

violets or the rarest of hot-house blooms, this is the chief mart of all London.

Time was when the area drawn upon by Covent Garden was limited to a small radius. Chelsea sent celery, Charlton provided peas, Mortlake supplied asparagus, Battersea contributed cabbages, and the Bedfordshire sands were responsible for onions. Burke used to grow carrots at Beaconsfield and benouan the low prices he received. But even Beaconsfield was not far afield. Before the steel road was laid, in short, the stores of Covent Garden were restricted to such as could reach London by horse traction. Now, however, the iron horse hurries in the produce of the entire British isles, swift steamers bring the harvests of the Channel Islands and France, and ocean greyhounds bear to this centre the fruits of the ends of the earth. Railway vans jostle each other with baskets and crates packed with the produce of California and Australian orchards, and for their companions there are farmers' wains overflowing with vegetables that have travelled fewer yards than the fruits have miles. Little did those long-headed vendors of 1656 dream when unto their modest merchandise would grow.

Gone are the stalwart Irishwomen who used to handle bales of cabbages or baskets of potatoes with the ease of amazons; in their place is an army of husky porters whose first duty is the unloading of railway vans and farmer's wains. On their needs, hardened by usage, they carry towering piles of crates or boxes or baskets to the stands of the various salesmen, and soon the business of the day is in full swing. First in evidence are the retail dealers from the best shops of all London; they can pay the highest prices and generally get the pick of everything. To them succeed the smaller shopkeepers or the most prosperous itinerant vendors; and last in the procession of buyers come the customer-mongers of mean streets. Of the latter there are several grades, ranging from the capitalist who owns several barrows and a team of donkeys, to the hard-pressed East-ender who has had much ado to scrape together the fourpence for his barrow hire and an odd shilling or so to invest in stock-in-trade. The customer-monger doesn't always get the leavings. He is an astute

bargainer and understands the trust game to a limited extent. Rings are not unknown among those street vendors; they often pool their funds and buy in sufficiently large quantities to get the better of their rivals. So the bidders are plentiful, the auction brisk, and by the time London is beginning to stir from its sleep its day's supply of fruits, vegetables, and flowers is streaming from Covent Garden to all points of the compass.

Even when the rush of the early hours is over the market is not destitute of attractions. Sufficient store of crated fruit is left to exhale the heavy odour of apples which Schiller loved so much that it was his chief inspiration in penning prose or verse; blending with that fragrance the nostrils can detect the more exotic pungency of pine-apples or bananas; while the arcade reserved for plants in pots and cut flowers emits a wealth of mingled scents and dazzles the eyes with a kaleidoscope of bewildering colour.

But the market is not all the interest of Covent Garden. The informed imagination grows busy in sweeping away the salesmen's stalls, the fruiterers' avenues, the mounds of cabbages and cauliflowers, the pyramids of baskets and crates, and fills the vacant space with figures of long-past ages. This was a favourite dwelling-ground in the days of old London; the private letters and public records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tell of many an "affair of honour" carried to fatal issue here; and yonder, where the opera-house stands, are the ghostly figures of Martha Ray and James Hackman, chief actors in the tragedy which robbed the Earl of Sandwich of his beautiful mistress and provided the town with a thrilling sensation. All around, too, are the shades of famous coffee-houses, the Bedford, and King's, and Tom's. The first stood under the Piazza, and could count among its patrons Fielding, Pope, Sheridan, Churchill, Garrick, Foote, Quin, and Horace Walpole; the second, little more than a humble shed, stood beneath the portico of St. Paul's Church, which yet stands on the west side of the market, and can be easily pictured from Hogarth's "Morning." Will's and Button's coffee-houses were close at

hand, the former immortalized for all time by Macaulay's glowing picture of the sparks and wits gathered in its smoke-laden room; the latter the haunt of Addison and Steele.

Although the original St. Paul's Church, save for the portico, was demolished by fire more than a century ago, the present building is an exact replica of the structure designed by Ingigo Jones. "I don't want it much better than a barn," said the Earl of Bedford to Jones, who rejoined, "You shall have the handsomest barn in England." The building is nothing more than that, but the vaults beneath hold the dust of the parents of Turner and of the veteran Macklin, while in the churchyard, under nameless stones, repose the vitriolic Peter Pinder, the gay Wycherley, the nimble-witted Samuel Butler of "Hudibras" fame, the tuneful Dr. Arne, who gave England the music of "Rule Britannia," and the courtly Peter Lely, who perpetuated the frail beauties of the merry monarch's court. Round the corner is Henrietta Street, the one-time

abode of Kitty Clive, Sir Robert Strange the illustrious engraver and Jane Austen when on her rare visits to town. But to-day the New World has invaded that famous thoroughfare, for where Pepys once took his strolls and Samuel Cooper painted his miniatures are the London establishments of the Duckworths and the Lippincotts.

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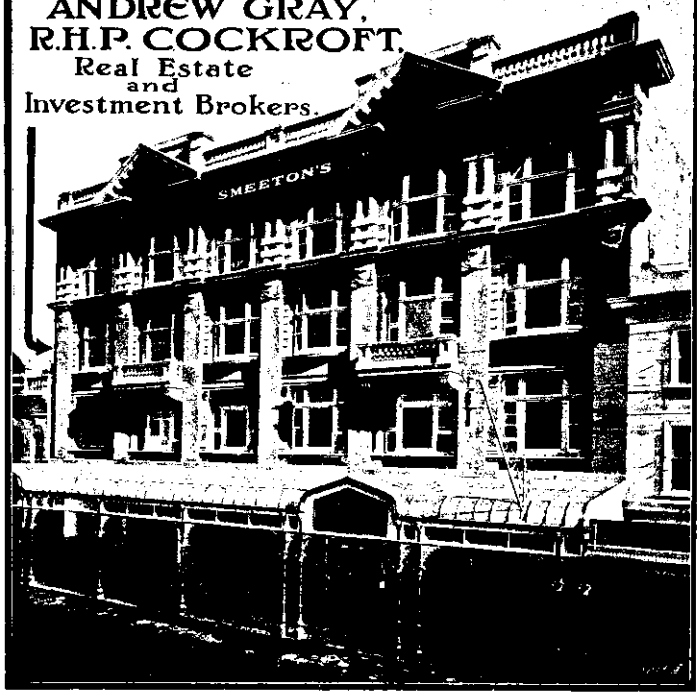
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25th September, 1912