

December

Tuesday's 'supermoon' (13th) was notable by being hidden behind cloud which is pretty normal for England. However as we had had some lovely clear crisp days recently I was hopeful...The furthest afield I have been this month was London.



One of the features of Parliament Square isn't just the statues of statesmen but [half the trees in central London](#) are *Platanus × acerifolia*. It is particularly resistant to

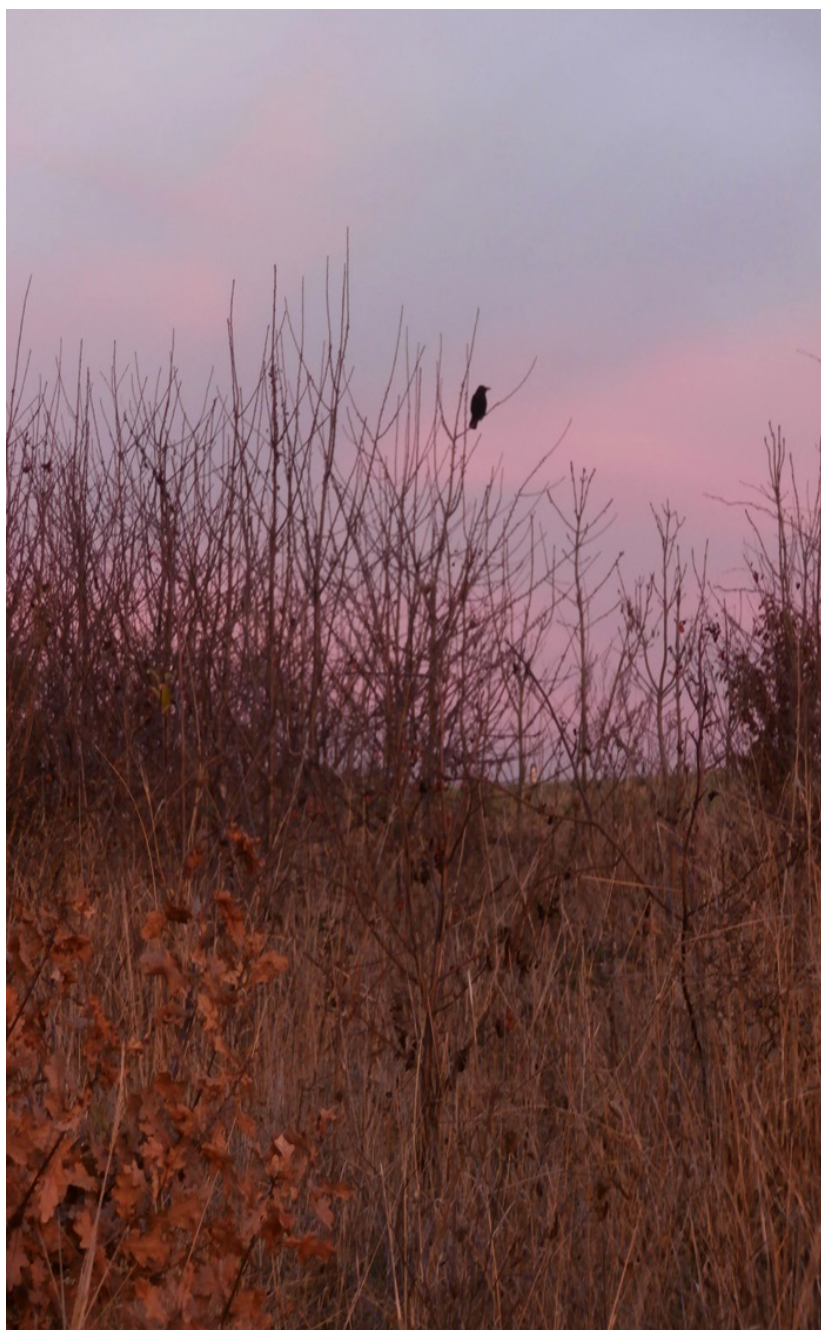
pollution. The attractive chequered bark constantly peels which is how it cleanses itself of soot and fumes. Rain washes off the glossy leaves. The only real drawback is that some people are allergic to the (rather attractive, in my opinion) pairs of spiky balls or nuts it produces. Its origins are not certain. it was 'discovered' by the gardener John Tradescant and is believed to be a hybrid of the Oriental Plane and the North American sycamore. Even better the hybridisation probably took place in London's Vauxhall Gardens. That is where Tradescant spotted this first recorded specimen. It is also popular in Paris, but the French don't call it the London Plane. They call it just 'platane'



On a bright afternoon just outside the M25 the red stems of dogwood were very bright.

Some ornamental varieties are grown for winter colour in the garden. Originally the bushes were grown for butchers' skewers (known as dags or dogs cf dagger.) I wonder if that is how the

hot dog got its name.



Extract from
Winter Sunset
by Katharine Tynan.

Roses in the sky,
Roses in the sea
Bowers of scarlet sky-roses
Take my heart and me.

God was good to make,
This December weather,
All this sky a rose-garden,
Rose and fire together...

Roses on the hills,
Roses in the hollow,
Roses on the wet hedges,
In the shining fallow.