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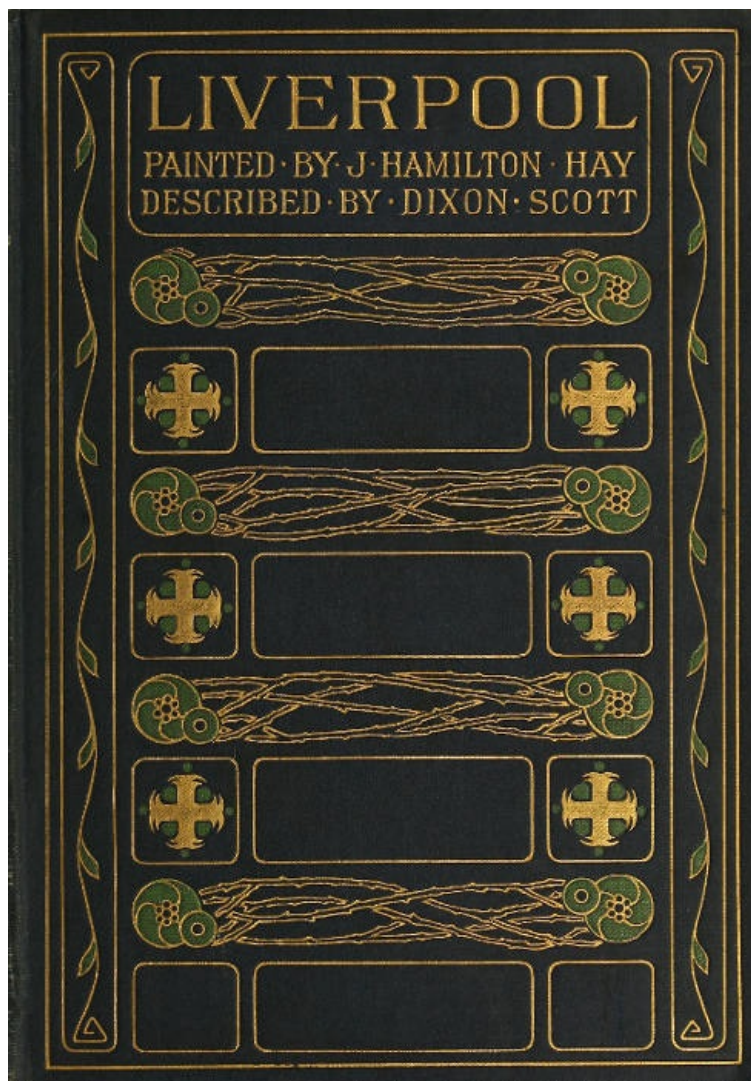
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THE TOWN HALL

LIVERPOOL

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WITH



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1907

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TO MY NEPHEW OR NIECE

WRITER'S NOTE

NEITHER guide-book nor history nor commercial estimate, this Book merely attempts the much less laborious task of handing on the instant effect produced by that active, tangible quantity, the Liverpool of the present day; and its Writer has therefore been forced to rely, almost as completely as its Illustrator, upon the private reports of his own senses rather than upon the books and testimonies of other people. None the less he has managed to incur a little sheaf of debts, and these, although he is unable to repay, he is anxious at least to acknowledge. By far the greatest measure of his gratitude is due, not for the first time, to his friend Mr. John Macleay—lacking whose suggestion the Book would never have been begun—lacking whose counsel it would, when finished, have been even less adequate than it now remains; but he desires as well to offer his especial thanks to Professor Ramsay Muir, who generously permitted him to read certain chapters of the recently published "History of Liverpool" in proof; to Dr. E. W. Hope, Liverpool's Medical Officer of Health, for courteous responses to various inquiries; to Mr. G. T. Shaw (of the Liverpool Athenæum), Mr. A. Chandler (of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board), Mr. H. Lee Jones, Mr. T. Alwyn Lloyd, and Mr. William Postlethwaite, all of whom have provisioned him with much more information than he has found it possible to use. To them, and to all those other creditors whose names have not been mentioned but who may be equally inclined to deplore the waste of good material, he would protest that their assistance might have had a more commensurate practical result if only they could have persuaded those implacable niggards, space and time, to imitate their eager liberality.

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LIVERPOOL

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CHAPTER I THE RIVER

§ 1.

That fine fellow (a Scotchman, I understand) who so handsomely acknowledged the thoughtfulness displayed by Providence in “constraining the great rivers of England to run in such convenient proximity to the great towns” would have found in Liverpool-on-the-Mersey an altogether exceptional opportunity for thanksgiving. For it is upon her River, with a very singular completeness, that the existence of this great, complex, modern organism unanimously depends. Rob her of her duties as port and harbour, and she becomes impossible. Other duties, of course, she has: among the labyrinths of effort which her million people have created all about them, you will find tobacco-factories, corn-mills, soap-works, breweries, sugar-refineries, and a dozen other quite flourishing industrial exploits; but these, even if they were not in large measure directly derived from the River itself—the voice of the River, so to say, announcing itself in other dialects—are never really fundamental. They could be plucked away, as her famous Potteries were plucked away at the opening of the nineteenth century, as her Chemical Works were plucked away some decades later, without producing anything but the mildest and most parochial of disturbances. Certainly, there would be no crisis: the great machine would still throb equably, the procession of her continually advancing life would still move magnificently on. But if you rob her of her river-born attributes, you leave her utterly dismantled. Let the river-estuary silt up, as river-estuaries have been known to do, as this one is constantly endeavouring to do, and the whole elaborate structure instantly crumbles and subsides. In London there are a score of Londons, in Glasgow a dozen Glasgows; but here there is only one Liverpool—Liverpool-on-the-Mersey.

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That is the great fact of her life. And its significance is chief, not merely because Liverpool owes her actual existence to the River, but also because the whole quality, the “virtue,” of that existence has been determined by the completeness of the dependency. It is not simply that it is upon this broadly curving estuary, as upon some broadly curving scimitar, that Liverpool has had wholly to rely in slashing her way to the position she now maintains; it is also (and, from our present point of view, chiefly) that her fidelity to that weapon has induced certain habits of poise, of outlook, of ideal, which are now her most essential characteristics. The influence is disclosed, as we shall see, in all manner of ways. It drenches the local atmospheres, private, social, civic, with a distinctive colour. It is revealed in the nature of the men in her streets, and in the nature of the streets about the men. It is the deciding element in that inherent spirit of the place which those men and those streets at once prefigure and evoke, and which it is the main purpose of this book, with the aid of those men and streets, to attempt in some measure to enclose. Some of the channels of the influence are direct and obvious enough, others are indirect and secret; and one of the more obvious and one of the most secret are connected with the fashion in which that dependence has affected her history in the past.

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§ 2.

The incisive feature of that history is the suddenness of the City’s emergence from a position of comparative obscurity into one of supreme moment. All down the ages, indeed, as the preparations for its sept-centenary celebrations, with which the place is ringing as I write, are now making especially clear, people have been clustered together on the river-bank, testing the great weapon, shaping and sharpening it, using it, as new issues and battle-cries uprose, with a constantly increasing forcefulness.^[1] But it was not until the later decades of the eighteenth century that the real opportunity arrived. It was among the alarums and excursions of the amazing period which then began, among its endless industrial sallies and revolutions, its fabulous commercial conquests, that the weapon was for the first time granted the scope it needed to swing with full effect. And therefore it was within a space of extraordinary brevity—within the leaping years of a single century, indeed—that the City achieved its greatness, and assumed the aspect which it wears to-day.

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[1] The details of these activities have been set out more perfectly than ever before, and with a union of concision and lucidity which it is impossible to praise too highly, in Professor Ramsay Muir’s recent “History of Liverpool.”

The direct consequences of that are obvious enough. Liverpool becomes, quite frankly, an almost pure product of the nineteenth century, a place empty of memorials, a mere jungle of modern civic apparatus. Its people are people who have been precipitately gathered together from north, from south, from overseas, by a sudden impetuous call. Its houses are houses, not merely of recent birth, but pioneer houses, planted instantly upon what, so brief a while ago, was unflawed meadow-land and marsh. Both socially and architecturally it becomes, in large measure, a city without ancestors.

That is sufficiently manifest. But what is not so manifest, and what robs these sept-centenary celebrations, these pageants and retrospective ardours, of any too great tincture of incongruity, is the fact that the River which has washed these interior traditions and memorials away has also restored them in another place and form. It has established, at the gates of the City, a far more perdurable monument to antiquity than any that architecture could contrive. For, whilst they are not of the soil, these people, they are all unmistakably of the Mersey. They have discovered a kinship, neither of blood nor of land, but wholly vital and compelling, which binds them not only with one another, but with old ardours and forgotten years. The wide plain of water that pours

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endlessly about their wharves and piers colours their lives as deeply as it coloured the lives of those who watched its lapse before them: consciously or unconsciously, they acquire something of the ripeness that comes from traffic with old and fateful quantities. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, they inevitably pass into vital touch with the earlier wielders of the weapon: with the dim fisher-folk who were its eldest users; with the cluster of serfs who received their first "charter" of privileges seven hundred years ago; with the Irish traders of the seventeenth century; with the slave-traders of the eighteenth; with the merchants who watched the dawn of the day of the last great onset. The River becomes in this way a kind of Cathedral, a place heavy with traditions, full of the sense of old passions.

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This is clearly not the sort of influence that one can measure with a foot-rule or sum up in a syllogism; but in this nuance of endeavour and in that, in characteristics which it would be impossible briefly to define, but which may perhaps appear in the pages which follow, the effect, I feel, is made faintly, delightfully apparent. The sheer youth of the place has been granted something of the dignity of age. The audacities and vigours of the century which gave it birth have been tinged with a certain gravity and largeness. The very force which has made the place so superbly youthful and athletic, so finely unhampered by the rags of outworn modes, has also granted it that intimate sense of history, that heartening and annealing influence of ancient ardours vitally and romantically recalled, without which a city, as a nation, is but an army without music and banners.

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§ 3.



BIRKENHEAD FROM THE RIVER

And it is this complete dependence of City upon River, too, which helps largely to explain what are certainly the two main paradoxes of her daily life: the fact that she is of all cities at once the most heterogeneous in composition, and in exposition the most homogeneous; and the fact, again, that her commercial interests are extravagantly world-wide, and her civic interests extraordinarily local. They are characteristics, these two, which never fail to attract the observer extremely—perhaps, even, extremely to puzzle him. He remarks the cosmopolitan population, the nomadic life so many of them lead, the disturbing flux and bustle of the traveller-strewn pavements; and in face of these things he discovers, to his huge surprise, that the civic spirit of this variegated and distracted junction is more puissant and concerted than that of any other city in the kingdom. He knows that she is, in effect, little more than a great gateway between West and East; he knows that her merchants are chiefly middlemen, that the prime function of the place is to fetch and carry, to bring from hither and forward there; and yet he finds the whole affair looming up into a stubborn Rodinesque independence, achieving this and that original thing with an unexpected air of finality, and maintaining always an aloofness, a clear and unmistakable individuality, that seems utterly incongruous in the midst of the involved world-movements swaying so frantically about her.

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Of the accuracy of his observation, at all events, there is room for little question. At every turn of the City's social and municipal life those two salient antithetical characteristics are vividly displayed. Liverpool is boldly different. She possesses, it seems, a singular faculty for moulding and co-ordinating. The peoples of the world pour through her streets, but they never interrupt her energetic introspectiveness. Fragments of this and that exotic race remain; they settle down, they breed, they pour their alien habits, their alien modes of thought, speech, religion, into the communal veins; but there is no perceptible change. The same emphatic lines of activity sweep on; the same special type is faithfully reproduced.... Liverpool, it seems to me, is astonishingly self-absorbed. It is her own problems that chiefly interest her, and she has a habit of solving these problems for herself on self-invented lines. She has striven to work out—she is, as we shall

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see, still intently striving to work out—in ways of her own devising, the salvation of her proletariat. She has created a society that is quite untinged by the colours of the county. She has bred her local school of painters. Her politics are a strange sort of democratic conservatism. She is more civic than national, and the newspapers of this most cosmopolitan of English towns tend to reflect the movements of the City rather than the movements of the nation. And yet, she is not provincial. Manchester, her nearest neighbour, has her finely national *Guardian*, and touches the actual life of the metropolis with a far greater intimacy and frequency; and yet, of the two, Manchester is clearly the more provincial. For provinciality, after all, is but a subordination to the metropolis, a reflection, half deliberate, half unconscious, of the life that goes on spontaneously at the centre. Well, Liverpool would be spontaneous, too. She will imitate no one, not even London. She will be her own metropolis. And those who have marked the clear efficiency of her designs, the unique mingling of American alertness and Lowland caution which colours the spirit that lives behind her very positive efforts, will admit that she has come bewilderingly near success.

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§ 4.

Much of this unexpected loyalty to certain salient attributes, unvarying and individual, is due, no doubt, to the brevity of the period in which her final growth took place: the pressure and intensity of the moment begot, of necessity, a kind of concentrated civism. And much of it, too, is due to a certain physical peculiarity which it is perhaps worth while remarking. The City and the River, of course, have now become a roaring avenue between the hemispheres; but none the less, Liverpool, in a certain narrow, internal sense, cannot be regarded as other than side-tracked. Unlike Manchester, she lies some distance away from the great highways that link north with south, and even to-day the tradition of London's remoteness still to some extent adheres. This isolation—an isolation that was felt very keenly in the early days of her growth—must have helped, in some measure, to breed that spirit of independence and self-reliance. She had to fight for herself. Her River made her too strong to be crushed by the disadvantage, and gave her more than all the power she needed to transform that initial weakness into a positive stimulus to especially emphatic effort.

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So the River reappears; and I like to think that it is, in the end, to the influence of that superbly dominating presence, even more than to the influence of these factors of concentrated growth and isolated station, that the City's paradoxically assonant announcements are to be attributed. It is, as we have seen, the City's *raison d'être*, the chief orderer and distributor of her people's vocations; and in that way alone it interweaves class with class, provides merchant, clerk, seaman, and dock-labourer with a common unifying interest. But with this dictation of tasks, with this provision of a tangible *leit motiv* that runs through and conjoins the efforts of several hundred thousand workers, the co-ordinating influence of the River can scarcely be believed to end. As a controller of physique, for instance, slowly reconciling disparities, its effect must be incalculably potent. It is a reservoir of tonic airs; it renews and revivifies the common atmosphere; it sets a crisp brine-tang in the heart of every inhalation. Some kind of mental and physical conformity, not easily to be defined, but still remarkable, that democratic sting quite conceivably creates; and some kind of subtle solidarity, too, must certainly result from the constant, unforgettable presence of a piece of outer Nature possessing so large a share of unremitting loveliness. From the fierce beauty of the River, indeed, there is no possibility of escape: its scale is so vast; it thrusts itself so exultantly upon one. It is not only the strange powers that belong to moving waters that it exercises; it trails with it as well, into the very core of the City, a great attendant sweep of unsullied and inviolable skyscape, and burns great sunsets, evening after evening, within full gaze of the town. The imaginative effect of all this insistent pageantry cannot, indeed, be easily overestimated. And I certainly believe that it is one of the great forces that weld this diverse city-full into so curious a unanimity.

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§ 5.



THE LANDING STAGE—SOUTH END.

In view of all this vital domination of the City by its River, there is something singularly appropriate in the nature of the first impression created by Liverpool on the traveller who approaches her from the sea. That first impression is, quite inevitably, an impression of a great river with a city vaguely and ineffectively attached. He has left New York, let us say, a week before, and New York remains on his memory as an intricate, high-piled monument of stone and iron, crowding upon and overshadowing the waters of the Upper Bay. No such effect of dominating human interests salutes him as he steams up the river towards New Brighton from the Bar. The south-swinging curve of the coast hides the City for a while, and for a while he sees nothing but a long, low line of bourgeois villas, sitting comfortably among the sandhills on his left, and the great sky-snipping lattice of the New Brighton Tower rising, not inelegantly, ahead. The houses on his left increase; Waterloo and Seaforth shine pleasantly in the sun; and from the base of the Tower, behind the domed and glittering pier that swims delicately out into the water from its root, more bourgeois villas and a great plenitude of white sea-promenades, stretching away up the coast to Egremont, up, beyond sight, to Seacombe, carry out the note of mild watering-place delights. It is all very charming, thinks the visitor, but it doesn't particularly suggest any furious commercial maelstrom.... The town swings into foreshortened vision, flat and docile beyond the racing tide: a mild, smoke-softened, wavering of roofs, a sporadic spire or so, a dozen and a half of chimney-stalks, and the dun cloud overhead—the constant cloud that ought certainly to speak impressively of industry, but that seems, somehow, on the contrary, to mitigate all the efforts (none of them very energetic) that the City makes in the direction of mass and lordliness. With the steep uprising of the Seaforth battery comes the first of the dumb grey miles of granite that stretch up-river to the Stage. They testify nothing to man's sovereignty, these great dock-walls; they seem—if, indeed, they seem of human origin at all—no more than an enforced defence-work; and the quiet rigging discernible behind them, and the funnels of a hidden liner, carry on that idea of the River's superior strength—a strength sufficient to pass the grey barriers and create a second kingdom in the plains beyond. A couple of little towers, perched on the wall, make pseudo-romantic notes—absent, archaic, meaningless. A great warehouse, four-square and stolid, with blind eyes, is set heavily down like a dull box—a box that may be full or empty, but that is undoubtedly shut and locked, whose key has undoubtedly been mislaid. More warehouses, all equally immobile, sullenly succeed it; and then the Landing-stage itself, low and level and a trifle dingy, begins to run humbly alongside, spirting out at intervals a little squeal of advertisement-begotten colour. And still there is no resounding manifestation from the City. The fretted tower of St. Nicholas makes a neatly punctured patch upon the sky; the Town Hall Dome shows vaguely; there is an unexplained glitter from the baseless crest of the Royal Insurance Office. But the solitary building within sight that swerves up with any unmistakable authority is the building of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board.

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And beneath, or beside, all this flatness and domesticity, the Mersey itself reels and swaggers splendidly. It is turgid and tumultuous; its bustling highways interlace alarmingly; there is a constant shouting and hooting and dancing of eager craft. Higher up-stream, the vast salt lake of the Sloyne holds a brace of liners, each, as it would seem, more massive than the town; and a tall imperturbable frigate sways graciously out towards the sea, bursting into white sail-bloom as she goes....

Nor, when he steps ashore, and climbs up Water Street to the City's hub, does that effect of the River's supremacy utterly forsake him. Salt airs from the sea pursue him; strange tongues salute his ears; far-brought merchandise is plucked hither and thither about him as he goes. And even when he passes through the heart of the City and into the suburbs beyond, and through the belt of these into the open country that stretches towards the east, the sting of the brine will from time to time assault him, and he will hear the endless crying of sea-birds, and he will watch the grey, innumerable gulls as they rise and fall above the red wake of the plough.

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CHAPTER II

THE DOCKS

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§ 1.



THE DOCK BOARD OFFICES FROM THE CANNING GRAVING DOCK.

As Liverpool lies deployed upon the South Lancashire landscape, she falls into the shape of an all but fully unfurled fan. The root bone-work of that fan, its unwebbed handle-part, is formed by the commercial apparatus of the place, the municipal apparatus, and—pleasantly conjoined to these hard masculine concerns—the more feminine region of the great shops, the flowers, the carriages, the shopping women. All this has been compactly tugged down towards its central wharves by that inevitable arbiter the River; it forms the area, busy but uninhabited, which the traveller enters the moment he steps ashore. In it are the streets of offices, the banks, the various Exchanges—Cotton, Corn, Produce, Stock—and occasional dense masses of warehouses; all about these—a pattern of dull jewels, say, on the grey essential framework—there lie the great official buildings—the Town Hall, the Municipal Offices, St. George's Hall, the Art Gallery, and so forth—with here and there, more vigorously flashing, the glassy bulbs that tip the railways; and there, finally—a series of decorative flourishes—curve the bright ways of the emporia. Next, to right and left of this clean-picked fabric, appear, like two swart brush-strokes, the twin quags of the slums—their position, too, explicitly defined by the River; and beyond these, again, drooping down V-wise towards the handle in the centre, but for the rest holding consistently aloof, spread the vast, indeterminate plumes of the suburbs, curving round from the river-side at Seaforth, away through the open country, and so back to the river-side at Garston.

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Thus, the whole congeries splits up, it will be seen, rather more automatically than is usual, into just those four great divisions which every modern city is theoretically supposed to display. Here and there, of course, a divergency appears: over at Linacre, for instance, a group of industrial exploits—match-works, dye-works, a tannery—have lunged out towards the open, have tended to create out there their own special circle of suburb, their own little patch of slum. Over at Garston, again, there is a somewhat similar happening; and across the River, on the shores of the Wirral Peninsula, Birkenhead, with its Town Hall and its Docks, makes an attempt to

complete that tangential impulse which the River has interrupted. But, for the most part, the two main facts in Liverpool's career—the precipitancy of her uprising and the singleness of her purpose—have served to make her adherence to that basic plan a singularly faithful one;^[2] and I propose, therefore, to take advantage of it in this book, dealing in the third chapter with that central region of shops and offices and civic architecture, the formal van of the army; in the fourth chapter with the plumes of the fan, the skirmishing sweep of the suburbs; and in the fifth with those dusky smears of the underworld.

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[2] It is interesting to observe that in this, as in so many other matters (the strength of her civic spirit, for instance; the nature of her municipal exploits; the conspicuous attention she is giving to the specifically urban problem of the Housing of the Poor; her constant devotion to the specifically urban business of locomotion), the abnormal circumstances of Liverpool's growth have made her an unusually faithful embodiment of certain of the most essential of modern urban impulses. She is, as I have said, boldly different; and it is of the body of that difference that she should be thus clearly representative: there being nothing, in actuality, quite so exceptional as the typical. On the one hand, that is to say, she is exceptional because she is typical; on the other, she is typical because she is exceptional.

But before I approach even the first of these, there remains yet another region, perhaps more memorable, certainly more remarkable, than them all: that queer specialized region of the Docks, the most extensive thing of its kind in the world, which runs all along the littoral, from Dingle in the south to Seaforth in the north, sustaining, both pictorially and essentially, practically the whole of that great fan of masonry, making a kind of long entrenchment, behind which the army of the City is drawn up: the elaborately forged handle, really, which Liverpool has constructed in order that she may grip her weapon more effectively.

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§ 2.

It is a region, this seven-mile sequence of granite-lipped lagoons, which is invested, as may be supposed, with some conspicuous properties of romance; and yet its romance is never of just that quality which one might perhaps expect. It is not here, certainly, in spite of the coming and going of great ships, and the aching appeal of brine, that the mind is moved to any deep sense of kinship with the folk who wielded the river-weapon in old days. The place is as modern as the town, as purged of traditions as the town, and the drama that goes on here is one that has never been enacted in the world before. Its effectiveness, indeed (I do not now speak of its efficiency), is a thing that aligns with no preconceived notions of effectiveness. Neither of the land nor of the sea, but possessing almost in excess both the stability of the one and the constant flux of the other—too immense, too filled with the vastness of the outer, to carry any sense of human handicraft—this strange territory of the Docks seems, indeed, to form a kind of fifth element, a place charged with daemonic issues and daemonic silences, where men move like puzzled slaves, fretting under orders they cannot understand, fumbling with great forces that have long passed out of their control....

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That, certainly, is the first impression—an impression that has nothing whatever to do with the romance of commerce or the ingenuity of man, or anything of that kind, but that is simply the effect of the unhuman spaciousness of it all, the strangely quiet, strangely patient presence of great ships, the vast leaning shadows, the smooth imprisoned waters, the slow white movements of a sea-bird gravely dipping and curving, dipping and curving, between the shadow and the sun, the sudden emergence in the midst of this solemnity of some great fever of monstrous echoing activity. Afterwards, of course, as the senses grow accustomed to the new order of things, to the frightening spaciousness and the bursts of tangled effort, there ensues another attitude. Names catch the eye: Naples, Hong-Kong, Para; and the imagination gets its practised opportunity. The sudden activities, too—the clustered, wrangling cranes, perched on their high roofs, and pecking tirelessly; the bound, leaning carcass of the ship below them, bleeding from a score of wounds, the cranes about her own masts adding to the riot; the long sheds, ringing with echoes, dappled with tiny figures delving in a long ruin of all the goods of the world—they begin to affect the mind more intimately. You find yourself in the shadow of some slab hill of cotton-bales, or peering up the slopes of a swelling cone of grain, a sibilant alp of gold, and you begin to envision the anæmic spinster who will one day wrap herself in some part of that sodden mound, or the white hen, in some dreamful farmyard, that will one day peck this grain.... Or you come down to the Docks after nightfall, passing out of the greasy silence of the northern streets, under the terrace of the Overhead Railway, and so through the gates behind the Huskisson. The air is troubled with a soft sustained groaning: the *Saxonia* (let us say) is at her berth discharging. She arrived from Boston on Thursday, she will sail again on Tuesday, and every instant, day and night, that soft moaning will continue. And that direful sound, and the torment of labour going forward, in a shower of green light, beneath the vague riven masses of the liner, serve somehow to drive you on to thoughts concerning Liverpool's efficiency and tirelessness, concerning the bigness of her interests.

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§ 3.

And gradually, too, the system of the labyrinth begins to emerge. That first period of bewilderment, of bewilderment that was almost fear, when you crept along narrow shelves running between dead water and warehouse wall, and watched the vistas unfolding, some gloomy, some naked, some clotted with ships as a mill-dam is clotted with drift-wood; when you crossed bridge after bridge, from granite islands to granite mainland, and heard the wailful voices of men coming desperately out of the distances, and decided with a sickening sense of despair that the whole thing had swollen utterly out of hand, that those ships would never be extricated, those giant forces never recaptured—that bewilderment is followed by the certainty that specific things will always be going on in specific places, and that the whole litter of events is really made up of two or three constantly recurring happenings. It becomes plain, for instance, that in one branch of the Huskisson you will always find the brick-red and black funnels of the Cunarders, and in another the cream and black of the White Star. You learn, again, that in the Wellington one or other of Glynn's boats will always be unloading grain from the Danube, that cotton from the Brazils and india-rubber from the Amazon will always be found in the sheds beside the Queens, and grapes and wines from Spain in the next dock to that, and rice from Calcutta over in the Toxteth. An austere elevator in the Coburg insists on the constant attendance of grain-barges; a mustard-coloured stain on the rim of the Harrington stands for cotton-seed meal from Galveston; silver-hulled coasters, their spars and rigging hanging in tender meshes against the blue, fill the quiet reaches of the Salthouse; and in the cloisters surrounding the sunless quadrangle of the Waterloo, men are always moving, as Mr. Hay has painted them, in a deep warm tumult of golden dusk. One-seventh of all the ships in the world, it is true, laden with fabulous loot, are driven along these intricate waterways, are penned in these monstrous interwoven cells; and one-third of all the goods the Kingdom receives, one-fourth of all the goods she sends away, pass through these great sheds and cumber these endless quays. But those vast herds, charging so wonderfully across the plains of the Seven Seas, hold here for the end of their flight a space that is measured by inches; and you may, therefore, in spite of its enormity, map out the whole labyrinth in your mind either chromatically or topographically, either by the names of companies or in terms of grapes and silks and dyes and precious ores, just as your temperament inclines.

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CUSTOM HOUSE FROM THE SALTHOUSE DOCK.

§ 4.

But however neatly familiarity may thus label the place and tie it up into little packages of effort, that first sense of the superhumanity of the drama going on here never for an instant lightens. The actors employed, whether the liners themselves, or the gaunt roof-cranes, or the dire monsters that effect the coaling, or the deliberate jaws of the dock-gates, are designed on so immensely loftier a scale than the rather draggled humans who run to and fro in their shadows, watched by the great silences, that they inevitably upraise the expectations to their own gigantic measure. Only in one brief corner of this seven-mile harbourage is it possible to return once more to the intimate human romance, the traditional drama, of harbours and sea-traffickings. It is a little basin between the Coburg Dock and the Brunswick Half Tide, and there, for a little while longer, beneath an old-world quay, brown sails dip softly in a quiet haven. Fishermen sit and smoke above them, nets hang in the sun, low buildings with broken, domestic roofs run round a cobbled square; and in one corner a pier-master's cottage has its ivy, its curtains, its canary in a wicker cage. It is a relic that serves only to italicize the change. A pace to the right of it, a pace to the left, the new world of draggled humans and unhuman gestures is awaiting one: a world where the blues of those jerseys, the warm browns of those sails, have faded into the sad blues and yellows of mechanics' overalls. From the cyclopean platform of granite, frowned upon by a cirque of raw cliff, and patterned with the shaggy heads and shoulders of half-embedded liners, which lies at one end of the chain, through all the rigid convolutions of honey-coloured water which lead to the interminable clangour of the Atlantic berths at the other, it is a place, invariably, where a new relation has been established between man and the outer seas. It is in hieroglyphs of granite and water, in monstrous shapes and silences, that the bare-handed individual and the naked element make their communications; and in the face of this terrible script it is not strange that the writer should be forgotten. The efficiency of Liverpool, yes; but never, quite, the efficiency of the people of Liverpool.

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§ 5.

I went down the other evening, for instance, to see the *Baltic* and the *Campania* come in to their berths. They had both arrived that morning from New York, they had landed their passengers and their mails at the Stage, and all afternoon they had been lying in mid-stream, two steep-shored islands, with the ferry-boats passing beneath them and silver clouds of gulls ranging about their coasts. And now, the tide being at the full, they had awakened wonderfully to life, and were moving processionally down the flood. A brace of tugs marched at the head of each, one a little to starboard, one to port, and in the wake of each another tug nodded and dipped.

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It was a grey evening; a cold wind pressed upon the tide, slats of rain broke upon the surface.

But the sight of that pageant out there in the stillness warmed the grey as with fire. It stirred the heart like music; it was as elemental in appeal as music. It fingered a new range of emotions, untouched by the doings of men. It was a progress as brave and unhuman as the progress of clouds across the sky.

The great moment came when they curved slowly about in the dusk, and began to move imperturbably across the flood to where the head-light of our pier upheld a cold gleam against the grey. The wind beat about them as they advanced, flurries of rain beset them, but neither the wind nor the rain, nor the racing tide, nor the narrowness of the granite-guarded opening they had to enter, seemed in the least to trouble that impassive progress. And then they were upon the gap, and the sheer walls were crushing about their flanks, and a vague tumult of sounds drifted down the air, and so they passed through, with a kind of contemptuous precision, into the dead reaches beyond. One admired, one marvelled, but it was never the admiration one gives to human things. That vague drift of sound, the dim peering faces away up there on the bridge, the little group of men running with a rope along the quay—they all seemed quite irrelevant—little happenings to which the lordly shapes remained profoundly indifferent. It was to them, to those lordly shapes, that the homage went out; theirs was the courage and the beauty and the wise strength. And when one lighted porthole, and then another, revealed rooms filled with living people, it became scarcely possible to resist a cry. The monster, after all, beneath this impassivity, was really crammed and feverish with some dreadful parasitic life.... It is a sensation not dissimilar to that which one gets when, standing in Hyde Park on some clear spring morning, one surveys the far landscape rising and falling away in the east, and then suddenly realizes with a stound that all that palely gleaming country-side is riddled with caverns enclosing living men.

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§ 6.

After the starkness and rigour of the Docks, the Landing Stage itself, the half-mile raft, moored to the City's gates, which forms their centre-piece, presents a somewhat dilettante appearance, almost, indeed, a sentimental. It certainly makes amends, at any rate, for the absence of the human note in the theatre that stretches away at either end of it. Half of Liverpool uses it as a matter of business, the other half as a matter of health and pleasure, and it presents all day long the appearance of a democratic promenade. It is, in fact, the finest of Liverpool's parks, furnished with its sheet of water, provided with its cafés, its bookstalls, its seats. Merchants and clerks from the contiguous bone-part of the fan slip down here at lunch-time, mothers bring their children from the recesses of the suburban plume. The actual people of Liverpool are here at last to be seen in vital conjunction with the weapon they employ. All that is vivid in the movements of great waters is made into a bright piece of their lives, a familiar picture on the walls of their living-room. A breeze is blowing, maybe, and all the wide surface is curded and laced with foam. The foam makes a silver lattice up which the golden roses of the morning climb and burn. The scent of their blooming has coloured the dreams of the ages.

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Nor is even the utilitarian, the northern, end of the Stage, where the great liners, the *Baltics* and *Campanias*, discharge and accept their passengers and mails, altogether free from that effect of festival. The mass of the steamer blots out the sky, indeed, and it is thus in a cistern of shade that the actual leave-takings are effected and the baggage plucked aboard. But there is always so much of briskness, of white-handed briskness, of silks and uniforms and an active sociability, that the gloom becomes a positive aid to the drawing-room sparkle of it all. Deep amongst those monstrous shapes and silences at the Docks all the real effort has gone forward—the loading, the coaling, even the embarkation of the emigrants—and having suffered that in secret, the liner simply plays the part of stolid protector of intimacies. The human drama is never very obvious: there are more tears and tension at any of the great railway-stations; and although the actual severance of the ship from its moorings—breaking away, as it seems from a distance, like a solid lump of the land—does make some restoration of that unhuman drama of elemental quantities, the massed, fluttering handkerchiefs, the lines of upturned faces by the water's edge, keep the moment intimate and gallant.

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THE LUCANIA.

More of the real emotion of distance, of destinies astonishingly contravened, belongs to the instant of the steamer's arrival. The naked fact of the departure is always somewhat misted, and the last severance gradually prepared for, by the way the process extends: the steamer protects the Stage for an hour or so, the nerves are habituated. But the incoming of the liner is a different matter. It is a smear in the sky, it is a neatly pencilled apparition, it is a towering event in the River, it is a vast door barring out the west, all in the briefest space of time: from start to climax the event leaps up through a swift crescendo of incident, and the little figures trooping an instant later over the high gangways that are really bridges from New York to London have a fine aura of adventure. To see all this accomplished in some evening of amber and emerald, with the lights unfolding like pale flowers on the far-drawn violet shores, is to get another vision of the world's possibilities of beauty and romance.

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CHAPTER III

THE CITY

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§ 1.

How to set about conveying the sense of this great mass of minutely reticulated architecture without instantly growing too pedantic on the one hand or too vaguely general on the other—that is the problem—always, in this business of civic portraiture, a very present one—that now begins to grow especially insistent. For the Docks, after all, in spite of their unhuman magnitude, do resolve themselves, as we have seen, into a fairly compact cycle of recurrences; and the Suburbs, again, unfolding themselves in their order, do provide a clear and vital method of attack; and the Slums, unhappily, cling loyally throughout to one dolorous code. But here, in this imposing van of the civic army, there is neither loyalty to sole effect nor specific rotation of several effects. Each building is more or less deeply individualized; every street has its especial quality; and about the bases of all these fretted cliffs, down all these changeful ravines, the mutable tides of the traffic charge and ebb unceasingly.... How is the sense of all these innumerable aspects going to be squeezed into a pitiful couple of thousand words?...

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One would like, for example, to distinguish street from street: to speak of Lord Street, say, with its inevitable air of well-groomed alertness, brisk and personable even under gloom, its rather superficial architecture pleasantly asnap, its traffic and its shops equally avoiding the dully

commercial, equally achieving a confident glitter that only just falls short of a swagger. One would like to contrast it with one of the ways that branch out from it—with North John Street, for instance, bleak-faced and sombre, constantly resonant with heavy traffic from the Docks, but made suddenly magnificent by the rocketting cream and gold of the foreshortened Royal Insurance building at its head; or with Whitechapel, again—a street, for all its proximity, of so profoundly different a quality: a street that seems always to be attempting to override, by dint of cheap cafés, clothiers, boot-shops, and the like, the coarse utilitarian note that insists on lumbrously emerging from Crosshall Street, from Stanley Street, from the neighbouring clangorous Goods depots: a country tripper of a street, shamefacedly endeavouring to conceal the presence of its obviously autochthonous companions.

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And one would like, again, to speak of Stanley Street itself, chief of those autochthonous companions, a narrow and difficult ravine, mostly sunless, always noisy, whose bed is encumbered from end to end with floats and lorries and waiting carters, and whose walls are provision offices, provision warehouses, and the sheer grey flanks of the G.P.O. From a gash in those grey flanks a blood-red stream of post-office vans and motors is jerked out intermittently. The air is thick with swinging boxes and heavy or keen with the most astounding range of odours: with slab cheesy odours and searching fruity ones; with exotic odours that one sniffs uncertainly, for which one can find no closer definition than nice or nasty; and, supereminently, running through them all, the wild decivilizing smell of wet deal cases—a smell that always arouses a certain unemotional cotton-broker of one's acquaintance to an inconvenient but rather touching hunger for some particular place of dim forest silences.

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BOLD STREET.

And then one would like to appraise the elusive atmosphere of Bold Street—that intimate, elegant avenue of rare fabrics and shopping women and the ripe, drumming ripple of automobiles—the Bond Street of Liverpool, whose wood pavements make a sudden chosen silence in the midst of the clatter, which is held beautifully inviolate from electric cars and sandwichmen, and at the head of whose discreet vista the tower of St. Luke's rises gravely up, faintly remindful of the manner in which the towers of Sainte Gudule survey that other road of women and priceless elegancies in Brussels. And with this so purely feminine apartment one would proceed to contrast, properly enough, some such exclusively male possession as Brunswick Street. It, too, is highly chosen and conserved, and the sober, archaic front of the old Heywood's Bank at the upper end of it prepares one at the outset for exactly the unostentatious sobriety of the lower, where it passes under the influence of the Corn Exchange. It seems to reflect, and the brokers one meets there seem exceptionally to reflect as well, something of the spirit of that fine race of merchants who wore leathern watchguards but stocked a most excellent port, whose word was good for thousands and who lunched at the little tavern which still stands there, like an old-fashioned waiter, with so engaging an air of homely dignity.

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And it would be impossible, of course, to avoid comparing Brunswick Street with that other exclusively masculine quarter, Victoria Street, which passes, in spite of its consistent virility, through three successive phases. In the first, where it lies between North John Street and the Post Office, it has an almost Stanley Street-like aspect—a wider and less viscid Stanley Street, with the red stream of mail-vans exchanged for a black swarm of clerks and merchants, hiving about the Produce Exchange. In the second it grows aridly official, the fidgety pomp of the Post Office towering away on the right, the Revenue Offices marching with much cold grey dignity on the left. And, finally, in its third phase, it grows positively dramatic and unintentionally spectacular: the offices of the town's protagonist newspapers, the *Post* and the *Courier*, confront one another threatfully—silent at sunset, but romantically vociferous towards dawn, and, from close beside them, one gets (especially on a morning of sunshine) the most delightful glimpse of the entirely noble sweep of architecture that rises up—dreaming, reduced, subtile—beyond the quick, green flash that sings out from among the statuary of St. John's Gardens.

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And so one could go on, disengaging the essential spirit of street after street, hoping that all the readings, taken together, would build up into the gross effect of the whole thing, would cleanly spell out the essential spirit of the City. As, indeed, they no doubt would. But in the way of the adoption of that course there lies one rather serious objection. To make its final result veracious, it would have to be followed with uncompromising thoroughness; and if it were followed with uncompromising thoroughness this chapter would never end.

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§ 2.

So, then, although it carries us a certain distance, that bundle of street analyses, even if it were considerably enlarged, must not be looked upon as final. The alternative method, of course, is the eclectic—a searching out of “notes,” of the vistas, the groupings, the buildings, that leap incisively out from the mass and engage the memory—an arrangement of these things in some considered order.



LIME STREET STATION

And to such a collection that bunch of street-portraits (their subjects, to be frank, having been chosen rather less off-handedly than might appear) forms an admirable nucleus. And since it is at the moments of arrival and departure that the nerves are most sensitive to aspects—since it is, in consequence, the first or the last glimpse of a place that remains, for most of us, its practical, portable symbol—the collection should next include a note of the way Liverpool reveals herself at each of her four great vestibules—at the Landing Stage, at the Exchange Station, at Lime Street Station, at the Central Station.

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From within the railings that fringe the tiny courtyard outside the last, for instance, it is as a neatly compacted vista of twinkling shops, of converging roofs, minarets, and flag-poles, that, in the day-time, she rather alluringly presents herself. There is much delicate cross-hatching of shade and shine, much blithe gold-lettering on the walls. There are flower-sellers on the kerb, a string of hansoms glisten in the roadway, an electric car, double-decked and yellow, surges down the hill from Ranelagh Street and provides the due top-note.... Emphatically, a most efficient

place, this Liverpool, glossy and high-stepping, at once elegant and active. And with nightfall it emerges as a place of quite exceptional loveliness. That checked curve of the receding buildings, giving the prospect depth without diminution, grades the lights without disparting them, knits them together, both the near and the far, into one exquisitely modulated chorus. Moon-green, mistletoe-white, orange, amethyst, and pearl, are their principal colours, and in this chamber of converging lines the massed clusters branch and leap and linger with the most wonderful effect of tender ardency.... Emphatically, a place, this Liverpool, possessing very singular possibilities of beauty.

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The Liverpool that awaits one outside the orifices that lead from Exchange Station, however, is of a vastly different quality.^[3] Roofed with a remote, unimportant sky, floored (say) with a vague shimmer from recent rain, and hung monotonously about with carefully unobtrusive buildings, it seems less like one of the central spaces of the City than a mere ante-chamber to rooms—possibly magnificent, possibly squalid—that lie somewhere beyond; and in the mornings, when the hosts from the northern suburbs are pouring silently through, that effect is irresistibly emphasized. It is all neutral, non-committal. The solitary stains of colour are the hoardings that flame up before the Moorfields entrance, and the immemorial fruit-barrow that picks out against the grey in Bixteth Street.

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[3] I speak here of what always seems to me to be its most characteristic moment. That it should sometimes be profoundly different, that it should often present itself, for example, as a prolonged splutter of lorries fighting up from the Docks—agitated enough, then, in all conscience, and daubed with much raw colour—is but a testimony to that baffling mutability which seems, in this matter, to make capture of the *vraie vérité* even more impossible than usual.



LIME STREET, WITH WELLINGTON MONUMENT.

One's impression of the Lime Street Liverpool, again, is always tinged by the consciousness of that superb stretch of "smutted Greek," Liverpool's most deliberate effort in the direction of sustained architectural spectacle, which one sees just the moment before or just the moment after. Without that consciousness, the flat-chested, multi-windowed, watery-complexioned hotels that droop, perhaps a little dismally, down the hill opposite, and the uncertain traffic that spreads itself thinly out upon the vast road-spaces in between, would probably not convince one that their claim to dignity was extraordinary. But as it is, they do seem to catch a kind of magnificence, a magnificence that is positively almost shared by the little ragged sentry-box of the Punch and Judy show set oddly down, like a grandfather's clock, plump in the middle distance—a queer axis for the cars that curve clangorously about it. As one advances, the black chine of St. George's Hall, a long grey ripple of steps lapping its base, thrusts forward more and more emphatically, and so one passes into sight of that plateau of classicism—St. George's Hall, the Museum, the Library, the Walker Art Gallery, which Mr. Hay has described so perfectly upon [another page](#).

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Deliberately majestic here, gravely featureless in Tithebarn Street, elegant from the Central, Liverpool achieves within the last of her four porticoes an order of effects more urgent and

memorable still. For it is behind the Landing Stage that many of the car routes of the City terminate, and the great space of unshadowed roadway, empty of all buildings save the new-sprung Dock Offices, is really a brave platform on which the cars endlessly wheel and interlace. By daylight it is wonderful enough: the long files of maroon and yellow monsters curving, separating, recoiling; the constant scream and clangour of their onset; the rich white bulk of the Dock Board building floating serenely above the press. But towards evening, when every car becomes a great cresset of prisoned flame, the golden plenty of it all, the intricate splendour of this vast terrace of racing and receding fire, is a thing to leave the senses glugged and overborne. Liverpool is no longer a place of architecture, grave or dignified. It is a mere spectacle, a piece of golden pageantry. And even the beauty of the dominating building, ivory and pale rose as it accepts the sunset, luminous and firm-bodied as an eastern cloud at the end of a day of wind, seems no more than a fit accessory to the fabric of woven lights astir below.

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ELECTRIC CAR TERMINUS—PIER HEAD.

§ 3.

It is one or other of those vignettes that stands for Liverpool in the minds of all but all those who live without her walls; but there still remains another touch or two to add before the symbol we are attempting to create can be called completed, before this inevitable, initial slab of what must begin to appear uncommonly like sheer "word-painting" (crude word for a cruder occupation) can be brought to a close. Already we have taken the sense of a group of her central ways; already we have surprised her at each of her four great doorways. It now remains to brush in a connecting note or two, an episode or so from the less formal interspaces:

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An appreciation, say, of one of those admirable fortalice-like structures, the warehouses, which clamp all the lower end of the mass and convert the little connecting roadways into canyons of sumptuous gloom. Four-square and massive, they are always shapely; the old stock brick, hand-made, of which so many of them are built, gives them a fine hunger for ripe colouring; and from their vertical lines of doorways—six, eight, ten, a dozen, of them superimposed in a slot that runs from roof to base—they gain the power to charge their austerity with something very near to positive elegance....

A reference to one other of the connecting ways: thin sabre wounds of light drawn across the dense body of offices—to such a one as Leather Lane, for instance, slipping stealthily from Tithebarn Street to Dale Street, a sun-bright tremor of traffic, dainty and diminished as an image in a lens, flickering delicately across its outlet....

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An impression of some such typical grouping of the mobile and the architectural as one gets, say, at the top of one of the three parallel ways—Chapel Street, Water Street, James Street—which run down from the centre towards the River: a crawling steep of men, cars, carriages, and drays; the flags and signs of a horde of shipping offices accompanying its descent; slow masts and a couple of great funnels moving seriously beyond. Or of such another grouping as one finds being repeated, over and over again, at the base of the brown stone curtain that falls from St. Nicholas' Churchyard to the street below: a troop of sandwichmen, their beat ended, piling their

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placards against the wall; a couple of ramping Clydesdales—head-chains glinting, feet asplay for purchase—taking the Chapel Street hill; an aproned carter swinking at their heads; a white-flecked mound of cotton-bales lurching stolidly at their heels; high over all, sailing equably against the blue, the fretted top-gallant of the Church....

A memorandum of one of the older (not the old—there are none) scraps of the City, pushed a little to one side, antiquated before they are antique: of that jolly little pot-bellied barber's shop at the foot of Mount Pleasant (Mr. Hay has [described that](#), too), and of how the slick new mass of the juxtaposed University Club crushes it into insignificance—a ready-made metaphor; or of that delightful Georgian residence in Wolstenholme Square, not far from Bold Street, with lorries clattering about its mild old cobbles, and a trio of extremely dirty tinsmiths bullying a carter from the top of its dignified stairway....

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THE LITTLE SHOP, MOUNT PLEASANT.

An appreciation of that tumultuary roofscape one surveys from the steps of the Art Gallery, a thing to be seen against the afterglow, a clean-verged, leaping monochrome of mauve on chrysoprase....

And there you have the main letters in the alphabet of masonry which Liverpool uses to write out some part of her confessions.

§ 4.

Now, it may be observed that I have made no reference whatever to some of the most conspicuous majuscules in that alphabet. I have said nothing, for instance, about the Municipal Offices, nor of the Town Hall, nor of the Sailors' Home, nor of the new Cotton Exchange, nor of the old Custom House, nor of a dozen other much-photographed architectural plums. This is not laxity, nor a sudden dearth of adjectives, nor a disgust with the business of scene-painting. There is, as they say, a reason; and if I disclose that reason, the confessions which those dropped capitals bestud may tend to grow more legible. Such disclosure might serve, at all events, to suggest a co-ordinating theory, to provide a kind of zoetrope into which those detached impressions and Mr. Hay's pictures may equally be fitted, and which, judiciously twirled, may induce them all to swim into a single animate and breathing image.

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The fact is, then, that when Liverpool desires most to impress she expresses least. When she

draws herself together for a splendid outburst, she grows inarticulate. Her considered effects are mostly affectations. So that to pick out those effects, to arrange all the majuscules together, is not merely to print her confession in another type: it is to print a confession of another type. One omits these deliberate, self-consciously impressive things from one's notes, not because Liverpool contains very little of such things, but rather because such things contain very little of Liverpool.



THE QUEEN VICTORIA MEMORIAL.

For the spirit behind this fabric is essentially a spirit absorbed in other matters than the deliberate, preconsidered capture of the beautiful.... Out of the several characteristics we have already noted—the swiftness of the City's growth, its glittering modernity, its tireless, deft adjustment of alien activities to a common end, its tenacious efficiency and alertness—out of these things in conjunction does there not already begin to emerge (we are all invincible anthropomorphists in these matters) some kind of quite consistent Personality—the genius of the place, if you will—the handy embodiment, at any rate, of the main instincts which this specially envired congeries has tended to throw into exceptional relief? For myself, I see it always as a blunt Rodinesque figure, sternly thewed, tensely poised, strenuously individual, tenacious of the actual, impatient of mere dreams, energetic rather than adventurous, a lover, above everything, of efficiency—efficiency, testing and twisting things with earnest, untiring fingers, whittling things down to the valid, irreducible core.... It is not from fingers like those that one looks to receive many frail white images of beauty. And whether this reading of the essential psychology of the place be true or false, it is certain that the men of Liverpool have never been overprone to sheer æstheticism. The vivid day of their City has been crammed with leaping episodes, it has left no spare strength for flourishes, and they have expressed themselves throughout in terms of a naked and practical utility. Such purely decorative effects as have from time to time been judiciously introduced become in consequence effects which it is vastly easy to misunderstand. Take, for instance, that lordly plateau-load of classical furniture at Lime Street—a feature that would seem utterly to contradict, but that in reality beautifully confirms, this non-æsthetic reading of the City's nature. Raking among the ruins of the place a thousand years hence, when steamships are unknown and the Mersey is silted up, some earnest archæologist will come upon those (in both senses of the word) imposing remains, and will promptly be deceived. He will speak with rapture of the "sharp bright edge of high Hellenic culture" that must have glittered about the community which could produce such stately monuments; and he will probably have a good deal to say about the civic decadence of his contemporaries. But archæology (not, perhaps, for the first time) will have been mistaken. These clean-limbed columns and great porticoes and

pediments were not upreared by a race of Phryne-worshipping hedonists. Directly regarded, therefore, they are misleading, uncharacteristic; but in an indirect way they are very characteristic indeed. One would ask for no better proof of a man's lack of native appetite for literature than that he had read through, in turn, the whole of the hundred best books. Similarly, this wholesale, uncompromising adoption of an architectural mode already traditional, already innumerable times approved, is a most convincing proof of the existence of that spirit of honest and tenacious practical efficiency of which I have spoken. When it came to a matter of beauty, they made beauty a business, they captured it by brute strength and logic. There was nothing tentative, experimental, about the effort; there was no attempt at realizing some splendid, unprecedented dream; line for line, mass for mass, it was the stolid, efficient reproduction of masses and lines about whose loveliness there was no possibility of question. And so the beautiful sequence of buildings which stands for Liverpool's most deliberate piece of architectural æstheticism is really a testimony to the beauty-disregarding spirit of naked utilitarianism which her endless and imminent activities have made inevitable.

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§ 5.

And it is precisely to this beauty-disregarding spirit of utilitarianism again that one traces some of the most memorable and significant pieces of beauty that the place possesses—more memorable and significant than the St. George's Hall group, because vastly more vital and characteristic. For Liverpool, in spite of herself, and quite unconsciously, is a place of exceeding beauty. Out of that hard turmoil of tangible interests and endeavours a very splendid and reassuring happening has sprung. In honest and shrewd response to instant necessities, the city has been carved and kneaded into the lean lines of practical effectiveness; and those lines have joined wonderfully together to make any number of unpremeditated glories. Loveliness has descended unawares. Built frankly for use, it seems to have attained, by processes almost as organic as those of outer nature, a very singular and moving impressiveness. That drama of leaping roof-tops seen from the Walker Art Gallery, that chamber of co-ordinated lights seen from the Central Station, that racing flood of gold beneath the Dock Board building, are examples of the sort of thing I mean. It is in these natural and instinctive creations, frankly utilitarian, and not in her self-conscious trafficking with loveliness, that Liverpool grows most sensuously magnificent. A curve of sunless canal with clustered chimneys rising solemnly about; a pit of railway sidings, warehouses ranged round, one proud white plume of smoke moving slowly across it; long glittering reaches at the Docks; a black stretch of suburb crawling out, myriad-speared, across the sunset; a mass of warehouses blotting out the stars; hot vistas in the markets, ripe and fierce with colour; burning evening skies, unintentionally clipped and framed by the pillars of the Town Hall portico; roof-adjusted rods of sunlight creating unexpected carnivals; perspectives forming and vanishing; great horses moving in procession; swift, imperative assonances—momentary, irrecoverable—between traffic and grouped buildings: these and a thousand others of the same spontaneous kind are the passages of her life, the native gestures, that linger in the memory like a cadence, that colour her aspect with an abiding dignity and graciousness.

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ST. JOHN'S MARKET.

And this is, after all, to say little more than that Liverpool possesses in deep measure that strange accidental beauty of the modern city which is a thing so new to the world that the arts have not yet learned to teach men how to enjoy it. But in Liverpool (exceptional, once more, because typical, typical because exceptional) that beauty exists in a state of singular purity. It is a beauty that is the result, above everything, of a naked response in stone and iron to certain clear imperative necessities: such a response catching, as it would seem, some of the beauty and authority that inevitably attach to every articulate expression of a vital impulse. And in Liverpool those responses have been especially clean and unentangled. The place is self-contained: it has never run to booths and show-places; it has no associations, romantic or historic, to attract the gaper; it has never had to sustain a pose, and only rarely been tempted to attempt one; and these facts, and the fact that its growth has been continuous, that there has nowhere been any shrinkage or debilitation, have made it possible for the garment of buildings to be fitted to the authentic body of its energies with an absolute closeness and integrity. There are no loose folds, no adaptations, very few adhesive insincerities. The whole thing is supremely vital and athletic; and therefore it everywhere discloses that strong and moving graciousness, as yet almost wholly uncelebrated, which is as elemental and unaffected as the strong, forthright graciousness of its River.

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§ 6.

Thus far I have spoken chiefly of the setting of this central stage, its scenery and back-cloths. Let me now attempt to indicate, as uninvitably as may be, one or two of the more prominent actors: themselves, of course, equally symptomatic, equally the choice and the mouthpiece of that Rodinesque *deus ex machina* couched invisibly behind.



ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH AND THE LAST OF TOWER BUILDINGS.

Place aux dames, by all means.... Of the maturer actresses, however, I confess I speak with a certain degree of diffidence. It is always dangerous to generalize on such a topic, and when the generalization inclines to be not wholly laudatory, to the danger of being guilty of inaccuracy is added that of floundering into blank discourtesy. But I will have, at least, the courage of my impressions. Sifting them, I incline to suggest that the more mature of the women-folk whom one discerns here, among the central shops—driving, walking, shopping—seem somehow not wholly to succeed. The efforts of an earlier day seem to have left their marks—sometimes in a certain exiguity, more often in a certain inexiguity; and, facially, one rather deplores the absence of anything in the nature of that enduring patrician basis which sometimes makes (as one seems to remember) the inevitable touches of attrition touches almost to be welcomed—touches that refine, clarify, take distinction a delicate step further. Here and there, in a Bold Street carriage, or in some one of the more guarded roadways of the south-eastern suburbs, a silvery face will flash out with a cameo-like precision; but their incidence is rare—quite rare enough, it seems to me, to be accepted as significant. The general note wavers instead between something almost touchingly *fade* and something too tenacious of qualities which, however charming in themselves, have rather lost their personal propriety.... So one hesitatingly generalizes. For the rest, there is an infinitude of kindness; and one suspects that it would sometimes much prefer to break away, more often than it has the right to do, into frankest homeliness. One is never tempted to deplore a too vulgar display of mere culture.

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But of the younger of the female players I speak with a notable access of assurance. There, beyond question, do I seem to detect the presence of a very distinct type, and (still more reassuring) of a type that is vastly pleasant. More, I have, for the first part at least of this judgment, the confirmation of a friend in whose *flair* for social qualities I repose, for the best of reasons, the most absolute confidence. "I can tell them anywhere, anywhere," she assures me: in Paris, at Nice, in Scotland, it seems, the Liverpool *jeune fille* stands apart. To the latter part of my judgment, it is true, she subscribes only an assent that is dimmed by a vague qualification or so, perhaps not wholly inexplicable. She hints, for one thing, at a kind of *gaucherie*; but that, I am convinced, is unfair. One may suggest, indeed, not without justice, a certain lack of *finesse*, but that is by no means the same thing. *Gaucherie* implies a kind of inefficiency, an inadequacy that trends towards clumsiness, and anything short of an absolute efficiency is flatly uncharacteristic of the sort of girl I mean. Whether she speaks or walks, buys a hat or wears one, plays golf or the piano, it is always the consummate apportionment of means to end that most impresses one; and if one rarely finds her indulging in the frailer, more elusive, artifices of femininity—in those so

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alluringly deliquescent touches of speech, voice, emotion, gesture, and so forth—in all the subtle craft of implication, for instance—it is by no means because her methods stumble before they reach her ideals, but simply because her ideals include none of those fine, diaphanous practices. Her vision of the world is as distinct and sharp as Mr. Bernard Shaw's (Mr. Shaw, indeed, would unreservedly admire her); her emotions are robustious and definite; and she makes all this instantly quite clear, even to the outsider, in her manner of speaking to her coachman as she steps into her brougham, or in the strong delicacy of the colours with which she so charmingly and undisguisedly emphasizes the clear colour of her eyes.

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I grow intimate, it will be perceived, and, in order to grow more intimate still, let me appoint a flesh-and-blood heroine. She is a woman who always seems to me perfectly to achieve exactly what her sister-players, one in this way, one in that, succeed in attaining only approximately. She certainly, at any rate, perfects and epitomizes, in the most delightful fashion, what one singles out as their main tendencies—their main physical tendencies, that is, and therefore, no doubt, their main sub-physical tendencies as well. She is tall and large-limbed, more Hebe than Diana, with the grace of swiftness rather than of languor, and a mode of gowning that deals directly with the body's needs, and so, the body being so admirably fashioned, immensely rejoices the eye. Bronze and rose (here one inevitably tends toward dithyramb; but these Liverpool complexions, too good to be untrue, are really quite memorable) meet distractingly in her face's colouring, and I will not deny an occasional freckle or so. She speaks an English that is clean and well picked in a voice that is so satisfied that it needs all its firmness to keep it from complacency, and she has no discoverable accent. She lives at Sefton Park in one of the rather ineffective houses we will criticize in the next chapter, and, as often as not, comes to town by electric car. (London, I hear, still looks askance at its County Council cars, but in Liverpool they are, and always have been, quite the thing.) She is most herself when she walks. Her stride is not evasive. Golf has helped to solidify it. She writes a most excellent letter, reads a good deal, cares nothing for Mr. Yeats, a great deal for Tolstoi, is (rather unexpectedly) a devotee of Bach, and can play the Chaconne very vividly. She is at once shrewd and tender, cool-headed and warm-hearted. And although she protests that she has "a soul above self-coloured papers," her regard for sacred things, on the one hand, is as free from sickliness as her regard for secular things, on the other, is free from crudity and ill-taste.

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SAINT PETER'S CHURCH.

She stands, then, that highly satisfactory young animal, for all that, in their several ways, the

majority of the younger women-folk tend to rival; not only those who pass from brougham to shop in the clear morning brightness of Church Street and Bold Street, but also those others, even more truly native to these central quarters, whom one observes hurrying here a few hours earlier, and leaving, with something more of leisureliness, in the neighbourhood of six and seven: the less fortunate, but scarcely less reassuring sisterhood whose business it is to wait at the thither end of that passage from brougham to shop, and produce such hats, ribbons, laces, flowers, as our heroine may desire. Physically, indeed, these shop-girls of Liverpool have a charm that rather astonishes the stranger; and they, too, are remarkably efficient self-gowners. To pass down Lord Street and Church Street on some spring evening, with the ebbing daylight tactfully erasing any of the lines the stress of the long, close hours may have left on the young faces, and the flowering lights of the City flinging little splashes of piquancy among them, is to be charmed into accepting the physical beauty of women as one of the especial attributes of these rapid commercial streets.

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§ 7.

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As for the male members of the company, they avow, of course, an unusually complete immersion in occupations unmuscular and theoretical: Liverpool's exceptional freedom from industrialism—other than the secluded industrialism of the Docks—making her, in this conspicuous white-fingered urbanity of her workers, once more especially typical of one of the chief modes of modern civic life. All manual labour being, broadly speaking, tidily banished to the Docks, these central spaces are left entirely at the disposal of the dock-labourer's soft-handed collaborators—the clerk, the merchant, the broker. Every morning, from nine to ten, the tide of these spruce actors pours astonishingly in. They cram and encrust the cars, they traverse, with a neat, fashionable air, that mild ante-room in Tithebarn Street; they flood thickly up from the River—an agreeably apparelled army that gives a fine air of prosperity to all the streets, and that will shortly settle down, in a thousand unseen cells, to its extraordinary and so modern labours, dealing always with symbols instead of actualities, with signatures instead of people, with bills of lading instead of bales and boxes, flinging tons of merchandise from continent to continent with the flick of a pen—a queer, Shalott-like existence of whispers and reflections.

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But in spite of these unmuscular rites, and in spite of those elegant costumes, it must not be imagined that the ritualists are themselves unmuscular. It is by no means a white-faced and dyspeptic clan, this clerical tribe of Liverpool. And, for my own part, I like to believe that it is the River once more which has secured for these clerks, merchants, bankers, brokers, their rather conspicuous emancipation from the proverbial physical defects of the sedentary. The place, anyhow, is very clearly pledged to athleticism, as those rows of physical culture magazines which chromatically tessellate the pavements of Water Street and Chapel Street would alone suffice to make quite evident. And certainly, even if it be not wholly responsible for this remorseless pursuit of muscularity, the River gives that pursuit all manner of exceptional advantages. The long series of famous golf-links that lie amongst the sand-dunes at New Brighton, at Leasowe, at Hoylake, at Formby, at Blundellsands, at Birkdale; the numerous salt-water swimming-baths; the sailing clubs; the briny, gale-cleansed spaces of aromatic gold, free to all who care to use them, that curve endlessly about the coast; the mere proximity of the Landing Stage and the presence of the cordial and bracing airs that enfilade the streets of offices behind it—all these things must have tended to give athleticism an especial point and vigour. The River has made one-half of Liverpool a race of quill-drivers; but it has also made them a race of exceptionally deep-lunged and brown-faced quill-drivers.

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EVENING AT NEW BRIGHTON.

Take, for instance, the case of L—. L—, nearer twenty than thirty, is a clerk in a bank here, and he, like our free-striding heroine, presents a clear and accurate summary of the tendencies one notes in the innumerable clerks who fill the close-packed offices all about him. He lives "across the water" at New Brighton, choosing that because of the half-hour's river crossing morning and evening. (He spends that half-hour walking steadfastly round and round the upper deck, hat in hand, practising—if he can do so unobtrusively—an elaborate and, I am sure, highly painful system of respiration.) He goes to the swimming-bath twice a week in winter, five or six times in summer, dodging down there, if possible, at moments that are perhaps, from a mere purist's point of view, not entirely his own. But in these matters L— is no mere purist. He does his work well (he is really a most excellent servant), and that suffices. He is paid £140 a year for doing it well, and that, too, suffices. It suffices for three £3 3s. suits per annum, for subscriptions to a football club, to a cricket club, to a tennis club, for a sixth share of the expenses of running a small yacht, for a £13 summer holiday, and for his various trim necessities. He is a close student of the science of "fitness," regarding "fitness" (very properly) as a thing much superior to any mental abnormality, and the shilling which suffices for his daily lunch is not expended without due dietetical considerations. Just now it is vegetarianism. Thereafter he repairs to one of those surprising underground smoking cabarets—places where an Oriental easefulness and languor loom dimly through a blue narcotic veil—which Liverpool, probably because of her emphatic clericalism, provides in such extreme abundance, and there, in the company of other seekers after fitness, he sips, and smokes, and nibbles one of the two biscuits with which he is provided (never both—that would be a grave *faux pas*), and discusses athleticism until a quarter of an hour after the time he should be back at his desk. He is lithe, clean-shaven, temperate, unmarried, and, in spite of his *contes*, probably strictly celibate as well. He reads, but books are of interest to him chiefly because they remind him of life, give him a fresh appetite for the fit and pleasant things of life; thus, he praises Harland because his people—Anthony and the rest—are "so immensely decent." He is not inordinately religious, but the traditional piety of his people is a thing he contentedly accepts. He may one day migrate ("going abroad" is a familiar topic in this City of lowly paid clerks and multitudinous cheap and obvious modes of exit), and if he does he will certainly score. If he stays at home he will wind up with a small bank managership and as much in the way of golf and week-ends as £250 a year will permit him to use as a salve for the obedient monotony of small bank management.

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That is one type of player. Another, and much older, is to be found gravely pacing among those sober buildings in Brunswick Street. Self-made, but never blatant; successful because of his common sense and his genius for hard work, and remaining common-sensible and hard-working in spite of his success; vested with a dignity that sometimes verges on stolidity; suspicious of sentiment in life, but an admirer of Bouguereau in art, he is pre-eminently the kind of man who ought always to be commemorated in a steel engraving, never in a photograph. He has had much to do with the creation of his City, and certain of her newer propensities awaken in him a vague sensation of alarm. Wealthy, he is a collector rather than an amateur, but a friend rather than a host. Not without a rich vein of humour, he still takes politics quite seriously. His house (if his family be amenable) has a strong mahogany flavour; if his family be vigorous, that vague feeling of disquietude pursues him there, where he is compelled to fit into an incongruous bungalow-full of *art nouveau* tenuityes.

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THE WALKER ART GALLERY—INTERIOR.

Thus, in spite of the fact that he, more than any of the others, often startles one by his resemblance to the tense Rodinesque figure beyond, he finds himself already being surrounded by a steady flow of new modes and influences. E—, for example, is the vigorous son of one of these admirable persons; and E— believes in bungalows, thinks consistent dignity undignified, and has acquired for mahogany a distaste which he believes to be instinctive. I doubt, myself, whether he has the essential capacity of his parent; but his practice (he is a solicitor) is good and whenever one catches his alert, rather thin, diligently groomed face in the City, he seems extraordinarily full of business. He is a member of a club, but uses it rarely: there is little club life in Liverpool. His idea of conversation is to get one alone, and talk shop with extreme diligence and (to be just) much charm. In spite of his *art nouveau* proclivities, he has less sincere taste for the arts than his Bouguereau-appreciating father; but he has a great stock of criteria, numbers a local portrait-painter among his friends, and at the Private View of the Autumn Exhibition has a neat, intelligent appraisal for every notable picture in the room. He never makes discoveries there, and of course his range is limited. He has a word of judicious praise for Hornel (whom his father still honestly dislikes), but Steer has not yet emerged from the unimportant section he vaguely calls Impressionist; but within those limits his efficiency is surprising: yes, he is unmistakably intelligent. He is not quite sure of the University: actually, unconsciously, he is just a little afraid of all that it stands for; and the University, although it makes a friend of him, has, in private, an attitude not wholly antithetical to pity.... That splitting up—that friendly specialization and intelligent exchange when needed—of culture, of business instincts, of dilettantism—so different from the inclusive interests, almost the independent universality, both of demand and supply, that marked his father—I find quite profoundly characteristic of the Liverpool of the present moment.

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§ 8.

Well, there, in their most characteristic rôles, are some of the chief of the players who step efficiently, efficiently, through the six days' traffic of this well-set central stage. I have said nothing, it will be seen, of their nationalities. That is partly because national characteristics in Liverpool have a way of bowing to the local spirit—or rather, to put it more accurately, because various national characteristics have contributed to a local spirit that an Englishman, a Scotchman, or a Welshman finds it easy and proper to adopt. Thus, there are any number of clerks in the North and South Wales Bank (whose Head Office is here) who are perfect replicas of L—, and E— *père*, for all his typical Liverpoolianism, is really a pure-bred Scot. And it is partly, too, because any real consideration of this alluring question of race would lead to what would be, in this most cosmopolitan of places, a quite endless business: the discussion, namely, of how the pattern of the local spirit has been affected by the presence of those charming peoples who draw such bright exotic threads through the social fabric.

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Into all that, unhappily, I have here no space to enter, nor can I even, much as I would desire, describe the changes of cast and play which occasionally take place: the pale Maeterlinckian drama, for instance, which is invariably presented at the close of the six days' traffic, making a mild hyphen between Saturday's curtain and Monday's overture—a coming and going of unknown people among wide echoes and empty roadways, with the sleepy Sunday buildings looking down in a kind of vacant puzzlement.... Or that other performance, not in the least Maeterlinckian, by which the Sunday quiet is succeeded—the great Rabelaisian drama of the Bank Holiday, presented by an entirely fresh company with new costumes and new effects. The lumpish dialect of South Lancashire echoes everywhere about the stage on such occasions. The Landing Stage is a prolonged ballet in red and white and inordinately electric blue. And although the Cotton Market and the Stock Exchange are utterly deserted, the appearance in the streets of a strange, pinkish, tissue-wropt substance described (perhaps apocryphally?) as "Liverpool Rock" would seem to testify to the discovery, and to the whole-souled encouragement, of a hitherto unsuspected local industry.

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And I would have liked, too, to celebrate in some measure the change that sweeps over the City with the oncoming of night. It is in her native unconsidered gestures, as I have said, far more than in her studied poses, that the essential beauty of Liverpool is most perfectly revealed; and it is at night, when the aid of the sunlight is ended and the sky is a forgotten tale and even the stars are of as little moment as moths that palely flutter outside the windows of a lighted palace, that Liverpool becomes most elemental and instinctive. Abandoned by external nature, she becomes most natural, and therefore attains her most conspicuous beauty. Those electric cars, of course, designed purely for utility, with no thought of spectacle, give to her nocturnes their special individualizing note; so that whilst she has nothing to correspond to that astonishing golden spray of hansoms which makes midnight Piccadilly a place of almost intolerable magnificence, she has her own rich code, just as characteristic, and of but little less a loveliness. Down London Road, down Renshaw Street, the crocus-coloured rivers pour into the vortex of light that boils beneath the great cliffs of Saint George's Hall, so terrible in their nocturnal shapelessness. Moon-green arc-lamps, that only Baudelaire could properly describe, hang, strange fruits, above the golden turmoil; and it is through courses fledged by sun-gold and canopied by this moon-green that the fluent saffron finally escapes. It sweeps down Dale Street and Water Street, it sweeps down Church Street and James Street, and so pours out, in the end, upon that streaming terrace by the water-side.

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§ 9.

So, inevitably, we return in the end to the River, the beautiful source of all this beauty, the magnificent architect of all this golden triumph. I have spoken already of its daylight loveliness, of the elemental hungers that it both feeds and fosters, of its cordial ministry to all that is most panic in men's blood. But with the advent of night it, too, suffers a deep and splendid change. Renouncing this medicative disloyalty, it frankly surrenders itself to the City's rule, and becomes a peaceful province of urbanity. The lights of the City make golden chains about it, golden lights from the City patrol its deep recesses. It is the hour of reconciliations. The City is more elemental than by day, the River is less elemental, and a long sustained harmony unites the flaming tides of the streets and the darkened causeway of the tide. Even the boats have shared the transformation. So eminently business-like beneath the sun, they are now changed to shining presences, romantically visiting the night. Topaz, emerald, and ruby are their chosen favours, and widespread robes of cramoisie and gold reflections trail sumptuously about them as they move.

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OVERHEAD RAILWAY FROM JAMES STREET.

CHAPTER IV THE SUBURBS

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§ 1.

If one wanted very badly to indulge a passion for historical retrospect, this chapter, of course, would provide the great opportunity. For although it is customary to regard them as mere upstarts, the Suburbs of Liverpool, like the suburbs of so many great towns, are really much more venerable than the City itself. West Derby, for instance, was a place of power and dignity when Liverpool was a mere huddle of patched cabins on the marshes away below; and Bootle, Litherland, Crosby, Walton, Kirkdale, Smithdown, Wavertree, and Toxteth, unlike the place that now looks down upon them patronizingly, are all distinguished by references in Doomsday Book. But in spite of this, and although, as we shall see, some faint odour of antiquity still here and there survives, yet to make anything more than the barest mention of their fine old memories and traditions would be to create a very false impression of the aspect they present to-day. It would

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be quite possible, I imagine, to wander through Kirkdale for a lifetime (an inspiring pilgrimage) without once suspecting that it owed anything to any other era than excessively mid-Victorian; and to tell over the far-off things that made Smithdown and Toxteth names of terror or magnificence in old days would be to give about as fair an idea of the expression now worn by those sober neighbourhoods as a description of the old tithe-barn that once stood there would give of that cautious ante-room in Tithebarn Street. The Suburbs are certainly older than the City, but the City has infected them with her youthfulness. They do, in cold fact, grow younger every day.

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THE HORNBY LIBRARY.

This double process of suburb-subordination and suburb-rejuvenescence has always, of course, been dependent upon the progress of the arts of locomotion; and its latest and swiftest phase was undoubtedly heralded by the clangour of the gong on the first electric car. It is her cars, as we have seen, that perfect Liverpool's most characteristic beauty. It is her cars, again, that have helped to perfect her characteristic homogeneity and compactness, that have helped to bind the whole sprawling mass, City and Suburb and all, more and more tightly together, both physically and sentimentally, into one unigenous organism. The London suburb, save in such districts as are tapped by the Tube and its companions, is a fairly self-contained community; it has its own shops, interests, concerts, society; and even in many of our smaller towns and cities the general effect is that of a number of self-interested *colonies* pouncing upon the central spaces for the mere means of life, and then returning to their own private recesses to dispose of them. But in Liverpool the Suburbs tend more and more to part with their independence, to "pool" their interests and enjoyments, to form themselves into a kind of family party ranged round the brightly burning grate of the City. And they grow more like a family party, not only because of this absorption in a common atmosphere, but also because of the increasing freedom which marks their intercourse one with another. That division of the residential semicircle into specific social *faubourgs*—Scotch engineers in Bootle, for instance, Welsh builders in Everton, merchants in Sefton Park—which subsisted very definitely until quite recently, is now in large measure being broken down. Interfusion of social states goes on with constantly increasing rapidity. Families who now migrate with the utmost nonchalance from, say, Kirkdale to Aigburth, confident of finding somewhere there precisely the strata to which they have been accustomed, would have looked on such a flight only last generation as being almost as impossible, almost as profoundly charged with social significations, as a transfer from Poplar to Park Lane; and were content, as I well know, to live and die and inherit without stirring, without dreaming of forsaking an equally static coterie

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of friends. Well, the chief agent in breaking down these social divisions was also that art of locomotion to the encouragement of which Liverpool, as I have said, has so peculiarly devoted herself, and the latest, the most democratic, and the most mobile of the creations of that art, the electric car, has inevitably increased that fluidity in a very remarkable degree.^[4] The overhead wires that bring every suburb into vital connexion with the centre are like the radiating nerves of the organism, flushing all the extremities with one sympathetic life.

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[4] It is impossible to doubt that Liverpool's conspicuous devotion to the business of locomotion—a devotion that is briefly evidenced by the significant association of her name with the first railway, the first canal, one of the first sub-river underground railways, the first electric overhead railway, the first sustained application of electricity to long-distance railway traction, and now with these electric road cars—owed its first impulse to that comparative isolation of her early situation to which I referred in the first Chapter, and that the eager continuance of that devotion was largely due to the function of universal carrier which was afterwards imposed upon her. It is equally impossible to doubt that it was that early isolation which helped, at the outset, to foster her spirit of independent and concerted effort. And it is, therefore (to me, at any rate), rather a pleasant reflection, and not perhaps a wholly useless one, that the circumstance which primarily and directly induced that essential solidarity was also the circumstance which created the tools for riveting it; and that the creation of those tools was considerably aided by the apparition of precisely those forces which seemed to threaten her with a disrupting cosmopolitanism.

§ 2.

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It is by the presence of these wires, then, that you may recognize the great suburb-reaching thoroughfares, the raying bones of our all but unfurled fan, and by taking up a position at one of the central junctions—that river-side terrace would be an excellent place—you may traverse them all in turn, and examine almost all the details of the residential plume, with no more trouble than is caused by stepping from pavement to car-platform, from car-platform back again to pavement. Seaforth tips the first bone; Litherland the second; Walton, Aintree and Fazakerley, Everton and Anfield, Cabbage Hall, Tuebrook and West Derby, variously feather the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth; whilst Fairfield, Old Swan and Knotty Ash, Edge Hill and Wavertree, Sefton Park and Mossley Hill, Dingle, Aigburth and Garston, fledge the remaining branches in the east and south.

Great Howard Street, Derby Road, and Rimrose Road, the three nominal sections of the first of these plangent ways, are tipped, as I say, by Seaforth, and to reach Seaforth they have to bore their way through the dense landscape of warehouses and timber-yards that lies behind the northern docks. But out beyond Seaforth, through Waterloo, Blundellsands, Altcar (its rifle-ranges crackling like a coffee-mill), Formby, Freshfield, and Birkdale, that other humming river of electricity, the most western arm of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, whose course the road from the first pretty closely follows, drains (or, rather, feeds) a constantly spreading, bungalow-saturated district of *bonne bourgeoisie*. It is all very prosperous, this new rubicund neighbourhood: sand-hills and wide shore spread between it and the sea; half a dozen golf-links accompany its brisk march by the railway-side; and that march can really scarcely be regarded as completed until the railway terminates, and plutocracy flames up in a last supreme outburst, twenty miles away from Liverpool, among the bathing-vans and pierrots of Southport: for Southport, too, in spite of plutocratic hauteur, is being rapidly induced by locomotion to play the part of Liverpool's accessory. And Southport presents, anyhow, a series of little paradoxes in appearance upon which one could desire to linger. It is, for instance, at once the chosen home of countless millionaires, and the chosen resort of countless cheap day-trippers. (Although that, indeed, if all local tales be true, is less fundamental a paradox than might perhaps be supposed.) Antitheses—at any rate superficial antitheses—are in consequence engagingly plentiful, and at night the place crowns this distracting effect by assuming all the airs and graces of the Continent. Lights thickly sown among the prolonged verdure of its central boulevard, a red-coated band and endless promenaders, little tables beneath the trees—yes, it is all, to the eye, very perfectly arranged.... And then, suddenly, disastrously, there emerges the slow accent, the toilsome facetiousness, of Chowbent.... But it is still very charming to have so many of the materials of illusion so ingeniously provided; and one looks back at evenings spent there, discreetly companioned, with a very quick tinge of pleasure.

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As for Seaforth itself, the first link in this chain of seaside settlements—well, it, naturally, is the least personable of them all. "The slums of the future," say the pessimists sententiously; and already a notable greyness begins to creep over its tightly packed workmen's cottages. It seems especially deplorable, for the shore of the place (unbelievably peppered in the summer heats with naked pinkish youngsters) is clean and fair enough, New Brighton glitters pleasantly across the estuary, the Welsh hills heave up in the distance, and the great ships of the world promenade before its parlour windows. A little further along the coast, towards Waterloo, the Marconi station leans upon its tall central mast like a sentry on his spear, and listens to the cries of other great ships fighting in the clutch of some blind Atlantic storm.

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Not far away, and even more conspicuous, a high, livid convent, many-windowed and forbidding, rises up out of the sand; and on its flat roof, remote against the sky, you may sometimes see the good nuns pacing to and fro together, or leaning solitarily against the wind. They must survey a bold and various prospect. On the one hand the level floor of the sea, here dusked, there silvered, marbled by voyaging clouds, runs out until it meets a wide pure sky. Poised at the western extreme of the long horizon blade, Anglesey rests like a sapphire, and the hem of all the air that sweeps away to the south is braided thereafter by the woven hills of Wales.

From them the eye stoops successively to the shimmering aura of the Dee, to the embossed interspace of the Wirral, to the bright-mailed river down below, and so to the louring masses of the City, ranging darkly out towards the east, a creation more terribly unhuman than even the mountains or the sea. Lastly, there is the scaly back of the suburb lying beneath, and, beyond it, unfolding between that spreading blackness in the south and a rim of purple woodland in the north, a fair carpet of meadowland and cornfield runs clear and away. A rare white farm or so, set in that green tranquillity, invest it with a kind of homely joy. And the tender outlines of a sister convent near at hand, rising gravely among the serene devices of its trees, touch that joy with a patience as of evening.

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§ 3.

But although it thus provides a very gracious incident in the landscape, that sister convent, the Convent of Our Good Shepherd down at Ford, plays no small part in increasing the dolour of the second of our great northward-driving roadways. For its annexe, hidden among those trees, is one of the chief of Liverpool's Catholic cemeteries, and since this second "bone" (Scotland Road, Stanley Road, Linacre Road, are its successive names) passes through the very heart of the Irish quarter of Liverpool, it follows that a grim pageant of rococo hearses, plumes, and jaded mourners passes constantly along this thoroughfare every Sunday in the year. It certainly stands in no need of these aids to sobriety. Quite on its own merits it succeeds in being the most profoundly depressing highway in all Liverpool. It plunges, the moment it leaves the City, into the tawdry litter of shops that edge the northern slum, and it is defamed, all thereabout, by the sour sights and sounds and smells (the sights and sounds and smells which we are to investigate in the next chapter) which the northern slum exudes. It runs, after that, along the ragged fringe of the grey curtain of shoddy streets that droops drearily down from the stooping shoulder of Everton. And it winds up, at Linacre, with an altogether abominable jangle of raw street-ends, waste lands, gasometers, and factories. Its solitary moment of even comparative cheerfulness, indeed, is to be set down to the credit of Bootle. At Bootle you catch a glimpse of a couple of parks; a broad avenue—trim, well-treed, and topped by an elegant spire—sweeps proudly across your track; and signs of free-stone and prosperity are not wanting. Lacking that respite, this arrow-straight four-mile stretch from the Old Haymarket to the terminus at Linacre Road would infallibly induce neurasthenia.

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OLD HAYMARKET

Not that Bootle ever receives the slightest acknowledgment for this fine alleviating effort. It is

a curious thing, but no Liverpolitan to whom you may ever speak will permit himself to refer to Bootle except in tones of an amused contempt. In part, no doubt, this is a result of Bootle's obstinate, exotic retention of her independence. In spite of the identity of interests, in spite of the physical absorption which long ago took place, Bootle still clings vehemently to her separate Boroughship; and not all the engines of suasion or attack (and both sorts have been energetically applied) that Liverpool can level against her seem able to encompass the surrender. Vividly exceptional, breaking up, at any rate theoretically, the co-ordination that would else be almost universal, she still adheres to all the formulæ of a separate social and municipal existence: appointing her own Mayor, lodging him in an impressive Town Hall, making him the hub of a brightly revolving wheel of emphatically local sociabilities. And Liverpool, incensed, no doubt, by this gross transgression of the physical and sentimental laws that rule her life, responds with a dole of contempt.

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It is terribly unfair, of course; for Bootle, in spite of the fact that its dockside quarters are not places of an overwhelming lucency and charm, really does possess many gentle and engaging attributes, not least among them being the spasmodic presence in its midst (even yet in larger numbers than elsewhere) of the most delightful broad Scotch seagoing engineers—sitters (when in port) in stifling back sitting-rooms—smokers of incomparable cigars (on which duty may or may not have been paid)—possessors of a very precise knowledge of the healing virtues of strong waters.... And yet, in spite of the unfairness of that contempt, one can't help feeling that perhaps, after all—independence or no independence—something of the sort was inevitable. Frankly, what is to be expected by a place so unhappily named? Its absurdity is crushing. Bootle, tootle, foogle—and not another rhyme-sound in the language. *Buckingham Palace, Bootle; White Nights, Bootle*: clearly, note-paper could affect no address, from the most stately to the most charming, that it would not instantly convert to screaming farce. And to protest that the name is of the most honourable antiquity is by no means to avoid the consequences. It simply invests the whole business with an extra tinge of tragedy.

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Independence of another sort, as yet untouched by tragedy, and awakening in the soul of the Liverpolitan something more like envy than contempt, is to be found at Litherland, which lies just beyond that raucous Linacre terminus, a few steps nearer to the cemetery at Ford. They are steps that provide an effective study in contrasts. They carry one across a frail little swing-bridge; and whilst one end of the bridge is immersed in that bad-tempered outburst of industrialism, the other shares an atmosphere of positively Quakerish demureness. Mild old Georgian residences, placidly sunning themselves among their groves and lawns, are respectfully waited upon by an irresistible village street of shops and inns and a post office. In the mildest and sunniest residence of all the Urban District Council has comfortably established itself; the village fire-escape sits contentedly upon the lawn; and the orchard at the rear has been contrived into an alley echoing with bird-song, where councillors and counselled may foregather with their evening pipes.... It is that highly prosaic thing, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, that has apparently served to keep this idyll unspotted by the world. It curves like a defensive moat between the bird-song and the harsh imbroglio a biscuit's-throw beyond, and upon the frail structure that crosses it not the most reckless electric car in the world would ever dream of venturing. It is the weakness of that bridge that has proved the place's strength.

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It was in the very shadow of that enviable fire-escape, by the way, that I heard of another and a subtler way in which the electric car carries on its business of subversion. My informant was an Urban District retainer, whom I found, the other afternoon, bedding out the Urban District geraniums. I spoke to him regarding the pleasantness of the neighbourhood, praised its quiet, its salubrity, and so forth. He merely subscribed a perfunctory assent. Judging that my pæan was considered to lack the appropriate degree of fervour, I redoubled my efforts. I waxed really eloquent. Superlatives abounded. But my strophe aroused no antistrophe. The more loudly did I extol, indeed, the gloomier and more perfunctory became his replies. At last I touched on rates, and that proved the last straw. "They're only two shillings and ninepence," he burst out wrathfully—I think it was two shillings and ninepence; anyhow, something quite preposterously minute—"and over in Liverpool folks is paying eight or nine shillin'." It certainly seemed an extraordinary sort of grievance.... And then "They use our cars," he went on savagely—"they use our cars an' libries an' baths. Why shouldn't they help to pay for 'em?... But they can't 'old out for ever; Liverpool will nab the place some o' these fine days." And he glanced at the genteel old stucco with an air of malevolent triumph.

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The man, it will be seen, was himself a Liverpolitan, and I dare say he voiced very fairly the general Liverpolitan sentiment in these matters. "You use our cars; clearly, then, you must be one of us; so quit this foolish pose of independence." And one day, no doubt, it will quit the pose perforce. Liverpool will "nab" it, the moat will be stoutly bridged, a troop of electric cars will storm across, and the quiet little gathering among the trees will be rudely broken up and submerged.

§ 4.

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To witness the actual consummation of such a ravagement, it is only necessary to follow the next "bone" as far as Walton-on-the-Hill. Walton, to my mind, stands as a perfect embodiment of all the mingled tragedy and triumph of this great process of suburb overthrow. For centuries her Church was the proud hub of the parish in which Liverpool was but an inconsiderable hamlet; and even so late as the last year of the seventeenth century she compelled Liverpool to regard her as its parochial superior, and to tramp every Sunday three miles out to her and three miles back. There is little pride left to the old Church now. It stands, bleak and friendless, in the midst

of a dull pool of gravestones; smoke from a railway siding blackens its walls; the cars roar triumphantly past its very gates; it has been compelled to guard its dead with rows of iron railings. In the lanes that cower behind it, too, defeat is equally apparent: scraps of villagedom hunted down by a rabble of red-faced tenements; a mass of garish brick squatting blatantly in the ruins of a cornfield; jerry-builders evicting old residents from the cottages they have lived in for half a century; the old Hall, in its nest of trees, lying fouled and rifled. In the shadow of the Church there is a little cottage that has the reputation, significantly enough, of being the only thatched cottage in Liverpool. It is delicately complexioned, daintily windowed, and altogether very fragrant and delightful. But the poor soul, one fancies, is not long for this world. A frenzied hoarding, horrent and gibbering, raves above it on one side; on the other some kind of corrugated iron affair screws its blunt shoulder into the frail old bones.... One seems to catch a gleam of piteous supplication behind the leaded panes.

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But just beside the Church one gets the modern touch that seems to make amends. It is from here that the great new road—wide, much-foliaged, grass-platted—begins the journey which is to result in a curving band of ordered white and green being drawn right through the mass of eastern suburbs: a noble avenue which posterity will pace delightedly, thinking kind thoughts of 1907. It is an admirable project, and a fine salve for outraged sentiment. It sets the seal on Walton's defeat: more even than the red-faced streets does it signalize her absorption in the mass; but it is none the less a thing one welcomes with enthusiasm. Thatch, after all, is not the final excellence of life.

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§ 5.

And, in any case, if Walton still thirsts for redress, she can surely regard herself as amply revenged by her sister suburb, Aintree. For Aintree, to no inconsiderable proportion of the inhabitants of the British Isles, is a vastly more important place than Liverpool—Liverpool, indeed, for them, deriving its sole significance from the fact that it is a well-trained and useful attendant at Aintree's door. The secret, of course, is the Grand National—most searching of all the national rhapsodies we strum on horse-flesh—which is performed here every spring.

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Big race-meetings don't vary very much; and Grand National Day at Aintree presents much the same features as one finds elsewhere. There are the same great stands, looking, from a proletarian distance, like boxes crammed with flowers; the same sliding bourdon from the betting-rings; the same sudden drift of music that means that Majesty has arrived, that Majesty is mounting the Stand, that Majesty's binoculars are even now compressing the whole astonishing landscape into one bright little picture for Majesty's eyes. Follows, as always, the remote, wavering crescent at the starting-point; the delicate stream of coloured scraps, blowing as before a wind, rising and falling here and there in easy, soundless undulations; the faint, raw crash of sound as the stream flutters beneath the quivering sparkle of the Stands. And afterwards, the usual black flood of people pouring across the plain, the usual sententious groups about the jumps, the usual rancid litter, the inevitable dizzy smell of trodden turf.

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Only, right at the end, there is one amendment to note. The traditional hotchpotch of home-returning vehicles has been replaced by something else. Away in the centre of the City some one in a little office signs an order; and when the mob pours out, it discovers long glittering files of electric cars awaiting it at the entrance. So, independently propelled no longer, but packed sociably together, they sweep back to the heart of the City, past the sad walls of Walton Church, a magnificent official cavalcade.

§ 6.

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Walton's drab neighbours on the other side, too, have also their sporting associations, and, in consequence, some measure of independent fame. Each Saturday afternoon throughout the winter grey clouds of sound drift over all this northern district and out into the country beyond: rivalling for a time the brazen rumours from the River which are always visiting these airs. They rise from the great football-grounds at Everton and Anfield, where some tens of thousands of enthusiasts, incredibly packed together (any number of the worst-paid of L—'s understudies among them), indulge, week after week, a passion for vicarious athletics.

There is always something rather heartsome about the sound of distant cheering, and in this case one welcomes these tumults with an especial enthusiasm. It would probably be unjust to suggest that they stand for the most positive moment in the lives of the cheerers, but it is certainly true that they provide the most positive note in the whole of the dull regions that surround them. Towards Stanley Park, indeed, in Anfield, there is a momentary touch of something that is almost sprightliness; and over in Everton, near the hill from which De Quincey admired the view of distant Liverpool, there is a flavour of dignified decay. But, for the rest, there are only labyrinthine miles of gardenless, spiritless streets, neither new nor old, neither vicious nor respectable—always tragically null and inchoate. They involve Kirkdale; they trail out towards Cabbage Hall; they trudge past Newsham Park, and so away towards the south. The main ribs strike across them here and there, distributing a little colour—paper-shops, tobacconists', sweet-shops, the rich phials of a drug-store, butchers' slabs covered with intricate runes of red and yellow; but these respites are desperately restricted. The gleam dies away as quickly as the sound of the car-gongs; the web slinks back into its old monotony, into that grey neutrality which seems, somehow, to be far baser and more vitiating than the brute positive blackness of the slums.

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To explain these regions, to see them (as we ought to see them) as something more than a dull and featureless enigma, it is needful to regard them in relation to the City, to see them as one of the essential whorls in the great hieroglyph which is Liverpool. Looked at in this way, they do begin to reveal a kind of meaning, even to assume a kind of magnificence. They mean that Liverpool demands, for the prosecution of her so colourful adventures, the services of so many thousands of grey lives, the efforts of a great brotherhood content to labour all day long on her behalf in exchange for permission to return at nightfall just here, to make themselves a home in just this stretch of barren twilight. She cannot let them go further afield; she cannot grant them space enough for brightness. This much she can afford them, and no more.

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So regarded, all this drabness becomes something much more terrible and magnificent than a mere neutral foil to the City's beauty, a mere grey passage which throws the purple into relief. It becomes one of the sources of that beauty, one of the processes by which that beauty was attained—a grey and dreadful ritual observed by the City in the hope of being granted strange powers. These dull houses are so much squeezed dye-wood. Their colour, their brightness, have gone to stain the rich fabric of the City's enterprise, to paint the romantic emblem by which she is known in dim corners of the earth, to illuminate the saga of her career. And, remembering this, it becomes almost possible to regard the dwellers in these regions less as prisoners in a dull and sorrowful gaol than as priests in the recesses of some twilight temple, gravely and honourably fulfilling sacred offices.

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§ 7.

At the same time, it is, no doubt, only too easy to overestimate the heaviness of the twilight. Here is human nature packed thick and thick, and where there is human nature, there romance is also. Theoretically, therefore, the whole place is seething with adventure, and each one of these drab doorways is an entrance to a palpitating epic. Theoretically, all this monotony is but a mask, and beneath it there are warm human features, quick and variable with terror and pity and passion and quiet joy. It may be so; but those doors remain implacably closed, the mask is never dropped; all this great romance is writ in cipher. Here and there a phrase emerges: a couple of youths whispering at a corner; a woman wrapped in a shawl singing drearily in an empty street; an old man solemnly tapping at a door; a child running screaming from a curtainless house; and one fingers them for a little, and pores over them, but in the end is always forced to push them despairingly aside. The key is lacking; they remain enigmatic; and one might wander these grey sad streets for ever and learn nothing of their secrets. Every house is inarticulate; a menacing dumbness broods over the whole region.

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And it is by personal associations alone that those secrets can be surprised. Directories carry us a little way: they tell us that two cabmen, a draper's assistant, a cotton-porter, a stoker, a bricklayer, and a carter, live in that half-dozen liver-coloured brick boxes; and the knowledge certainly invests the place (it is a street in Anfield) with a tinge of actuality. But there are so many other things we require to know about that bricklayer—the colour of his wife's eyes, for instance; whether he prefers hot-pot or Irish-stew; whether his youngest has yet had the measles. At Sefton Park, at Blundellsands, qualities analogous to these are easily discoverable, even by the outsider; but here they are hidden away beneath an unfathomable monotony. To discover the romance, to taste the secret drama that makes Anfield and Everton and Cabbage Hall habitable, it would be necessary to live in each of them in turn, to have an initiating friend in every road.... Thus, in a little street behind Netherfield Road there live a couple of dear old maiden ladies, whom the progress of education has prevented from teaching and taught to starve, and whose training has made them determined to starve respectably, in private; and knowledge of them and of their drama has made, for me, that street a shade less cryptic. And then, again, over in Edge Hill there is a little bed-sitting-room overlooking a stale back-yard where I used to go once a week to hear the Kosmos put in order by a poet who wrote bad verses, but quoted good ones. To the outsider Edge Hill must seem as inscrutably monotonous as its neighbours. But I know better. It revealed itself to me, in those days, as a wonderful avenue to all manner of tender and high-hearted possibilities; and I still recall evenings spent in the Botanic Gardens over there, with my poet mouthing some splendid scarlet thing from Whitman or Shelley in the afterglow, when the place seemed positively surcharged with vital and dramatic loveliness.

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§ 8.

But revealing experiences of this sort are inevitably limited, and, lacking any great store of them, one is content to fall back on broad summaries, to say that this crepuscular region stretches from Anfield and Everton in the north, below Newsham Park, through Edge Hill, and so towards Wavertree in the south. It has its degrees of neutrality, of course—amenities creep occasionally in—but for the most part it remains a region whose intimate meanings are concealed by its monotony, but whose monotony gives it in the mass a deep and terrible significance.

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And below this tract, gravely introducing its later passages to the City, there marches a dull, highly respectable quarter of streets and squares (rare episodes, these latter, in Liverpool), of which, again, one can only protest that it is really much more impressive than it seems. There is Abercromby Square, where the Bishop lives; there is Oxford Street, upon which the shade of Aubrey Beardsley is reported to make an occasional shrinking descent; there are Catherine Street, Bedford Street, Chatham Street, all earnestly pleading for geranium boxes; and Rodney Street, where many doctors and one small green slab combine to surround Gladstone's birthplace with an appropriate atmosphere of dignity. And so at length to the verge of the hill that cups the

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City, with the Philharmonic Hall making one part of it a place, on winter nights, of ringing hoofs and thronging audiences, and the University, in another, looking gravely down upon the rooftops of the tense and vivid City which it is its duty by scholarship to serve.

And on the other side of that dumb territory there always sweep the suburbs that have the green fields for their neighbours: the suburbs that here delicately woo the country and there vulgarly accost it, and now stop short at the sight of it with a gorgeous affectation of surprise, and now stealthily seduce it into all manner of morbid episodes; but whose essential business is always, by this device or by that, to lure the fields into the state of urbanity, to establish fresh colonies and receptacles for the constantly swelling mass that seethes behind. Cabbage Hall, the northernmost, plays the part of stealthy seducer, dribbling out among the fields in colourless disorder, entrapping them in the dreariest fashion, without a hint of glamour. Next comes West Derby, a group of clean-faced cottages standing about its car-terminus like smocked village children gaping prettily at a lurid visitor, its neatly dignified church and deer-scattered park reflecting the outburst of ripe, authentic aristocracy that makes the country-side beyond so unexpectedly, so exotically, old English. And after West Derby come Knotty Ash and Old Swan: the first, in one's pocket vision of it, a jolly stage-setting of taverns with farm-carts before them, of tiny, twinkling pinafores pouring out of a village school, of a neat spire (a property it doesn't, however, do to investigate too closely) rising above a grove of realistic trees; the second—suffering in places from a bad attack of the scarlet-fever which is now ravaging domestic architecture—leading to a long surge of ambiguous ways and broken ends that spills out finally among the fields near Wavertree. The country on which it breaks has qualities of richness; little coils of woodland lie pleasantly among leaning meadows; and right in the midst of it, like a fleck of pure foam far cast by the muddy wave of the town, lie the lawns and gardens of Calderstone, the latest of Liverpool's parks.

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CALDERSTONES PARK.

§ 9.

For parkland proper, however, it is needful to return to the smoke. Wavertree lies at the end of the Smithdown Road bone of the fan. The next bone pierces that Bloomsbury-like district of highly respectable squares, and so comes out upon the tail of a long regiment of trees making a fine effort to live up to their reputation of being a boulevard. This is Princes Avenue, and Princes Avenue (familiarity breeding uncontentment) is sometimes spoken of in the same breath as Berlin's Unter den Linden. But although the conjunction is scarcely wise, this broad way of trees and churches makes a wholly pleasant approach to the suavest of Liverpool's inner suburbs; and it leads, too, to a deftly-handled space of open air, where it is certainly possible to think of the Champs Elysées without a blush. Sefton Park, although it may not serve so deeply human a purpose as, say, Stanley Park in the north, is certainly quite the most perfectly fashioned of Liverpool's open spaces; and although it is the largest, it never commits the mistake that large parks sometimes make of endeavouring to appear like a piece of virginal country. It is always mannered, self-conscious, full of effects that are in the right sense "picturesque"; and the sheep that feed in one part of it do not seem much less deliberately decorative in intention than the peacocks that everywhere admirably strut and flower. To find one of these peacocks (the white one preferably) self-consciously posing on a meadow of rhythmical daffodils is to discover the

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true spirit of park artistry symbolized with absolute perfection.

Eminently Parisian in the morning, when the nurse-girls bring their charges here, and gossip and read and scold and perfunctorily play ball precisely as the *bonnes* do in the Champs Elysées, Sefton Park grows unmistakably British in the sacred hour that lapses between tea and dinner. For then young athletes like L—, and Hebes like our heroine, fill all its tennis-courts with a white-limbed energy.... It is not exactly a white-limbed energy that one observes in the adjoining bowling-green; and its laborious, stooping, shirt-sleeved figures may conceivably be regarded as striking rather a dissonant note amongst the clean-cut decorative activities which surround it. But none the less the sociologist in one eagerly welcomes and commemorates them. For their apparition is another evidence of that coalescence of strata with strata which is one of the features of suburb life just now. They mean that laborious, stooping, shirt-sleeved figures can live nowadays in the once exclusive neighbourhood hereabout; can demand, for their own especial pleasures, some share of the glittering accessory with which this suave neighbourhood once rather royally provided itself.

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§ 10.

But the neighbourhood that immediately environs the Park still remains fairly costly and responsible, and that it seems a little to fall short of absolute impressiveness is doubtless largely due to the overwhelming nature of its accessory. And then, too, it should be remembered, these yellow, uneasy houses came before the bungalow had taught a reasonable compromise between dignity and domesticity. A little further away, up towards Mossley Hill, the success is notably greater. Grave roads, filled with that indescribable hushed exclusiveness which only tall, ripe, sandstone walls and overarching leafage have power to confer, lead up the hill towards the Church. There are deliberate lodges and sudden glimpses of deep-breathing lawn; life grows leisurely and communicative; the silence is full of confessions.

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The Church itself, bulking monumentally against the sky, continues the warm, grave intimacy: even the green stillness that encircles it seems fuller of humanity than all the acres, dense with flesh and blood, over at Everton and Anfield. It is always worth while, therefore, to step through to the farther wall. There, in a flash, you find you have come again to the uttermost edge of the town. A great landscape leaps suddenly out from beneath your feet, woods curve distantly about it, sweet airs bring a company of quiet sounds. A chalk line being softly ruled across the green map means that half a hundred people who have just had tea in town will see the buses in the Euston Road before dinner. A vague smear on the far sky stands for Widnes and poison. A fainter smear above the tree-tops to the right reveals the neighbourhood of Garston.

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§ 11.

And with Garston we reach the tip of the last of the plumes of our fan. Viewed *de profil*—as, for instance, from the River—it would appear to be furnished chiefly with gasometers. The concomitants of gasometers are as invariable as those of race-meetings: Garston is grimy. Considered more closely, however, it breaks up a little, and reveals here and there some wholly pleasant incidents. And on its inland side it yields very gracefully to the influence of the shadowed lanes from Allerton.

The rib that joins it to the centre, sweeps, in the first place, through an easy, spacious district of private parks and well-preserved, middle-aged mansions, and, in the last place, through the débris of the southern slums. Its name in this last phase is Park Lane. If, perceiving that, the visitor feel impelled to smile as at an anticlimax, he would perhaps do well to hesitate; for this Park Lane has probably a wider reputation than any other thoroughfare in Europe. In and about this débris stand the sailors' quarters, the foreign quarters, the Chinese Colony, the emigrants' lodging-houses, the Sailors' Home; and the street that threads these things ("Parkee Lane Street" the coolies call it) is spoken of affectionately in every corner of the Seven Seas. Park Lane probably spells home to half the sailors in the world.

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Midway in its course this last rib separates the decaying gentility south of Princes Park from the frankly homespun suburb of the Dingle. But even the Dingle, since it marches cheek by jowl with the River, cannot escape being occasionally infected with romance. There is one little row of apparently quite subdued little tenements, for instance, whose lives must really be one long debauch of raw sensation. I do not insist upon the haunting presence of the Fever Hospital at one end of them; nor upon that of the lean bridge which stalks appallingly across a ramping railway-siding at the other; for these are incidents of a sort that make other neighbourhoods tremendous. But these cottages have perched themselves exactly on the brink of the ragged cliff which surrounds that ultimate dock, the Herculaneum, and beneath them a group of black monsters are always at work plucking trucks of coal bodily from the railway and plunging them into the bowels of chained ships. Further over, there are the peering heads and shoulders of embedded liners; further, again, the wide manuscript of the River, lurid with adventure; and, beyond that, the stony slopes of the Wirral. Nor is this all; for immediately below their doorsteps some thousands of gallons of petroleum are stored in the live rock, and somewhere beneath their kitchen floors the Midland expresses race and hammer all day long.

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HERCULANEUM DOCK.

Certainly, if it is roaring melodrama one thirsts for, the Dingle, in spite of its drabness, is clearly the place to dwell.

§ 12.

I have just spoken of the stony slopes of the Wirral. The stones, of course, are houses, and the houses form themselves into suburbs, and those suburbs troop all about the coast, and pour inland, and tend to fill all the green peninsula with pleasant cubicles. But of those suburbs and all the tranquil spaces they lead to and enclose I must not now attempt to speak. Their qualities are many: river and sea, heather, champaign, woven coppice, and swart fir-wood grant them a procession of aspects no mere generalization could include. Port Sunlight set out as though for an old English festival; Eastham with its woods and booths; New Ferry and Rock Ferry, the stony slopes that lead at length to Birkenhead; Birkenhead itself, a march played like a dirge; Seacombe, Egremont, New Brighton, promenade-linked, wide-shored, flickering out into all manner of watering-place delights; Leasowe, whose sea-beaten coppices are wonderful in spring with ranks of praying white and hymning purple; Hoylake, with its famous links and golfing fishermen; Thurstaston, with its legendary hills and dear memories; Heswall, sunset-saturated among its heaths; Prenton, with its pine-woods and its water-tower; Oxtun, mellow and meticulous upon its height: so do I content myself with naming them, and, so naming them, add one word of admiration for the dainty fashion in which, in her green chamber, Wirral makes the beds for so many of the workers in the streets across the way.



BIDSTON HILL.

But there is one place in the Wirral about which I must inevitably add another word. Both practically and sentimentally, indeed, Bidston Hill belongs to Liverpool: practically because it is the property of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, and because its Pharos plays so large a part in directing the courses of the fleets; sentimentally—well, sentimentally for a dozen excellent good reasons. It would be from here, no doubt, in the old days, that the traveller from the south would catch his first glimpse of the River and the hamlet; it is from here that generation after generation of townfolk have come to see their City in its bulk; it is here still that they bring the good stranger, hoping secretly that he will find their Liverpool a rather wonderful and alluring sort of place. And certainly it is from here, among this almond-scented gorse, that Liverpool builds up most perfectly into a visible entity. The City and its outposts draw easily together; the Dock Board Building makes an ivory nucleus; and Walton Church on the left, and Mossley Hill Church on the right, seem, in actuality, as they are in essence, but two organic incidents in the great design of which it forms the centre. The bird-song and the dumbness, the green spaces and the grey, the hid tragedies, the fair buildings, the lavish, roaring ways, are now merged wonderfully together, and, in their fusion, form one supreme attribute, nameless because it is unhuman. Smoke-scarves of her own weaving and vapours of the air binding her and her children together, Liverpool broods there in the sunshine, sole and indivisible, a splendid seaward-facing Presence. And the River flames at her feet.

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CHAPTER V

THE SLUMS

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§ 1.

She couches there like a vast Presence, seaward-facing but inly brooding, and, indeed, it is profoundly true that the remote adventures she surveys draw much of their range and splendour from the darkness of her private dreams. For in a manner much more direct and unescapable than those dumb grey regions in the east, these black abysses of her underworld are intimately bound up with the chief sources of her efficiency and power. It is their main purpose to provide the human fulcrum demanded by those monstrous levers at the Docks, and the strange motions of those engines are of a nature that inevitably leave the flesh hideously excoriated and crushed. The bedraggled humans whom we saw running hither and thither among the unhuman silences and uproars are drawn almost wholly from the Slums, and it is, quite undisguisedly, the incalculable necessities of those silences and uproars that have condemned them to the slums and kept them prisoned there.

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THE ALBERT DOCK.

For it is not that the wage of a dock-labourer is insufficient to grant life its decencies. It would, on the contrary, be quite possible for a dock-labourer, constantly employed, to live in one of the suburbs—out, say, at Seaforth—and come to the wharves each day by electric car. But the majority of these men are not constantly employed, and much of that inconstancy would seem to be inevitable. Ships come, ships go, and the tide of labour waxes and wanes as ceaselessly as the tides about it, and vastly more capriciously. And thus not more than twenty-five per cent. of these workers receive a full and constant wage; quite fifty per cent. average less than one-half; and fully a quarter are fortunate if they are permitted to work a couple of days a week. For the greater number of these ministers to Liverpool's efficiency, then, the Slums, obviously, are inevitable. Equally inevitably, the Slums form a topographical annexe to the Docks, a hinterland behind its gates. Out of the bodies of the battered and congested people who crowd there Liverpool contrives a suave unguent, more dreadful than adipocere, which enables the great ships to slide so smoothly to their berths.

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§ 2.

That, then, is the first broad feature of Liverpool's poverty—the frankness and completeness with which it is involved in the processes which grant her all her wealth. I have already spoken of its physical distribution: two dirty smears, one on either hand of the clean-swept central spaces. Of the two, the northern is the larger; and together they probably contain some six thousand adults and some thirteen thousand children. Of these (and this is the second and more interior peculiarity), the majority are either Irish or of Irish descent.^[5] It follows, therefore, that here alone in Liverpool do you get a specific dialect. They speak a bastard brogue: a shambling, degenerate speech of slipshod vowels and muddied consonants—a cast-off clout of a tongue, more debased even than Whitechapel Cockney, because so much more sluggish, so much less positive and acute. It follows, too, that the ruling religion of these quarters is Roman Catholicism. There are about a dozen Catholic churches actually in the Slums, and to pass suddenly into one of them out of the stench and uproar of some dishevelled court is to taste again, in a very peculiar measure, the sweet, rich silence that has so often broken on one's palate in the towns and villages of the Continent. Here, as on the Continent, too, the people slip in and out all day long, genuflecting, sitting in apathetic huddles, going back once more to their sorrowful outer world. And you constantly see the figures of priests moving to and fro among the lanes and alleys.

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[5] The northern Slum forms a large part of the only English constituency returning a Nationalist Member to the House.

§ 3.

It would be an easy matter to add to this list of the region's peculiarities: to speak of its food—chiefly bread and tea, with, upon occasion, the viler parts of pig; of its queer parasitic industries; of its dress, its habit of early marriage, its extravagant fecundity. But to do this would be simply to repeat, with a difference, that oldest and unhappiest of slum-induced habits, the habit of regarding the people who live there as, in some sort, a race apart. We speak largely of the Underworld, the People of the Abyss, the Submerged Tenth, and gradually we drift into a way of considering them as a strange breed of degenerates, mattoids, morlocks.... It is an offence that all the friendships I have formed amongst these people make me especially anxious to avoid. They are all, really, much more like the suburbans than the suburbans are themselves. Each one of these so bedraggled humans is really a rinsed and expurgated bundle of just those passions and emotions which form the unalterable nucleus of every character in the world. Life for them, you see, is so astonishingly shorn of the complexities and elaborations. All its circumstances—those levers at the Docks amongst others—have tended to fine everything down to the blunt, primary facts; and it is here, accordingly, and not amongst the lettuce-eaters who read Nietzsche in lonely country cottages, that you may discover the authentic simple life. They are always undisguisedly face to face, for instance, with that most ancient and inveterate of human problems, the problem of getting food. They start, so to say, from scratch. They tear the day's vitality out of their own vitals. They know the pains of hunger on the one hand, the pains of satisfying hunger on the other; and they are constantly preoccupied with the fundamental human business of reconciling that great antithesis. It is the same throughout. Birth and Death, Hunger, Love and Hate, the Terrors of Damnation and the Hope of Heaven, become constant and vehement companions. The bones of life show through. Here, certainly, *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*. And the people who live here are simply our simplified selves.

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§ 4.

Take, for example, the case of Esther—of Esther (I'm sorry) Grimes. She lives in one of those blind-backed courts off Blenheim Street—quite one of the most malodorous corners in the whole of Liverpool's Underworld. Her father (like so many of the fathers here: they seem to wear rather worse than the women) is dead, and Esther keeps herself and a vile-tempered, rheumatically old gargoyle-crowned stick of a mother by tramping amazing distances through the northern suburbs—Anfield, Kirkdale, and so on—selling "stuff." "Stuff" is Liverpool Irish for cheap fruits and vegetables, and she carries her ill-favoured tomatoes or oranges or whatever it may be in a great basket poised on a turban perched on the top of her head. Also, she bellows. By getting to the market by six in the morning and steadily walking and bellowing until five o'clock at night she can sometimes make quite as much as twelve shillings a week, which is more than she used to make in the tin-works. (It was Mr. Upton Sinclair, by the way, who really expelled her from there. "The Jungle" had some unsuspected sequels in this and that odd corner of the world.) She wears one of those local accretions of innumerable petticoats which so successfully attain all a crinoline's ugliness without any of its precision, and her mass of red hair is scraped back into a tumbling knot above her neck, and drawn over the forehead of her pointed face in a broad fringe. She speaks the hideous jargon of the district, and when the suburban sees her in his own streets thus fringed, petticoated, bawling, and besmeared, he very naturally wonders what kind of preposterous nature must lurk beneath so preposterous an exterior.

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But I know Esther very well indeed, and I protest that she is not in the least preposterous, that she is not, essentially, anything but particularly normal. I am convinced, indeed, as Grant Allen was of Hedda Gabler, that "I take her in to dinner twice a week." She has all the essential, the root qualities: she is just, she is generous, she is sociable. She loves cleanliness and good colours. She has a fine appetite for pleasure, and the right, needful touch of *diablerie*. All that she lacks is an adequate mode of expression, the flexile, elaborate technique which would enable her to grant these things a gracious and orderly embodiment.... If you could invest her with certain possibilities of dress (the dress that Mr. Charles Ricketts designed the other day for Miss McCarthy would suit her admirably), could get her hair heaped up and back, and so round across her forehead in the curve that would rhyme with the feat curve of her chin, she would present, if not a figure of intolerable beauty, at least one of very singular vividness and charm.... Well, just in the same way with that essential bundle of root qualities which she possesses: grant them a similar appropriate equipment, and you would get an equally delightful result. But as it is, hammered out on the patched and tuneless instrument she has been provided with, all the fine human music of which she is so full sounds fearfully like so much deliberate discordancy. Her sociability, for instance: she is compelled to express that by sitting on a sour doorstep in the midst of a raucous group of messy neighbours. Her affection, again: she can only display that by lovingly cursing her mother, and by swinking all day on her behalf instead of getting married—as she so easily might do. She is just; but perhaps the only dignified example of her justness that I can produce is her remark (remember, she is one of the devoutest of Catholics) that probably the folks who insist upon leaving tracts for her really mean very well at bottom. She is fond of cleanliness; and the proof of that is to be found in the fact that she spends vastly more pains upon her toilet than many even second-rate actresses. It is not her fault that the results are incommensurate with her efforts. When one has to get all the water one uses from a little dribbling pump in the middle of a filthy court; when one has to carry it in a leaky meat-tin up a slimy stairway to a foetid room; when one has to wash (without soap) in the same meat-tin, and do one's fringe without a looking-glass; when one has to do all this on a diet of bread and tea, and under a constant hail of reproaches from a rheumatically old gargoyle, then it becomes distinctly easy to expend an enormous amount of energy without obtaining any very ravishing result. The result in Esther's case is that you get an apparition so preposterous and streaky that well-

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meaning old ladies in the public streets are often moved to remonstrate with it on the subject of untidiness. I have heard them. I have also heard Esther's replies.... She has, as I say, the needful touch of *diablerie*.

§ 5.

As with Esther, so with the majority of those about her. They are not plaster saints, and they are not morlocks: they are simply a community of amiably-intentioned life and laughter loving men and women and children, with the average amount of pluck and the average amount of cowardice, all exceedingly human and sinful and lovable and amorous and faithful and absurd and vain, and all compelled, by some strange swirl of outer circumstance, to spend their strength in a warfare waged on prehistoric lines. Here and there, of course, the skin self-protectingly toughens, malformities creep in, the Beast gets its appalling opportunities. Those levers at the Docks produce some sickening results.... But I do not want to heap up horrors. That, indeed, would be an easy thing to do. But it is even easier to misunderstand those exterior horrors which constantly do present themselves. That dirt, as we have seen, does not mean a love of dirt or a lack of energy; it simply stands for lack of proper tools.

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Those clustered slatterns on the doorsteps do not really symbolize degeneracy; they merely emblemize that delicate and wholesome spirit which finds its projection elsewhere in the pleasant devices of our drawing-rooms. That ghastly uproar in a place of stench and wailing children simply means that the spleen which you and I, armed with a host of ingenious little instruments, twist and contrive into this and that elaborate code of moods and attitudes, is there being published abroad in the only fashion available. And it is not the fault of these people, nor in the least their essential desire, it is wholly the fault of the uncouth apparatus at their disposal, that their embodiment of that other wholesome and delicate human instinct—the instinct for Pleasure—should have taken the form of the crude lights and shocks of a corner tavern.

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No, down here in the blackness and the slime, it is not, for the most part, any strange, incalculable brood that has its spawning-place; and I would like these two regions to remain in your imagination rather as a couple of far, unwholesome islands, primitive with jungle and morass, on which some thousands of twentieth century civilians, bankrupt of even the necessities, have been planked astonishingly down.

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§ 6.

Now, it is obviously not in the nature of things that Liverpool should permit all the resultant discordancies and malformities—the constant waste of effort, the constant and preposterous clothing of civil bodies in a barbarous dress—without making some very notable efforts to provision and equip those islands. Much of this black disorder forms, as I have said, a large part of the price she pays for her efficiency—these people have been marooned here by the necessities of her own prosperous voyages—and although her passion for efficiency will never permit her to reduce the blackness by decreasing the efficiency, that very passion has always made her supremely anxious to beat down the price as far as possible. In no other city in the country, certainly, have the questions of feeding the poor, of housing them, nursing them, washing them, received more earnest and controlled attention; and upon the shores of these strange islands far-sounding official tides are constantly flinging this and that of necessity, of comfort, of direction. Into the details of all these efforts I have now no space to enter; nor, indeed, would such entry fall within the scope of this book. But you get their presence visualized, you get the vital sense of the activity of all these forces, when you turn some drab corner among the hovels and the rank disorder and come suddenly in sight of one of the clean, decisive blocks of Corporation dwellings: leash, personable structures, balconied and symmetrical, made up of course upon course of fit and habitable flats, and glittering at night with an unexpected blithesomeness and order. You get the same assurance, again, in the public wash-houses planted here and there—the first of their kind in the kingdom; and again in the occurrence of those neat-handed depots for distributing sterilized milk which dot a white pattern all about the blackness.

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And always about these coasts, augmenting the gifts of the controlled official tides, there constantly wheels and dips an active fleet of friendly privateers. It is to them, indeed, that one's natural inclination is always to look most hopefully: they are obviously human, they bring camaraderie and affection—needful things that the milk depots are not compelled to supply. You get all that side of the thing admirably symbolized by those open-air concerts (also, I fancy, the first of their sort in the kingdom) organized by one of the most successful of these free-lance expeditions, which fill the darkest of the courts, night after night, with actual, colourful music.... So that all these islanders, Esther and the rest, are not to be pictured as living in absolute isolation. Through the chaotic crowd of them there constantly move, very vitally and wonderfully, certain reassuring visitants—some shrewd, some benignant, some sentimental, but all enormously in earnest; and for my own part I never recall the dull bleared speech that prevails there without hearing, too, the dainty broken English, the daintier laughter, of a certain Swiss worker who chaffs them and mothers them and bullies them, and whom they love exceedingly, or without seeing the spare figure of that fine Founder of a noble secular order whom seven thousand children know by name, and who can pass anywhere among these morasses, at any hour of the day or night, and receive nothing but a welcome of elemental friendliness.

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§ 7.

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So that, in one way and another, the islanders begin to get their apparatus, the People of the Abyss, if you prefer to call them so, their share of light and laughter; and some day, perhaps, these two dull smears may even be wholly erased. And one speaks of such an event with the more of hopefulness because there are not lacking certain signals of a wide and deep change that is about to pass over, that has, indeed, already begun to pass over, the great organism of which they form so intimate a part. I do not speak now of a mere change in the social attitude towards these people; I speak rather of those profounder alterations of character, of purpose, of ideal, which must run their apparently unrelated course before any such specific attitude can be affected at all stably and significantly. All this blackness and disarray is, after all, too fundamental to vanish before any self-conscious and deliberate endeavours; it can only disappear by a kind of accident, the almost unintended by-product of other and alien processes; and it is, therefore, neither to the efforts of these fine workers, nor to the validity and zeal of that glittering official machinery, that one turns, on the last analysis, for the true portents of the change. It is rather to the talk going on in the cafés, to the books in the booksellers' windows, to the remote suburban firesides where very different matters are being quietly discussed, to the efforts apparent in the ateliers. And in all these places, it seems to me, there are to be discerned the signs of the dawn of another epoch in the City's history.

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Liverpool passes out of her pubescence. The swift straight lines of her eager and yet so strangely dignified uprising begin to swerve out now into ample curves, begin to enclose another spaciousness, a larger and more considerate leisure. One finds it evidenced in the social atmosphere of the place, in an increasing suavity and ripeness to be discovered there. It appears again in the part played by the University—a part of ever-increasing confidence and intimacy on the one hand, of ever-increasing acceptability on the other. It is to be detected in the religious life of the place, in the aspirations which surround the great Cathedral which is now splendidly uprising in her midst. It is disclosed in the revealing mirror of the arts. In her latest and most perfect piece of architecture, the luminous building, so significantly isolated, that serenely dominates her central wharves, she seems, almost for the first time, to have confessed herself in beauty perfectly, and she has done that because the nature of the confession had already suffered change. A new poet, too, has wonderfully arisen in the midst of these hitherto almost songless workers; and in the painters' quarters there is a momentous stir of schism and disputation. Already the old art of the place, called into existence by its spirit of independence, but limited by the typical demands of so strenuous an atmosphere, begins to give way a little before the advances of an art that concedes nothing to the citizen, that sits frankly apart among its own visions.... In a little bronze-hung studio, poised high above one of the central ways, a woman is dealing with pigment in a fashion more sensitive and personal than any that has been known in Liverpool before. Well, in the quality of her work I find some confession of the forces that are producing the profound unanimous change which may lead, among other things, to the dispersal of the darkness of the underworld.

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So that in the end this dull stain may vanish. I have called it a dream—a black mood out of which the City dreadfully gathers inspiration for her battles. Like other dreams, it may one day draw to its close. But when it is over the dreamer, too, will have changed; that, at least, is inevitable. Just in what manner these subtle and various mutations will affect her character, her aspect, it is impossible even to suggest. It may be that this growing sensitiveness will soften in some measure the fingers we have seen probing, so tirelessly, so tirelessly, for the hard unmitigable fact. Or it may be that she will discover some wonderful union between these qualities, will maintain a double dominion, losing nothing of her ardour, gaining much of this new tranquillity. It is impossible to predict. This much alone is certain: that the next book which essays her portraiture will have to deal with a strangely different subject.

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