

minus what may be called the "poundage"—is paid over to the proper party.

A man who had driven, or, as he called it, "managed," one of these vans, told me that he made this way, 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day; "but," he added, "if you make a good thing of it that way, you have all the less salary." These carmen are men of good character and good address, and were described to me, by a gentleman familiar with the trade, as "of the very best class of porters."

As this vehicular-itinerant business has now become an integral part of the general tea-trade, I need not further dwell upon it, but reserve it until I come to treat of the shopmen of grocers and tea-dealers, and thence of the tea-trade in general. I may add, however, that the tea thus hawked is, as regards, perhaps, three-fourths of the quantity sold, known as "mixed," and sold at 4s. per lb.—costing, at a tea-broker's, from 2s. 11d. to 3s. 3d. It is announced, as to its staple or entire compound, to be "congou," but is in reality a tea known as "pouchong." Some old ladies are still anxious, I was told, for a cup of good strong bohea; and though bohea has been unknown to the tea-trade since the expiration of the East India Company's Charter in 1834, the accommodating street-traveller will undertake to supply the genuine leaf to which the old lady had been so long accustomed. The green teas thus sold (and they are not above a fiftieth part of the other) are common twankays and common young hysons, neither of them—I can state on excellent authority—accounted in the trade to be "true teas," but, as in the case of some other green teas, "Canton made." The "green" is sold from the vans generally at 4s. 6d.; sometimes, but rarely, as high as 5s. 6d. What is sold at 4s. 6d. may cost, on the average, 3s. 5d. I may add, also, that when a good article is supplied, such profits in the tea-trade are not accounted at all excessive.

But the more usual mode of tea hawking is by itinerant dealers who have a less direct connection with the shop whereto they purchase their goods. To this mode of obtaining a livelihood, the hawkers are invited by all the persuasive powers of advertising eloquence: "To persons in want of a genteel and lucrative employment"—"To Gentlemen of good address and business habits," &c., &c. The genteel and lucrative employment is to hawk tea under the auspices of this "company" or the other. The nature of this business, and of the street tea-trade generally, is shown in the following statement:—"About twelve years ago I came to London in expectation of a situation as tide-waiter; I did not succeed, however, and not being able to obtain any other employment, and trusting to the promises of gentlemen M.P.s for too long a time, my means were exhausted, and I was at length induced to embark in the tea business. To this I was persuaded by a few friends who advanced me some money, considering that it would suit me well, while my friends would endeavour to get me a connection, that is, procure me customers. I accordingly went to a well-known Tea Company in the City, a firm bear-

ing a great name. Their advertisements put forth extraordinary statements, of so many persons realizing independencies from selling their teas, and in very short spaces of time. I was quite pleased at the prospect presented to me in such glowing terms, and, depending not a little on my own industry and perseverance, I embraced the opportunity and introduced myself forthwith to the Company. They advised me in the first place to take out a licence for selling teas, to secure me against any risk of fines or forfeitures. The cost of a licence, after payment of 2s. 11d. preliminary expenses, is 11s. per annum, to be paid quarterly, as it becomes due, and it is paid by the Company for their agents. The licence is granted for the place of abode of the 'traveller,' and strictly prohibits him from hawking or exposing his wares for sale at places other than at such place of abode, but he may of course supply his customers where he will, and serve them at their places of abode respectively. Everything thus prepared, I commenced operations, but soon found that this tea dealing was not so advantageous as I had anticipated. I found that the commission allowed by the Company on cheap teas was very low. For those generally used by the working people, '4s. tea,' for instance, or that at 4s. per pound, I had to pay to the Company 3s. 6d. per pound, thus allowing the travelling dealer or agent for commission only 6d. in the pound, or 1½d. per quarter. Now 80 or 100 customers is considered a fair connection for a dealer, and allowing each customer to take a quarter of a pound at an average, 80 good customers at that rate would bring him in 10s., or 100 customers 12s. 6d. clear profit weekly. But many customers do not require so much as a quarter of a pound weekly, while others require more, so that I find it rather awkward to subdivide it in portions to suit each customer, as the smallest quantity made at the warehouse is a quarter of a pound, and every quarter is done up in a labelled wrapper, with the price marked on it. So that to break or disturb the package in any way might cause some customers to suspect that it had been meddled with unfairly.

"Another disadvantage was in dealing with the 'Tea Company.' No sugars are supplied by them, which makes it more inconvenient for the travelling dealer, as his customers find it difficult to get sugars, most retail grocers having an objection to sell sugars to any but those who are purchasers of teas as well. However, I was not confined to deal with this Company, and so I tried other places, and found a City house, whose terms were preferable. Here I could get tea for 3s. 3d., as good as that for which the Company charged 3s. 6d., besides getting it done up to order in plain paper, and in quantities to suit every variety of customer. There were also sugars, which must be had to accommodate the customers, at whatever trouble or inconvenience to the traveller; for it is very lumbering to carry about, and leaves scarcely any profit at all.

"The trade is anything but agreeable, and the customers are often exacting. They seem to fancy,

however cheaply and well they may be supplied, that the tea-seller is under obligations to them; that their custom will be the making of him, and, therefore, they expect some compliment in return. The consequence is, that very often, unless he be willing to be accounted a 'shabby man,' the tea-dealer is obliged, of a Saturday night, to treat his customers, to ensure a continuance of their custom. Other customers take care to be absent at the time he calls. Those who are anxious to run up bills, perhaps, keep out of the way purposely for two or more successive nights of the dealer's calling, who, notwithstanding, cannot very well avoid serving such customers. This is another evil, and if the tea-man's capital be not sufficient to enable him to carry on the business in this manner, giving credit (for it is unavoidable), he is very soon insolvent, and compelled to give up the business. I had to give it up at last, after having carried it on for four years, leaving 8l. or 9l. due to me, in small sums, varying from 1s. to 10s., one shilling of which I never expect to be paid. I could not have continued it so long, for my means would not allow me to give credit; but getting partial employment at the last-mentioned house, where I dealt, enabled me to do so. When, however, I got permanently employed, I grew tired of tea-dealing, and gave it up.

"In my opinion the business would best suit persons casually employed, such as dockmen and others, who might have leisure to go about; those

also who get other commissions and hawk about other commodities, such as soft wares, might do very well by it; otherwise, in most cases, 'tis only resorted to as a make-shift where no other employment can be obtained.

"I do not know how many persons are in the trade. I have, however, heard it asserted, that there were between 4000 and 5000 persons in London engaged in the business, who are, with but few exceptions, Scotchmen; they, of all others, manage to do the best in this line.

"A man, to undertake the tea business, requires a double capital, because in the first place, he has to purchase the tea, then he must give credit, and be able to support himself till such time as he can get in his money. Some of the tea-dealers manage to eke out their profits by mixing tea-leaves, which have been used, with the genuine commodity. They spread the old tea-leaves on tins which they have for the purpose, and, by exposing them either to the action of the air or the heat of the fire, the leaves crisp up as they had been before they were used, and are not distinguishable from the rest. I never vended such an article, and that may be one reason why I could not succeed in the business."

I believe the career thus detailed is a common one among the hawkers of tea, or rather the "travellers" in the tea trade. Many sell it on tally.

OF THE WOMEN STREET-SELLERS.

As the volume is now fast drawing to a close, and a specific account has been furnished of almost every description of street-seller (with the exception of those who are the makers of the articles they vend), I purpose giving a more full and general history and classification than I have yet done of the feminine portion of the traders in the streets.

The women engaged in street-sale are of all ages and of nearly all classes. They are, however, chiefly of two countries, England and Ireland. There are (comparatively) a few Jewesses, and a very few Scotchwomen and Welchwomen who are street-traders; and they are so, as it were, accidentally, from their connection, by marriage or otherwise, with male street-sellers. Of foreigners there are German broom-women, and a few Italians with musical instruments.

The first broad and distinctive view of the female street-sellers, is regarding them *nationally*, that is to say, either English or Irish women—two classes separated by definite characteristics from each other.

The Irishwomen—to avoid burthening the reader with an excess of subdivisions—I shall speak of generally; that is to say, as one homogeneous class, referring those who require a more specific account to the description before given of the street-sellers.

The Englishwomen selling in the streets appear to admit of being arranged into four distinct groups, viz. :—

1. The Wives of Street-Sellers.
2. Mechanics' or Labourers' Wives, who go out Street-Selling (while their husbands are at work) as a means of helping out the family income.
3. Widows of former Street-Sellers.
4. Single Women.

I do not know of any street-trade carried on *exclusively* by women. The sales in which they are principally concerned are in fish (including shrimps and oysters), fruit and vegetables (widows selling on their own account), fire-screens and ornaments, laces, millinery, artificial flowers (but not in any great majority over the male traders), cut flowers, boot and stay-laces and small wares, wash-leathers, towels, burnt linen, combs, bonnets, pin-cushions, tea and coffee, rice-milk, curds and whey, sheeps'-trotters, and dressed and undressed dolls.

What may be called the "heavier" trades, those necessitating the carrying of heavy weights, or the pushing of heavily-laden barrows, are in the hands of men; and so are, even more exclusively, what may be classed as the more skilled trades of the streets, viz. the sale of stationery, of books, of the most popular catables and

drinkables (the coffee-stalls excepted), and in every branch dependent upon the use of patten. In such callings as root-selling, crock-bartering, table-cover selling, mats, game, and poultry, the wife is the helpmate of her husband; if she trade separately in these things, it is because there is a full stock to dispose of, which requires the exertions of two persons, perhaps with some hired help just for the occasion.

The difference in the street-traffic, as carried on by Englishwomen and Irishwomen, is marked enough. The Irishwoman's avocations are the least skilled, and the least remunerative, but as regards mere toil, such as the carrying of a heavy burthen, are by far the most laborious. An Irishwoman, though not reared to the streets, will carry heavy baskets of oranges or apples, principally when those fruits are cheap, along the streets while her English co-trader (if not a costermonger) may be vending laces, millinery, artificial flowers, or other commodities of a "light," and in some degree of street estimation a "genteel" trade. Some of the less laborious callings, however, such as that in wash-leathers, are principally in the hands of young and middle-aged Irishwomen, while that in sheeps'-trotters, which does not entail heavy labour, are in the hands mostly of elderly Irishwomen. The sale of such things as lucifer-matches and water-cresses, and any "stock" of general use, and attainable for a few pence, is resorted to by the very poor of every class. The Irishwoman more readily unites begging with selling than the Englishwoman, and is far more fluent and even eloquent; perhaps she pays less regard to truth, but she unquestionably pays a greater regard to chastity. When the uneducated Irishwoman, however, has fallen into licentious ways, she is, as I once heard it expressed, the most "savagely wicked" of any.

After these broad distinctions I proceed to details.

1. From the best information at my command it may be affirmed that about one-half of the women employed in the diverse trades of the streets, are the wives or concubines (permanently or temporarily) of the men who pursue a similar mode of livelihood—the male street-sellers. I may here observe that I was informed by an experienced police-officer—who judged from his personal observation, without any official or even systematic investigation—that the women of the town, who survived their youth or their middle age, did not resort to the sale of any commodity in the streets, but sought the shelter of the workhouse, or died, he could not tell where or under what circumstances. Of the verity of this statement I have no doubt, as a street-sale entails some degree of industry or of exertion, for which the life of those wretched women may have altogether unfitted them.

In the course of the narratives and statements I have given, it is shown that some wives pursue one (itinerant or stationary) calling, while the husband pursues another. The trades in which the husband and wife (and I may here remark that when I speak of "wives," I include all, so regarded in street life, whether legally united or not)—the trades in which the woman is,

more than in any others, literally the help-mate of the man, are the costermonger's (including the flower, or root, sellers) and the crockery-ware people. To the costermonger some help is often indispensable, and that of a wife is the cheapest and the most honest (to say nothing of the considerations connected with a home) which can be obtained. Among the more prosperous costermongers too, especially those who deal in fish, the wife attends to the stall while the husband goes "a round," and thus a greater extent of business is transacted. In the root and crockery-trades the woman's assistance is necessary when barter takes place instead of sale, as the husband may be ignorant of the value of the old female attire which even "high-hip ladies," as they were described to me, loved to exchange for a fuchsia or a geranium; for a glass cream-jug or a china ornament. Of the married women engaged in any street trade, I believe nineteen-twentieths are the wives of men also pursuing some street avocation.

2. There are, however, large classes of female street-sellers who may be looked upon as exceptions, the wife selling in the streets while the husband is engaged in some manual labour, but they are only partially exceptions. In the sale of wash-leathers, for instance, are the wives of many Irish bricklayers' labourers; the woman may be constantly occupied in disposing of her wares in the streets or suburbs, and the man labouring at any building; but in case of the deprivation of work, such a man will at once become a street-seller, and in the winter many burly Irish labourers sell a few nuts or "baked taties," or a few pairs of braces, or some article which seems little suitable for the employment of men of thews and muscle. In the course of my present inquiry I have, in only very rare instances, met with a poor Irishman, who had not a reason always at his tongue's end to justify anything he was doing. Ask a bricklayer's labourer why, in his youth and strength, he is selling nuts, and he will at once reply: "Sure thin, your honnur, isn't it better than doin' nothing? I must thry and make a pinny, 'til I'm in worruk again, and glory be to God, I hope that'll be soon."

An experienced man, who knows all the street-folk trading in Whitechapel and its neighbourhood, and about Spitalfields, told me that he could count up 100 married women, in different branches of open-air commerce, and of them only two had husbands who worked regularly in-doors. The husband of one woman works for a slop-tailor, the other is a bobbin turner; the tailor's wife sells water-cresses every morning and afternoon; the turner's wife is a "small-ware woman." The tailor, however, told my informant that his eyesight was failing him, that his earnings became less and less, that he was treated like dirt, and would go into some street-trade himself before long. When the man and his wife are both in the street-trade, it is the case in three instances out of four (excluding of course the costermongers, root-sellers, and crock-man's pursuits) that the couple carry on different callings.

In the full and specific accounts I gave of the largest body of street-sellers, viz., the costermongers, I showed that concubinage among persons of all ages was the rule, and marriage the exception. It was computed that, taking the mass of costermongers, only one couple in twenty, living together, were married, except in Clerkenwell, where the costers are very numerous, and where the respected incumbent at certain seasons marries poor persons gratuitously; there one couple in ten were really man and wife.

Of the other classes of women street-sellers, directly the reverse is the case; of those living as man and wife, one couple in twenty may be *unmarried*. An intelligent informant thought this average too high, and that it was more probably one in sixteen. But I incline to the opinion of one in twenty, considering how many of the street-traders have "seen better days," and were married before they apprehended being driven to a street career. In this enumeration I include only street-traders. Among such people as ballad singers, concubinage, though its wrongfulness is far better understood than among ignorant costermongers, is practised even more fully; and there is often among such classes even worse than concubinage—a dependance, more or less, on the wages of a woman's prostitution, and often a savage punishment to the wretched woman, if those wages of sin are scant or wanting.

3. The widows in the street-trades are very generally the widows of street-sellers. I believe that very few of the widows of mechanics, when left unprovided for on their husbands' demise, resort to street traffic. If they have been needlewomen before marriage, they again seek for employment at needle-work; if they have been servants, they become charwomen, or washerwomen, or again endeavour to obtain a livelihood in domestic service.

There are some to whom those resources are but starvation, or a step from starvation, or whom they fail entirely, and then they "must try the streets," as they will describe it. If they are young and reckless, they become prostitutes; if in more advanced years, or with good principles, they turn street-sellers; but this is only when destitution presses sharply.

4. The single women in the street-callings are generally the daughters of street-sellers, but their number is not a twentieth of the others, excepting they are the daughters of Irish parents. The costermongers' daughters either help their parents, with whom they reside, or carry on some similar trade; or they soon form connections with the other sex, and easily sever the parental tie, which very probably has been far too lax or far too severe. I made many inquiries, but I did not hear of any unmarried young woman, not connected with street-folk by birth or rearing, such as a servant maid,—endeavouring to support herself when out of work or place by a street avocation. Such a person will starve on slop millinery or slop shirt-making; or will, as much or more from desperation than from viciousness, go upon the town. With the

Irish girls the case is different: brought up to a street-life, used to whine and blarney, they grow up to womanhood in street-selling, and as they rarely form impure connections, and as no one may be induced to offer them marriage, their life is often one of street celibacy. A young Irishwoman, to whom I was referred in the course of my inquiry among fruit-sellers, had come to London in the hopes of meeting her brother, with whom she was to emigrate; but she could learn nothing of him, and, concluding that he was dead, became an apple-seller. She sat, when I saw her, on cold wintry days, at the corner of a street in the Commercial-road, seemingly as much dead as alive, and slept with an aunt, also a single woman, who was somewhat similarly circumstanced; and thus these two women lived on about 6d. a day each. Their joint bed was 1s. a week, and they contrived to subsist on what remained when this shilling was paid. The niece referred me, not without a sense of pride, to her priest, as to her observance of her religious duties, and declared that where she lodged there were none but women lodgers, and those chiefly her own countrywomen. I believe such cases are not uncommon. A few, who have had the education of ladies (as in the case of an envelope-seller whose statement I gave), are driven to street-trading, but it is as a desperate grasp at something to supply less bitter bread, however little of it, than is supplied in the workhouse. I have many a time heard poor women say: "God knows, sir, I should live far better, and be better lodged and better cared for in the house (they seldom call it workhouse), but I'd rather live on 2d. a day." Into the question of out and in-door relief I need not now enter, but the prevalent feeling I have indicated is one highly honourable to the English poor. I have heard it stated that the utter repugnance to a workhouse existence was weaker than it used to be among the poor, but I have not met with anything to uphold such an opinion.

Such constitute the several classes of women street-sellers. I shall now proceed to speak of the habits and characters of this peculiar portion of the street-folk.

As regards the religion of the women in street-trades, it is not difficult to describe it. The Irishwomen are Roman Catholics. Perhaps I am justified in stating that they are *all* of that faith. The truth of this assertion is proved, moreover, to as full a demonstration as it very well can be proved without actual enumeration, by the fact that the great majority of the Irishwomen in the streets are from the Catholic provinces of Connaught, Leinster, and Munster; there are very few from Ulster, and not one-twentieth of the whole from any one of the other provinces. Perhaps, again, it is not extravagant to estimate that three-fourths of the women and girls from the sister island, now selling things in the streets, have been, when in their own country, connected through their husbands or parents with the cultivation of the land. It is not so easy to speak of what the remaining fourth were before they became immigrants. Some were the wives of mechanics, who, when their husbands

failing to obtain work in London became street-traders, had adopted the same pursuits. I met with one intelligent man having a stall of very excellent fruit in Battle-bridge, who had been a brogue-maker. He had been in business on his own account in Tralee, but mended the indifferent profits of brogue-making by a little trade in "dry goods." This, he told me with a cautious glance around him and in a half whisper, though it was twenty-eight years since he left his country, meant smuggled tobacco. He found it advisable, on account of being "wanted" by the revenue officers, to leave Tralee in great haste. He arrived in London, got employment as a bricklayer's labourer, and sent for his wife to join him. This she did, and from her first arrival, sold fruit in the streets. In two or three years the husband's work among the builders grew slack, and he then took to the streets. Another man, a shoemaker, who came from Dublin to obtain work in London, as he was considered "a good hand," could not obtain it, but became a street-seller, and his wife, previously to himself, had resorted to a street-trade in fruit. He became a widower and married as "his second," the daughter of an Irish carpenter who had been disappointed in emigrating from London, and whose whole family had become fruit-sellers. A third man, who had worked at his trade of a tailor in Cork, Waterford, Wicklow, and Dublin (he "tramped" from Cork to Dublin) had come to London and been for many years a street-seller in different capacities. His wife and daughter now assist him, or trade independently, in selling "roots." "Rayther," this man said, "than put up wid the wages and the *ter-rutement* (said very emphatically) o' thim slop masters at the Aist Ind, I'd sill myself as a slave. The straits doesn't degrade a man like thim thieves o' the worruld." This man knew, personally, ten Irish mechanics who were street-sellers in London, as were their wives and families, including some five-and-twenty females.

I adduce these and the following details somewhat minutely, as they tend to show by what class of Irish immigrants the streets of the imperial metropolis are stocked with so large a body of open-air traders.

There is also another class of women who, I am informed on good authority, sometimes become street-sellers, though I met with no instance myself. The orphan children of poor Irish parents are, on the demise of their father and no other sometimes taken into a workhouse and placed out as domestic servants. So, as regards domestic servants, are the daughters of Irish labourers, by their friends or the charitable. As the wages of these young girls are small and sometimes nominal, the work generally hard, and in no few instances the food scanty and the treatment severe, domestic service becomes distasteful, and a street life "on a few oranges and limmons" is preferred. There is, moreover, with some of this class another cause which almost compels the young Irish girl into the adoption of some street calling. A peevish mistress, whose numerous family renders a servant necessary, but whose means are small or precarious,

becomes bitterly dissatisfied with the awkwardness or stupidity of her Irish handmaiden; the girl's going, or "teasing to go," every Sunday morning to mass is annoying, and the girl is often discharged, or discharges herself "in a huff." The mistress, perhaps, with the low tyranny dear to vulgar minds, refuses her servant a character, or, in giving one, suppresses any good qualities, and exaggerates the failings of impudence, laziness, lying, and dirtiness. Thus the girl cannot obtain another situation, and perforce perhaps she becomes a street-seller.

The readiness with which young Irish people thus adapt themselves to all the uncertainties and hardships of a street life is less to be wondered at when we consider that the Irish live together, or at any rate associate with one another, in this country, preserving their native tastes, habits, and modes of speech. Among their tastes and habits, a dislike to a street life does not exist as it does among English girls.

The poor Irish females in London are for the most part regular in their attendance at mass, and this constant association in their chapels is one of the links which keeps the street-Irish women so much distinct from the street-English. In the going to and returning from the Roman Catholic chapels, there is among these people—I was told by one of the most intelligent of them—a talk of family and secular matters,—of the present too high price of oranges to leave full 6d. a day at two a penny, and the probable time when cherries would be "in" and cheap, "plaze God to prosper them." In these colloquies there is an absence of any interference by English street-sellers, and an unity of conversation and interest peculiarly Irish. It is thus that the tie of religion, working with the other causes, keeps the Irish in the London streets knitted to their own ways, and is likely to keep them so, and, perhaps, to add to their number.

It was necessary to write somewhat at length of so large a class of women who are professors of a religion, but of the others the details may be brief; for, as to the great majority, religion is almost a nonentity. For this absence of religious observances, the women street-sellers make many, and sometimes, I must confess, valiant excuses. They must work on a Sunday morning, they will say, or they can't eat; or else they tell you, they are so tired by knocking about all the week that they must rest on a Sunday; or else they have no clothes to go to church in, and ar'n't a-going there just to be looked down upon and put in any queer place as if they had a fever, and for ladies to hold their grand dresses away from them as they walked in to their grand pews. Then, again, some assert they are not used to sit still for so long a time, and so fall asleep. I have heard all these causes assigned as reasons for not attending church or chapel.

A few women street-sellers, however, do attend the Sunday service of the Church of England. One lace-seller told me that she did so because it obliged Mrs. ———, who was the best friend and customer she had, and who always looked from

her pew in the gallery to see who were on the poor seats. A few others, perhaps about an equal number, attend dissenting places of worship of the various denominations—the Methodist chapels comprising more than a half. If I may venture upon a calculation founded on the result of my inquiries, and on the information of others who felt an interest in the matter, I should say that about five female street-sellers attended Protestant places of worship, in the ratio of a hundred attending the Roman Catholic chapels.

The localities in which the female street-sellers reside are those (generally) which I have often had occasion to specify as the abodes of the poor. They congregate principally, however, in the neighbourhood of some street-market. The many courts in Ray-street, Turnmill-street, Cow-cross, and other parts of Clerkenwell, are full of street-sellers, especially costermongers, some of those costermongers being also drovers. Their places of sale are in Clerkenwell-green, Aylesbury-street, and St. John-street. Others reside in Vine-street (late Mutton-hill), Saffron-hill, Portpool Lane, Baldwin's-gardens, and the many streets or alleys stretching from Leather-lane to Gray's-inn-lane, with a few of the better sort in Cromer-street. Their chief mart is Leather-lane, now one of the most crowded markets in London. The many who use the Brill as their place of street-traffic, reside in Brill-row, in Ossulston-street, Wilstead-street, Chapel-street, and in the many small intersecting lanes and alleys connected with those streets, and in other parts of Somers-town. The saleswomen in the Cripplegate street-markets, such as Whitecross-street, Fore-street, Golden-lane, &c., reside in Play-house-yard, and in the thick congregation of courts and alleys, approximating to Aldersgate-street, Fore-street, Bunhill-row, Chiswell-street, Barbican, &c., &c. Advancing eastward, the female street-sellers in Shoreditch (including the divisions of the Bishopsgate-streets Within and Without, Norton Folgate, and Holywell-street) reside in and about Artillery-lane, Half-moon-street, and the many narrow "clefts" (as they are called in one of Leigh Hunt's essays) stretching on the right hand as you proceed along Bishopsgate-street, from its junction with Cornhill; "clefts" which, on my several visits, have appeared to me as among the foulest places in London. On the left-hand side, proceeding in the same direction, the street-sellers reside in Long-alley, and the many yards connected with that, perhaps narrowest, in proportion to its length, of any merely pedestrian thoroughfare in London. Mixed with the poor street-sellers about Long-alley, I may observe, are a mass of the tailors and shoemakers employed by the east-end slop-masters; they are principally Irish workmen, carrying on their crafts many in one room, to economise the rent, while some of their wives are street-sellers.

The street-sellers in Spitalfields and Bethnal-green are so mixed up as to their abodes with the wretchedly underpaid cabinet-makers who supply the "slaughter-houses;" with slop-employed tailors and shoemakers (in the employ of a class, as respects shoemakers, known as "garret-

masters" or middle-men, between the workman and the wholesale warehouse-man), bobbin-turners, needle-women, slop-milliners, &c., that I might tediously enumerate almost every one of the many streets known, emphatically enough, as the "poor streets." These poor streets are very numerous, running eastward from Shoreditch to the Cambridge-road, and southward from the Bethnal-green-road to Whitechapel and the Mile End-road. The female street-sellers in Whitechapel live in Wentworth-street, Thrawl-street, Osborne-street, George-yard, and in several of their interminglements with courts and narrow streets. The Petticoat-lane street-dealers are generally Jews, and live in the poorer Jewish quarters, in Petticoat-lane and its courts, and in the streets running on thence to Houndsditch. Rosemary-lane has many street-sellers, but in the lane itself and its many yards and blind alleys they find their domiciles. Westward in the metropolis one of the largest street-markets is in Tottenham-court-road; and in the courts between Fitzroy-market and Tottenham-court-road are the rooms of the women vending their street goods. Those occupying the Hampstead-road with their stalls—which is but a continuation of the Tottenham-court-road market—live in the same quarters. In what is generally called the St. George's-market, meaning the stalls at the western extremity of Oxford-street, the women who own those stalls reside in and about Thomas-street, Tom's-court, and the wretched places—the very existence of which is perhaps unknown to their aristocratic neighbourhood—about Grosvenor-square; some of them lamentably wretched places. It might be wearisome to carry on this enumeration further. It may suffice to observe, that in the populous parts of Southwark, Lambeth, and Newington, wherever there is a street-market, are small or old streets inhabited by the street-sellers, and at no great distance. From the Obelisk at the junction, or approximate junction, of the Westminster, Waterloo, Blackfriars, Borough, and London-roads, in pretty well every direction to the banks of the Thames, are a mass of private-looking streets—as far as the absence of shops constitutes the privacy of a street—old and half-ruinous, or modern and trim, in all of which perhaps may be found street-sellers, and in some of which are pickpockets, thieves, and prostitutes.

Of course it must be understood that these specified localities are the residence of the male, as well as the female street-sellers, both adults and children.

The proportion of female street-traders who reside in lodging-houses may be estimated at one-tenth of the entire number. This may appear a small proportion, but it must be remembered that the costermongering women do not reside in lodging-houses—so removing the largest class of street-folk from the calculation of the numbers thus accommodated—and that the Irish who pursue street callings with any regularity generally prefer living, if it be two or three families in a room, in a place of their own. The female

street-folk sleeping in lodging-houses, and occasionally taking their meals there, are usually those who are itinerant; the women who have a settled trade, especially a "pitch," reside in preference in some "place of their own." Of the number in lodging-houses one half may be regular inmates, some having a portion of a particular room to themselves; the others are casual sojourners, changing their night's shelter as convenience prompts.

Of the female street-sellers residing in houses of ill-fame there are not many; perhaps not many more than 100. I was told by a gentleman whose connection with parochial matters enabled him to form an opinion, that about Whitecross-street, and some similar streets near the Cornwall-road, and stretching away to the Blackfriars and Borough-roads—the locality which of any in London is perhaps the most rank with prostitution and its attendant evils—there might be 600 of those wretched women and of all ages, from 15 to upwards of 40; and that among them he believed there were barely a score who occupied themselves with street-sale. Of women, and more especially of girl, street-sellers, such as flower-girls, those pursuing immoral courses are far more numerous than 100, but they do not often reside in houses notoriously of ill-fame, but in their own rooms (and too often with their parents) and in low lodging-houses. For women who are street-sellers, without the practice of prostitution, to reside in a house of ill-fame, would be a reckless waste of money; as I am told that in so wretched a street as White-horse-street, the rent of a front kitchen is 4s. 6d. a week; of a back kitchen, 3s. 6d.; of a front parlour, 6s.; and of a back parlour, 4s. 6d.; all being meagrely furnished and very small. This is also accounted one of the cheapest of all such streets. The rent of a street-seller's unfurnished room is generally 1s. 6d. or even 1s. a week; a furnished room is 3s. or 2s. 6d.

The state of education among the female street-sellers is very defective. Perhaps it may be said that among the English costers not one female in twenty can read, and not one in forty can write. But they are fond of listening to any one who reads the newspaper or any exciting story. Among the street-selling Irish, also, education is very defective. As regards the adults, who have been of woman's estate before they left Ireland, a knowledge of reading and writing may be as rare as among the English costerwomen; but with those who have come to this country sufficiently young, or have been born here, education is far more diffused than among the often more prosperous English street children. This is owing to the establishment of late years of many Roman Catholic schools, at charges suited to the poor, or sometimes free, and of the Irish parents having availed themselves (probably on the recommendation of the priest) of such opportunities for the tuition of their daughters, which the English costers have neglected to do with equal chances. Of the other classes whom I have specified as street-sellers, I believe I may say that the educa-

tion of the females is about the average of that of "servants of all work" who have been brought up amidst struggles and poverty; they can read, but with little appreciation of what they read, and have therefore little taste for books, and often little leisure even if they have taste. As to writing, a woman told me that at one time, when she was "in place," and kept weekly accounts, she had been complimented by her mistress on her neat hand, but that she and her husband (a man of indifferent character) had been street-sellers for seven or eight years, and during all that time she had only once had a pen in her hand; this was a few weeks back, in signing a petition—something about Sundays, she said—she wrote her name with great pain and difficulty, and feared that she had not even spelled it aright! I may here repeat that I found the uneducated always ready to attribute their want of success in life to their want of education; while the equally poor street-sellers, who were "scholars," are as apt to say, "It's been of no manner of use to me." In all these matters I can but speak generally. The male street-sellers who have seen better days have of course been better educated, but the most intelligent of the street class are the patters, and of them the females form no portion.

The diet of the class I am describing is, as regards its poorest members, tea and bread or bread and grease; a meal composed of nothing else is their fare twice or thrice a day. Sometimes there is the addition of a herring—or a plaice, when plaice are two a penny—but the consumption of cheap fish, with a few potatoes, is more common among the poor Irish than the poor English female street-sellers. "Indeed, sir," said an elderly woman, who sold cakes of blacking and small wares, "I could make a meal on fish and potatoes, cheaper than on tea and bread and butter, though I don't take milk with my tea—I've got to like it better without milk than with it—but if you're a long time on your legs in the streets and get to your bit of a home for a cup of tea, you want a bit of rest over it, and if you have to cook fish it's such a trouble. O, no, indeed, this time of year there's no 'casion to light a fire for your tea—and tea 'livens you far more nor a herring—because there's always some neighbour to give a poor woman a jug of boiling water." Married women, who may carry on a trade distinct from that of their husbands, live as well as their earnings and the means of the couple will permit: what they consider good living is a dinner daily off "good block ornaments" (small pieces of meat, discoloured and dirty, but not tainted, usually set for sale on the butcher's block), tripe, cow-heel, beef-sausages, or soup from a cheap cook-shop, "at 2d. a pint." To this there is the usual accompaniment of beer, which, in all populous neighbourhoods, is "3d. a pot (quart) in your own jugs." From what I could learn, it seems to me that an inordinate or extravagant indulgence of the palate, under any circumstances, is far less common among the female than the male street-sellers.

During the summer and the fine months of the spring and autumn, there are, I am assured, one-third of the London street-sellers—male and female—

"tramping" the country. At Maidstone Fair the other day, I was told by an intelligent itinerant dealer, there were 300 women, all of whose faces he believed he had seen at one time or other in London. The Irish, however, tramp very little into the country for purposes of trade, but they travel in great numbers from one place to another for purposes of mendicancy; or, if they have a desire to emigrate, they will tramp from London to Liverpool, literally begging their way, no matter whether they have or have not any money. The female street-sellers are thus a fluctuating body.

The beggars among the women who profess to be street-traders are chiefly Irishwomen, some of whom, though otherwise well-conducted, sober and chaste, beg shamelessly and with any mendacious representation. It is remarkable enough, too, that of the Irishwomen who will thus beg, many if employed in any agricultural work, or in the rougher household labours, such as scouring or washing, will work exceedingly hard. To any feeling of self-respect or self-dependence, however, they seem dead; their great merit is their chastity, their great shame their lying and mendicancy.

The female street-sellers are again a fluctuating body, as in the summer and autumn months. A large proportion go off to work in market-gardens, in the gathering of peas, beans, and the several fruits; in weeding, in hay-making, in the corn-harvest (when they will endeavour to obtain leave to glean if they are unemployed more profitably), and afterwards in the hopping. The women, however, thus seeking change of employment, are the ruder street-sellers, those who merely buy oranges at 4d. to sell at 6d., and who do not meddle with any calling mixed up with the necessity of skill in selection, or address in recommending. Of this half-vagrant class, many are not street-sellers usually, but are half prostitutes and half thieves, not unfrequently drinking all their earnings, while of the habitual female street-sellers, I do not think that drunkenness is now a very prevalent vice. Their earnings are small, and if they become habituated to an indulgence in drink, their means are soon dissipated; in which case they are unable to obtain stock-money, and they cease to be street-sellers.

If I may venture upon an estimation, I should say that the women engaged in street sale—wives, widows, and single persons—number from 25,000 to 30,000, and that their average earnings run from 2s. 6d. to 4s. a week.

I shall now proceed to give the histories of individuals belonging to each of the above class of female street-sellers, with the view of illustrating what has been said respecting them generally.

OF A SINGLE WOMAN, AS A STREET-SELLER.

I HAD some difficulty, for the reasons I have stated, in finding a single woman who, by her unaided industry, supported herself on the sale of street merchandise. There were plenty of single young women so engaged, but they lived, or lodged, with their parents or with one parent,

or they had some support, however trifling, from some quarter or other. Among the street

I could have obtained statements from many single women who depended on their daily sale for their daily bread, but I have already given instances of their street life. One Irishwoman, a spinster of about 50, for I had some conversation with her in the course of a former inquiry, had supported herself alone, by street sale, for many years. She sat, literally packed in a sort of hamper-basket, at the corner of Charles-street, Leather-lane. She seemed to fit herself cross-legged, like a Turk, or a tailor on his shop-board, into her hamper; her fruit stall was close by her, and there she seemed to doze away life day by day—for she usually appeared to be wrapped in slumber. If any one approached her stall, however, she seemed to awake, as it were, mechanically. I have missed this poor woman of late, and I believe she only packed herself up in the way described when the weather was cold.

A woman of about 26 or 27—I may again remark that the regular street-sellers rarely know their age—made the following statement. She was spare and sickly looking, but said that her health was tolerably good.

"I used to mind my mother's stall," she stated, "when I was a girl, when mother wasn't well or had a little work at pea-shelling or such like. She sold sweet-stuff. No, she didn't make it, but bought it. I never cared for it, and when I was quite young I've sold sweet-stuffs as I never tasted. I never had a father. I can't read or write, but I like to hear people read. I go to Zion Chapel sometimes of a Sunday night, the singing's so nice. I don't know what religion you may call it of, but it's a Zion Chapel. Mother's been dead these—well I don't know how long, but it's a long time. I've lived by myself ever since, and kept myself, and I have half a room with another young woman who lives by making little boxes. I don't know what sort of boxes. Pill-boxes? Very likely, sir, but I can't say I ever saw any. She goes out to work on another box-maker's premises. She's no better off nor me. We pays 1s. 6d. a-week between us; it's my bed, and the other sticks is her'n. We 'gree well enough. I haven't sold sweet stuff for a great bit. I've sold small wares in the streets, and artificials (artificial flowers), and lace, and penny dolls, and penny boxes (of toys). No, I never hear anything improper from young men. Boys has sometimes said, when I've been selling sweets, 'Don't look so hard at 'em, or they'll turn sour.' I never minded such nonsense. I has very few amusements. I goes once or twice a month, or so, to the gallery at the Wick (Victoria Theatre), for I live near. It's beautiful there. O, it's really grand. I don't know what they call what's played, because I can't read the bills.

"I hear what they're called, but I forgets. I knows Miss Vincent and John Herbert when they come on. I likes them the best. I'm a going to leave the streets. I have an aunt a laundress, because she was mother's sister, and I always helped her, and she taught me laundressing. I

work for her three and sometimes four days a-week now, because she's lost her daughter Ann, and I'm known as a good ironer. Another laundress will employ me next week, so I'm dropping the streets, as I can do far better. I'm not likely to be married and I don't want to."

OF A MECHANIC'S WIFE, AS A STREET-SELLER.

A MIDDLE-aged woman, presenting what may be best understood as a decency of appearance, for there was nothing remarkable in her face or dress, gave me the following account of her experience as a street-seller, and of her feelings when she first became one:—

"I went into service very young in the country," she said, "but mistress brought me up to London with her, where master had got a situation: the children was so fond of me. I saved a little money in that and other places as girls often does, and they seems not to save it so much for themselves as for others. Father got the first bit of money I saved, or he would have been seized for rent—he was only a working man (agricultural labourer)—and all the rest I scraped went before I'd been married a fortnight, for I got married when I was 24. O no, indeed, I don't mean that my money was wasted by my husband. It was every farthing laid out in the house, besides what he had, for we took a small house in a little street near the Commercial-road, and let out furnished rooms. We did very well at first with lodgings, but the lodgers were mates of vessels, or people about the river and the docks, and they were always coming and going, and the rooms was often empty, and some went away in debt. My husband is a smith, and was in middling work for a good while. Then he got a job to go with some horses to France, for he can groom a horse as well as shoe it, and he was a long time away, three or four months, for he was sent into another country when he got to France, but I don't understand the particulars of it. The rooms was empty and the last lodger went away without paying, and I had nothing to meet the quarter's rent, and the landlord, all of a sudden almost, put in the brokers, for he said my husband would never come back, and perhaps I should be selling the furniture and be off to join him, for he told me it was all a planned thing he knew. And so the furniture was sold for next to nothing, and 1*l.* 6*s.* was given to me after the sale; I suppose that was over when all was paid, but I'd been forced to part with some linen and things to live upon and pay the rates, that came very heavy. My husband came back to an empty house three days after, and he'd been unlucky, for he brought home only 4*l.* instead of 10*l.* at least, as he expected, but he'd been cheated by the man he went into the other country with. Yes, the man that cheated him was an Englishman, and my poor John was put to great trouble and expense, and was in a strange place without knowing a word of the language. But the foreigners was very kind to him, he said, and didn't laugh at him when he tried to make hisself understood, as I've seen people do here many a time. The

landlord gave us 1*l.* to give up the house, as he had a good offer for it, and so we had to start again in the world like.

"Our money was almost all gone before John got regular work, tho' he had some odd jobs, and then he had for a good many months the care of a horse and cart for a tradesman in the City. Shortly after that he was laid up a week with a crushed leg, but his master wouldn't wait a week for him, so he hired another: 'I have nothing to say against John,' says he, when I told his master of the accident, 'and I'm sorry, very sorry, but my business can't be hindered by waiting for people getting better of accidents.' John got work at his own business next, but there was always some stopper. He was ill, or I was ill, and if there was 10*s.* in the house, then it went and wasn't enough. And so we went on for a good many years, I don't know how many. John kept working among horses and carts, or at his own business, but what with travelling abroad, I suppose, and such like, he got to like best to be in the streets, and he has his health best that way." (The husband, it is evident, was afflicted with the restlessness of the tribe.) "About seven years ago we were very badly off—no work, and no money, and neither of us well. Then I used to make a few women's plain night-caps and plain morning caps for servants, and sell them to a shopkeeper, but latterly I couldn't sell them at all, or get no more than the stuff cost me, without any profit for labour. So at last—and it was on a Friday evening of all unlucky times—my gold wedding-ring that cost 8*s.* 6*d.*, and that I'd stuck to all along, had to be pawned for 4*s.* 6*d.* for rent and bread. That was a shocking time, sir. We've sat in the dark of an evening, for we could get neither coals nor a candle as we was a little in debt, and John said, it was a blessing after all perhaps that we hadn't no family, for he often, both joking and serious, wished for children, but it wasn't God's will you see that we should have any. One morning when I woke very early I found my husband just going out, and when I asked him what sent him out so soon, he says: 'It's for nothing bad, so don't fret yourself, old gal.' That day he walked all over London and called on all the masters as had employed him, or knowed him, and told them how he was situated, and said that if he could borrow 20*s.* up and down, he could do a little, he knew—the thought of it came into his mind all of a sudden—in going about with a horse and cart, that he could hire, and sell coals to poor people. He raised 8*s.* 6*d.*, I think it was, and started with a quarter of a ton of coals, and then another quarter when the first was sold, and he carried it on for three or four weeks. But the hire of the horse and cart took all the profit, and the poor people wanted credit, besides people must cheat to thrive as sells coals in the street. All this time I could do nothing—though I tried for washing and charing, but I'm slow at washing—but starve at home, and be afraid every knock was the landlord. After that John was employed to carry a very heavy board over his shoulder, and so as to have it read on both sides. It was about an eating-house, and I went



THE LONDON DUSTMAN.

"Dust Hoi! Dust Hoi!"

[From a Photograph.]

with him to give little bills about it to all we met, for it was as much as a man could do to carry the board. He had 1s. a day, and I had 6d. That was my first time in the streets and I felt so 'shamed to come to that. I thought if I met any people I knew in Essex, or any of my old mistresses, what would they think. Then we had all sorts of jokes to stand. We both looked pinched, and young gents used to say, 'Do you dine there yourselves?' and the boys—O, of all the torments!—they've shouted out, 'Excellent Dining-rooms' that was on the board, sir, 'and two jolly specimens of the style of grub!' I could have knocked their saucy heads together. We was resting in the shade one day—and we were anxious to do our best, for 1s. 6d. a day was a great thing then—and an old gentleman came up and said he was glad to get out of the sun. He looked like a parson, but was a joky man, and he'd been having some wine, I think, he smelled of it so. He began to talk to us and ask us questions, such as you have, sir, and we told him how we was situated. 'God bless you,' says he, 'for I think you're honest folks. People that lie don't talk like you; here's some loose silver I have,' and he gave John 5s. 6d. and went away. We could hardly think it was real; it seemed such a lot of money just then, to be got clear all at once. I've never seen him since, and never saw him, as I knows of, before, but may God Almighty bless him wherever he is, for I think that 5s. 6d. put new life into us, and brought a blessing. A relation of John's came to London not long after and gave him a sovereign and sent him some old clothes, and very good ones, when he went back. Then John hired a barrow—it's his own now—and started as a costermonger. A neighbour of ourn told him how to do it, and he's done very well at it since.

"Well, you know, sir, I could'nt like to stay at home by myself doing of a nothing, and I couldn't get any charing; besides John says, 'Why, can't you sell something?' So I made some plain women's caps, and as we lived in Ann's-place, Waterloo-road, then, I went into the New Cut with them on a Saturday night. But there was such crowding, and shoving, and shouting, that I was kept under and sold only one cap. I was very much nervoused before I went and thought again—it was very foolish, I know—'if I saw anybody from Essex,' for country people seem to think all their friends in London are making fortunes! Before I went my landlady would treat me to a little drop of gin to give me spirits, and 'for luck,' but I think it made me more nervoused. I very seldom taste any. And John's very good that way. He takes his pint or two every now and then, but I know where he uses, and if it gets late I go for him and he comes home. The next time I went to sell in the Cut I got bold, for I knew I was doing nothing but what was honest; I've sold caps, and millinery, and laces, and artificial flowers, and such like ever since. We've saved a little money now, which is in the bank, thank God, but that's not done by costering, or by my trade. But my husband buys

a poney every now and then, and grooms and fattens it up well, and makes it quite another thing, and so clears a pound or two; he once cleared 3l. 15s. on it. We don't go to church or chapel on a Sunday, we're so tired out after the week's work. But John reads a tract that a young lady leaves 'till he falls asleep over it."

OF AN IRISHWOMAN, AS A STREET-SELLER.

I HAVE before had occasion to remark the aptitude of the poor Irish in the streets of London not so much to lie, which may be too harsh a word when motives and idiosyncrasy are considered, but to exaggerate, and misrepresent, and colour in such a way that the truth becomes a mere incident in the narrative, instead of being the animating principle throughout. I speak here not as regards any direct question or answer on one specific point, but as regards a connected statement. Presuming that a poor Irishwoman, for instance, had saved up a few shillings, very likely for some laudable purpose, and had them hidden about her person, and was asked if she had a farthing in the world, she would reply with a look of most stolid innocence, "Sorra a fardin, sir." This of course is an unmitigated lie. Then ask her *why* she is so poor and what are her hopes for the future, and a very slender substratum of truth will suffice for the putting together of a very ingenious history, if she think the occasion requires it.

It is the same when these poor persons are questioned as to their former life. They have heard of societies to promote emigration, and if they fancy that any inquiries are made of them with a view to emigration, they will ingeniously shape their replies so as to promote or divert that object, according to their wishes. If they think the inquiries are for some charitable purpose, their tale of woe and starvation is heart-rending. The probability is that they may have suffered much, and long, and bravely, but they will still exaggerate. In one thing, however, I have found them understate the fact, and that I believe principally, or wholly, when they had been previously used to the most wretched of the Irish hovels. I mean as to their rooms. "Where do you live," may be asked. "Will, thin, in Paraker-street (Parker-street) Derwry-lane?" "Have you a decent room?" "Shure, thin, and it is dacint for a poor woman." On a visit, perhaps the room will be found smoky, filthy, half-ruinous, and wretched in every respect. I believe, however, that if these poor people could be made to comprehend the motives which caused their being questioned for the purposes of this work, the elucidation of the truth—motives which they cannot be made to understand—they would speak with a far greater regard to veracity. But they will suspect an ulterior object, involving some design on the part of the querist, and they will speak accordingly. To what causes, social or political, national, long-rooted, or otherwise, this spirit may be owing, it is not now my business to inquire.

At the catset of my inquiries amongst the poor

Irish, whose civility and often native politeness, where there is a better degree of intelligence, makes it almost impossible to be angry with them even when you listen to a story of which you believe not one-sixth—at the outset of my inquiries, I say, I was told by an Irish gentleman that I was sure to hear the truth if I had authority to use the name of their priest. I readily obtained the consent of reverend gentlemen to use their names and for any purpose of inquiry, a courtesy which I thankfully acknowledge. I mention this more especially, that it may not be thought that there has been exaggeration in my foregoing or in the following statement, where the Irish are the narrators. I have little doubt of their truth.

It may be but proper to remark, in order that one class of poor people may not be unduly *depreciated*, while another class is, perhaps, unduly *appreciated*, that the poor Irishman is much more imaginative, is readier of wit and far readier of speech, than an Englishman of a corresponding grade; and were the untaught Englishman equally gifted in those respects, who will avouch that *his* regard for the truth would be much more severe?

Of the causes which induced a good-looking Irish woman to become a street-seller I had the following account, which I give in its curious details:—

“Deed thin, sir, it’s more than 20 long years since I came from Dublin to Liverpool wid my father and mother, and brother William that’s dead and gone, rest his soul. He died when he was fourteen. They was masons in Ireland. Was both father and mother masons, sir? Well, then, in any quiet job mother helped father, for she was a strong woman. They came away sudden. They was in some thurble, but I never knew what, for they wouldn’t talk to me about it. We thravelled from Liverpool to London, for there was no worruk at Liverpool; and he got worruk on buildings in London, and had 18s. a week; and mother cleaned and worruked for a greengrocer, as they called him—he sold coals more than anything—where we lodged, and it wasn’t much, she got, but she aimed what is such a thurble to poor people, the rint. We was well off, and I was sent to school; and we should have been better off, but father took too much to the dhrup, God save him. He fell onste and broke his leg; and though the hospital gintlemen, God bless them for good Christians, got him through it, he got little worruk when he came out again, and died in less than a year. Mother wasn’t long after him; and on her death-bed she said, so low I could hardly hear her, ‘Mary, my darlint, if you starruve, be vartuous. Rimimber poor Illen’s funeral.’ When I was quite a child, sir, I went wid mother to a funeral—she was a relation—and it was of a young woman that died after her child had been borrun a fortnight, and she wasn’t married; that was Illen. Her body was brought out of the lying-in hospital—I’ve often heard spake of it since—and was in the churchyard to be buried; and her brother, that hadn’t seen her for a long time, came and wanted to see her in her

coffin, and they took the lid off, and then he currued her in her coffin afore him; she’d been so wicked. But he wasn’t a good man hisself, and was in dhrink too; still nobody said anything, and he walked away. It made me ill to see Illen in her coffin, and hear him currued, and I’ve rimimbered it ever since.

“I was thin fifteen, I believe, and hadn’t any friends that had any tie to me. I was lone, sir. But the neebours said, ‘Poor thing, she’s left on the shuckrawn’ (homeless); and they helped me, and I got a place. Mistress was very kind at first, that’s my first mistress was, and I had the care of a child of three years old; they had only one, because mistress was busy making waistcoats. Master was a hatter, and away all day, and they was well off. But some women called on mistress once, and they had a deal of talkin’, and blatherin’, and laughin’, and I don’t know how often I was sent out for quarterns of gin. Then they all went out together; and mistress came home quite tipsy just afore master, and went upstairs, and had just time to get into bed; she told me to tell master she had one of her sick head-aches and was forced to go to bed; she went on that way for three or four days, and master and she used to quarrel of a night, for I could hear them. One night he came home sooner than common, and he’d been drinking, or perhaps it might be thurble, and he sent me to bed wid the child; and sometime in the night, I don’t know what time, but I could only see from a gas-lamp that shined into the room, he came in, for there was no fastenin’ inside the door, it was only like a closet, and he began to ask me about mistress. When he larned she’d been drinking wid other women, he used dreadful language, and pulled me out of bed, and struck me with a stick that he snatched up, he could see it in the gas-light, it was little Frank’s horse, and swore at me for not telling him afore. He only struck me onste, but I screamed ever so often, I was so frightened. I dressed myself, and lay down in my clothes, and got up as soon as it was light—it was summer time—and thought I would go away and complain to some one. I would ask the neebours who to complain to. When I was going out there was master walking up and down the kitchen. He’d never been to bed, and he says, says he, ‘Mary, where are you going?’ So I told him, and he begged my pardon, and said he was ashamed of what he’d done, but he was half mad; then he began to cry, and so I cried, and mistress came home just then, and when she saw us both crying together, she cried, and said she wasn’t wanted, as we was man and wife already. Master just gave her a push and down she fell, and he ran out. She seemed so bad, and the child began to cry, that I couldn’t lave thin; and master came home drunk that night, but he wasn’t cross, for he’d made out that mistress had been drinking with some neebours, and had got to her mother’s, and that she was so tipsy she fell asleep, they let her stay till morning, and then some woman set her home, but she’d been there all night. They made

it up at last, but I wouldn’t stay. They was very kind to me when I left, and paid me all that was owing, and gave me a good pair of shoes, too; for they was well off.

“I had a many places for seven years; after that, and when I was out of a place, I stayed wid a widder, and a very dacint woman, she was wid a daughter working for a bookbinder, and the old woman had a good pitch with fruit. Some of my places was very harrud, but shure, again, I met some as was very kind. I left one because they was always wanting me to go to a Methodist chapel, and was always running down my religion, and did all they could to hinder my ever going to mass. They would hardly pay me when I left, because I wouldn’t listen to them, they said—the haythens!—when they would have saved my soul. They save my soul, indeed! The likes o’ thim! Yes, indeed, thin, I had wicked offers sometimes, and from masters that should have known better. I kept no company wid young men. One mistress refused me a karakter, because I was so unhandy, she said; but she thought better of it. At last, I had a fever (fever), and wasn’t expected for long (not expected to live); when I was getting well, everything went to keep me. What wasn’t good enough for the pawn went to the dolly (dolly-shop, generally a rag and bottle shop, or a marine store). When I could get about, I was so shabby, and my clothes hung about me so, that the shops I went to said, ‘Very sorry, but can’t recommend you anywhere;’ and mistresses looked strange at me, and I didn’t know what to do and was miserable. I’d been miserable sometimes in place, and had many a cry, and thought how ‘lone’ I was, but I never was so miserable as this. At last, the old woman I stayed along wid—O, yes, she was an Irishwoman—advised me to sill fruit in the streets, and I began on strawberries, and borrowed 2s. 6d. to do it wid. I had my hilt better than ever thin; and after I’d sold fruit of all kinds for two years, I got married. My husband had a potato can thin. I knew him because he lived near, and I saw him go in and out, and go to mass. After that he got a porter’s place and dropped his can, and he porters when he has a chance still, and has a little work in sewing sacks for the corn-merchants. Whin he’s at home at his sacks, as he is now, he can mind the children—we have two—and I sells a few oranges to make a thrifle. Whin there’s nothing ilse for him to do, he sills fruit in the sthreads, and thin I’m at home. We do middlin, God be praised.”

There is no doubt my informant was a modest, and, in her way, a worthy woman. But it may be doubted if any English girl, after seven years of domestic service, would have so readily adapted herself to a street calling. Had an English girl been living among, and used to the society of women who supported themselves by street labour, her repugnance to such a life might have been lessened; but even then, I doubt if she, who had the virtue to resist the offers told of by my Irish informant, could have made the attempt to live by selling fruit. I do not mean

that she would rather have fallen into immoral courses than honestly live upon the sale of strawberries, but that she would have struggled on and striven to obtain any domestic labour in preference to a street occupation.

OF A WIDOW, A STREET-SELLER.

A WOMAN, apparently about 50, strong-built and red-faced, speaking in a loud tone, and what people of her class account a *heartly* manner, gave me the following account. I can readily condense it, for in her street career there there was nothing very novel. She was the daughter of a costermonger, and she married a costermonger before she was 20. On my hinting that sometimes the marriage ceremony was not considered indispensable, the good woman laughed and said, “married, or as good, it’s hall as one—but we was married.” The marriage was not one of unalloyed happiness, for the couple often wrangled and occasionally fought. This was told to me with some laughter, and with perfect good humour; for the widow seemed interested to have a listener. She did not, I feel confident, exaggerate the merits of the deceased, nor, perhaps, his failings. He was the best judge of fish in the streets, she said, and was the neatest hand in cutting it up, or showing it off; he was not “a bad sort,” and was very fond of his children. When sober and at work he was a quiet fellow, without a cross word for a whole morning, but when drunk, which was far too often (unless *very* drunk, and then he was silly), he went about tearing and swearing “like one o’clock.” But if he saw his wife take but a glass or two, to do her good, he went on like a madman, and as if he never touched it himself. He never had nothing to say to other women—if he had she would have clawed their eyes out, and his’n too—he was as good that way as any nobleman could be, and he was a fine man to look at; and on a Sunday, when he dressed hisself, he was beautiful. He was never in a church in his life, and didn’t trouble hisself about such things; they was no concern of his’n.

It may be thought that I have treated this matter too lightly, but the foregoing is really the substance, and certainly it is the tone, of the widow’s talk, which she poured forth freely, without expressing wonder why any one, a perfect stranger, cared to listen to such a history. She needed but a few hints and leading questions to make her talk on. Nor is this an uncommon quality even among classes who would be shocked to be classed, in any respect, with the Widowed Street-Seller. Their own career, their own sayings and doings, hopes and disappointments, alone interest masses of people, and with the simplicity which not seldom pertains to selfishness, they will readily talk of all that interests themselves, as if it must necessarily interest others. On the whole, though the departed costermonger was greatly deplored by his widow and family, they did very well without him, and carry on the business to this day. He died four or five years back.

I have no doubt this widow is a shrewd sales-

woman enough. I have heard her cry "mack'rel, live mack'rel, eight a shilling, mack'rel!" and at other times, "Eight a bob, fine mack'rel, mack'rel, eight a bob, eight a bob!" On my inquiring as to the cause of this difference in her cries, the fish-seller laughed and said, "I cries eight a bob when I sees people as I thinks is likely to like slang; to others I cries eight a shilling, which no doubt is the right way of talking."

OF THE CHILDREN STREET-SELLERS OF LONDON.

WHEN we consider the spirit of emulation, of imitation, of bravado, of opposition, of just or idle resentment, among boys, according to their training, companionship, natural disposition, and, above all, home treatment, it seems most important to ascertain how these feelings and inclinations are fostered or stimulated by the examples of the free street-life of other lads to be seen on every side. There is no doubt that to a large class of boys, whose parents are not in poverty, the young street ruffian is a hero.

If this inquiry be important, as it unquestionably is, concerning boys, how much more important is it, when it includes the female children of the streets; when it relates to the sex who, in all relations of life, and in all grades of society, are really the guardians of a people's virtue.

The investigation is, again, rendered more interesting and more important, when it includes those children who have known no guidance from parent, master, or relative, but have been flung into the streets through neglect, through viciousness, or as outcasts from utter destitution. Mixed with the children who really *sell* in the streets, are the class who assume to sell that they may have the better chance to steal, or the greater facility to beg.

Before I classify what I consider to be the causes which have driven children to a street career, with all its hardening consequences, I may point out that culpability cannot be imputed to them at the commencement of their course of life. They have been either untaught, mistaught, maltreated, neglected, regularly trained to vice, or fairly turned into the streets to shift for themselves. The censure, then, is attributable to parents, or those who should fill the place of parents—the State, or society. The exceptions to this culpability as regards parents are to be found in the instances where a costermonger employs his children to aid him in his business occupation, which the parents, in their ignorance or prejudices, may account as good as any other, and the youths thus become unfit, perhaps, for any other than a scrambling street life. A second exception may be where the children in a poor family (as continually happens among the Irish in London) *must* sell in the streets, that they may eat in any place.

In the following details I shall consider all to be children who are under fifteen years of age. It is just beyond that age (or the age of puberty) that, as our prison statistics and other returns show, criminal dispositions are developed, "self-

will" becomes more imperious and headstrong, that destructive propensity, or taste, which we term the ruling passion or character of the individual is educed, and the destiny of the human being, especially when apart from the moulding and well-directed care of parents or friends, is influenced perhaps for life.

The *Causes*, then, which fill our streets with children who either manifest the keen and sometimes roguish propensity of a precocious trader, the daring and adroitness of the thief, or the loutish indifference of the mere dull vagabond, content if he can only eat and sleep, I consider to be these:—

1. The conduct of parents, masters, and mistresses.
2. The companionship and associations formed in tender years.
3. The employment of children by costermongers and others who live by street traffic, and the training of costermongers' children to a street life.
4. Orphanhood, friendlessness, and utter destitution.
5. Vagrant dispositions and tastes on the part of children, which cause them to be runaways.

After this I shall treat of (a) the pursuits of the street-trading children; (b) their earnings; (c) the causes or influences which have induced children to adopt some especial branch of a street life; (d) their state of education; (e) their morals, religion, opinions, and conduct; (f) places and character of dwellings; (g) diet; (h) amusements; (i) clothing; (j) propensities.

Concerning cause 1, viz., "The conduct of parents, masters, and mistresses," I should have more to say were I treating of the juvenile criminals, instead of sellers in the streets. The brute tyranny of parents, manifested in the wreaking of any annoyances or disappointments they may have endured, in the passionate beating and cursing of their children, for trifling or for no causes, is among the worst symptoms of a depraved nature. This conduct may be the most common among the poor, for among them are fewer conventional restraints; but it exists among and debases other classes. Some parents only exercise this tyranny in their fits of drunkenness, and make that their plea in mitigation; but their dispositions are then only the more undisguisedly developed, and they would be equally unjust or tyrannical when sober, but for some selfish fear which checks them. A boy perhaps endures this course of tyranny some time, and then finding it increase he feels its further endurance intolerable, and runs away. If he have no friends with whom he can hope to find a shelter, the streets only are open to him. He soon meets with comrades, some of whom perhaps had been circumstanced like himself, and, if not strongly disposed to idleness and vicious indulgencies, goes through a course of horse-holding, errand-running, parcel-carrying, and such like, and so becomes, if honestly or prudently inclined, a street-seller, beginning with fuzees, or nuts, or some unexpensive stock. The where to buy and the how to sell he will find

plenty to teach him at the lodging-houses, where he *must* sleep when he can pay for a bed.

When I was collecting information concerning brace-selling I met with a youth of sixteen who about two years previously had run away from Birmingham, and made his way to London, with 2s. 6d. Although he earned something weekly, he was so pinched and beaten by a step-mother (his father was seldom at home except on Sunday) that his life was miserable. This went on for nearly a year, until the boy began to resist, and one Saturday evening, when beaten as usual, he struck in return, drawing blood from his step-mother's face. The father came home before the fray was well ended; listened to his wife's statement, and would not listen to the boy's, and in his turn chastised the lad mercilessly. In five minutes after the boy, with aching bones and a bitter spirit, left his father's house and made his way to London, where he was then vending cheap braces. This youth could neither read nor write, and seemed to possess no quickness or intelligence. The only thing of which he cared to talk was his step-mother's treatment of him; all else was a blank with him, in comparison; this was the one burning recollection.

I may here observe, that I heard of several instances of children having run away and adopted a street life in consequence of the violence of step-mothers far more than of step-fathers.

I cite the foregoing instance, as the boy's career was exactly that I have described; but the reader will remember, that in the many and curious narratives I have collected, how often the adult street-seller has begun such a life by being a runaway from domestic tyranny. Had this Birmingham boy been less honest, or perhaps less dull, it would have been far easier for him to have become a thief than a street-trader. To the gangs of young thieves, a new boy, who is not known to the police is often (as a smart young pickpocket, then known as the Cocksparrow, described it to me) "a God-send."

My readers will remember that in the collected statements of the street-folk, there are several accounts of runaways, but they were generally older than the age I have fixed, and it was necessary to give an account of one who comes within my classification of a child.

I did not hear of any girls who had run away from their homes having become street-sellers merely. They more generally fall into a course of prostitution, or sometimes may be ostensibly street-sellers as a means of accosting men, and, perhaps, for an attractive pretence to the depraved, that they are poor, innocent girls, struggling for an honest penny. If they resort to the low lodging-houses, where the sexes are lodged indiscriminately, their ruin seems inevitable.

2. That the companionship and associations formed in tender years lead many children to a street life is so evident, that I may be brief on the subject. There are few who are in the habit of noting what they may observe of poor children in the streets and quieter localities, who have not seen little boys playing at marbles,

or gambling with halfpennies, farthings, or buttons, with other lads, and who have laid down their basket of nuts or oranges to take part in the play. The young street-seller has probably more halfpence at his command, or, at any rate, in his possession, than his non-dealing playmates; he is also in the undoubted possession of what appears a large store of things for which poor boys have generally a craving and a relish. Thus the little itinerant trader is envied and imitated.

This attraction to a street career is very strong. I have ascertained, among the neglected children of the poor, when the parents are absent at their work. On a Saturday morning, some little time since, I was in a flagged court near Drury-lane, a wretched place, which was full of children of all ages. The parents were nearly all, I believe, then at work, or "on the look out for a job," as porters in Covent Garden-market, and the children played in the court until their return. In one corner was a group of four or five little boys gambling and squabbling for nuts, of which one of the number was a vendor. A sharp-looking lad was gazing enviously on, and I asked him to guide me to the room of a man whom I wished to see. He did so, and I gave him a penny. On my leaving the court I found this boy the most eager of the players, gambling with the penny I had given him. I had occasion to return there a few hours after, and the same lad was leaning against the wall, with his hands in his pockets, as if suffering from listlessness. He had had no luck with the nut covey, he told me, but he hoped before long to sell nuts himself. He did not know his age, but he appeared to be about eleven. Only last week I saw this same lad hawking a basket, very indifferently stocked with oranges. He had raised a shilling, he said, and the "Early Bird" (the nickname of a young street-seller) had put him up to the way to lay it out. On my asking if his father (a journeyman butcher) knew what he was doing, he replied that so long as he didn't bother his father he could do what he pleased, and the more he kept out of his (the father's) way the better he would be liked and treated.

The association of poor boys and girls with the children of the costermongers, and of the Irish fruit-sellers, who are employed in itinerant vending, is often productive of a strong degree of envy on the part of unemployed little ones, who look upon having the charge of a basket of fruit, to be carried in any direction, as a species of independence.

3. "The employment of children by costermongers, and others who live by street traffic; and the training of costermongers' children to a street life, is the ordinary means of increase among the street-folk."

The children of the costermongers become necessarily, as I have already intimated, street-dealers, and perhaps more innocently than in any other manner, by being required, as soon as their strength enables them, to assist their parents in their work, or sell trifles, single-handed, for the behoof of their parents. The child does but obey his father and the father does but rear the child