

## ENGLISH CHARACTERISTICS.

[CONTINUED.]  
We have lost immensely in some things, and what we have gained is not yet so great as our losses. We have lost in reverence, in homesickness, in heart and conscience—in virtue, using the word in its proper sense. To some the difference which I note may appear a difference in favor of the greater 'cuteness, wilewakeness, and enterprise' of the American; but it is simply a difference expressive of our national fondness. We are a hardy people, and the god we worship is Smartness. In one of the worst tendencies of the age, namely, an impudent, superficial, journalistic intellectuality and glibness, America, in her polite and literary circles, no doubt, leads all other nations. English books and newspapers show more homely veracity, more singleness of purpose, in short, more character than ours. The great charm of such a man as Darwin, for instance, is his simple mildness and transparent good faith, and the absence in him of that final, self-complacent smartness which is the bane of our literature.

A London crowd I thought the most normal and unimpassioned I had ever seen, with the just admixture of rowdyness and refinement, was to be seen freely in the hundred and one places of amusement where the average working classes assemble, with their wives and daughters and sweethearts, and smoke villainous cigars, and drink ale and stout. There was to me something notably fresh and canny about them, as if the only yearning ceased to be shepherd and shepherd. They certainly were less developed, in certain directions, or shall I say depraved, than similar crowds in our great cities. They are easily pleased, and laugh at the simple and childlike, but there is little that hints of an impure taste, or of abnormal appetites. I often smiled at the tameness and simplicity of the masses, but my sense of fitness, or proportion, or decorum, was never once outraged. They always stop short of a certain point—the point where wit degenerates into mockery, and liberty into license; nature is never put to shame, and will commonly bear much more. Equally to the American sense did their various social strokes, their negro minstrelsy, and attempts at Yankee comedy, seem in a minor key. There was not enough irreverence, and slang, and coarse ribaldry, in those evening's entertainments to have sold out one line of some of our most popular comic poetry. But the music, and the manner, the acrobatic, and other feats, were of a very high order. And I will say here that the characteristic flavor of the humor and fun making of the average English people, as it impressed my sense, is a very one given in Sterne—very human and stereotyped, and entirely free from the contempt and amazement of most current writers. I did not see one whiff of Dickens anywhere. No doubt, it is there in some form or other, but it is not patent, nor even appreciable, to the sense of such an observer as I am.

I was not less pleased by the simple good will, and bonhomie that pervaded the crowd. There is in all these gatherings an indiscriminate mingling of the sexes, a mingling without jar, or noise or rudeness of any kind, and marked by a mutual respect on all sides that is novel and refreshing. Indeed, so uniform is the ways, and so human and considerate the instinct that was often at a loss to discriminate the wife, or the sister, from the tree, or the acquaintance of the hour, and has many times to check my American curiosity, and cold, criticalizing stare. For it was curious to see young men and women from the lowest social strata meet and mingle in a public hall without lowliness or bad taste, but even with gentleness and consideration. The truth is, however, that the class of women known as victims of the social evil do not sink within many degrees as low as those they do in this country, either in their own opinion or in that of the public; though but little doubt that gatherings of the kind referred to, if permitted in our great cities, would be ten-fold more scandalous and disgraceful than they are in London or Paris. There is something so reckless and desperate in the career of man or woman in that country when they begin to go down, that the only feeling they too often excite is one of loathsome-ness and disgust. The lowest depth must be reached, and is soon passed quickly. But, in London, the same characters seem to keep a sweet side from corruption to the last, and you will scarce find them anywhere.

We hear of our countrymen to women, but if the Old World made her a tool, we are fast making her a toy, and the latter is the more hopeless condition. But among the better classes in England I am convinced that woman is regarded more as a sister and an equal than in this country, and is less subject to insult and to leering, brutal comment than here. When her slave or her tyrant, so seldom her brother and friend, I thought it a significant fact that I found no place of amusement apart from the men; where one sex went the other went; what was sauce for the gander was sauce for the goose; and the spirit that prevailed was soft and human acordingly. The hotels had no 'nades' entrance," but all went in and out the same door, and commonly met and rangled in the same room, and the place was as much for one as for the other. It was no more a masculine monopoly than it was a feminine. Indeed, in the country towns and villages the character of the inns is unmistakably given by the manners and tastes, and fills them to the spirit. Even the large hotels of Liverpool and London have a private, cosy, home character that is most delightful. On entering them instead of finding yourself in a sort of public thoroughfare or political caucuse, and crowds of men talking, and smoking and spitting, with stalls on either side, like hardware and tobacco, and books and papers are sold, you perceive you are in something like a larger hall of a private house, with parlor and coffee-room on one side, and the office, and smoking-room, and staircase on the other. You may leave your coat and hat on the rack in the hall, and stand your umbrella there also, with full assurance that it will be there when you want them. If it is the next morning or the next week. Instead of that petty tyrant the hotel-clerk, a young woman sits in the office with her sewing or other needlework, and quietly takes you off gives you your number on a card, takes your chambermaid to show you to your room, and directs your luggage to be sent up, and there is something in the look of things, and the way they are done, that goes to the right spot at once.

To be continued.

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