

OUR LONDON LETTER

By ADELE GIANELLI

AVIGNETTE of London! It is like the delicately etched lines of character on the face of the matured but lovely lady which inspired Barrie to say she was "beautiful with dear, forgotten kindnesses." That is London! London as we saw her just twenty-four hours ago when the taxi whirled us from Waterloo Station and in the twilight the soft gray lines of the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Horse-Guards' parade and the familiar landmarks around Trafalgar Square were mellowed to a gracious femininity. London was "beautiful with dear, forgotten kindnesses."

New York had deluged us with rain. Its traffic and its taxis had exasperated unto hysteria—a state no doubt induced by the tantalizing wealth of window pageants on Fifth Avenue. Then came the excitement of embarking on board ship, and with the weighing of anchor commenced that delightful carefree interlude known only on the sea. Bermuda, the next port of call (we were going the longest way round as the warmest way home!) was so dazzlingly tropical—an exotic bit of stage scenery realistically unreal—that it made lotus-eaters of us all and life became such things as dreams are made of.

But England! When England emerged upon the horizon and the ship sailed through the Needles, passing the gorse-clad Isle of Wight, the shores of Cowes, and the old sea-dog at one's side said, "Beyond is Portsmouth where Nelson's *Victory* lies—a rejuvenated *Victory* whose repairs cost £60,000 but if they cost a hundred thousand we would have paid it." Then the thrill of England got you. She is so very real! If London has the beauty of maturity, the English countryside has the elixir of youth. It glowed with the wholesomeness of living. What care she if British gold is spilling across the seas, when Laburnam and the Gorse pour gold from an inexhaustible mint?

And so—this is London. Morning has brought sunshine and with it the tingle of life—the buzz of a great city setting about its business with a decided purpose in life; throngs of human beings who apparently never *hustle*, but whose steady stride soon leaves one lagging far behind. That, itself, never fails to amaze, it is so subtle—yet so English. And all the men are carrying canes or umbrellas! What males of other nationality could be jaunty with a "brawly"—and yet look virile? Here it is done! One sniffs the air delightedly—this pungent, petrol smell of smokiness that means London—and it is avidly inhaled. In fact, one seems to have spent the entire morning sniffing nice respectable sniffs, for the Violets and the Lilies-of-the Valley are fragrant little wayside shrines where one must stop and worship.

Violets at sixpence a bunch are so beautiful they stir the heart, and Flower Girls—so fat and so far past forty that they are utterly unlike Shaw's portrayal of the type in *Pygmalion*. But no doubt they could use his naughty, gory word much more effectively than Mrs. Patrick Campbell! And then it was time for another sniff at Morney's whose very name, written in gold letters, is a delicious whiff of bath salts and such like. On Regent Street, Liberty's completely

entrals! Its black marble window trims frame incomparable colors of fabrics even more beautiful than the originals designed by those Pre-Raphaelite artists who first made the shop famous. And now the new block of half-timber, gabled houses is a treasure-trove of color; past the infinite variety of funny-faced clocks that have ever been a lure to me at the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths—have you ever noticed what personality there is in a clock's face? Through the sophisticated smartness of the Burlington Arcade where men's garb and feminine lingerie flirt outrageously. Up one side of Bond Street (there we passed the dear old Duke of Connaught shopping and looking very smart) to the glitter of Cartier's and down to the rakishness of Piccadilly. There is something in the mere name that gives it a swagger and makes it more amusing. Across



Lady Byng, in the Canadian garden of her country estate at Thorpe Hall, near Clacton-on-Sea, England, where the ex-Governor-General of Canada and his lady now reside

to the middle-class regions of Maison Lyons whose windows are the very acme of artistry, exquisite Maxfield Parrish twilight shades that suggest tropical loveliness in tones of periwinkle, amethyst, azure and rose—all atmosphere for luscious lollypops of marzipan. Down through the lurid haunts of Leicester Square so pallid in the morning light. Past the quaint offices of ancient publishing houses—one of which looked most familiar as the leaded windows and wood-paneled front of Aldine House appeared (its replica has recently been erected in Toronto by Dent & Son). Across the vast square where pigeons are flocking around the Sailors' Monument like sea-gulls round a ship. And there is *Canada House*. An edifice any Canadian may look upon with pride—but more of it anon.

Lunch at the Carlton is always a completely satisfying affair—perfect atmosphere of music, flowers and the utmost chic. There we ran across Colonel and Mrs. James Woods of Ottawa, who had just come from St. James's Palace where their old friend Lord Stamfordham, the King's Secretary, resides when in town. They are here on a short visit and were just rushing off to lunch with Lord Byng's sister, Lady Margaret Boscawen. Dashing into the Carlton dressing room to powder one's nose after lunch, I found it the same *recherché* little boudoir—a model Canadian hotels might well copy should they

feel inclined to aspire to the really exquisite. Ever seething with Canadians is Waterloo Place where one barges into more familiar faces than if going shopping in one's own home town. There we saw Mrs. P. J. Nolan, of Calgary, widow of P. J. Nolan, K.C., whose fame as a criminal lawyer and delightful raconteur is Dominion-wide. Their son, Harry, is following in his father's footsteps—as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford he took an honor degree and is now practising law in the firm of R. J. Bennett and Company.

Within a few minutes, greetings had been helloed from half-a-dozen Canadians who had to come across the seas to see each other. Among them was Mrs. Ruth Hamilton Walsh, a very charming woman, grand-daughter of Bishop Fuller of Hamilton, and great, great grand-daughter of Wm. Dummer Powell, the first Chief Justice of Canada. She married Richard Walsh, an Irishman of Kingswood County, Dublin, who as one of the greatest experts in land and cattle, assisted in establishing a ten million acre ranch for the Brazilian Government in Brazil. Later their life was lived on a four million acre ranch in Southern Rhodesia and Mrs. Walsh's stories of her life out there read like a fairy tale of the land of beautiful dreams. Since her husband's death, she has been traveling extensively, lecturing on Southern Rhodesia. Last year Mrs. Walsh was presented at court.

There are two May Courts to be held next week and among those Canadians being presented is Mrs. Raymond Willis, of Toronto, who is very beautiful with her classical features. Others are Lady Davis, of Montreal, the Misses Willa and Jean Price, daughters of Lady Price of Quebec, Miss Mary Money, of Vancouver, Miss Evelyn Fleming, daughter of the late R. J. Fleming of Donlands, Toronto, Mrs. J. Stewart McLennan and Miss Victoria Tytus, of Sydney—wife and step-daughter of Senator McLennan. There will be two other courts in June.

We found London agog with the two sensations of the week—the wedding of Mary Ashley, one of the world's richest girls—and the return of Lily Elsie to the stage. The latter has fascinated the entire town by her sweet, old-fashioned beauty—"She looks such a lady" as one critic put it in his relief from reviewing the standardized stars of the day. And it recalls the memory of an Easter dance in Folkestone during the war when I saw the stage favorite dancing next to me in a flower-garlanded frock of chiffon. She had a frail, Botticelli-like beauty that was very lovely.

At the Ashley wedding which was an appalling crush, a friend tells me that Lady Haddington, who was Miss Cook, of Montreal, was especially noticeable for her chic costume of green with a feathered hat. Apropos of hats—the Gainsborough hat is receiving much attention at the moment as it is the bi-centenary of Gainsborough's birth, and historians are madly delving into the question of the woman who designed the famous headgear which lent romantic inspiration to the artist's portraits.

Hats with soft plumage over the ears are the essence of smartness just now and Worth has

See also page 74