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IF I WERE A VOICE.

If I were a voice, a persuasive voice,
That could travel the wide world through,
I would fly on the beams of the morning light,
And speak to men with a gentle might,
And tell them to be true,
I would fly, I would fly over land and sea,
Wherever a human heart might be,
Telling a tale, or singing a song
In praise of the right—in blame of the wrong.

If I were a voice, a consoling voice,
I'd fly on the wings of air;
The homes of sorrow and guilt I'd seek,
And calm and truthful words I'd speak,
To save them from despair.
I would fly, I would fly o'er the crowded town,
And drop, like the happy sunlight, down
Into the hearts of suffering men,
And teach them to look up again.

If I were a voice, a convincing voice,
I'd travel with the wind;
And wherever I saw the nations torn
By warfare, jealousy, spite, or scorn,
Or hatred of their kind,
I would fly, I would fly on the thunder-crash,
And into their blinded bosoms flash;
Then, with their evil thoughts subdued,
I'd teach them Christian brotherhood.

If I were a voice, an immortal voice,
I would fly the earth around;
And wherever men to idols bowed,
I'd publish in notes both long and loud
The Gospel's joyful sound.
I would fly, I would fly on the wings of day
Proclaiming peace on my world wide-way,
Bidding the saddened earth rejoice—
If I were a voice—an immortal voice.

(From the London City Mission Magazine.)

MORAL IMPROVEMENT OF LONDON IN RECENT YEARS.

In the previous article we have presented to our readers a sketch of London as it was 165 years since, as portrayed by an historian of considerable power in illustration, and who has also evidently devoted considerable care to the investigation of the facts which he states.—London then and London now are scarcely the same places, and yet individuals now alive may be found who were contemporaries with individuals who lived at that time. The description of that period would have appeared still more unfavourable to its morals if we had inserted the pages which describe the condition of the court, or portray the condition of the theatres, or sketch the debased and polluted character of the press.

With all the evils which still exist, it is impossible to look back a century and a half, without perceiving the immense improvement which has taken place in the morals of the people, and the far higher standard of religion which now exists among our population.

In fact, the religious societies which have recently celebrated their jubilee have, in their jubilee publications, shown how surprising has been the advance of the Redeemer's kingdom in only half a century.

If the last half century were again divided into two equal parts, the decisive improvements of the latter 25 years over the former 25 years would be no less striking and marked. Our large Foreign Missionary Societies had not attained one half their present growth when one half of the fifty years had expired, while, as to home, the chief efforts on its behalf have been made of late years. All our exclusively home Societies have been originated since then, while the exertions made by the erection of churches, chapels, and schools

have, during the last 25 years, been beyond all comparison with what were made before.

If we were still further to reduce our extent of vision, and again to divide the last 25 years it would be no less gratifying to observe how truth progresses, and the moral and religious condition of the people improves.

To take, as an example, one crime—in itself supposed to be still the cause of one fourth of the apprehensions—the crime of drunkenness, and which is the fruitful source of various other crimes. The time is within the recollection of multitudes when this sin was common among the higher and middle classes of society and (in the same manner as profane swearing) thought little of, even before ladies, and especially at social entertainments. Now happily, the existence of such sins among these classes of society is quite the exception, rather than the rule, and would exclude those guilty of such offences from society of respectability. It must be admitted, indeed, that there is much drunkenness still among the working classes; but even this, fearful as it yet is in amount, is very small as compared with what it was in former days. About a century since a report made by the magistrates to a Committee of Parliament, states positively that there were 12,000 gin sellers in the metropolis, exclusive of the City and Southwark; and the Bishop of Salisbury, in his speech, says that there were 7044 licensed for spirits and 3007 alehouses; and that boards were put up inscribed with, 'You may here get drunk for one penny; dead drunk for twopence; and have clean straw for nothing.' The Report confirms the statement, that there were 20,000 houses and shops for drinking within the bills of mortality. On authority, at least equally certain, (the Population Returns for 1831) we find that the number of public-houses and gin-shops within the largest extent of the metropolis did not exceed 5000—an amazing difference. We shall not arrive at any better conclusion in behalf of the habits of the people (about a century since) as compared with our own, if we simply consider the quantities consumed at the respective periods. It appeared, from an investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons, that, in 1742, 19,000,000 gallons of spirits were made from malt, and 800,000 gallons from foreign materials, in England and Wales. It does not appear that any of this quantity was exported. Now we find that the British and foreign spirits retained in this country for home consumption, in 1833, amounted to no more than 26,770,000 gallons; whereas, if to the account for 1742 we add about 3,000,000 gallons of foreign spirits, and consider that the population has doubled since that period, not less than 46,000,000 gallons would be required, if the people were not more temperate (even so far back as) in 1833 than in 1742. It is a very remarkable fact that, notwithstanding the large increase of the population of Great Britain from 1831 to 1841, the number of publicans during those ten years decreased from 61,231 to 50,125—a decrease of no less than 21 per cent. The increase of beer-shops would have to be set off against this remarkable decrease, in order to arrive at a fair estimate of the matter. But there is no question that the cause of temperance has made rapid strides within the last few years, and there is little doubt that when the returns of 1851 are made, this will be found to have been still more the case between 1841 and 1851, than between 1831 and 1841.

In our Magazine for March, 1849, we showed how remarkably crime had decreased in London and the large manufacturing towns

within the last few years, while it had steadily increased for many previous years in those places, and while it still increased in the rural and agricultural districts. We gave an extract from the "Eclectic Review" on this subject, in which the following statement was made: "The phenomena of crime in England seem to establish the conclusion, almost to demonstration, that the aggregation of the population in towns and cities, powerfully tends to increase the opportunities and incentives to crime. It is, therefore, palpable, that some powerful principle, counteractive of crime, has been in operation, the form of which has been most strongly developed in the manufacturing and metropolitan counties." We expressed our belief that City and Town Missions had been much blessed in bringing about this result, as it was especially since their establishment, and in those parts of the country where they were in operation, that the retardation of crime had taken place.

The Correspondent in the "Morning Chronicle" states:—"It may be asserted, that there are in the metropolis (in round numbers) seven per cent. less of offenders above 20 years of age than in England and Wales."—This he infers from the subjoined table:—

Average per centage of offenders above 20 years of age in England and Wales, from 1839 to 1848.	70.6
Average per centage of offenders above 20 years of age in the metropolis, from 1839 to 1848.	63.7
Deficiency of offenders above 20 years in the metropolis.	6.9

Such a statement as to the metropolitan population above 20 years of age is in itself most gratifying and encouraging. And another very gratifying circumstance is, that although no fewer than 70,600 persons in 1849 were taken into custody by the metropolitan police alone, nearly 67,003 of these were arrested only on paltry charges.

But even so far as the juvenile metropolitan population is concerned, it would appear that the number of committals has not increased, although the apprehensions may have done so. Such is the statement of the "Daily News" of March 30, with which we conclude the present article:—

"Two interesting documents have very recently appeared bearing on the criminal condition of London and its suburbs. The Metropolitan Police Commissioners give us forty seven pages of statistical information, in which they show the number of persons taken into custody during 1849; their ages, sex, and offences; the cases discharged, summarily disposed of, held to bail, or committed for trial; the result of the committals; the degree of instruction of all who were apprehended; and a variety of comparative tables, showing the state of crime in London for several years past as contrasted with its present state.

"The other document is a short Report from Mr. Daniel W. Harvey, the Commissioner of City Police. He reviews the past and present condition of the City, and declares that there is 'a marked improvement in the condition and conduct of the people.' In 1841 nearly 8,000 persons were taken into custody by the City police; in 1849 the arrests numbered only 5,100. In 1841, £9,000 was reported to be the value of the property stolen; in 1849 the amount had decreased to £4,406. Mr. Harvey urges that this is strong evidence of the improved and improving habits of the people, whose conduct comes more especially within the cognisance of the police.

"From the returns of the Metropolitan Police Commissioners, the same inferences might not, at first sight, be drawn. The num-

ber of persons taken into custody during 1849 exhibits a marked increase over the arrests for 1847 and 1848. 62,100 were arrested in 1847, 64,500 in 1848, and 70,600 in 1849. Upon the face of it, this account tells disadvantageously. But when we come to look into it, we find that although the number of arrests had so greatly increased, the number of committals for trial had undergone a marked diminution. 5,900 persons were committed in 1847, 5,500 in 1848, and only 4,500 in 1849. The number of convictions, also, was 4,500 in 1847, 4,300 in 1848, and only 3,600 in 1849. So that it is evident that the arrests made by the metropolitan police are for the most part for very petty offences; indeed we find that out of the 70,600 persons taken into custody 34,700, or more than a half, were discharged by the magistrates, and nearly 32,000 were held to bail or summarily dealt with. Out of the 70,600 arrests, therefore, nearly 67,000 were on paltry charges.

"Drunkenness constitutes a fourth part of the 'crime' of the metropolis. Out of the 50,600 persons taken into custody, more than 21,000 were arrested as 'drunk,' or 'drunk and disorderly.' We appear, also, to be a very pugnacious people. More than 8,000 arrests were made for assaults, of which number, it should be observed, that no less than 3,000 were 'assaults on the police;' 6,500 persons were taken into custody as 'vagrants,' and 3,200 more as 'suspicious characters;' 5,200 as 'disorderly,' and 2,400 as 'prostitutes.' Here are nearly 50,000 charges for offences against public order rather than against the law. And this may account, to a great extent, for the inefficiency of the police in the more delicate and important duties of their office. They are street-keepers, not Bow-street runners; preservers of the peace, not detectors of great crimes.

"In everything appertaining to street-keeping the vigilance of the police appears, indeed, to be greatly on the increase. In 1848, the number of stage and hackney coachmen summoned by the police was 2,049; in 1849, they summoned 2,855. In 1848, the police obtained 920 summonses against publicans; in 1849, they obtained no less than 1,372. How happens it that so many more hackney-cabmen refused to 'move on' in 1849 than in 1848? What was it that occasioned such a great increase in the number of 'crimes' committed by the publicans? It seems to us, we must say, very questionable how far this increased rigour towards industrious classes of the community is either desirable, or likely to be followed by beneficial consequences. And we view these charges with the more jealousy, because magistrates invariably convict on police testimony in cases of this sort, and because such cases therefore open very ready facilities for extortion, annoyance, and oppression.

"The number of summary convictions by magistrates amounted in the year last past to 31,343. Of these 16,000 offenders were fined, whilst somewhere about 12,000 were imprisoned for terms varying from seven days to three months. Of those who were thus committed to gaol, the largest numbers were arrested for assaults on the police, for acts of vagrancy, and as suspicious characters. We are glad of this opportunity of expressing an opinion very adverse to short committals, and especially for these offences. This is the way our thieves are made. Some poor creature wandering about in a state of distress is arrested by the police as a vagrant or as a 'very suspicious character,' and is sent for a month or six weeks to board and lodge at the national expense. In prison he is obliged to mingle with a criminal class steeped in depravity and vice, and by the time he leaves he has come to think that thieving is no such great crime after all."

* Monthly Supplement of the "Penny Magazine" of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge for February, 1835.