

AMONG THE COSTERMONGERS

Peculiar Features of Their Life, Customs and Appearance.

MATING AT FROM 14 TO 16 YEARS

How Wakenam Happily Reunited "Stumpy" and "Becky" After Gambling Had Broken Up the Home and Separated the Twin.

(Copyrighted, 1893.)

LONDON, May 9.—(Correspondence of THE BEE.)—In that most unvaried portion of London lying between Bethnal Green, Billingsgate market and the London docks, I have passed many strange days and stranger nights among those most curious and interesting folk known as the London costermongers.

It came about in an accidental way, as most pleasant things are sure to happen to the vagrant traveler who loiters rather than rushes through old world scenes, and so cheap with all that when I came to figure expenditures I found that not only had been required to give me permanent status with the entire fraternity, I felt some twinges of conscience that my footing made so begrudgingly a showing. Two pounds ten were invested in a coster's cart and donkey; three pounds went to prevent a domestic tragedy; eighteen shillings bought a second-hand coster's narrow outright; four shillings were paid for a "peppering" chimney; twelve shillings were taken to the Derby as a coster in the coster's annual parade; another two pounds was lost on the suppositively unimpeachable judgment of a coster companion who introduced me to several brilliant "peppering" contests in the Whitechapel districts; and the remaining fifteen-six was squandered without computation in coster tea parties, by the side of coster rat pits, in coster "penny gaffs" and at coster tap rooms—all of which, as I have taken the reader thus far into a personal confidence, should be susceptible of rigid explanation.

To begin with, that all this and these London folk may be understood, there must be something said about costers in the abstract. There are from 50,000 to 60,000 of them in the great metropolis. They are the hawkers of fish, vegetables and fruit. It is not true as with us when a hawk is called a hawk; it is a hawk that any one who "costers" in London would be a coster. These costers are a separate race. They are the only hawkers here. They are a distinct, characterful and integral part of this great and ever wonderful Babel of London. It is known that they have been precisely what they now are for nearly 500 years.

The earliest record of London costermongers' cries is said to be in Lytton's "London and its Environs" in the time of Henry V., about 475 years ago. Shakespeare refers contemptuously to "these costermonger times;" Ben Jonson makes his Moroso swoon if he hears 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."

The result is that the costermongers of London of today form almost a little realm of their own, ever changing in outlines yet unchanged in character and antiquity, with a purer strain of blood, of its kind, than half of the English nobility; and with ancient customs and traditions remaining inexorable laws of guidance to themselves; all to a more marked degree than is true of any equal number of people in any corner of Europe.

At his daily labors the coster will have on his head a small cloth cap well to one side, with the visor either pointed to the sky or slanting one side of his neck. He is never without his black or flannelly colored silk "kingsman" or heavy, loosely gathered neckerchief, always tied in a sailor's knot and the ends tucked in the folds of his gray woollen shirt, the whole exposing a fine, well corded and often hairy neck and chest. His waistcoat is long, like the coat, and has two pockets and huge tabs, and always of corduroy or velvet. His trousers are half Mexican in cut, of corduroy or coarse ducking, and their bottoms dip over the heels, the shoes worn by any lowly men in London. Added to this are pearl or polished metal buttons innumerable.

In the matter of buttons their "best togs" 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 they can be placed around 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 the buttons on 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 edge of the hem. On the best last button clicks and patters against the pavement and the shoe.

The coster women are none the 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 shapely feet. Their waists are always low at the hips, in the neck and usually the latter, as with the men, is adorned with a flashy silk neckerchief, while a small round plait or silk shawl covers the shoulders and the upper part of the breast where it is always fastened with a brooch of huge dimensions.

But the habits of the coster are most distinctive. 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, with a wide brim, and in front, and above this canopy waves a forest of ostrich plumes. Coster girls belong to clubs for the purchase of these prized feathers, and they are held in such esteem that they will not make to possess the largest plumes that can be bought. The hair is dressed behind the crown in a bun, and extends from this immediately over each ear, and a heavy straight tab lies against either cheek. Above the forehead the hair falls straight down to the brows, and is then frizzed and curled until it stands upward and outward like monstrous matted chevaux de frise.

where from 3,000 to 4,000 may daily be seen, until opportunity at last came. I used to saunter for hours about the famous market in the early morning. On a certain May morning of last year I found among the pea-shellers under the market colonnade, opposite the ancient Tavistock hotel, one of the women, comely enough for a wonder among these who are generally indescribable, busy shelling in a desolate sort of way, and crying as though her heart would break. My tears than poured fell in her bowl, and the old Jewels below her were, after quite the fashion of women adding to her misery by laughing her with the foolishness of her marriage, which had evidently gone amiss. When these taunts became insufferable she would quietly punch one or another of their heads when there would be a little savage scuffling and then she would resume her tears and peas. I could see the other costermongers and in few minutes waiting I gathered enough to know that the weeping pea-sheller had run away from coster father and mother, married a man of her own family or of similar privities, and that the latter, possessed of a frisky over some chaffinor or dog had stripped the pair, time after time of money, cart and home belongings, as he often lost; and, worse yet, had become so infamous among his kind that in all London he was looked upon as a crooked, crooked fellow, usually an easy thing for a coster to do, nor so much as a "threepenny bit" with which to quench his thirst and drown his sorrows. This very morning, however, the weeping pea-sheller, had tragically left her incorrigible husband "for good and all," and at that very moment the latter, known as "Stumpy" Jen, was lying in his bed, and being nursed by his ill-luck and incurable, was turning away from gibing coster groups, one after another the picture of irretrievable despair.

The language of these folk is simply unprintable, not because of the costers' intention to be obscene and filthy, but because the deepest pride in their own speech and ways. "Stumpy Jen" himself quailed under the fusillade that morning. He slunk away like one pursued, and I followed him. Half way down Southampton street, he made a last effort to retrieve himself by begging a loan from "Jenny Williams, the Minder"—a milder name for the last thirty years for all the groggery's carters who crowd that thoroughfare between the Strand and the market. Jenny was "up to snuff," and she gave him the loan, and he was off. The language of these folk is simply unprintable, not because of the costers' intention to be obscene and filthy, but because the deepest pride in their own speech and ways. "Stumpy Jen" himself quailed under the fusillade that morning. He slunk away like one pursued, and I followed him. Half way down Southampton street, he made a last effort to retrieve himself by begging a loan from "Jenny Williams, the Minder"—a milder name for the last thirty years for all the groggery's carters who crowd that thoroughfare between the Strand and the market. Jenny was "up to snuff," and she gave him the loan, and he was off.

But I soon ran alongside him, and before he was half way to the middle of the bridge had him by the shoulder and then, telling him he could attend to the little matter he had in mind just as well later in the day, marched him, a willing and wondering prisoner, to a cheap eating house in the Strand for breakfast. Even an outcast costermonger filled with good food, and in company where the clink of silver is, is a different sort of fellow than one just on the point of "staying a header" at Waterloo bridge. He could do little else than barge his eyes and after much emotional effort spurt out his sentiments in—

"Gor bil me, but ere's a go!"

It was a little greater "go" when, a half hour later, I had him help me ransack every pound of London. In the time of Henry V., about 475 years ago, Shakespeare refers contemptuously to "these costermonger times;" Ben Jonson makes his Moroso swoon if he hears 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."

The result is that the costermongers of London of today form almost a little realm of their own, ever changing in outlines yet unchanged in character and antiquity, with a purer strain of blood, of its kind, than half of the English nobility; and with ancient customs and traditions remaining inexorable laws of guidance to themselves; all to a more marked degree than is true of any equal number of people in any corner of Europe.

At his daily labors the coster will have on his head a small cloth cap well to one side, with the visor either pointed to the sky or slanting one side of his neck. He is never without his black or flannelly colored silk "kingsman" or heavy, loosely gathered neckerchief, always tied in a sailor's knot and the ends tucked in the folds of his gray woollen shirt, the whole exposing a fine, well corded and often hairy neck and chest. His waistcoat is long, like the coat, and has two pockets and huge tabs, and always of corduroy or velvet. His trousers are half Mexican in cut, of corduroy or coarse ducking, and their bottoms dip over the heels, the shoes worn by any lowly men in London. Added to this are pearl or polished metal buttons innumerable.

In the matter of buttons their "best togs" 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 they can be placed around 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 the buttons on 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 edge of the hem. On the best last button clicks and patters against the pavement and the shoe.

The coster women are none the 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 shapely feet. Their waists are always low at the hips, in the neck and usually the latter, as with the men, is adorned with a flashy silk neckerchief, while a small round plait or silk shawl covers the shoulders and the upper part of the breast where it is always fastened with a brooch of huge dimensions.

evolution of these folk into non-gambling, non-drinking, fairly respectable man and woman, of their inexpressible pride when, after all their "peppering" and "staying away," there is issued to the pair, who almost breathlessly and altogether simultaneously exclaim "Gor bil me, but ere's a go!" by the officials of the Postoffice Savings Bank. No. 37 St. Paul's Churchyard, a huge deposit book with "£5.5.0" to their credit. And, to prove it, add, that, though Becky has not been able to follow the cart with her cheery voice and pleasant ways quite all the time, for reasons which kindly-hearted mothers can well understand, within a year's time the credit in this same deposit book has been increased to a round £30; and that within this humble little book is the history of a young Stumpy Jen's life.

He pulls your hair, nor does he care how much the pain may be. He waves his hands like fair winds, and jumps and crows with glee. He readily winks and nods, and upon his mother's knee. Ah, no, ah, no, it is not so. You surely, surely do not know my baby.

But there are others who know that Manawa's limpid depths despite the nocturnal eddies and rapids of every stream, are swarms with the king of all fish in these western waters, the black bass, micropterus salmoides, and the beautiful black dotted minnow, and they know how to take them.

These men not only thoroughly understand the region and the habits of the different species of fish, but they are also adepts in their favorite sport. They handle the rod and the reel with equal skill, and teach their novices with a cheerful patience. They have every water in the vicinity under tribute, and their fatal hooks know the busy spots of every lake, and the mouth, eddies and rapids of every stream.

Of all the successful anglers who visit Manawa from this city, there is none more zealous or who knows more about the gentle art of fishing than the late Mr. John Farnham street tobaccoist and cigar vendor.

And with a few mornings since and on his return he brought with him, not only a few fish, but a large quantity of their favorite sport. They handle the rod and the reel with equal skill, and teach their novices with a cheerful patience. They have every water in the vicinity under tribute, and their fatal hooks know the busy spots of every lake, and the mouth, eddies and rapids of every stream.

ON THE LAKE AT SUNRISE

The Reedy, Weedy, Mossy Lair of the King of Fish.

A DISCIPLE OF THE WALTONIAN SCHOOL

The Peep o' Day at Manawa—Chief d'Oceuvres of a Master Hand—Where the Lory Bass Lurks—A Strike—How He Dies.

Sunrise on Lake Manawa! A golden light glimmers the straggling, feathery willows upon the northern border of the glittering lake; one beautiful sweep of dark green fields covers the remainder of the scene.

Such is Manawa on any of these glorious summer mornings—an ideal resort of the disciples of an immortal Walton. There are any number of alleged anglers in this city who will scout at the idea of these lovely waters teeming with black bass and minnows. They have been there time and time again, only to be rewarded with a flabby ring perch or two, or a willow switch of minnow. That is the extent of their labors with the rod and reel; you might as well expect to catch an octopus! Of such are the majority of fishermen who visit Manawa from this city. They know nothing of the eddies of the stream; and could not make a "cast" any more than they could throw a lasso, and would not know a "strike" from a trout. What they do want is plenty of worms and plenty of loaves, and if they cannot allure the luscious members of the finny family up into the corn fields with these, there are none in the waters, that is all.

But there are others who know that Manawa's limpid depths despite the nocturnal eddies and rapids of every stream, are swarms with the king of all fish in these western waters, the black bass, micropterus salmoides, and the beautiful black dotted minnow, and they know how to take them.

These men not only thoroughly understand the region and the habits of the different species of fish, but they are also adepts in their favorite sport. They handle the rod and the reel with equal skill, and teach their novices with a cheerful patience. They have every water in the vicinity under tribute, and their fatal hooks know the busy spots of every lake, and the mouth, eddies and rapids of every stream.

Of all the successful anglers who visit Manawa from this city, there is none more zealous or who knows more about the gentle art of fishing than the late Mr. John Farnham street tobaccoist and cigar vendor.

And with a few mornings since and on his return he brought with him, not only a few fish, but a large quantity of their favorite sport. They handle the rod and the reel with equal skill, and teach their novices with a cheerful patience. They have every water in the vicinity under tribute, and their fatal hooks know the busy spots of every lake, and the mouth, eddies and rapids of every stream.

down he dives; up he comes again, as if he found no success from pain below; then he launches out and spins round like a pickerel! How skillfully Andy plays him. How he gives him line to more certainly hang himself in the end. Mark his countenance, intense but grave, while his whole demeanor is collected and patient. He reels in and reels out, always keeping the fish taut up to the reel, like the true angler that he is.

But now old Salmoides moves slower; he makes one more desperate lunge for the head of lily pads—one more dart toward the deep pool under the hanging lid of sedge bank. He is growing weary and drowning! Andy pulls him carefully toward him. There is a flop or two in the water, and a faint outpull, but at length something glitters under the surface near the boat. Andy leans over and lifts upward. The next instant the trout point black bass is flopping hopelessly in the bottom of the boat.

A Hundred Miles of New Buildings. The new buildings erected in St. Louis in 1890, 1891 and 1892, placed side by side would extend over a hundred miles. Every known style of architecture is presented and some of the new buildings are palatial in style and decoration.

A Big Bunch of Letters. Harper's Bazar "Confound it!" exclaimed Jackson, "what a stupid fellow that jeweler is!" "How so?" inquired his friend. "Why, I told him the other day that I wanted engraved on the engagement ring the letters 'From A. to Z.'—from Arthur to Zenobia, you know—and the idiot went to work and put in the whole alphabet."

Twenty Years The Leader!!! Corcha, Plena, Rhabdo, Sclatica, Lumbago, Back-Ache, and all External Affections removed quickly by BENSON'S

I WAS BIG. I WAS FAT. I FELT MEAN. I TOOK PILLS. I TOOK SALTS. I GOT LEAN. Handsome Women Can Lose Weight. Fast. Homely Men Look Better. If Thin. Try Dr. Edlin's System. No Diets.

Moquette Carpets, Axminster Carpets

The most luxurious Carpets in use at the price of ordinary Brussels. Patterns that we will not order, with and without borders, elegant parlor and rug effects, some with only enough for a bed room will be sold as remnants.

ORCHARD AND WILHELM CARPET CO. Successors to S. A. ORCHARD, Douglas, bet. 14th and 15th

Glutt & Co. YOU SEE IT NOW! This illustration shows you the correct thing in the Link-Button Cuff now generally in vogue.

Hotel Lafayette Lake Minnetonka, Minn. Room for sale in Omaha and Trust Co.

Dr. Down's 1316 Douglas Street, Omaha, Neb.

Omaha Loan and Trust Co. SAVINGS BANK. SIXTEENTH AND DOUGLAS STREETS. Capital \$100,000; Liability of Stockholders, \$200,000

Radfield's Female Regulator. The best recommendation from prominent physicians and those who have tried it.

Omaha Loan and Trust Co. 5 PER CENT. Interest paid on SIX MONTHS.