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LIFE IN BIG LONDON

SOME OF THE THINGS AMERICAN VISITORS SOON LEARN.

Frequent Blowing of Cab Whistles Puzzling at First—No Bootblack Stands in British Capital—Women Cannot Clean Windows.

Americans sojourning in London are often puzzled in their first few hours there to account for the frequent blowing of mouth whistles in their vicinity, resembling the blasts of sound with which the New York postman accompanies the delivery of mail. A Yankee who arrived in the British metropolis one summer night greatly fatigued by his journey retired early at his lodgings, but was kept awake until midnight by the unaccustomed and continuous blowing of whistles, which suggested to his drowsy brain that letter carriers were calling every few minutes at the adjoining houses.

At breakfast the next morning he remarked that he had often heard of London's frequent mail deliveries, but he had never supposed there were so many of them as he had heard the previous evening.

"Hear?" inquired his seat mate.

"Yes; didn't you hear the postmen blowing their whistles every few minutes until after midnight?"

The English are too polite to laugh in one's face, but a suppressed snicker went around the table, breaking into audible laughter as another New Yorker, who had been in London twenty-four hours longer than the new arrival, explained glibly:

"Why, those were cab calls you heard. Every London house has a cab whistle. One blast brings a hansom, two a four wheeler."

Cabs are essential to London, where antiquated stages are the only means of going in many directions, and they serve as express wagons as well as conveyances. Few persons send their baggage ("luggage," it is called over there) in advance to railway station or steamer pier. A cab is called at the last moment, and the cabman puts trunk or valise on the roof of his vehicle. If one's parcels are numerous a four wheeler or omnibus is employed. On arriving with luggage the same method is used to carry it to one's home or lodgings.

As the baggage covered hansom bows along two or three ragged and dirty men or boys may be seen running beside it. If any distance is to be traversed, it will be noticed that some of these drop behind one after the other, while others take their places. They are "runners," usually men on their "uppers," who earn an occasional shilling by following cabs to their destinations and carrying the luggage upstairs for the arriving passengers.

It would not occur to the average Englishman to seek a bootblack outside his own home for his morning "shine." Shoes are generally polished in the house by the maidservant, if one lacks valet or footman, and the bootblack stand is conspicuously absent from the British capital. Bootblacks, often aged men, bearing the label "Licensed Messenger" on their coat sleeve, have foot boxes at the chief intersections of the principal thoroughfares and ply their trade for the benefit of transients and foreigners. They are seldom patronized by the London householder.

One of the first inquiries made by Americans who settle in London is for a washerwoman. But it is soon found that this useful person is not to be had. Very little washing is done at home or taken out by washerwomen in London, all the soiled linen being sent to a laundry. The result is that Americans, accustomed to the weekly visit of the family washerwoman at home, find their laundry bills not a small item of expense on the other side of the ocean.

A surprise is in store for the new householder in London who asks the maidservant to clean the windows. "Indeed, ma'am, I'd be arrested if I did," explains the girl as she refuses the task. And, sure enough, it is learned that owing to accidents to women cleaning windows from the outside the authorities have ordained that women must not risk life or limb at window cleaning. The penalty for disobeying the regulation is a fine of \$5. So men employed as porters in furniture stores and similar shops earn many odd sixpences and shillings by spending their weekly half holidays as window cleaners to householders lacking men servants.

Most of the small London shopkeepers and their assistants take a half holiday on Thursday instead of Saturday, as in New York, the butchers closing up Tuesday afternoons. This practice causes inconvenience to newcomers until guarded against by early purchases. —New York Tribune.

A Sickly Diary.

"Look here, old chap, I'll give you a valuable tip," said the experienced married man to the prospective bridegroom. "Don't let your wife keep a diary on the honeymoon. My wife did that, and now whenever we quarrel she brings it out and reads some of the idiotic things I said to her then."

Quite English.

She—is that an English coat you are wearing? He—Yes. How do you like it? She—To be frank with you, it is a fright. He—It wouldn't be English if it wasn't.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Easy.

"How do you suppose that fellow ever got through college?" "By means of a college coach."—Baltimore American.

It is great and manly to disdain disfigure; it shows our spirit and proves our strength.—Young.

AN ANCIENT VOLUME.

Old Playbook of Jefferson's Grandfather Rescued From Scrap Heap.

Before me lies an ancient playbook rescued from the scrap heap of a junk dealer. It contains three small pamphlets hand stitched with coarse linen thread—"The Emperor of the Moon, as performed at the Patagonian Theater, London;" "Damon and Phillida, with the Musick prefix'd to each Song," and "English Readings, a Comic Piece in one Act." They are dated 1777, 1765 and 1787. On the frontispiece of each playlet is inscribed a signature—J. Jefferson. The autographs have so nearly faded into the yellow dimness of the time stained paper that it is not possible they could have been written by the genial comedian of our day. Each signature is evidently as old as the book itself.

One day, curious as to the ownership of the little volume, I submitted it to the late Joseph Jefferson. He turned the yellowed pages slowly and with much interest, studying attentively the autograph inscribed here and there through the book.

"It is undoubtedly," he said, "a stray volume from the library of my grandfather. Like my own library, it was bound to have many playbooks in it. He may have used it in London and brought it with him when he came to America in 1797. The playbills of those days abounded in a medley of short pieces such as you find in this little volume. What interests me most, however, is the curious likeness I find in the autograph of my grandfather to my own writing. The characters are smaller, and some letters are unlike. Still there is a family resemblance, somewhat like that handed down in face and figure.—Lippincott's Magazine.

A CAT'S AMUSING TRICK.

Pass Found a Way to Keep Her Appointments.

"My cat," says a writer in the Chicago Tribune, "is twelve years old and an ordinary tabby. Since it was delicate as a kitten, I always let it sleep in the kitchen on the ground floor, from which a large window overlooks a yard. In this window is one pane which opens separately by means of a latch.

"When it was about two years old the cat, no doubt finding the night long, taught itself to open this pane and get out through it. At first when the cook told me about it I was incredulous, knowing that servants have a way of making the cat responsible for any little negligence of their own, but as the window was found open every morning I was bound to believe it. Since then I have seen the cat do the trick a hundred times, for, once it knew that we had discovered it, it no longer made a secret of it. Its way of doing it was to jump upon the inner window sill, push the latch upward with the tip of its nose and pull the frame back with its paw. It did this as easily as a human being would do it with the hand.

"The most amusing part is that one of this cat's descendants, perceiving that its mother knew the secret of getting outside, taught itself the same trick in quite a short time. This kitten opened any sideboard or cupboard in which the key had not been turned by pulling the door toward it with the greatest dexterity."

The Seal's Sense of Smell.

The sense of smell possessed by the seals is very strong and will invariably wake them out of a sound sleep, even if you come upon them ever so quietly to the windward, and you will alarm them in this way much more thoroughly, though you be a half mile distant, than if you came up carelessly from the leeward and even walked in among them, they seeming to feel that you are not different from one of their own species until they smell you. The chief attraction in these animals is their large, handsome eyes, which indicate great intelligence. They are a deep bluish black, with a soft, glistening appearance, and the pupil, like the cat's, is capable of great dilation and contraction.

Curious Manx Custom.

On July 5 every year all the officials of the Isle of Man, including the clergy in their surplices, walk to the top of Tynwald hill, and from the top of the laws made during the year are promulgated in Manx and English. This promulgation of the laws on Tynwald hill is as necessary as the royal assent to the validity of all laws passed by the Manx legislature. This is one of the many relics which the old Norsemen left behind, and it dates so far back that its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity.—Liverpool Mercury.

Getting It Right.

A schoolteacher instructing her classes in grammar wrote this sentence on the board for correction: "The horse and the cow is in the lot." No one seemed to know what was wrong with it till at last a polite little boy raised his hand. "What is it, Johnny?" asked the teacher. "You should put the lady first," corrected Johnny.

Logie.

"Now, then," thundered the temperance orator, "what causes most of the crime in this world? Drink! And what causes drink?" "Thirst!" cried a voice in the rear of the hall.—Philadelphia Press.

The Simple Life.

"To what extent do you believe in the simple life?" "By never indulging in those things that you do not care for."—Milwaukee Sentinel.

Roman censors often fined bachelors, and men of full age were required to marry.

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