The same must be true of the mediaeval city. For one thing, the narrow winding streets prevented anything like an accumulated stream of traffic with its unending clatter.

Florence, for example, must have been quiet, even in times of political upheaval. Otherwise, Dante, adding a City of Din to the City of Dis, would have appalled us with a circle of the Inferno given over to the devils of racket. It is true that the “demon Cerberus” (a barking dog, by the way), “who thundering stuns the spirits, that they for deafness wish in vain,” and the mingled cries and wails of the damned, struck terror to his soul, but Dante’s imagination never conceived the possibility of noise as torture in itself. What noise he did hear in Hell was incidental, so to speak. Obviously he had never experienced din as we moderns know it, and when he seeks to convey to his readers the idea of some overpowering crash, all he can liken it to is the sound of a tempestuous wind in a forest.

No! It has been left to scientific civilisation to fill the world with stridency. We have to pay for our comforts in racket.

And it has been left to Sime, a modern artist of incisive wit, to depict among the punishments for sin the eternal grinding of a street-organ, and to the feeble pen of the present writer to attempt a description of the noises that assail the ear in the modern city. To that City of Din we now pass.

“All hope abandon, ye who enter here!”

Writers of the antiquarian reminiscent school, of whom England is so prolific as almost to suggest that she is in her dotage, often lament the loss of our old English street-cries. Let them take courage, remembering that lavender is still vocally hawked about in its season and that the milkman’s yodel is still audible from our area steps with the clink of his cans as an obbligato. Neither of these, to be sure, is a noise according to our definition, seeing that they are both fresh, pleasant, and even musical. The muffin-man also with his bell and his board still perambulates our quiet Sunday streets during certain months of the year. But I am afraid that the auditory disturbance he creates does approach in quality to noise.
It is an interesting and, as far as I am aware, a hitherto unremarked fact that the tones of the voice can be modified in such a way as to carry not only over long distances in space, but also through an atmosphere burdened with excessive sound. Of the former Sir Walter Scott in 'The Maid of Geierstein' gives a description. Presumably it is the Swiss yödel he has in mind when he speaks of the "singular shrill modulation" that astonishes his hero on the mountains—that yödel which has now degenerated into one of the side-shows of Switzerland, like the cow-bells.

"Why," I asked my Führer one day, "do they hang bells round the cow's necks?"

"Um den Herren zu gefallen!" was his reply.

The "Coo-ee" of Australia is another of those far cries. It was bequeathed to the early settlers by the Australian natives, and similar modes of projecting the voice to great distances are practised by many other uncivilised races.

Workmen in our own country who labour amidst noisy surroundings, of which more anon, instinctively adopt a peculiar tone when conversing at their work. Beetlers, for example, throw into their voice a special quality which enables it to traverse the bone-shaking thunder of their machinery. And in our noisy city streets, also, the draymen, taxi-drivers, and bus-drivers, contrive to exchange badinage at considerable distances in spite of the jarring rattle and rumble of the traffic. Of recent years, however, I notice that they are beginning to rely chiefly upon the language of signs.

A charming suffragette of my acquaintance once informed me that she was attending a class where women were being taught how to address a meeting amid the noise of the London streets.

"How are you taught?" was my natural question.

"Oh!" she replied, "One of us speaks while the rest of the class imitates the noise of the traffic."

It is to the penetrative quality of its notes that the popularity of the street-piano is due, the music of which seems to travel along a plane of comparative stillness to reach our ears, and sometimes also our hearts, through, amidst, and yet in defiance of the massive
clatter of street din. There is a peculiar sweetness in unexpected music, and especially in music with a background of jangle. Witness mill-girls singing amid the metallic whir of spindles, and children warbling in a waggonette or landau, like canaries in a noise.

We must not omit to mention also the common and pathetic London spectacle of a guitar-player strumming his strings just outside the door of a public-house. Looking to heaven and longing to enter in, he directs his notes by some dexterous sleight of hand so that they shall be heard only by the elect and not by the passer-by in the street.

(For the benefit of foreigners who may read this book I hasten to explain that the cruel exclusion of the musician from the tavern is due to our peculiar liquor laws.)

In London of recent years, since the motor vehicle with rubber tyres has to such a great extent replaced the horse-drawn vehicle with its iron-girt wheels, the noise of the traffic has altered very considerably in quality. It is less clattering, less jarring, less varied, and to this grateful change the provision of smoothly-surfaced roads has contributed not a little. But while it has altered in quality we must also regretfully note that it has not lessened in quantity. The roar of the traffic of motor-buses, taxi-cabs, and motor-cars is of a deeper, more thunderous, and more overpowering nature than in former days, principally because the vehicles are heavier and are driven at a much greater speed. In addition to that fact there are also two new sources of unpleasant and disturbing noise, part and parcel of the motor vehicle. One is the jarring and grating of the change-speed lever, particularly in the motor-buses, and the other is the motor-horn.

The motor-horn! The motor-horn! I often wonder why in all the world such an instrument of torture has ever been permitted to exist even for a single day! But there it is; an institution, fixed; established; to be conserved; and of a variety . . . !

When the motor-car took its first experimental run the noise of the explosions in the cylinder was all undamped.

"Never do!" said the wiseacres, shaking their heads. "Far too noisy!"
“Too noisy?” echoed the engineers,—“soon settle that little trouble.” And they proceeded to invent and to perfect the silencer and the multiple cylinder, with the happy result that nowadays the engine produces a mere gentle purring, not unmusical. This little example shows what can be done when quietness is insisted upon.

But the engine and gear-box having been quietened, needs must that the horn develop or the King’s lieges suffer scathe, all unused as they were in those early days to swift movement. So ingenuity again set to work, producing noise this time to take the place of the noise they had just abolished. Hence the horn.

Horns! Surely never before in the whole raucous history of din have such fiendish contraptions split the air.

First and foremost there comes the hoarse ready squawk that betokens the cheaper car, the taxi, and the like, croaking like some gigantic raven from a Dinosaurian age as the driver dashes round a corner or threatens a slow-going horse-vehicle in front of him.

Then follow horns of a more ambitious and even more assertive quality; some of them passing for “musical”—music being the least disagreeable of noises in this connection—like the “Gabriel” horn, whose sounding diapason is startling enough, in all conscience, to awaken the dead; the bugle horn that tootles mechanically the dominant notes of a chord; the horn that sounds all the notes of the chord simultaneously. And at the end of the list come unearthly screeches, squeaks, and groans, from the various noise-producers “on the exhaust”; a rattling whistle that vainly aims at continuity; and finally that ear-rending hollow cough, likened by a tortured surgeon in the middle of his sleepless night to the bark of a sea-lion at the Zoo.

The modern chemist has been able to concoct compounds which are, to all intents and purposes, genuinely novel creations, every whit as deserving of that proud title as the products of M. Worth. So with motor-horn noises. For the first time in the history of the universe we are condemned to endure the infliction of genuinely novel noises. Man, in a word, has created, all by himself, unprecedented varieties of din. No
wonder the nervous jump! Really, man’s possibilities are so appalling!

Vaguely hovering about in the shady background of my memory there is a hazy recollection (or have I dreamt it?) that Parliament had been gestating, and that after much groaning labour it had given birth to an Act forbidding the use of horns and such-like noises “on the exhaust.” Whether or no, these exhaust and exhausting noises still bellow on, deafening, startling, and harassing the noise-worn nerves of the dwellers in Din, until Death, as the eternal Silence, allures us now as never before he hath allured the people of this earth in all the long history of time!

Drivers vary in their reliance upon this warning trumpet. A few will glide from one end of London to the other without once compressing the rubber-bag, or diverting the exhaust pipe from its normal functions. But the vast majority of them pin their faith to a constant exercise of the malign reeds of their brazen trumpets, in consequence of which there is no escape from the noises they produce. Bad enough during the day, their effect is ten times worse at night, when every-

thing else is silent, and the squawks, coughs, and screeches echo and re-echo along the deserted streets, waking the weary from their hard-won slumbers, and denying their so badly-needed rest to the sick and suffering.

Exasperated beyond endurance by his callous trumpetings, I have frequently thrust my head out of a taxi window and have bidden the surly devil: “Don’t drive so much on the horn!” And as a set-off to his muttered but perfectly audible blessing, have soothed my ruffled feelings with the reflection that were all fares equally sensitive, or considerate, or courageous, London streets would be much more pleasant and not any less safe. Not any less safe because, naturally, when he dispenses with his raucous herald the chauffeur drives with greater care and with more consideration for pedestrians. Nor is the loss of time in any degree serious.

In my opinion the motor-horn is quite unnecessary, and were the motor-horn abolished and the change-speed lever of the buses silenced, the noise in our streets would be rendered much less wearing.

The trams, to be sure, would still remain;
those gawky, perambulating crystal palaces, whose hollow rumble sounds so dirge-like, just as if they were mourning for the money their upkeep costs the ratepayer! This sorrowful din adds greatly to the traffic noises in many of our streets, and I cannot suggest any method of reducing it. For once the old advice to resist the devil must be reversed.

The sensibility to noise varies very much in different individuals. There is no doubt that in time we learn to ignore it, a happy acquisition which is rapidly secured when the noise is continuous or expected. Everybody, for example, has heard of the miller who could not sleep out of the sound of his mill-wheels, and everybody, I suppose, has had the curious experience of waking up when the bedroom clock stops ticking. In some of the hotels in Paris they have a clock in every bedroom, each clock being electrically actuated from a central power-station, and the minion of the devil who invented the process has so arranged the mechanism that the clocks are silent, save and except at the minute intervals, which are announced by a loud, single, solitary tick. Clocks that tick only once a minute! And, moreover, you cannot stop one without deranging the whole circuit and bringing every clock in the building to a standstill. If you are slightly deaf, if you are a sound sleeper, if your sensibilities are obtuse, well and good. But if you are endowed with delicate perceptions, if your sense of hearing is acute, if your brain sleeps on a hair-trigger, then I warn you to avoid those hospices of torment as you would the devil himself.

Now it is the irregularity and unexpectedness of the motor-horn that makes a London house so unrestful. Wherefore I inveigh against it.

I once knew a man who kept a small drapery shop in one of London’s great thoroughfares, where the thunder of the traffic goes on unceasingly day and night save during the “wee sma’ hours ayont the twal.” Here above his shop he lived, and in course of time he saved enough money to enable him to retire. On giving up business he bought a small villa in which to spend his remaining years, not, as you might expect, in
archway, the mellow music and deep boom of the bells. One pauses:

"In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought is not, in enjoyment it expires"—

When—can you believe it?—Anti-climax of the nethermost! What is that little hurrying tinkle? Is it some extra-mural bell of its mighty neighbour, and school jealous of its impudently determined in this land of free spirit, to assert its right to make a noise? Not din to assert its right to make a noise? Not a bit of it! The twopenny tinkle is also a The University bell? The University bell! “It came from the old College in the High Street,” and so (a College in the High Street,” and so (a delightful non sequitur, Mr. Professor of delight, non sequitur, Mr. Professor of Logic) despite the painful incongruity, it is still rung to hurry the student to the classroom and the door close.

But oh! for a Petition to the High Authorities who dispose of events upon those classic slopes! Your petitioner humbly sheweth, and so forth, that the old bell is ridiculous, and he prayeth that you now grant it an eternal rest. Let it hang by all means! But let it hang silent.

There are in Europe three cities of bells: Rome, Oxford, Edinburgh. Worlds apart in theological atmosphere though they be, in all three the bells seem to ring out very much the same sort of message. In all the thoughts of even the careless and vagrant outsider are led to ponder for a moment over the deep mystery that underlies the rippling surface of events. Emphasising the distinction between what appears and what actually is, their voice insinuates into the mind of the most worldly some hint of evaded curiosity since ever men began to think.

“There is a castle built over an abyss, through the grating of whose dungeons come and go strange whisperings of wild hopes; unfathomable fears...”

The next of our sections is that which deals with music. It is necessary first of all for me to premise my remarks upon the subject with the declaration that I yield to no one in my love for music, which is only as most of the influence of music upon the mind. Consequently whatever strictures I
may venture upon must not be scorned as the mere growling of a tone-deaf curmudgeon.

In point of fact, however, a disclaimer of any kind is unnecessary since I find myself supported and many of my views trenchantly expressed by no less an authority than Mr. Thomas Beecham, who, in a lecture reported in 'The Times' on June 3rd, 1915, handles the subject of music as a public nuisance with some degree of vigour.

"Music," he says, "forces itself into every entertainment from the drama to the cinema show. People cannot be allowed to meet for conversation or a meal without having their ears assaulted with music, generally of the worst type, and all because those trained to practise music as a fine art cannot earn a living without becoming a public nuisance. Its perpetual din makes the mass of people insensitive to the finer aspects of music, and a public revolt from its tyranny is to be expected, . . . Unfortunately, the insensitiveness which such music breeds raises an effective barrier against it; when one lives constantly in a noise one ceases to long for silence."

The reader may in this connection recall sympathetically the frequent complaint in von Hohenlohe's 'Memoirs,' thus:

"Sat at dinner beside the Freifrau von Süssentrippen, a most charming lady, but unfortunately the band made such a noise that it was impossible for us to converse."

Mr. Beecham's remarks imply that so accustomed have the people of the present day become to din that even in their moments of idleness and retirement they cannot bear to be deprived of their normal environment of uproar.

Although this is probably true of a large section of the community, there are yet in Israel seven thousand which have not bowed the knee unto Baal, and it is as their prophet that I speak.

To us that only is music which, gentle and appealing, touches the finer emotions exclusively. Roughness and violence, though not strength and vigour, are foreign to it. In truth, it is only in Darkest Germany, that roughness and violence are mistaken for strength and vigour. In civilised countries they are recognised to be merely weakness in masquerade. Blaring music is, in a word, noise, and the vilest of all noise, for lilies that foster stink far worse than weeds.

This kind of bastard music has found its most perfect exponent and most accurate interpreter in de Sousa, typical product of the loudest and noisiest of all civilisations, the American.
Every nation has the music it deserves!
Some might be inclined to couple Wagner with de Sousa. But Wagner only reaches at rare intervals and in odd moments the plateau of screams whereon the more modern genius revels. Wagner is incapable of anything like sustained flight amid the thunderclouds where de Sousa rides the whirlwind and directs the storm. At those sublime heights his feeble pinions fail him and he is fain to sink to lower and gentler levels where he is more at ease. "The Ride of the Valkyries," for example, is all too brief, and its rushing violence is, quite patently, mere forcible feebleness. De Sousa, on the other hand, could blare forth a similar theme with such sustained and effective power, such almighty and devastating force, that nothing less than an artificial membrana tympani could suffer intact the crash of the elements upon his mountain-top.

Hail! de Sousa! Triumphant Expositioner of Transatlantic Din! Conquering and to conquer!

In vocal music—I dare not call it singing—in vocal music, on the other hand, Wagner has certainly achieved this much of success, that only vocal cords of a leathery texture are capable of enduring the force he demands of them.

One result of this is, as every teacher of singing knows only too well, that so great is the strain thrown upon the voices of modern operatic singers that only a few of them, and those not the finest, can retain their quality unimpaired for more than a few years. Basses and contraltos must always be deep and impressive; tenors and sopranos high and thrilling.

The other result is an addition to the Din of the City——

Some years ago I used to reside in the neighbourhood of the Paddington railway terminus and a lady vocalist. When at frequent intervals the air was rent by a shriek, one was really never quite sure whether it was proceeding from the railway station or from the lady's larynx. (Operatic managers who desire that vocalist's address can have it on application.)

Previous to the Teutonic era in music we had the Italian, the vogue of which extends back as far as the time of Addison and Steele,
for a moment intend my strictures to apply to anything but certain varieties of modern music. On the other hand, much of the orchestral music of our day is certainly admirable in its grace, refinement, and power. With all its irregularities and extravagances, and in spite of many will o' the wisp adventures, never before in the history of the world has music reached such heights of splendour and such depths of meaning as it does at the present day. Its very errors are only the errors of youth and high spirits.

Indeed, the modern development of fine music might almost be regarded by the philosopher of Quiet as the provision of a sanctuary of refuge in the heart of our City of Din; where not only the bruised spirit but also the aching ear may find rest and healing. The modern man's music is his reaction to the crashing noise about him. Who has not observed how the *Pathétique* is heightened in effect when through the music you can hear the street traffic? The storm-cloud sets off the rainbow; the garish daylight enhances the rosy hue of Sainte Chapelle. It is the contrast, you say! My very point. It is the contrast that has made this music. Seek a
remedy for noise and you will find it in music. In music, not in silence. Music it is that relaxes and relieves the fret and strain of noise. True music, mind you! Not the bastard music of our denouncing, which is merely a mode of noise.

We proceed now to another section of our subject, that of the noise of railway trains. Ruskin's was a powerful, if somewhat too eloquent pen, and Ruskin, who had a rich vein of hatred, heartily detested railway trains.

But even Ruskin fell short of the possibilities of his theme in this matter of trains.

To the onlooker the shriek and roar of a train is bad enough, but it is transient. A shrill whistle, a roll of thunder, and it is all over till the next time. But to the traveller within the train the noise it makes brings comfort. Everyone, I suppose, has analysed it during the weary blankness of a long railway journey. Children, following the clank of the wheels as they bump over the rail-joinings, make a kind of song of the recurrent din in their sound, transmuting the rhythmic

tuneful natures into some nursery rhyme or folk tune. But in adult life this kind of involuntary reaction to rhythmic sound is an indication of nerve-exhaustion. When, for example, we find ourselves keeping time with hand or foot to the tick of a clock, it is always associated with that curious empty depression that follows a day of worry and harassment. The cause of the rhythmic muscular movement is to be found, probably, in the side-tracking of a recurrent sound to which I alluded in a former section. When we are vigorous the nerve-impulses are obliterated, when we are tired they are side-tracked.

In addition to the clank of the wheel at the end of each length of rail, there is generated a noise of a roaring, thundering character, wheels and the rails deepened and amplified by the hollow wooden carriages, and reverberated and re-echoed, also, from cuttings, inoffensive when the train is moving slowly, begins to grow until at the highest speeds it