

# London:

## "Give us This Day our Daily Bread"

By SPINDRIFT.

### II.

THE whole world provides food for the Londoner. From North, South, East and West, from cold, frozen zones to broiling, sweetening tropical islands, food of one kind or another pours into London. Heavily freighted steamers plough through rough seas, carrying spices from Ceylon, tea from China, flour from Canada, and meat from New Zealand. Trains rush through Europe, Asia, Africa and America with food which centres in London.

Rich food for the dyspeptic rich, poor food for the poor, food for the surfeited, food for the starving, and food for the middle multitude.

The greater quantity of food which comes to London is marketed in raw form, some in live form, some frozen and some manufactured; it concentrates in the various markets where it is either auctioned or sold privately.

There is a large number of markets, but I intend referring only to the most notable; these are—Covent Garden, Smithfield, Billingsgate, the Metropolitan Cattle Market, and the Leadenhall Poultry Market.

Covent Garden originated as "a great fruit, vegetable and herb market" in 1634; previous to that date it was a public garden and fashionable resort. But if Dryden is to be believed its women frequenters were not of the highest quality. To quote him:—  
"The town two bargains has not worth a farthing."

A Smithfield horse and wife of Covent Garden.  
This market is situated about one hundred yards north of the Strand, 400 yards east of Leicester Square, close to Drury Lane Theatre and the Bow-street Police Court. Fruit, flowers, and vegetables go daily to Covent Garden from every part of the United Kingdom; as the "man about town," satiated with amusement, and saturated with drink, seeks to catch the last train to his home and then to sleep; the "maam from the country," having had his sleep, wends his way to Covent Garden with his heavily laden dray of the earth's produce.

From 2 a.m. till 7 or 8 a.m. the greatest activity and noise prevail there, sellers are busy "knocking down" and buyers active "picking up" bargains. Costermongers shout to one another in a pronounced cockney dialect, horses and donkeys are anathematized, and great wrangling ensues. Heard from a distance the noise sounds like the waves

of an angry sea lashing against the shore. Every grade of buyer is here, from the representative of the "swagger" restaurant to the humble street pedlar with his handcart. Food is bought for the King in his palace, the beggar in a workhouse, the judge in his mansion, the convict in his cell, food for the palatial West End homes where the wealthy "dine"; food for the dirty, tumble-down crib where the wretched, dissolute drunken East-ender "skoffs his grub."

From Covent Garden vehicles of every form, size, and shape drawn by man, woman, horse or donkey go in every direction throughout London carrying accessories for millions of breakfasts, luncheons and dinners. Much of this food changes hands several times before it reaches the consumer, and each time its price is considerably increased; an onion must swell enormously with conscious pride and amazement, as its value is enhanced in transition from the market stall to the West End kitchen. Covent Garden should not be visited later than 7 a.m., as during the fore or afternoon, it is like a ballroom after a ball, a cheerless, lifeless, depressing place.

From Covent Garden to Smithfield is not a far cry, and here we find "The London Central Meat Market." Smithfield, like Covent Garden, is covered with memories of historical interest as numerous as barnacles on the coppered bottom of an old wind-jammer. Formerly it was a gay and fashionable place where tournaments were held, when Belted Knights joust their armoured competitors—whose deeds of daring were prompted by the bright eyes and kindly smiles of "myre ladies." After serving its purpose as a bloody field of mimic battle, Smithfield was converted into a place of public execution, made more bloody by the beheading of William Wallace and the slaying of Wat Tyler in 1381. "Bloody Mary" made it bloodier still when she got rid of Anne Askew, Rogers, Bradford and Philpot; while "Good Queen Bess," probably with a cordial desire to maintain the bloody reputation of the place, had several Nonconformists executed there, and hard by there still exists a memorial tablet to the Smithfield martyrs.

As a human shambles, Smithfield was espersed by the notorious Tyburn, near the Marble Arch. To-day the bloody purpose of Smithfield is not so gruesome as in "ye olden times," and the only sanguinary sight is the blood of cattle, sheep, lambs, and pigs from New Zealand and elsewhere. This market covers 34 acres; it is roofed with glass, and is de-

voted to the sale of meat, poultry, and game. Smithfield rules the prices for these products, and many a New Zealand squatter has to determine whether his women folk are to get new-silked gowns or renovate their old ones according to the Smithfield prices for his meat.

From Smithfield we go to Farrington Station, and take the underground railway to London Bridge; thence we walk to Billingsgate, made "a free and open market for all sorts of fish on and after the 10th day of May, 1699." Billingsgate is supposed to have taken its name from Belin, a King of the Britons, who built a gate there 400 years before the Nativity of Christ. It is the great centre for fish, and some irresponsible people do say language also, but in fairness to the fishfolk, it is only right to explain that they claim that with the cleaner conditions of modern times has come cleaner tongues. The use of "Choice Billingsgate" is an art no longer cultivated there; in fact, the market is now quite Sunday-schooly. If Billingsgate has lost its pre-emptive rights in language, it has not lost its smelliness; there is "an ancient and fish-like smell," which, combined with the pitching and chucking about of slimy, slippery, splashing fish, makes the first visit of the eight-seeing visitor also his last.

Here are auctioned fish from all the lakes and rivers of Great Britain and all the seas within reach thereof. There or a pile, very much like a heap of firewood, is that King of Sporting fish, the clean run Scotch salmon looking all over a fighter even in his flaccid lifelessness; alongside we see turbot, halibut, hake, herring, haddock, plaice, sole, and that unmitigated fraud, the English whitebait. As at Covent Garden, with vegetables and fruit, Smithfield with meat, so at Billingsgate with fish, we see the first step in the distribution of food which up to this point has been concentrating from every point of the compass; the beginning of the end. Food going to the palatial houses, to every grade of hotel, restaurant, and boardinghouse; to trains and steamers, shops, galls, asylums, poor houses, and houses of the poor.

For upwards of 400 years Leadenhall Market has been devoted to the sale of poultry, and looks as if it might continue being used for the same purpose for the next 400 years.

The Metropolitan Cattle Market in London has accommodation for 10,000 cattle, 35,000 sheep, and 1000 pigs, enough animals to stock a fair-sized New Zealand run.

Although not in the category of food markets, at least for Londoners; Tattersall's Horse Market in Knightsbridge is very interesting, and should be visited by colonials who like to see good horse-flesh.

There are many other markets where products, such as butter, cheese, flour, sugar, tea, are dealt with, but their mention would serve no special purpose, therefore "to return to our mittens."

During the last few years London has made great improvements in its restaurants, and is now, I believe, better catered for than any other city in the world. Meals are obtainable when one

likes, where one likes, and how one likes, at prices ranging from 3d up to a guinea, or more. Many of the restaurants are historical, such as the Cheshire Cheese, in Fleet-street, which is redolent of Johnson—a brass plate indicates where he sat; souvenir plates, mugs, or teapots can be purchased, put up in woven baskets secured by a wooden skiver." On Wednesdays one can get a Johnonian luncheon of beefsteak, lark, kidney, oyster pudding; quite good, too. Many other restaurants are made famous by Dickens and other writers. The Ship Inn at Greenwich still exists, known in days gone by for its whitebait dinners. Dropping into an old-fashioned eating-house lately I found little cabins of high oak panels, just like the old exclusive church pews; an old man, dull, melancholy, and slow witted on me—asking him for how long he had been there, he replied:—"Man and boy, I've been here over fifty years," and he looked like it; he was part of the place; a newer waiter would have been an anachronism. At Simpson's, in the Strand, dinner wagons are wheeled about the rooms, and the joints are carried alongside the guests. Old Londoners in New Zealand talk of Spira and Pond as being the caterers of their day, but now we see with greater frequency such signs as the A.B.C. (Asperated Bread Company), Slater's, Fuller's, the Cabin, but mostly "Lyons and Co." The latter is probably the greatest catering company in the world; wherever one goes in London, their white and gold buildings are in evidence, so much so that on one occasion Mr. Deakin, the late Commonwealth Premier, said that "he was not sure whether he was in London or Lyons," to which he might have added that at the Zoo Londoners feed the lions; elsewhere the Lyons feed the Londoners! Lyons and Co. spells successful management and big dividends, due in a measure to the marked ability of Mr. A. W. Marks, who made his start in life in Wellington (N.Z.), and who married a Sydney lady. This company caters in a high-class way at the Trocadero, claimed to be the best restaurant in existence. For the everyday man and woman their "popular" restaurant in Piccadilly gives an excellent lunch for 1/6, and an equally good dinner for 2/6. Other grades there are right down to the modest "suppence-an-article" place, where the shop and office people have their "snack."

Swagger hotels are: The Piccadilly, The Ritz, Carlton, Savoy and Cecil. Prominent restaurants are: Frascatti's, Holborn and Princes', Monico, Pall Mall, but a mere enumeration of the names of your restaurants would fill columns of your paper. Talking of eating causes one to think of tipping as the two actions are twin associates. Tipping has become a wearisome tax on Londoners, a plague worse than any of the ten plagues of Egypt. Everywhere one goes one tips. Go to an hotel, and you tip the waiter, the man who takes your hat and gloves, the lavatory fellow who gives you a towel, the boy who opens the door for you, and the chap who calls a taxi for you, and the driver of the taxi! The extent of a tip depends upon the quality of a horse and the size of you bill; at the better class houses one gives a shilling, two shillings, or larger tip for dinner, but at the ordinary restaurant twopence is the standard, and one requires to carry lots of coppers, threepenny pieces are almost unknown here, and the few I have received have always been tendered with an apology, why, I cannot say, unless it's because the coin looks so small and insignificant as against three pennies.

The "Popular" restaurant and the Strand Palace Hotel absolutely prohibit tipping; it means instant dismissal to any employee who receives a tip; the system seems to work so well there that one wonders why it is not more generally extended.

Some of the cheaper eating houses have "tip boxes" near the pay counter, the contributions to which are divided amongst the staff generally—perhaps this is a deliberate reversion to the method which caused the application of the word "tip"; in olden times such boxes were marked: "To Insure Promptness," and alliterative customers named it the T.I.P. box, hence "Tip" and "Tipping." Many, if not most, waiters get no wages, but live on their tips—a waiter in a fashionable restaurant told me that not only did he get no wages, but he had to pay a premium for his place, and added that he considered it a poor year



A VERY FORWARD PASS.

A reminiscence of games we have seen played.

Continued on page 60