toccini, and the Chinese shades. (*b*) The street-performers of feats of strength and dexterity—as "acrobats" or posturers, "equilibrists" or balancers, stiff and bending tumblers, jugglers, conjurors, sword-swallowers, "salamanders" or fire-eaters, swordsmen, etc. (*c*) The street-performers with trained animals—as dancing dogs, performing monkeys, trained birds and mice, cats and hares, sapient pigs, dancing bears, and tame camels. (*d*) The street-actors—as clowns, "Billy Barlows," "Jim Crows," and others.

2. *The Street Showmen*, including shows of (*a*) extraordinary persons—as giants, dwarfs, Albinoes, spotted boys, and pig-faced ladies. (*b*) Extraordinary animals—as alligators, calves, horses and pigs with six legs or two heads, industrious fleas, and happy families. (*c*) Philosophic instruments—as the microscope, telescope, thaumascope. (*d*) Measuring-machines—as weighing, lifting, measuring, and striking machines; and (*e*) miscellaneous shows—such as peep-shows, glass ships, mechanical figures, wax-work shows, pugilistic shows, and fortune-telling apparatus.

3. *The Street-Artists*—as black profile-cutters, blind paper-cutters, "screevers" or draughtsmen in coloured chalks on the pavement, writers without hands, and readers without eyes.

4. *The Street Dancers*—as street Scotch girls, sailors, slack and tight rope dancers, dancers on stilts, and comic dancers.

5. *The Street Musicians*—as the street bands (English and German), players of the guitar, harp, bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, dulcimer, musical bells, cornet, tom-tom, &c.

6. *The Street Singers*, as the singers of glees, ballads, comic songs, nigger melodies, psalms, serenaders, reciters, and improvisatori.

7. *The Proprietors of Street Games*, as swings, highflyers, roundabouts, puff-and-darts, rifle shooting, down the dolly, spin-'em-rounds, prick the garter, thimble-rig, etc.

Then comes the Fifth Division of the Street-Folk, viz., the STREET-ARTIZANS, or WORKING PEDLARS;

These may be severally arranged into three distinct groups—(1) Those who *make* things in the streets; (2) Those who *mend* things in the streets; and (3) Those who *make* things *at home* and *sell* them in the *streets*.

1. Of *those who make things in the streets* there are the following varieties: (*a*) the metal workers—such as toasting-fork makers, pin makers, engravers, tobacco-stopper makers. (*b*) The textile-workers—stocking-weavers, cabbage-net makers, night-cap knitters, doll-dress knitters. (*c*) The miscellaneous workers,—the wooden spoon makers, the leather brace and garter makers, the printers, and the glass-blowers.

2. *Those who mend things in the streets*, consist of broken china and glass menders, clock menders, umbrella menders, kettle menders, chair menders, grease removers, hat cleaners, razor and knife grinders, glaziers, travelling bell hangers, and knife cleaners.

3. *Those who make things at home and sell them in the streets*, are (*a*) the wood workers—as the makers of clothes-pegs, clothes-props, skewers, needle-cases, foot-stools and clothes-horses, chairs and tables, tea-caddies, writing-desks, drawers, work-boxes, dressing-cases, pails and tubs. (*b*) The trunk, hat, and bonnet-box makers, and the cane and rush basket makers. (*c*) The toy makers—such as Chinese roarers, children's windmills, flying birds and fishes, feathered cocks, black velvet cats and sweeps, paper houses, cardboard carriages, little copper pans and kettles, tiny tin fireplaces, children's watches, Dutch dolls, buy-a-brooms, and gutta-percha heads. (*d*) The apparel makers—viz., the makers of women's caps, boys and men's cloth caps, night-caps, straw bonnets, children's dresses, watch-pockets, bonnet shapes, silk bonnets, and gaiters. (*e*) The metal workers,—as the makers of fire-guards, bird-cages, the wire workers. (*f*) The miscellaneous workers—or makers of ornaments for stoves, chimney ornaments, artificial flowers in pots and in nose-gays, plaster-of-Paris night-shades, brooms, brushes, mats, rugs, hearthstones, firewood, rush matting, and hassocks.

Of the last division, or STREET-LABOURERS, there are four classes:

1. *The Cleansers*—such as scavengers, night-men, flushermen, chimney-sweeps, dustmen, crossing-sweepers, "street-orderlies," labourers to sweeping-machines and to watering-carts.

2. *The Lighters and Waterers*—or the turn-cocks and the lamplighters.

3. *The Street-Advertisers*—viz., the bill-stickers, bill-deliverers, boardmen, men to advertising vans, and wall and pavement stencillers.

4. *The Street-Servants*—as horse holders, link-men, coach-hirers, street-porters, shoe-blacks.

OF THE NUMBER OF COSTERMONGERS AND OTHER STREET-FOLK.

THE number of costermongers,—that it is to say, of those street-sellers attending the London "green" and "fish markets,"—appears to be, from the best data at my command, now 30,000 men, women, and children. The census of 1841 gives only 2,045 "hawkers, hucksters, and pedlars," in the metropolis, and no costermongers or street-sellers, or street-performers at all. This number is absurdly small, and its absurdity is accounted for by the fact that not one in twenty of the costermongers, or of the people with whom they lodged, troubled themselves to fill up the census returns—the majority of them being unable to read and write, and others distrustful of the purpose for which the returns were wanted.

The costermongering class extends itself yearly; and it is computed that for the last five years it has increased considerably faster than the general metropolitan population. This increase is derived partly from *all* the children of costermongers following the father's trade, but chiefly from working men, such as the servants of greengrocers or of innkeepers, when out of

employ, "taking to a coster's barrow" for a livelihood; and the same being done by mechanics and labourers out of work. At the time of the famine in Ireland, it is calculated, that the number of Irish obtaining a living in the London streets must have been at least doubled.

The great discrepancy between the government returns and the accounts of the costermongers themselves, concerning the number of people obtaining a living by the sale of fish, fruit, and vegetables, in the streets of London, caused me to institute an inquiry at the several metropolitan markets concerning the number of street-sellers attending them: the following is the result:

During the summer months and fruit season, the average number of costermongers attending Covent-garden market is about 2,500 per market-day. In the strawberry season there are nearly double as many, there being, at that time, a large number of Jews who come to buy; during that period, on a Saturday morning, from the commencement to the close of the market, as many as 4,000 costers have been reckoned purchasing at Covent-garden. Through the winter season, however, the number of costermongers does not exceed upon the average 1,000 per market morning. About one-tenth of the fruit and vegetables of the least expensive kind sold at this market is purchased by the costers. Some of the better class of costers, who have their regular customers, are very particular as to the quality of the articles they buy; but others are not so particular; so long as they can get things cheap, I am informed, they do not care much about the quality. The Irish more especially look out for damaged articles, which they buy at a low price. One of my informants told me that the costers were the best customers to the growers, inasmuch as when the market is flagging on account of the weather, they (the costers) wait and make their purchases. On other occasions, such as fine mornings, the costers purchase as early as others. There is no trust given to them—to use the words of one of my informants, they are such slippery customers; here to-day and gone to-morrow.

At Leadenhall market, during the winter months, there are from 70 to 100 costermongers general attendants; but during the summer not much more than one-half that number make their appearance. Their purchases consist of warren-rabbits, poultry, and game, of which about one-eighth of the whole amount brought to this market is bought by them. When the market is slack, and during the summer, when there is "no great call" for game, etc., the costers attending Leadenhall-market turn their hand to crockery, fruit, and fish.

The costermongers frequenting Spitalfields-market average all the year through from 700 to 1,000 each market-day. They come from all parts, as far as Edmonton, Edgeware, and Tottenham; Highgate, Hampstead, and even from Greenwich and Lewisham. Full one-third of the produce of this market is purchased by them.

The number of costermongers attending the Borough-market is about 250 during the fruit season, after which time they decrease to about 200 per market morning. About one-sixth of the produce that comes into this market is purchased by the costermongers. One gentleman informed me, that the salesmen might shut up their shops were it not for these men. "In fact," said another, "I don't know what would become of the fruit without them."

The costers at Billingsgate-market, daily, number from 3,000 to 4,000 in winter, and about 2,500 in summer. A leading salesman told me that he would rather have an order from a costermonger than a fishmonger; for the one paid ready money, while the other required credit. The same gentleman assured me, that the costermongers bought excellent fish, and that very largely. They themselves aver that they purchase half the fish brought to Billingsgate—some fish trades being entirely in their hands. I ascertained, however, from the authorities at Billingsgate, and from experienced salesmen, that of the quantity of fish conveyed to that great mart, the costermongers bought one-third; another third was sent into the country; and another disposed of to the fishmongers, and to such hotel-keepers, or other large purchasers, as resorted to Billingsgate.

The salesmen at the several markets all agreed in stating that no trust was given to the costermongers. "Trust them!" exclaimed one, "O, certainly, as far as I can see them."

Now, adding the above figures together, we have the subjoined sum for the gross number of

COSTERMONGERS ATTENDING THE LONDON MARKETS.

Billingsgate-market	3,500
Covent-garden	4,000
Spitalfields	1,000
Borough	250
Leadenhall	100
	8,850

Besides these, I am credibly informed, that it may be assumed there are full 1,000 men who are unable to attend market, owing to the dissipation of the previous night; another 1,000 are absent owing to their having "stock on hand," and so requiring no fresh purchases; and further, it may be estimated that there are at least 2,000 boys in London at work for costers, at half profits, and who consequently have no occasion to visit the markets. Hence, putting these numbers together, we arrive at the conclusion that there are in London upwards of 13,000 street-sellers, dealing in fish, fruit, vegetables, game, and poultry alone. To be on the safe side, however, let us assume the number of London costermongers to be 12,000, and that one-half of these are married and have two children (which from all accounts appears to be about the proportion); and then we have 30,000 for the

sum total of men, women, and children dependent on "costermongering" for their subsistence.

Large as this number may seem, still I am satisfied it is rather within than beyond the truth. In order to convince myself of its accuracy, I caused it to be checked in several ways. In the first place, a survey was made as to the number of stalls in the streets of London—forty-six miles of the principal thoroughfares were travelled over, and an account taken of the "standings." Thus it was found that there were upon an average upwards of fourteen stalls to the mile, of which five-sixths were fish and fruit-stalls. Now, according to the Metropolitan Police Returns, there are 2,000 miles of street throughout London, and calculating that the stalls through the whole of the metropolis run upon an average only four to the mile, we shall thus find that there are 8,000 stalls altogether in London; of these we may reckon that at least 6,000 are fish and fruit-stalls. I am informed, on the best authority, that twice as many costers "go rounds" as have standings; hence we come to the conclusion that there are 18,000 itinerant and stationary street-sellers of fish, vegetables, and fruit, in the metropolis; and reckoning the same proportion of wives and children as before, we have thus 45,000 men, women, and children, obtaining a living in this manner. Further, "to make assurance doubly sure," the street-markets throughout London were severally visited, and the number of street-sellers at each taken down on the spot. These gave a grand total of 3,801, of which number two-thirds were dealers in fish, fruit, and vegetables; and reckoning that twice as many costers again were on their rounds, we thus make the total number of London costermongers to be 11,403, or calculating men, women, and children, 28,506. It would appear, therefore, that if we estimate the gross number of individuals subsisting on the sale of fish, fruit, and vegetables, in the streets of London, at between thirty and forty thousand, we shall not be very wide of the truth.

But, great as is this number, still the costermongers are only a portion of the street-folk. Besides these, there are, as we have seen, many other large classes obtaining their livelihood in the streets. The street musicians, for instance, are said to number 1,000, and the old clothesmen the same. There are supposed to be at the least 500 sellers of water-cresses; 200 coffee-stalls; 300 cats-meat men; 250 ballad-singers; 200 play-bill sellers; from 800 to 1,000 bone-grubbers and mud-larks; 1,000 crossing-sweepers; another thousand chimney-sweeps, and the same number of turncocks and lamp-lighters; all of whom, together with the street-performers and showmen, tinkers, chair, umbrella, and clock-menders, sellers of bonnet-boxes, toys, stationery, songs, last dying-speeches, tubs, pails, mats, crockery, blacking, lucifers, corn-salves, clothes-pegs, brooms, sweetmeats, razors, dog-collars, dogs, birds, coals, sand,—scavengers, dustmen, and others, make up, it may be fairly assumed, full thirty thousand adults, so that, reckoning men, women, and children, we may truly say that there are upwards of fifty thousand individuals, or about a fortieth-part of the entire population of the metropolis getting their living in the streets.

Now of all modes of obtaining subsistence, that of street-selling is the most precarious. Continued wet weather deprives those who depend for their bread upon the number of people frequenting the public thoroughfares of all means of living; and it is painful to think of the hundreds belonging to this class in the the metropolis who are reduced to starvation by three or four days successive rain. Moreover, in the winter, the street-sellers of fruit and vegetables are cut off from the ordinary means of gaining their livelihood, and, consequently, they have to suffer the greatest privations at a time when the severity of the season demands the greatest amount of physical comforts. To expect that the increased earnings of the summer should be put aside as a provision against the deficiencies of the winter, is to expect that a precarious occupation should beget provident habits, which is against the nature of things, for it is always in those callings which are the most uncertain, that the greatest amount of improvidence and intemperance are found to exist. It is not the well-fed man, be it observed, but the starving one that is in danger of surfeiting himself.

Moreover, when the religious, moral, and intellectual degradation of the great majority of these fifty thousand people is impressed upon us, it becomes positively appalling to contemplate the vast amount of vice, ignorance and want, existing in these days in the very heart of our land. The public have but to read the following plain unvarnished account of the habits, amusements, dealings, education, politics, and religion of the London costermongers in the nineteenth century, and then to say whether they think it safe—even if it be thought fit—to allow men, women, and children to continue in such a state.

Of the Varieties of Street-folk in general, and Costermongers in particular.

Among the street-folk there are many distinct characters of people—people differing as widely from each in tastes, habits, thoughts and creed, as one nation from another. Of these the costermongers form by far the largest and certainly the mostly broadly marked class. They appear to be a distinct race—perhaps, originally, of Irish extraction—seldom associating with any other of the street-folks, and being all known to each other. The "patterers," or the men who cry the last dying-speeches, &c. in the street, and those who help off their wares by long harrangues in the public thoroughfares, are again a separate class. These, to use their own term, are "the aristocracy of the street-sellers," despising the costers for

their ignorance, and boasting that they live by their intellect. The public, they say, do not expect to receive from them an equivalent for their money — they pay to hear them talk. Compared with the costermongers, the patterers are generally an educated class, and among them are some classical scholars, one clergyman, and many sons of gentlemen. They appear to be the counterparts of the old mountebanks or street-doctors. As a body they seem far less improvable than the costers, being more "knowing" and less impulsive. The street-performers differ again from those; these appear to possess many of the characteristics of the lower class of actors, viz., a strong desire to excite admiration, an indisposition to pursue any settled occupation, a love of the tap-room, though more for the society and display than for the drink connected with it, a great fondness for finery and predilection for the performance of dexterous or dangerous feats. Then there are the street mechanics, or artizans—quiet, melancholy, struggling men, who, unable to find any regular employment at their own trade, have made up a few things, and taken to hawk them in the streets, as the last shift of independence. Another distinct class of street-folk are the blind people (mostly musicians in a rude way), who, after the loss of their eyesight, have sought to keep themselves from the workhouse by some little excuse for alms-seeking. These, so far as my experience goes, appear to be a far more deserving class than is usually supposed—their affliction, in most cases, seems to have chastened them and to have given a peculiar religious cast to their thoughts.

Such are the several varieties of street-folk, intellectually considered—looked at in a national point of view, they likewise include many distinct people. Among them are to be found the Irish fruit-sellers; the Jew clothesmen; the Italian organ boys, French singing women, the German brass bands, the Dutch buy-a-broom girls, the Highland bagpipe players, and the Indian crossing-sweepers—all of whom I here shall treat of in due order.

The costermongering class or order has also its many varieties. These appear to be in the following proportions:—One-half of the entire class are costermongers proper, that is to say, the calling with them is hereditary, and perhaps has been so for many generations; while the other half is composed of three-eighths Irish, and one-eighth mechanics, tradesmen, and Jews.

Under the term "costermonger" is here included only such "street-sellers" as deal in fish, fruit, and vegetables, purchasing their goods at the wholesale "green" and fish markets. Of these some carry on their business at the same stationary stall or "standing" in the street, while others go on "rounds." The itinerant costermongers, as contradistinguished from the stationary street-fishmongers and greengrocers, have in many instances regular rounds, which they go daily, and which extend from two to ten miles. The longest are those which embrace a suburban part; the shortest are through streets thickly peopled by the poor, where duly to "work" a single street consumes, in some instances, an hour. There are also "chance" rounds. Men "working" these carry their wares to any part in which they hope to find customers. The costermongers, moreover, diversify their labours by occasionally going on a country round, travelling on these excursions, in all directions, from thirty to ninety and even a hundred miles from the metropolis. Some, again, confine their callings chiefly to the neighbouring races and fairs.

Of all the characteristics attending these diversities of traders, I shall treat severally. I may here premise, that the regular or "thorough-bred costermongers," repudiate the numerous persons who sell only nuts or oranges in the streets, whether at a fixed stall, or any given locality, or who hawk them through the thoroughfares or parks. They repudiate also a number of Jews, who confine their street-trading to the sale of "coker-nuts" on Sundays, vended from large barrows. Nor do they rank with themselves the individuals who sell tea and coffee in the streets, or such condiments as peas-soup, sweetmeats, spice-cakes, and the like; those articles not being purchased at the markets. I often heard all such classes called "the illegitimates."

Of Costermongering Mechanics.

"From the numbers of mechanics," said one smart costermonger to me, "that I know of in my own district, I should say there's now more than 1,000 costers in London that were once mechanics or labourers. They are driven to it as a last resource, when they can't get work at their trade. They don't do well, at least four out of five, or three out of four don't. They're not up to the dodges of the business. They go to market with fear, and don't know how to venture a bargain if one offers. They're inferior salesmen too, and if they have fish left that won't keep, it's a dead loss to them, for they aren't up to the trick of selling it cheap at a distance where the coster ain't known; or of quitting it to another, for candle-light sale, cheap, to the Irish or to the 'lushingtons,' that haven't a proper taste for fish. Some of these poor fellows lose every penny. They're mostly middle-aged when they begin costering. They'll generally commence with oranges or herrings. We pity them. We say, 'Poor fellows! they'll find it out by-and-bye.' It's awful to see some poor women, too, trying to pick up a living in the streets by selling nuts or oranges. It's awful to see them, for they can't set about it right; besides that, there's too many before they start. They don't find a living, *it's only another way of starving.*"

Ancient Calling of Costermongers.

The earliest record of London cries is, according to Mr. Charles Knight, in Lydgate's poem of "London Lyckpeny," which is as old as the days of Henry V., or about 430

years back. Among Lydgate's cries are enumerated "Strawberries ripe and cherries in the rise;" the *rise* being a twig to which the cherries were tied, as at present. Lydgate, however, only indicates costermongers, but does not mention them by name.

It is not my intention, as my inquiries are directed to the *present* condition of the costermongers, to dwell on this part of the question, but some historical notice of so numerous a body is indispensable. I shall confine myself therefore to show from the elder dramatists, how the costermongers flourished in the days of Elizabeth and James I.

"Virtue," says Shakespeare, "is of so little regard in these *coster-monger times*, that true valour is turned bear-herd." Costermonger times are as old as any trading times of which our history tells; indeed, the stationary costermonger of our own day is a legitimate descendant of the tradesmen of the olden time, who stood by their shops with their open casements, loudly inviting buyers by praises of their wares, and by direct questions of "What d'ye buy? What d'ye lack?"

Ben Jonson makes his *Morose*, who hated all noises, and sought for a silent wife, enter "upon divers treaties with the fish-wives and orange-women," to moderate their clamour; but *Morose*, above all other noisy people, "cannot endure a costard-monger; he swoons if he hear one."

In Ford's "Sun's Darling" I find the following: "Upon my life he means to turn costermonger, and is projecting how to forestall the market. I shall cry pippins rarely."

In Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady" is the following:

> "Pray, sister, do not laugh; you'll anger him,
> And then he'll rail like a rude costermonger."

Dr. Johnson, gives the derivation of costard-monger (the orthography he uses), as derived from the sale of apples or costards, "round and bulky like the head;" and he cites Burton as an authority: "Many country vicars," writes Burton, "are driven to shifts, and if our great patrons hold us to such conditions, they will make us *costard-mongers*, graziers, or sell ale."

"The costard-monger," says Mr. Charles Knight, in his "London," "was originally an apple-seller, whence his name, and, from the mention of him in the old dramatists, he appears to have been frequently an Irishman."

In Ireland the word "costermonger" is almost unknown.

Of the Obsolete Cries of the Costermongers.

A brief account of the cries once prevalent among the street-sellers will show somewhat significantly the change in the diet or regalements of those who purchase their food in the street. Some of the articles are not vended in the public thoroughfares now, while others are still sold, but in different forms.

"Hot sheep's feet," for instance, were cried in the streets in the time of Henry V.; they are now sold *cold*, at the doors of the lower-priced theatres, and at the larger public-houses. Among the street cries, the following were common prior to the wars of the Roses: "Ribs of beef," — "Hot peascod," — and "Pepper and saffron." These certainly indicate a different street diet from that of the present time.

The following are more modern, running from Elizabeth's days down to our own. "Pippins," and, in the times of Charles II., and subsequently, oranges were sometimes cried as "Orange pips,"—"Fair lemons and oranges; oranges and citrons,"—"New Wall-fleet oysters," ["*fresh*" fish was formerly cried as "new,"]—"New-river water," [I may here mention that water-carriers still ply their trade in parts of Hampstead,] — "Rosemary and lavender," — "Small coals," [a cry rendered almost poetical by the character, career, and pitiful end, through a practical joke, of Tom Britton, the "small-coal man,"] — "Pretty pins, pretty women,"—"Lilly-white vinegar,"—"Hot wardens" (pears)— "Hot codlings,"—and lastly the greasy-looking beverage which Charles Lamb's experience of London at early morning satisfied him was of all preparations the most grateful to the stomach of the then existing climbing-boys — viz., "Sa-loop." I may state, for the information of my younger readers, that saloop (spelt also "salep" and "salop") was prepared, as a powder, from the root of the *Orchis mascula*, or Red-handed Orchis, a plant which grows luxuriantly in our meadows and pastures, flowering in the spring, though never cultivated to any extent in this country; that required for the purposes of commerce was imported from India. The saloop-stalls were superseded by the modern coffee-stalls.

There were many other cries, now obsolete, but what I have cited were the most common.

Of the Costermongers "economically" considered.

Political economy teaches us that, between the two great classes of producers and consumers, stand the distributors — or dealers — saving time, trouble, and inconvenience to, the one in disposing of, and to the other in purchasing, their commodities.

But the distributor was not always a part and parcel of the economical arrangements of the State. In olden times, the producer and consumer were brought into immediate contact, at markets and fairs, holden at certain intervals. The inconvenience of this mode of operation, however, was soon felt; and the pedlar, or wandering distributor, sprang up as a means of carrying the commodities to those who were unable to attend the public markets at the appointed time. Still the pedlar or wandering distributor was not without *his* disadvantages. He only came at certain periods, and commodities were occasionally required in the interim. Hence the shopkeeper, or stationary distributor, was called into existence, so that the consumer might obtain any commodity of the producer at

any time he pleased. Hence we see that the pedlar is the primitive tradesman, and that the one is contradistinguished from the other by the fact, that the pedlar carries the goods to the consumer, whereas, in the case of the shopkeeper, the consumer goes after the goods. In country districts, remote from towns and villages, the pedlar is not yet wholly superseded; "but a dealer who has a fixed abode, and fixed customers, is so much more to be depended on," says Mr. Stewart Mill, "that consumers prefer resorting to him if he is conveniently accessible, and dealers, therefore, find their advantage in establishing themselves in every locality where there are sufficient customers near at hand to afford them a remuneration." Hence the pedlar is now chiefly confined to the poorer districts, and is consequently distinguished from the stationary tradesman by the character and means of his customers, as well as by the amount of capital and extent of his dealings. The shopkeeper supplies principally the noblemen and gentry with the necessaries and luxuries of life, but the pedlar or hawker is the purveyor in general to the poor. He brings the greengrocery, the fruit, the fish, the water-cresses, the shrimps, the pies and puddings, the sweetmeats, the pine-apples, the stationery, the linendrapery, and the jewellery, such as it is, to the very door of the working classes; indeed, the poor man's food and clothing are mainly supplied to him in this manner. Hence the class of travelling tradesmen are important, not only as forming a large portion of the poor themselves, but as being the persons through whom the working people obtain a considerable part of their provisions and raiment.

But the itinerant tradesman or street-seller is still further distinguished from the regular fixed dealer—the *stall*keeper from the *shop*keeper—the *street*-wareman from the ware*house*man, by the arts they respectively employ to attract custom. The street-seller cries his goods aloud at the head of his barrow; the enterprising tradesman distributes bills at the door of his shop. The one appeals to the ear, the other to the eye. The cutting costermonger has a drum and two boys to excite attention to his stock; the spirited shopkeeper has a column of advertisements in the morning newspapers. They are but different means of attaining the same end.

The London Street Markets on a Saturday Night.

The street sellers are to be seen in the greatest numbers at the London street markets on a Saturday night. Here, and in the shops immediately adjoining, the working-classes generally purchase their Sunday's dinner; and after pay-time on Saturday night, or early on Sunday morning, the crowd in the New-cut, and the Brill in particular, is almost impassable. Indeed, the scene in these parts has more of the character of a fair than a market. There are hundreds of stalls, and every stall has its one or two lights; either it is illuminated by the intense white light of the new self-generating gas-lamp, or else it is brightened up by the red smoky flame of the old-fashioned grease lamp. One man shows off his yellow haddock with a candle stuck in a bundle of firewood; his neighbour makes a candlestick of a huge turnip, and the tallow gutters over its sides; whilst the boy shouting "Eight a penny, stunning pears!" has rolled his dip in a thick coat of brown paper, that flares away with the candle. Some stalls are crimson with the fire shining through the holes beneath the baked chestnut stove; others have handsome octohedral lamps, while a few have a candle shining through a sieve: these, with the sparkling ground-glass globes of the tea-dealers' shops, and the butchers' gaslights streaming and fluttering in the wind, like flags of flame, pour forth such a flood of light, that at a distance the atmosphere immediately above the spot is as lurid as if the street were on fire.

The pavement and the road are crowded with purchasers and street-sellers. The housewife in her thick shawl, with the market-basket on her arm, walks slowly on, stopping now to look at the stall of caps, and now to cheapen a bunch of greens. Little boys, holding three or four onions in their hand, creep between the people, wriggling their way through every interstice, and asking for custom in whining tones, as if seeking charity. Then the tumult of the thousand different cries of the eager dealers, all shouting at the top of their voices, at one and the same time, is almost bewildering. "So-old again," roars one. "Chestnuts all 'ot, a penny a score," bawls another. "An 'aypenny a skin, blacking," squeaks a boy. "Buy, buy, buy, buy, buy—bu-u-uy!" cries the butcher. "Half-quire of paper for a penny," bellows the street stationer. "An 'aypenny a lot ing-uns." "Twopence a pound grapes." "Three a penny Yarmouth bloaters." "Who'll buy a bonnet for four-pence?" "Pick 'em out cheap here! three pair for a halfpenny, bootlaces." "Now's your time! beautiful whelks, a penny a lot." "Here's ha'p'orths," shouts the perambulating confectioner. "Come and look at 'em! here's toasters!" bellows one with a Yarmouth bloater stuck on a toasting-fork. "Penny a lot, fine russets," calls the apple woman: and so the Babel goes on.

One man stands with his red-edged mats hanging over his back and chest, like a herald's coat; and the girl with her basket of walnuts lifts her brown-stained fingers to her mouth, as she screams, "Fine warnuts! sixteen a penny, fine war-r-nuts." A bootmaker, to "ensure custom," has illuminated his shop-front with a line of gas, and in its full glare stands a blind beggar, his eyes turned up so as to show only "the whites," and mumbling some begging rhymes, that are drowned in the shrill notes of the bamboo-flute-player next to him. The boy's sharp cry, the woman's cracked voice, the gruff, hoarse shout of the man, are all mingled together. Sometimes an Irish-

man is heard with his "fine ating apples;" or else the jingling music of an unseen organ breaks out, as the trio of street singers rest between the verses.

Then the sights, as you elbow your way through the crowd, are equally multifarious. Here is a stall glittering with new tin saucepans; there another, bright with its blue and yellow crockery, and sparkling with white glass. Now you come to a row of old shoes arranged along the pavement; now to a stand of gaudy tea-trays; then to a shop with red handkerchiefs and blue checked shirts, fluttering backwards and forwards, and a counter built up outside on the kerb, behind which are boys beseeching custom. At the door of a tea-shop, with its hundred white globes of light, stands a man delivering bills, thanking the public for past favours, and "defying competition." Here, alongside the road, are some half-dozen headless tailors' dummies, dressed in Chesterfields and fustian jackets, each labelled, "Look at the prices," or "Observe the quality." After this is a butcher's shop, crimson and white with meat piled up to the first-floor, in front of which the butcher himself, in his blue coat, walks up and down, sharpening his knife on the steel that hangs to his waist. A little further on stands the clean family, begging; the father with his head down as if in shame, and a box of lucifers held forth in his hand—the boys in newly-washed pinafores, and the tidily got-up mother with a child at her breast. This stall is green and white with bunches of turnips—that red with apples, the next yellow with onions, and another purple with pickling cabbages. One minute you pass a man with an umbrella turned inside up and full of prints; the next, you hear one with a peepshow of Mazeppa, and Paul Jones the pirate, describing the pictures to the boys looking in at the little round windows. Then is heard the sharp snap of the percussion-cap from the crowd of lads firing at the target for nuts; and the moment afterwards, you see either a black man half-clad in white, and shivering in the cold with tracts in his hand, or else you hear the sounds of music from "Frazier's Circus," on the other side of the road, and the man outside the door of the penny concert, beseeching you to "Be in time—be in time!" as Mr. Somebody is just about to sing his favourite song of the "Knife Grinder." Such, indeed, is the riot, the struggle, and the scramble for a living, that the confusion and uproar of the New-cut on Saturday night have a bewildering and saddening effect upon the thoughtful mind.

Each salesman tries his utmost to sell his wares, tempting the passers-by with his bargains. The boy with his stock of herbs offers "a double 'andful of fine parsley for a penny;" the man with the donkey-cart filled with turnips has three lads to shout for him to their utmost, with their "Ho! ho! hi-i-i! What do you think of this here? A penny a bunch—hurrah for free trade! *Here's* your turnips!" Until it is seen and heard, we have no sense of the scramble that is going on throughout London for a living. The same scene takes place at the Brill—the same in Leather-lane—the same in Tottenham-court-road—the same in Whitecross-street; go to whatever corner of the metropolis you please, either on a Saturday night or a Sunday morning, and there is the same shouting and the same struggling to get the penny profit out of the poor man's Sunday's dinner.

Since the above description was written, the New Cut has lost much of its noisy and brilliant glory. In consequence of a New Police regulation, "stands" or "pitches" have been forbidden, and each coster, on a market night, is now obliged, under pain of the lock-up house, to carry his tray, or keep moving with his barrow. The gay stalls have been replaced by deal boards, some sodden with wet fish, others stained purple with blackberries, or brown with walnut-peel; and the bright lamps are almost totally superseded by the dim, guttering candle. Even if the pole under the tray or "shallow" is seen resting on the ground, the policeman on duty is obliged to interfere.

The mob of purchasers has diminished one-half; and instead of the road being filled with customers and trucks, the pavement and kerb-stones are scarcely crowded.

The Sunday Morning Markets.

Nearly every poor man's market does its Sunday trade. For a few hours on the Sabbath morning, the noise, bustle, and scramble of the Saturday night are repeated, and but for this opportunity many a poor family would pass a dinnerless Sunday. The system of paying the mechanic late on the Saturday night—and more particularly of paying a man his wages in a public-house—when he is tired with his day's work, lures him to the tavern, and there the hours fly quickly enough beside the warm tap-room fire, so that by the time the wife comes for her husband's wages, she finds a large portion of them gone in drink, and the streets half cleared, so that the Sunday market is the only chance of getting the Sunday's dinner.

Of all these Sunday-morning markets, the Brill, perhaps, furnishes the busiest scene; so that it may be taken as a type of the whole.

The streets in the neighbourhood are quiet and empty. The shops are closed with their different-coloured shutters, and the people round about are dressed in the shiney cloth of the holiday suit. There are no "cabs," and but few omnibuses to disturb the rest, and men walk in the road as safely as on the footpath.

As you enter the Brill the market sounds are scarcely heard. But at each step the low hum grows gradually into the noisy shouting, until at last the different cries become distinct, and the hubbub, din, and confusion of a thousand voices bellowing at once again fill the air. The road and footpath are crowded, as on the over-night; the men are standing in groups, smoking and talking; whilst the women run

to and fro, some with the white round turnips showing out of their filled aprons, others with cabbages under their arms, and a piece of red meat dangling from their hands. Only a few of the shops are closed, but the butcher's and the coal-shed are filled with customers, and from the door of the shut-up baker's, the women come streaming forth with bags of flour in their hands, while men sally from the halfpenny barber's smoothing their clean-shaved chins. Walnuts, blacking, apples, onions, braces, combs, turnips, herrings, pens, and corn-plaster, are all bellowed out at the same time. Labourers and mechanics, still unshorn and undressed, hang about with their hands in their pockets, some with their pet terriers under their arms. The pavement is green with the refuse leaves of vegetables, and round a cabbage-barrow the women stand turning over the bunches, as the man shouts, "Where you like, only a penny." Boys are running home with the breakfast herring held in a piece of paper, and the side-pocket of the apple-man's stuff coat hangs down with the weight of the halfpence stored within it. Presently the tolling of the neighbouring church bells breaks forth. Then the bustle doubles itself, the cries grow louder, the confusion greater. Women run about and push their way through the throng, scolding the saunterers, for in half an hour the market will close. In a little time the butcher puts up his shutters, and leaves the door still open; the policemen in their clean gloves come round and drive the street-sellers before them, and as the clock strikes eleven the market finishes, and the Sunday's rest begins.

The following is a list of the street-markets, and the number of costers usually attending:—

MARKETS ON THE SURREY SIDE.

New-cut, Lambeth	300	Bermondsey	107
Lambeth-walk	104	Union-street, Borough	29
Walworth-road	22	Great Suffolk-street	46
Camberwell	15	Blackfriars-road	58
Newington	45		764
Kent-street, Borough	38		

MARKETS ON THE MIDDLESEX SIDE.

Brill and Chapel-st., Somers' Town	300	Leather-lane	150
Camden Town	50	St. John's-street	47
Hampstead-rd. and Tottenham-ct.-rd.	333	Old-street (St. Luke's)	46
St. George's Market, Oxford-street	177	Whitecross-street, Cripplegate	150
Marylebone	37	Islington	79
Edgeware-road	78	City-road	49
Crawford-street	145	Shoreditch	100
Knightsbridge	46	Bethnal-green	100
Pimlico	32	Whitechapel	258
Tothill-st. & Broad-way, Westminster	119	Mile End	105
Drury-lane	22	Commercial-rd. (East)	114
Clare-street	139	Limehouse	88
Exmouth-street and Aylesbury-street, Clerkenwell	142	Ratcliffe Highway	122
		Rosemary-lane	119
			3147

We find, from the foregoing list of markets, held in the various thoroughfares of the metropolis, that there are 10 on the Surrey side and 27 on the Middlesex side of the Thames. The total number of hucksters attending these markets is 3911, giving an average of 105 to each market.

Habits and Amusements of Costermongers.

I find it impossible to separate these two headings; for the habits of the costermonger are not domestic. His busy life is past in the markets or the streets, and as his leisure is devoted to the beer-shop, the dancing-room, or the theatre, we must look for his habits to his demeanour at those places. Home has few attractions to a man whose life is a street-life. Even those who are influenced by family ties and affections, prefer to "home"—indeed that word is rarely mentioned among them — the conversation, warmth, and merriment of the beer-shop, where they can take their ease among their "mates." Excitement or amusement are indispensable to uneducated men. Of beer-shops resorted to by costermongers, and principally supported by them, it is computed that there are 400 in London.

Those who meet first in the beer-shop talk over the state of trade and of the markets, while the later comers enter at once into what may be styled the serious business of the evening—amusement.

Business topics are discussed in a most peculiar style. One man takes the pipe from his mouth and says, "Bill made a doogheno hit this morning." "Jem," says another, to a man just entering, "you'll stand a top o' reeb?" "On," answers Jem, "I've had a trosseno tol, and have been doing dab." For an explanation of what may be obscure in this dialogue, I must refer my readers to my remarks concerning the language of the class. If any strangers are present, the conversation is still further clothed in slang, so as to be unintelligible even to the partially initiated. The evident puzzlement of any listener is of course gratifying to the costermonger's vanity, for he feels that he possesses a knowledge peculiarly his own.

Among the in-door amusements of the costermonger is card-playing, at which many of them are adepts. The usual games are all-fours, all-fives, cribbage, and put. Whist is known to a few, but is never played, being considered dull and slow. Of short whist they have not heard; "but," said one, whom I questioned on the subject, "if it's come into fashion, it'll soon be among us." The play is usually for beer, but the game is rendered exciting by bets both among the players and the lookers-on. "I'll back Jem for a yanepatine," says one. "Jack for a gen," cries another. A penny is the lowest sum laid, and five shillings generally the highest, but a shilling is not often exceeded. "We play fair among ourselves," said a costermonger to me—"aye, fairer than the aristocrats—but we'll take in anybody else." Where it is known that the landlord will not supply cards, "a sporting coster" carries a pack or two with him. The cards played with have rarely been stamped:

they are generally dirty, and sometimes almost illegible, from long handling and spilled beer. Some men will sit patiently for hours at these games, and they watch the dealing round of the dingy cards intently, and without the attempt—common among politer gamesters—to appear indifferent, though they bear their losses well. In a full room of card-players, the groups are all shrouded in tobacco-smoke, and from them are heard constant sounds—according to the games they are engaged in—of "I'm low, and Ped's high." "Tip and me's game." "Fifteen four and a flush of five." I may remark it is curious that costermongers, who can neither read nor write, and who have no knowledge of the multiplication table, are skilful in all the intricacies and calculations of cribbage. There is not much quarrelling over the cards, unless strangers play with them, and then the costermongers all take part one with another, fairly or unfairly.

It has been said that there is a close resemblance between many of the characteristics of a very high class, socially, and a very low class. Those who remember the disclosures on a trial a few years back, as to how men of rank and wealth passed their leisure in card-playing—many of their lives being one continued leisure—can judge how far the analogy holds when the card-passion of the costermongers is described.

"Shove-halfpenny" is another game played by them; so is "Three up." Three halfpennies are thrown up, and when they fall all "heads" or all "tails," it is a mark; and the man who gets the greatest number of marks out of a given amount—three, or five, or more—wins. "Three-up" is played fairly among the costermongers; but is most frequently resorted to when strangers are present to "make a pitch,"—which is, in plain words, to cheat any stranger who is rash enough to bet upon them. "This is the way, sir," said an adept to me; "bless you, I can make them fall as I please. If I'm playing with Jo, and a stranger bets with Jo, why, of course, I make Jo win." This adept illustrated his skill to me by throwing up three halfpennies, and, five times out of six, they fell upon the floor, whether he threw them nearly to the ceiling or merely to his shoulder, all heads or all tails. The halfpence were the proper current coins—indeed, they were my own; and the result is gained by a peculiar position of the coins on the fingers, and a peculiar jerk in the throwing. There was an amusing manifestation of the pride of art in the way in which my obliging informant displayed his skill.

"Skittles" is another favourite amusement, and the costermongers class themselves among the best players in London. The game is always for beer, but betting goes on.

A fondness for "sparring" and "boxing" lingers among the rude members of some classes of the working men, such as the tanners. With the great majority of the costermongers this fondness is still as dominant as it was among the "higher classes," when boxers were the pets of princes and nobles. The sparring among the costers is not for money, but for beer and "a lark"—a convenient word covering much mischief. Two out of every ten landlords, whose houses are patronised by these lovers of "the art of self-defence," supply gloves. Some charge 2*d.* a night for their use; others only 1*d.* The sparring seldom continues long, sometimes not above a quarter of an hour; for the costermongers, though excited for a while, weary of sports in which they cannot personally participate, and in the beer-shops only two spar at a time, though fifty or sixty may be present. The shortness of the duration of this pastime may be one reason why it seldom leads to quarrelling. The stake is usually a "top of reeb," and the winner is the man who gives the first "noser;" a *bloody* nose however is required to show that the blow was veritably a noser. The costermongers boast of their skill in pugilism as well as at skittles. "We are all handy with our fists," said one man, "and are matches, aye, and more than matches, for anybody but reg'lar boxers. We've stuck to the ring, too, and gone reg'lar to the fights, more than any other men."

"Twopenny-hops" are much resorted to by the costermongers, men and women, boys and girls. At these dances decorum is sometimes, but not often, violated. "The women," I was told by one man, "doesn't show their necks as I've seen the ladies do in them there pictures of high life in the shop-winders, or on the stage. Their Sunday gowns, which is their dancing gowns, ain't made that way." At these "hops" the clog-hornpipe is often danced, and sometimes a collection is made to ensure the performance of a first-rate professor of that dance; sometimes, and more frequently, it is volunteered gratuitously. The other dances are jigs, "flash jigs"—hornpipes in fetters—a dance rendered popular by the success of the acted "Jack Sheppard"—polkas, and country-dances, the last-mentioned being generally demanded by the women. Waltzes are as yet unknown to them. Sometimes they do the "pipe-dance." For this a number of tobacco-pipes, about a dozen, are laid close together on the floor, and the dancer places the toe of his boot between the different pipes, keeping time with the music. Two of the pipes are arranged as a cross, and the toe has to be inserted between each of the angles, without breaking them. The numbers present at these "hops" vary from 30 to 100 of both sexes, their ages being from 14 to 45, and the female sex being slightly predominant as to the proportion of those in attendance. At these "hops" there is nothing of the leisurely style of dancing—half a glide and half a skip—but vigorous, laborious capering. The hours are from half-past eight to twelve, sometimes to one or two in the morning, and never later than two, as the costermongers are early risers. There is sometimes a good deal of drinking; some of the young girls being often pressed to drink, and frequently yielding to the temptation. From 1*l.* to 7*l.* is spent in drink at a hop; the youngest men or lads present spend the most, especially in that act of costermonger politeness—"treating the gals." The music is always a fiddle, sometimes with the addition of a harp and a cornopean. The band is provided by the costermongers, to whom the assembly is confined; but during the present and the last year, when the costers' earnings have been less than the average, the landlord has provided the harp, whenever that instrument has added to the charms of the fiddle. Of one use to which these "hops" are put I have given an account, under the head of "Marriage."

The other amusements of this class of the community are the theatre and the penny concert, and their visits are almost entirely confined to the galleries of the theatres on the Surrey-side—the Surrey, the Victoria, the Bower Saloon, and (but less frequently) Astley's. Three times a week is an average attendance at theatres and dances by the more prosperous costermongers. The most intelligent man I met with among them gave me the following account. He classes himself with the many, but his tastes are really those of an educated man:—"Love and murder suits us best, sir; but within these few years I think there's a great deal more liking for deep tragedies among us. They set men a thinking; but then we all consider them too long. Of *Hamlet* we can make neither end nor side; and nine out of ten of us—ay, far more than that—would like it to be confined to the ghost scenes, and the funeral, and the killing off at the last. *Macbeth* would be better liked, if it was only the witches and the fighting. The high words in a tragedy we call jaw-breakers, and say we can't tumble to that barrikin. We always stay to the last, because we've paid for it all, or very few costers would see a tragedy out if any money was returned to those leaving after two or three acts. We are fond of music. Nigger music was very much liked among us, but it's stale now. Flash songs are liked, and sailors' songs, and patriotic songs. Most costers—indeed, I can't call to mind an exception—listen very quietly to songs that they don't in the least understand. We have among us translations of the patriotic French songs. 'Mourir pour la patrie' is very popular, and so is the 'Marseillaise.' A song to take hold of us must have a good chorus." "They like something, sir, that is worth hearing," said one of my informants, "such as the 'Soldier's Dream,' 'The Dream of Napoleon,' or 'I 'ad a dream—an 'appy dream.'"

The songs in ridicule of Marshal Haynau, and in laudation of Barclay and Perkin's draymen, were and are very popular among the costers; but none are more popular than Paul Jones—"A noble commander, Paul Jones was his name." Among them the chorus of "Britons never shall be slaves," is often rendered "Britons always shall be slaves." The most popular of all songs with the class, however, is "Duck-legged Dick," of which I give the first verse.

"Duck-legged Dick had a donkey,
And his lush loved much for to swill,
One day he got rather lumpy,
And got sent seven days to the mill.
His donkey was taken to the green-yard,
A fate which he never deserved.
Oh! it was such a regular mean yard,
That alas! the poor moke got starved.
Oh! bad luck can't be prevented,
Fortune she smiles or she frowns,
He's best off that's contented,
To mix, sirs, the ups and the downs."

Their sports, are enjoyed the more, if they are dangerous and require both courage and dexterity to succeed in them. They prefer, if crossing a bridge, to climb over the parapet, and walk along on the stone coping. When a house is building, rows of coster lads will climb up the long ladders, leaning against the unslated roof, and then slide down again, each one resting on the other's shoulders. A peep show with a battle scene is sure of its coster audience, and a favourite pastime is fighting with cheap theatrical swords. They are, however, true to each other, and should a coster, who is the hero of his court, fall ill and go to a hospital, the whole of the inhabitants of his quarter will visit him on the Sunday, and take him presents of various articles so that "he may live well."

Among the men, rat-killing is a favourite sport. They will enter an old stable, fasten the door and then turn out the rats. Or they will find out some unfrequented yard, and at night time build up a pit with apple-case boards, and lighting up their lamps, enjoy the sport. Nearly every coster is fond of dogs. Some fancy them greatly, and are proud of making them fight. If when out working, they see a handsome stray, whether he is a "toy" or "sporting" dog, they whip him up—many of the class not being *very* particular whether the animals are stray or not.

Their dog fights are both cruel and frequent. It is not uncommon to see a lad walking with the trembling legs of a dog shivering under a bloody handkerchief, that covers the bitten and wounded body of an animal that has been figuring at some "match." These fights take place on the sly—the tap-room or back-yard of a beer-shop, being generally chosen for the purpose. A few men are let into the secret, and they attend to bet upon the winner, the police being carefully kept from the spot.

Pigeons are "fancied" to a large extent, and are kept in lath cages on the roofs of the houses. The lads look upon a visit to the Red-house, Battersea, where the pigeon-shooting takes place, as a great treat. They stand without the hoarding that encloses the ground, and watch for the wounded pigeons to fall, when a violent scramble takes place among them, each bird being valued at 3*d.* or 4*d* So popular has this sport become, that some boys take dogs with them trained to retrieve the birds, and two Lambeth costers attend regularly after their morning's work with their guns, to shoot those that escape the 'shots' within.

A good pugilist is looked up to with great admiration by the costers, and fighting is considered to be a necessary part of a boy's education. Among them cowardice in any shape is despised

as being degrading and loathsome, indeed the man who would avoid a fight, is scouted by the whole of the court he lives in. Hence it is important for a lad and even a girl to know how to "work their fists well"—as expert boxing is called among them. If a coster man or woman is struck they are obliged to fight. When a quarrel takes place between two boys, a ring is formed, and the men urge them on to have it out, for they hold that it is a wrong thing to stop a battle, as it causes bad blood for life; whereas, if the lads fight it out they shake hands and forget all about it. Everybody practises fighting, and the man who has the largest and hardest muscle is spoken of in terms of the highest commendation. It is often said in admiration of such a man that "he could muzzle half a dozen bobbies before breakfast."

To serve out a policeman is the bravest act by which a costermonger can distinguish himself. Some lads have been imprisoned upwards of a dozen times for this offence; and are consequently looked upon by their companions as martyrs. When they leave prison for such an act, a subscription is often got up for their benefit. In their continual warfare with the force, they resemble many savage nations, from the cunning and treachery they use. The lads endeavour to take the unsuspecting "crusher" by surprise, and often crouch at the entrance of a court until a policeman passes, when a stone or a brick is hurled at him, and the youngster immediately disappears. Their love of revenge too, is extreme — their hatred being in no way mitigated by time; they will wait for months, following a policeman who has offended or wronged them, anxiously looking out for an opportunity of paying back the injury. One boy, I was told, vowed vengeance against a member of the force, and for six months never allowed the man to escape his notice. At length, one night, he saw the policeman in a row outside a public-house, and running into the crowd kicked him savagely, shouting at the same time: "Now, you b——, I've got you at last." When the boy heard that his persecutor was injured for life, his joy was very great, and he declared the twelvemonth's imprisonment he was sentenced to for the offence to be "dirt cheap." The whole of the court where the lad resided sympathized with the boy, and vowed to a man, that had he escaped, they would have subscribed a pad or two of dry herrings, to send him into the country until the affair had blown over, for he had shown himself a "plucky one."

It is called "plucky" to bear pain without complaining. To flinch from expected suffering is scorned, and he who does so is sneered at and told to wear a gown, as being more fit to be a woman. To show a disregard for pain, a lad, when without money, will say to his pal, "Give us a penny, and you may have a punch at my nose." They also delight in tattooing their chests and arms with anchors, and figures of different kinds. During the whole of this painful operation, the boy will not flinch, but laugh and joke with his admiring companions, as if perfectly at ease.

Gambling of Costermongers.

It would be difficult to find in the whole of this numerous class, a youngster who is not—what may be safely called—a desperate gambler. At the age of fourteen this love of play first comes upon the lad, and from that time until he is thirty or so, not a Sunday passes but he is at his stand on the gambling ground. Even if he has no money to stake, he will loll away the morning looking on, and so borrow excitement from the successes of others. Every attempt made by the police, to check this ruinous system, has been unavailing, and has rather given a gloss of daring courage to the sport, that tends to render it doubly attractive.

If a costermonger has an hour to spare, his first thought is to gamble away the time. He does not care what he plays for, so long as he can have a chance of winning something. Whilst waiting for a market to open, his delight is to find out some pieman and toss him for his stock, though, by so doing, he risks his market-money and only chance of living, to win that which he will give away to the first friend he meets. For the whole week the boy will work untiringly, spurred on by the thought of the money to be won on the Sunday. Nothing will damp his ardour for gambling, the most continued ill-fortune making him even more reckless than if he were the luckiest man alive.

Many a lad who had gone down to the gambling ground, with a good warm coat upon his back and his pocket well filled from the Saturday night's market, will leave it at evening penniless and coatless, having lost all his earnings, stock-money, and the better part of his clothing. Some of the boys, when desperate with "bad luck," borrow to the utmost limit of their credit; then they mortgage their "king's-man" or neck-tie, and they will even change their cord trousers, if better than those of the winner, so as to have one more chance at the turn of fortune. The coldest winter's day will not stop the Sunday's gathering on the river-side, for the heat of play warms them in spite of the sharp wind blowing down the Thames. If the weather be wet, so that the half-pence stick to the ground, they find out some railway-arch or else a beer-shop, and having filled the tap-room with their numbers, they muffle the table with handkerchiefs, and play secretly. When the game is very exciting, they will even forget their hunger, and continue to gamble until it is too dark to see, before they think of eating. One man told me, that when he was working the races with lemonade, he had often seen in the centre of a group, composed of costers, thimble-riggers and showmen, as much as 100*l.* on the ground at one time, in gold and silver. A friend of his, who had gone down in company with him, with a pony-truck of toys,

THE COSTER-GIRL.

"Apples! An 'aypenny a lot, Apples!"

[*From a Photograph.*]

lost in less than an hour his earnings, truck, stock of goods, and great-coat. Vowing to have his revenge next time, he took his boy on his back, and started off on the tramp to London, there to borrow sufficient money to bring down a fresh lot of goods on the morrow, and then gamble away his earnings as before.

It is perfectly immaterial to the coster with whom he plays, whether it be a lad from the Lambeth potteries, or a thief from the Westminster slums. Very often, too, the gamblers of one costermonger district, will visit those of another, and work what is called "a plant" in this way. One of the visitors will go before hand, and, joining a group of gamblers, commence tossing. When sufficient time has elapsed to remove all suspicion of companionship, his mate will come up and commence betting on each of his pals' throws with those standing round. By a curious quickness of hand, a coster can make the toss tell favourably for his wagering friend, who meets him after the play is over in the evening, and shares the spoil.

The spots generally chosen for the Sunday's sport are in secret places, half-hidden from the eye of the passers, where a scout can give quick notice of the approach of the police: in the fields about King's-cross, or near any unfinished railway buildings. The Mint, St. George's-fields, Blackfriars'-road, Bethnal-green, and Marylebone, are all favourite resorts. Between Lambeth and Chelsea, the shingle on the left side of the Thames, is spotted with small rings of lads, half-hidden behind the barges. One boy (of the party) is always on the look out, and even if a stranger should advance, the cry is given of "Namous" or "Kool Eslop." Instantly the money is whipped-up and pocketed, and the boys stand chattering and laughing together. It is never difficult for a coster to find out where the gambling parties are, for he has only to stop the first lad he meets, and ask him where the "erht pu" or "three up" is going on, to discover their whereabouts.

If during the game a cry of "Police!" should be given by the looker-out, instantly a rush at the money is made by any one in the group, the costers preferring that a stranger should have the money rather than the policeman. There is also a custom among them, that the ruined player should be started again by a gift of 2*d.* in every shilling lost, or, if the loss is heavy, a present of four or five shillings is made; neither is it considered at all dishonourable for the party winning to leave with the full bloom of success upon him.

That the description of one of these Sunday scenes might be more truthful, a visit was paid to a gambling-ring close to ——. Although not twenty yards distant from the steam-boat pier, yet the little party was so concealed among the the coal-barges, that not a head could be seen. The spot chosen was close to a small narrow court, leading from the street to the water-side, and here the lad on the look-out was stationed. There were about thirty young fellows, some tall strapping youths, in the costers' cable-cord costume,—others, mere boys, in rags, from the potteries, with their clothes stained with clay. The party was hidden from the river by the black dredger-boats on the beach; and it was so arranged, that should the alarm be given, they might leap into the coal-barges, and hide until the intruder had retired. Seated on some oars stretched across two craft, was a mortar-stained bricklayer, keeping a look-out towards the river, and acting as a sort of umpire in all disputes. The two that were tossing had been playing together since early morning; and it was easy to tell which was the loser, by the anxious-looking eye and compressed lip. He was quarrelsome too; and if the crowd pressed upon him, he would jerk his elbow back savagely, saying, "I wish to C——t you'd stand backer." The winner, a short man, in a mud-stained canvas jacket, and a week's yellow beard on his chin, never spake a word beyond his "heads," or "tails;" but his cheeks were red, and the pipe in his mouth was unlit, though he puffed at it.

In their hands they each held a long row of halfpence, extending to the wrist, and topped by shillings and half-crowns. Nearly every one round had coppers in his hands, and bets were made and taken as rapidly as they could be spoken. "I lost a sov. last night in less than no time," said one man, who, with his hands in his pockets, was looking on; "never mind—I musn't have no wenson this week, and try again next Sunday."

The boy who was losing was adopting every means to "bring back his luck again." Before crying, he would toss up a halfpenny three times, to see what he should call. At last, with an oath, he pushed aside the boys round him, and shifted his place, to see what that would do; it had a good effect, for he won toss after toss in a curiously fortunate way, and then it was strange to watch his mouth gradually relax and his brows unknit. His opponent was a little startled, and passing his fingers through his dusty hair, said, with a stupid laugh, "Well, I never see the likes." The betting also began to shift. "Sixpence Ned wins!" cried three or four; "Sixpence he loses!" answered another; "Done!" and up went the halfpence. "Half-a-crown Joe loses!"—"Here you are," answered Joe, but he lost again. "I'll try you a 'gen'" (shilling) said a coster; "And a 'rouf yenap'" (fourpence), added the other. "Say a 'exes'" (sixpence).—"Done!" and the betting continued, till the ground was spotted with silver and halfpence.

"That's ten bob he's won in five minutes," said Joe (the loser), looking round with a forced smile; but Ned (the winner) never spake a word, even when he gave any change to his antagonist; and if he took a bet, he only nodded to the one that offered it, and threw down his money. Once, when he picked up more than a sovereign from the ground, that he had won in one throw, a washed sweep, with a black rim round his neck, said, "There's a hog!" but

there wasn't even a smile at the joke. At last Joe began to feel angry, and stamping his foot till the water squirted up from the beach, cried, "It's no use; luck's set in him—he'd muck a thousand!" and so he shifted his ground, and betted all round on the chance of better fortune attending the movement. He lost again, and some one bantering said, "You'll win the shine-rag, Joe," meaning that he would be "cracked up," or ruined, if he continued.

When one o'clock struck, a lad left, saying, he was "going to get an inside lining" (dinner). The sweep asked him what he was going to have. "A two-and-half plate, and a ha'p'orth of smash" (a plate of soup and a ha'p'orth of mashed potatoes), replied the lad, bounding into the court. Nobody else seemed to care for his dinner, for all stayed to watch the gamblers.

Every now and then some one would go up the court to see if the lad watching for the police was keeping a good look-out; but the boy never deserted his post, for fear of losing his threepence. If he had, such is the wish to protect the players felt by every lad, that even whilst at dinner, one of them, if he saw a police-man pass, would spring up and rush to the gambling ring to give notice.

When the tall youth, "Ned," had won nearly all the silver of the group, he suddenly jerked his gains into his coat-pocket, and saying, "I've done," walked off, and was out of sight in an instant. The surprise of the loser and all around was extreme. They looked at the court where he had disappeared, then at one another, and at last burst out into one expression of disgust. "There's a scurf!" said one; "He's a regular scab," cried another; and a coster declared that he was "a trosseno, and no mis-take." For although it is held to be fair for the winner to go whenever he wishes, yet such conduct is never relished by the losers.

It was then determined that "they would have him to rights" the next time he came to gamble; for every one would set at him, and win his money, and then "turn up," as he had done.

The party was then broken up, the players separating to wait for the new-comers that would be sure to pour in after dinner.

"Vic. Gallery."

On a good attractive night, the rush of costers to the threepenny gallery of the Coburg (better known as "the Vic") is peculiar and almost awful.

The long zig-zag staircase that leads to the pay box is crowded to suffocation at least an hour before the theatre is opened; but, on the occasion of a piece with a good murder in it, the crowd will frequently collect as early as three o'clock in the afternoon. Lads stand upon the broad wooden bannisters about 50 feet from the ground, and jump on each others' backs, or adopt any expedient they can think of to obtain a good place.

The walls of the well-staircase having a remarkably fine echo, and the wooden floor of the steps serving as a sounding board, the shouting, whistling, and quarrelling of the impatient young costers is increased tenfold. If, as sometimes happens, a song with a chorus is started, the ears positively ache with the din, and when the chant has finished it seems as though a sudden silence had fallen on the people. To the centre of the road, and all round the door, the mob is in a ferment of excite-ment, and no sooner is the money-taker at his post than the most frightful rush takes place, every one heaving with his shoulder at the back of the person immediately in front of him. The girls shriek, men shout, and a nervous fear is felt lest the massive staircase should fall in with the weight of the throng, as it lately did with the most terrible results. If a hat tumbles from the top of the staircase, a hundred hands snatch at it as it descends. When it is caught a voice roars above the tumult, "All right, Bill, I've got it"—for they all seem to know one another—"Keep us a pitch and I'll bring it."

To any one unaccustomed to be pressed flat it would be impossible to enter with the mob. To see the sight in the gallery it is better to wait until the first piece is over. The ham-sandwich men and pig-trotter women will give you notice when the time is come, for with the first clatter of the descending footsteps they commence their cries.

There are few grown-up men that go to the "Vic" gallery. The generality of the visitors are lads from about twelve to three-and-twenty, and though a few black-faced sweeps or whitey-brown dustmen may be among the throng, the gallery audience consists mainly of costermon-gers. Young girls, too, are very plentiful, only one-third of whom now take their babies, owing to the new regulation of charging half-price for infants. At the foot of the staircase stands a group of boys begging for the return checks, which they sell again for 1½*d.* or 1*d.*, according to the lateness of the hour.

At each step up the well-staircase the warmth and stench increase, until by the time one reaches the gallery doorway, a furnace-heat rushes out through the entrance that seems to force you backwards, whilst the odour positively prevents respiration. The mob on the landing, standing on tiptoe and closely wedged together, resists any civil attempt at gaining a glimpse of the stage, and yet a coster lad will rush up, elbow his way into the crowd, then jump up on to the shoulders of those before him, and sud-denly disappear into the body of the gallery.

The gallery at "the Vic" is one of the largest in London. It will hold from 1500 to 2000 people, and runs back to so great a distance, that the end of it is lost in shadow, excepting where the little gas-jets, against the wall, light up the two or three faces around them. When the gallery is well packed, it is usual to see piles of boys on each others shoulders at the back, while on the partition

boards, dividing off the slips, lads will pitch themselves, despite the spikes.

As you look up the vast slanting mass of heads from the upper boxes, each one appears on the move. The huge black heap, dotted with faces, and spotted with white shirt sleeves, almost pains the eye to look at, and should a clapping of hands commence, the twinkling nearly blinds you. It is the fashion with the mob to take off their coats; and the cross-braces on the backs of some, and the bare shoulders peeping out of the ragged shirts of others, are the only variety to be found. The bonnets of the "ladies" are hung over the iron railing in front, their numbers nearly hiding the panels, and one of the amusements of the lads in the back seats consists in pitching orange peel or nutshells into them, a good aim being rewarded with a shout of laughter.

When the orchestra begins playing, before "the gods" have settled into their seats, it is impossible to hear a note of music. The puffed-out cheeks of the trumpeters, and the raised drumsticks tell you that the overture has commenced, but no tune is to be heard. An occasional burst of the full band being caught by gushes, as if a high wind were raging. Recognitions take place every moment, and "Bill Smith" is called to in a loud voice from one side, and a shout in answer from the other asks "What's up?" Or family secrets are revealed, and "Bob Triller" is asked where "Sal" is, and replies amid a roar of laughter, that she is "a-larning the pynanney."

By-and-by a youngster, who has come in late, jumps up over the shoulders at the door, and doubling himself into a ball, rolls down over the heads in front, leaving a trail of commotion for each one as he passes aims a blow at the fellow. Presently a fight is sure to begin, and then every one rises from his seat whistling and shouting; three or four pairs of arms fall to, the audience waving their hands till the moving mass seems like microscopic eels in paste. But the commotion ceases suddenly on the rising of the curtain, and then the cries of "Silence!" "Ord-a-a-r!" "Ord-a-a-r!" make more noise than ever.

The "Vic" gallery is not to be moved by touching sentiment. They prefer vigorous exer-cise to any emotional speech. "The Child of the Storm's" declaration that she would share her father's "death or imprisonment as her duty," had no effect at all, compared with the split in the hornpipe. The shrill whistling and brayvos that followed the tar's performance showed how highly it was relished, and one "god" went so far as to ask "how it was done." The comic actor kicking a dozen Polish peasants was encored, but the grand banquet of the Czar of all the Russias only produced merriment, and a request that he would "give them a bit" was made directly the Emperor took the willow-patterned plate in his hand. All affect-ing situations were sure to be interrupted by cries of "orda-a-r;" and the lady begging for her father's life was told to "speak up old gal;" though when the heroine of the "dummestic dreamer" (as they call it) told the general of all the Cossack forces "not to be a fool," the uproar of approbation grew greater than ever,—and when the lady turned up her swan's-down cuffs, and seizing four Russian soldiers shook them successively by the collar, then the enthusiasm knew no bounds, and the cries of "Bray-vo Vincent! Go it my tulip!" resounded from every throat.

Altogether the gallery audience do not seem to be of a gentle nature. One poor little lad shouted out in a crying tone, "that he couldn't see," and instantly a dozen voices demanded "that he should be thrown over."

Whilst the pieces are going on, brown, flat bottles are frequently raised to the mouth, and between the acts a man with a tin can, glitter-ing in the gas-light, goes round crying, "Port-a-a-a-r! who's for port-a-a-a-r." As the heat increased the faces grew bright red, every bonnet was taken off, and ladies could be seen wiping the perspiration from their cheeks with the play-bills.

No delay between the pieces will be allowed, and should the interval appear too long, some one will shout out—referring to the curtain—"Pull up that there winder blind!" or they will call to the orchestra, saying, "Now then you catgut-scrapers! Let's have a ha'purth of liveliness." Neither will they suffer a play to proceed until they have a good view of the stage, and "Higher the blue," is constantly shouted, when the sky is too low, or "Light up the moon," when the transparency is rather dim.

The dances and comic songs, between the pieces, are liked better than anything else. A highland fling is certain to be repeated, and a stamping of feet will accompany the tune, and a shrill whistling, keep time through the entire performance.

But the grand hit of the evening is always when a song is sung to which the entire gallery can join in chorus. Then a deep silence pre-vails all through the stanzas. Should any burst in before his time, a shout of "orda-a-r" is raised, and the intruder put down by a thousand indignant cries. At the proper time, however, the throats of the mob burst forth in all their strength. The most deafening noise breaks out suddenly, while the cat-calls keep up the tune, and an imitation of a dozen Mr. Punches squeak out the words. Some actors at the minor theatres make a great point of this, and in the bill upon the night of my visit, under the title of "There's a good time coming, boys," there was printed, "assisted by the most numerous and effective chorus in the metropolis—" meaning the whole of the gallery. The singer himself started the mob, saying, "Now then, the Exeter Hall touch if you please gentlemen," and beat time with his hand, parodying M. Jullien with his *baton*. An "angcore" on such occasions is always

demanded, and, despite a few murmurs of "change it to 'Duck-legged Dick,'" invariably insisted on.

The Politics of Costermongers.—Policemen.

The notion of the police is so intimately blended with what may be called the politics of the costermongers that I give them together.

The politics of these people are detailed in a few words—they are nearly all Chartists. "You might say, sir," remarked one of my informants, "that they *all* were Chartists, but as its better you should rather be under than over the mark, say *nearly* all." Their ignorance, and their being impulsive, makes them a dangerous class. I am assured that in every district where the costermongers are congregated, one or two of the body, more intelligent than the others, have great influence over them; and these leading men are all Chartists, and being industrious and not unprosperous persons, their pecuniary and intellectual superiority cause them to be regarded as oracles. One of these men said to me: "The costers think that working-men know best, and so they have confidence in us. I like to make men discontented, and I will make them discontented while the present system continues, because it's all for the middle and the moneyed classes, and nothing, in the way of rights, for the poor. People fancy when all's quiet that all's stagnating. Propagandism is going on for all that. It's when all's quiet that the seed's a growing. Republicans and Socialists are pressing their doctrines."

The costermongers have very vague notions of an aristocracy; they call the more prosperous of their own body "aristocrats." Their notions of an aristocracy of birth or wealth seem to be formed on their opinion of the rich, or reputed rich salesmen with whom they deal; and the result is anything but favourable to the nobility.

Concerning free-trade, nothing, I am told, can check the costermongers' fervour for a cheap loaf. A Chartist costermonger told me that he knew numbers of costers who were keen Chartists without understanding anything about the six points.

The costermongers frequently attend political meetings, going there in bodies of from six to twelve. Some of them, I learned, could not understand why Chartist leaders exhorted them to peace and quietness, when they might as well fight it out with the police at once. The costers boast, moreover, that they stick more together in any "row" than any other class. It is considered by them a reflection on the character of the thieves that they are seldom true to one another.

It is a matter of marvel to many of this class that people can live without working. The ignorant costers have no knowledge of "property," or "income," and conclude that the non-workers all live out of the taxes. Of the taxes generally they judge from their knowledge that tobacco, which they account a necessary of life, pays 3*s.* per lb. duty.

As regards the police, the hatred of a costermonger to a "peeler" is intense, and with their opinion of the police, all the more ignorant unite that of the governing power. "Can you wonder at it, sir," said a costermonger to me, "that I hate the police? They drive us about, we must move on, we can't stand here, and we can't pitch there. But if we're cracked up, that is if we're forced to go into the Union (I've known it both at Clerkenwell and the City of London workhouses,) why the parish gives us money to buy a barrow, or a shallow, or to hire them, and leave the house and start for ourselves: and what's the use of that, if the police won't let us sell our goods?—Which is right, the parish or the police?"

To thwart the police in any measure the costermongers readily aid one another. One very common procedure, if the policeman has seized a barrow, is to whip off a wheel, while the officers have gone for assistance; for a large and loaded barrow requires two men to convey it to the green-yard. This is done with great dexterity; and the next step is to dispose of the stock to any passing costers, or to any "standing" in the neighbourhood, and it is honestly accounted for. The policemen, on their return, find an empty, and unwheelable barrow, which they must carry off by main strength, amid the jeers of the populace.

I am assured that in case of a political riot every "coster" would seize his policeman.

Marriage and Concubinage of Costermongers.

Only one-tenth—at the outside one-tenth—of the couples living together and carrying on the costermongering trade, are married. In Clerkenwell parish, however, where the number of married couples is about a fifth of the whole, this difference is easily accounted for, as in Advent and Easter the incumbent of that parish marries poor couples without a fee. Of the rights of "legitimate" or "illegitimate" children the costermongers understand nothing, and account it a mere waste of money and time to go through the ceremony of wedlock when a pair can live together, and be quite as well regarded by their fellows, without it. The married women associate with the unmarried mothers of families without the slightest scruple. There is no honour attached to the marriage state, and no shame to concubinage. Neither are the unmarried women less faithful to their "partners" than the married; but I understand that, of the two classes, the unmarried betray the most jealousy.

As regards the fidelity of these women I was assured that, "in anything like good times," they were rigidly faithful to their husbands or paramours; but that, in the worst pinch of poverty, a departure from this fidelity—if it provided a few meals or a fire—was not considered at all heinous. An old costermonger, who had been mixed up with other callings, and whose

prejudices were certainly not in favour of his present trade, said to me, "What I call the working girls, sir, are as industrious and as faithful a set as can well be. I'm satisfied that they're more faithful to their mates than other poor working women. I never knew one of these working girls do wrong that way. They're strong, hearty, healthy girls, and keep clean rooms. Why, there's numbers of men leave their stock-money with their women, just taking out two or three shillings to gamble with and get drunk upon. They sometimes take a little drop themselves, the women do, and get beaten by their husbands for it, and hardest beaten if the man's drunk himself. They're sometimes beaten for other things too, or for nothing at all. But they seem to like the men better for their beating them. I never could make that out." Notwithstanding this fidelity, it appears that the "larking and joking" of the young, and sometimes of the middle-aged people, among themselves, is anything but delicate. The unmarried separate as seldom as the married. The fidelity characterizing the women does not belong to the men.

The dancing-rooms are the places where matches are made up. There the boys go to look out for "mates," and sometimes a match is struck up the first night of meeting, and the couple live together forthwith. The girls at these dances are all the daughters of costermongers, or of persons pursuing some other course of street life. Unions take place when the lad is but 14. Two or three out of 100 have their female helpmates at that early age; but the female is generally a couple of years older than her partner. Nearly all the costermongers form such alliances as I have described, when both parties are under twenty. One reason why these alliances are contracted at early ages is, that when a boy has assisted his father, or any one engaging him, in the business of a costermonger, he knows that he can borrow money, and hire a shallow or a barrow—or he may have saved 5*s.*—"and then if the father vexes him or snubs him," said one of my informants, "he'll tell his father to go to h—l, and he and his gal will start on their own account."

Most of the costermongers have numerous families, but not those who contract alliances very young. The women continue working down to the day of their confinement.

"Chance children," as they are called, or children unrecognised by any father, are rare among the young women of the costermongers.

Religion of Costermongers.

An intelligent and trustworthy man, until very recently actively engaged in costermongering, computed that not 3 in 100 costermongers had ever been in the interior of a church, or any place of worship, or knew what was meant by Christianity. The same person gave me the following account, which was confirmed by others:

"The costers have no religion at all, and very little notion, or none at all, of what religion or a future state is. Of all things they hate tracts. They hate them because the people leaving them never give them anything, and as they can't read the tract—not one in forty—they're vexed to be bothered with it. And really what is the use of giving people reading before you've taught them to read? Now, they respect the City Missionaries, because they read to them—and the costers will listen to reading when they don't understand it—and because they visit the sick, and sometimes give oranges and such like to them and the children. I've known a City Missionary buy a shilling's worth of oranges of a coster, and give them away to the sick and the children—most of them belonging to the costermongers—down the court, and that made him respected there. I think the City Missionaries have done good. But I'm satisfied that if the costers had to profess themselves of some religion to-morrow, they would all become Roman Catholics, every one of them. This is the reason:—London costers live very often in the same courts and streets as the poor Irish, and if the Irish are sick, be sure there comes to them the priest, the Sisters of Charity—they *are* good women—and some other ladies. Many a man that's not a Catholic, has rotted and died without any good person near him. Why, I lived a good while in Lambeth, and there wasn't one coster in 100, I'm satisfied, knew so much as the rector's name,—though Mr. Dalton's a very good man. But the reason I was telling you of, sir, is that the costers reckon *that* religion's the best that gives the most in charity, and they think the Catholics do this. I'm not a Catholic myself, but I believe every word of the Bible, and have the greater belief that it's the word of God because it teaches democracy. The Irish in the courts get sadly chaffed by the others about their priests,—but they'll die for the priest. Religion is a regular puzzle to the costers. They see people come out of church and chapel, and as they're mostly well dressed, and there's very few of their own sort among the church-goers, the costers somehow mix up being religious with being respectable, and so they have a queer sort of feeling about it. It's a mystery to them. It's shocking when you come to think of it. They'll listen to any preacher that goes among them; and then a few will say—I've heard it often—'A b—y fool, why don't he let people go to h-ll their own way?' There's another thing that makes the costers think so well of the Catholics. If a Catholic coster—there's only very few of them—is 'cracked up' (penniless), he's often started again, and the others have a notion that it's through some chapel-fund. I don't know whether it is so or not, but I know the cracked-up men are started again, if they're Catholics. It's still the stranger that the regular costermongers, who are nearly all Londoners, should have such respect for the Roman Catholics, when they have such a hatred of the Irish, whom they look upon as intruders and underminers."—"If a missionary came among

us with plenty of money," said another costermonger, "he might make us all Christians or Turks, or anything he liked." Neither the Latter-day Saints, nor any similar sect, have made converts among the costermongers.

Of the Uneducated State of Costermongers.

I have stated elsewhere, that only about one in ten of the regular costermongers is able to read. The want of education among both men and women is deplorable, and I tested it in several instances. The following statement, however, from one of the body, is no more to be taken as representing the ignorance of the class generally, than are the clear and discriminating accounts I received from intelligent costermongers to be taken as representing the intelligence of the body.

The man with whom I conversed, and from whom I received the following statement, seemed about thirty. He was certainly not ill-looking, but with a heavy cast of countenance, his light blue eyes having little expression. His statements, or opinions, I need hardly explain, were given both spontaneously in the course of conversation, and in answer to my questions. I give them almost verbatim, omitting oaths and slang:

"Well, times is bad, sir," he said, "but it's a deadish time. I don't do so well at present as in middlish times, I think. When I served the Prince of Naples, not far from here (I presume that he alluded to the Prince of Capua), I did better and times was better. That was five years ago, but I can't say to a year or two. He was a good customer, and was wery fond of peaches. I used to sell them to him, at 12*s.* the plasket when they was new. The plasket held a dozen, and cost me 6*s.* at Covent-garden—more sometimes; but I didn't charge him more when they did. His footman was a black man, and a ignorant man quite, and his housekeeper was a English-woman. He was the Prince o' Naples, was my customer; but I don't know what he was like, for I never saw him. I've heard that he was the brother of the king of Naples. I can't say where Naples is, but if you was to ask at Euston-square, they'll tell you the fare there and the time to go it in. It may be in France for anything I know may Naples, or in Ireland. Why don't you ask at the square? I went to Croydon once by rail, and slept all the way without stirring, and so you may to Naples for anything I know. I never heard of the Pope being a neighbour of the King of Naples. Do you mean living next door to him? But I don't know nothing of the King of Naples, only the prince. I don't know what the Pope is. Is he any trade? It's nothing to me, when he's no customer of mine. I have nothing to say about nobody that ain't no customers. My crabs is caught in the sea, in course. I gets them at Billingsgate. I never saw the sea, but it's salt-water, I know. I can't say whereabouts it lays. I believe it's in the hands of the Billingsgate salesmen—all of it? I've heard of shipwrecks at sea, caused by drownding, in course. I never heard that the Prince of Naples was ever at sea. I like to talk about him, he was such a customer when he lived near here." (Here he repeated his account of the supply of peaches to his Royal Highness.) "I never was in France, no, sir, never. I don't know the way. Do you think I could do better there? I never was in the Republic there. What's it like? Bonaparte? O, yes; I've heard of him. He was at Waterloo. I didn't know he'd been alive now and in France, as you ask me about him. I don't think you're larking, sir. Did I hear of the French taking possession of Naples, and Bonaparte making his brother-in-law king? Well, I didn't, but it may be true, because I served the Prince of Naples, what *was* the brother of the king. I never heard whether the Prince was the king's older brother or his younger. I wish he may turn out his older if there's property coming to him, as the oldest has the first turn; at least so I've heard—first come, first served. I've worked the streets and the courts at all times. I've worked them by moonlight, but you couldn't see the moonlight where it was busy. I can't say how far the moon's off us. It's nothing to me, but I've seen it a good bit higher than St. Paul's. I don't know nothing about the sun. Why do you ask? It must be nearer than the moon for it's warmer,—and if they're both fire, that shows it. It's like the tap-room grate and that bit of a gas-light; to compare the two is. What was St. Paul's that the moon was above? A church, sir; so I've heard. I never was in a church. O, yes, I've heard of God; he made heaven and earth; I never heard of his making the sea; that's another thing, and you can best learn about that at Billingsgate. (He seemed to think that the sea was an appurtenance of Billingsgate.) Jesus Christ? Yes. I've heard of him. Our Redeemer? Well, I only wish I could redeem my Sunday togs from my uncle's."

Another costermonger, in answer to inquiries, said: "I 'spose you think us 'riginal coves that you ask. We're not like Methusalem, or some such swell's name, (I presume that Malthus was meant) as wanted to murder children afore they was born, as I once heerd lectured about—we're nothing like that."

Another on being questioned, and on being told that the information was wanted for the press, replied: "The press? I'll have nothing to say to it. We are oppressed enough already."

That a class numbering 30,000 should be permitted to remain in a state of almost brutish ignorance is a national disgrace. If the London costers belong especially to the "dangerous classes," the danger of such a body is assuredly an evil of our own creation; for the gratitude of the poor creatures to any one who seeks to give them the least knowledge is almost pathetic.

Language of Costermongers.

The slang language of the costermongers is not very remarkable for originality of construction; it possesses no humour: but they boast that it is known only to themselves; it is far beyond the Irish, they say, and puzzles the Jews. The *root* of the costermonger tongue, so to speak, is to give the words spelt backward, or rather pronounced rudely backward,—for in my present chapter the language has, I believe, been reduced to orthography for the first time. With this backward pronunciation, which is very arbitrary, are mixed words reducible to no rule and seldom referrable to any origin, thus complicating the mystery of this unwritten tongue; while any syllable is added to a proper slang word, at the discretion of the speaker.

Slang is acquired very rapidly, and some costermongers will converse in it by the hour. The women use it sparingly; the girls more than the women; the men more than the girls; and the boys most of all. The most ignorant of all these classes deal most in slang and boast of their cleverness and proficiency in it. In their conversations among themselves, the following are invariably the terms used in money matters. A rude back-spelling may generally be traced:

Flatch	Halfpenny.
Yenep	Penny.
Owt-yenep	Twopence.
Erth-yenep	Threepence.
Rouf-yenep	Fourpence.
Ewif-yenep	Fivepence.
Exis-yenep	Sixpence.
Neves-yenep	Sevenpence.
Teaich-yenep	Eightpence.
Enine-yenep	Ninepence.
Net-yenep	Tenpence.
Leven	Elevenpence.
Gen	Twelvepence.
Yenep-flatch	Three half-pence.

and so on through the penny-halfpennies.

It was explained to me by a costermonger, who had introduced some new words into the slang, that "leven" was allowed so closely to resemble the proper word, because elevenpence was almost an unknown sum to costermongers, the transition—weights and measures notwithstanding—being immediate from 10*d.* to 1*s.*

"Gen" is a shilling and the numismatic sequence is pursued with the gens, as regards shillings, as with the "yeneps" as regards pence. The blending of the two is also according to the same system as "Owt-gen, teaich-yenep" two-and-eightpence. The exception to the uniformity of the "gen" enumeration is in the sum of 8*s.*, which instead of "teaich-gen" is "teaich-guy:" a deviation with ample precedents in all civilised tongues.

As regards the larger coins the translation into slang is not reducible into rule. The following are the costermonger coins of the higher value:

Couter	Sovereign.
Half-Couter, or *Net-gen*	Half-sovereign.
Ewif-gen	Crown.
Flatch-ynork	Half-crown.

The costermongers still further complicate their slang by a mode of multiplication. They thus say, "Erth Ewif-gens" or 3 times 5*s.*, which means of course 15*s.*

Speaking of this language, a costermonger said to me: "The Irish can't tumble to it anyhow; the Jews can tumble better, but we're *their* masters. Some of the young salesmen at Billingsgate understand us,—but only at Billingsgate; and they think they're uncommon clever, but they're not quite up to the mark. The police don't understand us at all. It would be a pity if they did."

I give a few more phrases:

A doogheno or dabheno?	Is it a good or bad market?
A regular trosseno	A regular bad one.
On	No.
Say	Yes.
Tumble to your barrikin	Understand you.
Top o' reeb	Pot of beer.
Doing dab	Doing badly.
Cool him	Look at him.

The latter phrase is used when one costermonger warns another of the approach of a policeman "who might order him to move on, or be otherwise unpleasant." "Cool" (look) is exclaimed, or "Cool him" (look at him). One costermonger told me as a great joke that a very stout policeman, who was then new to the duty, was when in a violent state of perspiration, much offended by a costermonger saying "Cool him."

Cool the esclop	Look at the police.
Cool the namesclop	Look at the policeman.
Cool ta the dillo nemo	Look at the old woman;

said of any woman, young or old, who, according to costermonger notions, is "giving herself airs."

This language seems confined, in its general use, to the immediate objects of the costermonger's care; but is, among the more acute members of the fraternity, greatly extended, and is capable of indefinite extension.

The costermongers oaths, I may conclude, are all in the vernacular; nor are any of the common salutes, such as "How d'you do?" or "Good-night" known to their slang.

Kennetseeno	Stinking; (applied principally to the quality of fish.)
Flatch kanurd	Half-drunk.
Flash it	Show it; (in cases of bargains offered.)
Op dnog	No good.

Cross chap	A thief.
Showfulls	Bad money;

(seldom in the hands of costermongers.)

I'm on to the deb . .	I'm going to bed.
Do the tightner . .	Go to dinner.
Nommus	Be off.
Tol	Lot, Stock, or Share.

Many costermongers, "but principally—perhaps entirely,"—I was told, "those who had not been regular born and bred to the trade, but had taken to it when cracked up in their own," do not trouble themselves to acquire any knowledge of slang. It is not indispensable for the carrying on of their business; the grand object, however, seems to be, to shield their bargainings at market, or their conversation among themselves touching their day's work and profits, from the knowledge of any Irish or uninitiated fellow-traders.

The simple principle of costermonger slang—that of pronouncing backward, may cause its acquirement to be regarded by the educated as a matter of ease. But it is a curious fact that lads who become costermongers' boys, without previous association with the class, acquire a very ready command of the language, and this though they are not only unable to spell, but don't "know a letter in a book." I saw one lad, whose parents had, until five or six months back, resided in the country. The lad himself was fourteen; he told me he had not been "a costermongering" more than three months, and prided himself on his mastery over slang. To test his ability, I asked him the coster's word for "hippopotamus;" he answered, with tolerable readiness, "musatoppop." I then asked him for the like rendering of "equestrian" (one of Astley's bills having caught my eye). He replied, but not quite so readily, "nirtseque." The last test to which I subjected him was "good-naturedly;" and though I induced him to repeat the word twice, I could not, on any of the three renderings, distinguish any precise sound beyond an indistinct gabbling, concluded emphatically with "doog:"—"good" being a word with which all these traders are familiar. It must be remembered, that the words I demanded were remote from the young costermonger's vocabulary, if not from his understanding.

Before I left this boy, he poured forth a minute or more's gibberish, of which, from its rapid utterance, I could distinguish nothing; but I found from his after explanation, that it was a request to me to make a further purchase of his walnuts.

This slang is utterly devoid of any applicability to humour. It gives no new fact, or approach to a fact, for philologists. One superior genius among the costers, who has invented words for them, told me that he had no system for coining his term. He gave to the known words some terminating syllable, or, as he called it, "a new turn, just," to use his own words, "as if he chorussed them, with a tol-de-rol." The intelligence communicated in this slang is, in a great measure, communicated, as in other slang, as much by the inflection of the voice, the emphasis, the tone, the look, the shrug, the nod, the wink, as by the words spoken.

Of the Nicknames of Costermongers.

Like many rude, and almost all wandering communities, the costermongers, like the cabmen and pickpockets, are hardly ever known by their real names; even the honest men among them are distinguished by some strange appellation. Indeed, they are all known one to another by nicknames, which they acquire either by some mode of dress, some remark that has ensured costermonger applause, some peculiarity in trading, or some defect or singularly in personal appearance. Men are known as "Rotten Herrings," "Spuddy" (a seller of bad potatoes, until beaten by the Irish for his bad wares,) "Curly" (a man with a curly head), "Foreigner" (a man who had been in the Spanish-Legion), "Brassy" (a very saucy person), "Gaffy" (once a performer), "The One-eyed Buffer," "Jaw-breaker," "Pine-apple Jack," "Cast-iron Poll" (her head having been struck with a pot without injury to her), "Whilky," "Blackwall Poll" (a woman generally having two black eyes), "Lushy Bet," "Dirty Sall" (the costermongers generally objecting to dirtywomen), and "Dancing Sue."

Of the Education of Costermongers' Children.

I have used the heading of "Education," but perhaps to say "non-education," would be more suitable. Very few indeed of the costermongers' children are sent even to the Ragged Schools; and if they are, from all I could learn, it is done more that the mother may be saved the trouble of tending them at home, than from any desire that the children shall acquire useful knowledge. Both boys and girls are sent out by their parents in the evening to sell nuts, oranges, &c., at the doors of the theatres, or in any public place, or "round the houses" (a stated circuit from their place of abode). This trade they pursue eagerly for the sake of "bunts," though some carry home the money they take, very honestly. The costermongers are kind to their children, "perhaps in a rough way, and the women make regular pets of them very often." One experienced man told me, that he had seen a poor costermonger's wife—one of the few who could read—instructing her children in reading; but such instances were very rare. The education of these children is such only as the streets afford; and the streets teach them, for the most part—and in greater or lesser degrees,—acuteness—a precocious acuteness—in all that concerns their immediate wants, business, or gratifications; a patient endurance of cold and hunger; a desire to obtain money without working for it; a craving for the excitement of gambling; an inordinate love of amusement; and an irrepressible repugnance to any settled in-door industry

The Literature of Costermongers.

We have now had an inkling of the London costermonger's notions upon politics and religion. We have seen the brutified state in which he is allowed by society to remain, though possessing the same faculties and susceptibilities as ourselves—the same power to perceive and admire the forms of truth, beauty, and goodness, as even the very highest in the state. We have witnessed how, instinct with all the elements of manhood and beasthood, the qualities of the beast are principally developed in him, while those of the man are stunted in their growth. It now remains for us to look into some other matters concerning this curious class of people, and, first, of their literature:

It may appear anomalous to speak of the literature of an uneducated body, but even the costermongers have their tastes for books. They are very fond of hearing any one read aloud to them, and listen very attentively. One man often reads the Sunday paper of the beer-shop to them, and on a fine summer's evening a costermonger, or any neighbour who has the advantage of being "a schollard," reads aloud to them in the courts they inhabit. What they love best to listen to—and, indeed, what they are most eager for—are Reynolds's periodicals, especially the "Mysteries of the Court." "They've got tired of Lloyd's blood-stained stories," said one man, who was in the habit of reading to them, "and I'm satisfied that, of all London, Reynolds is the most popular man among them. They stuck to him in Trafalgar-square, and would again. They all say he's 'a trump,' and Feargus O'Connor's another trump with them.'"

One intelligent man considered that the spirit of curiosity manifested by costermongers, as regards the information or excitement derived from hearing stories read, augured well for the improvability of the class.

Another intelligent costermonger, who had recently read some of the cheap periodicals to ten or twelve men, women, and boys, all costermongers, gave me an account of the comments made by his auditors. They had assembled, after their day's work or their rounds, for the purpose of hearing my informant read the last number of some of the penny publications.

"The costermongers," said my informant, "are very fond of illustrations. I have known a man, what couldn't read, buy a periodical what had an illustration, a little out of the common way perhaps, just that he might learn from some one, who *could* read, what it was all about. They have all heard of Cruikshank, and they think everything funny is by him—funny scenes in a play and all. His 'Bottle' was very much admired. I heard one man say it was very prime, and showed what 'lush' did, but I saw the same man," added my informant, "drunk three hours afterwards. Look you here, sir," he continued, turning over a periodical, for he had the number with him, "here's a portrait of 'Catherine of Russia.' 'Tell us all about her,' said one man to me last night; read it; what was she?' When I had read it," my informant continued, "another man, to whom I showed it, said, 'Don't the cove as did that know a deal?' for they fancy—at least, a many do—that one man writes a whole periodical, or a whole newspaper. Now here,' proceeded my friend, "you see's an engraving of a man hung up, burning over a fire, and some costers would go mad if they couldn't learn what he'd been doing, who he was, and all about him. 'But about the picture?' they would say, and this is a very common question put by them whenever they see an engraving.

"Here's one of the passages that took their fancy wonderfully," my informant observed:

> 'With glowing cheeks, flashing eyes, and palpitating bosom, Venetia Trelawney rushed back into the refreshment-room, where she threw herself into one of the arm-chairs already noticed. But scarcely had she thus sunk down upon the flocculent cushion, when a sharp click, as of some mechanism giving way, met her ears; and at the same instant her wrists were caught in manacles which sprang out of the arms of the treacherous chair, while two steel bands started from the richly carved back and grasped her shoulders. A shriek burst from her lips—she struggled violently, but all to no purpose: for she was a captive—and powerless!
>
> 'We should observe that the manacles and the steel bands which had thus fastened upon her, were covered with velvet, so that they inflicted no positive injury upon her, nor even produced the slightest abrasion of her fair and polished skin.'

Here all my audience," said the man to me, "broke out with—'Aye! that's the way the harristocrats hooks it. There's nothing o' that sort among us; the rich has all that barrikin to themselves.' 'Yes, that's the b—— way the taxes goes in,' shouted a woman.

"Anything about the police sets them a talking at once. This did when I read it:

> 'The Ebenezers still continued their fierce struggle, and, from the noise they made, seemed as if they were tearing each other to pieces, to the wild roar of a chorus of profane swearing. The alarm, as Bloomfield had predicted, was soon raised, and some two or three policemen, with their bull's-eyes, and still more effective truncheons, speedily restored order.'

'The blessed crushers is everywhere,' shouted one. 'I wish I'd been there to have had a shy at the eslops,' said another. And then a man sung out: 'O, don't I like the Bobbys?'

"If there's any foreign language which can't be explained, I've seen the costers," my informant went on, "annoyed at it—quite annoyed. Another time I read part of one of Lloyd's numbers to them—but they like something spicier. One article in them—here it is—finishes in this way:

> "The social habits and costumes of the Magyar *noblesse* have almost all the characteristics of the corresponding class in Ireland. This word *noblesse* is one of wide signification in Hungary; and one may with great truth say of this strange nation, that '*qui n'est point noble n'est rien.*'"

'I can't tumble to that barrikin,' said a young fellow; 'it's a jaw-breaker. But if this here—what d' ye call it, you talk about—was like the Irish, why they was a rum lot.' 'Noblesse,' said a man that's considered a clever fellow, from having once learned his letters, though he can't

read or write. 'Noblesse!' Blessed if I know what he's up to.' Here there was a regular laugh."

From other quarters I learned that some of the costermongers who were able to read, or loved to listen to reading, purchased their literature in a very commercial spirit, frequently buying the periodical which is the largest in size, because when "they've got the reading out of it," as they say, "it's worth a halfpenny for the barrow."

Tracts they will rarely listen to, but if any persevering man *will* read tracts, and state that he does it for their benefit and improvement, they listen without rudeness, though often with evident unwillingness. "Sermons or tracts," said one of their body to me, "gives them the 'orrors." Costermongers purchase, and not unfrequently, the first number of a penny periodical, "to see what it's like."

The tales of robbery and bloodshed, of heroic, eloquent, and gentlemanly highwaymen, or of gipsies turning out to be nobles, now interest the costermongers but little, although they found great delight in such stories a few years back. Works relating to Courts, potentates, or "harristocrats," are the most relished by these rude people.

Of the Honesty of Costermongers.

I heard on all hands that the costers never steal from one another, and never wink at any one stealing from a neighbouring stall. Any stall-keeper will leave his stall untended to get his dinner, his neighbour acting for him; sometimes he will leave it to enjoy a game at skittles. It was computed for me, that property worth 10,000*l.* belonging to costers is daily left exposed in the streets or at the markets, almost entirely unwatched, the policeman or market-keeper only passing at intervals. And yet thefts are rarely heard of, and when heard of are not attributable to costermongers, but to regular thieves. The way in which the sum of 10,000*l.* was arrived at, is this: "In Hooper-street, Lambeth," said my informant, "there are thirty barrows and carts exposed on an evening, left in the street, with nobody to see to them; left there all night. That is only one street. Each barrow and board would be worth, on the average, 2*l.* 5*s.*, and that would be 67*l.* 10*s.* In the other bye-streets and courts off the New-cut are six times as many, Hooper-street having the most. This would give 405*l.* in all, left unwatched of a night. There are, throughout London, twelve more districts besides the New-cut—at least twelve districts—and, calculating the same amount in these, we have, altogether, 4,860*l.* worth of barrows. Taking in other bye-streets, we may safely reckon it at 4,000 barrows; for the numbers I have given in the thirteen places are 2,520, and 1,480 added is moderate. At least half of those which are in use next day, are left unwatched; more, I have no doubt, but say half. The stock of these 2,000 will average 10*s.* each, or 1,000*l.*; and the barrows will be worth 4,500*l.*; in all 5,500*l.*, and the property exposed on the stalls and the markets will be double in amount, or 11,000*l.* in value, every day, but say 10,000*l.*

"Besides, sir," I was told, "the thieves won't rob the costers so often as they will the shopkeepers. It's easier to steal from a butcher's or bacon-seller's open window than from a costermonger's stall or barrow, because the shopkeeper's eye can't be always on his goods. But there's always some one to give an eye to a coster's property. At Billingsgate the thieves will rob the salesmen far readier than they will us. They know we'd take it out of them readier if they were caught. It's Lynch law with us. We never give them in charge."

The costermongers' boys will, I am informed, cheat their employers, but they do not steal from them. The costers' donkey stables have seldom either lock or latch, and sometimes oysters, and other things which the donkey will not molest, are left there, but are never stolen.

Of the Conveyances of the Costermongers and other Street-sellers.

We now come to consider the matters relating more particularly to the commercial life of the costermonger.

All who pass along the thoroughfares of the Metropolis, bestowing more than a cursory glance upon the many phases of its busy street life, must be struck with astonishment to observe the various modes of conveyance, used by those who resort to the public thoroughfares for a livelihood. From the more provident costermonger's pony and donkey cart, to the old rusty iron tray slung round the neck by the vendor of blacking, and down to the little grey-eyed Irish boy with his lucifer-matches, in the last remains of a willow hand-basket—the shape and variety of the means resorted to by the costermongers and other street-sellers, for carrying about their goods, are almost as manifold as the articles they vend.

The pony—or donkey—carts (and the latter is by far the more usual beast of draught), of the prosperous costermongers are of three kinds:—the first is of an oblong shape, with a rail behind, upon which is placed a tray filled with bunches of greens, turnips, celery, &c., whilst other commodities are laid in the bed of the cart. Another kind is the common square cart without springs, which is so constructed that the sides, as well as the front and back, will let down and form shelves whereon the stock may be arranged to advantage. The third sort of pony-cart is one of home manufacture, consisting of the framework of a body without sides, or front, or hind part. Sometimes a coster's barrow is formed into a donkey cart merely by fastening, with cord, two rough poles to the handles. All these several kinds of carts are used for the conveyance of either fruit, vegetables, or fish; but besides those, there is the salt and mustard vendor's cart, with and without the tilt or covering, and a square piece of tin (stuck into a block of salt), on which is

painted "salt 3 lbs. a penny," and "mustard a penny an ounce" Then there is the poultry cart, with the wild-ducks, and rabbits dangling at its sides, and with two uprights and a cross-stick, upon which are suspended birds, &c., slung across in couples.

The above conveyances are all of small dimensions, the barrows being generally about five feet long and three wide, while the carts are mostly about four feet square.

Every kind of harness is used; some is well blacked and greased and glittering with brass, others are almost as grey with dust as the donkey itself. Some of the jackasses are gaudily caparisoned in an old carriage-harness, which fits it like a man's coat on a boy's back, while the plated silver ornaments are pink, with the copper showing through; others have rope traces and belly-bands, and not a few indulge in old cotton handkerchiefs for pads.

The next conveyance (which, indeed, is the most general) is the costermonger's hand-barrow. These are very light in their make, with springs terminating at the axle. Some have rails behind for the arrangement of their goods; others have not. Some have side rails, whilst others have only the frame-work. The shape of these barrows is oblong, and sloped from the hind-part towards the front; the bottom of the bed is not boarded, but consists of narrow strips of wood nailed athwart and across. When the coster is hawking his fish, or vending his green stuff, he provides himself with a wooden tray, which is placed upon his barrow. Those who cannot afford a tray get some pieces of board and fasten them together, these answering their purpose as well. Pine-apple and pine-apple rock barrows are not unfrequently seen with small bright coloured flags at the four corners, fluttering in the wind.

The knife-cleaner's barrow, which has lately appeared in the streets, must not be passed over here. It consists of a huge sentry-box, with a door, and is fixed upon two small wheels, being propelled in the same way as a wheel-barrow. In the interior is one of Kent's Patent Knife-cleaning Machines, worked by turning a handle. Then there are the cat and dog's-meat barrows. These, however, are merely common wheelbarrows, with a board in front and a ledge or shelf, formed by a piece of board nailed across the top of the barrow, to answer the purpose of a cutting-board. Lastly, there is the hearth-stone barrow, piled up with hearth-stone, Bath-brick, and lumps of whiting.

Another mode of conveying the goods through the streets, is by baskets of various kinds; as the sieve or head basket; the square and oval "shallow," fastened in front of the fruit-woman with a strap round the waist; the hand-basket; and the "prickle." The sieve, or head-basket, is a round willow basket, containing about one-third of a bushel. The square and oval shallows are willow baskets, about four inches deep, and thirty inches long, by eighteen broad. The hand-basket is the common oval basket, with a handle across to hang upon the arm; the latter are generally used by the Irish for onions and apples. The prickle is a brown willow basket, in which walnuts are imported into this country from the Continent; they are about thirty inches deep, and in bulk rather larger than a gallon measure; they are used only by the vendors of walnuts.

Such are the principal forms of the costermongers' conveyances; but besides carts, barrows, and baskets, there are many other means adopted by the London street-sellers for carrying their goods from one part of the metropolis to another. The principal of these are cans, trays, boxes, and poles.

The baked potato-cans sometimes are square and sometimes oval; they are made with and without legs, a lid fastened on with hinges, and have a small charcoal fire fixed at the bottom of the can, so as to keep the potatoes hot, while there is a pipe at top to let off the steam. On one side of the can is a little compartment for the salt, and another on the other side for the butter. The hot pie-can is a square tin can, standing upon four legs, with a door in front, and three partitions inside; a fire is kept in the bottom, and the pies arranged in order upon the iron plates or shelves. When the pies at the bottom are sufficiently hot they are taken out, and placed on the upper shelf, whilst those above are removed to the lower compartments, by which means all the pies are kept "hot and hot."

The muffin and crumpet-boy carries his articles in a basket, covered outside with oil-cloth and inside with green-baize, either at his back, or slung over his arm, and rings his bell as he walks.

The blacking boy, congreve-match and water-cress girl, use a rusty tray, spread over with their "goods," and suspended to the neck by a piece of string.

The vendors of corn-salve, plating balls, soap for removing grease spots, paper, steel pens, envelopes, &c., carry their commodities in front of them in boxes, suspended round the neck by a narrow leather strap.

Rabbits and game are sometimes carried in baskets, and at other times tied together and slung over a pole upon the shoulder. Hat and bonnet-boxes are likewise conveyed upon a pole.

Door-mats, baskets and "duffer's" packs, wood pails, brushes, brooms, clothes-props, clothes-lines and string, and grid-irons, Dutch-ovens, skewers and fire-shovels, are carried across the shoulder.

Of the "Smithfield Races."

Having set forth the costermonger's usual mode of conveying his goods through the streets of London, I shall now give the reader a description of the place and scene where and when he purchases his donkeys.

When a costermonger wishes to sell or buy a donkey, he goes to Smithfield-market on a Friday afternoon. On this day, between the hours of one and five, there is a kind of fair held,

attended solely by costermongers, for whose convenience a long paved slip of ground, about eighty feet in length, has been set apart. The animals for sale are trotted up and down this—the "race-course," as it is called—and on each side of it stand the spectators and purchasers, crowding among the stalls of peas-soup, hot eels, and other street delicacies.

Every thing necessary for the starting of a costermonger's barrow can be had in Smithfield on a Friday,—from the barrow itself to the weights—from the donkey to the whip. The animals can be purchased at prices ranging from *5s.* to *3l.* On a brisk market-day as many as two hundred donkeys have been sold. The barrows for sale are kept apart from the steeds, but harness to any amount can be found everywhere, in all degrees of excellence, from the bright japanned cart saddle with its new red pads, to the old mouldy trace covered with buckle marks. Wheels of every size and colour, and springs in every stage of rust, are hawked about on all sides. To the usual noise and shouting of a Saturday night's market is added the shrill squealing of distant pigs, the lowing of the passing oxen, the bleating of sheep, and the braying of donkeys. The paved road all down the "race-course" is level and soft, with the mud trodden down between the stones. The policeman on duty there wears huge fishermen's or flushermen's boots, reaching to their thighs; and the trouser ends of the costers' corduroys are black and sodden with wet dirt. Every variety of odour fills the air; you pass from the stable smell that hangs about the donkeys, into an atmosphere of apples and fried fish, near the eating-stalls, while a few paces further on you are nearly choked with the stench of goats. The crowd of black hats, thickly dotted with red and yellow plush caps, reels about; and the "hi-hi-i-i" of the donkey-runners sounds on all sides. Sometimes a curly-headed bull, with a fierce red eye, on its way to or from the adjacent cattle-market, comes trotting down the road, making all the visitors rush suddenly to the railings, for fear—as a coster near me said—of "being taught the hornpipe."

The donkeys standing for sale are ranged in a long line on both sides of the "race-course," their white velvetty noses resting on the wooden rail they are tied to. Many of them wear their blinkers and head harness, and others are ornamented with ribbons, fastened in their halters. The lookers-on lean against this railing, and chat with the boys at the donkeys' heads, or with the men who stand behind them, and keep continually hitting and shouting at the poor still beasts to make them prance. Sometimes a party of two or three will be seen closely examining one of these "Jerusalem ponys," passing their hands down its legs, or looking quietly on, while the proprietor's ash stick descends on the patient brute's back, making a dull hollow sound. As you walk in front of the long line of donkeys, the lads seize the animals by their nostrils, and show their large teeth, asking if you "want a hass, sir," and all warranting the creature to be "five years old next buff-day." Dealers are quarrelling among themselves, downcrying each other's goods. "A hearty man," shouted one proprietor, pointing to his rival's stock, "could eat three sich donkeys as yourn at a meal."

One fellow, standing behind his steed, shouts as he strikes, "Here's the real Brittannia mettle;" whilst another asks, "Who's for the Pride of the Market?" and then proceeds to flip "the pride" with his whip, till she clears away the mob with her kickings. Here, standing by its mother, will be a shaggy little colt, with a group of ragged boys fondling it, and lifting it in their arms from the ground.

During all this the shouts of the drivers and runners fill the air, as they rush past each other n the race-course. Now a tall fellow, dragging a donkey after him, runs by crying, as he charges in amongst the mob, "Hulloa! Hulloa! hi! hi!' his mate, with his long coat-tails flying in the wind, hurrying after and roaring, between his blows, "Keem-up!"

On nearly every post are hung traces or bridles; and in one place, on the occasion of my visit, stood an old collar with a donkey nibbling at the straw that had burst out. Some of the lads, in smock-frocks, walk about with cart-saddles on their heads, and crowds gather round the trucks, piled up with a black heap of harness studded with brass. Those without trays have spread out old sacks on the ground, on which are laid axle-trees, bound-up springs, and battered carriage-lamps. There are plenty of rusty nails and iron bolts to be had, if a barrow should want mending; and if the handles are broken, an old cab-shaft can be bought cheap, to repair them.

In another "race-course," opposite to the donkeys,—the ponies are sold. These make a curious collection, each one showing what was his last master's whim. One has its legs and belly shorn of its hair, another has its mane and tail cut close, and some have switch tails, muddy at the end from their length. A big-hipped black nag, with red tinsel-like spots on its back, had its ears cut close, and another curly-haired brute that was wet and steaming with having been shown off, had two huge letters burnt into its hind-quarters. Here the clattering of the hoofs and the smacking of whips added to the din; and one poor brute, with red empty eye-holes, and carrying its head high up—as a blind man does—sent out showers of sparks from its hoofs as it spluttered over the stones, at each blow it received. Occasionally, in one part of the pony market, there may be seen a crowd gathered round a nag, that some one swears has been stolen from him.

Raised up over the heads of the mob are bundles of whips, and men push their way past, with their arms full of yellow-handled curry-combs; whilst, amongst other cries, is heard that of "Sticks ½*d.* each! sticks—real smarters." At one end of the market the barrows for sale

are kept piled up one on another, or filled with old wheels, and some with white unpainted wood, showing where they have been repaired. Men are here seen thumping the wooden trays, and trying the strength of the springs by leaning on them; and here, too, stood, on the occasion of my visit, a ragged coster lad trying to sell his scales, now the cherry-season had past.

On all sides the refreshment-barrows are surrounded by customers. The whelk-man peppers his lots, and shouts, "A lumping penn'orth for a ha'penny;" and a lad in a smock-frock carries two full pails of milk, slopping it as he walks, and crying, "Ha'penny a mug-full, new milk from the ke-ow!" The only quiet people to be seen are round the peas-soup stall, with their cups in their hands; and there is a huge crowd covering in the hot-eel stand, with the steam rising up in the centre. Baskets of sliced cake, apples, nuts, and pine-apple rock, block up the pathway; and long wicker baskets of live fowls hem you in, round which are grouped the costers, handling and blowing apart the feathers on the breast.

Of the Donkeys of the Costermongers.

The costermongers almost universally treat their donkeys with kindness. Many a costermonger will resent the ill-treatment of a donkey, as he would a personal indignity. These animals are often not only favourites, but pets, having their share of the costermonger's dinner when bread forms a portion of it, or pudding, or anything suited to the palate of the brute. Those well-used, manifest fondness for their masters, and are easily manageable; it is, however, difficult to get an ass, whose master goes regular rounds, away from its stable for any second labour during the day, unless it has fed and slept in the interval. The usual fare of a donkey is a peck of chaff, which costs 1*d.*, a quart of oats and a quart of beans, each averaging 1½*d.*, and sometimes a pennyworth of hay, being an expenditure of 4*d.* or 5*d.* a day; but some give double this quantity in a prosperous time. Only one meal a day is given. Many costermongers told me, that their donkeys lived well when they themselves lived well.

"It's all nonsense to call donkeys stupid," said one costermonger to me; "them's stupid that calls them so: they're sensible. Not long since I worked Guildford with my donkey-cart and a boy. Jack (the donkey) was slow and heavy in coming back, until we got in sight of the lights at Vauxhall-gate, and then he trotted on like one o'clock, he did indeed! just as if he smelt it was London besides seeing it, and knew he was at home. He had a famous appetite in the country, and the fresh grass did him good. I gave a country lad 2*d.* to mind him in a green lane there. I wanted my own boy to do so, but he said, 'I'll see you further first.' A London boy hates being by himself in a lone country part. He's afraid of being burked; he is indeed. One can't quarrel with a lad when he's away with one in the country; he's very useful. I feed my donkey well. I sometimes give him a carrot for a luxury, but carrots are dear now. He's fond of mashed potatoes, and has many a good mash when I can buy them at 4lb. a penny."

"There was a friend of mine," said another man, "had great trouble about his donkey a few months back. I saw part of it, and knew all about it. He was doing a little work on a Sunday morning at Wandsworth, and the poor thing fell down dead. He was very fond of his donkey and kind to it, and the donkey was very fond of him. He thought he wouldn't leave the poor creature he'd had a good while, and had been out with in all weathers, by the road side; so he dropped all notion of doing business, and with help got the poor dead thing into his cart; its head lolloping over the end of the cart, and its poor eyes staring at nothing. He thought he'd drag it home and bury it somewheres. It wasn't for the value he dragged it, for what's a dead donkey worth? There was a few persons about him, and they was all quiet and seemed sorry for the poor fellow and for his donkey; but the church-bells struck up, and up came a 'crusher,' and took the man up, and next day he was fined 10*s.*, I can't exactly say for what. He never saw no more of the animal, and lost his stock as well as his donkey."

Of the Costermongers' Capital.

The costermongers, though living by buying and selling, are seldom or never capitalists. It is estimated that not more than one-fourth of the entire body trade upon their own property. Some borrow their stock money, others borrow the stock itself, others again borrow the donkey-carts, barrows, or baskets, in which their stock is carried round, whilst others borrow even the weights and measures by which it is meted out.

The reader, however uninformed he may be as to the price the poor usually have to pay for any loans they may require, doubtlessly need not be told that the remuneration exacted for the use of the above-named commodities is not merely confined to the legal *5l.* per centum per annum; still many of even the most "knowing" will hardly be able to credit the fact that the ordinary rate of interest in the costermongers' money-market amounts to 20 per cent. per week, or no less than 1040*l.* a year, for every 100*l.* advanced.

But the iniquity of this usury in the present instance is felt, not so much by the costermongers themselves, as by the poor people whom they serve; for, of course, the enormous rate of interest must be paid out of the profits on the goods they sell, and consequently added to the price, so that coupling this overcharge with the customary short allowance—in either weight or measure, as the case may be—we can readily perceive how cruelly the poor are defrauded, and how they not only get often too little for what they do, but have as often to pay too much for what they buy.

Premising thus much, I shall now proceed to describe the terms upon which the barrow, the cart, the basket, the weights, the measures, the stock-money, or the stock, is usually advanced to the needy costermongers by their more thrifty brethren.

The hire of a barrow is 3*d.* a day, or 1*s.* a week, for the six winter months; and 4*d.* a day, or 1*s.* 6*d.* a week, for the six summer months. Some are to be had rather lower in the summer, but never for less than 4*d.*—sometimes for not less than 6*d.* on a Saturday, when not unfrequently every barrow in London is hired. No security and no deposit is required, but the lender satisfies himself that the borrower is really what he represents himself to be. I am informed that 5,000 hired barrows are now in the hands of the London costermongers, at an average rental of 3*l.* 5*s.* each, or 16,250*l.* a year. One man lets out 120 yearly, at a return (dropping the 5*s.*) of 360*l.*; while the cost of a good barrow, new, is 2*l.* 12*s.*, and in the autumn and winter they may be bought new, or "as good as new," at 30*s.* each; so that reckoning each to cost this barrow-letter 2*l.* — he receives 360*l.* rent or interest —exactly 150 per cent. per annum for property which originally cost but 240*l.*, and property which is still as good for the ensuing year's business as for the past. One man has rented a barrow for eight years, during which period he has paid 26*l.* for what in the first instance did not cost more than twice as many shillings, and which he must return if he discontinues its use. "I know men well to do," said an intelligent costermonger, "who have paid 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.* a week for a barrow for three, four, and five years; and they can't be made to understand that it's rather high rent for what might cost 40*s.* at first. They can't see they are losers. One barrow-lender sends his son out, mostly on a Sunday, collecting his rents (for barrows), but he's not a hard man." Some of the lenders complain that their customers pay them irregularly and cheat them often, and that in consequence they must charge high; while the "borrowers" declare that it is very seldom indeed that a man "shirks" the rent for his barrow, generally believing that he has made an advantageous bargain, and feeling the want of his vehicle, if he lose it temporarily. Let the lenders, however, be deceived by many, still, it is evident, that the rent charged for barrows is most exorbitant, by the fact, that all who take to the business become men of considerable property in a few years.

Donkey-carts are rarely hired. "If there's 2,000 donkey and pony-carts in London, more or less, not 200 of them's borrowed; but of barrows five to two is borrowed." A donkey-cart costs from 2*l.* to 10*l.*; 3*l.* 10*s.* being an average price. The hire is 2*s.* or 2*s.* 6*d.* a week. The harness costs 2*l.* 10*s.* new, but is bought, nineteen times out of twenty, second-hand, at from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 20*s.* The donkeys themselves are not let out on hire, though a costermonger may let out his donkey to another in the trade when he does not require its services; the usual sum paid for the hire of a donkey is 2*s.* 6*d.* or 3*s.* per week. The cost price of a pony varies from 5*l.* to 13*l.*; that of a donkey from 1*l.* to 3*l.* There may be six donkeys, or more, in costermonger use, to one pony. Some traffic almost weekly in these animals, liking the excitement of such business.

The repairs to barrows, carts, and harness are almost always effected by the costermongers themselves.

"Shallows" (baskets) which cost 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.*, are let out at 1*d.* a day; but not five in 100 of those in use are borrowed, as their low price places them at the costermonger's command. A pewter quart-pot, for measuring onions, &c., is let out at 2*d.* a day, its cost being 2*s.* Scales are 2*d.*, and a set of weights 1*d.* a day.

Another common mode of usury is in the lending of stock-money. This is lent by the costermongers who have saved the means for such use of their funds, and by beer-shop keepers. The money-lending costermongers are the most methodical in their usury—1,040*l.* per cent. per annum, as was before stated, being the rate of interest usually charged. It is seldom that a lower sum than 10*s* is borrowed, and never a higher sum than 2*l.* When a stranger applies for a loan, the money-lender satisfies himself as I have described of the barrow-lender. He charges 2*d.* a day for a loan of 2*s.* 6*d.*; 3*d.* a day for 5*s.*; 6*d.* a day for 10*s.*; and 1*s.* a day for 1*l.* If the daily payments are rendered regularly, at a month's end the terms are reduced to 6*d.* a week for 5*s.*; 1*s.* for 10*s.*; and 2*s.* for 1*l.* "That's reckoned an extraordinary small interest," was said to me, "only 4*d.* a day for a pound." The average may be 3*s.* a week for the loan of 20*s.*; it being only to a few that a larger sum than 20*s.* is lent. "I paid 2*s.* a week for 1*l.* for a whole year," said one man, "or 5*l.* 4*s.* for the use of a pound, and then I was liable to repay the 1*l.*" The principal, however, is seldom repaid; nor does the lender seem to expect it, though he will occasionally demand it. One money-lender is considered to have a floating capital of 150*l.* invested in loans to costermongers. If he receive 2*s.* per week per 1*l.* for but twenty-six weeks in the year (and he often receives it for the fifty-two weeks)—his 150*l.* brings him in 390*l.* a year.

Sometimes a loan is effected only for a day, generally a Saturday, as much as 2*s.* 6*d.* being sometimes given for the use of 5*s.*; the 5*s.* being of course repaid in the evening.

The money-lenders are subject to at least twice the extent of loss to which the barrow-lender is exposed, as it is far oftener that money is squandered (on which of course no interest can be paid) than that a barrow is disposed of.

The money-lenders, (from the following statement, made to me by one who was in the habit of borrowing,) pursue their business in a not very dissimilar manner to that imputed to those who advance larger sums:—"If I want to borrow in a hurry," said my informant, "as I may

THE OYSTER STALL.

"Penny a lot, Oysters! Penny a lot!"

[*From a Photograph.*]

hear of a good bargain, I run to my neighbour L——'s, and he first says he hasn't 20*s.* to lend, and his wife's by, and she says she hasn't 2*s.* in her pocket, and so I can't be accommodated. Then he says if I must have the money he'll have to pawn his watch,—or to borrow it of Mr. ——, (an innkeeper) who would charge a deal of interest, for he wasn't paid all he lent two months back, and 1*s.* would be expected to be spent in drink—though L—— don't drink—or he must try if his sister would trust him, but she was sick and wanted all her money—or perhaps his barrow-merchant would lend him 10*s.*, if he'd undertake to return 15*s.* at night; and it ends by my thinking I've done pretty well if I can get 1*l.* for 5*s.* interest, for a day's use of it."

The beer-shop keepers lend on far easier terms, perhaps at half the interest exacted by the others, and without any regular system of charges; but they look sharp after the repayment, and expect a considerable outlay in beer, and will only lend to good customers; they however have even lent money without interest.

"In the depth of last winter," said a man of good character to me, "I borrowed 5*s.* The beer-shop keeper wouldn't lend; he'll rather lend to men doing well and drinking. But I borrowed it at 6*d.* a day interest, and that 6*d.* a day I paid exactly four weeks, Sundays and all; and that was 15*s.* in thirty days for the use of 5*s.* I was half starving all the time, and then I had a slice of luck, and paid the 5*s.* back slap, and got out of it."

Many shopkeepers lend money to the stall-keepers, whom they know from standing near their premises, and that without interest. They generally lend, however, to the women, as they think the men want to get drunk with it. "Indeed, if it wasn't for the women," said a costermonger to me, "half of us might go to the Union."

Another mode of usurious lending or trading is, as I said before, to provide the costermonger —not with the stock-money—but with the stock itself. This mode also is highly profitable to the usurer, who is usually a costermonger, but sometimes a greengrocer. A stock of fruit, fish, or vegetables, with a barrow for its conveyance, is entrusted to a street-seller, the usual way being to "let him have a sovereign's worth." The value of this, however, at the market cost, rarely exceeds 14*s.*, still the man entrusted with it must carry 20*s.* to his creditor, or he will hardly be trusted a second time. The man who trades with the stock is not required to pay the 20*s.* on the first day of the transaction, as he may not have realised so much, but he must pay some of it, generally 10*s.*, and must pay the remainder the next day or the money-lender will decline any subsequent dealings.

It may be thought, as no security is given, and as the costermongering barrow, stock, or money-lender never goes to law for the recovery of any debt or goods, that the per centage is not so very exorbitant after all. But I ascertained that not once in twenty times was the money lender exposed to any loss by the non-payment of his usurious interest, while his profits are enormous. The borrower knows that if he fail in his payment, the lender will acquaint the other members of his fraternity, so that no future loan will be attainable, and the costermonger's business may be at an end. One borrower told me that the re-payment of his loan of 2*l.*, borrowed two years ago at 4*s.* a week, had this autumn been reduced to 2*s.* 6*d.* a week: "He's a decent man I pay now," he said; "he has twice forgiven me a month at a time when the weather was very bad and the times as bad as the weather. Before I borrowed of him I had dealings with ———. He *was* a scurf. If I missed a week, and told him I would make it up next week, 'That won't do,' he'd say, 'I'll turn you up. I'll take d——d good care to stop you. *I'll* have you to rights.' If I hadn't satisfied him, as I did at last, I could never have got credit again; never." I am informed that most of the money-lenders, if a man has paid for a year or so, will now "drop it for a month or so in a very hard-up time, and go on again." There is no I.O.U. or any memorandum given to the usurer. "There's never a slip of paper about it, sir," I was told.

I may add that a very intelligent man from whom I derived information, said to me concerning costermongers never going to law to recover money owing to them, nor indeed for any purpose: "If any one steals anything from me—and that, as far as I know, never happened but once in ten years—and I catch him, I take it out of him on the spot. I give him a jolly good hiding and there's an end of it. I know very well, sir, that costers are ignorant men, but in my opinion" (laughing) "our never going to law shows that in *that* point we are in advance of the aristocrats. I never heard of a coster in a law court, unless he was in trouble (charged with some offence)—for assaulting a crusher, or anybody he had quarrelled with, or something of that kind."

The barrow-lender, when not regularly paid, sends some one, or goes himself, and carries away the barrow.

My personal experience with this peculiar class justifies me in saying that they are far less dishonest than they are usually believed to be, and much more honest than their wandering habits, their want of education and "principle" would lead even the most charitable to suppose. Since I have exhibited an interest in the sufferings and privations of these neglected people, I have, as the reader may readily imagine, had many applications for assistance, and without vanity, I believe I may say, that as far as my limited resources would permit, I have striven to extricate the street-sellers from the grasp of the usurer. Some to whom I have *lent* small sums (for gifts only degrade struggling honest men into the apathy of beggars) have taken the money with many a protesta-

tion that they would repay it in certain weekly instalments, which they themselves proposed, but still have never made their appearance before me a second time—it may be from dishonesty and it may be from inability and shame—others, however, and they are not a few, have religiously kept faith with me, calling punctually to pay back a sixpence or a shilling as the precariousness of their calling would permit, and doing this, though they knew that I abjured all claims upon them but through their honour, and was, indeed, in most cases, ignorant where to find them, even if my inclination led me to seek or enforce a return of the loan. One case of this kind shows so high a sense of honour among a class, generally considered to rank among the most dishonourable, that, even at the risk of being thought egotistical, I will mention it here:—"Two young men, street-sellers, called upon me and begged hard for the loan of a little stock-money. They made needle-cases and hawked them from door to door at the east end of the town, and had not the means of buying the wood. I agreed to let them have ten shillings between them; this they promised to repay at a shilling a week. They were utter strangers to me; nevertheless, at the end of the first week one shilling of the sum was duly returned. The second week, however, brought no shilling, nor did the third, nor the fourth, by which time I got to look upon the money as lost; but at the end of the fifth week one of the men called with his sixpence, and told me how he should have been with me before but his mate had promised each week to meet him with his sixpence, and each week disappointed him; so he had come on alone. I thanked him, and the next week he came again; so he did the next, and the next after that. On the latter occasion he told me that in five more weeks he should have paid off his half of the amount advanced, and that then, as he had come with the other man, he would begin paying off *his* share as well!"

Those who are unacquainted with the character of the people may feel inclined to doubt the trustworthiness of the class, but it is an extraordinary fact that but few of the costermongers fail to repay the money advanced to them, even at the present ruinous rate of interest. The poor, it is my belief, have not yet been sufficiently tried in this respect;—pawnbrokers, loan-offices, tally-shops, dolly-shops, are the only parties who will trust them—but, as a startling proof of the good faith of the humbler classes generally, it may be stated that Mrs. Chisholm (the lady who has exerted herself so benevolently in the cause of emigration) has lent out, at different times, as much as 160,000*l.* that has been entrusted to her for the use of the "lower orders," and that the whole of this large amount has been returned—*with the exception of* 12*l.*!

I myself have often given a sovereign to professed thieves to get "changed," and never knew one to make off with the money. Depend upon it, if we would really improve, we must begin by elevating instead of degrading.

Of the "Slang" Weights and Measures.

All counterfeit weights and measures, the costermongers call by the appropriate name of "slang." "There are not half so many slangs as there was eighteen months ago," said a 'general dealer' to me. "You see, sir, the letters in the *Morning Chronicle* set people a talking, and some altered their way of business. Some was very angry at what was said in the articles on the street-sellers, and swore that costers was gentlemen, and that they'd smash the men's noses that had told you, sir, if they knew who they were. There's plenty of costers wouldn't use slangs at all, if people would give a fair price; but you see the boys *will* try it on for their bunts, and how is a man to sell fine cherries at 4*d.* a pound that cost him 3½*d.*, when there's a kid alongside of him a selling his 'tol' at 2*d.* a pound, and singing it out as bold as brass? So the men slangs it, and cries '2*d.* a pound,' and gives half-pound, as the boy does; which brings it to the same thing. We doesn't 'dulterate our goods like the tradesmen—that is, the regular hands doesn't. It wouldn't be easy, as you say, to 'dulterate cabbages or oysters; but we deals fair to all that's fair to us,—and that's more than many a tradesman does, for all their juries."

The slang quart is a pint and a half. It is made precisely like the proper quart; and the maker, I was told, "knows well enough what it's for, as it's charged, new, 6*d.* more than a true quart measure; but it's nothing to him, as he says, what it's for, so long as he gets his price." The slang quart is let out at 2*d.* a day—1*d.* extra being charged "for the risk." The slang pint holds in some cases three-fourths of the just quantity, having a very thick bottom; others hold only half a pint, having a false bottom half-way up. These are used chiefly in measuring nuts, of which the proper quantity is hardly ever given to the purchaser; "but, then," it was often said, or implied to me, the "price is all the lower, and people just brings it on themselves, by wanting things for next to nothing; so it's all right; it's people's own faults." The hire of the slang pint is 2*d.* per day.

The scales used are almost all true, but the weights are often beaten out flat to look large, and are 4, 5, 6, or even 7 oz. deficient in a pound, and in the same relative proportion with other weights. The charge is 2*d.*, 3*d.*, and 4*d.* a day for a pair of scales and a set of slang weights.

The wooden measures—such as pecks, half pecks, and quarter pecks—are not let out slang, but the bottoms are taken out by the costers, and put in again half an inch or so higher up. "I call this," said a humorous dealer to me, "slop-work, or the cutting-system."

One candid costermonger expressed his perfect contempt of slangs, as fit only for bunglers, as *he* could always "work slang" with a true measure. "Why, I can cheat any man," he said. "I can manage to measure mussels so as you'd think you got a lot over, but there's a lot under measure, for I holds them up with my fingers and keep crying, 'Mussels! full measure, live mussels!' I can do the same with peas. I delight to do it with stingy aristocrats. We don't work slang in the City. People know what they're a buying on there. There's plenty of us would pay for an inspector of weights; I would. We might do fair without an inspector, and make as much if we only agreed one with another."

In conclusion, it is but just I should add that there seems to be a strong disposition on the part of the more enlightened of the class to adopt the use of fair weights and measures; and that even among the less scrupulous portion of the body, short allowance seems to be given chiefly from a desire to be *even* with a "scaly customer." The coster makes it a rule never to refuse an offer, and if people *will* give him less than what he considers his proper price, why—he gives them less than their proper quantity. As a proof of the growing honesty among this class, many of the better disposed have recently formed themselves into a society, the members of which are (one and all) pledged not only to deal fairly with their customers, but to compel all other street-sellers to do the same. With a view of distinguishing themselves to the public, they have come to the resolution of wearing a medal, on which shall be engraved a particular number, so that should any imposition be practised by any of their body, the public will have the opportunity of complaining to the Committee of the Association, and having the individual (if guilty) immediately expelled from the society.

Of Half Profits.

Besides the modes of trading on borrowed capital above described, there is still another means of obtaining stock prevalent among the London costermongers. It is a common practice with some of the more provident costermongers, who buy more largely—for the sake of buying cheaply—than is required for the supply of their own customers, to place goods in the hands of young men who are unable to buy goods on their own account, "on half profits," as it is called. The man adopting this means of doing a more extensive business, says to any poor fellow willing to work on those terms, "Here's a barrow of vegetables to carry round, and the profit on them will be 2*s.*; you sell them, and half is for yourself." The man sells them accordingly; if however he fail to realize the 2*s.* anticipated profit, his employer must still be paid 1*s.*, even if the "seller" prove that only 13*d.* was cleared; so that the costermonger capitalist, as he may be described, is always, to use the words of one of my informants, "on the profitable side of the hedge."

Boys are less frequently employed on half-profits than young men; and I am assured that instances of these young men wronging their employers are hardly ever known.

Of the Boys of the Costermongers, and their Bunts.

But there are still other "agents" among the costermongers, and these are the "boys" deputed to sell a man's goods for a certain sum, all over that amount being the boys' profit or "bunts." Almost every costermonger who trades through the streets with his barrow is accompanied by a boy. The ages of these lads vary from ten to sixteen, there are few above sixteen, for the lads think it is then high time for them to start on their own account. These boys are useful to the man in "calling," their shrill voices being often more audible than the loudest pitch of an adult's lungs. Many persons, moreover, I am assured, prefer buying of a boy, believing that if the lad did not succeed in selling his goods he would be knocked about when he got home; others think that they are safer in a boy's hands, and less likely to be cheated; these, however, are equally mistaken notions. The boys also are useful in pushing at the barrow, or in drawing it along by tugging at a rope in front. Some of them are the sons of the costermongers; some go round to the costermongers' abodes and say: "Will you want me to-morrow?" "Shall I come and give you a lift?" The parents of the lads thus at large are, when they *have* parents, either unable to support them, or, if able, prefer putting their money to other uses, (such as drinking); and so the lads have to look out for themselves, or, as they say, "pick up a few halfpence and a bit of grub as we can." Such lads, however, are the smallest class of costermongering youths; and are sometimes called "cas'alty boys," or "nippers."

The boys—and nearly the whole of them—soon become very quick, and grow masters of slang, in from six weeks to two or three months. "I suppose," said one man familiar with their character, "they'd learn French as soon, if they was thrown into the way of it. They must learn slang to live, and as they have to wait at markets every now and then, from one hour to six, they associate one with another and carry on conversations in slang about the "penny gaffs" (theatres), criticising the actors; or may be they toss the pieman, if they've got any ha'pence, or else they chaff the passers by. The older ones may talk about their sweethearts; but they always speak of them by the name of 'nammow' (girls).

"The boys are severe critics too (continued my informant) on dancing. I heard one say to another; 'What do you think of Johnny Millicent's new step?' for they always recognise a new step, or they discuss the female dancer's legs, and not very decently. At other times the boys discuss the merits or demerits of their masters, as to who feeds them best. I have heard one say, 'O, aint Bob stingy? We have bread and cheese!' Another added; '*We* have

steak and beer, and I've the use of Bill's, (the master's) 'baccy box.' "

Some of these lads are paid by the day, generally from 2*d.* or 3*d.* and their food, and as much fruit as they think fit to eat, as by that they soon get sick of it. They generally carry home fruit in their pockets for their playmates, or brothers, or sisters; the costermongers allow this, if they are satisfied that the pocketing is not for sale. Some lads are engaged by the week, having from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*, and their food when out with their employer. Their lodging is found only in a few cases, and then they sleep in the same room with their master and mistress. Of master or mistress, however, they never speak, but of Jack and Bet. They behave respectfully to the women, who are generally kind to them. They soon desert a very surly or stingy master; though such a fellow could get fifty boys next day if he wanted them, but not lads used to the trade, for to these he's well known by their talk one with another, and they soon tell a man his character very plainly—"*very* plainly indeed, sir, and to his face too," said one.

Some of these boys are well beaten by their employers; this they put up with readily enough, if they experience kindness at the hands of the man's wife; for, as I said before, parties that have never thought of marriage, if they live together, call one another husbands and wives.

In "working the country" these lads are put on the same footing as their masters, with whom they eat, drink, and sleep; but they do not gamble with them. A few, however, go out and tempt country boys to gamble, and—as an almost inevitable consequence—to lose. "Some of the boys," said one who had seen it often, "will keep a number of countrymen in a beer-shop in a roar for the hour, while the countrymen ply them with beer, and some of the street-lads can drink a good deal. I've known three bits of boys order a pot of beer each, one after the other, each paying his share, and a quartern of gin each after that—drunk neat; they don't understand water. Drink doesn't seem to affect them as it does men. I don't know why." "Some costermongers," said another informant, "have been known, when they've taken a fancy to a boy—I know of two—to dress him out like themselves, silk handkerchiefs and all; for if they didn't find them silk handkerchiefs, the boys would soon get them out of their '*bunts*.' They like silk handkerchiefs, for if they lose all their money gambling, they can then pledge their handkerchiefs."

I have mentioned the term "*bunts*." Bunts is the money made by the boys in this manner:—If a costermonger, after having sold a sufficiency, has 2*s.* or 3*s.* worth of goods left, and is anxious to get home, he says to the boy, "Work these streets, and bring me 2*s.* 6*d.* for the tol," (lot) which the costermonger knows by his eye—for he seldom measures or counts—is easily worth that money. The lad then proceeds to sell the things entrusted to him, and often shows great ingenuity in so doing. If, for instance, turnips be tied up in penny bunches, the lad will open some of them, so as to spread them out to nearly twice their previous size, and if any one ask if that be a penn'orth, he will say, "Here's a larger for 1½*d.*, marm," and so palm off a penny bunch at 1½*d.* Out of each bunch of onions he takes one or two, and makes an extra bunch. All that the lad can make in this way over the half-crown is his own, and called "bunts." Boys have made from 6*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* "bunts," and this day after day. Many of them will, in the course of their traffic, beg old boots or shoes, if they meet with better sort of people, and so "work it to rights," as they call it among themselves; servants often give them cast-off clothes. It is seldom that a boy carries home less than the stipulated sum.

The above is what is understood as "fair bunts."

"Unfair bunts" is what the lad may make unknown to his master; as, if a customer call from the area for goods cried at 2*d.*, the lad may get 2½*d.*, by pretending what he had carried was a superior sort to that called at 2*d.*,—or by any similar trick.

"I have known some civil and industrious boys," said a costermonger to me, "get to save a few shillings, and in six months start with a shallow, and so rise to a donkey-cart. The greatest drawback to struggling boys is their sleeping in low lodging-houses, where they are frequently robbed, or trepanned to part with their money, or else they get corrupted."

Some men employ from four to twelve boys, sending them out with shallows and barrows, the boys bringing home the proceeds. The men who send lads out in this way, count the things, and can tell to a penny what can be realised on them. They neither pay nor treat the boys well, I am told, and are looked upon by the other costermongers as extortioners, or unfair dealers, making money by trading on poor lads' necessities, who serve them to avoid starvation. These men are called "Scurfs." If the boys working for them make bunts, or are suspected of making bunts, there is generally "a row" about it.

The bunts is for the most part the gambling money, as well as the money for the "penny gaff," the "twopenny hop," the tobacco, and the pudding money of the boys. "More would save their wages and their bunts," was said to me on good authority, "but they have no place to keep their money in, and don't understand anything about savings banks. Many of these lads are looked on with suspicion by the police, and treated like suspected folks; but in my opinion they are not thieves, or they wouldn't work so hard; for a thief's is a much easier life than a costermonger's."

When a boy begins business on his own account, or "sets up," as they call it, he purchases a shallow, which costs at least 1*s.*, and a half hundred of herrings, 1*s.* 6*d.* By the sale of the herrings he will clear 1*s.*, going the round he has been accustomed to, and then trade on the 2*s.* 6*d.* Or, if it be fruit time, he will trade in

apples until master of 5*s.*, and then "take to a barrow," at 3*d.* a day hire. By this system the ranks of the costermongers are not only recruited but increased. There is one grand characteristic of these lads; I heard on all hands they are, every one of them, what the costers call—"wide awake."

There are I am assured from 200 to 300 costers, who, in the busier times of the year, send out four youths or lads each on an average. The young men thus sent out generally live with the costermonger, paying 7*s.* a week for board, lodging and washing. These youths, I was told by one who knew them well, were people who "didn't care to work for themselves, because they couldn't keep their money together; it would soon all go; and they *must* keep it together for their masters. They are not fed badly, but then they make 'bunts' sometimes, and it goes for grub when they're out, so they eat less at home."

Of the Juvenile Trading of the Costermongers.

My inquiries among the costermongers induced one of their number to address me by letter. My correspondent—a well-informed and well-educated man—describes himself as "being one of those that have been unfortunately thrust into that precarious way of obtaining a living, not by choice but circumstances." The writer then proceeds to say: "No person but those actually connected with the streets can tell the exertion, anxiety, and difficulties we have to undergo; and I know for a fact it induces a great many to drink that would not do so, only to give them a stimulant to bear up against the troubles that they have to contend with; and so it ultimately becomes habitual. I could point out many instances of the kind. My chief object in addressing you is to give my humble suggestion as to the best means of alleviating our present position in society, and establishing us in the eyes of the public as a respectable body of men, honestly endeavouring to support our families, without becoming chargeable to the parish, and to show that we are not all the degraded class we are at present thought to be, subject to the derision of every passer by, and all looked upon as extortioners and the confederates of thieves. It is grievous to see children, as soon as they are able to speak, thrust into the streets to sell, and in many instances, I am sorry to state, to support their parents. Kind sir, picture to yourself a group of those children mixing together indiscriminately—the good with the bad—all uneducated—and without that parental care which is so essential for youth—and judge for yourself the result: the lads in some instances take to thieving, (this being easier for a living), and the girls to prostitution; and so they pass the greater part of their time in gaol, or get transported. Even those who are honestly disposed cannot have a chance of bettering their condition, in consequence of their being uneducated, so that they often turn out brutal husbands and bad fathers. Surely, sir, Government could abolish in a measure this juvenile trading, so conducive to crime and so injurious to the shopkeeper, who is highly rated. How is it possible, if children congregate around his door with the very articles he may deal in, that he can meet the demands for rates and taxes; whereas the educated man, brought by want to sell in the streets, would not do so, but keep himself apart from the shopkeeper, and not merit his enmity, and the interference of the police, which he necessarily claims. I have procured an existence (with a few years' exception) in the streets for the last twenty-five years as a general salesman of perishable and imperishable articles, and should be most happy to see anything done for the benefit of my class. This juvenile trading I consider the root of the evil; after the removal of this, the costermongers might, by classifying and co-operation, render themselves comparatively happy, in their position, and become acknowledged members of society."

Another costermonger, in conversing with me concerning these young traders, said, that many of them would ape the vices of men: mere urchins would simulate drunkenness, or boast, with many an exaggeration, of their drinking feats. They can get as much as they please at the public-houses; and this too, I may add, despite the 43rd clause in the Police Act, which enacts, that "every person, licensed to deal in exciseable liquors within the said (Metropolitan Police) District, who shall knowingly supply any sort of distilled exciseable liquor to be drunk upon the premises, to any boy or girl, apparently under the age of sixteen years, shall be liable to a penalty of not more than 20*s.*;" and upon a second conviction to 40*s.* penalty; and on a third to 5*l.*

Of the Education of the "Coster-Lads."

Among the costers the term education is (as I have already intimated) merely understood as meaning a complete knowledge of the art of "buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest." There are few lads whose training extends beyond this. The father is the tutor, who takes the boy to the different markets, instructs him in the art of buying, and when the youth is perfect on this point, the parent's duty is supposed to have been performed. Nearly all these boys are remarkable for their precocious sharpness. To use the words of one of the class, "these young ones are as sharp as terriers, and learns every dodge of business in less than half no time. There's one I knows about three feet high, that's up to the business as clever as a man of thirty. Though he's only twelve years old he'll chaff down a peeler so uncommon severe, that the only way to stop him is to take him in charge!"

It is idle to imagine that these lads, possessed of a mental acuteness almost wonderful, will not educate themselves in vice, if we neglect

to train them to virtue. At their youthful age, the power of acquiring knowledge is the strongest, and some kind of education is continually going on. If they are not taught by others, they will form their own characters—developing habits of dissipation, and educing all the grossest passions of their natures, and learning to indulge in the gratification of every appetite without the least restraint.

As soon as a boy is old enough to shout well and loudly, his father takes him into the streets. Some of these youths are not above seven years of age, and it is calculated that not more than one in a hundred has ever been to a school of any kind. The boy walks with the barrow, or guides the donkey, shouting by turns with the father, who, when the goods are sold, will as a reward, let him ride home on the tray. The lad attends all markets with his father, who teaches him his business and shows him his tricks of trade; "for," said a coster, "a governor in our line leaves the knowledge of all his dodges to his son, jist as the rich coves do their tin."

The life of a coster-boy is a very hard one. In summer he will have to be up by four o'clock in the morning, and in winter he is never in bed after six. When he has returned from market, it is generally his duty to wash the goods and help dress the barrow. About nine he begins his day's work, shouting whilst the father pushes; and as very often the man has lost his voice, this share of the labour is left entirely to him. When a coster has regular customers, the vegetables or fish are all sold by twelve o'clock, and in many coster families the [illegible] is then packed off with fruit to hawk in the streets. When the work is over, the father will perhaps take the boy to a public-house with him, and give him part of his beer. Sometimes a child of four or five is taken to the tap-room, especially if he be pretty and the father proud of him. "I have seen," said a coster to me, "a baby of five year old reeling drunk in a tap-room. His governor did it for the lark of the thing, to see him chuck hisself about—sillyfied like."

The love of gambling soon seizes upon the coster boy. Youths of about twelve or so will as soon as they can get away from work go to a public-house and play cribbage for pints of beer, or for a pint a corner. They generally continue playing till about midnight, and rarely—except on a Sunday—keep it up all night.

It ordinarily happens that when a lad is about thirteen, he quarrels with his father, and gets turned away from home. Then he is forced to start for himself. He knows where he can borrow stock-money and get his barrow, for he is as well acquainted with the markets as the oldest hand at the business, and children may often be seen in the streets under-selling their parents. "How's it possible," said a woman, "for people to live when there's their own son at the end of the court a-calling his goods as cheap again as we can afford to sell ourn."

If the boy is lucky in trade, his next want is to get a girl to keep home for him. I was assured, that it is not at all uncommon for a lad of fifteen to be living with a girl of the same age, as man and wife. It creates no disgust among his class, but seems rather to give him a position among such people. Their courtship does not take long when once the mate has been fixed upon. The girl is invited to "raffles," and treated to "twopenny hops," and half-pints of beer. Perhaps a silk neck handkerchief—a "King's-man" is given as a present; though some of the lads will, when the arrangement has been made, take the gift back again and wear it themselves. The boys are very jealous, and if once made angry behave with great brutality to the offending girl. A young fellow of about sixteen told me, as he seemed to grow angry at the very thought, "If I seed my gal a talking to another chap I'd fetch her sich a punch of the nose as should plaguy quick stop the whole business." Another lad informed me, with a knowing look, "that the gals—it was a rum thing now he come to think on it—axully liked a feller for walloping them. As long as the bruises hurted, she was always thinking on the cove as gived 'em her." After a time, if the girl continues faithful, the young coster may marry her; but this is rarely the case, and many live with their girls until they have grown to be men, or perhaps they may quarrel the very first year, and have a fight and part.

These boys hate any continuous work. So strong is this objection to continuity that they cannot even remain selling the same article for more than a week together. Moreover none of them can be got to keep stalls. They must be perpetually on the move—or to use their own words "they like a roving life." They all of them delight in dressing "flash" as they call it. If a "governor" was to try and "palm off" his old cord jacket upon the lad that worked with him, the boy wouldn't take it. "Its too big and seedy for me," he'd say, "and I aint going to have your leavings." They try to dress like the men, with large pockets in their cord jackets and plenty of them. Their trowsers too must fit tight at the knee, and their boots they like as good as possible. A good "King's-man," a plush skull cap, and a seam down the trowsers are the great points of ambition with the coster boys.

A lad about fourteen informed me that "brass buttons, like a huntman's, with foxes' heads on em, looked stunning flash, and the gals liked em." As for the hair, they say it ought to be long in front, and done in "figure-six" curls, or twisted back to the ear "Newgate-knocker style." "But the worst of hair is," they add, "that it is always getting cut off in quod, all along of muzzling the bobbies."

The whole of the coster-boys are fond of good living. I was told that when a lad started for himself, he would for the first week or so live almost entirely on cakes and nuts. When settled in business they always manage to have what they call "a relish" for breakfast and tea, "a couple of herrings, or a bit of bacon, or what not." Many of them never dine excepting on the Sunday—the pony and donkey proprietors being the only costers whose incomes will permit them to indulge in a "fourpenny plate of meat at a cook's shop." The whole of the boys too are extremely fond of pudding, and should the "plum duff" at an eating-house contain an unusual quantity of plums, the news soon spreads, and the boys then endeavour to work that way so as to obtain a slice. While waiting for a market, the lads will very often spend a shilling in the cakes and three cornered puffs sold by the Jews. The owners toss for them, and so enable the young coster to indulge his two favourite passions at the same time—his love of pastry, and his love of gambling. The Jews crisp butter biscuits also rank very high with the boys, who declare that they "slip down like soapsuds down a gully hole." In fact it is curious to notice how perfectly unrestrained are the passions and appetites of these youths. The only thoughts that trouble them are for their girls, their eating and their gambling—beyond the love of self they have no tie that binds them to existence.

The Life of a Coster-Lad.

One lad that I spoke to gave me as much of his history as he could remember. He was a tall stout boy, about sixteen years old, with a face utterly vacant. His two heavy lead-coloured eyes stared unmeaningly at me, and, beyond a constant anxiety to keep his front lock curled on his cheek, he did not exhibit the slightest trace of feeling. He sank into his seat heavily and of a heap, and when once settled down he remained motionless, with his mouth open and his hands on his knees—almost as if paralyzed. He was dressed in all the slang beauty of his class, with a bright red handkerchief and unexceptionable boots.

"My father" he told me in a thick unimpassioned voice, "was a waggoner, and worked the country roads. There was two on us at home with mother, and we used to play along with the boys of our court, in Golding-lane, at buttons and marbles. I recollects nothing more than this—only the big boys used to cheat like bricks and thump us if we grumbled—that's all I recollects of my infancy, as you calls it. Father I've heard tell died when I was three and brother only a year old. It was worse luck for us!—Mother was so easy with us. I once went to school for a couple of weeks, but the cove used to fetch me a wipe over the knuckles with his stick, and as I wasn't going to stand that there, why you see I aint no great scholard. We did as we liked with mother, she was so precious easy, and I never learned anything but playing buttons and making leaden 'bonces,' that's all," (here the youth laughed slightly.) "Mother used to be up and out very early washing in families — anything for a living. She was a good mother to us. We was left at home with the key of the room and some bread and butter for dinner. Afore she got into work—and it was a goodish long time—we was shocking hard up, and she pawned nigh everything. Sometimes, when we had'nt no grub at all, the other lads, perhaps, would give us some of their bread and butter, but often our stomachs used to ache with the hunger, and we would cry when we was werry far gone. She used to be at work from six in the morning till ten o'clock at night, which was a long time for a child's belly to hold out again, and when it was dark we would go and lie down on the bed and try and sleep until she came home with the food. I was eight year old then.

"A man as know'd mother, said to her, 'Your boy's got nothing to do, let him come along with me and yarn a few ha'pence,' and so I became a coster. He gave me 4*d.* a morning and my breakfast. I worked with him about three year, until I learnt the markets, and then I and brother got baskets of our own, and used to keep mother. One day with another, the two on us together could make 2*s.* 6*d.* by selling greens of a morning, and going round to the publics with nuts of a evening, till about ten o'clock at night. Mother used to have a bit of fried meat or a stew ready for us when we got home, and by using up the stock as we couldn't sell, we used to manage pretty tidy. When I was fourteen I took up with a girl. She lived in the same house as we did, and I used to walk out of a night with her and give her half-pints of beer at the publics. She were about thirteen, and used to dress werry nice, though she weren't above middling pretty. Now I'm working for another man as gives me a shilling a week, victuals, washing, and lodging, just as if I was one of the family.

"On a Sunday I goes out selling, and all I yarns I keeps. As for going to church, why, I can't afford it,—besides, to tell the truth, I don't like it well enough. Plays, too, ain't in my line much; I'd sooner go to a dance—its more livelier. The 'penny gaffs' is rather more in my style; the songs are out and out, and makes our gals laugh. The smuttier the better, I thinks; bless you! the gals likes it as much as we do. If we lads ever has a quarrel, why, we fights for it. If I was to let a cove off once, he'd do it again; but I never give a lad a chance, so long as I can get anigh him. I never heard about Christianity, but if a cove was to fetch me a lick of the head, I'd give it him again, whether he was a big 'un or a little 'un. I'd precious soon see a henemy of mine shot afore I'd forgive him,—where's the use? Do I understand what behaving to your neighbour is?—In coorse I do. If a feller as lives next me wanted a basket of mine as I wasn't using, why, he might have it; if I was working it though, I'd see him further! I can under-

stand that all as lives in a court is neighbours; but as for policemen, they're nothing to me, and I should like to pay 'em all off well. No; I never heerd about this here creation you speaks about. In coorse God Almighty made the world, and the poor bricklayers' labourers built the houses arterwards—that's *my* opinion; but I can't say, for I've never been in no schools, only always hard at work, and knows nothing about it. I have heerd a little about our Saviour,—they seem to say he were a goodish kind of a man; but if he says as how a cove's to forgive a feller as hits you, I should say he know'd nothing about it. In coorse the gals the lads goes and lives with thinks our walloping 'em wery cruel of us, but we don't. Why don't we?—why, because we don't. Before father died, I used sometimes to say my prayers, but after that mother was too busy getting a living to mind about my praying. Yes, I knows!—in the Lord's prayer they says, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgives them as trespasses agin us.' It's a very good thing, in coorse, but no costers can't do it."

Of the "Penny Gaff."

In many of the thoroughfares of London there are shops which have been turned into a kind of temporary theatre (admission one penny), where dancing and singing take place every night. Rude pictures of the performers are arranged outside, to give the front a gaudy and attractive look, and at night-time coloured lamps and transparencies are displayed to draw an audience. These places are called by the costers "Penny Gaffs;" and on a Monday night as many as six performances will take place, each one having its two hundred visitors.

It is impossible to contemplate the ignorance and immorality of so numerous a class as that of the costermongers, without wishing to discover the cause of their degradation. Let any one curious on this point visit one of these penny shows, and he will wonder that *any* trace of virtue and honesty should remain among the people. Here the stage, instead of being the means for illustrating a moral precept, is turned into a platform to teach the cruelest debauchery. The audience is usually composed of children so young, that these dens become the school-rooms where the guiding morals of a life are picked up; and so precocious are the little things, that the girl of nine will, from constant attendance at such places, have learnt to understand the filthiest sayings, and laugh at them as loudly as the grown-up lads around her. What notions can the young female form of marriage and chastity, when the penny theatre rings with applause at the performance of a scene whose sole point turns upon the pantomimic imitation of the unrestrained indulgence of the most corrupt appetites of our nature? How can the lad learn to check his hot passions and think honesty and virtue admirable, when the shouts around him impart a glory to a descriptive song so painfully corrupt, that it can only have been made tolerable by the most habitual excess? The men who preside over these infamous places know too well the failings of their audiences. They know that these poor children require no nicely-turned joke to make the evening pass merrily, and that the filth they utter needs no double meaning to veil its obscenity. The show that will provide the most unrestrained debauchery will have the most crowded benches: and to gain this point, things are acted and spoken that it is criminal even to allude to.

Not wishing to believe in the description which some of the more intelligent of the costermongers had given of these places, it was thought better to visit one of them, so that all exaggeration might be avoided. One of the least offensive of the exhibitions was fixed upon.

The "penny gaff" chosen was situated in a broad street near Smithfield; and for a great distance off, the jingling sound of music was heard, and the gas-light streamed out into the thick night air as from a dark lantern, glittering on the windows of the houses opposite, and lighting up the faces of the mob in the road, as on an illumination night. The front of a large shop had been entirely removed, and the entrance was decorated with paintings of the "comic singers," in their most "humourous" attitudes. On a table against the wall was perched the band, playing what the costers call "dancing tunes" with great effect, for the hole at the money-taker's box was blocked up with hands tendering the penny. The crowd without was so numerous, that a policeman was in attendance to preserve order, and push the boys off the pavement—the music having the effect of drawing them insensibly towards the festooned green-baize curtain.

The shop itself had been turned into a waiting-room, and was crowded even to the top of the stairs leading to the gallery on the first floor. The ceiling of this "lobby" was painted blue, and spotted with whitewash clouds, to represent the heavens; the boards of the trap-door, and the laths that showed through the holes in the plaster, being all of the same colour. A notice was here posted, over the canvass door leading into the theatre, to the effect that "Ladies and Gentlemen to the front places must pay Twopence."

The visitors, with a few exceptions, were all boys and girls, whose ages seemed to vary from eight to twenty years. Some of the girls—though their figures showed them to be mere children—were dressed in showy cotton-velvet polkas, and wore dowdy feathers in their crushed bonnets. They stood laughing and joking with the lads, in an unconcerned, impudent manner, that was almost appalling. Some of them, when tired of waiting, chose their partners, and commenced dancing grotesquely, to the admiration of the lookers-on, who expressed their approbation in obscene terms, that, far from disgusting the poor little women, were received as compliments, and acknowledged with smiles and coarse repartees. The boys clustered together, smoking their pipes, and laughing at each other's anecdotes, or else jingling halfpence in time with the tune, while they whistled an accompaniment to it. Presently one of the performers, with a gilt crown on his well greased locks, descended from the staircase, his fleshings covered by a dingy dressing-gown, and mixed with the mob, shaking hands with old acquaintances. The "comic singer," too, made his appearance among the throng—the huge bow to his cravat, which nearly covered his waistcoat, and the red end to his nose, exciting neither merriment nor surprise.

To discover the kind of entertainment, a lad near me and my companion was asked "if there was any flash dancing." With a knowing wink the boy answered, "Lots! show their legs and all, prime!" and immediately the boy followed up his information by a request for a "yennep" to get a "tib of occabot." After waiting in the lobby some considerable time, the performance inside was concluded, and the audience came pouring out through the canvass door. As they had to pass singly, I noticed them particularly. Above three-fourths of them were women and girls, the rest consisting chiefly of mere boys—for out of about two hundred persons I counted only eighteen men. Forward they came, bringing an overpowering stench with them, laughing and yelling as they pushed their way through the waiting-room. One woman carrying a sickly child with a bulging forehead, was reeling drunk, the saliva running down her mouth as she stared about her with a heavy fixed eye. Two boys were pushing her from side to side, while the poor infant slept, breathing heavily, as if stupified, through the din. Lads jumping on girls' shoulders, and girls laughing hysterically from being tickled by the youths behind them, every one shouting and jumping, presented a mad scene of frightful enjoyment.

When these had left, a rush for places by those in waiting began, that set at defiance the blows and strugglings of a lady in spangles who endeavoured to preserve order and take the checks. As time was a great object with the proprietor, the entertainment within began directly the first seat was taken, so that the lads without, rendered furious by the rattling of the piano within, made the canvass partition bulge in and out, with the strugglings of those seeking admission, like a sail in a flagging wind.

To form the theatre, the first floor had been removed; the whitewashed beams however still stretched from wall to wall. The lower room had evidently been the warehouse, while the upper apartment had been the sitting-room, for the paper was still on the walls. A gallery, with a canvass front, had been hurriedly built up, and it was so fragile that the boards bent under the weight of those above. The bricks in the warehouse were smeared over with red paint, and had a few black curtains daubed upon them. The coster-youths require no very great scenic embellishment, and indeed the stage—which was about eight feet square—could admit of none. Two jets of gas, like those outside a butcher's shop, were placed on each side of the proscenium, and proved very handy for the gentlemen whose pipes required lighting. The band inside the "theatre" could not compare with the band without. An old grand piano, whose canvass-covered top extended the entire length of the stage, sent forth its wiry notes under the be-ringed fingers of a "professor Wilkinsini," while another professional, with his head resting on his violin, played vigorously, as he stared unconcernedly at the noisy audience.

Singing and dancing formed the whole of the hours' performance, and, of the two, the singing was preferred. A young girl, of about fourteen years of age, danced with more energy than grace, and seemed to be well-known to the spectators, who cheered her on by her Christian name. When the dance was concluded, the proprietor of the establishment threw down a penny from the gallery, in the hopes that others might be moved to similar acts of generosity; but no one followed up the offering, so the young lady hunted after the money and departed. The "comic singer," in a battered hat and the huge bow to his cravat, was received with deafening shouts. Several songs were named by the costers, but the "funny gentleman" merely requested them "to hold their jaws," and putting on a "knowing" look, sang a song, the whole point of which consisted in the mere utterance of some filthy word at the end of each stanza. Nothing, however, could have been more successful. The lads stamped their feet with delight; the girls screamed with enjoyment. Once or twice a young shrill laugh would anticipate the fun—as if the words were well known—or the boys would forestall the point by shouting it out before the proper time. When the song was ended the house was in a delirium of applause. The canvass front to the gallery was beaten with sticks, drum-like, and sent down showers of white powder on the heads in the pit. Another song followed, and the actor knowing on what his success depended, lost no opportunity of increasing his laurels. The most obscene thoughts, the most disgusting scenes were coolly described, making a poor child near me wipe away the tears that rolled down her eyes with the enjoyment of the poison. There were three or four of these songs sung in the course of the evening, each one being encored, and then changed. One written about "Pine-apple rock," was the grand treat of the night, and offered greater scope to the rhyming powers of the author than any of the others. In this, not a single chance had been missed; ingenuity had been exerted to its utmost lest an obscene thought should be passed by, and it was absolutely awful to behold the relish with which the young ones jumped to the hideous meaning of the verses.

There was one scene yet to come, that was perfect in its wickedness. A ballet began between a man dressed up as a woman, and a country clown. The most disgusting attitudes were struck, the most immoral acts represented, without one dissenting voice. If there had been any feat of agility, any grimacing, or, in fact, anything with which the laughter of the uneducated classes is usually associated, the applause might have been accounted for; but here were two ruffians degrading themselves each time they stirred a limb, and forcing into the brains of the childish audience before them thoughts that must embitter a lifetime, and descend from father to child like some bodily infirmity.

When I had left, I spoke to a better class costermonger on this saddening subject. "Well, sir, it is frightful," he said, "but the boys *will* have their amusements. If their amusements is bad they don't care; they only wants to laugh, and this here kind of work does it. Give 'em better singing and better dancing, and they'd go, if the price was as cheap as this is. I've seen, when a decent concert was given at a penny, as many as four thousand costers present, behaving themselves as quietly and decently as possible. Their wives and children was with 'em, and no audience was better conducted. It's all stuff talking about them preferring this sort of thing. Give 'em good things at the same price, and I *know* they will like the good, better than the bad."

My own experience with this neglected class goes to prove, that if we would really lift them out of the moral mire in which they are wallowing, the first step must be to provide them with *wholesome* amusements. The misfortune, however, is, that when we seek to elevate the character of the people, we give them such mere dry abstract truths and dogmas to digest, that the uneducated mind turns with abhorrence from them. We forget how we ourselves were originally won by our *emotions* to the consideration of such subjects. We do not remember how our own tastes have been formed, nor do we, in our zeal, stay to reflect how the tastes of a people generally are created; and, consequently, we cannot perceive that a habit of enjoying any matter whatsoever can only be induced in the mind by linking with it some æsthetic affection. The heart is the mainspring of the intellect, and the feelings the real educers and educators of the thoughts. As games with the young destroy the fatigue of muscular exercise, so do the sympathies stir the mind to action without any sense of effort. It is because "serious" people generally object to enlist the emotions in the education of the poor, and look upon the delight which arises in the mind from the mere perception of the beauty of sound, motion, form, and colour—or from the apt association of harmonious or incongruous ideas—or from the sympathetic operation of the affections; it is because, I say, the zealous portion of society look upon these matters as "*vanity*," that the amusements of the working-classes are left to venal traders to provide. Hence, in the low-priced entertainments which necessarily appeal to the poorer, and therefore, to the least educated of the people, the proprietors, instead of trying to develop in them the purer sources of delight, seek only to gratify their audience in the coarsest manner, by appealing to their most brutal appetites. And thus the emotions, which the great Architect of the human mind gave us as the means of quickening our imaginations and refining our sentiments, are made the instruments of crushing every operation of the intellect and debasing our natures. It is idle and unfeeling to believe that the great majority of a people whose days are passed in excessive toil, and whose homes are mostly of an uninviting character, will forego *all* amusements, and consent to pass their evenings by their *no* firesides, reading tracts or singing hymns. It is folly to fancy that the mind, spent with the irksomeness of compelled labour, and depressed, perhaps, with the struggle to live by that labour after all, will not, when the work is over, seek out some place where at least it can forget its troubles or fatigues in the temporary pleasure begotten by some mental or physical stimulant. It is because we exact too much of the poor—because we, as it were, strive to make true knowledge and true beauty as forbidding as possible to the uneducated and unrefined, that they fly to their penny gaffs, their twopenny-hops, their beer-shops, and their gambling-grounds for pleasures which we deny them, and which we, in our arrogance, believe it is possible for them to do without.

The experiment so successfully tried at Liverpool of furnishing music of an enlivening and yet elevating character at the same price as the concerts of the lowest grade, shows that the people may be won to delight in beauty instead of beastiality, and teaches us again that it is *our* fault to allow them to be as they are and not their's to remain so. All men are compound animals, with many inlets of pleasure to their brains, and if one avenue be closed against them, why it but forces them to seek delight through another. So far from the perception of beauty inducing habits of gross enjoyment as "serious" people generally imagine, a moment's reflection will tell us that these very habits are only the necessary consequences of the non-development of the æsthetic faculty; for the two assuredly cannot co-exist. To cultivate the sense of the beautiful is necessarily to inculcate a detestation of the sensual. Moreover, it is impossible for the mind to be accustomed to the contemplation of what is admirable without continually mounting to higher and higher forms of it—from the beauty of nature to that of thought—from thought to feeling, from feeling to action, and lastly to the fountain of all goodness—the great munificent Creator of the sea, the mountains, and the flowers—the stars, the sunshine, and the rainbow—the fancy, the reason, the love and the heroism of man and womankind—the instincts of the beasts—the glory of the angels—and the mercy of Christ.

Of the Coster-Girls.

The costermongers, taken as a body, entertain the most imperfect idea of the sanctity of marriage. To their undeveloped minds it merely consists in the fact of a man and woman living together, and sharing the gains they may each earn by selling in the street. The father and mother of the girl look upon it as a convenient means of shifting the support of their child over to another's exertions; and so thoroughly do they believe this to be the end and aim of matrimony, that the expense of a church ceremony is considered as a useless waste of money, and the new pair are received by their companions as cordially as if every form of law and religion had been complied with.

The notions of morality among these people agree strangely, as I have said, with those of many savage tribes—indeed, it would be curious if it were otherwise. They are a part of the Nomades of England, neither knowing nor caring for the enjoyments of home. The hearth, which is so sacred a symbol to all civilized races as being the spot where the virtues of each succeeding generation are taught and encouraged, has no charms to them. The tap-room is the father's chief abiding place; whilst to the mother the house is only a better kind of *tent*. She is away at the stall, or hawking her goods from morning till night, while the children are left to play away the day in the court or alley, and pick their morals out of the gutter. So long as the limbs gain strength the parent cares for nothing else. As the young ones grow up, their only notions of wrong are formed by what the policeman will permit them to do. If we, who have known from babyhood the kindly influences of a home, require, before we are thrust out into the world to get a living for ourselves, that our perceptions of good and evil should be quickened and brightened (the same as our perceptions of truth and falsity) by the experience and counsel of those who are wiser and better than ourselves,—if, indeed, it needed a special creation and example to teach the best and strongest of us the law of right, how bitterly must the children of the street-folk require tuition, training, and advice, when from their very cradles (if, indeed, they ever knew such luxuries) they are doomed to witness in their parents, whom they naturally believe to be their superiors, habits of life in which passion is the sole rule of action, and where every appetite of our animal nature is indulged in without the least restraint.

I say thus much because I am anxious to make others feel, as I do myself, that *we* are the culpable parties in these matters. That they poor things should do as they do is but human nature—but that *we* should allow them to remain thus destitute of every blessing vouchsafed to ourselves—that we should willingly share what we enjoy with our brethren at the Antipodes, and yet leave those who are nearer and who, therefore, should be dearer to us, to want even the commonest moral necessaries is a paradox that gives to the zeal of our Christianity a strong savour of the chicanery of Cant.

The costermongers strongly resemble the North American Indians in their conduct to their wives. They can understand that it is the duty of the woman to contribute to the happiness of the man, but cannot feel that there is a reciprocal duty from the man to the woman. The wife is considered as an inexpensive servant, and the disobedience of a wish is punished with blows. She must work early and late, and to the husband must be given the proceeds of her labour. Often when the man is in one of his drunken fits—which sometimes last two or three days continuously—she must by her sole exertions find food for herself and him too. To live in peace with him, there must be no murmuring, no tiring under work, no fancied cause for jealousy—for if there be, she is either beaten into submission or cast adrift to begin life again—as another's leavings.

The story of one coster girl's life may be taken as a type of the many. When quite young she is placed out to nurse with some neighbour, the mother—if a fond one—visiting the child at certain periods of the day, for the purpose of feeding it, or sometimes, knowing the round she has to make, having the infant brought to her at certain places, to be "suckled." As soon as it is old enough to go alone, the court is its play-ground, the gutter its school-room, and under the care of an elder sister the little one passes the day, among children whose mothers like her own are too busy out in the streets helping to get the food, to be able to mind the family at home. When the girl is strong enough, she in her turn is made to assist the mother by keeping guard over the younger children, or, if there be none, she is lent out to carry about a baby, and so made to add to the family income by gaining her sixpence weekly. Her time is from the earliest years fully occupied; indeed, her parents cannot afford to keep her without doing and getting *something*. Very few of the children receive the least education. "The parents," I am told, "never give their minds to learning, for they say, 'What's the use of it? *that* won't yarn a gal a living.'" Everything is sacrificed—as, indeed, under the circumstances it must be—in the struggle to live—aye! and to live *merely*. Mind, heart, soul, are all absorbed in the belly. The rudest form of animal life, physiologists tell us, is simply a locomotive stomach. Verily, it would appear as if our social state had a tendency to make the highest animal sink into the lowest.

At about seven years of age the girls first go into the streets to sell. A shallow-basket is given to them, with about two shillings for stock-money, and they hawk, according to the time of year, either oranges, apples, or violets; some begin their street education with the sale of water-cresses. The money earned by this means is strictly given to the parents. Sometimes—

though rarely—a girl who has been unfortunate during the day will not dare to return home at night, and then she will sleep under some dry arch or about some market, until the morrow's gains shall ensure her a safe reception and shelter in her father's room.

The life of the coster-girls is as severe as that of the boys. Between four and five in the morning they have to leave home for the markets, and sell in the streets until about nine. Those that have more kindly parents, return then to breakfast, but many are obliged to earn the morning's meal for themselves. After breakfast, they generally remain in the streets until about ten o'clock at night; many having nothing during all that time but one meal of bread and butter and coffee, to enable them to support the fatigue of walking from street to street with the heavy basket on their heads. In the course of a day, some girls eat as much as a pound of bread, and very seldom get any meat, unless it be on a Sunday.

There are many poor families that, without the aid of these girls, would be forced into the workhouse. They are generally of an affectionate disposition, and some will perform acts of marvellous heroism to keep together the little home. It is not at all unusual for mere children of fifteen to walk their eight or ten miles a day, carrying a basket of nearly two hundred weight on their heads. A journey to Woolwich and back, or to the towns near London, is often undertaken to earn the 1*s.* 6*d.* their parents are anxiously waiting for at home.

Very few of these girls are married to the men they afterwards live with. Their courtship is usually a very short one; for, as one told me, "the life is such a hard one, that a girl is ready to get rid of a *little* of the labour at any price." The coster-lads see the girls at market, and if one of them be pretty, and a boy take a fancy to her, he will make her bargains for her, and carry her basket home. Sometimes a coster working his rounds will feel a liking for a wench selling her goods in the street, and will leave his barrow to go and talk with her. A girl seldom takes up with a lad before she is sixteen, though some of them, when barely fifteen or even fourteen, will pair off. They court for a time, going to raffles and "gaffs" together, and then the affair is arranged. The girl tells her parents "she's going to keep company with so-and-so," packs up what things she has, and goes at once, without a word of remonstrance from either father or mother. A furnished room, at about 4*s.* a week, is taken, and the young couple begin life The lad goes out as usual with his barrow, and the girl goes out with her basket, often working harder for her lover than she had done for her parents. They go to market together, and at about nine o'clock her day's selling begins. Very often she will take out with her in the morning what food she requires during the day, and never return home until eleven o'clock at night.

The men generally behave very cruelly to the girls they live with. They are as faithful to them as if they were married, but they are jealous in the extreme. To see a man talking to their girl is sufficient to ensure the poor thing a beating. They sometimes ill-treat them horribly—most unmercifully indeed—nevertheless the girls say they cannot help loving them still, and continue working for them, as if they experienced only kindness at their hands. Some of the men are gentler and more considerate in their treatment of them, but by far the larger portion are harsh and merciless. Often when the Saturday night's earnings of the two have been large, the man will take the entire money, and as soon as the Sunday's dinner is over, commence drinking hard, and continue drunk for two or three days together, until the funds are entirely exhausted. The women never gamble; they say, "it gives them no excitement." They prefer, if they have a spare moment in the evening, sitting near the fire making up and patching their clothes. "Ah, sir," said a girl to me, "a neat gown does a deal with a man; he always likes a girl best when everybody else likes her too." On a Sunday they clean their room for the week and go for a treat, if they can persuade their young man to take them out in the afternoon, either to Chalk Farm or Battersea Fields —"where there's plenty of life."

After a girl has once grown accustomed to a street-life, it is almost impossible to wean her from it. The muscular irritability begotten by continued wandering makes her unable to rest for any time in one place, and she soon, if put to any *settled* occupation, gets to crave for the severe exercise she formerly enjoyed. The least restraint will make her sigh after the perfect liberty of the coster's "roving life." As an instance of this I may relate a fact that has occurred within the last six months. A gentleman of high literary repute, struck with the heroic strugglings of a coster Irish girl to maintain her mother, took her to his house, with a view of teaching her the duties of a servant. At first the transition was a painful one to the poor thing. Having travelled barefoot through the streets since a mere child, the pressure of shoes was intolerable to her, and in the evening or whenever a few minutes' rest could be obtained, the boots were taken off, for with them on she could enjoy no ease. The perfect change of life, and the novelty of being in a new place, reconciled her for some time to the loss of her liberty. But no sooner did she hear from her friends, that sprats were again in the market, than, as if there were some magical influence in the fish, she at once requested to be freed from the confinement, and permitted to return to her old calling.

Such is the history of the lower class of girls, though this lower class, I regret to say, constitutes by far the greater portion of the whole. Still I would not for a moment have it inferred that *all* are bad. There are many young girls getting their living, or rather helping to get

the living of others in the streets, whose goodness, considering the temptations and hardships besetting such an occupation, approximates to the marvellous. As a type of the more prudent class of coster girls, I would cite the following narrative received from the lips of a young woman in answer to a series of questions.

The Life of a Coster Girl.

I wished to have obtained a statement from the girl whose portrait is here given, but she was afraid to give the slightest information about the habits of her companions, lest they should recognize her by the engraving and persecute her for the revelations she might make. After disappointing me some dozen times, I was forced to seek out some other coster girl.

The one I fixed upon was a fine-grown young woman of eighteen. She had a habit of curtsying to every question that was put to her. Her plaid shawl was tied over the breast, and her cotton-velvet bonnet was crushed in with carrying her basket. She seemed dreadfully puzzled where to put her hands, at one time tucking them under her shawl, warming them at the fire, or measuring the length of her apron, and when she answered a question she invariably addressed the fireplace. Her voice was husky from shouting apples.

"My mother has been in the streets selling all her lifetime. Her uncle learnt her the markets and she learnt me. When business grew bad she said to me, 'Now you shall take care on the stall, and I'll go and work out charing.' The way she learnt me the markets was to judge of the weight of the baskets of apples, and then said she, 'Always bate 'em down, a'most a half.' I always liked the street-life very well, that was if I was selling. I have mostly kept a stall myself, but I've known gals as walk about with apples, as have told me that the weight of the baskets is sich that the neck cricks, and when the load is took off, its just as if you'd a stiff neck, and the head feels as light as a feather. The gals begins working very early at our work; the parents makes them go out when a'most babies. There's a little gal, I'm sure she an't more than half-past seven, that stands selling water-cresses next my stall, and mother was saying, 'Only look there, how that little one has to get her living afore she a'most knows what a penn'orth means.'

"There's six on us in family, and father and mother makes eight. Father used to do odd jobs with the gas-pipes in the streets, and when work was slack we had very hard times of it. Mother always liked being with us at home, and used to manage to keep us employed out of mischief—she'd give us an old gown to make into pinafores for the children and such like! She's been very good to us, has mother, and so's father. She always liked to hear us read to her whilst she was washing or such like! and then we big ones had to learn the little ones. But when father's work got slack, if she had no employment charing, she'd say, 'Now I'll go and buy a bushel of apples,' and then she'd turn out and get a penny that way. I suppose by sitting at the stall from nine in the morning till the shops shuts up—say ten o'clock at night, I can earn about 1*s.* 6*d.* a day. It's all according to the apples—whether they're good or not—what we makes. If I'm unlucky, mother will say, 'Well, I'll go out to-morrow and see what *I* can do;' and if I've done well, she'll say 'Come you're a good hand at it; you've done famous.' Yes, mother's very fair that way. Ah! there's many a gal I knows whose back has to suffer if she don't sell her stock well; but, thank God! I never get more than a blowing up. My parents is very fair to me.

"I dare say there ain't ten out of a hundred gals what's living with men, what's been married Church of England fashion. I know plenty myself, but I don't, indeed, think it right. It seems to me that the gals is fools to be 'ticed away, but, in coorse, they needn't go without they likes. This is why I don't think it's right. Perhaps a man will have a few words with his gal, and he'll say, 'Oh! I ain't obligated to keep her!' and he'll turn her out: and then where's that poor gal to go? Now, there's a gal I knows as came to me no later than this here week, and she had a dreadful swole face and a awful black eye; and I says, 'Who's done that?' and she says, says she, 'Why, Jack'—just in that way; and then she says, says she, 'I'm going to take a warrant out to-morrow.' Well, he gets the warrant that same night, but she never appears again him, for fear of getting more beating. That don't seem to me to be like married people ought to be. Besides, if parties is married, they ought to bend to each other; and they won't, for sartain, if they're only living together. A man as is married is obligated to keep his wife if they quarrels or not; and he says to himself, says he, 'Well, I may as well live happy, like.' But if he can turn a poor gal off, as soon as he tires of her, he begins to have noises with her, and then gets quit of her altogether. Again, the men takes the money of the gals, and in coorse ought to treat 'em well —which they don't. This is another reason: when the gal is in the family way, the lads mostly sends them to the workhouse to lay in, and only goes sometimes to take them a bit of tea and shuggar; but, in coorse, married men wouldn't behave in such likes to their poor wives. After a quarrel, too, a lad goes and takes up with another young gal, and that isn't pleasant for the first one. The first step to ruin is them places of 'penny gaffs,' for they hears things there as oughtn't to be said to young gals. Besides, the lads is very insinivating, and after leaving them places will give a gal a drop of beer, and make her half tipsy, and then they makes their arrangements. I've often heerd the boys boasting of having ruined gals, for all the world as if they was the first noblemen in the land.

"It would be a good thing if these sort of doings on could be stopped. It's half the pa-

rents' fault; for if a gal can't get a living, they turns her out into the streets, and then what's to become of her? I'm sure the gals, if they was married, would be happier, because they couldn't be beat worse. And if they was married, they'd get a nice home about 'em; whereas, if they's only living together, they takes a furnished room. I'm sure, too, that it's a bad plan; for I've heerd the gals themselves say, 'Ah! I wish I'd never seed Jack' (or Tom, or whatever it is); 'I'm sure I'd never be half so bad but for him.'

"Only last night father was talking about religion. We often talks about religion. Father has told me that God made the world, and I've heerd him talk about the first man and woman as was made and lived—it must be more than a hundred years ago—but I don't like to speak on what I don't know. Father, too, has told me about our Saviour what was nailed on a cross to suffer for such poor people as we is. Father has told us, too, about his giving a great many poor people a penny loaf and a bit of fish each, which proves him to have been a very kind gentleman. The Ten Commandments was made by him, I've heerd say, and he performed them too among other miracles. Yes! this is part of what our Saviour tells us. We are to forgive everybody, and do nobody no injury. I don't think I could forgive an enemy if she injured me very much; I'm sure I don't know why I couldn't, unless it is that I'm poor, and never learnt to do it. If a gal stole my shawl and didn't return it back or give me the value on it, I couldn't forgive her; but if she told me she lost it off her back, I shouldn't be so hard on her. We poor gals ain't very religious, but we are better than the men. We all of us thanks God for everything—even for a fine day; as for sprats, we always says they're God's blessing for the poor, and thinks it hard of the Lord Mayor not to let 'em come in afore the ninth of November, just because he wants to dine off them—which he always do. Yes, we knows for certain that they eats plenty of sprats at the Lord Mayor's 'blanket.' They say in the Bible that the world was made in six days: the beasts, the birds, the fish, and all—and sprats was among them in coorse. There was only one house at that time as was made, and that was the Ark for Adam and Eve and their family. It seems very wonderful indeed how all this world was done so quick. I should have thought that England alone would have took double the time; shouldn't you, sir? But then it says in the Bible, God Almighty's a just and true God, and in coorse time would be nothing to him. When a good person is dying, we says, 'The Lord has called upon him, and he must go,' but I can't think what it means, unless it is that an angel comes—like when we're a-dreaming—and tells the party he's wanted in heaven. I know where heaven is; it's above the clouds, and they're placed there to prevent us seeing into it. That's where all the good people go, but I'm afeerd,"—she continued solemnly—"there's very few costers among the angels—'specially those as deceives poor gals.

"No, I don't think this world could well go on for ever. There's a great deal of ground in it, certainly, and it seems very strong at present; but they say there's to be a flood on the earth, and earthquakes, and that will destroy it. The earthquake ought to have took place some time ago, as people tells me, but I never heerd any more about it. If we cheats in the streets, I know we shan't go to Heaven; but it's very hard upon us, for if we didn't cheat we couldn't live, profits is so bad. It's the same with the shops, and I suppose the young men there won't go to Heaven neither; but if people won't give the money, both costers and tradesmen must cheat, and that's very hard. Why, look at apples! customers want them for less than they cost us, and so we are forced to shove in bad ones as well as good ones; and if we're to suffer for that, it does seem to me dreadful cruel."

Curious and extravagant as this statement may perhaps appear to the uninitiated, nevertheless it is here given as it was spoken; and it was spoken with an earnestness that proved the poor girl looked upon it as a subject, the solemnity of which forced her to be truthful.

Of Costermongers and Thieves.

Concerning the connection of these two classes I had the following account from a costermonger: "I've known the coster trade for twelve years, and never knew thieves go out a costering as a cloak; they may have done so, but I very much doubt it. Thieves go for an idle life, and costermongering don't suit them. Our chaps don't care a d—n who they associate with,—if they're thieves they meet 'em all the same, or anything that way. But costers buy what they call 'a gift,'—may-be it's a watch or coat wot's been stolen—from any that has it to sell. A man will say: 'If you've a few shillings, you may make a good thing of it. Why this identical watch is only twenty shillings, and it's worth fifty;' so if the coster has money, he buys. Thieves will get 3*d.* where a mechanic or a coster will earn ½*d.*, and the most ignorant of our people has a queer sort of respect for thieves, because of the money they make. Poverty's as much despised among costers as among other people. People that's badly off among us are called 'cursed.' In bad weather it's common for costers to 'curse themselves,' as they call having no trade. 'Well, I'm cursed,' they say when they can make no money. It's a common thing among them to shout after any one they don't like. that's reduced, 'Well, ain't you cursed?'" The costers, I am credibly informed, gamble a great deal with the wealthier class of thieves, and win of them the greater part of the money they get.

Of the more provident Costermongers.

Concerning this head, I give the statement of a man whose information I found fully con-

THE BAKED POTATO MAN.

"Baked 'taturs! All 'ot, all 'ot!"

[*From a Photograph.*]

firmed:—"We are not such a degraded set as some believe; sir, but a living doesn't tumble into a man's mouth, now a days. A good many of us costers rises into greengrocers and coal-sheds, and still carries on their rounds as costers, all the same. Why, in Lock's-fields, I could show you twenty such, and you'd find them very decent men, sir—very. There's one man I know, that's risen that way, who is worth hundreds of pounds, and keeps his horse and cart like a gentleman. They rises to be voters, and they all vote liberal. Some marry the better kind of servants, — such servant-maids as would'nt marry a rag and bottle shop, but doesn't object to a coal shed. It's mostly younger men that manages this. As far as I have observed, these costers, after they has settled and got to be housekeepers, don't turn their backs on their old mates. They'd have a nice life of it if they did—yes! a very nice life."

Of the Homes of the Costermongers.

The costermongers usually reside in the courts and alleys in the neighbourhood of the different street-markets. They themselves designate the locality where, so to speak, a colony of their people has been established, a "coster district," and the entire metropolis is thus parcelled out, almost as systematically as if for the purposes of registration. These costermonger districts are as follows, and are here placed in the order of the numerical importance of the residents:

The New Cut (Lambeth).	Ratcliffe Highway.
Whitecross-street.	Lisson-grove.
Leather-lane.	Petticoat and Rosemary-lane.
The Brill, Somers' Town.	Marylebone-lane.
Whitechapel.	Oxford-street.
Camberwell.	Rotherhithe.
Walworth.	Deptford.
Peckham.	Dockhead.
Bermondsey.	Greenwich.
The Broadway, Westminster.	Commercial-road (East).
Shoreditch.	Poplar.
Paddington and Edgeware Road.	Limehouse.
Tottenham-court Road.	Bethnal-green.
Drury-lane.	Hackney-road.
Old-street Road.	Kingsland.
Clare Market.	Camden Town.

The homes of the costermongers in these places, may be divided into three classes; firstly, those who, by having a regular trade or by prudent economy, are enabled to live in comparative ease and plenty; secondly, those who, from having a large family or by imprudent expenditure, are, as it were, struggling with the world; and thirdly, those who for want of stock-money, or ill success in trade are nearly destitute.

The first home I visited was that of an old woman, who with the assistance of her son and girls, contrived to live in a most praiseworthy and comfortable manner. She and all her family were teetotallers, and may be taken as a fair type of the thriving costermonger.

As I ascended a dark flight of stairs, a savory smell of stew grew stronger at each step I mounted. The woman lived in a large airy room on the first floor ("the drawing-room") as she told me laughing at her own joke), well lighted by a clean window, and I found her laying out the savory smelling dinner looking most temptingly clean. The floor was as white as if it had been newly planed, the coke fire was bright and warm, making the lid of the tin saucepan on it rattle up and down as the steam rushed out. The wall over the fire-place was patched up to the ceiling with little square pictures of saints, and on the mantel-piece, between a row of bright tumblers and wine glasses filled with odds and ends, stood glazed crockeryware images of Prince Albert and M. Jullien. Against the walls, which were papered with "hangings" of four different patterns and colours, were hung several warm shawls, and in the band-box, which stood on the stained chest of drawers, you could tell that the Sunday bonnet was stowed safely away from the dust. A turn-up bedstead thrown back, and covered with a many-coloured patch-work quilt, stood opposite to a long dresser with its mugs and cups dangling from the hooks, and the clean blue plates and dishes ranged in order at the back. There were a few bushel baskets piled up in one corner, "but the apples smelt so," she said, "they left them in a stable at night."

By the fire sat the woman's daughter, a pretty meek-faced gray-eyed girl of sixteen, who "was home nursing" for a cold. "Steve" (her boy) I was informed, was out working. With his help, the woman assured me, she could live very comfortably—"God be praised!" and when he got the barrow he was promised, she gave me to understand, that their riches were to increase past reckoning. Her girl too was to be off at work as soon as sprats came in. "Its on Lord Mayor's-day they comes in," said a neighbour who had rushed up to see the strange gentleman, "they says he has 'em on his table, but I never seed 'em. They never gives us the pieces, no not even the heads," and every one laughed to their utmost. The good old dame was in high spirits, her dark eyes sparkling as she spoke about her "Steve." The daughter in a little time lost her bashfulness, and informed me "that one of the Polish refugees was a-courting Mrs. M——, who had given him a pair of black eyes."

On taking my leave I was told by the mother that their silver gilt Dutch clock—with its glass face and blackleaded weights—"was the best one in London, and might be relied on with the greatest safety."

As a specimen of the dwellings of the struggling costers, the following may be cited:

The man, a tall, thick-built, almost good-looking fellow, with a large fur cap on his head, lived with his family in a front kitchen, and as there were, with his mother-in-law, five persons, and only one bed, I was somewhat puzzled to know where they could *all* sleep. The barrow standing on the railings over the window, half shut out the light, and when any one passed there was a momentary shadow thrown over the room, and a loud rattling of the

iron gratings above that completely prevented all conversation. When I entered, the mother-in-law was reading aloud one of the threepenny papers to her son, who lolled on the bed, that with its curtains nearly filled the room. There was the usual attempt to make the fireside comfortable. The stone sides had been well whitened, and the mantel-piece decorated with its small tin trays, tumblers, and a piece of looking-glass. A cat with a kitten were seated on the hearth-rug in front. "They keeps the varmint away," said the woman, stroking the "puss," "and gives a look of home." By the drawers were piled up four bushel baskets, and in a dark corner near the bed stood a tall measure full of apples that scented the room. Over the head, on a string that stretched from wall to wall, dangled a couple of newly-washed shirts, and by the window were two stone barrels, for lemonade, when the coster visited the fairs and races.

Whilst we were talking, the man's little girl came home. For a poor man's child she was dressed to perfection; her pinafore was clean, her face shone with soap, and her tidy cotton print gown had clearly been newly put on that morning. She brought news that "Janey" was coming home from auntey's, and instantly a pink cotton dress was placed by the mother-in-law before the fire to air. (It appeared that Janey was out at service, and came home once a week to see her parents and take back a clean frock.) Although these people were living, so to speak, in a cellar, still every endeavour had been made to give the home a look of comfort. The window, with its paper-patched panes, had a clean calico blind. The side-table was dressed up with yellow jugs and cups and saucers, and the band-boxes had been stowed away on the flat top of the bedstead. All the chairs, which were old fashioned mahogany ones, had sound backs and bottoms.

Of the third class, or the very poor, I chose the following "type" out of the many others that presented themselves. The family here lived in a small slanting-roofed house, partly stripped of its tiles. More than one half of the small leaden squares of the first-floor window were covered with brown paper, puffing out and crackling in the wind, while through the greater part of the others were thrust out ball-shaped bundles of rags, to keep out the breeze. The panes that did remain were of all shapes and sizes, and at a distance had the appearance of yellow glass, they were so stained with dirt. I opened a door with a number chalked on it, and groped my way up a broken tottering staircase.

It took me some time after I had entered the apartment before I could get accustomed to the smoke, that came pouring into the room from the chimney. The place was filled with it, curling in the light, and making every thing so indistinct that I could with difficulty see the white mugs ranged in the corner-cupboard, not three yards from me. When the wind was in the north, or when it rained, it was always that way, I was told, "but otherwise," said an old dame about sixty, with long grisly hair spreading over her black shawl, "it is pretty good for that."

On a mattrass, on the floor, lay a pale-faced girl—"eighteen years old last twelfth-cake day"—her drawn-up form showing in the patch-work counterpane that covered her. She had just been confined, and the child had died! A little straw, stuffed into an old tick, was all she had to lie upon, and even that had been given up to her by the mother until she was well enough to work again. To shield her from the light of the window, a cloak had been fastened up slantingly across the panes; and on a string that ran along the wall was tied, amongst the bonnets, a clean nightcap—"against the doctor came," as the mother, curtsying, informed me. By the side of the bed, almost hidden in the dark shade, was a pile of sieve baskets, crowned by the flat shallow that the mother "worked" with.

The room was about nine feet square, and furnished a home for three women. The ceiling slanted like that of a garret, and was the colour of old leather, excepting a few rough white patches, where the tenants had rudely mended it. The white light was easily seen through the laths, and in one corner a large patch of the paper looped down from the wall. One night the family had been startled from their sleep by a large mass of mortar—just where the roof bulged in—falling into the room. "We never want rain water," the woman told me, "for we can catch plenty just over the chimney-place."

They had made a carpet out of three or four old mats. They were "obligated to it, for fear of dropping anything through the boards into the donkey stables in the parlour underneath. But we only pay ninepence a week rent," said the old woman, "and mustn't grumble."

The only ornament in the place was on the mantel-piece—an old earthenware sugar-basin, well silvered over, that had been given by the eldest girl when she died, as a remembrance to her mother. Two cracked tea-cups, on their inverted saucers, stood on each side, and dressed up the fire-side into something like tidiness. The chair I sat on was by far the best out of the three in the room, and that had no back, and only half its quantity of straw.

The parish, the old woman told me, allowed her 1*s.* a week and two loaves. But the doctor ordered her girl to take sago and milk, and she was many a time sorely puzzled to get it. The neighbours helped her a good deal, and often sent her part of their unsold greens;—even if it was only the outer leaves of the cabbages, she was thankful for them. Her other girl—a big-boned wench, with a red shawl crossed over her bosom, and her black hair parted on one side—did all she could, and so they lived on. "As long as they kept out of the 'big house' (the workhouse) she would not complain."

I never yet beheld so much destitution borne with so much content. Verily the acted philosophy of the poor is a thing to make those who write and preach about it hide their heads.

Of the Dress of the Costermongers.

From the homes of the costermongers we pass to a consideration of their dress.

The costermonger's ordinary costume partakes of the durability of the warehouseman's, with the quaintness of that of the stable-boy. A well-to-do "coster," when dressed for the day's work, usually wears a small cloth cap, a little on one side. A close-fitting worsted tie-up skull-cap, is very fashionable, just now, among the class, and ringlets at the temples are looked up to as the height of elegance. Hats they never wear—excepting on Sunday—on account of their baskets being frequently carried on their heads. Coats are seldom indulged in; their waistcoats, which are of a broad-ribbed corduroy, with fustian back and sleeves, being made as long as a groom's, and buttoned up nearly to the throat. If the corduroy be of a light sandy colour, then plain brass, or sporting buttons, with raised fox's or stag's heads upon them—or else black bone-buttons, with a flower-pattern—ornament the front; but if the cord be of a dark rat-skin hue, then mother-of-pearl buttons are preferred. Two large pockets—sometimes four—with huge flaps or lappels, like those in a shooting-coat, are commonly worn. If the costermonger be driving a good trade and have his set of regular customers, he will sport a blue cloth jacket, similar in cut to the cord ones above described; but this is looked upon as an extravagance of the highest order, for the slime and scales of the fish stick to the sleeves and shoulders of the garment, so as to spoil the appearance of it in a short time. The fashionable stuff for trousers, at the present, is a dark-coloured "cable cord," and they are made to fit tightly at the knee and swell gradually until they reach the boot, which they nearly cover. Velveteen is now seldom worn, and knee-breeches are quite out of date. Those who deal wholly in fish wear a blue serge apron, either hanging down or tucked up round their waist. The costermonger, however, prides himself most of all upon his neckerchief and boots. Men, women, boys and girls, all have a passion for these articles. The man who does not wear his silk neckerchief—his "King's-man" as it is called—is known to be in desperate circumstances; the inference being that it has gone to supply the morning's stock-money. A yellow flower on a green ground, or a red and blue pattern, is at present greatly in vogue. The women wear their kerchiefs tucked in under their gowns, and the men have theirs wrapped loosely round the neck, with the ends hanging over their waistcoats. Even if a costermonger has two or three silk handkerchiefs by him already, he seldom hesitates to buy another, when tempted with a bright showy pattern hanging from a Field-lane door-post.

The costermonger's love of a good strong boot is a singular prejudice that runs throughout the whole class. From the father to the youngest child, all will be found well shod. So strong is their predilection in this respect, that a costermonger may be immediately known by a glance at his feet. He will part with everything rather than his boots, and to wear a pair of second-hand ones, or "translators" (as they are called), is felt as a bitter degradation by them all. Among the men, this pride has risen to such a pitch, that many will have their upper-leathers tastily ornamented, and it is not uncommon to see the younger men of this class with a heart or a thistle, surrounded by a wreath of roses, worked below the instep, on their boots. The general costume of the women or girls is a black velveteen or straw bonnet, with a few ribbons or flowers, and almost always a net cap fitting closely to the cheek. The silk "King's-man" covering their shoulders, is sometimes tucked into the neck of the printed cotton-gown, and sometimes the ends are brought down outside to the apron-strings. Silk dresses are never worn by them—they rather despise such articles. The petticoats are worn short, ending at the ankles, just high enough to show the whole of the much-admired boots. Coloured, or "illustrated shirts," as they are called, are especially objected to by the men.

On the Sunday no costermonger will, if he can possibly avoid it, wheel a barrow. If a shilling be an especial object to him, he may, perhaps, take his shallow and head-basket as far as Chalk-farm, or some neighbouring resort; but even then he objects strongly to the Sunday-trading. They leave this to the Jews and Irish, who are always willing to earn a penny—as they say.

The prosperous coster *will* have his holiday on the Sunday, and, if possible, his Sunday suit as well—which usually consists of a rough beaver hat, brown Petersham, with velvet facings of the same colour, and cloth trousers, with stripes down the side. The women, generally, manage to keep by them a cotton gown of a bright showy pattern, and a new shawl. As one of the craft said to me—"Costers likes to see their gals and wives look lady-like when they takes them out." Such of the costers as are not in a flourishing way of business, seldom make any alteration in their dress on the Sunday.

There are but five tailors in London who make the garb proper to costermongers; one of these is considered somewhat "slop," or as a coster called him, a "springer-up."

This springer-up is blamed by some of the costermongers, who condemn him for employing women at reduced wages. A whole court of costermongers, I was assured, would withdraw their custom from a tradesman, if one of their body, who had influence among them, showed that the tradesman was unjust to his workpeople. The tailor in question issues bills after the following fashion. I give one verbatim, merely withholding the address for obvious reasons:

"ONCE TRY YOU'LL COME AGAIN.

Slap-up Tog and out-and-out Kicksies Builder.

Mr. —— nabs the chance of putting his cus-

tomers awake, that he has just made his escape from Russia, not forgetting to clap his mawleys upon some of the right sort of Ducks, to make single and double backed Slops for gentlemen in black, when on his return home he was stunned to find one of the top manufacturers of Manchester had cut his lucky and stepped off to the Swan Stream, leaving behind him a valuable stock of Moleskins, Cords, Velveteens, Plushes, Swandowns, &c., and I having some ready in my kick, grabbed the chance, and stepped home with my swag, and am now safe landed at my crib. I can turn out toggery of every description very slap up, at the following low prices for

Ready Gilt—Tick being no go.

Upper Benjamins, built on a downey plan, a monarch to half a finnuff. Slap up Velveteen Togs, lined with the same, 1 pound 1 quarter and a peg. Moleskin ditto, any colour, lined with the same, 1 couter. A pair of Kerseymere Kicksies, any colour, built very slap up, with the artful dodge, a canary. Pair of stout Cord ditto, built in the 'Melton Mowbray' style, half a sov. Pair of very good broad Cord ditto, made very saucy, 9 bob and a kick. Pair of long sleeve Moleskin, all colours, built hanky-spanky, with a double fakement down the side and artful buttons at bottom, half a monarch. Pair of stout ditto, built very serious, 9 times. Pair of out-and-out fancy sleeve Kicksies, cut to drop down on the trotters, 2 bulls. Waist Togs, cut long, with moleskin back and sleeves, 10 peg. Blue Cloth ditto, cut slap, with pearl buttons, 14 peg. Mud Pipes, Knee Caps, and Trotter Cases, built very low.

"A decent allowance made to Seedy Swells, Tea Kettle Purgers, Head Robbers, and Flunkeys out of Collar.

"N.B. Gentlemen finding their own Broady can be accommodated."

Of the Diet and Drink of Costermongers.

It is less easy to describe the diet of costermongers than it is to describe that of many other of the labouring classes, for their diet, so to speak, is an "out-door diet." They breakfast at a coffee-stall, and (if all their means have been expended in purchasing their stock, and none of it be yet sold) they expend on the meal only 1*d.*, reserved for the purpose. For this sum they can procure a small cup of coffee, and two "thin" (that is to say two thin slices of bread and butter). For dinner—which on a week-day is hardly ever eaten at the costermonger's abode—they buy "block ornaments," as they call the small, dark-coloured pieces of meat exposed on the cheap butchers' blocks or counters. These they cook in a tap-room; half a pound costing 2*d.* If time be an object, the coster buys a hot pie or two; preferring fruit-pies when in season, and next to them meat-pies. "We never eat eel-pies," said one man to me, "because we know they're often made of large dead eels. *We*, of all people, are not to be had that way. But the haristocrats eats 'em and never knows the difference." I did not hear that these men had any repugnance to meat-pies; but the use of the dead eel happens to come within the immediate knowledge of the costermongers, who are, indeed, its purveyors. Saveloys, with a pint of beer, or a glass of "short" (neat gin) is with them another common week-day dinner. The costers make all possible purchases of street-dealers, and pride themselves in thus "sticking to their own." On Sunday, the costermonger, when not "cracked up," enjoys a good dinner at his own abode. This is always a joint—most frequently a shoulder or half-shoulder of mutton—and invariably with "lots of good taturs baked along with it." In the quality of their potatoes these people are generally particular.

The costermonger's usual beverage is beer, and many of them drink hard, having no other way of spending their leisure but in drinking and gambling. It is not unusual in "a good time," for a costermonger to spend 12*s.* out of every 20*s.* in beer and pleasure.

I ought to add, that the "single fellows," instead of living on "block ornaments" and the like, live, when doing well, on the best fare, at the "spiciest" cook-shops on their rounds, or in the neighbourhood of their residence.

There are some families of costermongers who have persevered in carrying out the principles of teetotalism. One man thought there might be 200 individuals, including men, women, and children, who practised total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. These parties are nearly all somewhat better off than their drinking companions. The number of teetotallers amongst the costers, however, was more numerous three or four years back.

Of the Cries, Rounds, and Days of Costermongers.

I shall now proceed to treat of the London costermongers' mode of doing business.

In the first place all the goods they sell are cried or "hawked," and the cries of the costermongers in the present day are as varied as the articles they sell. The principal ones, uttered in a sort of cadence, are now, "Ni-ew mackerel, 6 a shilling." ("I've got a good jacketing many a Sunday morning," said one dealer, "for waking people up with crying mackerel, but I've said, 'I must live while you sleep.'") "Buy a pair of live soles, 3 pair for 6*d.*"—or, with a barrow, "Soles, 1*d.* a pair, 1*d.* a pair;" "Plaice alive, alive, cheap;" "Buy a pound crab, cheap;" "Pine-apples, ½*d.* a slice;" "Mussels a penny a quart;" "Oysters, a penny a lot;" "Salmon alive, 6*d.* a pound;" "Cod alive, 2*d.* a pound;" "Real Yarmouth bloaters, 2 a penny;" "New herrings alive, 16 a groat" (this is the loudest cry of any); "Penny a bunch turnips" (the same with greens, cabbages, &c.); "All new nuts, 1*d.* half-pint;" "Oranges, 2 a penny;" "All large and alive-O, new sprats, O, 1*d.* a plate;"

"Wi-ild Hampshire rabbits, 2 a shilling;" "Cherry ripe, 2*d.* a pound;" "Fine ripe plums, 1*d.* a pint;" "Ing-uns, a penny a quart;" "Eels, 3lbs. a shilling—large live eels 3lbs. a shilling."

The continual calling in the streets is very distressing to the voice. One man told me that it had broken his, and that very often while out he lost his voice altogether. "They seem to have no breath," the men say, "after calling for a little while." The repeated shouting brings on a hoarseness, which is one of the peculiar characteristics of hawkers in general. The costers mostly go out with a boy to cry their goods for them. If they have two or three hallooing together, it makes more noise than one, and the boys can shout better and louder than the men. The more noise they can make in a place the better they find their trade. Street-selling has been so bad lately that many have been obliged to have a drum for their bloaters, "to drum the fish off," as they call it.

In the second place, the costermongers, as I said before, have mostly their little bit of a "round;" that is, they go only to certain places; and if they don't sell their goods they "work back" the same way again. If they visit a respectable quarter, they confine themselves to the mews near the gentlemen's houses. They generally prefer the poorer neighbourhoods. They go down or through almost all the courts and alleys—and avoid the better kind of streets, unless with lobsters, rabbits, or onions. If they have anything inferior, they visit the low Irish districts—for the Irish people, they say, want only quantity, and care nothing about quality—*that* they don't study. But if they have anything they wish to make a price of, they seek out the mews, and try to get it off among the gentlemen's coachmen, for *they* will have what is good; or else they go among the residences of mechanics,—for their wives, they say, like good-living as well as the coachmen. Some costers, on the other hand, go chance rounds.

Concerning the busiest days of the week for the coster's trade, they say Wednesdays and Fridays are the best, because they are regular fish days. These two days are considered to be those on which the poorer classes generally run short of money. Wednesday night is called "draw night" among some mechanics and labourers—that is, they then get a portion of their wages in advance, and on Friday they run short as well as on the Wednesday, and have to make shift for their dinners. With the few halfpence they have left, they are glad to pick up anything cheap, and the street-fishmonger never refuses an offer. Besides, he can supply them with a cheaper dinner than any other person. In the season the poor generally dine upon herrings. The poorer classes live mostly on fish, and the "dropped" and "rough" fish is bought chiefly for the poor. The fish-huckster has no respect for persons, however; one assured me that if Prince Halbert was to stop him in the street to buy a pair of soles of him, he'd as soon sell him a "rough pair as any other man—indeed, I'd take in my own father," he added, "if he wanted to deal with me." Saturday is the worst day of all for fish, for then the poor people have scarcely anything at all to spend; Saturday night, however, the street-seller takes more money than at any other time in the week.

Of the Costermongers on their Country Rounds.

Some costermongers go what they term "country rounds," and they speak of their country expeditions as if they were summer excursions of mere pleasure. They are generally variations from a life growing monotonous. It was computed for me that at present three out of every twenty costermongers "take a turn in the country" at least once a year. Before the prevalence of railways twice as many of these men carried their speculations in fish, fruit, or vegetables to a country mart. Some did so well that they never returned to London. Two for instance, after a country round, settled at Salisbury; they are now regular shopkeepers, "and very respectable, too," was said to me, "for I believe they are both pretty tidy off for money; and are growing rich." The railway communication supplies the local-dealer with fish, vegetables, or any perishable article, with such rapidity and cheapness that the London itinerant's occupation in the towns and villages about the metropolis is now half gone.

In the following statement by a costermonger, the mode of life on a country round, is detailed with something of an assumption of metropolitan superiority.

"It was fine times, sir, ten year back, aye, and five year back, in the country, and it ain't so bad now, if a man's known. It depends on that now far more than it did, and on a man's knowing how to work a village. Why, I can tell you if it wasn't for such as me, there's many a man working on a farm would never taste such a nice thing as a fresh herring—never, sir. It's a feast at a poor country labourer's place, when he springs six-penn'orth of fresh herrings, some for supper, and some in salt for next day. I've taken a shillings'-worth to a farmer's door of a darkish night in a cold autumn, and they'd a warm and good dish for supper, and looked on me as a sort of friend. We carry them relishes from London; and they like London relishes, for we know how to set them off. I've fresh herringed a whole village near Guildford, first thing in the morning. I've drummed round Guildford too, and done well. I've waked up Kingston with herrings. I've been as welcome as anything to the soldiers in the barracks at Brentwood, and Romford, and Maidstone with my fresh herrings; for they're good customers. In two days I've made 2*l.* out of 10*s.* worth of fresh herrings, bought at Billingsgate. I always lodge at a public-house in the country; so do all of us, for the publicans are customers. We are well received at the public-houses; some of us go there for the handiness of the 'lush.' I've done

pretty well with red herrings in the country. A barrel holds (say) 800. We sell the barrels at 6*d.* a piece, and the old women fight after them. They pitch and tar them, to make water-barrels. More of us would settle in the country, only there's no life there."

The most frequented round is from Lambeth to Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond, Guildford, and Farnham. The costermonger is then "sold out," as he calls it,—he has disposed of his stock, and returns by the way which is most lightly tolled, no matter if the saving of 1*d.* or 2*d.* entail some miles extra travelling. "It cost me 15*d.* for tolls from Guildford for an empty cart and donkey," said a costermonger just up from the country.

Another round is to Croydon, Reigate, and the neighbourhoods; another to Edgeware, Kilburn, Watford, and Barnet; another to Maidstone; but the costermonger, if he starts trading at a distance, as he now does frequently, has his barrow and goods sent down by railway to such towns as Maidstone, so he saves the delay and cost of a donkey-cart. A "mate" sees to the transmission of the goods from London, the owner walking to Maidstone to be in readiness to "work" them immediately he receives them. "The railway's an ease and a saving," I was told; "I've got a stock sent for 2*s.*, and a donkey's keep would cost that for the time it would be in travelling. There's 5,000 of us, I think, might get a living in the country, if we stuck to it entirely."

If the country enterprise be a failure, the men sometimes abandon it in "a pet," sell their goods at any loss, and walk home, generally getting drunk as the first step to their return. Some have been known to pawn their barrow on the road for drink. This they call "doing queer."

In summer the costermongers carry plums, peas, new potatoes, cucumbers, and quantities of pickling vegetables, especially green walnuts, to the country. In winter their commodities are onions, fresh and red herrings, and sprats. "I don't know how it is," said one man to me, "but we sell ing-uns and all sorts of fruits and vegetables, cheaper than they can buy them where they're grown; and green walnuts, too, when you'd think they had only to be knocked off a tree."

Another costermonger told me that, in the country, he and his mates attended every dance or other amusement, "if it wasn't too respectable." Another said: "If I'm idle in the country on a Sunday, I never go to church. I never was in a church; I don't know why, for my silk handkerchief's worth more than one of their smock-frocks, and is quite as respectable."

Some costermongers confine their exertions to the fairs and races, and many of them are connected with the gipsies, who are said to be the usual receivers of the stolen handkerchiefs at such places.

Of the Earnings of Costermongers.

The earnings of the costermonger—the next subject of inquiry that, in due order, presents itself—vary as much as in more fashionable callings, for he is greatly dependent on the season, though he may be little affected by London being full or empty.

Concurrent testimony supplied me with the following estimate of their earnings. I cite the average earnings (apart from any charges or drawbacks), of the most staple commodities:

In January and February the costers generally sell fish. In these months the wealthier of the street fishmongers, or those who can always command "money to go to market," enjoy a kind of monopoly. The wintry season renders the supply of fish dearer and less regular, so that the poorer dealers cannot buy "at first hand," and sometimes cannot be supplied at all; while the others monopolise the fish, more or less, and will not sell it to any of the other street-dealers until a profit has been realised out of their own regular customers, and the demand partially satisfied. "Why, I've known one man sell 10*l.* worth of fish—most of it mackarel—at his stall in Whitecross-street," said a costermonger to me, "and all in one snowy day, in last January. It was very stormy at that time, and fish came in unregular, and he got a haul. I've known him sell 2*l.* worth in an hour, and once 2*l.* 10*s.* worth, for I then helped at his stall. If people has dinner parties they must have fish, and gentlemen's servants came to buy. The *average* earnings however of those that "go rounds" in these months are computed not to exceed 8*s.* a week; Monday and Saturday being days of little trade in fish.

"March is dreadful," said an itinerant fish seller to me; "we don't average, I'm satisfied, more nor 4*s.* a week. I've had my barrow idle for a week sometimes—at home every day, though it had to be paid for, all the same. At the latter end of March, if it's fine, it's 1*s.* a week better, because there's flower roots in—'all a-growing,' you know, sir. And that lasts until April, and we then make above 6*s.* a week. I've heard people say when I've cried 'all a-growing' on a fine-ish day, 'Aye, now summer's a-coming.' I wish you may get it, says I to myself; for I've studied the seasons."

In May the costermonger's profit is greater. He vends fresh fish—of which there is a greater supply and a greater demand, and the fine and often not very hot weather insures its freshness—and he sells dried herrings and "roots" (as they are called) such as wall-flowers and stocks. The average earnings then are from 10*s.* to 12*s.* a week.

In June, new potatoes, peas, and beans tempt the costermongers' customers, and then his earnings rise to 1*l.* a week. In addition to this 1*l.*, if the season allow, a costermonger at the end of the week, I was told by an experienced hand, "will earn an extra 10*s.* if he has anything of a round," "Why, I've cleared thirty shillings myself," he added, "on a Saturday night."

In July cherries are the principal article of traffic, and then the profit varies from 4*s.* to 8*s.* a day, weather permitting, or 30*s.* a week on a low average. On my inquiry if they did not sell fish in that month, the answer was, "No, sir; we pitch fish to the ——; we stick to cherries, strawberries, raspberries, and ripe currants and gooseberries. Potatoes is getting good and cheap then, and so is peas. Many a round's worth a crown every day of the week."

In August, the chief trading is in Orleans plums, green-gages, apples and pears, and in this month the earnings are from 5*s.* to 6*s.* a day. [I may here remark that the costermongers care little to deal in either vegetables or fish, "when the fruit's in," but they usually carry a certain supply of vegetables all the year round, for those customers who require them.]

In September apples are vended, and about 2*s.* 6*d.* a day made.

In October "the weather gets cold," I was told, "and the apples gets fewer, and the day's work's over at four; we then deals most in fish, such as soles; there's a good bit done in oysters, and we may make 1*s.* or 1*s.* 6*d.* a day, but it's uncertain."

In November fish and vegetables are the chief commodities, and then from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* a day is made; but in the latter part of the month an extra 6*d.* or 1*s.* a day may be cleared, as sprats come in and sell well when newly introduced.

In December the trade is still principally in fish, and 12*d.* or 18*d.* a day is the costermonger's earnings. Towards the close of the month he makes rather more, as he deals in new oranges and lemons, holly, ivy, &c., and in Christmas week he makes 3*s.* or 4*s.* a day.

These calculations give an average of about 14*s.* 6*d.* a week, when a man pursues his trade regularly. One man calculated it for me at 15*s.* average the year through—that is supposing, of course, that the larger earnings of the summer are carefully put by to eke out the winter's income. This, I need hardly say, is never done. Prudence is a virtue, which is comparatively unknown to the London costermongers. They have no knowledge of savings'-banks; and to expect that they themselves should keep their money by them untouched for months (even if they had the means of so doing) is simply to expect impossibilities—to look for the continued withstanding of temptation among a class who are unused to the least moral or prudential restraint.

Some costers, I am told, make upwards of 30*s.* a week all the year round; but allowing for cessations in the street-trade, through bad weather, neglect, ill-health, or casualty of any kind, and taking the more prosperous costers with the less successful—the English with the Irish—the men with the women—perhaps 10*s.* a week may be a fair average of the earnings of the entire body the year through.

These earnings, I am assured, were five years ago at least 25 per cent higher; some said they made half as much again: "I can't make it out how it is," said one man, "but I remember that I could go out and sell twelve bushel of fruit in a day, when sugar was dear, and now, when sugar's cheap, I can't sell three bushel on the same round. Perhaps we want thinning."

Such is the state of the working-classes; say all the costers, they have little or no money to spend. "Why, I can assure you," declared one of the parties from whom I obtained much important information, "there's my missis—she sits at the corner of the street with fruit. Eight years ago she would have taken 8*s.* out of that street on a Saturday, and last Saturday week she had one bushel of apples, which cost 1*s.* 6*d.* She was out from ten in the morning till ten at night, and all she took that day was 1*s.* 7½*d.* Go to whoever you will, you will hear much upon the same thing." Another told me, "The costers are often obliged to sell the things for what they gave for them. The people haven't got money to lay out with them—they tell us so; and if they are poor we must be poor too. If we can't get a profit upon what goods we buy with our stock-money, let it be our own or anybody's else, we are compelled to live upon it, and when that's broken into, we must either go to the workhouse or starve. If we go to the workhouse, they'll give us a piece of dry bread, and abuse us worse than dogs." Indeed, the whole course of my narratives shows how the costers generally—though far from universally—complain of the depressed state of their trade. The following statement was given to me by a man who, for twelve years, had been a stall-keeper in a street-market. It shows to what causes he (and I found others express similar opinions) attributes the depression:—

"I never knew things so bad as at present—never! I had six prime cod-fish, weighing 15lbs. to 20lbs. each, yesterday and the day before, and had to take two home with me last night, and lost money on the others—besides all my time, and trouble, and expense. I had 100 herrings, too, that cost 3*s.*—prime quality, and I only sold ten out of them in a whole day. I had two pads of soles, sir, and lost 4*s.*—that is one pad—by them. I took only 4*s.* the first day I laid in this stock, and only 2*s.* 6*d.* the next; I then had to sell for anything I could get, and throw some away. Yet, people say mine's a lazy, easy life. I think the fall off is owing to meat being so cheap, 'cause people buy that rather than my goods, as they think there's more stay in it. I'm afeard things will get worse too." (He then added by way of *sequitur*, though it is difficult to follow the reasoning,) "If this here is free-trade, then to h— with it, I say!"

Of the Capital and Income of the Costermongers.

I shall now pass, from the consideration of the individual earnings, to the income and capital of the entire body. Great pains have been taken to ensure exactitude on these points, and the following calculations are certainly below the mark. In order to be within due bounds, I will take the costermongers, exclusive of their wives and families, at 10,000, whereas it

would appear that their numbers are upwards of 11,000.

1,000 carts, at 3*l.* 3*s.* each. . . . . [Donkeys, and occasionally ponies, are harnessed to barrows.]	£3,150
5,000 barrows, at 2*l.* each . . .	10,000
1,500 donkeys, at 1*l.* 5*s.* each . . . [One intelligent man thought there were 2,000 donkeys, but I account that in excess.]	1,875
200 ponies, at 5*l.* each . . . . . [Some of these ponies, among the very first-class men, are worth 20*l.*: one was sold by a coster for 30*l.*]	1,000
1,700 sets of harness, at 5*s.* each . . [All calculated as worn and second-hand.]	425
4,000 baskets (or shallows), at 1*s.* each	200
3,500 stalls or standings, at 5*s.* each . [The stall and barrow men have generally baskets to be used when required.]	875
10,000 weights, scales, and measures, at 2*s.* 6*d.* each . . . . . [It is difficult to estimate this item with exactitude. Many averaged the value at 3*s.* 4*d.*]	1,250
Stock-money for 10,000 costers, at 10*s.* each	5,000
Total capital . . .	£24,135

Upwards of 24,000*l.*, then, at the most moderate computation, represents the value of the animals, vehicles, and stock, belonging to the costermongers in the streets of London.

The keep of the donkeys is not here mixed up with their value, and I have elsewhere spoken of it.

The whole course of my narrative shows that the bulk of the property in the street goods, and in the appliances for their sale, is in the hands of usurers as well as of the costers. The following account shows the sum paid yearly by the London costermongers for the hire, rent, or interest (I have heard each word applied) of their barrows, weights, baskets, and stock:

Hire of 3,000 barrows, at 1*s.* 3*d.* a week	£14,000
Hire of 600 weights, scales, &c., at 1*s.* 6*d.* a week for 2, and 6*d.* a week for 10 months	1,020
Hire of 100 baskets, &c., at 6*d.* a week	6,500
Interest on 2,500*l.* stock-money, at 125*l.* per week . . . . . [Calculating at 1*s.* interest weekly for 20*s.*]	6,500
Total paid for hire and interest	£22,550

Concerning the income of the entire body of costermongers in the metropolis, I estimate the earnings of the 10,000 costermongers, taking the average of the year, at 10*s.* weekly. My own observation, the result of my inquiries, confirmed by the opinion of some of the most intelligent of the costermongers, induce me to adopt this amount. It must be remembered, that if some costermongers do make 30*s.* a week through the year, others will not earn a fourth of it, and hence many of the complaints and sufferings of the class. Then there is the drawback in the sum paid for "hire," "interest," &c., by numbers of these people; so that it appears to me, that if we assume the income of the entire body—including Irish and English—to be 15*s.* a week per head in the summer, and 5*s.* a week each in the winter, as the two extremes, or a mean of 10*s.* a week all the year through, we shall not be far out either way. The aggregate earnings of the London costermongers, at this rate, are 5,000*l.* per week, or 260,000*l.* yearly. Reckoning that 30,000 individuals have to be supported out of this sum, it gives an average of 3*s.* 4*d.* a week per head.

But it is important to ascertain not only the earnings or aggregate amount of profit made by the London costermongers in the course of the year, but likewise their receipts, or aggregate amount of "takings," and thus to arrive at the gross sum of money annually laid out by the poorer classes of the metropolis in the matter of fish, fruit, and vegetables alone. Assuming that the average profits of the costermongers are at the rate of 25 per cent. (and this, I am satisfied, is a high estimate — for we should remember, that though cent. per cent. may be frequently obtained, still their "goods," being of a "perishable" nature, are as frequently lost or sold off at a "tremendous sacrifice"); assuming then, I say, that the *average* profits of the entire 10,000 individuals are 25 per cent on the cost-price of their stock, and that the aggregate amount of their profits or earnings is upwards of 260,000*l.*, it follows that the gross sum of money laid out with the London costers in the course of the twelvemonth is between 1,250,000*l.* and 1,500,000*l.* sterling—a sum so enormous as almost to make us believe that the tales of individual want are matters of pure fiction. Large, however, as the amount appears in the mass, still, if distributed among the families of the working men and the poorer class of Londoners, it will be found that it allows but the merest pittance per head per week for the consumption of those articles, which may be fairly said to constitute the staple commodities of the dinners and "desserts!" of the poor.

Of the Providence and Improvidence of Costermongers.

The costermongers, like all wandering tribes, have generally no foresight; only an exceptional few are provident—and these are mostly the more intelligent of the class—though some of the very ignorant do occasionally save. The providence of the more intelligent costermonger enables him in some few cases to become "a settled man," as I have before pointed out. He perhaps gets to be the proprietor of a coal-shed, with a greengrocery and potato business attached to it; and with the usual trade in oysters and ginger-beer. He may too, sometimes, have a sum of money in the savings'-bank, or he may invest it in the purchase of a lease of the premises he occupies, or expend it in furnishing the rooms of his house to let them out to single-men lodgers; or he may become an usurer, and lend out his money to his less provident brethren at 1040*l.* per cent. per annum; or he may purchase largely at the markets, and engage youths to sell his surplus stock at half profits.

The provident costermonger, who has thus "got on in the world," is rarely speculative. He can hardly be induced to become a member of a "building" or "freehold land" society, for instance. He has been accustomed to an almost *immediate* return for his outlays, and distrusts any remote or contingent profit. A regular costermonger—or any one who has been a regular costermonger, in whatever trade he may be afterwards engaged—generally dies intestate, let his property be what it may; but there is seldom any dispute as to the disposition of his effects: the widow takes possession of them, as a matter of course. If there be grown-up children, they may be estranged from home, and not trouble their heads about the matter; or, if not estranged, an amicable arrangement is usually come to. The costermongers' dread of all courts of law, or of anything connected with the law, is only second to their hatred of the police.

The more ignorant costermonger, on the other hand, if he be of a saving turn, and have no great passion for strong drink or gaming, is often afraid to resort to the simple modes of investment which I have mentioned. He will rather keep money in his pocket; for, though it does not fructify there, at least it is safe. But this is only when provided with a donkey or pony "what suits;" when not so provided, he will "suit himself" forthwith. If, however, he have saved a little money, and have a craving after gambling or amusements, he is sure at last to squander it that way. Such a man, without any craving for drink or gaming, will often continue to pay usuriously for the hire of his barrow, not suspecting that he is purchasing it over and over and over again, in his weekly payments. To suggest to him that he might place his money in a bank, is to satisfy him that he would be "had" in some way or other, as he believes all banks and public institutions to be connected with government, and the taxes, and the police. Were any one to advise a man of this class—and it must be remembered that I am speaking of the *ignorant* costers — to invest a spare 50*l.* (supposing he possessed it) in the "three per cents.," it would but provoke a snappish remark that he knew nothing about them, and would have nothing to do with them; for he would be satisfied that there was "some cheatery at the bottom." If he could be made to understand what is meant by 3*l.* per centum per annum, he would be sure to be indignant at the robbery of giving only 7½*d.* for the use of 1*l.* for a whole year!

I may state, in conclusion, that a costermonger of the class I have been describing, mostly objects to give change for a five-pound note; he will sooner give credit—when he knows "the party"—than change, even if he have it. If, however, he feels compelled, rather than offend a regular customer, to take the note, he will not rest until he has obtained sovereigns for it at a neighbouring innkeeper's, or from some tradesman to whom he is known. "Sovereigns," said one man, and not a very ignorant man, to me, "is something to lay hold on; a note ain't."

Moreover, should one of the more ignorant, having tastes for the beer-shop, &c., meet with "a great haul," or save 5*l.* by some continuous industry (which he will most likely set down as "luck"), he will spend it idly or recklessly in dissipation and amusement, regardless of the coming winter, whatever he may have suffered during the past. Nor, though they know, from the bitterest experience, that their earnings in the winter are not half those of the rest of the year, and that they are incapacitated from pursuing their trade in bad weather, do they endeavour to make the extra gains of their best time mitigate the want of the worst.

Of the Costermongers in Bad Weather and during the Cholera.

"Three wet days," I was told by a clergyman, who is now engaged in selling stenographic cards in the streets, "will bring the greater part of 30,000 street-people to the brink of starvation." This statement, terrible as it is, is not exaggerated. The average number of wet days every year in London is, according to the records of the Royal Society, 161—that is to say, rain falls in the metropolis more than three days in each week, and very nearly every other day throughout the year. How precarious a means of living then must street-selling be!

When a costermonger cannot pursue his out-door labour, he leaves it to the women and children to "work the public-houses," while he spends his time in the beer-shop. Here he gambles away his stock-money oft enough, "if the cards or the luck runs again him;" or else he has to dip into his stock-money to support himself and his family. He must then borrow fresh capital at any rate of interest to begin again, and he begins on a small scale. If it be in the cheap and busy seasons, he may buy a pad of soles for 2*s.* 6*d.*, and clear 5*s.* on them, and that "sets him a-going again, and then he gets his silk handkerchief out of pawn, and goes as usual to market."

The sufferings of the costermongers during the prevalence of the cholera in 1849, were intense. Their customers generally relinquished the consumption of potatoes, greens, fruit, and fish; indeed, of almost every article on the consumption of which the costermongers depend for his daily bread. Many were driven to apply to the parish; "many had relief and many hadn't," I was told. Two young men, within the knowledge of one of my informants, became professional thieves, after enduring much destitution. It does not appear that the costermongers manifested any personal dread of the visitation of the cholera, or thought that their lives were imperilled: "We weren't a bit afraid," said one of them, "and, perhaps, that

was the reason so few costers died of the cholera. I knew them all in Lambeth, I think, and I knew only one die of it, and he drank hard. Poor Waxy! he was a good fellow enough, and was well known in the Cut. But it was a terrible time for us, sir. It seems to me now like a shocking dream. Fish I could'nt sell a bit of; the people had a perfect dread of it—all but the poor Irish, and there was no making a crust out of them. *They* had no dread of fish, however; indeed, they reckon it a religious sort of living, living on fish,—but they *will* have it dirt cheap. We were in terrible distress all that time."

Of the Costermongers' Raffles.

In their relief of the sick, if relief it is to be called, the costermongers resort to an exciting means; something is raffled, and the proceeds given to the sufferer. This mode is common to other working-classes; it partakes of the excitement of gambling, and is encouraged by the landlords of the houses to which the people resort. The landlord displays the terms of the raffle in his bar a few days before the occurrence, which is always in the evening. The raffle is not confined to the sick, but when any one of the class is in distress—that is to say, without stock-money, and unable to borrow it, —a raffle for some article of his is called at a public-house in the neighbourhood. Cards are printed, and distributed among his mates. The article, let it be whatever it may—perhaps a handkerchief—is put up at 6*d.* a member, and from twenty to forty members are got, according as the man is liked by his "mates," or as he has assisted others similarly situated. The paper of every raffle is kept by the party calling it, and before he puts his name down to a raffle for another party, he refers to the list of subscribers to *his* raffle, in order to see if the person ever assisted him. Raffles are very "critical things, the pint pots fly about wonderful sometimes"—to use the words of one of my informants. The party calling the raffle is expected to take the chair, if he can write down the subscribers' names. One who had been chairman at one of these meetings assured me that on a particular occasion, having called a "general dealer" to order, the party very nearly split his head open with a quart measure. If the hucksters know that the person calling the raffle is "down," and that it is necessity that has made him call it, they will not allow the property put up to be thrown for. "If you was to go to the raffle to-night, sir," said one of them to me, many months ago, before I became known to the class, "they'd say to one another directly you come in, 'Who's this here swell? What's he want?' And they'd think you were a 'cad,' or else a spy, come from the police. But they'd treat you civilly, I'm sure. Some very likely would fancy you was a fast kind of a gentleman, come there for a lark. But you need have no fear, though the pint pots *does* fly about sometimes."

Of the Markets and Trade Rights of the Costerongers, and of the laws affecting them.

The next point of consideration is what are the legal regulations under which the several descriptions of hawkers and pedlars are allowed to pursue their occupations.

The laws concerning hawkers and pedlars, (50 Geo. III., c. 41, and 6 Geo. IV., c. 80,) treat of them as identical callings. The "hawker," however, is, strictly speaking, one who sells wares by *crying* them in the streets of towns, while the *pedlar* travels *on foot* through the country with his wares, not publicly proclaiming them, but visiting the houses on his way to solicit private custom. Until the commencement of the present century—before the increased facilities for conveyance—the pedlars were a numerous body in the country. The majority of them were Scotchmen and some amassed considerable wealth. Railways, however, have now reduced the numbers to insignificance.

Hawkers and pedlars are required to pay 4*l.* yearly for a license, and an additional 4*l.* for every horse or ass employed in the conveyance of wares. The hawking or exposing for sale of fish, fruit, or victuals, does not require a license; and further, it is lawful for any one "being the maker of any home manufacture," to expose it for sale in any fair or market, without a warrant. Neither does anything in either of the two acts in question prohibit "any tinker, cooper, glazier, plumber, harness-mender, or other person, from going about and carrying the materials proper to their business."

The right of the costermongers, then, to "hawk" their wares through the streets is plainly inferred by the above acts; that is to say, nothing in them extends to prohibit persons "going about," unlicensed, and at their own discretion, and selling fish, vegetables, fruit, or provisions generally.

The law acknowledges none of the street "markets." These congregatings are, indeed, in antagonism to the municipal laws of London, which provide that no market, or public place where provisions are sold, shall be held within seven miles of the city. The law, though it permits butchers and other provisionmongers to hire stalls and standings in the flesh and other markets, recognised by custom or usage, gives no such permission as to street-trading.

The right to sell provisions from stands in the streets of the metropolis, it appears, is merely permissive. The regulation observed is this: where the costermongers or other street-dealers have been in the habit of standing to sell their goods, they are not to be disturbed by the police unless on complaint of an adjacent shopkeeper or other inhabitant. If such a person shows that the costermonger, whose stand is near his premises, is by his improper conduct a nuisance, or that, by his clamour or any peculiarity in his mode of business, he causes a crowd to gather

and obstruct the thoroughfare, the policeman's duty is to remove him. If the complaint from the inhabitants against the street-sellers be at all general the policemen of the beat report it to the authorities, taking no steps until they receive instructions.

It is somewhat anomalous, however, that the law now recognises—inferentially it is true—the right of costermongers to carry about their goods for sale. Formerly the stands were sometimes tolerated, but not the itinerancy.

The enactments of the Common-council from the time of Elizabeth are stringent against itinerant traders of all descriptions, but stringent to no purpose of prevention. In 1607, a Common-council enactment sets forth, that "many People of badd and lewde Condicon daylie resorte from the most Parte of this Realme to the said Cyttie, Suburbes, and Places adjoininge, procuringe themselves small Habytacons, namely, one Chamber-Roome for a poore Forreynor and his Familye, in a small Cottage with some other as poore as himself in the Cyttie, Suburbes, or Places adjacente, to the great Increase and Pestringe of this Cyttie with poore People; many of them proovinge Shifters, lyvinge by Cozeninge, Stealinge, and Imbeazellinge of Mens Gooddes as Opportunitye may serve them, remoovinge from Place to Place accordinglye; many Tymes runninge away, forsakinge their Wives and Children, leavinge them to the Charge of the said Cyttie, and the Hospitalles of the same."

It was towards this class of men who, by their resort to the capital, recruited the numbers of the street-sellers and public porters and others that the jealousy of the Corporation was directed. The city shop-keepers, three centuries ago, complained vehemently and continuously of the injuries inflicted on their trade by itinerant dealers, complaints which led to bootless enactments. In Elizabeth's reign the Court of Common Council declared that the streets of the city should be used, as in ancient times, for the common highway, and not for the traffic of hucksters, pedlars, and hagglers. But this traffic increased, and in 1632 another enactment was accounted necessary. Oyster-wives, herb-wives, tripe-wives, and all such "unruly people," were threatened with the full pains and penalties of the outraged law if they persevered in the prosecution of their callings, which are stigmatised as "a way whereby to live a more easie life than by labour." In 1694 the street-sellers were menaced with the punishments then deemed suitable for arrant rogues and sturdy beggars—whipping; and that remedy to be applied alike to males and females!

The tenor of these Vagrant Laws not being generally known, I here transcribe them, as another proof of the "wisdom" and mercy of our "ancestors" in "the good old times!"

In the year 1530 the English Parliament enacted, that, while the impotent poor should receive licenses from the justices of the peace to beg within certain limits, all men and *women*, "being whole and mighty in body, and able to labour," if found vagrant and unable to give an account as to how they obtained their living, should be apprehended by the constables, tied to the tail of a cart *naked*, and beaten with whips through the nearest market-town, or hamlet, "till their bodies be bloody by reason of such whipping!" Five years afterwards it was added, that, if the individual had been once already whipped, he or she should not only be whipped again, but "also shall have the upper part of the gristle of his ear clean cut off, so as it may appear for a perpetual token hereafter that he hath been a contemner of the good order of the commonwealth." And finally, in 1562, it was directed that any beggar convicted of being a vagabond should, after being grievously whipped, be burnt through the gristle of the right ear "with a hot iron of the compass of an inch about," unless some person should agree to take him as a servant—of course without wages —for a year; then, that if he twice ran away from such master, he should be adjudged a felon; and that if he ran away a third time, he should "suffer pains of death and loss of land and goods as a felon, without benefit of clergy or sanctuary."

The only acts now in force which regulate the government of the streets, so to speak, are those best known as Michael Angelo Taylor's Act, and the 2 & 3 Vic., best known as the Police Act.

Of the Removals of Costermongers from the Streets.

Such are the laws concerning street trading: let us now see the effect of them.

Within these three months, or little more, there have been many removals of the costermongers from their customary standings in the streets. This, as I have stated, is never done, unless the shopkeepers represent to the police that the costermongers are an injury and a nuisance to them in the prosecution of their respective trades. The costermongers, for the most part, know nothing of the representation of the shopkeepers, so that perhaps the first intimation that they must "quit" comes from the policemen, who thus incur the full odium of the measure, the majority of the street people esteeming it a mere arbitrary act on the part of the members of the force.

The first removal, recently, took place in Leather-lane, Holborn, between three and four months back. It was effected in consequence of representations from the shopkeepers of the neighbourhood. But the removal was of a brief continuance. "Leather-lane," I was told, "looked like a desert compared to what it was. People that had lived there for years hardly knew their own street; and those that had complained, might twiddle their thumbs in their shops for want of something better to do."

The reason, or one reason, why the shopkeepers' trade is co-existent with that of the street-sellers was explained to me in this way

by a tradesman perfectly familiar with the subject. "The poorer women, the wives of mechanics or small tradesmen, who have to prepare dinners for their husbands, like, as they call it, 'to make one errand do.' If the wife buys fish or vegetables in the street, as is generally done, she will, at the same time, buy her piece of bacon or cheese at the cheesemonger's, her small quantity of tea and sugar at the grocer's, her fire-wood at the oilman's, or her pound of beef or liver at the butcher's. In all the street-markets there are plenty of such tradesmen, supplying necessaries not vended in the streets, and so one errand is sufficient to provide for the wants of the family. Such customers—that is, such as have been used to buy in the streets—will *not* be driven to buy at the shops. They can't be persuaded that they can buy as cheap at the shops; and besides they are apt to think shopkeepers are rich and street-sellers poor, and that they may as well encourage the poor. So if one street-market is abolished, they'll go to another, or buy of the itinerant costermongers, and they'll get their bits of groceries and the like at the shops in the neighbourhood of the other street-market, even if they have a walk for it; and thus everybody's injured by removing markets, except a few, and they are those at the nearest markets that's not disturbed."

In Leather-lane the shopkeepers speedily retrieved what many soon came to consider the false step (as regards their interests) which they had taken, and in a fortnight or so, they managed, by further representations to the police authorities, and by agreement with the street-sellers, that the street-market people should return. In little more than a fortnight from that time, Leather-lane, Holborn, resumed its wonted busy aspect.

In Lambeth the case at present is different. The men, women, and children, between two and three months back, were all driven by the police from their standings. These removals were made, I am assured, in consequence of representations to the police from the parishioners, not of Lambeth, but of the adjoining parish of Christchurch, Blackfriars-road, who described the market as an injury and a hindrance to their business. The costermongers, etc., were consequently driven from the spot.

A highly respectable tradesman in "the Cut" told me, that he and all his brother shopkeepers had found their receipts diminished a quarter, or an eighth at least, by the removal; and as in all populous neighbourhoods profits were small, this falling off was a very serious matter to them.

In "the Cut" and its immediate neighbourhood, are tradesmen who supply street-dealers with the articles they trade in,—such as cheap stationery, laces, children's shoes, braces, and toys. They, of course, have been seriously affected by the removal; but the pinch has fallen sorest upon the street-sellers themselves. These people depend a good deal one upon another, as they make mutual purchases; now, as they have neither stalls nor means, such a source of profit is abolished.

"It is hard on such as me," said a fruit-seller to me, "to be driven away, for nothing that I've done wrong as I knows of, and not let me make a living, as I've been brought up to. I can't get no work at any of the markets. I've tried Billingsgate and the Borough hard, but there is so many poor men trying for a crust, they're fit to knock a new-comer's head off, though if they did, it wouldn't be much matter. I had 9*s.* 6*d.* stock-money, and I sold the apples and a few pears I had for 3*s.* 9*d.*, and that 13*s.* 3*d.* I've been spinning out since I lost my pitch. But it's done now, and I haven't had two meals a day for a week and more—and them not to call meals—only bread and coffee, or bread and a drink of beer. I tried to get a round of customers, but all the rounds was full, and I'm a very bad walker, and a weak man too. My wife's gone to try the country—I don't know where she is now. I suppose I shall lose my lodging this week, and then I must see what 'the great house' will say to me. Perhaps they'll give me nothing, but take me in, and that's hard on a man as don't want to be a pauper."

Another man told me that he now paid 3*s.* a week for privilege to stand with two stalls on a space opposite the entrance into the National Baths, New Cut; and that he and his wife, who had stood for eleven years in the neighbourhood, without a complaint against them, could hardly get a crust.

One man, with a fruit-stall, assured me that nine months ago he would not have taken 20*l.* for his pitch, and now he was a "regular bankrupt." I asked a girl, who stood beside the kerb with her load in front strapped round her loins, whether her tray was heavy to carry. "After eight hours at it," she answered, "it swaggers me, like drink." The person whom I was with brought to me two girls, who, he informed me, had been forced to go upon the streets to gain a living. Their stall on the Saturday night used to have 4*l.* worth of stock; but trade had grown so bad since the New Police order, that after living on their wares, they had taken to prostitution for a living, rather than go to the "house." The ground in front of the shops has been bought up by the costermongers at any price. Many now give the tradesmen six shillings a week for a stand, and one man pays as much as eight for the right of pitching in front.

The applications for parochial relief, in consequence of these removals, have been fewer than was anticipated. In Lambeth parish, however, about thirty families have been relieved, at a cost of 50*l.* Strange to say, a quarter, or rather more, of the very applicants for relief had been furnished by the parish with money to start the trade, their expulsion from which had driven them to pauperism.

It consequently becomes a question for serious consideration, whether any particular body of householders should, for their own interest, convenience, or pleasure, have it in their power to deprive so many poor people of their only means of livelihood, and so either force the rate-payers to keep them as paupers, or else drive the women, who object to the imprisonment of the Union, to prostitution, and the men to theft—especially when the very occupation which they are not allowed to pursue, not only does no injury to the neighbourhood, but is, on the contrary, the means of attracting considerable custom to the shops in the locality, and has, moreover, been provided for them by the parish authorities as a means of enabling them to get a living for themselves.

Of the Tricks of Costermongers.

I shall now treat of the tricks of trade practised by the London costermongers. Of these the costers speak with as little reserve and as little shame as a fine gentleman of his peccadilloes. "I've boiled lots of oranges," chuckled one man, "and sold them to Irish hawkers, as wasn't wide awake, for stunning big uns. The boiling swells the oranges and so makes 'em look finer ones, but it spoils them, for it takes out the juice. People can't find that out though until it's too late. I boiled the oranges only a few minutes, and three or four dozen at a time." Oranges thus prepared will not keep, and any unfortunate Irishwoman, tricked as were my informant's customers, is astonished to find her stock of oranges turn dark-coloured and worthless in forty-eight hours. The fruit is "cooked" in this way for Saturday night and Sunday sale—times at which the demand is the briskest. Some prick the oranges and express the juice, which they sell to the British wine-makers.

Apples cannot be dealt with like oranges, but they are mixed. A cheap red-skinned fruit, known to costers as "gawfs," is rubbed hard, to look bright and feel soft, and is mixed with apples of a superior description. "Gawfs are sweet and sour at once," I was told, "and fit for nothing but mixing." Some foreign apples, from Holland and Belgium, were bought very cheap last March, at no more than 16*d.* a bushel, and on a fine morning as many as fifty boys might be seen rubbing these apples, in Hooper-street, Lambeth. "I've made a crown out of a bushel of 'em on a fine day," said one sharp youth. The larger apples are rubbed sometimes with a piece of woollen cloth, or on the coat skirt, if that appendage form part of the dress of the person applying the friction, but most frequently they are rolled in the palms of the hand. The smaller apples are thrown to and fro in a sack, a lad holding each end. "I wish I knew how the shopkeepers manages *their* fruit," said one youth to me; "I should like to be up to some of their moves; they do manage their things so plummy."

Cherries are capital for mixing, I was assured by practical men. They purchase three sieves of indifferent Dutch, and one sieve of good English cherries, spread the English fruit over the inferior quality, and sell them as the best. Strawberry pottles are often half cabbage leaves, a few tempting strawberries being displayed on the top of the pottle. "Topping up," said a fruit dealer to me, "is the principal thing, and we are perfectly justified in it. You ask any coster that knows the world, and he'll tell you that all the salesmen in the markets tops up. It's only making the best of it." Filberts they bake to make them look brown and ripe. Prunes they boil to give them a plumper and finer appearance. The latter trick, however, is not unusual in the shops.

The more honest costermongers will throw away fish when it is unfit for consumption, less scrupulous dealers, however, only throw away what is utterly unsaleable; but none of them fling away the dead eels, though their prejudice against such dead fish prevents their indulging in eel-pies. The dead eels are mixed with the living, often in the proportion of 20 lb. dead to 5 lb. alive, equal quantities of each being accounted very fair dealing. "And after all," said a street fish dealer to me, "I don't know why dead eels should be objected to; the aristocrats don't object to them. Nearly all fish is dead before it's cooked, and why not eels? Why not eat them when they're sweet, if they're ever so dead, just as you eat fresh herrings? I believe it's only among the poor and among our chaps, that there's this prejudice. Eels die quickly if they're exposed to the sun."

Herrings are made to look fresh and bright by candle-light, by the lights being so disposed "as to give them," I was told, "a good reflection. Why I can make them look splendid; quite a pictur. I can do the same with mackerel, but not so prime as herrings."

There are many other tricks of a similar kind detailed in the course of my narrative. We should remember, however, that *shopkeepers* are not immaculate in this respect.

OF THE STREET-SELLERS OF FISH.

Of the Kind and Quantities of Fish sold by the London Costermongers.

Having now given the reader a general view of the numbers, characters, habits, tastes, amusements, language, opinions, earnings, and vicissitudes of the London costermongers,—having described their usual style of dress, diet, homes, conveyances, and street-markets,—having explained where their donkeys are bought, or the terms on which they borrow them, their barrows, their stock-money, and occasionally their stock itself,—having shown their ordinary mode of dealing, either in person or by deputy,