

## CHAPTER XII--CORONATION DAY

O thou that sea-walls sever  
From lands unwalled by seas!  
Wilt thou endure forever,  
O Milton's England, these?  
Thou that wast his Republic,  
Wilt thou clasp their knees?  
These royalties rust-eaten,  
These worm-corroded lies  
That keep thy head storm-beaten,  
And sun-like strength of eyes  
From the open air and heaven  
Of intercepted skies!

SWINBURNE.

Vivat Rex Eduardus! They crowned a king this day, and there has been great rejoicing and elaborate tomfoolery, and I am perplexed and saddened. I never saw anything to compare with the pageant, except Yankee circuses and Alhambra ballets; nor did I ever see anything so hopeless and so tragic.

To have enjoyed the Coronation procession, I should have come straight from America to the Hotel Cecil, and straight from the Hotel Cecil to a

five-guinea seat among the washed. My mistake was in coming from the unwashed of the East End. There were not many who came from that quarter. The East End, as a whole, remained in the East End and got drunk. The Socialists, Democrats, and Republicans went off to the country for a breath of fresh air, quite unaffected by the fact that four hundred millions of people were taking to themselves a crowned and anointed ruler. Six thousand five hundred prelates, priests, statesmen, princes, and warriors beheld the crowning and anointing, and the rest of us the pageant as it passed.

I saw it at Trafalgar Square, "the most splendid site in Europe," and the very innermost heart of the empire. There were many thousands of us, all checked and held in order by a superb display of armed power. The line of march was double-walled with soldiers. The base of the Nelson Column was triple-fringed with bluejackets. Eastward, at the entrance to the square, stood the Royal Marine Artillery. In the triangle of Pall Mall and Cockspur Street, the statue of George III. was buttressed on either side by the Lancers and Hussars. To the west were the red-coats of the Royal Marines, and from the Union Club to the embouchure of Whitehall swept the glittering, massive curve of the 1st Life Guards--gigantic men mounted on gigantic chargers, steel-breastplated, steel-helmeted, steel-caparisoned, a great war-sword of steel ready to the hand of the powers that be. And further, throughout the crowd, were flung long lines of the Metropolitan Constabulary, while in the rear were the reserves--tall, well-fed men, with weapons to wield and muscles to wield them in ease of need.

And as it was thus at Trafalgar Square, so was it along the whole line of march--force, overpowering force; myriads of men, splendid men, the pick of the people, whose sole function in life is blindly to obey, and blindly to kill and destroy and stamp out life. And that they should be well fed, well clothed, and well armed, and have ships to hurl them to the ends of the earth, the East End of London, and the "East End" of all England, toils and rots and dies.

There is a Chinese proverb that if one man lives in laziness another will die of hunger; and Montesquieu has said, "The fact that many men are occupied in making clothes for one individual is the cause of there being many people without clothes." So one explains the other. We cannot understand the starved and runty {2} toiler of the East End (living with his family in a one-room den, and letting out the floor space for lodgings to other starved and runty toilers) till we look at the strapping Life Guardsmen of the West End, and come to know that the one must feed and clothe and groom the other.

And while in Westminster Abbey the people were taking unto themselves a king, I, jammed between the Life Guards and Constabulary of Trafalgar Square, was dwelling upon the time when the people of Israel first took unto themselves a king. You all know how it runs. The elders came to the prophet Samuel, and said: "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

And the Lord said unto Samuel: Now therefore hearken unto their voice; howbeit thou shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king, and he said:

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you; he will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and they shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and he will set some to plough his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take a tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your

goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take a tenth of your flocks; and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall call out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not answer you in that day.

All of which came to pass in that ancient day, and they did cry out to Samuel, saying: "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." And after Saul, David, and Solomon, came Rehoboam, who "answered the people roughly, saying: My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

And in these latter days, five hundred hereditary peers own one-fifth of England; and they, and the officers and servants under the King, and those who go to compose the powers that be, yearly spend in wasteful luxury \$1,850,000,000, or 370,000,000 pounds, which is thirty-two per cent. of the total wealth produced by all the toilers of the country.

At the Abbey, clad in wonderful golden raiment, amid fanfare of trumpets and throbbing of music, surrounded by a brilliant throng of masters, lords, and rulers, the King was being invested with the insignia of his sovereignty. The spurs were placed to his heels by the Lord Great Chamberlain, and a sword of state, in purple scabbard, was presented him

by the Archbishop of Canterbury, with these words:-

Receive this kingly sword brought now from the altar of God, and delivered to you by the hands of the bishops and servants of God, though unworthy.

Whereupon, being girded, he gave heed to the Archbishop's exhortation:-

With this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the Holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order.

But hark! There is cheering down Whitehall; the crowd sways, the double walls of soldiers come to attention, and into view swing the King's watermen, in fantastic mediaeval garbs of red, for all the world like the van of a circus parade. Then a royal carriage, filled with ladies and gentlemen of the household, with powdered footmen and coachmen most gorgeously arrayed. More carriages, lords, and chamberlains, viscounts, mistresses of the robes--lackeys all. Then the warriors, a kingly escort, generals, bronzed and worn, from the ends of the earth come up to London Town, volunteer officers, officers of the militia and regular forces; Spens and Plumer, Broadwood and Cooper who relieved Ookiep, Mathias of Dargai, Dixon of Vlakfontein; General Gaselee and Admiral Seymour of China; Kitchener of Khartoum; Lord Roberts of India and all the world--the fighting men of England, masters of destruction, engineers

of death! Another race of men from those of the shops and slums, a totally different race of men.

But here they come, in all the pomp and certitude of power, and still they come, these men of steel, these war lords and world harnessers. Pell-mell, peers and commoners, princes and maharajahs, Equerries to the King and Yeomen of the Guard. And here the colonials, lithe and hardy men; and here all the breeds of all the world-soldiers from Canada, Australia, New Zealand; from Bermuda, Borneo, Fiji, and the Gold Coast; from Rhodesia, Cape Colony, Natal, Sierra Leone and Gambia, Nigeria, and Uganda; from Ceylon, Cyprus, Hong-Kong, Jamaica, and Wei-Hai-Wei; from Lagos, Malta, St. Lucia, Singapore, Trinidad. And here the conquered men of Ind, swarthy horsemen and sword wielders, fiercely barbaric, blazing in crimson and scarlet, Sikhs, Rajputs, Burmese, province by province, and caste by caste.

And now the Horse Guards, a glimpse of beautiful cream ponies, and a golden panoply, a hurricane of cheers, the crashing of bands--"The King! the King! God save the King!" Everybody has gone mad. The contagion is sweeping me off my feet--I, too, want to shout, "The King! God save the King!" Ragged men about me, tears in their eyes, are tossing up their hats and crying ecstatically, "Bless 'em! Bless 'em! Bless 'em!" See, there he is, in that wondrous golden coach, the great crown flashing on his head, the woman in white beside him likewise crowned.

And I check myself with a rush, striving to convince myself that it is

all real and rational, and not some glimpse of fairyland. This I cannot succeed in doing, and it is better so. I much prefer to believe that all this pomp, and vanity, and show, and mumbo-jumbo foolery has come from fairyland, than to believe it the performance of sane and sensible people who have mastered matter and solved the secrets of the stars.

Princes and princelings, dukes, duchesses, and all manner of coroneted folk of the royal train are flashing past; more warriors, and lackeys, and conquered peoples, and the pageant is over. I drift with the crowd out of the square into a tangle of narrow streets, where the public-houses are a-roar with drunkenness, men, women, and children mixed together in colossal debauch. And on every side is rising the favourite song of the Coronation:-

"Oh! on Coronation Day, on Coronation Day,  
We'll have a spree, a jubilee, and shout, Hip, hip, hooray,  
For we'll all be marry, drinking whisky, wine, and sherry,  
We'll all be merry on Coronation Day."

The rain is pouring down. Up the street come troops of the auxiliaries, black Africans and yellow Asiatics, beturbaned and befezed, and coolies swinging along with machine guns and mountain batteries on their heads, and the bare feet of all, in quick rhythm, going slish, slish, slish through the pavement mud. The public-houses empty by magic, and the swarthy allegiants are cheered by their British brothers, who return at once to the carouse.



"And how did you like the procession, mate?" I asked an old man on a bench in Green Park.

"Ow did I like it? A bloomin' good chawnce, sez I to myself, for a sleep, wi' all the coppers aw'y, so I turned into the corner there, along wi' fifty others. But I couldn't sleep, a-lyin' there an' thinkin' 'ow I'd worked all the years o' my life an' now 'ad no plyce to rest my 'ead; an' the music comin' to me, an' the cheers an' cannon, till I got almost a hanarchist an' wanted to blow out the brains o' the Lord Chamberlain."

Why the Lord Chamberlain I could not precisely see, nor could he, but that was the way he felt, he said conclusively, and there was no more discussion.

As night drew on, the city became a blaze of light. Splashes of colour, green, amber, and ruby, caught the eye at every point, and "E. R.," in great crystal letters and backed by flaming gas, was everywhere. The crowds in the streets increased by hundreds of thousands, and though the police sternly put down mafficking, drunkenness and rough play abounded. The tired workers seemed to have gone mad with the relaxation and excitement, and they surged and danced down the streets, men and women, old and young, with linked arms and in long rows, singing, "I may be crazy, but I love you," "Dolly Gray," and "The Honeysuckle and the Bee"--the last rendered something like this:-

"Yew aw the enny, ennyseckle, Oi em ther bee,  
Oi'd like ter sip ther enny from those red lips, yew see."

I sat on a bench on the Thames Embankment, looking across the illuminated water. It was approaching midnight, and before me poured the better class of merry-makers, shunning the more riotous streets and returning home. On the bench beside me sat two ragged creatures, a man and a woman, nodding and dozing. The woman sat with her arms clasped across the breast, holding tightly, her body in constant play--now dropping forward till it seemed its balance would be overcome and she would fall to the pavement; now inclining to the left, sideways, till her head rested on the man's shoulder; and now to the right, stretched and strained, till the pain of it awoke her and she sat bolt upright. Whereupon the dropping forward would begin again and go through its cycle till she was aroused by the strain and stretch.

Every little while boys and young men stopped long enough to go behind the bench and give vent to sudden and fiendish shouts. This always jerked the man and woman abruptly from their sleep; and at sight of the startled woe upon their faces the crowd would roar with laughter as it flooded past.

This was the most striking thing, the general heartlessness exhibited on every hand. It is a commonplace, the homeless on the benches, the poor miserable folk who may be teased and are harmless. Fifty thousand people must have passed the bench while I sat upon it, and not one, on such a

jubilee occasion as the crowning of the King, felt his heart-strings touched sufficiently to come up and say to the woman: "Here's sixpence; go and get a bed." But the women, especially the young women, made witty remarks upon the woman nodding, and invariably set their companions laughing.

To use a Britishism, it was "cruel"; the corresponding Americanism was more appropriate--it was "fierce." I confess I began to grow incensed at this happy crowd streaming by, and to extract a sort of satisfaction from the London statistics which demonstrate that one in every four adults is destined to die on public charity, either in the workhouse, the infirmary, or the asylum.

I talked with the man. He was fifty-four and a broken-down docker. He could only find odd work when there was a large demand for labour, for the younger and stronger men were preferred when times were slack. He had spent a week, now, on the benches of the Embankment; but things looked brighter for next week, and he might possibly get in a few days' work and have a bed in some doss-house. He had lived all his life in London, save for five years, when, in 1878, he saw foreign service in India.

Of course he would eat; so would the girl. Days like this were uncommon hard on such as they, though the coppers were so busy poor folk could get in more sleep. I awoke the girl, or woman, rather, for she was "Eyght an' twenty, sir," and we started for a coffee-house.

"Wot a lot o' work puttin' up the lights," said the man at sight of some building superbly illuminated. This was the keynote of his being. All his life he had worked, and the whole objective universe, as well as his own soul, he could express in terms only of work. "Coronations is some good," he went on. "They give work to men."

"But your belly is empty," I said.

"Yes," he answered. "I tried, but there wasn't any chawnce. My age is against me. Wot do you work at? Seafarin' chap, eh? I knew it from yer clothes."

"I know wot you are," said the girl, "an Eyetalian."

"No 'e ayn't," the man cried heatedly. "'E's a Yank, that's wot 'e is. I know."

"Lord lumne, look a' that," she exclaimed, as we debauched upon the Strand, choked with the roaring, reeling Coronation crowd, the men bellowing and the girls singing in high throaty notes:-

"Oh! on Coronation D'y, on Coronation D'y,  
We'll 'ave a spree, a jubilee, an' shout 'Ip, 'ip, 'ooray;  
For we'll all be merry, drinkin' whisky, wine, and sherry,  
We'll all be merry on Coronation D'y."

"Ow dirty I am, bein' around the w'y I 'ave," the woman said, as she sat down in a coffee-house, wiping the sleep and grime from the corners of her eyes. "An' the sights I 'ave seen this d'y, an' I enjoyed it, though it was lonesome by myself. An' the duchesses an' the lydies 'ad sich gran' w'ite dresses. They was jest bu'ful, bu'ful."

"I'm Irish," she said, in answer to a question. "My nyme's Eyethorne."

"What?" I asked.

"Eyethorne, sir; Eyethorne."

"Spell it."

"H-a-y-t-h-o-r-n-e, Eyethorne."

"Oh," I said, "Irish Cockney."

"Yes, sir, London-born."

She had lived happily at home till her father died, killed in an accident, when she had found herself on the world. One brother was in the army, and the other brother, engaged in keeping a wife and eight children on twenty shillings a week and unsteady employment, could do nothing for her. She had been out of London once in her life, to a place

in Essex, twelve miles away, where she had picked fruit for three weeks:  
"An' I was as brown as a berry w'en I come back. You won't b'lieve it,  
but I was."

The last place in which she had worked was a coffee-house, hours from seven in the morning till eleven at night, and for which she had received five shillings a week and her food. Then she had fallen sick, and since emerging from the hospital had been unable to find anything to do. She wasn't feeling up to much, and the last two nights had been spent in the street.

Between them they stowed away a prodigious amount of food, this man and woman, and it was not till I had duplicated and triplicated their original orders that they showed signs of easing down.

Once she reached across and felt the texture of my coat and shirt, and remarked upon the good clothes the Yanks wore. My rags good clothes! It put me to the blush; but, on inspecting them more closely and on examining the clothes worn by the man and woman, I began to feel quite well dressed and respectable.

"What do you expect to do in the end?" I asked them. "You know you're growing older every day."

"Work'ouse," said he.

"Gawd blimey if I do," said she. "There's no 'ope for me, I know, but I'll die on the streets. No work'ouse for me, thank you. No, indeed," she sniffed in the silence that fell.

"After you have been out all night in the streets," I asked, "what do you do in the morning for something to eat?"

"Try to get a penny, if you 'aven't one saved over," the man explained. "Then go to a coffee-'ouse an' get a mug o' tea."

"But I don't see how that is to feed you," I objected.

The pair smiled knowingly.

"You drink your tea in little sips," he went on, "making it last its longest. An' you look sharp, an' there's some as leaves a bit be'ind 'em."

"It's s'prisin', the food wot some people leaves," the woman broke in.

"The thing," said the man judicially, as the trick dawned upon me, "is to get 'old o' the penny."

As we started to leave, Miss Haythorne gathered up a couple of crusts from the neighbouring tables and thrust them somewhere into her rags.

"Cawn't wyste 'em, you know," said she; to which the docker nodded, tucking away a couple of crusts himself.

At three in the morning I strolled up the Embankment. It was a gala night for the homeless, for the police were elsewhere; and each bench was jammed with sleeping occupants. There were as many women as men, and the great majority of them, male and female, were old. Occasionally a boy was to be seen. On one bench I noticed a family, a man sitting upright with a sleeping babe in his arms, his wife asleep, her head on his shoulder, and in her lap the head of a sleeping youngster. The man's eyes were wide open. He was staring out over the water and thinking, which is not a good thing for a shelterless man with a family to do. It would not be a pleasant thing to speculate upon his thoughts; but this I know, and all London knows, that the cases of out-of-works killing their wives and babies is not an uncommon happening.

One cannot walk along the Thames Embankment, in the small hours of morning, from the Houses of Parliament, past Cleopatra's Needle, to Waterloo Bridge, without being reminded of the sufferings, seven and twenty centuries old, recited by the author of "Job":-

There are that remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks and feed them.

They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.



They turn the needy out of the way; the poor of the earth hide themselves together.

Behold, as wild asses in the desert they go forth to their work, seeking diligently for meat; the wilderness yieldeth them food for their children.

They cut their provender in the field, and they glean the vintage of the wicked.

They lie all night naked without clothing, and have no covering in the cold.

They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

There are that pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.

So that they go about naked without clothing, and being an hungered they carry the sheaves.--Job xxiv. 2-10.

Seven and twenty centuries ago! And it is all as true and apposite to-day in the innermost centre of this Christian civilisation whereof Edward VII. is king.