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ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY ESSAY COMPETITION.

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An Imaginary Trip to London.

Bong, bong, yes, it was really Big Ben! I was not at home in Jamaica, but walking along the Embankment of the famous River Thames. As I looked up at the great, dignified-looking clock, I remembered when I last heard those chimes, it was over the radio, in my bedroom at home; and to think that now I was actually seeing the grand, stately old clock face to face! Not actually 'face to face', as I saw how high I had to look up to it; did not someone once refer to it as the "grandfather of all clocks?" Then I knew why. Bong, the last stroke brought me to my senses quickly, gracious! It was ten am., and, with a wave of homesickness I wondered what the girls at home were doing. Probably, they were having the first break, then, I remembered that they were six hours behind in time compared with us in England.

As we walked along the Embankment, I noticed how wide and very beautifully kept the roads were. I marvelled at how perfectly the famous London "bobbies" controlled the incessant traffic, and I reminisced somewhat humorously about the policemen at home who try to keep order amid the bustle of chaysmen, "higgles", hand-carts and market women balancing their baskets on their heads.

Westminster Abbey! How many men, along the paths of history, had entered that very portal and had

left as kings! How must they have felt amid the rush of the crowds that thronged to see them when they entered the Royal Coach? It is a lovely thought, that so many of Britain's poets and literary geni are together in their own little sanctuary in Westminster Abbey, Poet's Corner. One feels that there is an atmosphere there that should not be broken by the materialistic things in life. It is very beautiful, also, to feel that the thousands of warriors who were killed in the World War, and have no known graves are not forgotten in this place of memory, culture and prayer, for the grave of the Unknown Warrior is there to be a lasting memorial of those who died for their country.

I gazed at the Houses of Parliament in awe, picturing Guy Fawkes crouching in the cellar with his gun-powder, waiting..... How many laws were passed there! How many great men have expressed opinions in that very building, that have shaped the destiny of Britain!

We passed Cleopatra's Needle while walking along the Embankment, I was surprised at its shape, for I had rather fancied it to look like a needle. I tried to imagine it in its natural surroundings in far away Egypt, but found I had to give in, instead, to the realistic world around me.

After buying a paper from a Cockney newspaper boy whose cry was almost unintelligible, we crossed the road and went to the underground railway, where an escalator took us down to the trains. My first experience of travelling underground was a source of great interest to me. The drive was very pleasant, not at all like the Jamaican trains from which one is liable to emerge covered with soot!

Soon, we arrived at our hotel where we had a real English dinner of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, potatoes and brussel sprouts, which I thoroughly enjoyed; but,

really, deep down inside I had an inner yearning for a real Jamaican dish like saltfish and ackee.

very likely
good.

I was surprised the next morning when I looked out to find the weather very bleak, for at home I was used to waking up and finding the room flooded with sunshine. Even though it was in April it was cold and I felt very uncomfortable wearing a sweater, coat and heavy shoes. How I envied the girls at home who could wear their cool, light summer frocks and open sandals!

After breakfast, Auntie said that she would like to go to Downing Street and see number ten, the Prime Minister's house, but I said that I would much rather go to see the Changing of the Guards. So, by ten o'clock we were at the Horse Guards, and soon after the interesting ceremony began. I was impressed by the smartness and precision of the movements, the whole ceremony being like a little boy's dream of tin soldiers come true, carrying with it the colourful tradition of the past.

Inside the grounds of Buckingham Palace I could see the Royal Standard flying at the flagstaff, so I knew that the king was in residence.

We went by a doubledecker bus to Trafalgar Square where the Nelson Column stands high above everything and towers into the sky. It seems to show the greatness of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar. It is beautiful to think that England appreciates and honours that gallant, half-blind, one-armed admiral who died fighting for his country. At the pedestal of the column are representations of his four great naval battles, and there are four noble bronze lions at the base. He seems to be up there, looking down and reminding everyone of

his famous signal, "England expects that every man will do his duty."

Was that really the Tower of London where the famous State prisoners were kept? I wondered what they must have thought, most of them being of a daring and courageous spirit, locked up in that stone-walled tower, whose very appearance suggested murder and intrigue. The deep moat surrounding it adds to the dark, dramatic appearance of the battlemented walls. The traditional beef-eaters in their picturesque costumes and the fact that the incomparable crown jewels are on display inside, lend an air of suppressed excitement to the fascination which the tower holds — for the tourist, gladiator; the historian, factual interest and the school girl, romance.

As I left, with vivid memories, London was not to me as it is to many people, a city of "fope and factories", but an interesting place of culture and where tradition and sentiment go "hand in hand."

Reference Books :

- (i) The Consolidated Encyclopaedia 1936.
United States of America.
- (ii) Souvenir Guide to London.
Savoy Newsagency.

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This is a good essay. It is worth noting that the essay has to do entirely with time spent in London and not enroute.