

THE LONDON COSTERMONGER

Daily Life, Habits and Amusements of a Characteristic English Citizen.

A STRAIN OF GYPSY BLOOD SUGGESTED

Pen-Picture of the London Street Vendor as He Is—Easy in His Domestic Relations—His Soul Centered on Pearl Buttons—His "Donah" and Her Delights.

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London, Aug. 15.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—There are between 30,000 and 50,000 costermongers in the city of London. Their vocation is the same as that of the street hawkers of American cities, but those who have made the most careful study of the latter can form no proper idea of the former without personal acquaintance.

There is good reason for this. Our street vendors of fish, fruits and vegetables come and go ever-changing host of widely varying and unaccustomed nationalities. A hawker in our country, from whatever race he has sprung, never remains a hawker longer than necessity compels. If he is not successful in his ventures between markets and customers, he shortly drops out of the braying throng and goes to his home in the suburbs. If his wares are not sold, he will take the next wagon bringing him profit, he will make the next bargain possible, or he will go to his home and wait for a "good will," which is shortly found in possession of a market stall or grocery, and over after scores the vegetation and associations which gave him prosperity.

The great distinguishing difference between American hawkers and London costermongers, and which is the interesting peculiarity of the latter, have grown, in the extreme antiquity of costermongers as a distinct class or race. Indeed, the latter is properly to be considered as a race; and I am not so sure but that in a more thorough acquaintance with them than I have gained, it would be found that they were really a distinct race, or gypsy strain of blood. I have certainly noticed in many many race characteristics of the gypsies, and their origin, historically considered, almost exactly corresponds with the period in which gypsies were first noticed in England.

Some of the marked characteristics and customs I have found common to both gypsies and costermongers are noteworthy. Both races are right in their own minds, and both are not a bit of either, in England, can read or write. Both are hereditarily roving in nature, and would pine and die if forced for any length of time into indoor labor. Both mate rather than marry; and while remarkable for their fidelity in this relation they hold in deep contempt religious or civil marriages.

Both are the most honorable and honest people who live in all dealings among themselves, but hold in the highest esteem and morality to "do" all others not of their ilk. Both, however, are, humble and actually labor-abiding in their daily lives, are hereditarily the enemies of all law and authority, though both will make the most desperate of sacrifice to avoid becoming involved in any commitments of law, and are, in religiously, agnostics of such luminousness and density as by comparison would put all the Hamiltons, Mansons and Spencers to fervent blush and shame.

The earliest record of London costermongers is said to be in Livizante's poem of "London Looked Upon" by the poet Henry V., about 475 years ago. Shakespeare refers contemptuously to "those costermonger times." Ben Jonson makes his Morose swear if he never sees a costermonger's cry, and Dr. Johnson gives the derivation of "costermonger" as originating in the street sale of apples or costards "round and bulky like the head."

As far as can be traced in history and literature these folk were precisely the same in mode of life, vocation and characteristics hundreds of years ago, as at the present time. Like the fishermen of New Haven and Galway, and still like the gypsies, they have scarcely ever been known to intermarry with other classes. The result is the costermongers of the London of today form almost a pure strain of their kind, with scarcely more admixture of other blood than that of the English nobility, and with ancient customs and traditions remaining inexorable laws of guidance to themselves—all to a more marked degree than in true aristocracy, and a number of people in any corner of Europe.

If all this were not true of the London costermonger to whom still be found a picturesque object to the casual observer. In the first place his dress is picturesque. You will not find at Catania, Messina or Palermo so peculiarly more odd or colorful groupings than these crowds of costers at the markets or at their evening and holiday resorts. Indeed, there is a dash of the gypsy in the dress of these folk that constantly recalls the romany people.

Garb of the Coster. At his daily labor the coster will have on his head a small cloth cap well to one side, with the visor either pointed to the sky or sawing one side of his neck. He is never without his black or flashy colored silk "kingdom" or heavy, loosely fastened neckerchief, always tied in a sailor's knot and the ends, tucked in the folds of his heavy wooden shirt, the whole exposing a line, well corded and often hairy neck and chest. His waistcoat is long, like a jockey's, with capacious pockets and huge tabs, and always of corduroy or velvet. His trousers are half Mexican in cut, of corduroy or coarse duck, and their wide bottoms flap over the best shoes worn by any lowly man in London. Added to this are pearl or polished metal buttons innumerable.

In the matter of buttons their "best tops" for Sundays and holidays are truly startling. Whether of metal or pearl, they are from a half inch to an inch in diameter and are set as thickly as the stars in the firmament, and the cap band and visor edge, down the edge of the waistcoat from throat to point, above every pocket, and along the edges of all flaps, upon the sleeves nearly from wrist to elbow, and along the wide plush side stripes of the trousers, from just below the knee to the very tips of the trousers, are those that last button clicks and patters against the pavement and the shoe.

The Coster's "Donah." The coster women are more or less striking in their garb and appearance. Like the men, they are all well shod, and wear short coarse serge petticoats, showing their ankles and sturdy feet, and their coats are as simple as a Chaslagh fishwife's. Their waists are always low at, or are left open in, the neck, and usually the latter, as with the men, is decorated with a flashy silk neckerchief, while a small woaden plaid or silk shawl covers the breast, where it is always fastened with a bunch of huge diamond-shaped buttons. From these alone a coster girl is anywhere recognizable. The hat is of straw or felt, and always as large as a coster's cartwheel. It protrudes alarmingly in front, and above this canopy wears a forest of ostrich plumes. Coster girls have been known to purchase of these prized feathers, and there is no ordinary sacrifice they will not make to possess the latest in plume hats, and if bought, the hair is bestowed behind in a large braid. A "part" extends from this over each ear, and a heavy, straight tab lies across each cheek. A "donah" is a small, heavy braid, straight as the bow, and is fringed and curled until it stands upward and outward, and is fastened with a ribbon to the top of the head. As a coster proudly remarked to me: "Our donahs (girls, sweethearts, women) was a style as all their own."

Outfit of the Costermonger. The costermonger's outfit comprises either a handcart or a spring cart on two wheels on which he will load from 500 to 1,000 pounds of fruit or vegetables and with the help of a boy or his "donah" push the same a dozen miles in a day; or a donkey and cart possessed by the coster himself, and with the help of the latter loaded with from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds weight at Covent Garden market. The women when hawking alone are sometimes provided with donkey carts or barrows, but often with "shallows," or shallow baskets which with their heavy contents are carried on their heads. A curious sort of business has always been in vogue owing to the improvidence of the costermongers as a class. This is the hiring out of them of barrow, barrows and carts. Out of the 50,000 or 60,000 costermonger pop-

OBSERVATIONS IN SWEDEN

Councilman Steel Tells of What He Noted During a Brief Trip

FEATURES OF EUROPE'S NORTHERN VENICE

Railroad, Telegraph and Telephone Services Unsurpassed and All Under Government Control—Where Dishonesty and Vagrancy are Unknown.

Since my return from my brief trip to Sweden, I am daily asked to give my impression of Sweden and the Swedes.

I landed at the port of Malmo, where my baggage was examined closer than at any one of the seven custom houses I went through. I spent a few days in Simslund, where I found keen enjoyment in studying the natural beauty of the country. The climate is beautiful, with a moderate range of temperature in summer, the thermometer averaging 60° Fahrenheit, with less than 5° variation between night and day, with probably the richest flora to be found anywhere. Children would go out for an hour or so with baskets full of the lily of the valley and other wild flowers, both fragrant and beautiful. What strikes me very forcibly is the rustic attire and fragrant simplicity of the peasantry, the difference between the people in the country and those in the cities or towns being so great as to seem more like going from one nation into another.

From Simslund I went to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, from which point I made numerous excursions for pleasure and observation. Pleasant steamers run in all directions between the islands in the narrow straits, the banks lined with villas and gardens going as far north as Upsala, the Swedish capital, and as far south as Gothenburg, a famous university, which ranks as one of the foremost seats of learning in Europe; it was established over 1,000 years ago, and has at present 2,000 students. A magnificent library is here, and the museum is rich in works of art, curios and relics of the olden times, when Sweden ranked high among the nations of Europe.

Of Sweden's Capital. Stockholm is seventy-two miles inland on an arm of the Baltic sea, and is one of the principal seaports of the country. It is what might be called a Venice of the north, being built on numerous islands. Formerly there were no bridges and communication between the different islands was had by means of boat hoists. However, all Stockholm is connected by a magnificent system of bridges, spanning the city in every direction. The great industries of Sweden are iron, copper and lumber. The immense forests furnish lumber for nearly every portion of Europe. Then all along the coast are the great timbering operations. The rivers furnish vast quantities of salmon for the markets of England and other European countries. Sweden is famed for its dairy interests; its butter and cheese are undoubtedly the finest in the world. Great quantities of iron and steel are exported every year, and support a large portion of the population of the interior.

One of the pleasantest journeys which I took was from Stockholm through the interior of the country to Gothenburg. The distance is about 300 miles, and the method of transportation was by means of canals. I took a steamer at Stockholm and paddled slowly through the canals, which at quite frequent intervals open out into small lakes. There were numerous beautiful little sheets of water and two quite large lakes. The country we passed through was cultivated like a garden, and stretching back from the banks of the canal the scene was most picturesquely pastoral; the peasants in their quaint attire, the fields of grain, the orchards and the verdancy presented a picture of rural life such as I could have feasted my eyes on forever. I spent two days on this trip, and the collection of memories which I take with me always. We went through many lakes; at the famous Trollhattan falls, our steamer glided over a series of rapids as if on wheels. The scenery around and below these falls is, perhaps, the grandest and most majestic I ever saw.

Government Railroads and Telegraphs. Most of the railroads of Sweden are owned by the government, and are operated in a systematic and businesslike manner. The roads are, I think, somewhat better than those of any other country, and are not quite up to our standard. Passengers have the privilege of riding either first, second or third class. It is a common saying over here that only the Swedes would ride first class. Why? Well, I suppose because traveling second class is quite as comfortable and pleasant as first class. Traveling first class only means that you desire to be a little more exclusive and stylish. The third class coaches are for the common people. The roads are almost all of one class, or conveniences. Second class fare is about 1 1/2 cents, and the apartments are upholstered and quite comfortable and pleasant for the ordinary traveler. If you travel first class you secure a compartment something like a coach, with a window, and people and by so doing gain a little more of elegance and finish and more exclusiveness. For this you pay 2 1/2 cents a mile.

The telegraph and telephone systems are also under control of the government, and, so far as the latter service is concerned, it is perfect. When talking about the telegraph system, I want to say emphatically that the United States is not in it. The government's policy is to have the telegraph system run by the government for the benefit of the people, not for the corporations, as in this country. The telegraph is superb, and one cannot thoroughly appreciate it unless they have had an experience with our excellent system. Inevitably and unquestionably the telegraph is an instant, and if the girl at the exchange were not prompt and polite of would go her official duty. Every little town in Sweden is connected by telephone. The system is not exactly like ours, as they have the Erickson patent, invented by an officer in the Swedish army, which was bought by the government. To show what a splendid system they have, I mention an instance. Having occasion, while in Stockholm, to communicate with the bank at Malmo, I called at the telephone. Although the distance was 385 miles I did not have the slightest difficulty in hearing or making myself understood. The conversation was as clear as though I were in the same room. And there were no vexatious delays, no buzzing, no interruptions of any kind, and for a three-minute message for that distance I was charged 6 cents. Telephone instruments rent at very reasonable rates. Large business houses pay a year other \$8, and private dwellings \$1. Now, I want to express myself radically on the subject, but in comparing the telegraph and telephone systems of the United States, one is forcibly impressed with the superiority of their system, and the question naturally suggests itself whether after all the legislation not conducted on a plan more beneficial to the public good by the government than by the private corporation.

All the cities and towns of Sweden are lighted by the electric system, and the same is true of the telephone system. The electric plants, gas and water works, and most other public utilities are owned by the municipalities, which insures the maximum of good service at the minimum of cost. Postal Savings Banks a Success. The postal savings of Sweden is, I think, somewhat inferior to that of the United States, but one feature which I noticed was very interesting and seemed to be very beneficial. This was the system of savings banks established by the government. Persons desiring to deposit their money with the government could do so, receiving thereon 2 percent. Great numbers of people took advantage of this, and the government was receiving any amount from a penny up. The system is quite popular and increased the habits of thrift and economy among the people. The people as a class are thrifty and frugal and are perfectly honorable and upright and honest in their dealings. They believe in the government and follow that precept in daily life and in all their business transactions. One little incident will indicate this strong national characteristic. I had occasion to take a meal at a railroad station eating house one

OVERBOARD

Some people don't believe in doing things by halves, but we do. We are doing something by halves now that seems to be the proper caper if the amount of our sales is any criterion. We're selling the rest of Hellman's suits by halves; that is, Half Price. They won't last but a few days now.

School Boys.

Boys who are between 4 and 14 years old can get an all wool suit of us now for \$2.00. It's an elegant gray cassimere in two pieces. Boys' elegant worsted 2-piece suit, in plaids and stripes, ages 4 to 14, for \$3.50, worth \$6. Boys' 3-piece suits, ages 12 to 18, long pants, wool mixtures, in three shades, go at \$3.00, worth fully \$5. Boys' 3-piece suits, long pants, all wool cassimere, dark effects, 5 different styles, ages 12 to 18, worth \$10, go for \$6.75. Boys' single Knee Pants and Long Pants, in all sizes, styles and prices.

These lines must be closed out within the next few days, as we must have the room they occupy for OUR NEW FALL ARRIVALS.

Columbia Clothing Company,

Corner 13th and Farnam Streets, Omaha. Successors to M. Hellman & Co.

every. I went in, and as is the custom, proceeded to a large round table on which were placed dishes containing whatever a person might desire to see. I helped myself, and taking whatever I desired sat down to a side table and enjoyed my dinner, for over there you are given half hour for meals. After eating I discovered a woman sitting in one corner to whom I said what I had eaten. She figured it up and informed me what my bill was. Could I have a plate operated in Omaha? Hardly. The restaurant man who would try it would go broke in a month. But in Sweden the restaurants are usually carried on this plan, and no one thinks of acting dishonestly. Men would not do such a petty mean act. So the woman is a very good example of confidence, trust and honor that locks and bars are almost unknown. People do not fear thieves, because they are very scarce. Vagrants and tramps are not common. At the hotels guests do not lock their doors, and in the morning a porter comes in on tiptoe and takes your shoes and clothes, first emptying every pocket, taking the contents on the table, retires and soon returns with them nicely brushed and dusted. Neither Plumbers Nor Paupers in Sweden. There is plenty of work for those who desire it, but wages are very low and the laborer must exercise the greatest economy to make both ends meet. The dishonest man, who would gain a reputation by cheating, overreaching, sharp practice or anything like that might as well move out of the country. He is shunned and despised by all classes in the community. Dishonesty is the one crime there which will not be countenanced in any form. As a matter of fact Sweden is a poor country. What strikes me very forcibly is the rustic attire and fragrant simplicity of the peasantry, the difference between the people in the country and those in the cities or towns being so great as to seem more like going from one nation into another. From Simslund I went to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, from which point I made numerous excursions for pleasure and observation. Pleasant steamers run in all directions between the islands in the narrow straits, the banks lined with villas and gardens going as far north as Upsala, the Swedish capital, and as far south as Gothenburg, a famous university, which ranks as one of the foremost seats of learning in Europe; it was established over 1,000 years ago, and has at present 2,000 students. A magnificent library is here, and the museum is rich in works of art, curios and relics of the olden times, when Sweden ranked high among the nations of Europe. Of Sweden's Capital. 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Pears' Soap

Skin blemishes, like foul teeth, are the more offensive because they are mostly voluntary. The pores are closed. One cannot open them in a minute; he may in a month. Try plenty of soap, give it plenty of time, and often; excess of good soap will do no harm. Use Pears'—no alkali in it; nothing but soap. All sorts of stores sell it, especially druggists; all sorts of people are using it.

FAT FOLKS REDUCED

DR. SNYDER, THE SUCCESSFUL OBESITY SPECIALIST

The following persons have taken treatment of Dr. Snyder, with loss of weight shown below. They will cheerfully answer all inquiries if stamps are enclosed. Name, Address, Weight Before, Weight After, Age. Mrs. Alice Marie Orger, Mrs. Wright, 1416 Broadway, Chicago, Ill. 210 lbs. 175 lbs. 45 yrs. Miss Rachel C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 178 lbs. 145 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. B. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 145 lbs. 125 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. W. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 125 lbs. 105 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. W. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 105 lbs. 85 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. W. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 85 lbs. 65 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. W. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 65 lbs. 45 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. W. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 45 lbs. 25 lbs. 40 yrs. Mrs. W. C. Johnson, 323 1/2 St. 25 lbs. 5 lbs. 40 yrs.

ALLAN LINE

ROYAL MAIL STEAMSHIPS. MONTREAL and QUEBEC TO BOSTON and LIVERPOOL. To BOSTON via LIVERPOOL. To LIVERPOOL via BOSTON. Intermediate stops at low rates. See CATALOGUE. SERVICE OF STATE AND ALLAN LINE. NEW YORK and BOSTON. Via LONDON every fortnight. See CATALOGUE. STATE OF CALIFORNIA. H. A. M. See CATALOGUE. H. A. M. See CATALOGUE.

Advertisement for Columbia Clothing Company, featuring 'OVERBOARD' suits and 'FILLED WITHOUT PAIN' dental work. Includes text about suit prices and dental services.

Advertisement for DR. R. W. BAILEY, DENTIST, featuring 'DENTIST' illustration and 'HOME INDUSTRIES' advertisement. Includes a list of dental services and contact information.