

ST. GEORGE'S HALL, LIVERPOOL

Art Effort in British Cities

BY CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

TO the American who is interested in the art of making cities beautiful, no nation offers more inviting field for study than does England. Paris may hold up an ideal of municipal achievement earnestly to be desired. Belgium may intensely interest with its story of organized and elaborately centralized private effort. But England shows conditions so like our own, both in the conquest to be made and in the means that are taken to obtain it, that in looking thither we see, as it were, our own efforts—separately, dispassionately, and as one hardly sees them here, where they cover so wide a territory, where they fluctuate so rapidly, and one loses sight of the general drift in a fascinated watching of the eddies.

This likeness is not so complete as to be a mere replica. National peculiarities necessarily assert themselves in a work which is so largely voluntary and

individual. Long before public spirit has suggested association, and thus given self-consciousness to organized endeavor to make cities handsomer, a thousand private and selfish efforts have put their characteristic stamp on the cities of the nations. It can be said, for instance, that to an American nothing is as striking, in the half-suburban residence quarters of an English city, as the high walls that enclose the gardens.

Edgbaston, which is the fashionable west-end suburb of Birmingham, may be taken as a type of it. The broad streets, overhung by noble trees, curve and wind in a most fascinating manner, presenting topographical advantages of rare loveliness; but the houses on either side of the road are enclosed by high walls of brick and stone. Now and again the luxuriant ivy gives to these walls a beauty of their own, and trees spreading their branches over them suggest coolness, seclusion, and

beauty within. But such amenity to the public way has come not because of the walls, but in spite of them, and the observer who takes the æsthetic stand-point sees, when he goes to a newer suburb where the walls are of glaring brick, and the highway, that really runs between pleasant gardens, has become a prison walk, what sacrifice of city beauty is made by this custom to unconscious selfishness—or, in politer phrase, to that individualism that is peculiar of the nation.

The walled gardens in the residence quarters of every English city represent not a whim, not a temporary fashion, but the stamp of a national peculiarity. They are to be classed with the familiar London anomaly of the plain exterior of houses that have rare beauty within them. Indeed, of all the English societies that are working on various lines for civic beauty, not one, as far as I have learned, has ever seriously advocated the removal of street walls.

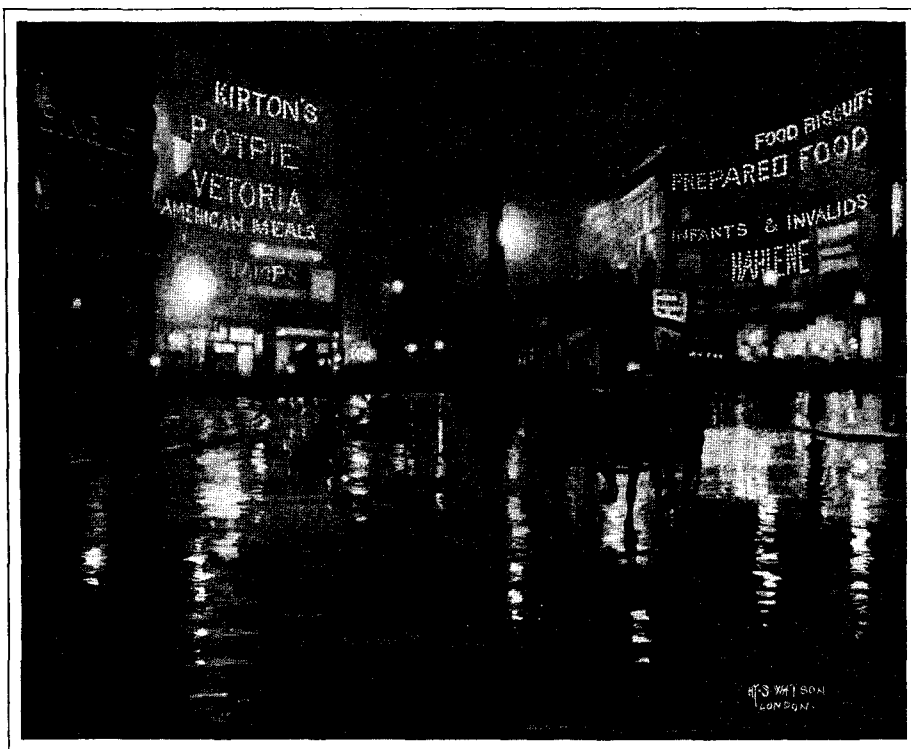
There is another characteristic of the nation that gives to its movement for

municipal art a development not evident among Latin races. This is the seriousness with which it is taken up—as a work, rather than as a joyous artistic expression; as a duty to be performed conscientiously and solemnly. The result is that, where much of the effort on the Continent is purely decorative, and with us is most yearningly so, in England it appears to be not less predominantly educational. We have very little which corresponds with this important educational phase of English effort to make cities beautiful.

Speaking generally, then, a British city is like an American city of the same size, except in these respects: in the residence quarters, the walled gardens, with their disadvantages and merits; in the business section, the better condition of the pavements, the greater interest which age has given to the architecture, an absence of sky-scrapers, and poorer transportation facilities. Both cities alike suffer from the evil of black smoke and glaring advertisements; while less obviously to the casual tourist there is the



A TYPICAL ENGLISH SUBURBAN STREET



ILLUMINATED ADVERTISEMENTS, LUDGATE CIRCUS—LONDON NIGHT

difference in that greater emphasis which in England is put on art education for the people.

When one goes to an English city of "the provinces," say to Manchester, or Birmingham, or Leicester, or Liverpool, or Newcastle—and asks what is done for municipal art, one is told at once of this less obvious achievement, the art gallery and art school that belong to the city, and is given a hint that in the technical school also there may be something of interest. The popular awakening to artistic aspiration in England arose sixty years ago out of an industrial or commercial condition which at first rendered it national instead of municipal. England suddenly realized that her manufactures were in danger for lack of art. British manufactures, for all their cheapness and strength, were seen to be losing ground merely because they were ugly and unattractive. What works of art the nation had, in any branch, were in private hands. The era was that of the doctrine of free trade, and of this the exposition

of 1851 was finally the development. The Prince Consort, who was at the head of this enterprise, was deeply interested also in England's art interests, and when the exposition closed with a money surplus and a mass of presented productions of art and manufacture, he urged the foundation of a national museum of industrial art from this illustrative material and the money in hand. So arose the South Kensington Museum, and the Government's Department of Practical Art, subsequently changed to the Department of Science and Art.

With its fine start and royal patronage the museum grew rapidly. The mediocre was weeded out, the art treasures of the royal palaces were lent to it, and, private individuals following royal example, a loan system was established, and much of the art wealth that had been long in private hands became accessible to the public. In this way was furnished incentive and inspiration, and South Kensington was made the power-house of England's activity in art instruction.

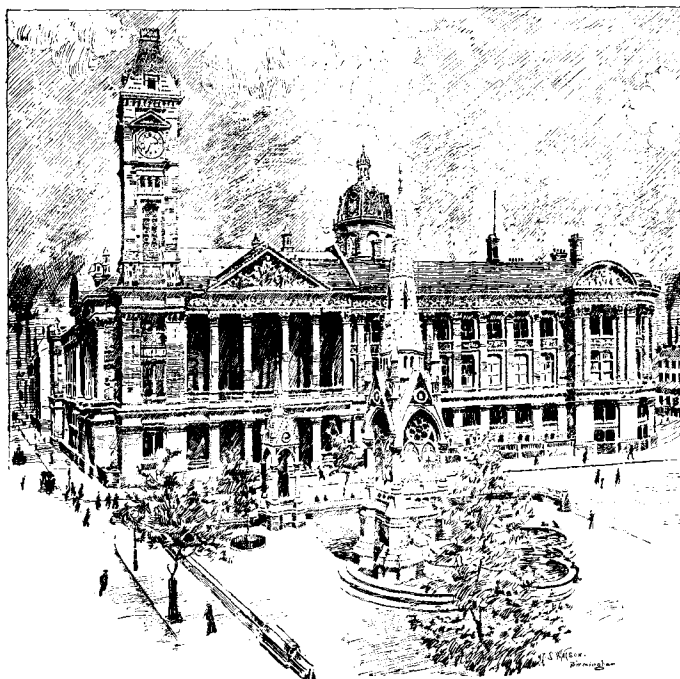
Now, in every English city one finds a school of art. Thus has arisen that splendid system of art instruction in the cities, by technical schools and by art schools, that must be the admiration of every student of the municipal art of to-day in England—that system that is giving to art a popular dignity unusual in these times, showing it as a necessity, not a luxury, erecting noble buildings for its purpose, and splendidly equipping them; instructing tens of thousands of young people in its principles, and so developing talent and raising the art taste and standard. The pertinence of all this to municipal art in the narrow sense of civic beauty will not be overlooked, even in a general summary of its advantages.

The Municipal School of Art at Manchester traces its origin to the first art school that in 1838 was established in the provinces in imitation of the London School of Design. The present imposing building was erected in 1881, one individual subscribing as much as £8000, and the school is now an extremely large and flourishing institution. It numbers Walter Crane among its past directors of de-

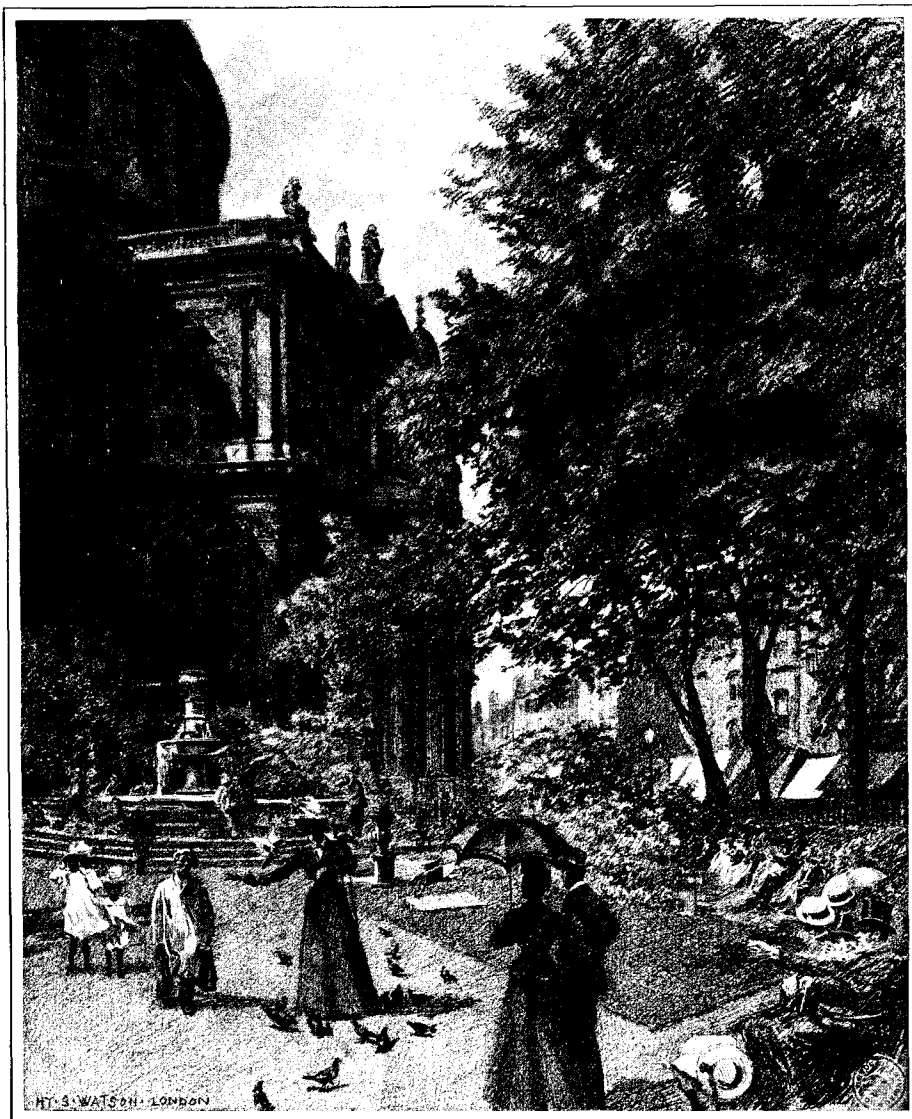
sign, and a \$50,000 addition has been lately made to its building, out of profits of the Jubilee Exposition. The new structure includes a beautiful exhibition-hall where, on public view, are the loans from the South Kensington Museum and the rich collection of the school. Across the river lies an industrial quarter of large population. Here, through the bequest of an individual, is a park in which is situated the Whitworth Institute, designed for the promotion of the fine arts by a museum, gallery, and school. The Manchester School of Art has amalgamated with the latter school. Thus the pupils number in all some fourteen hundred, divided between evening and day classes, and on Saturdays several hundred teachers from the board schools attend for study.

At Birmingham, where the art schools were the first municipal schools of art in the United Kingdom, the connection between them and beautification of the city has been recently made clearer. Here there are 1100 students in the central building, and perhaps 4000 at the branches. The excellence of the Bir-

mingham school, annually attested by the proportion of prizes its pupils secure in the national competition, has attracted to it students from a wide field. There is a fine technical school in Birmingham, which works in harmony with the School of Art. A very earnest spirit and practical ideal animates instructors and pupils here, and has created such an attitude toward art in its broad sense as one associates, with an individual's limitations, with William Morris. The result of this has



THE MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY OF BIRMINGHAM; CHAMBERLAIN
MEMORIAL IN THE FOREGROUND



CHURCH-YARD OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL MADE INTO A RECREATION-GROUND

appeared in various practical things that the students have done for the city, though, as usual, local appreciation came after that from abroad. Door-plates, stained glass, etc., have been designed by the students for the art-school building, and lately the decoration of the Town Hall has been taken up. Instead of filling the long mural panels with conventional design, students in the Municipal School of Art have painted large figures personifying instrumental and

vocal music on either side of the famous organ. Further, they are decorating the walls with historical paintings pertinent to Birmingham.

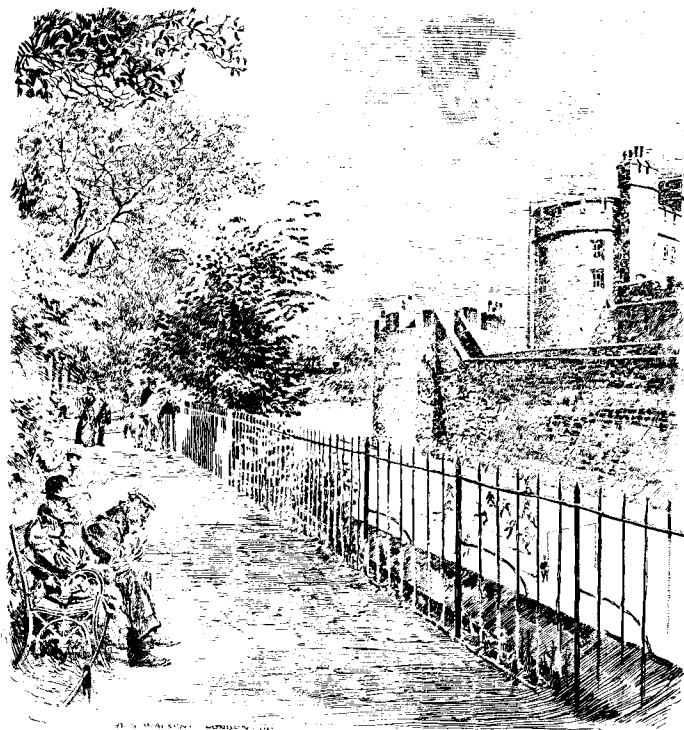
In the smaller cities not less is done proportionately for art education than in the larger. At Leicester, the technical and art schools, now conducted by the corporation, occupy a beautifully equipped building erected in 1897 at a cost of nearly \$150,000. The schools have about 1300 pupils, of whom most attend

in the evening, and are managed, as usual, by a committee, of whom about half are members of the Council, and the others private citizens, connoisseurs, etc. It is worth noting that the art needle-work department here, which has nearly 300 pupils, and is the largest in Great Brit-

merely beautiful and dreamy. That municipalities can successfully maintain art galleries of worth, conduct picture exhibitions in which party interest never conflicts with art ideals, unhappily seems strange to Americans.

With all these victories, no visitor to

the manufacturing cities can fail to see that civic art has much ground to regain. Palls of black smoke destroy dreams of cities beautiful. There are restrictive laws to check the evil, but it is hard to secure enforcement of the law when men look proudly at smoke as a proof of the city's industry. In Manchester the lamp-posts are very hideous; overhead wires are suffered; there are glaring advertisements; and so, in spite of its Town Hall, its vast municipal work, and the strength of its art educational effort, the town makes a poor showing from an



MOAT OF TOWER OF LONDON A RECREATION-GROUND

ain, is under the management of an American woman.

In this art educational movement of the English cities, the schools, interesting as they are, make only the active side of a constant endeavor of which municipal galleries may be said to form the passive. These not only reach a class of citizens whom the schools, with their particular appeal to the younger generation, could not reach; they offer a constant art ideal that keeps the goal of all the effort high and pure; they cultivate almost unconsciously the public taste, and put the city's stamp of practical value on what to so many of its citizens might seem the

æsthetic point of view. The parks in most provincial cities owe their origin to a philanthropic impulse. The trams are not uncommonly an eyesore, owing to prospective acquirement by the municipality—a fact that naturally discourages careful maintenance on the part of the operating company.

Here and there, but only occasionally, one finds individuals joining to form a society to improve the city. The most distinguished instance of this is probably the Cockburn Association of Edinburgh, founded in 1875 expressly "for the improvement of Edinburgh and its neighborhood." In its long career this



THE OBELISK AND THE THAMES EMBANKMENT

society has done much to make Edinburgh deserve the name of one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It repeatedly lends "support and vigor to the Town Council in their exertions for improvement," and is also an inspiration to the Council by forming a link between the civic rulers and public opinion.

But speaking generally, municipal art is not advanced in English provincial cities. From that stand-point they are in a transition stage. They have grown

rapidly, and, as a rule, content to expend their energy in laying foundations for a future civic glory, the ugly and gross has been suffered to show upon the surface. Below are the efforts that will tell: firm, intelligent, honest grasp of municipal monopolies, and a thorough and far-reaching art instruction.

When one passes from the provinces to London one finds general conditions more akin to those in New York. Extremes of wealth and poverty are



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

complemented, as usual, by extremes of civic splendor and squalor. One is confronted by a mass of associated efforts, represented by societies for every phase of civic endeavor, that, with closer organization and a less vast subject than is London, might, one fancies, accomplish more than it has for civic beauty. And yet much is attained, as every visitor to London sees, and it need scarcely be added that several of these societies, bringing "national" into

their titles, have extended their efforts into the provinces.

Among the societies which have assumed for their province the appearance of the streets are the Metropolitan Drinking-fountain and Cattle-trough Association, the National Society for Checking Abuses of Public Advertising, and the Coal-smoke Abatement Society. There was also formed some time ago a society which had a good name and a large field, but which seems to have languished, the

Society for the Suppression of Street Nuisances. The Drinking-fountain Association is philanthropic rather than artistic in its purpose, expending about \$10,000 a year for water alone; but in the statement that 725 fountains and nearly 800 troughs are in use by it the society's connection with art in the street and park is clear.

The efforts of the National Society for Checking Abuses of Public Advertising are designed as earnestly to prevent defilement of civic dignity as they are for the maintenance of rural beauty.

Edinburgh has had for several years a by-law prohibiting "sky-signs"—advertisements whose letters, standing clear of a structure, would show against the sky; Glasgow, at a sacrifice of £4000 a year, determined that the municipal trams should not be disfigured by advertising; in Manchester, among other cities, the Council has resolved that all hoardings belonging to the Improvement Committee shall be kept free of advertising and be colored in maroon. Various architects followed the city's lead in this matter when making their contracts. More recently London adopted a sky-sign act, and within a few months the powers of Edinburgh to regulate public advertising have been vastly extended. Flashing electric signs have been prohibited in various places, and the society has turned some of its attention to street noises and to the thoughtless littering of public places. It has grown more powerful with each year of its existence.

The Coal-smoke Abatement Society was organized at the end of 1898, in response to a letter addressed to the *Times* by Sir William Richmond. It attempts to obtain the enforcement of existing laws, to secure increased efficiency of legislation, to learn what is done to abate the smoke nuisance in other cities, to promote the knowledge of methods by which smoke can be prevented, and to encourage such preventive inventions by prizes and exhibitions.

Among the voluntary societies for the æsthetic care of London there are the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, the Commons and Foot-paths Preservation Society, the London Playing-fields Society, the Selborne Society, the Thames Preservation League, the Kyrle

Society, and finally a Parliamentary committee, which is semi-official. It should be understood that London is peculiarly situated in the matter of parks and open spaces. First, large reservations belonging to the crown, like Hyde Park and Regent's Park, have relieved the municipality of providing such parks. Secondly, in the better residence quarters innumerable squares, adorned with flowers, shrubs, lawns, and trees, satisfy æsthetic requirements, even though they belong, as usually, to private land-owners and are enclosed by iron fences, to the gates of which rent-payers of the adjacent property alone have keys. And these lessces pay well for their luxury, and gain thereby a safe play-ground for their children. Third, legislation of the last few years has opened several hundred neglected church-yards as play-grounds for populous neighborhoods, putting them in charge of local and central authorities, who first restore some of their lost beauty. Fourth, of the villages and towns that form the outskirts of London each is apt to have its common, and as the huge metropolis gathers them to itself, what more natural than that these commons should become suburban parks?

Yet it is not to be supposed that in a city of such vast area and of high land values there is little need of private effort for securing open spaces. The commons opportunity alone has given rise to the voluntary association of citizens who make it their task, in the Commons and Foot-paths Preservation Society, to see that the metropolis avails itself of this chance for suburban parks. Since its establishment, in 1865, large areas that were previously appropriated have been restored to the public; and many of the most important open spaces (Epping Forest, Wimbledon, Blackheath, Tooting, and Hampstead) have been placed under suitable management in the public interest.

Closely in line with this society is the Thames Preservation League. The purposes of the league are the preservation of the Thames and, as far as possible, of its tributaries, for public enjoyment.

If the work of these societies tends to a negative character, that of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association is as distinctly positive in the effort to provide the metropolis with open spaces.

The organization is a very strong one. It not only provides open spaces through various means, but it places seats in many public sites, plants trees in gardens and streets, makes improvements in existing play-grounds, and has erected numerous drinking-fountains by special donations for that purpose. Its report for 1898 stated that since its birth, in 1882, the society had laid out, wholly or in part, 98 play-grounds or gardens, and had completed 300 other undertakings for London's betterment.

In the work of the London Playing-fields Society the æsthetic purpose is entirely incidental. Still, in the provision of suburban cricket, football, and tennis grounds for the thousands of young men who are able to make a slight payment for their amusement (and who without these facilities would tend to crowd poorer athletes from the public parks) something certainly is accomplished for the pleasing aspect of the suburbs. The Kyrle Society in its London branch is also mainly philanthropic in aim. It has, however, a Decorative section, of which a purpose is "to foster a knowledge and love of art by such means as may be available," and an "Open Spaces" section, which not only co-operates with the Metropolitan Gardens and the Commons societies, but does what it can by itself. In a recent year the work of the Decorative section included mural paintings representative of country life for a general room in the Municipal Lodging-house; and at the close of its twentieth year, in 1896, the society reported that 191 institutions had profited in this way from its efforts.

The Selborne Society, which is also in this group, has devoted itself more particularly to the protection of wild nature than of urban amenities, but for the preservation of several open spaces and historical buildings in London it has joined its efforts to those of the societies we have named.

Another group of the London societies is representative of the effort of citizens to preserve interesting traces of history. This, naturally, is a far greater, if not more important, work in the old cities of Europe than with us. Modern progress and growth, which are not less marked there than here, must not be suffered to

destroy the history which the past has so fully written on London streets. We have, accordingly, the Committee for the Survey and Registration of the Old Memorials of Greater London, as a department of the County Council's work; and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a voluntary association, which preaches protection, not restoration. This was founded by William Morris, and takes as its excellent but unusual creed the dictum, "*Renewal of old work should never be resorted to unless repair is impossible.* When, unfortunately, renewal is the only course, the new work should be carefully designed as far as may be to harmonize with the old, but not to be made in imitation of it, or of any existing work elsewhere."

But beyond all associated effort, which is large in London, and all official effort, which by comparison with Paris is insignificant, much must always depend on individual sentiment and private action. To that are due the flowers in balconies and those window gardens that are the lovely distinction of English cities, and bring into the heart of London a touch of unexpected rural beauty. This may be held to balance fairly the official remissness in the great city's lighting, where clumsy lamp-posts lend no beauty to the street by day, and show at night a flickering flame which makes the vast metropolis compare sadly with electric-lighted villages in America. And if this important result of private initiative be not sufficiently ambitious or public-spirited, we may turn to a long list of gifts, in which the bringing of the Obelisk to London and its setting up, the private presentation of many costly play-grounds, and now the decoration of the Royal Exchange, will have a just prominence.

There is a dream of a London far more beautiful and splendid than exists. The new Thames Embankment is a feature of it. The clearing out recently of the old buildings which hid the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey was a step in its direction. The Bethnal Green plan for the housing of the poor, the great new thoroughfares, the promised street that is to descend from Holborn to the Strand—these are conquests that give courage to the fighters.

The Sea-Dog

BY T. JENKINS HAINS

HE was a yellow brute, mangy, lean, and treacherous-looking. He had been in two ships where dogs were not particularly liked by the officers, and the last one had gone ashore in the darkness during a northeast gale off the Fry-ing Pan. How he had come ashore from the wreck was a detail beyond his reasoning. Here he was on the beach of North Carolina, and not one of his shipmates was left to take care of him.

He had at first foraged among the bushes of beach myrtle and through the pine woods, stealing into the light-keeper's yard at Bald Head during the hours of darkness, and rummaging through his garbage for a bit of food to keep the life within his mangy hide. He had now been ashore for nearly five months, and during all that time he had shown an aversion to the light-keeper's society. There was no other human habitation on the island, and the light-keeper had fired a charge of bird-shot at him on two occasions. This had not given him greater confidence in strangers, and that which he had had was of a suspicious kind, born and nurtured aboard ship, where a kick was the usual salutation. He was as sly as a wolf and as wild as a razor-back hog, for he had gradually fallen upon the resources of the wild animal, and his one thought was for himself.

He had broken away into the night howling after the last reception by the light-keeper at the Bald Head tower, and sore and stiff he had crawled into the bushes to pick at the tiny pellets that stung so fiercely. In the future he would be more careful. He must watch. Eternal vigilance was the price for his worthless life. All the evil desires and instincts begotten through a line of rascally curs now began to grow within him. He would not repress them, for was it not manifest that he must exercise every selfish desire to its utmost if he would

live? His eyes took on that wild, hunted look of the beast with whom all are at war, and his teeth showed fiercely at each and every sound. A sullen savageness of mind came upon him more and more every day, until after these months of wildness he had dropped back again into the natural state of his forefathers. He was a wild dog in every sense. As wild as the hogs who rooted through the pine woods or tore through the swamp, lean as deer and alert to every danger, the degenerates of the well-bred pigs of the early settlers.

Sometimes he would run along the edge of the beach in the sunlight and watch the surf, but even this was dangerous, for once the light-keeper happened to be out hunting and sent a rifle bullet singing past his ears. He broke for cover again, and seldom ventured forth except after the sun went down. In the daytime he would go slinking through the gloom of the dense thickets with ears cocked and senses alert, watching like a wolf for the slightest sign of danger. A wolf is seldom seen unless he means to be, and the yellow dog soon became as retiring.

Small game furnished food during this season, for the creeks swarmed with fish and crabs, which were often caught in shallows at low water, and gophers were plentiful, but sometimes when the wind was howling and souging through the forest, and the rain rattling and whistling through the clearings, he would try the light-keeper's back yard again, and grab a defenceless duck or goose that happened to be within reach. Their squawking was music to his ears, for he remembered the flash and stinging pain following his earlier attempts to procure food, and he would dash furiously through the timber with his prize, nor stop until many miles were between him and the bright eye that flamed high in