

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 nei-

ther 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 know 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 9s. 6d. stock-money, and I sold the apples and a few pears I had for 3s. 9d., and that 13s. 3d. 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 3s. 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 20l. 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 4l. 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 50l. 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 16d. 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 de-

scribed 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,

either at half-profits or by means of boys,—where they go and how they manage on their rounds in town and in the country,—what are the laws affecting them, as well as the operation of those laws upon the rest of the community,—having done all this by way of giving the reader a general knowledge of the street-sellers of fish, fruit, and vegetables,—I now proceed to treat more particularly of each of these classes *seriatim*. Beginning with the street-fishmongers, I shall describe, in due order, the season when, the market where, and the classes of people by whom, the wet-fish, the dry-fish, and the shell-fish are severally sold and purchased in the London streets, together with all other concomitant circumstances.

The facilities of railway conveyance, by means of which fish can be sent from the coast to the capital with much greater rapidity, and therefore be received much fresher than was formerly the case, have brought large supplies to London from places that before contributed no quantity to the market, and so induced, as I heard in all quarters at Billingsgate, an extraordinary lowness of price in this species of diet. This cheap food, through the agency of the costermongers, is conveyed to every poor man's door, both in the thickly-crowded streets where the poor reside—a family at least in a room—in the vicinity of Drury-lane and of White-chapel, in Westminster, Bethnal-green, and St. Giles's, and through the long miles of the suburbs. For all low-priced fish the poor are the costermongers' best customers, and a fish diet seems becoming almost as common among the ill-paid classes of London, as is a potato diet among the peasants of Ireland. Indeed, now, the fish season of the poor never, or rarely, knows an interruption. If fresh herrings are not in the market, there are sprats; and if not sprats, there are soles, or whittings, or mackarel, or plaice.

The rooms of the very neediest of our needy metropolitan population, always smell of fish; most frequently of herrings. So much so, indeed, that to those who, like myself, have been in the habit of visiting their dwellings, the smell of herrings, even in comfortable homes, savours from association, so strongly of squalor and wretchedness, as to be often most oppressive. The volatile oil of the fish seems to hang about the walls and beams of the rooms for ever. Those who have experienced the smell of fish only in a well-ordered kitchen, can form no adequate notion of this stench, in perhaps a dilapidated and ill-drained house, and in a rarely-cleaned room; and I have many a time heard both husband and wife—one couple especially, who were "sweating" for a gorgeous clothes' emporium—say that they had not time to be clean.

The costermonger supplies the poor with every kind of fish, for he deals, usually, in every kind when it is cheap. Some confine

their dealings to such things as shrimps, or periwinkles, but the adhering to one particular article is the exception and not the rule; while shrimps, lobsters, &c., are rarely bought by the very poor. Of the entire quantity of fish sent to Billingsgate-market, the costermongers, stationary and itinerant, may be said to sell one-third, taking one kind with another.

The fish sent to London is known to Billingsgate salesmen as "red" and "white" fish. The red fish is, as regards the metropolitan mart, confined to the salmon. The other descriptions are known as "white." The costermongers classify the fish they vend as "wet" and "dry." All fresh fish is "wet;" all cured or salted fish, "dry." The fish which is sold "pickled," is known by that appellation, but its street sale is insignificant. The principal fish-staple, so to speak of the street-fishmonger, is soles, which are in supply all, or nearly all, the year. The next are herrings, mackarel, whittings, Dutch eels, and plaice. The trade in plaice and sprats is almost entirely in the hands of the costermongers; their sale of shrimps is nearer a half than a third of the entire quantity sent to Billingsgate; but their purchase of cod, or of the best lobsters, or crabs, is far below a third. The costermonger rarely buys turbot, or brill, or even salmon, unless he can retail it at 6d. the pound. When it is at that price, a street salmon-seller told me that the eagerness to buy it was extreme. He had known persons, who appeared to him to be very poor, buy a pound of salmon, "just for a treat once in a way." His best, or rather readiest customers—for at 6d. a pound all classes of the community may be said to be his purchasers—were the shopkeepers of the busier parts, and the occupants of the smaller private houses of the suburbs. During the past year salmon was scarce and dear, and the costermongers bought, comparatively, none of it. In a tolerably cheap season they do not sell more than from a fifteenth to a twentieth of the quantity received at Billingsgate.

In order to be able to arrive at the quantity or weight of the several kinds of fish sold by the costermongers in the streets of London, it is necessary that we should know the entire amount sent to Billingsgate-market, for it is only by estimating the proportion which the street-sale bears to the whole, that we can attain even an approximation to the truth. The following Table gives the results of certain information collected by myself for the first time, I believe, in this country. The facts, as well as the estimated proportions of each kind of fish sold by the costermongers, have been furnished me by the most eminent of the Billingsgate salesmen—gentlemen to whom I am under many obligations for their kindness, consideration, and assistance, at all times and seasons.



THE LONDON COFFEE-STALL.

[From a Photograph.]

TABLE. SHOWING THE QUANTITY, WEIGHT, OR MEASURE OF THE FOLLOWING KINDS OF FISH SOLD IN BILLINGSGATE MARKET IN THE COURSE OF THE YEAR:

Description of Fish.	Number of Fish.	Weight or Measure of Fish.	Proportion sold by Costermongers.
WET FISH.			
		lbs.	
Salmon and Salmon Trout (29,000 boxes, 14 fish per box)	406,000	3,480,000	One-twentieth.
Live Cod (averaging 10 lbs. each)	400,000	4,000,000	One-fourth.
Soles (averaging $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. each)	97,520,000	26,880,000	One-fifteenth.
Whiting (averaging 6 oz. each)	17,920,000	6,720,000	One-fourth.
Haddock (averaging 2 lbs. each)	2,470,000	5,040,000	One-tenth.
Plaice (averaging 1 lb. each)	33,600,000	33,600,000	Seven-eighths.
Mackarel (averaging 1 lb. each)	23,520,000	23,520,000	Two-thirds.
Fresh Herrings (250,000 bars., 700 fish per bar.)	175,000,000	42,000,000	One-half.
" (in bulk)	1,050,000,000	252,000,000	Three-fourths.
Sprats		4,000,000	Three-fourths.
Eels from Holland	9,797,760	1,505,280	One-fourth.
" England and Ireland } (6 fish per 1 lb.)			
Flounders (7,200 quarterns, 36 fish per quartern)	259,200	48,200	All.
Dabs (7,500 quarterns, 36 fish per quartern) . .	270,000	48,750	All.
DRY FISH.			
Barrelled Cod (15,000 barrels, 50 fish per barrel)	750,000	4,200,000	One-eighth.
Dried Salt Cod (5 lbs. each)	1,600,000	8,000,000	One-tenth.
Smoked Haddock (65,000 bars., 300 fish per bar.)	19,500,000	10,920,000	One-eighth.
Bloaters (265,000 baskets, 150 fish per basket) .	147,000,000	10,600,000	One-fourth.
Red Herrings (100,000 bars., 500 fish per bar.) .	50,000,000	14,000,000	One-half.
Dried Sprats (9,600 large bundles, 30 fish per bundle)*	288,000	96,000	None.
SHELL FISH.			
Oysters (300,935 bars., 1,600 fish per bar.) . .	495,896,000		One-fourth.
Lobsters (averaging 1 lb. each fish)	1,200,000	1,200,000	One-twentieth.
Crabs (averaging 1 lb. each fish)	600,000	600,000	One-twelfth.
Shrimps ($3\frac{1}{4}$ to the pint)	498,428,648	192,295 gals.	One-half.
Whelks (224 to the $\frac{1}{2}$ bus.)	4,943,200	24,300 $\frac{1}{2}$ bus.†	All.
Mussels (1000 to the $\frac{1}{2}$ bus.)	50,400,000	50,400 "	Two-thirds.
Cockles (2,000 to the $\frac{1}{2}$ bus.)	67,392,000	32,400 "	Three-fourths.
Periwinkles (4,000 to the $\frac{1}{2}$ bus.)	304,000,000	76,000 "	Three-fourths.

* Costermongers dry their own sprats.

† The half-bushel measure at Billingsgate is double quantity—or, more correctly, a bushel.

OF THE COSTERMONGERS' FISH SEASON.

THE season for the street-fishmongers begins about October and ends in May.

In October, or a month or two earlier, may-be, they generally deal in fresh herrings, the supply of which lasts up to about the middle or end of November. This is about the best season. The herrings are sold to the poor, upon an average, at twelve a groat, or from 3s. to 4s. the hundred. After or during November, the sprat and plaice season begins. The regular street-fishmonger, however, seldom deals in sprats. He "works" these only when there is no other fish to be got. He generally considers this trade beneath him, and more fit for women than men. Those costers who do sell them: dispose of them now by weight at the rate of 1d. to 2d. the pound—a bushel averaging from 40 to 50 pounds. The plaice season

continues to the first or second week in May. During May the casualty season is on, and there is little fish certain from that time till salmon comes in, and this is about the end of the month. The salmon season lasts till about the middle of July. The selling of salmon is a bad trade in the poor districts, but a very good one in the better streets or the suburbs. At this work the street-fishmonger will sometimes earn on a fine day from 5s. to 12s. The losses, however, are very great in this article if the weather prove bad. If kept at all "over" it loses its colour, and turns to a pale red, which is seen immediately the knife goes into the fish. While I was obtaining this information some months back, a man went past the window of the house in which I was seated, with a barrow drawn by a donkey. He was crying, "Fresh cod, oh! 1½d. a pound, cod alive, oh!" My informant called me to the

window, saying, "Now, here is what we call rough cod." He told me it was three days old. He thought it was eatable *then*, he said. The eyes were dull and heavy and sunken, and the limp tails of the fish dangled over the ends of the barrow. He said it was a hanging market that day—that is to say, things had been dear, and the costers couldn't pay the price for them. He should fancy, he told me, the man had paid for the fish from 9d. to 1s. each, which was at the rate of 1d. per pound. He was calling them at 1½d. He would not take less than this until he had "got his own money in;" and then, probably, if he had one or two of the fish left, he would put up with 1d. per pound. The weight he was "working" was 12 oz. to the pound. My informant assured me he knew this, because he had borrowed *his* 12 oz. pound weight that morning. This, with the draught of 2 oz. in the weighing-machine, and the ounce gained by placing the fish at the end of the pan, would bring the actual weight given to 9 oz. per pound, and probably, he said the man had even a lighter pound weight in his barrow ready for a "scaly" customer.

After the street-fishmonger has done his morning's work, he sometimes goes out with his tub of pickled salmon on a barrow or stall, and sells it in saucers at 1d. each, or by the piece. This he calls as "fine Newcastle salmon." There is generally a great sale for this at the races; and if country-people begin with a penny-worth they end with a shilling-worth—a penny-worth, the costers say, makes a fool of the mouth. If they have any on hand, and a little stale, at the end of the week, they sell it at the public-houses to the "Lushingtons," and to them, with plenty of vinegar, it goes down sweet. It is generally bought for 7s. a kit, a little bit "pricked;" but, if good, the price is from 12s. to 18s. "We're in no ways particular to that," said one candid coster to me. "We don't have the eating on it ourselves, and people a'n't always got their taste, especially when they have been drinking, and we sell a great deal to parties in that way. We think it no sin to cheat 'em of 1d. while the publicans takes 1s."

Towards the middle of June the street-fishmonger looks for mackerel, and he is generally employed in selling this fish up to the end of July. After July the Billingsgate season is said to be finished. From this time to the middle of October, when the herrings return, he is mostly engaged selling dried haddocks and red herrings, and other "cas'alty fish that may come across him." Many of the street-fishmongers object to deal in periwinkles, or stewed mussels, or boiled whelks, because, being accustomed to take their money in sixpences at a time, they do not like, they say, to traffic in halfpenny-worths. The dealers in these articles are generally looked upon as an inferior class.

There are, during the day, two periods for the sale of street-fish—the one (the morning trade) beginning about ten, and lasting till one in the day—and the other (the night trade) lasting from six in the evening up to ten at night. What fish

is left in the forenoon is generally disposed of cheap at night. That sold at the latter time is generally used by the working-class for supper, or kept by them with a little salt in a cool place for the next day's dinner, if it will last as long. Several articles are sold by the street-fishmonger chiefly by night. These are oysters, lobsters, pickled salmon, stewed mussels, and the like. The reason why the latter articles sell better by night is, my informant says, "Because people are lofty-minded, and don't like to be seen eating on 'em in the street in the day-time." Shrimps and winkles are the staple commodities of the afternoon trade, which lasts from three to half-past five in the evening. These articles are generally bought by the working-classes for their tea.

BILLINGSGATE.

To see this market in its busiest costermonger time, the visitor should be there about seven o'clock on a Friday morning. The market opens at four, but for the first two or three hours, it is attended solely by the regular fishmongers and "bummarees" who have the pick of the best there. As soon as these are gone, the costers' sale begins.

Many of the costers that usually deal in vegetables, buy a little fish on the Friday. It is the fast day of the Irish, and the mechanics' wives run short of money at the end of the week, and so make up their dinners with fish; for this reason the attendance of costers' barrows at Billingsgate on a Friday morning is always very great. As soon as you reach the Monument you see a line of them, with one or two tall fishmonger's carts breaking the uniformity, and the din of the cries and commotion of the distant market, begins to break on the ear like the buzzing of a hornet's nest. The whole neighbourhood is covered with the hand-barrows, some laden with baskets, others with sacks. Yet as you walk along, a fresh line of costers' barrows are creeping in or being backed into almost impossible openings; until at every turning nothing but donkeys and rails are to be seen. The morning air is filled with a kind of seaweedy odour, reminding one of the sea-shore; and on entering the market, the smell of fish, of whelks, red herrings, sprats, and a hundred others, is almost overpowering.

The wooden barn-looking square where the fish is sold, is soon after six o'clock crowded with shiny cord jackets and greasy caps. Everybody comes to Billingsgate in his worst clothes, and no one knows the length of time a coat can be worn until they have been to a fish sale. Through the bright opening at the end are seen the tangled rigging of the oyster-boats and the red worsted caps of the sailors. Over the hum of voices is heard the shouts of the salesmen, who, with their white aprons, peering above the heads of the mob, stand on their tables, roaring out their prices.

All are bawling together—salesmen and hucksters of provisions, capes, hardware, and new-

pers—till the place is a perfect Babel of competition. "Ha-a-ansome cod! best in the market! All alive! alive! alive O!" "Ye-o-o! Ye-o-o! here's your fine Yarmouth bloaters! Who's the buyer?" "Here you are, governor, splendid whiting! some of the right sort!" "Turbot! turbot! all alive! turbot!" "Glass of nice peppermint! this cold morning a ha'penny a glass!" "Here you are at your own price! Fine soles, O!" "Oy! oy! oy! Now's your time! fine grizzling sprats! all large and no small!" "Hullo! hullo here! beautiful lobsters! good and cheap! fine cock crabs all alive O!" "Five brill and one turbot—have that lot for a pound! Come and look at 'em, governor; you wont see a better sample in the market." "Here, this way! this way for splendid skate! skate O! skate O!" "Had—had—had—had—haddick! all fresh and good!" "Currant and meat puddings! a ha'penny each!" "Now, you mussel-buyers, come along! come along! come along! now's your time for fine fat mussels!" "Here's food for the belly, and clothes for the back, but I sell food for the mind" (shouts the news-vender). "Here's smelt O!" "Here ye are, fine Finney haddick!" "Hot soup! nice peas-soup! a-all hot! hot!" "Ahoy! ahoy here! live plaice! all alive O!" "Now or never! whelk! whelk! whelk!" "Who'll buy brill O! brill O!" "Capes! water-proof capes! sure to keep the wet out! a shilling a piece!" "Eels O! eels O! Alive! alive O!" "Fine flounders, a shilling a lot! Who'll have this prime lot of flounders?" "Shrimps! shrimps! fine shrimps!" "Wink! wink! wink!" "Hi! hi-i! here you are, just eight eels left, only eight!" "O ho! O ho! this way—this way—this way! Fish alive! alive! alive O!"

In the darkness of the shed, the white bellies of the turbot, strung up bow-fashion, shine like mother-of-pearl, while, the lobsters, lying upon them, look intensely scarlet, from the contrast. Brown baskets piled up on one another, and with the herring-scales glittering like spangles all over them, block up the narrow paths. Men in coarse canvas jackets, and bending under huge hampers, push past, shouting "Move on! move on, there!" and women, with the long limp tails of cod-fish dangling from their aprons, elbow their way through the crowd. Round the auction-tables stand groups of men turning over the piles of soles, and throwing them down till they slide about in their slime; some are smelling them, while others are counting the lots. "There, that lot of soles are worth your money," cries the salesman to one of the crowd as he moves on leisurely; "none better in the market. You shall have 'em for a pound and half-a-crown." "Oh!" shouts another salesman, "it's no use to bother him—he's no go." Presently a tall porter, with a black oyster-bag, staggers past, trembling under the weight of his load, his back and shoulders wet with the drippings from the sack. "Shove on one side!" he mutters from between his clenched teeth, as he forces

his way through the mob. Here is a tray of reddish-brown shrimps piled up high, and the owner busy sifting his little fish into another stand, while a doubtful customer stands in front, tasting the flavour of the stock and consulting with his companion in speculation. Little girls carrying matting-bags, that they have brought from Spitalfields, come up, and ask you in a begging voice to buy their baskets; and women with bundles of twigs for stringing herrings, cry out, "Half-penny a bunch!" from all sides. Then there are blue-black piles of small live lobsters, moving about their bound-up claws and long "feelers," one of them occasionally being taken up by a looker-on, and dashed down again, like a stone. Everywhere every one is asking, "What's the price, master?" while shouts of laughter from round the stalls of the salesmen, bantering each other, burst out, occasionally, over the murmuring noise of the crowd. The transparent smelts on the marble-slabs, and the bright herrings, with the lump of transparent ice magnifying their eyes like a lens, are seldom looked at until the market is over, though the hampers and piles of huge maids, dropping slime from the counter, are eagerly examined and bartered for.

One side of the market is set apart for whelks. There they stand in sackfuls, with the yellow shells piled up at the mouth, and one or two of the fish, curling out like corkscrews, placed as a sample. The coster slips one of these from its shell, examines it, pushes it back again, and then passes away, to look well round the market. In one part the stones are covered with herring-barrels, packed closely with dried fish, and yellow heaps of stiff haddock rise up on all sides. Here a man walks up with his knot on his shoulder, waiting for a job to carry fish to the trucks. Boys in ragged clothes, who have slept during the night under a railway-arch, clamour for employment; while the heads of those returning from the oyster-boats, rise slowly up the stone sides of the wharf.

The costermongers have nicknamed the long row of oyster boats moored close alongside the wharf "Oyster-street." On looking down the line of tangled ropes and masts, it seems as though the little boats would sink with the crowds of men and women thronged together on their decks. It is as busy a scene as one can well behold. Each boat has its black sign-board, and salesman in his white apron walking up and down "his shop," and on each deck is a bright pewter pot and tin-covered plate, the remains of the salesman's breakfast. "Who's for Baker's?" "Who's for Archer's?" "Who'll have Alston's?" shout the oyster-merchants, and the red cap of the man in the hold bobs up and down as he rattles the shells about with his spade. These holds are filled with oysters—a gray mass of sand and shell—on which is a bushel measure well piled up in the centre, while some of them have a blue muddy heap of mussels

divided off from the "natives." The sailors in their striped guernseys sit on the boat sides smoking their morning's pipe, allowing themselves to be tempted by the Jew boys with cloth caps, old shoes, and silk handkerchiefs. Lads with bundles of whips skip from one boat to another, and, seedy-looking mechanics, with handfuls of tin fancy goods, hover about the salesmen, who are the principal supporters of this trade. The place has somewhat the appearance of a little Holywell-street; for the old clothes' trade is entirely in the hands of the Jew boys, and coats, caps, hats, umbrellas, and old shoes, are shouted out in a rich nasal twang on all sides.

Passing by a man and his wife who were breakfasting on the stone coping, I went to the shore where the watermen ply for passengers to the eel boats. Here I found a crowd of punts, half filled with flounders, and small closely-packed baskets of them ranged along the seats. The lads, who act as jacks-in-the-water, were busy feeling in the mud for the fish that had fallen over board, little caring for the water that dashed over their red swollen feet. Presently a boat, piled up with baskets, shot in, grazing the bottom, and men and women, blue with the cold morning air, stepped out.

The Dutch built eel-boats, with their bulging polished oak sides, were half-hidden in the river mist. They were surrounded by skiffs, that ply from the Surrey and Middlesex shores, and wait whilst the fares buy their fish. The holds of these eel-boats are fitted up with long tanks of muddy water, and the heads of the eels are seen breathing on the surface—a thick brown bubble rising slowly, and floating to the sides. Wooden sabots and large porcelain pipes are ranged round the ledges, and men in tall fur caps with high check bones, and rings in their ears, walk the decks. At the stern of one boat was moored a coffin-shaped barge pierced with holes, and hanging in the water were baskets, shaped like olive jars—both to keep the stock of fish alive and fresh. In the centre of the boat stood the scales,—a tall heavy apparatus, one side fitted up with the conical net-bag to hold the eels, and the other with the weights, and pieces of stone to make up for the extra draught of the water hanging about the fish. When a skiff load of purchasers arrives, the master Dutchman takes his hands from his pockets, lays down his pipe, and seizing a sort of long-handled landing-net scoops from the tank a lot of eels. The purchasers examine them, and try to beat down the price. "You calls them eels do you?" said a man with his bag ready opened. "Yeas," answered the Dutchman without any show of indignation. "Certainly, there is a few among them," continued the customer; and after a little more of this kind of chaffering the bargain is struck.

The visitors to the eel-boats were of all grades; one was a neatly-dressed girl to whom the costers showed the utmost gallantry, calling her "my dear," and helping her up the shining sides of the boat; and many of the men had on

their blue serge apron, but these were only where the prices were high. The greatest crowd of customers is in the heavy barge alongside of the Dutch craft. Here a stout sailor in his red woollen shirt, and canvass petticoat, is surrounded by the most miserable and poorest of fish purchasers—the men with their crushed hats, tattered coats, and unshorn chins, and the women with their pads on their bonnets, and brown ragged gowns blowing in the breeze. One, in an old table-cover shawl, was beating her palms together before the unmoved Dutchman, fighting for an abatement, and showing her stock of halfpence. Others were seated round the barge, sorting their lots in their shallows, and sanding the fish till they were quite yellow. Others, again, were crowding round the scales narrowly watching the balance, and then begging for a few dead eels to make up any doubtful weight.

As you walk back from the shore to the market, you see small groups of men and women dividing the lot of fish they have bought together. At one basket, a coster, as you pass, calls to you, and says, "Here, master, just put these three halfpence on these three cod, and obleege a party." The coins are placed, and each one takes the fish his coin is on; and so there is no dispute.

At length nearly all the busy marketing has finished, and the costers hurry to breakfast. At one house, known as "Rodway's Coffee-house," a man can have a meal for 1*d.*—a mug of hot coffee and two slices of bread and butter, while for two-pence what is elegantly termed "a tightener," that is to say, a most plentiful repast, may be obtained. Here was a large room, with tables all round, and so extremely silent, that the smacking of lips and sipping of coffee were alone heard. Upwards of 1,500 men breakfast here in the course of the morning, many of them taking as many as three such meals. On the counter was a pile of white mugs, and the bright tin cans stood beside the blazing fire, whilst Rodway himself sat at a kind of dresser, cutting up and buttering the bread, with marvellous rapidity. It was a clean, orderly, and excellent establishment, kept by a man, I was told, who had risen from a saloop stall.

Opposite to the Coal Exchange were ranged the stalls and barrows with the street eatables, and the crowds round each showed the effects of the sharp morning air. One—a Jew's—had hot-pies with lids that rose as the gravy was poured in from an oil can; another carried a stone jar of peppermint-water, at $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.* a glass; and the pea-soup stand was hemmed in by boys and men blowing the steam from their cups. Beside these were Jews with cloth caps and knives, and square yellow cakes; one old man, in a corner, stood examining a thread-bare scarf that a cravatless coster had handed to him. Coffee-stalls were in great plenty; and men left their barrows to run up and have "an oyster," or "an 'ot heel." One man here makes his living by selling sheets of old newspapers, at $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.* each,

for the costers to dress their trays with. Though seemingly rather out of place, there was a Mosaic jewellery stand; old umbrellas, too, were far from scarce; and one had brought a horse-hair stool for sale.

Everybody was soon busy laying out their stock. The wrinkled dull-eyed cod was freshened up, the red-headed gurnet placed in rows, the eels prevented from writhing over the basket sides by cabbage-leaves, and the soles paired off like gloves. Then the little trucks began to leave, crawling, as it were, between the legs of the horses in the vans crowding Thames-street, and plunging in between huge waggons, but still appearing safely on the other side; and the 4,000 costers who visit Billingsgate on the Friday morning were shortly scattered throughout the metropolis.

OF THE FORESTALLING OF MARKETS AND THE BILLINGSGATE BUMMAREES.

"FORESTALLING," writes Adam Smith, "is the buying or contracting for any cattle, provisions, or merchandize, on its way to the market (or at market), or dissuading persons from buying their goods there, or persuading them to raise the price, or spreading any false rumour with intent to enhance the value of any article. In the remoter periods of our history several statutes were passed, prohibiting forestalling under severe penalties; but as more enlarged views upon such subjects began to prevail, their impolicy became obvious, and they were consequently repealed in 1772. But forestalling is still punishable by fine and imprisonment; though it be doubtful whether any jury would now convict an individual accused of such practices."

In Billingsgate the "forestallers" or middlemen are known as "bummarees," who, as regards means, are a far superior class to the "hagglers" (the forestallers of the "green" markets). The bummaree is the jobber or speculator on the fish-exchange. Perhaps on every busy morning 100 men buy a quantity of fish, which they account likely to be remunerative, and retail it, or dispose of it in lots to the fishmongers or costermongers. Few if any of these dealers, however, are merely bummarees. A salesman, if he have disposed of the fish consigned to himself, will turn bummaree if any bargain tempt him. Or a fishmonger may purchase twice the quantity he requires for his own trade, in order to procure a cheaper stock, and "bummaree" what he does not require. These speculations in fish are far more hazardous than those in fruit or vegetables, for later in the day a large consignment by railway may reach Billingsgate, and, being thrown upon the market, may reduce the price one half. In the vegetable and fruit markets there is but one arrival. The costermongers are among the best customers of the bummarees.

I asked several parties as to the origin of the word "bummaree," and how long it had been in use. "Why, bless your soul, sir,"

said one Billingsgate labourer, "there always was bummarees, and there always will be; just as Jack there is a 'rough,' and I'm a blessed 'bobber.'" One man assured me it was a French name; another that it was Dutch. A fishmonger, to whom I was indebted for information, told me he thought that the bummaree was originally a bum-boat man, who purchased of the wind-bound smacks at Gravesend or the Nore, and sent the fish up rapidly to the market by land.

I may add, as an instance of the probable gains of the forestallers, in the olden time, that a tradesman whose family had been long connected with Billingsgate, showed me by his predecessors' books and memoranda, that in the depth of winter, when the Thames was perhaps choked with ice, and no supply of fish "got up" to London, any, that might, by management, reach Billingsgate used to command exorbitant prices. To speak only of the present century: March 11th, 1802, a cod fish (8 lbs.) was bought by Messrs. Phillips and Robertson, fishmongers, Bond-street, for 1*l.* 8*s.* February, 1809, a salmon (19 lbs.) was bought by Mr. Phillips at a guinea a pound, 19*l.* 19*s.* for the fish! March 24th, 1824, three lobsters were sold for a guinea each.

The "haggler," I may here observe, is the bummaree or forestaller or middleman of the green markets; as far as the costermonger's trade is concerned, he deals in fruit and vegetables. Of these traffickers there are fully 200 in Covent-garden-market; from 60 to 70 in Farringdon; from 40 to 50 in the Borough; from 50 to 60 in Spitalfields; and none in Portman-market; such being the only wholesale green-markets for the purposes of the costermongers. The haggler is a middleman who makes his purchases of the growers when the day is somewhat advanced, and the whole produce conveyed to the market has not been disposed of. The grower will then, rather than be detained in town, sell the whole lot remaining in his cart or wagon to a haggler, who re-sells it to the costers, or to any other customer, from a stand which he hires by the day. The costermongers who are the most provident, and either have means or club their resources for a large purchase, often buy early in the morning, and so have the advantage of anticipating their fellows in the street-trade, with the day before them. Those who buy later are the customers of the hagglers, and are street-sellers, whose means do not command an extensive purchase, or who do not care to venture upon one unless it be very cheap. These men speak very bitterly of the hagglers, calling them "cracked-up shopkeepers" and "scurfs," and declaring that but for them the growers must remain, and sell off their produce cheap to the costermongers.

A species of forestalling is now not uncommon, and is on the increase among the costermongers themselves. There are four men, having the command of money, who attend the markets and buy either fish or vegetables largely. One man especially buys almost daily

as much fruit and vegetables as will supply thirty street-dealers. He adds 3d. a bushel to the wholesale market price of apples; 6d. to that of pears; 9d. to plums; and 1s. to cherries. A purchaser can thus get a smaller quantity than he can always buy at market, and avails himself of the opportunity.

Moreover, a good many of the more intelligent street-dealers now club together—six of them, for instance—contributing 15s. each, and a quantity of fish is thus bought by one of their body (a smaller contribution suffices to buy vegetables). Perhaps, on an equal partition, each man thus gets for his 15s. as much as might have cost him 20s., had he bought "single-handed." This mode of purchase is also on the increase.

OF "WET" FISH-SELLERS IN THE STREETS. CONCERNING the sale of "wet" or fresh fish, I had the following account from a trustworthy man, of considerable experience and superior education:

"I have sold 'wet fish' in the streets for more than fourteen years," he said; "before that I was a gentleman, and was brought up a gentleman, if I'm a beggar now. I bought fish largely in the north of England once, and now I must sell it in the streets of London. Never mind talking about that, sir; there's some things won't bear talking about. There's a wonderful difference in the streets since I knew them first; I could make a pound then, where I can hardly make a crown now. People had more money, and less meanness then. I consider that the railways have injured me, and all wet fish-sellers, to a great extent. Fish now, you see, sir, comes in at all hours, so that nobody can calculate on the quantity that will be received—nobody. That's the mischief of it; we are afraid to buy, and miss many a chance of turning a penny. In my time, since railways were in, I've seen cod-fish sold at a guinea in the morning that were a shilling at noon; for either the wind and the tide had served, or else the railway fishing-places were more than commonly supplied, and there was a glut to London. There's no trade requires greater judgment than mine—none whatever. Before the railways—and I never could see the good of them—the fish came in by the tide, and we knew how to buy, for there would be no more till next tide. Now, we don't know. I go to Billingsgate to buy my fish, and am very well known to Mr. — and Mr. — (mentioning the names of some well-known salesmen). The Jews are my ruin there now. When I go to Billingsgate, Mr. — will say, or rather, I will say to him, 'How much for this pad of soles?' He will answer, 'Fourteen shillings.' 'Fourteen shillings!' I say, 'I'll give you seven shillings,—that's the proper amount;' then the Jew boys—none of them twenty that are there—ranged about will begin; and one says, when I bid 7s., 'I'll give 8s.;' 'nine,' says another, close on my left; 'ten,' shouts another, on my right, and so they go offering on; at last Mr. — says to one of them, as grave as a

judge, 'Yours, sir, at 13s,' but it's all gammon. The 13s. buyer isn't a buyer at all, and isn't required to pay a farthing, and never touches the goods. It's all done to keep up the price to poor fishermen, and so to poor buyers that are our customers in the streets. Money makes money, and it don't matter how. Those Jew boys—I dare say they're the same sort as once sold oranges about the streets—are paid, I know 1s. for spending three or four hours that way in the cold and wet. My trade has been injured, too, by the great increase of Irish costermongers; for an Irishman will starve out an Englishman any day; besides if a tailor can't live by his trade, he'll take to fish, or fruit and cabbages. The month of May is a fine season for plaice, which is bought very largely by my customers. Plaice are sold at ½d. and 1d. a piece. It is a difficult fish to manage, and in poor neighbourhoods an important one to manage well. The old hands make a profit out of it; new hands a loss. There's not much cod or other wet fish sold to the poor, while plaice is in. "My customers are poor men's wives,—mechanics, I fancy. They want fish at most unreasonable prices. If I could go and pull them off a line flung off Waterloo-bridge, and no other expense, I couldn't supply them as cheap as they expect them. Very cheap fish-sellers lose their customers, through the Billingsgate bummarees, for they have pipes, and blow up the cod-fish, most of all, and puff up their bellies till they are twice the size, but when it comes to table, there's hardly to say any fish at all. The Billingsgate authorities would soon stop it, if they knew all I know. They won't allow any roguery, or any trick, if they only come to hear of it. These bummarees have caused many respectable people to avoid street-buying, and so fair traders like me are injured. I've nothing to complain of about the police. Oft enough, if I could be allowed ten minutes longer on a Saturday night, I could get through all my stock without loss. About a quarter to twelve I begin to halloo away as hard as I can, and there's plenty of customers that lay out never a farthing till that time, and then they can't be served fast enough, so they get their fish cheaper than I do. If any halloos out that way sooner, we must all do the same. Anything rather than keep fish over a warm Sunday. I have kept mine in ice; I haven't opportunity now, but it'll keep in a cool place this time of year. I think there's as many sellers as buyers in the streets, and there's scores of them don't give just weight or measure. I wish there was good moral rules in force, and everybody gave proper weight. I often talk to street-dealers about it. I've given them many a lecture; but they say they only do what plenty of shopkeepers do, and just get fined and go on again, without being a pin the worse thought of. They are abusive sometimes, too; I mean the street-sellers are, because they are ignorant. I have no children, thank God, and my wife helps me in my business. Take the year through, I clear from 10s. to 12s. every week. That's not

much to support two people. Some weeks I earn only 4s.,—such as in wet March weather. In others I earn 18s. or 17. November, December, and January are good months for me. I wouldn't mind if they lasted all the year round. I'm often very badly off indeed—very badly; and the misery of being hard up, sir, is not when you're making a struggle to get out of your trouble; no, nor to raise a meal off herrings that you've given away once, but when your wife and you're sitting by a grate without a fire, and putting the candle out to save it, a planning how to raise money. 'Can we borrow?' 'Can we manage to sell if we can borrow?' 'Shall we get from very bad to the parish?' Then, perhaps, there's a day lost, and without a bite in our mouths trying to borrow. Let alone a little drop to give a body courage, which perhaps is the only good use of spirit after all. That's the pinch, sir. When the rain you hear outside puts you in mind of drowning!"

Subjoined is the amount (in round numbers) of wet fish annually disposed of in the metropolis by the street-sellers:

	No. of Fish.	lbs. weight.
Salmon	20,000	175,000
Live-cod	100,000	1,000,000
Soles	6,500,000	1,650,000
Whiting	4,440,000	1,680,000
Haddock	250,000	500,000
Plaice	29,400,000	29,400,000
Mackarel	15,700,000	15,700,000
Herrings	875,000,000	210,000,000
Sprats	"	3,000,000
Eels, from Holland	400,000	65,000
Flounders	260,000	43,000
Dabs	270,000	48,000

Total quantity of wet fish sold in the streets of London 932,340,000 263,281,000

From the above Table we perceive that the fish, of which the greatest quantity is eaten by the poor, is herrings; of this, compared with plaice there is upwards of thirty times the number consumed. After plaice rank mackerel, and of these the consumption is about one-half less in number than plaice, while the number of soles vended in the streets, is again half of that of mackerel. Then come whiting, which are about two-thirds the number of the soles, while the consumption to the poor of haddock, cod, eels, and salmon, is comparatively insignificant. Of sprats, which are estimated by weight, only one-fifth of the number of pounds are consumed compared with the weight of mackerel. The pounds weight of herrings sold in the streets, in the course of a year, is upwards of seven times that of plaice, and fourteen times that of mackerel. Altogether more than 260,000,000 pounds, or 116,000 tons weight of wet fish are yearly purchased in the streets of London, for the consumption of the humbler classes. Of this aggregate amount, no less than five-sixths consists of herrings; which, indeed, constitute the great slop diet of the metropolis.

OF SPRAT-SELLING IN THE STREETS.

SPRATS—one of the cheapest and most grateful luxuries of the poor—are generally introduced about the 9th of November. Indeed "Lord Mayor's day" is sometimes called "sprat day." They continue in about ten weeks. They are sold at Billingsgate by the "toss," or "chuck," which is about half a bushel, and weighs from 40lbs. to 50lbs. The price varies from 1s. to 5s. Sprats are, this season, pronounced remarkably fine. "Look at my lot sir," said a street-seller to me; "they're a heap of new silver," and the bright shiny appearance of the glittering little fish made the comparison not inappropriate. In very few, if in any, instances does a costermonger confine himself to the sale of sprats, unless his means limit him to that one branch of the business. A more prosperous street-fishmonger will sometimes detach the sprats from his stall, and his wife, or one of his children will take charge of them. Only a few sprat-sellers are itinerant, the fish being usually sold by stationary street-sellers at "pitches." One who worked his sprats through the streets, or sold them from a stall as he thought best, gave me the following account. He was dressed in a newish fustian-jacket, buttoned close up his chest, but showing a portion of a clean cotton shirt at the neck, with a bright-coloured coarse handkerchief round it; the rest of his dress was covered by a white apron. His hair, as far as I could see it under his cloth cap, was carefully brushed, and (it appeared) as carefully oiled. At the first glance I set him down as having been a gentleman's servant. He had a somewhat deferential, though far from cringing manner with him, and seemed to be about twenty-five or twenty-six—he thought he was older, he said, but did not know his age exactly.

"Ah! sir," he began, in a tone according with his look, "sprats is a blessing to the poor. Fresh herrings is a blessing too, and sprats is young herrings, and is a blessing in 'portion' [for so he pronounced what seemed to be a favourite word with him "proportion"]. "It's only four years—yes, four, I'm sure of that—since I walked the streets starving, in the depth of winter, and looked at the sprats, and said, I wish I could fill my belly off you. Sir, I hope it was no great sin, but I could hardly keep my hands from stealing some and eating them raw. If they make me sick, thought I, the police'll take care of me, and that'll be something. While these thoughts was a passing through my mind, I met a man who was a gentleman's coachman; I knew him a little formerly, and so I stopped him and told him who I was, and that I hadn't had a meal for two days. 'Well, by G—,' said the coachman, 'you look like it, why I shouldn't have known you. Here's a shilling.' And then he went on a little way, and then stopped, and turned back and thrust 3½d. more into my hand, and bolted off. I've never seen him since. But I'm grateful to him in the

same 'portion (proportion) as if I had. After I'd had a penn'orth of bread and a penn'orth of cheese, and half-a-pint of beer, I felt a new man, and I went to the party as I'd longed to steal the sprats from, and told him what I'd thought of. I can't say what made me tell him, but it turned out for good. I don't know much about religion, though I can read a little, but may be that had something to do with it." The rest of the man's narrative was—briefly told—as follows. He was the only child of a gentleman's coachman. His father had deserted his mother and him, and gone abroad, he believed, with some family. His mother, however, took care of him until her death, which happened "when he was a little turned thirteen, he had heard, but could not remember the year." After that he was "a helper and a jobber in different stables," and "anybody's boy," for a few years, until he got a footman's, or rather footboy's place, which he kept above a year. After that he was in service, in and out of different situations, until the time he specified, when he had been out of place for nearly five weeks, and was starving. His master had got in difficulties, and had gone abroad; so he was left without a character. "Well, sir," he continued, "the man as I wanted to steal the sprats from, says to me, says he, 'Poor fellow; I know what a hempty belly is myself—come and have a pint.' And over that there pint, he told me, if I could rise 10s. there might be a chance for me in the streets, and he'd show me how to do. He died not very long after that, poor man. Well, after a little bit, I managed to borrow 10s. of Mr. — (I thought of him all of a sudden). He was butler in a family that I had lived in, and had a charitab'e character, though he was reckoned very proud. But I plucked up a spirit, and told him how I was off, and he said, 'Well, I'll try you,' and he lent me 10s., which I paid him back, little by little, in six or eight weeks; and so I started in the costermonger line, with the advice of my friend, and I've made from 5s. to 10s., sometimes more, a week, at it ever since. The police don't trouble me much. They is civil to me in 'portion (proportion) as I am civil to them. I never mixed with the costers but when I've met them at market. I stay at a lodging-house, but it's very decent and clean, and I have a bed to myself, at 1s. a week, for I'm a regular man. I'm on sprats now, you see, sir, and you'd wonder, sometimes, to see how keen people looks to them when they're new. They're a blessing to the poor, in 'portion (proportion) of course. Not twenty minutes before you spoke to me, there was two poor women came up—they was sickly-looking, but I don't know what they was—perhaps shirt-makers—and they says to me, says they, 'Show us what a penny plateful is.' 'Sart'nly, ladies,' says I. Then they whispered together, and at last one says, says she, 'We'll have two platefuls.' I told you they was a blessing to the poor, sir—specially to such as them, as lives all the year round on bread and

tea. But it's not only the poor as buys; others in 'portion (proportion). When they're new they're a treat to everybody. I've sold them to poor working-men, who've said, 'I'll take a treat home to the old 'oman and the kids; they dotes on sprats.' Gentlemen's servants is very fond of them, and mechanics comes down—such as shoemakers in their leather aprons, and sings out, 'Here, old sprats, give us two penn'orth.' They're *such* a relish. I sell more to men than to women, perhaps, but there's little difference. They're best stewed, sir, I think—if you're fond of sprats—with vinegar and a pick of allspice; that's my opinion, and, only yesterday, an old cook said I was right. I makes 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. a day, and sometimes rather more, on my sprats, and sticks to them as much as I can. I sell about my 'toss' a day, seldom less. Of course I can make as many penn'orths of it as I please, but there's no custom without one gives middling penn'orths. If a toss costs me 3s., I may make sixty penn'orths of it sometimes—sometimes seventy or more—and sometimes less than sixty. There's many turns over as much as me and more than that. I'm thinking that I'll work the country with a lot; they'll keep to a second day, when they're fresh to start, specially if its frosty weather, too, and then they're better than ever—yes, and a greater treat—scalding hot from the fire, they're the cheapest and best of all suppers in the winter time. I hardly know which way I'll go. If I can get anythink to do among horses in the country, I'll never come back. I've no tie to London."

To show how small a sum of money will enable the struggling striving poor to obtain a living, I may here mention that, in the course of my inquiries among the mudlarks, I casually gave a poor shoeless urchin, who was spoken of by one of the City Missionaries as being a well-disposed youth, 1s. out of the funds that had been entrusted to me to dispense. Trifling as the amount appears, it was the means of keeping his mother, sister, and himself through the winter. It was invested in sprats, and turned over and over again.

I am informed, by the best authorities, that near upon 1000 "tosses" of sprats are sold daily in London streets, while the season lasts. These, sold retail in pennyworths, at very nearly 5s. the toss, give about 150l. a day, or say 1,000l. a week spent on sprats by the poorer classes of the metropolis; so that, calculating the sprat season to last ten weeks, about 10,000l. would be taken by the costermongers during that time from the sale of this fish alone.

Another return, furnished me by an eminent salesman at Billingsgate, estimates the gross quantity of sprats sold by the London costers in the course of the season at three millions of pounds weight, and this disposed of at the rate of 1d. per pound, gives upwards of 12,000l. for the sum of money spent upon this one kind of fish.

OF SHELL-FISH SELLERS IN THE STREETS.

I had the following account from an experienced man. He lived with his mother, his wife, and four children, in one of the streets near Gray's-inn-lane. The street was inhabited altogether by people of his class, the women looking sharply out when a stranger visited the place. On my first visit to this man's room, his wife, who is near her confinement, was at dinner with her children. The time was $\frac{1}{4}$ to 12. The meal was tea, and bread with butter very thinly spread over it. On the wife's bread was a small piece of pickled pork, covering about one-eighth of the slice of a quarter loaf cut through. In one corner of the room, which is on the ground-floor, was a scantily-covered bed. A few dingy-looking rags were hanging up to dry in the middle of the room, which was littered with baskets and boxes, mixed up with old furniture, so that it was a difficulty to stir. The room (although the paper, covering the broken panes in the window, was torn and full of holes) was most oppressively close and hot, and there was a fetid smell, difficult to sustain, though it was less noticeable on a subsequent call. I have often had occasion to remark that the poor, especially those who are much subjected to cold in the open air, will sacrifice much for heat. The adjoining room, which had no door, seemed littered like the one where the family were. The walls of the room I was in were discoloured and weather-stained. The only attempt at ornament was over the mantel-shelf, the wall here being papered with red and other gay-coloured papers, that once had been upholsterer's patterns.

On my second visit, the husband was at dinner with the family, on good boiled beef and potatoes. He was a small-featured man, with a head of very curly and long black hair, and both in mien, manners, and dress, resembled the mechanic far more than the costermonger. He said:—

"I've been twenty years and more, perhaps twenty-four, selling shell-fish in the streets. I was a boot-closer when I was young, and have made my 20s. and 30s., and sometimes 40s., and then sometimes not 10s. a week; but I had an attack of rheumatic-fever, and lost the use of my hands for my trade. The streets hadn't any great name, as far as I knew, then, but as I couldn't work, it was just a choice between street-selling and starving, so I didn't prefer the last. It was reckoned degrading to go into the streets—but I couldn't help that. I was astonished at my success when I first began, and got into the business—that is into the understanding of it—after a week, or two, or three. Why, I made 3l. the first week I knew my trade, properly; yes, I cleared 3l.! I made, not long after, 5l. a week—but not often. I was giddy and extravagant. Indeed, I was a fool, and spent my money like a fool. I could have brought up a family then like a gentleman—I

send them to school as it is—but I hadn't a wife and family then, or it might have been better; it's a great check on a man, is a family. I began with shell-fish, and sell it still; very seldom anything else. There's more demand for shells, no doubt, because its far cheaper, but then there's so many more sellers. I don't know why exactly. I suppose it's because poor people go into the streets when they can't live other ways, and some do it because they think it's an idle life; but it ain't. Where I rook 35s. in a day at my stall—and well on to half of it profit—I now take 5s. or 6s., or perhaps 7s., in the day and less profit on that less money. I don't clear 3s. a day now, take the year through. I don't keep accounts, but I'm certain enough that I average about 15s. a week the year through, and my wife has to help me to make that. She'll mind the stall, while I take a round sometimes. I sell all kinds of shell-fish, but my great dependence is on winkles. I don't do much in lobsters. Very few speculate in them. The price varies very greatly. What's 10s. a score one day may be 25s. the next. I sometimes get a score for 5s. or 6s., but it's a poor trade, for 6d. is the top of the tree, with me, for a price to a seller. I never get more. I sell them to mechanics and tradesmen. I do more in pound crabs. There's a great call for haporths and pennorths of lobster or crab, by children; that's their claws. I bile them all myself, and buy them alive. I can bile twenty in half an hour, and do it over a grate in a back-yard. Lobsters don't fight or struggle much in the hot water, if they're properly packed. It's very few that knows how to bile a lobster as he should be biled. I wish I knew any way of killing lobsters before biling them. I can't kill them without smashing them to bits, and that won't do at all. I kill my crabs before I bile them. I stick them in the throat with a knife and they're dead in an instant. Some sticks them with a skewer, but they kick a good while with the skewer in them. It's a shame to torture anything when it can be helped. If I didn't kill the crabs they'd shed every leg in the hot water; they'd come out as bare of claws as this plate. I've known it oft enough, as it is; though I kill them uncommon quick, a crab will be quicker and shed every leg—throw them off in the moment I kill them, but that doesn't happen once in fifty times. Oysters are capital this season, I mean as to quality, but they're not a good sale. I made 3l. a week in oysters, not reckoning anything else, eighteen or twenty years back. It was easy to make money then; like putting down one sovereign and taking two up. I sold oysters then oft enough at 1d. a piece. Now I sell far finer at three a penny and five for 2d. People can't spend money in shell-fish when they haven't got any. They say that fortune knocks once at every man's door. I wish I'd opened my door when he knocked at it."

This man's wife told me afterwards, that last

winter, after an attack of rheumatism, all their stock-money was exhausted, and her husband sat day by day at home almost out of his mind; for nothing could tempt him to apply to the parish, and "he would never have mentioned his sufferings to me," she said; "he had too much pride." The loan of a few shillings from a poor costermonger enabled the man to go to market again, or he and his family would now have been in the Union.

As to the quantity of shell-fish sold in the streets of London, the returns before-cited give the following results:

Oysters	124,000,000
Lobsters	60,000
Crabs	50,000
Shrimps	770,000 pts.
Whelks	4,950,000
Mussels	1,000,000 qts.
Cockles	750,000 qts.
Periwinkles	3,640,000 pts.

OF SHRIMP SELLING IN THE STREETS.

SHRIMP selling, as I have stated, is one of the trades to which the street-dealer often confines himself throughout the year. The sale is about equally divided between the two sexes, but the men do the most business, walking some of them fifteen to twenty miles a day in a "round" of "ten miles there and ten back."

The shrimps vended in the streets are the Yarmouth prawn shrimps, sold at Billingsgate at from 6d. to 10d. a gallon, while the best shrimps (chiefly from Lee, in Essex,) vary in price from 10d. to 2s. 6d. a gallon; 2s. being a common price. The shrimps are usually mixed by the street-dealers, and they are cried, from stalls or on rounds, "a penny half-pint, fine fresh s'rumps." (I heard them called nothing but "s'rumps" by the street-dealers.) The half-pint, however, is in reality but half that quantity. "It's the same measure as it was thirty years back," I was told, in a tone as if its antiquity removed all imputation of unfair dealing. Some young men "do well on s'rumps," sometimes taking 5s. in an hour on a Saturday evening, "when people get their money, and wants a relish." The females in the shrimp line are the wives, widows, or daughters of costermongers. They are computed to average 1s. 6d. a day profit in fine, and from 9d. to 1s. in bad weather; and, in snowy, or very severe weather, sometimes nothing at all.

One shrimp-seller, a middle-aged woman, wrapped up in a hybrid sort of cloak, that was half a man's and half a woman's garment, gave me the following account. There was little vulgarity in either her language or manner.

"I was in the s'rump trade since I was a girl. I don't know how long. I don't know how old I am. I never knew; but I've two children, one's six and t'other's near eight, both girls; I've kept count of that as well as I can. My

husband sells fish in the street; so did father, but he's dead. We buried him without the help of the parish, as many gets—that's something to say. I've known the trade every way. It never was any good in public-houses. They want such great ha'p'orths there. They'll put up with what isn't very fresh, to be sure, sometimes; and good enough for them too, I say, as spoils their taste with drink." [This was said very bitterly.] "If it wasn't for my husband's drinking for a day together now and then we'd do better. He's neither to have nor to hold when he's the worse for liquor; and it's the worse with him, for he's a quiet man when he's his own man. Perhaps I make 9d. a day, perhaps 1s. or more. Sometimes my husband takes my stand, and I go a round. Sometimes, if he gets through his fish, he goes my round. I give good measure, and my pint's the regular s'rump pint." [It was the half-pint I have described.] "The trade's not so good as it was. People hasn't the money, they tells me so. It's bread before s'rumps, says they. I've heard them say it very cross, if I've wanted hard to sell. Some days I can sell nothing. My children stays with my sister, when me and my old man's out. They don't go to school, but Jane (the sister) learns them to sew. She makes drawers for the slop-sellers, but has very little work, and gets very little for the little she does; she would learn them to read if she knew how. She's married to a pavior, that's away all day. It's a hard life mine, sir. The winter's a coming, and I'm now sometimes 'numbed with sitting at my stall in the cold. My feet feels like lumps of ice in the winter; and they're beginning now, as if they weren't my own. Standing's far harder work than going a round. I sell the best s'rumps. My customers is judges. If I've any s'rumps over on a night, as I often have one or two nights a week, I sells them for half-price to an Irishwoman, and she takes them to the beer-shops, and the coffee-shops. She washes them. to look fresh. I don't mind telling that, because people should buy of regular people. It's very few people know how to pick a s'rump properly. You should take it by the head and the tail and jam them up, and then the shell separates, and the s'rump comes out beautifully. That's the proper way."

Sometimes the sale on the rounds may be the same as that at the stalls, or 10 or 20 per cent. more or less, according to the weather, as shrimps can be sold by the itinerant dealers better than by the stall-keepers in wet weather, when people prefer buying at their doors. But in hot weather the stall trade is the best, "for people often fancy that the s'rumps is sent out to sell 'cause they'll not keep no longer. It's only among customers as knows you, you can do any good on a round then."

The costermongers sell annually, it appears, about 770,000 pints of shrimps. At 2d. a pint (a very low calculation) the street sale of shrimps amount to upwards of 6,400l. yearly.

OF OYSTER SELLING IN THE STREETS.

THE trade in oysters is unquestionably one of the oldest with which the London—or rather the English—markets are connected; for oysters from Britain were a luxury in ancient Rome.

Oysters are now sold out of the smacks at Billingsgate, and a few at Hungerford. The more expensive kind such as the real Milton, are never bought by the costermongers, but they buy oysters of a "good middling quality." At the commencement of the season these oysters are 14s. a "bushel," but the measure contains from a bushel and a half to two bushels, as it is more or less heaped up. The general price, however, is 9s. or 10s., but they have been 16s. and 18s. The "big trade" was unknown until 1848, when the very large shelly oysters, the fish inside being very small, were introduced from the Sussex coast. They were sold in Thames-street and by the Borough-market. Their sale was at first enormous. The costermongers distinguished them by the name of "scuttle-mouths." One coster informant told me that on the Saturdays he not unfrequently, with the help of a boy and a girl, cleared 10s. by selling these oysters in the streets, disposing of four bags. He thus sold, reckoning twenty-one dozen to the bag, 2,016 oysters; and as the price was two for a penny, he took just 4l. 4s. by the sale of oysters in the streets in one night. With the scuttle-mouths the costermonger takes no trouble: he throws them into a yard, and dashes a few pails of water over them, and then places them on his barrow, or conveys them to his stall. Some of the better class of costermongers, however, lay down their oysters carefully, giving them oatmeal "to fatten on."

In April last, some of the street-sellers of this article established, for the first time, "oyster-rounds." These were carried on by costermongers whose business was over at twelve in the day, or a little later; they bought a bushel of scuttle-mouths (never the others), and, in the afternoon, went a round with them to poor neighbourhoods, until about six, when they took a stand in some frequented street. Going these oyster-rounds is hard work, I am told, and a boy is generally taken to assist. Monday afternoon is the best time for this trade, when 10s. is sometimes taken, and 4s. or 5s. profit made. On other evenings only from 1s. to 5s. is taken—very rarely the larger sum—as the later the day in the week the smaller is the receipt, owing to the wages of the working classes getting gradually exhausted.

The women who sell oysters in the street, and whose dealings are limited, buy either of the costermongers or at the coal-sheds. But nearly all the men buy at Billingsgate, where as small a quantity as a peck can be had.

An old woman, who had "seen better days," but had been reduced to keep an oyster-stall, gave me the following account of her customers. She showed much shrewdness in her conversation, but having known better days, she declined

to enter upon any conversation concerning her former life:—

"As to my customers, sir," she said, "why, indeed, they're all sorts. It's not a very few times that gentlemen (I call them so because they're mostly so civil) will stop—just as it's getting darkish, perhaps,—and look about them, and then come to me and say very quick: 'Two penn'orth for a whet.' Ah! some of 'em will look, may be, like poor parsons down upon their luck, and swallow their oysters as if they was taking poison in a hurry. They'll not touch the bread or butter once in twenty times, but they'll be free with the pepper and vinegar, or, mayhap, they'll say quick and short, 'A crust off that.' I many a time think that two penn'orth is a poor gentleman's dinner. It's the same often—but only half as often, or not half—with a poor lady, with a veil that once was black, over a bonnet to match, and shivering through her shawl. She'll have the same. About two penn'orth is the mark still; it's mostly two penn'orth. My son says, it's because that's the price of a glass of gin, and some persons buy oysters instead—but that's only his joke, sir. It's not the vulgar poor that's our chief customers. There's many of them won't touch oysters, and I've heard some of them say: 'The sight on 'em makes me sick; it's like eating snails.' The poor girls that walk the streets often buy; some are brazen and vulgar, and often the finest dressed are the vulgarest; at least, I think so; and of those that come to oyster stalls, I'm sure it's the case. Some are shy to such as me, who may, perhaps, call their own mothers to their minds, though it aint many of them that is so. One of them always says that she must keep at least a penny for gin after her oysters. One young woman ran away from my stall once after swallowing one oyster out of six that she'd paid for. I don't know why. Ah! there's many things a person like me sees that one may say, 'I don't know why' to; that there is. My heartiest customers, that I serve with the most pleasure, are working people, on a Saturday night. One couple—I think the wife always goes to meet her husband on a Saturday night—has two, or three, or four penn'orth, as happens, and it's pleasant to hear them say, 'Won't you have another, John?' or, 'Do have one or two more, Mary Anne.' I've served them that way two or three years. They've no children, I'm pretty sure, for if I say, 'Take a few home to the little ones,' the wife tosses her head, and says, half vexed and half laughing, 'Such nonsense.' I send out a good many oysters, opened, for people's suppers, and sometimes for supper parties—at least, I suppose so, for there's five or six dozen often ordered. The maid-servants come for them then, and I give them two or three for themselves, and say, jokingly-like, 'It's no use offering you any, perhaps, because you'll have plenty that's left.' They've mostly one answer: 'Don't we wish we may get 'em?' The very poor never buy of me, as I told you. A penny

buys a loaf, you see, or a ha'porth of bread and a ha'porth of cheese, or a half-pint of beer, with a farthing out. My customers are mostly working people and tradespeople. Ah! sir, I wish the parson of the parish, or any parson, sat with me a fortnight; he'd see what life is then. 'It's different,' a learned man used to say to me—that's long ago—from what's noticed from the pew or the pulpit.' I've missed the gentleman as used to say that, now many years—I don't know how many. I never knew his name. He was drunk now and then, and used to tell me he was an author. I felt for him. A dozen oysters wasn't much for him. We see a deal of the world, sir—yes, a deal. Some, mostly working people, take quantities of pepper with their oysters in cold weather, and say it's to warm them, and no doubt it does; but frosty weather is very bad oyster weather. The oysters gape and die, and then they are not so much as manure. They are very fine this year. I clear 1s. a day, I think, during the season—at least 1s., taking the fine with the wet days, and the week days with the Sundays, though I'm not out then; but, you see, I'm known about here."

The number of oysters sold by the costermongers amounts to 124,000,000 a year. These, at four a penny, would realise the large sum of 129,650*l.* We may therefore safely assume that 125,000*l.* is spent yearly in oysters in the streets of London.

OF PERIWINKLE SELLING IN THE STREETS.

THERE are some street people who, nearly all the year through, sell nothing but periwinkles, and go regular rounds, where they are well known. The "wink" men, as these periwinkle sellers are called, generally live in the lowest parts, and many in lodging-houses. They are forced to live in low localities, they say, because of the smell of the fish, which is objected to. The city district is ordinarily the best for winkle-sellers, for there are not so many cheap shops there as in other parts. The summer is the best season, and the sellers then make, upon the average, 12s. a week clear profit; in the winter, they get upon the average, 5s. a week clear, by selling mussels and whelks—for, as winkles last only from March till October, they are then obliged to do what they can in the whelk and mussel way. "I buy my winks," said one, "at Billingsgate, at 3s. and 4s. the wash. A wash is about a bushel. There's some at 2s., and some sometimes as low as 1s. the wash, but they wouldn't do for me, as I serve very respectable people. If we choose we can boil our winkles at Billingsgate by paying 4*d.* a week for boiling, and ½*d.* for salt, to salt them after they are boiled. Tradesmen's families buy them for a relish to their tea. It's reckoned a nice present from a young man to his sweetheart, is winks. Servant girls are pretty good customers, and want them cheaper when they say it's for themselves; but I have only one price."

One man told me he could make as much as 12s. a week—sometimes more and sometimes less.

He made no speeches, but sung—"Winketty-winketty-wink-wink-wink—wink-wink-wink-wink-wink—fine fresh winketty-winks wink wink." He was often so sore in the stomach and hoarse with hallooing that he could hardly speak. He had no child, only himself and wife to keep out of his earnings. His room was 2s. a week rent. He managed to get a bit of meat every day, he said, "somehow or 'nother."

Another, more communicative and far more intelligent man, said to me concerning the character of his customers: "They're people I think that like to daddle" (dawdle, I presume) "over their teas or such like; or when a young woman's young man takes tea with her mother and her, then they've winks; and then there's joking, and helping to pick winks, between Thomas and Betsy, while the mother's busy with her tea, or is wiping her specs, 'cause she can't see. Why, sir, I've known it! I was a Thomas that way myself when I was a tradesman. I was a patten-maker once, but pattens is no go now, and hasn't been for fifteen year or more. Old people, I think, that lives by themselves, and has perhaps an annuity or the like of that, and nothing to do pertickler, loves winks, for they likes a pleasant way of making time long over a meal. They're the people as reads a newspaper, when it's a week old, all through. The other buyers, I think, are tradespeople or working-people what wants a relish. But winks is a bad trade now, and so is many that depends on relishes."

One man who "works" the New Cut, has the "best wink business of all." He sells only a little dry fish with his winks, never wet fish, and has "got his name up," for the superiority of that shell-fish—a superiority which he is careful to ensure. He pays 8s. a week for a stand by a grocer's window. On an ordinary afternoon he sells from 7s. to 10s. worth of periwinkles. On a Monday afternoon he often takes 20s.; and on the Sunday afternoon 3*l.* and 4*l.* He has two coster lads to help him, and sometimes on a Sunday from twenty to thirty customers about him. He wraps each parcel sold in a neat brown paper bag, which, I am assured, is of itself, an inducement to buy of him. The "unfortunate" women who live in the streets contiguous to the Waterloo, Blackfriars, and Borough-roads, are among his best customers, on Sundays especially. He is rather a public character, getting up dances and the like. "He aint bothered—not he—with ha'p'orths or penn'orths of a Sunday," said a person who had assisted him. "It's the top of the tree with his customers; 3*d.* or 6*d.* at a go." The receipts are one-half profit. I heard from several that he was "the best man for winks a-going."

The quantity of periwinkles disposed of by the London street-sellers is 3,600,000 pints, which, at 1*d.* per pint, gives the large sum of 15,000*l.* expended annually in this street luxury. It should be remembered, that a very large con-

sumption of periwinkles takes place in public-houses and suburban tea-gardens.

OF "DRY" FISH SELLING IN THE STREETS.

THE dealing in "dry" or salt fish is never carried on as a totally distinct trade in the streets, but some make it a principal part of their business; and many wet fish-dealers whose "wet fish" is disposed of by noon, sell dry fish in the afternoon. The dry fish, proper, consists of dried mackerel, salt cod—dried or barrelled—smoked or dried haddocks (often called "finnie haddies"), dried or pickled salmon (but salmon is only salted or pickled for the streets when it can be sold cheap), and salt herrings.

A keen-looking, tidily-dressed man, who was at one time a dry fish-seller principally, gave me the following account. For the last two months he has confined himself to another branch of the business, and seemed to feel a sort of pleasure in telling of the "dodges" he once resorted to:

"There's Scotch haddies that never knew anything about Scotland," he said, "for I've made lots of them myself by Tower-street, just a jump or two from the Lambeth station-house. I used to make them on Sundays. I was a wet fish-seller then, and when I couldn't get through my haddocks or my whittings of a Saturday night, I wasn't a-going to give them away to folks that wouldn't take the trouble to lift me out of a gutter if I fell there, so I presarved them. I've made haddies of whittings, and good ones too, and Joe made them of codlings besides. I had a bit of a back-yard to two rooms, one over the other, that I had then, and on a Sunday I set some wet wood a fire, and put it under a great tub. My children used to gut and wash the fish, and I hung them on hooks all round the sides of the tub, and made a bit of a chimney in a corner of the top of the tub, and that way I gave them a jolly good smoking. My wife had a dry fish-stall and sold them, and used to sing out 'Real Scotch haddies,' and tell people how they was from Aberdeen; I've often been fit to laugh, she did it so clever. I had a way of giving them a yellow colour like the real Scotch, but that's a secret. After they was well smoked they was hung up to dry all round the rooms we lived in, and we often had stunning fires that answered as well to boil crabs and lobsters when they was cheap enough for the streets. I've boiled a mate's crabs and lobsters for 2½*d.*; it was two boilings and more, and 2½*d.* was reckoned the price of half a quarter of a hundred of coals and the use of the pan. There's more ways than one of making 6*d.*, if a man has eyes in his head and keeps them open. Haddocks that wouldn't fetch 1*d.* a piece, nor any money at all of a Saturday night, I've sold—at least she has" (indicating his wife by a motion of his thumb)—"at 2*d.*, and 3*d.*, and 4*d.* I've bought fish of costers that was over on a Saturday night, to make Scotch haddies of them. I've tried experience" (experiments) "too. Ivy, burnt

under them, gave them, I thought, a nice sort of flavour, rather peppery, for I used always to taste them; but I hate living on fish. Ivy with brown berries on it, as it has about this time o' year, I liked best. Holly wasn't no good. A black-currant bush was, but it's too dear; and indeed it couldn't be had. I mostly spread wetted fire-wood, as green as could be got, or damp sticks of any kind, over shavings, and kept feeding the fire. Sometimes I burnt sawdust. Somehow, the dry fish trade fell off. People does get so prying and so knowing, there's no doing nothing now for no time, so I dropped the dry fish trade. There's few up to smoking them proper; they smoke 'em black, as if they was hung up in a chimbley."

Another costermonger gave me the following account:

"I've salted herrings, but the commonest way of salting is by the Jews about Whitechapel. They make real Yarmouth bloaters and all sorts of fish. When I salted herrings, I bought them out of the boats at Billingsgate by the hundred, which is 120 fish. We give them a bit of a clean—hardly anything—then chuck them into a tub of salt, and keep scattering salt over them, and let them lie a few minutes, or sometimes half an hour, and then hang them up to dry. They eat well enough, if they're eaten in time, for they won't keep. I've known three day's old herrings salted, just because there was no sale for them. One Jew sends out six boys crying 'real Yarmouth bloaters.' People buy them in preference, they look so nice and clean and fresh-coloured. It's quite a new trade among the Jews. They didn't do much that way until two years back. I sometimes wish I was a Jew, because they help one another, and start one another with money, and so they thrive where Christians are ruined. I smoked mackerel, too, by thousands; that's a new trade, and is done the same way as haddocks. Mackerel that won't bring 1*d.* a piece fresh, bring 2*d.* smoked; they are very nice indeed. I make about 10s. or 11s. a week by dry fish in the winter months, and about as much by wet,—but I have a tidy connection. Perhaps I make 17s. or 18s. a week all the year round."

The aggregate quantity of dry fish sold by the London costermongers throughout the year is as follows—the results being deduced from the table before given:

Wet salt cod	93,750
Dry do.	1,000,000
Smoked Haddocks	4,875,000
Bloaters	36,750,000
Red-herrings	25,000,000

GROSS VALUE OF THE SEVERAL KINDS OF FISH ANNUALLY SOLD IN THE STREETS OF LONDON.

It now but remains for me, in order to complete this account of the "street-sellers of fish," to form an estimate of the amount of money annually expended by the labourers and the poorer

classes of London upon the different kinds of wet, dry, and shell-fish. This, according to the best authorities, is as follows:

Wet Fish.	£
175,000 lbs. of salmon, at 6d. per lb.	4,000
1,000,000 lbs. of live cod, at 1½d. per lb.	5,000
3,250,000 pairs of soles, at 1½d. per pair	20,000
4,400,000 whiting, at ½d. each	9,000
29,400,000 plaice, at ⅓d.	90,000
15,700,000 mackerel, at 6 for 1s.	130,000
875,000,000 herrings, at 16 a groat	900,000
3,000,000 lbs. of sprats, at 1d. per lb.	12,000
400,000 lbs. of eels, at 3 lb. for 1s.	6,000
260,000 flounders, at 1d. per dozen	100
270,000 dabs, at 1d. per dozen	100

Sum total expended yearly in wet fish 1,177,000

Dry Fish.

525,000 lbs. barrelled cod, at 1½d.	3,000
500,000 lbs. dried salt cod, at 2d.	4,000
4,875,000 smoked haddock, at 1d.	20,000
36,750,000 bloaters, at 2 for 1d.	75,000
25,000,000 red herrings, at 4 for 1d.	25,000

Sum total expended yearly in dry fish 127,000

Shell Fish.

124,000,000 oysters, at 4 a penny	125,000
60,000 lobsters, at 3d.	750
50,000 crabs, at 2d.	400
770,000 pints of shrimps, at 2d.	6,000
1,000,000 quarts of mussels, at 1d.	4,000
750,000 quarts of cockles, at 1d.	3,000
4,950,000 whelks, at 8 for 1d.	2,500
3,600,000 pints of periwinkles, at 1d.	15,000

Sum total expended yearly in shell-fish 156,650

Adding together the above totals, we have the following result as to the gross money value of the fish purchased yearly in the London streets:

	£
Wet fish	1,177,200
Dry fish	127,000
Shell fish	156,650
Total	£1,460,850

Hence we find that there is nearly a million and a half of money annually spent by the poorer classes of the metropolis in fish; a sum so prodigious as almost to discredit every statement of want, even if the amount said to be so expended be believed. The returns from which the above account is made out have been obtained, however, from such unquestionable sources—not from one salesman alone, but checked and corrected by many gentlemen who can have no conceivable motive for exaggeration either one way or the other—that, sceptical as our utter ignorance of the subject must necessarily make

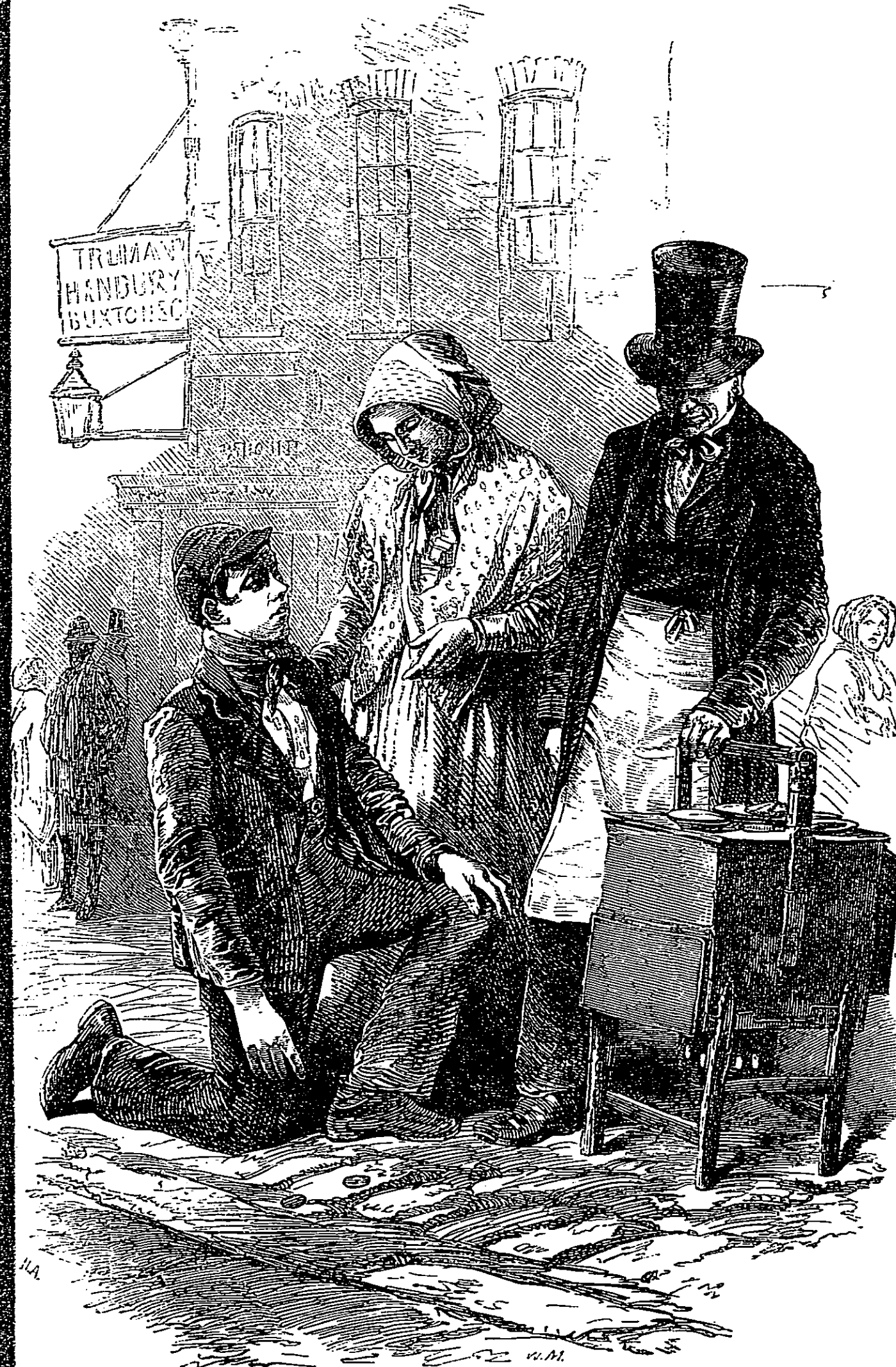
us, still if we will but examine for ourselves, we shall find there is no gainsaying the facts.

Moreover as to the enormity of the amount dispelling all ideas of privation among the industrious portion of the community, we shall also find on examination that assuming the working-men of the metropolis to be 500,000 in number (the Occupation Abstract of 1841, gives 773,560 individuals following some employment in London, but these include merchants, employers, shopkeepers, Government-officers and others), and that they, with their wives and children, make up one million individuals, it follows that the sum per head, expended in fish by the poorer classes every week, is a fraction more than 6½d., or, in other words, not quite one penny a day.

If the diet of a people be a criterion, as has been asserted, of their character, it may be feared that the present extensive fish-diet of the working-people of London, is as indicative of degeneracy of character, as Cobbett insisted must result from the consumption of tea, and "the cursed root," the potato. "The flesh of fish," says Pereira on Diet, "is less satisfying than the flesh of either quadrupeds or birds. As it contains a larger proportion of water (about 80 per cent.), it is obviously less nourishing." Haller tells us he found himself weakened by a fish-diet; and he states that Roman Catholics are generally debilitated during Lent. Pechlin also affirms that a mechanic, nourished merely by fish, has less muscular power than one who lives on the flesh of warm-blooded animals. Jockeys, who waste themselves in order to reduce their weight, live principally on fish.

The classes of fish above given, are, when considered in a "dietetical point of view," of two distinct kinds; viz., those which form the staple commodity of the dinners and suppers of the poor, and those which are mere relishes or stimuli to failing, rather than stays to, eager appetites. Under the former head, I include red-herrings, bloaters, and smoked haddocks; such things are not merely provocatives to eat, among the poor, as they are at the breakfast-table of many an over-fed or intemperate man. With the less affluent these salted fish are not a "relish," but a meal.

The shell-fish, however, can only be considered as luxuries. The 150,000l. thus annually expended in the streets, represents the sum laid out in mere relishes or stimuli to sluggish appetites. A very large proportion of this amount, I am inclined to believe, is spent by persons whose stomachs have been disordered by drink. A considerable part of the trade in the minor articles, as winks, shrimps, &c., is carried on in public-houses, while a favourite pitch for an oyster-stall is outside a tavern-door. If, then, so large an amount is laid out in an endeavour to restore the appetite after drinking, how much money must be squandered in destroying it by the same means?



THE COSTER BOY AND GIRL TOSSING THE PIEMAN

[From a Photograph.]