

# London: The City of Mammon

By Lionel Grant

There is a painting—somewhere. A fresco, I believe. Where I saw it I do not even remember.

Nevertheless it stands out in my mind clearly. The picture of a seated woman—her back against the marble staircase of a church or temple—one hand hangs limply at her side, the other shades the keen old hawk eyes gazing out into the distance, lost in some evil dream.

She is a wicked old woman—a fearsome witch of olden days exercising some black magic on the minds of all who look upon her. You are that witch—You, London! Many times at night I have seen you sitting thus. Leaning your long lean hands out across the Continents—the Empire of Mammon which you stand for. You look out with your keen old eyes across the waters, seeking for new fields to exploit in the name of your so-called civilisation and Christianity.

There is power in your gaze.

And so men keep coming and coming that they may die, in order that your overlords may live in the lap of luxury at the expense of those who toil for them. . . .

You exact to the utmost from those who have not the will to oppose your tyranny!

You—City of the Homeless and the Starving amidst your store-houses filled with plenty. The fruits of your children's labour, denied the right of access to by their lords and masters.

You—London, with your back turned against the new world of brotherhood and plenty, with your eyes searching after the gods of War and Mammon.

All around you lie the ruins of your creed. Hatred, suspicions, the cry of the hungry, and the oppressed peoples.

## II.

Men call you a terrible city, O London.

A city like unto all the other cities ruled by the vested interests of the few at the sufferings of the many. Full of cruelty, of chaos, of magic and promise for those who are powerful enough to enforce their will.

The things you keep whispering under your fierce hot breath, the things you keep mumbling between those hard old lips, as you sit there with your Power supported by the sufferings of the masses crying out against your rule in all your domains! The incantations and the magic promises you make that men may serve you. Promises that you still more easily forget to fulfil when it suits your purpose. . . .

And you cry, "No ruins here."

I have tried to understand and make you out—you Witch. To size you up, I've sat in the evening looking at you; at your strange little ways—at the terrible things that are done in your name, and in the name of the Liberty for which you stand. . . .

And yet what did I seek?

A city with beautiful gardens—velvety grass-plots and wide green spaces where the peoples came to rest and play when the day's task was done. A wonderful city, careful of how its children were housed, graceful and clean, made fair by artists' hands. Men living in peace: receiving the full returns of their labour. Where none could live at the expense and toil of others.

But you, O London, sneer at beauty; at the fairness of the artists' hands. You have set up false ideals for beauty—and crush all those who tell you of your infidelity.

Some day in the future I see your stone flesh all diaphanous and radiant like molten amethyst, and the touch of your hand shall mean brotherhood and the dawn of the New World. Perhaps I shall not live to see it—but I take my part along with those of your children throughout your domains who are seeking to make of you the City of their dreams.

## ST. PAUL'S

(Seen from Cheapside on a day of sunshine.)

St. Paul's, thou relic of a waning age,  
The slender trees about thee growing wreath  
Their budding boughs amid thy solitudes,  
Shrouded in shadow, dost withdraw thyself,

As though far purple distance lay between  
Thee and this busy street, a-light with sun.  
Wise Wren did build thee, and with musing soul,  
Conceived thy gracious lines and contours grave,

Like to a lovely woman, brooding there  
In sweet reserve, or as fair Luna's self,  
Celestial bride of young Endymion,  
Elusive to the death; or Eurydice

Whom Orpheus in his ardours might not grasp.  
Thou'rt like some sylvia in a forest glade,  
Seen in a fleeting glimpse, by memory held,  
A cherished fragrance in this fretful whirl.

E.S.P.

## An Epigram.

There's lots of things look easy to fools  
That seem not so to the wise:  
Mussolini "put God back in the schools"  
But—who'll put him back in the skies?

A.C.