing at the feel of the bath, he is fain to plump right in. Whether he comes out on top or gets beaten is another matter; in any case, the trouble about the thing is that, win or lose, it is infinitely and appallingly costly. Law, the Englishman's birthright, is not to be given away. If you want any, you must pay for it, and pay for it handsomely, too. Otherwise you can go without. The English adage to the effect that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor is one of those adages which are very subtly true. There is a law for the rich, certainly. There is also a law for the poor—namely, no law at all. On the whole the Englishman who has not had his

pristine dream of English law shattered by contact with the realities is to envied. All other Englishmen, whether their experience has lain in County Courts, High Courts, or Courts of Appeal, talk lovingly of English law with their tongues in their cheeks.

With respect to order, the much bepraised handmaiden of law, I do not think that the English get half so much of her as they think they do. She costs them a pretty penny. The up-keep of her police and magistrates and general myrmidons runs the Englishman into some noble taxation; yet where shall you find an English community that is orderly if even an infinitesimal section of it has made up its mind to be otherwise? In London at the present moment there are whole districts which it is not safe for a decently dressed person to traverse even in broad daylight; and these districts are not by any means slum districts, but parts of the metropolis in which lie important arteries of traffic. There is not a square mile of the metropolitan area which does not boast its organised gang of

daylight robbers, purse-snatchers, watch-snatchers, and bullies who would beat a man insensible for fourpence, and whose great weapon is the belt.

For convenience' sake these people have been grouped together under the term "Hooligan." The police—the far-famed London police—can do nothing with them. They admit that they are ineradicable and irrepressible. The magistrates and the newspapers keep on asseverating that "something must be done." That something apparently consists in the capture of a stray specimen of the tribe, who is forthwith given three months, with perhaps a little whipping thrown in. But hooliganism is a business that continues to flourish like the green bay-tree, and London is no safer to-day than it was in the time of the garotters. As the belt is the weapon of the London robber, and as Hooligan is his name, so we find in all the larger provincial towns gangs of scoundrels with special instruments and slang names of their own. In Lancashire and the Black

168 The Egregious English

Country kicking appears to be the favourite method of dealing with the order-loving citizen. In some of the northern towns the knuckle-duster, the sand-bag, and the loaded stick are requisitioned; and in all cases we are told the police are powerless. The fact is, that, on the whole, England cannot be reckoned an orderly country. The "hooligans" and their provincial imitators are just straws that show the way of the wind. When these persons say: "We will do such and such things in contravention of the law," there is practically nothing to stop them. In the same way, when a community determines to run amuck on an occasion of "national rejoicing" (such as the late Mafeking night), or because a strike is in progress, or a charity dinner has been badly served, or the vaccination laws are being enforced, it does so at its own sweet will, and order can be hanged. Once a week, too,—namely, on Saturday nights,—English order, like the free list at the theatres, is entirely suspended. Saturday night is the recognised and inviolable

hour of the mob. Throughout the country your flaring English gin-palaces are at their flaringest; the beer-pumps sing together with a myriad voices, and the clink of glasses takes the evening air with beauty. Until, perhaps, eight o'clock all goes well; then the quarrel-someness which the English masses extract from their cups begins to assert itself, and the chuckers-out (in what other country in the world are there chuckers-out?) and the police begin to be busy. Till long after midnight their hands are full, and it is not until the Sabbath is a couple of hours old that the English masses seek their rest. In the meantime what squalid indiscretions, what sins against humanity, what outrages, have not been committed? The bare consumption of drink alone has been appalling; the bickerings, angry shoutings, indulgences in pugilism and hair-pulling, have been infinite; and on Monday morning the police-courts will have their usual plethora of drunks and disorderlies, wife-beatings and assaults on the police, with, perhaps, a case or two of

manslaughter and a murder to put the crown on things.

In the main, therefore, law and order may be counted among John Bull's many illusions. They are, as one might say, sweet to meditate upon; they look all right on paper, and they sound all right in the mouths of orators. For the rest the Englishman who is wise smiles and keeps a folded tale. One may note, before leaving this entertaining subject, that in England lawyers and laymen alike take a special pride in admitting a certain ignorance. At the bare mention of Scots law they lift up pious hands and impious eyes and say, "Thank Heaven, we know nothing about it!"

CHAPTER XVIII

EDUCATION

LORD ROSEBERY, whom the worthy Mr. Crosland dislikes on purely racial grounds, is usually credited as the originator of what has latterly become the Englishman's watchword, "Educate, educate, educate!" Whether it was the Scotch half of Lord Rosebery or the English half that prompted him to this simple human cry, I shall not pretend to say. On the other hand, it is certain that when his Lordship offered the English such a profound piece of advice, he gave them exactly the counsel that they most needed; for, though the English boast of their knowledge, though they are the arrogant possessors of seats of learning out of which can come nothing but perfection,

though they possess ancient universities and ancient public schools, though they have a school-board system and free education, and though their country is overrun with middle-sized men who play billiards and drink bitter beer and call themselves schoolmasters, they are indubitably and unmistakably an uneducated people.

Until the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870, learning in England amounted practically to a luxury. Only the rich might be permitted to know things. It was a case of schools, colleges, and universities for the sons of noblemen and gentlemen. The rascally lower classes might look after themselves. It is open to question whether the rascally lower classes were not, on the whole, educationally better off in that day than they are at present. That, however, is by the way. But in the later sixties the reformer got his eagle eye on the rascally lower classes. He perceived that the rascally lower classes were in bad case. They got drunk, they used foul language, they smoked

short pipes, and, Heaven help them! they could not read. Anticipating the English or Scotch half of Lord Rosebery, as the case may be, the reformer said, "Educate, educate, educate!" And it was so. The English have been educating ever since. They educated to such purpose that thirty years later Lord Rosebery felt it incumbent upon himself to bid them educate, educate, educate! In those thirty years the rascally lower classes learned somewhat. They were supposed to discover, *inter alia*, that knowledge was power. They were told that a hodman who could write his name was a better hodman than the hodman whose sign-manual was a cross. They were led shrewdly to infer that their pastors and masters and general betters owed their supremacy to knowledge; and that if they, the rascally lower classes, would only instruct their children, these same children might wax great in the land and carry burdens no more. The rascally lower classes sent their children to school, some of them cheerfully, some of them

174 The Egregious English

with groans; and the stars began to shine over England's darkness.

What has come to pass all men know. Every Englishman gets the smatterings of a literary education, and believes in his heart that he was cut out by the Almighty to be a clerk. The honest trades and handicrafts are no longer desirable in the minds of English youth. To take one's coat off with a view to livelihood is a business for dolts and fools. Advertise in England for an office-boy and you shall receive five hundred applications; advertise for a boy to learn plumbing, and you will be offered, perhaps, two daft-looking lads, who after much thrashing have managed to attain the age of fourteen years.

The fact is, that the English do not know what education means. At the public schools, and at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, education has become, to a great extent, a social matter. You go to these places to learn, certainly; but you also go with a view to the formation of a desirable and influential acquaintance, and to get upon

your forehead the mark which is supposed to make glorious the public-school and university-bred Englishman. As a general rule, that mark is altogether imperceptible to the eyes of the unelect, who, if the truth must be told, discover the university man not so much by his manners or conversation as by his ineptitudes. When one comes to consider the principles upon which the public-school and university system are worked, one is quite prepared to admit that, were it not for the element of snobbery patent in the system, English public schools and universities alike would in the long run have to be disestablished. As it is, they are the conventional resort of aristocratic adolescence, and permitted to exist only on condition that, if a low middle-class person can find the money and keep up the style, he, too, may join the angelic host. To the man of temperament, to the scholar, to the man who loves learning for learning's sake, the English universities have precious little to offer.

After Oxford and Cambridge, one turns to

176 The Egregious English

London and the non-resident foundations, all of them, I believe, modern. Here, as it seems to me, the English err again. Broadly speaking, these institutions, wittingly or unwittingly, devote their energies to the preparation of young men for the Civil Service. If you are an English board-school teacher at £80 a year and you discover that a second-class clerk in the Circumlocution Department commences at £300 a year, and that, roughly, the examination to be passed is the same as for matriculation at London, you naturally go in bald-headed for matriculation at London. For the learning you get by these efforts you have not the smallest respect. If, on presenting yourself for examination by the Civil Service Commissioners, you come out sufficiently high on the list to secure an appointment, well and good. If not, your labour has been wasted. It is this spirit which is at the bottom of the English ignorance. With them, learning, education, is a means to an end, and not in the least its own exceeding great reward. Hence a properly

educated Englishman is almost as rare as a blue rose. For the masses—the rascally lower orders, that is to say—there are the board schools. Here for thirty years past has been enacted about the sweetest travesty of education that the mind of man could conceive. For the teaching of the children of the rascally lower orders, the wise English Government, with the assistance of the wise English school boards, has invented what is to all intents and purposes a new type of man. And his name shall be called Schoolmaster. He began Heaven knows how. But if you inquire into him, you will find that he has spent three years at a Government training college, and that prior to this experience he was for some years a pupil teacher; also that he is a son of the people, and that his father drove an engine or kept a shop. In these latter circumstances he was, perhaps, fortunate. The marvellous fact about him is that, in spite of his years of pupil-teachership and of his three years at a Government training college, he is not a man of either learning or

culture. I am told that an English pupil teacher is not expected to fash himself by the study of either Latin or Greek. Two books of Euclid will see him through the stiffest of his examinations. He does not need to have even a nodding acquaintance with modern languages; and as for science, if he really wants some, he must pick it up at evening classes. Even when he passes into the Government training college,—where, by the way, he is instructed and boarded and lodged gratis,—his studies do not become in any way profound. The history of England, the geography of the world, arithmetic according to Barnard Smith, algebra according to Dr. Todhunter, Latin and Greek according to Dr. William Smith (Part I.), with a little French,—a very little French,—bring him to the end of his tether.

Really, the whole business is childish. Any youth of average capacity should get through the entire three years' course in six weeks. Of course, there is the so-called technical

training to reckon with; that is to say, a man at one of these colleges is supposed to spend a great deal of his time, and no doubt does, in perfecting himself as a teacher; but one would have thought that actual practice in an ordinary school would be the best instructor in this respect. In any case, nobody can consider closely the English schoolmaster as manufactured at Government training colleges without perceiving that the Government turns out a very remarkable article indeed. I have no desire to belittle a hard-worked, and probably underpaid, body of public servants. Their profession is a thankless one. I do not think for a moment a single man of them went into it with his eyes open, and I know for a certainty that the school boards and the Government between them have so hedged it round with petty annoyances that a man possessed of feeling must loathe it. It is probably this feeling of loathing of his work that keeps the English schoolmaster down. He knows that it is vain for him to go a hair's-breadth out of the

beaten tracks. The school boards must have grants; the Government inspectors must be satisfied. There is only one method of ensuring these desirable consummations: that one way amounts to sheer mechanism and slog. The English schoolmaster must have no temperament. If he possess such a thing, he is bound to come to great grief. Hence the whole weight of the English system is, from first to last, employed in the work of knocking temperament out of him and keeping it out. His three years' free training particularly tend to make a slack, unthinking sap-head of him. He gets a parchment which entitles him to call himself a certificated teacher, and he is taught to imagine that for downright learning there is nothing like himself under the sun. In this latter surmise he is quite right. The schoolmaster in England, though he will probably be another quarter of a century waking up to the fact, counts for next to nothing. Men of parts avoid him; men of no parts laugh at him. For himself, I imagine, he will long

continue to believe in his heart that he is a great man, a little lower, perhaps, than a parson, but certainly a little higher than a policeman.

The real value of English education, like the real value of most other things, becomes apparent when it is put to the test of practical affairs. Any employer of labour will tell you that, whether an English boy come to him from a board school or a school of a higher grade, whether he be the son of a ploughman or of what the English call a professional man, he is always and inevitably a good deal of a fool. You have to teach him how to lick stamps. You have to teach him that, excepting in so far as he can write and read, what he has learned at school is not wanted; you have to teach him how many beans make five; you have to teach him that punctuality and accuracy are worth more in business than all the botany he ever learned; and all the time you have to watch him like a cat watching a mouse. "Fire out the fools!" once exclaimed Dr. Robertson Nicoll.

182 The Egregious English

I do not think it is too much to say that, if the average English employer took the hint, he would have nobody left to do his business for him.

CHAPTER XIX

RECREATION

To amuse oneself is the great art of life. From the English point of view, the finest kind of amusement is to be obtained by killing something. Fox-hunting, deer-stalking, grouse-shooting, pheasant-shooting, pigeon-shooting, and even rabbit-shooting still stand for a great deal among the best class of Englishmen. Of old, the masses had their bull-baitings, dog-fights, and cock-fights. These, however, are no longer regarded as legitimate forms of amusement, and the masses, being for various reasons unable to hunt foxes and shoot pheasants, have to fall back on recreations in which killing takes place only by accident. There is the race-course and the football-field. The masses are expected to

184 The Egregious English

consider themselves happy. Outside racing and football, however, the come-day, go-day Englishman has a good many facilities for recreation. Although in most communities the grandfatherly authorities have abolished the old feasts and fairs, which provided periodic saturnalia of merry-go-rounds and wild-beast shows, it is a poor townlet which cannot nowadays boast its permanent settlement of cocoanut-shies and shooting-galleries, where on Saturday evenings the true-born Englishman may find substantial joys. Then, for the Londoner, in addition to this kind of thing, there are from time to time provided vast orgies at Hampstead Heath, the Welsh Harp, Barnet Fair, and other choice resorts. Here, again, it is a case of cocoanuts, shooting-galleries, swing-boats, steam-roundabouts, and aërial flights, backed up with donkey-rides, a free use of the tickler and the ladies' teaser, unlimited confetti throwing, and unlimited beer. These amusements, of course, are on the face of them quite innocent, and equally English and unintellectual.

Fading merry-go-rounds and cocoanut-shies, the delights of which are apt to pall, the English masses have still left to them their main redoubt of rational enjoyment, which, for reasons no man may skill, is called the music-hall. The English music-hall is practically an expansion or efflorescence of the old-fashioned "sing-song." Sixty years ago the man who went out to take a stoup of ale at his inn was accustomed to be regaled with a little music free of charge. Mine host had possessed himself of a second-hand piano, and secured the services of some broken-down musician to play it for him. There was a great singing of old songs, and the time sped merrily, as it did in the golden age. These feasts of harmony brought custom, and in course of time the evening "sing-songs" at certain hostelries became organised institutions and were run on lines of great enterprise, the piano being supplemented by an orchestra, and the pianist by a number of professional singers and entertainers. Within the last fifty years the "sing-song" has been

186 The Egregious English

separated from its parent the alehouse, and has developed into the music-hall. To-day the English music-halls are almost as thick on the ground as churches and chapels. In the metropolis you would have a difficulty to count them. In the provinces every town of size supports two or three halls, and insists on London talent and London style. The class of entertainment provided may be costly and amusing, but it is certainly not edifying. The performers almost to a man, and one might say to a woman, are persons who can be considered "artists" only in the broadest sense, and whose ignorance and vulgarity are as colossal as their salaries.

Roughly, the entertainment may be divided into two sections, the one concerned with feats of strength, juggling, and the like, and the other with laughter-making and vocalism. As regards the first of these sections, a man who can balance a horse and trap on the end of his chin appears to give great satisfaction to an English audience. Why this should be so, nobody knows. The

good purpose that may be served by balancing a horse and trap on the end of one's chin is not obvious; but the English masses are ravished by the spectacle. They also have a great fondness for the stout lady who catches cannon-balls on the back of her neck, for the other stout lady who risks her life nightly on the flying trapeze, for the gentleman who walks about the stage with a piano under one arm and a live mule under the other, and for the gentleman who rides the bicycle standing on his head. To the mind of the English masses these are marvels and well worth the money. They give a zest to life, they provide material for conversation, and their attraction seems perennial.

The great stand-by of the halls, however, is the laughter-making and vocal department. Here shine the great stars whose names are familiar on English lips as household words. Here is purveyed the culture, the song, and the humour of the English masses. It is from the music-hall stage that the vast majority of Englishmen take their

188 The Egregious English

tone and their sentiment. That renowned comedian, Fred Fetchem, strolls on to the boards of the Frivolity some night, and, assuming a fiendish grin, exclaims idiotically; "There 's 'air!" Next morning and for many weeks thereafter all England says; "There's 'air!" on any and every occasion. "What ho she bumps!" "Now, we sha'n't be long," "Not half," "Did he?" and similar catchwords, all popular and all meaningless, capture the English imagination in their turn, and for a season, at any rate, Englishmen can say nothing else. It is the same with the music-hall song. Always there are current in England three or four "songs of the hour," which every Englishman worth the name sings, whistles, or hums; and always these songs, from whatever point of view regarded, are of the most blithering and bathotic nature. At the present moment the prime and universal favourite is that pathetic ditty, *Everybody's Loved by Some One*. For the benefit of the English, I quote the first stanza and the chorus of this work:

A lady stood within a busy city,
Her darling little daughter by her side;
She'd stopped to buy a bunch of pretty violets
From a ragged little orphan she espied.
The words she spoke were kinder than the boy had
heard for years;
And in reply to what she asked, he murmur'd through
his tears,

Everybody's loved by some one, everybody
knows that's true,
Some have father and mother dear ; sister and
brother, too.
All the time that I remember, since I was a mite
so small,
I seem to be the only one that nobody loves at
all.

With this enchanting song the English
welkin resounds by day and night. The
great, broad-shouldered, genial Englishman,
full of four-ale and bad whisky, howls it in
chorus at his favourite "public," work-girls
sing it in factories, mothers rock their chil-
dren to sleep with it, and every English
urchin whistles or shouts it at you with un-
flagging zest. Of course, there are others;
for example, there is *I'm a P'liceman*, which
goes like this:

190 The Egregious English

In the inky hour of midnight, when the clock is striking
 three,
As I stroll along my beet-root, many curious things I
 see:
Ragged urchins stagger past me to their mansions in
 the west;
Millionaires, through cold and hunger, on our doorsteps
 sink to rest;
Dirty dustmen in their broughams, off to supper at the
 “Cri.”;
Then “Bill Sykes,” the burglar, passes, with an eye-
 glass in his eye.

Such are the sights I witness when I am on my
 beat,
Filling my heart with sawdust, filling my boots
 with feet;
Covering half the pavement up with my “plates
 of meat,”
Though mother sent to say that I’m a p’liceman—

which—need one remark?—is intended for
what the Scots are supposed to call “wut.”
Also, there is *He Stopped*:

Pendlebury Plum had a wart on his gum,
 And he rubbed it with sand-paper hard;
The wart on his gum made Plum fairly hum,
 When it stuck out about half a yard.
The wart grew so quick, when he rubbed it with a
 brick,
Till it looked like a short billiard-cue;
Said Plum to himself, “I shall die on the shelf,
 For I’m darned if I know what to do.”

So he went and got a pick-axe and shov'd it
underneath,
Then he lifted up his jaw, and he swallowed all
his teeth;
Then he stopped!

The verses I have quoted are a good, true, and fair sample of the kind of thing that finds favour among the English masses. I do not think that anything better is being proffered, and it is pretty certain that anything less inane would be doomed to failure. The fact is that the English mind in the lump is flat, coarse, and maggoty, and the English understanding is as the understanding of a feeble and ill-bred child. A couple of generations ago the songs popular among Englishmen had some claim to coherence, decency, and common sense; nowadays, however, the Englishman admits that "he cannot sing the old songs." He has gone farther and fared worse, and among the many symptoms of his decadence, none is more pronounced than his easy toleration of the balderdash that is being served up to him by the "'alls."

CHAPTER XX

STOCK EXCHANGE

THERE is nothing in England more astounding or more tigerish than the city man. Englishmen have a fixed idea that they are the soul of generosity, indifferent to money, and not in the least sordid. When they are put to it for a type of sheer greediness it pleases them to point a finger at the Scot. Yet there can be no doubt that of late years the desire for riches has become the absorbing English passion. The ostentation and vulgar displays of the aristocracy and the newly rich have stirred the middle-class English heart to envy. How comes it that such and such a man sleeps on lilies and eats roses? He has "means," my friend. And what are "means"? Just money. If

you are going to be happy in this life, if you insist upon a full paunch of the choicest—upon the ease and softness which are so grateful to decadent persons, if you would be in a position to possess all that the soul of the decadent person covets, you really must have money. And as you are a middle class Englishman whose people have omitted to leave you a million or so, it is very awkward for you. Life is short; the cup goes round but once.

You have £500. How is it to be made into £50,000, and that while the flush of youth still incarnadines your ambitious cheek? There is only one way: you must speculate—judiciously, if you can; but you must speculate. You are an Englishman and a sportsman, and sometimes you get your £50,000. Then all the world marvels and would fain do likewise, so that the ball is kept rolling. It is a ball full of money, and it rolls cityward. The generous, open-handed Englishmen who are the City take as much as they want and toss you the balance.

194 The Egregious English

The game is as fashionable as ping-pong: everybody plays it, and, win or lose, everybody calls it the Stock Exchange. I am told that the Stock Exchange proper is a reputable institution and essential to the well-being of the country. I do not doubt this for a moment; but round it there has grown up a specious and parasitical finance which is rapidly transforming the English into a nation of punters. "Fortunes made while you wait," is the lure to which the latter-day Englishman has been found infallibly to respond. The remnant of the common sense possessed by his excellent grandparents arouses in him a sneaking suspicion that the golden promises of the outside broker and the bucket-shop keeper are not to be depended upon. Yet he reads in his morning paper that no end of stocks and shares have risen a point or dropped a point, as the case may be, and he knows that if he had been in on the right side he would have made more money in a few hours than his excellent grandparents could have made in the course

of a whole grubby lifetime. Hence, sooner or later, his patrimony, or few hundred of surplus capital, is planked into the ball that rolls citywards, on the off-chance that it may come back arm in arm, as it were, with thousands.

Even the more cautious sort of Englishman, who looks upon speculation with a deprecating eye and pins his faith on legitimate investment, is rapidly descending into the gambling habit. Schemes which promise fat dividends inflame his imagination and drag him out of the even tenor of his way. He is perfectly well aware that fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five per cent. in return for one's money is quite wrong somehow. But, on the other hand, the prospect ravishes, and there are concerns in the world which pay such dividends year by year without turning a hair. Only sometimes there is a colossal smash, and half the shopkeepers of England put on sackcloth and ashes and get up funds for one another's relief. To the looker-on the whole system is highly

196 The Egregious English

diverting; to the players in the game the fun will never be obvious.

The real truth about the matter is simply this—the standard of living in England is an inflated and artificial standard. Practically every Englishman lives, or longs to live, beyond his means. The workman and the workman's wife must put on the style of the foreman and the foreman's wife, and the foreman and the foreman's wife must appear to be nearly as comfortably off as the manager, the manager as his employer, all employers, shopkeepers, factory owners, iron-masters, engineers, printers, and even publishers as prosperous as each other, and so on till you come to dukes, than whom, of course, nobody can be more prosperous. It would be possible to bring together six Englishmen whose incomes ranged from £1 10s. a week to £50,000 a year, and whose dress and tastes would be pretty well identical. Fifty years ago the sons of the middle classes had really no inclination toward the superfluities. The dandy was rather laughed at

among them, the gourmet was a monster they never by any chance encountered, and the libertine was a sad warning and a person to be eschewed. Nowadays it is all the other way: the gilt and tinsel and glamour and rapidity of the gay world have captured the English understanding and brought it exceeding low. There is little moral backbone left in the country. Money, money, money, to be ill gotten and ill spent, is the English ideal. The man who can go without is considered a crank or a fool or worse, or he is set down for an indolent fellow who should be given a month or two on the treadmill for luck. The whole duty of man—of Englishmen, that is to say—is to have money in ponderable quantities; the man without it is of no account at all. Nobody believes in him, nobody wants him, nobody tolerates him. He may be wise and witty and chaste and blessed with all the virtues, and still be received with great coldness by bank managers; and it is well known that the attitude of a bank manager towards a man is the

198 The Egregious English

attitude of society at large. If the bank manager beams and rubs his hands, "God's in His heaven: all's right with the world." If the bank manager frowns and sends you impertinent letters, you may last a week or a fortnight or a few months, but you are on thin ice, and you must please take care not to forget it. I should not be at all surprised if the omnipotent official whose business it is to discover what persons are or are not qualified to approach our British fountain of honour were one day found to be a bank manager in disguise.

So that, on the whole, the Englishman has every inducement to get rich and to be very quick about it. His dealings with the "Stock Exchange"—that is to say, with the City—are but the natural expression of his anxiety to oblige all parties concerned. It is a pity that getting and spending should become the main concerns of his life; but, as he pathetically puts it, "One must do as Rome does, and some women are never content." The Stock Exchange is the only way.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BELOVED

WHAT is more beautiful or meet to be taken to the bosom than the Englishman? Everybody loves him; his goings to and fro upon the earth are as the progresses of one who has done all men good. He drops fatness and blessings as he walks. He smiles benignity and graciousness and "I-am-glad-to-see-you-all-looking-so-well." And before him runs one in plush, crying, "Who is the most popular man of this footstool?" And all the people shall rejoice and say, "The Englishman—God bless him!"

Hence it comes to pass that in whatever part of the world the Englishman may find himself, he has a feeling that he is thoroughly at home. "I am as welcome as flowers in

May," he says. "These pore foreigners, these pore 'eathen are glad to see me. They never have any money, pore devils! and were it not for our whirring spindles at home, I verily believe they would have nothing to wear." In brief, the Englishman abroad is always in a sort of Father Christmas, Santa Claus frame of mind. He eats well, he drinks well, and he sleeps well. He calls for the best, and he PAYS for it. It is a wonderful thing to do, and it goes straight to the hearts of the "pore foreigner" and the "pore 'eathen." This, at any rate, is the Englishman's own view. It is a pleasing, consoling, and stimulating view, and it would ill become an unregenerate outsider rudely to disturb it. Indeed, I question whether the Englishman in his blindness and adipose conceit would allow you to disturb it.

When persons in France say, "*À bas l'Anglais*," your fat Englishman smiles, and says, "Little boys!" When people put rude pictures of him on German postcards, he smiles again, and says that the flowing tide

of public opinion in Germany is entirely with him. When Dutch farmers propose to throw him into the sea, he becomes very red in the neck, splutters somewhat, and says, "I'm sure they will make excellent subjects in time." And when the savage Americans desire to chew him up and swallow him, he says, "You astonish me. I have always been under the impression that blood was thicker than water." His desire is to live at peace with all men; but his notion of peace is to have his hand in both your pockets and no questions asked. He owns two-thirds of the habitable globe (*vide* the geography books), and every pint of sea is his (*pace* the popular song); he owns also everything that is worth owning. He is the Pierpont Morgan of the universe. Who could help loving him?

On the other hand, the excellent J. B. has not escaped calumny. If I were disposed to reproduce some of the slanders upon him, it goes without saying that they would make a rather large chapter. All manner of foreign writers have time and time again had a

'Twiſt Saxon man and man. He is more congruous
grown;
Holding a ſubtler plan to make the world his own
By organized ſelf-seeking in the paths of power
He is new-drilled to wait. He knoweth his appointed
hour
And his appointed prey. Of all he maketh tool,
Even of his own ſad virtues, to cajole and rule.

We are told, further, that the Beloved has tarred Time's features, pock-marked Nature's face, and "brought all to the ſame jakes," whatever that may mean. Also:

There is no ſentient thing
Polluteth and defileth as this Saxon king,
This intellectual lord and ſage of the new queſt.
The only wanton he that fouleth his own neſt,
And ſtill his boaſt goeth forth.

This is an English opinion, and, conſe-
quently, worth the money. Mr. Blunt as-
ſures us that in putting it forth he has the
approval of no leſs a philoſopher than Mr.
Herbert Spencer, and no leſs an idealist than
Mr. George Frederick Watts. "I have not,"
ſays Mr. Blunt, "ſhrunk from inſiſting on
the truth that the hypocriſy and all-acquir-
ing greed of modern England is an atrocious

204 The Egregious English

spectacle—one which, if there be any justice in Heaven, must bring a curse from God, as it has surely already made the angels weep. The destruction of beauty in the name of science, the destruction of happiness in the name of progress, the destruction of reverence in the name of religion, these are the Pharisaic crimes of all the white races; but there is something in the Anglo-Saxon impiety crueller still: that it also destroys, as no other race does, for its mere vainglorious pleasure. The Anglo-Saxon alone has in our day exterminated, root and branch, whole tribes of mankind. He alone has depopulated continents, species after species, of their wonderful animal life, and is still yearly destroying; and this not merely to occupy the land, for it lies in large part empty, but for his insatiable lust of violent adventure, to make record bags and kill.”

When the Beloved comes across reading of this sort he no doubt sheds bitter tears, and remembers how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child. And

he goes on his way rejoicing, unimpressed and unreformed.

The fact of the matter is, that from the beginning, John Bull, though possessed of a great reputation for honesty and munificence, has never really been any better than he should be. When he interfered between tyrant and slave, when he went forth to conquer savage persons and to annex savage lands which somehow invariably flowed with milk and honey, he made a point of doing it with the air of a philanthropist, and for centuries the world took him at his own estimate. Even in the late war the great cry was that he did not want gold-mines. As a general rule he never wants anything; but he always gets it. It is only of late that the world has begun to find him out and that he himself has begun to have qualms. He feels in his bones that something has gone wrong with him. It may be a slight matter and not beyond repair, but there it is. He cannot put his hand on his heart and say; "I am the fine, substantial, sturdy, truth-speaking,

206 The Egregious English

incorruptible, magnanimous, genial Englishman of half a century ago!" The fly has crept into the ointment of his virtue, and the fragrance of it no longer remains. His attitude at the present moment is the attitude of the anxious man who perceives that life is a little too much for him, and keeps on saying, "We shall have to buck up!"

He is in two minds about most things over which he was once cock-sure. He could not quite tell you, for example, whether he continues to stand at the head of the world's commerce or not. Once there was no doubt about it; now—well, it is a question of statistics, and you can prove anything by statistics. Out of America men have come to buy English things which were deemed unpurchasable. The American has come and seen and purchased and done it quite quickly. The Englishman is a little puzzled; his slow wits cannot altogether grasp the situation. "We must buck up!" he says, "and take measures while there is yet time." He does

not see that the newer order is upon him, and that inevitably and for his good he must be considerably shaken up. His own day has been a lengthy, a roseful, and a gaudy one; it has been a day of ease and triumph and comfortable going, and the Beloved has become very wealthy and a trifle stout in consequence. Whether to-morrow is going to be his day, too, and whether it is going to be one of those nice loafing, sunshiny kind of days that the Beloved likes, are open questions. It is to be hoped devoutly that fate will be kind to him: he needs the sympathy of all who are about him; he wants encouragement and support and a restful time.

It is said that his Majesty of Portugal, who has just left these shores, on being asked what had impressed him most during his visit, replied, "The roast beef." "Nothing else, sir?" inquired his interlocutor. "Yes," said the monarch; "the boiled beef." And there is a great deal in it. Through much devouring of beef the English have undoubt-

208 The Egregious English

edly waxed a trifle beefy. It is their beefiness and suetiness—that fatty degeneration, in fact—which impress you.

Recognising his need of props and stays and abdominal belts, as it were, the Beloved has latterly taken to remembering the Colonies. He is now of opinion that he and his sturdy children over-seas should be “knit together in bonds of closer unity,” “to present an unbroken front to the world,” “should share the burdens and glories of Empire,” and so on and so forth. The Colonies—good bodies!—saw it all at once. They had been accustomed to be snubbed and neglected and left out of count, and they had forgotten to whom they belonged. In his hour of need the Beloved cried, “’Elp! I said I did n’t want you, but I do—I do!” and the Colonies sent to his aid, at a dollar a day per head, the prettiest lot of freebooters and undesirable characters they found themselves able to muster. Later, they sent several landau loads of premiers and politicians, who were fed and flattered

to their hearts' content, and went home, no doubt, greatly impressed with the English roast and boiled beef. These gentlemen made speeches in return for their dinners; they were allowed to visit the Colonial Office and kiss the hand of Mr. Chamberlain; they saw Peter Robinson's and the tuppenny tube; and the bonds of Empire have been knit closer ever since.

Not to put too fine a point upon it, the Englishman's attempt to buttress himself up out of the Colonies has proved a ghastly failure. The scheme fell flat. The English may want the Colonies, but the Colonies do not want the English—at any rate, on bonds of unity lines. The banner of Imperialism which has waved so gloriously during the past lustrum will have to be furled and put away. The great Imperial idea declines to work; it has been brought on the political stage half a century too late. At best it was a fetch, and it has failed. The All-Beloved will have to find some other way out. Whether he is quite equal to the task may

210 The Egregious English

be reckoned another question. One supposes that he will try; for there is life in the old dog yet, at any rate, according to the old dog.

THE END

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