



YOUNG SAVOYARDS REHEARSING THEIR PERFORMANCE.

THE YOUNG SAVOYARDS.

In nearly all parts of England we meet occasionally with little ragged wandering boys, browned by the sun of their native land, made browner by dirt and neglect, unkempt and uncared for. Their general appearance and certain national peculiarities which belong to all of them, tell us that, although known generally as Italian boys, they have come from the valleys of Savoy. What circumstances have led them to travel so far from home? Were these young wanderers impressed with the idea of making a fortune in that great rough English country? Or, were their parents so poor that they were compelled to send their children out thus early to struggle with the world? Both these causes have been at work in most instances. There are many men of the lowest class of Italians who earn a disgraceful living by "farming" a number of these lads—if we may use the expression. These men find their way to the quiet country homes of Savoy, and excite the imagination of the simple inmates by tales of the wealth they might obtain by sending their children to England as traveling musicians. These families are often very poor, and they are unable to resist the glowing prospects held out to them. Thus one of the men we have alluded to will obtain some dozen boys, whom he brings to England and sends out into the streets. He treats them often with great cruelty, giving them the most scanty food, and compelling them to give up to him every farthing of their hard earnings. Compare the boys in our illustration, depicted amidst the beauties of their native scenery, with the outcasts with whose deplorable appearance in the streets of London we are familiarised, and we have a remarkable contrast. The artist has portrayed two young Savoyards rehearsing the simple performance by which they vainly dream of earning a fortune.

FAIRS ON THE THAMES.

The climate of Europe generally, and especially of the southern part of England, would appear to have grown considerably milder than it once was. What may be the reason of the change we will not now stop to inquire, but it is clearly not due to those causes which operate in ameliorating the climate of new countries, such as the clearing of forests and draining of swamps; for in England the change has been more decidedly marked within the last fifty years.

A very intense and continued frost is now a rare

thing in this country. There was, indeed, a period of severe cold towards the end of last December, but it lasted only for a few days, and the rest of the winter has been mild. The newspaper reports have made most of our readers familiar with the scenes which take place in the London parks during a hard frost. Immediately it is ascertained that the ice will bear, and often when its condition is anything but safe, the Serpentine, the ornamental water in the St. James's and Victoria parks, &c., are crowded with a motley company of skaters and sliders. At such times the fun is rather boisterous, and while falls may be reckoned by hundreds, serious accidents are numerous, and the "Ice-men" of the Royal Humane Society are busily occupied in saving life.

The extraordinary bustle and excitement on these occasions may be attributed, in some degree, to the rarity of the amusement. The vendors of skates must have a most fluctuating business, as their trade—at least, for home consumption—is usually confined to a few days in the year. In former times, however, severe winters were more frequent; and there are records of several frosts during which the Thames at London was completely frozen over—so firm a mass of ice being formed that the river became the scene of numerous diversions, in which a large proportion of the population of London took part.

The first great frost of which we have authentic record was in 1092, in the reign of William Rufus; and the next in 1281, when we are told that five arches of London-bridge were carried away by the ice. Three hundred years later, in 1564-5, a very severe frost commenced on the 21st of December.

On New Year's Eve in this year, says Holinshed, "People went on and amongst the Thames on the ice from London-bridge to Westminster. Some played at the football as ballie there as if it had been on the drie land; diverse of the Court being then at Westminster, shot dailie at prickes set upon the Thames; and the people, both men and women, went upon the Thames in greater numbers than in anie street of the citie of London."

On the 3rd of January a very sudden thaw took place, which caused great floods and serious loss of life in various parts of England. In December, 1608, another remarkable frost occurred, and the Thames was several times partially frozen. Towards the close of the month the cold became yet more intense; and from the 30th of December to the 3rd of January—and again from the 10th till the 15th of January—the Thames was completely frozen over. We read of games of bowls, dances, and various other sports on the ice, while booths and tents were erected for the sale of fruit, beer, and wine—the tents generally containing fires.

In 1683 the Thames was still more firmly frozen, so that a new city, as it were, was built on the river. "The Thames before London," says Evelyn in his *Diary*,

"Was planted with boothes in formal streetes; all sorts of trades and shops furnished, and ful of commodities, even to a printing presse, where the people and ladies tooke a fancy to have their names printed, and the day and yeare set down when printed on the Thames. This humour tooke universally, that 'twas estimated the printer gained £5 a-day, for printing a line onely, at sixpence a name, besides what he got by ballads, &c. Coaches plied from Westminster to the Temple, and from several other stairs, to and fro, as in the streetes; sleds, sliding with skertes, a bull-baiting, horse and coach races, puppet plays and interludes, cooke's, tipling, and other places; so that it seem'd to be a bacchanalian triumph or carnival on the water."

Among the visitors to this frost fair were Charles II., and several other members of the royal family, and the paper on which the king and his royal companions had their names printed, in accordance with the humour of the time, is still in existence.

On several other occasions it is recorded that the Thames was either wholly or partially frozen; viz., in 1709, 1715-16, 1739-40, 1768, 1785, and 1789; and on all these occasions the river was made the scene of sports and pastimes—a leading feature of which, on more than one occasion, was the roasting of an ox whole.

Our engraving represents the last frost fair held on the river Thames, in 1814. The frost commenced on the 27th of December, with a dense fog, succeeded by a very heavy fall of snow, which continued, with but little intermission, for two days. This frost lasted for a month, during which the cold was intense, and large masses of ice were floating up and down the river with the tide, rendering the navigation extremely difficult and dangerous. On the 26th of January a thaw took place, lasting for four days, and it was succeeded by a renewal of the frost yet more severe than before. On Sunday, the 30th, a thin sheet of ice covered the Thames from bank to bank, and some foolhardy persons ventured to cross over in different places. On Tuesday, February the 1st, the usual entries were formed by the unemployed watermen, particularly between Blackfriars Bridge and Three Cranes Wharf; and notices were posted in the streets leading to them, announcing a safe footway over the river. The business done by these watermen while it lasted was profitable, for we are told that many of them received £5 and £6 per day from persons who wished to pass over their little bridges from the edge of the river to the ice.



THE FAIR ON THE THAMES IN 1814.

At this, the most modern frost fair, all the ancient amusements were revived. There was a street of tent shops gaily decked out with flags, called the "City-road." Small sheep were roasted over fires before the eyes of admiring spectators, who afterwards purchased the meat under the name of "Lapland mutton," at 1s. per slice. Once more the printing press was set to work upon the ice, the subject of the articles being not so much "the condition of the Thames"—for in 1814 the river had not yet offended the noses of the public—as on the "liberty of the press," the weather, and the amusements going forward. We give an example of one of these remarkable publications:—

"TO MADAM TABITHA THAW.

"DEAR DISSOLVING DAME,—Father Frost and Sister Snow have buoyed my borders, formed an idol of ice upon my bosom, and all the lads of London come to make merry; now, as you love mischief, treat the multitude with a few cracks by a sudden visit, and obtain the thanks of the poor on both banks.

"Given at my own press, February 5, 1814.

"THOMAS THAMES."

The thaw did in reality commence on the evening of the 5th February, and by four o'clock on the following day the ice was completely broken up, and the frost fair had disappeared.

A passage in the notice we have quoted reminds us, that however amusing the fairs on the Thames may have been to well-to-do citizens, amply protected from the cold, the poor must have suffered severely during these memorable winters. We have reason, on the whole, to congratulate ourselves that such severe weather has in our day become rare.

There is a popular error, that extreme cold is healthy; and people who can afford to wear plenty of warm clothing call a hard frost "seasonable weather." But cold, in truth, saps the springs of life, and not only the poor and aged, but often the wealthy and the young, succumb to its effects.

The Amateur Gardener.

BY GEORGE GLENNY.

AN aquarium may be made of any form that will best harmonise with the furniture, the window, and general appearance of the room in which it is to be placed. If there be a Wardian case, the aquarium should in some way be made to match; the only difference in the necessary construction is that it should have no roof, whereas the wardian case is glass above.

Independent aquariums have been made of various forms; but an oblong square glass cistern, on a pedestal or stand of some kind, is the most effective, and the height of the bottom from the ground should make it level with the glass of the window where it is to stand. An ordinary propagating glass, mounted on a stand, will answer the purpose equally well, and may be obtained at a trifling cost.

With regard to the animals with which to furnish the aquarium, there are some beautiful lizards, which will lie at the bottom, or climb up the heap and rock if there be one; and these may give a striking feature. Gold and silver fish do well; small eels, minnows, stone roach, bull heads, small founders, are all calculated to live, and are so entirely different in their structure and habit that they are highly interesting; but several other fishes are too much alike to add to the interest so much as they do to the number.

We do not approve of crowding the space with plants; but we would rather have two of a sort of those which are effective than see a great variety of weedy things. *Stratoides aloides* grows very much like a small *yucca*; and a couple of these planted in what we call the mount—that is, the heap of sand and pebbles—will be very effective. *Valisneria spiralis* is an interesting plant, which exhibits the circulation of its sap under a microscope. *Hottoma palustris* is also an interesting plant with flesh-coloured flowers; but before we recommend furnish-

ing to any extent, we should wish the owner to visit some of the places where these aquariums are kept filled, and have only such as they approve from their appearance—for there is no accounting for taste.

The object in view in limiting the body of water to one foot from the back to the front, is that the objects can be seen well if they are close to the opposite glass. Everything is seen, however small; and as river water, however pure, is not so clear as that from a well, we cannot see things on the opposite side if there be any greater body of water to look through. In some of the aquariums at the Crystal Palace, where the body of water is greater, the objects on the opposite side are greatly distorted, or scarcely visible, and most of the fish and water animals get as far away from the spectator as they can.

Salt water aquariums are much more difficult to furnish, and can only be supplied to our own taste by a visit to the sea-side, where there is a choice of both plants and animals. There we may select our own favourites, whether from among the numerous living creatures that abound, or the still more numerous varieties of sea-weeds.

The sea-weeds should be selected from among those rooted to small stones; for although, like our plants on land, some might strike root, it is much safer to make sure by taking those which can be transferred to the aquarium without being detached from the stones they have grown to.

Salt water can be purchased in London, and although the chemists tell us how we can imitate it, and give us the analysis of its contents, we know that it cannot be made like the real article; for there is dissolved vegetable matter that cannot be supplied, and that is most essential to both marine plants and animals, as well as to those wonderful things which partake of both.

This being a favourable season for the purpose, we have deviated from our series of articles on Amateur Gardening to give a few hints on the above interesting subject, and to which we shall recur from time to time. In our next number we shall resume our articles on gardening.