

WATCHMEN.

OLD customs are gradually disappearing. We have seen the last of many practices and offices which were regarded as permanent by our ancestors. Only a few weeks back the last of the watchmen disappeared from the Temple, having cried the hour for the last time, when the old guardian of the City gave place to the new police. When this steady, regular, and efficient force was introduced by the late Sir Robert Peel, and in derision christened "Peelers" by the vulgar, the Temple kept up its practice of watchmen—the lawyers strictly maintaining their independence; and for long years after the practice of crying the hour had ceased in all our London streets, it still woke up the echoes of the Temple. Within the precincts of the law the old watchmen lingered; but even they—the only remaining specimens of the old City guardian—have disappeared at last, and the Police Commissioners reign without a rival.

The watchmen, with their huge overcoats and dim lanterns, crying in a broken voice—for they were most of them old—the hour of night, belong to the past,—to a state of society very different from the present. Then there was little security in the streets after dark, and when night set in the streets were dark indeed, for the best of oil lamps gave but little light, and gas was yet unknown; then the streets were badly paved, the footpath little better than the road, the road in winter or in rainy weather a Stygian quagmire; then thieves of all kinds were ready for their work of plunder, and plied a profitable trade—highway robberies were daringly committed, and ruffianly assaults took place; then insolences and outrages, cowardly and unprovoked, were offered by the "fast" men of the time; and to break the head of a "Charley," or watchman, to turn the box of a watch (with the watchman in it) against a blank wall, and leave the peace officer in hopeless captivity; to compel a watchman to surrender his coat, staff, and lantern to some tipsy rake fond of masquerading; to make any sort of practical joke on the only guardians which the City knew, was regarded as fine sport—almost equalling that of the Mohocks, Dancing-masters, and Tumblers of the days of George II.

The ancient guardians of the night, such as those who formerly watched (or dozed) over our safety, are still seen in some of the old German cities. There they cry the hour generally with some quaint rhyme, moral, or religious, or domestic in its nature. The same practice prevailed, or did prevail until a very recent period, in Poland, and our engraving is taken from a sketch made by an artist of two such watchmen in a Polish town. These watchmen go on duty in couples; each man armed with a short staff, one carrying a lantern, the other a rattle. The men represented in the illustration are sturdy fellows, far better able to take care of themselves and other people than our old Charleys; but the whole force nothing like so well organised as our police, or the police of Paris. They keep up the old German practice of chanting—or repeating, with a nasal twang, such words as

Ey Panowie gospodarze
Tonj dzielconta naj zegawze
etc. etc.



POLISH WATCHMEN ON THEIR ROUNDS.

Which may be rendered thus—from Polish poetry into English prose: "Oh, yes! householders take notice, it is now ten o'clock; see that all your fires are extinguished—not intrusting this precaution to your servants, but looking after it yourselves; so may Heaven keep you all from fire, and give you a good night."

Varying the advice, but seldom satisfied with simply stating that it was past one, two, three, or whatever might be the hour, the Polish guardians of the night keep their rounds till daybreak. It is a singular custom, contrasting very unfavourably, for all practical purposes, with an efficient police force day and night in our streets.

EDDYSTONE LIGHTHOUSE.

THE shipwreck of which we recently gave an illustration, must have excited a melancholy interest in many of our readers, and a description in the present number of one of the most gigantic precautionary measures against such disasters as shipwrecks, cannot be unwelcome. We allude to the Eddystone Lighthouse. The strength of this tower cannot be appreciated until we consider the situation in which it has, for nearly a century, braved the anger of the stormy deep.

The Eddystone rocks, on which the lighthouse is erected, are a little within the line between the Start and Lizard points; and as they lie nearly in the direction of vessels coasting up and down the

Channel, before the establishment of lighthouses, they often occasioned fatal shipwrecks. It must also be remembered, that they lie exposed to the swells of the Bay of Biscay and of the Atlantic Ocean, from all south-western points of the compass; and all the heavy seas from the south-west come uncontrolled upon the Eddystone rocks, and break on them with the utmost fury. The force and height of these seas are aggravated by the circumstance of the rocks stretching across the Channel in a north and south direction, and by their lying in a sloping manner towards the south-west, and even at low water this *striking* of the rocks, as it is technically called, does not cease, but goes on progressively. Even in calm weather the sea breaks frightfully upon the Eddystone rocks; and a circumstance that still further increases the difficulty of working on them is, that of there being a sudden drop of the surface of the rock, forming a step of about five feet high, so that even in moderate weather, when the seas come swelling to this part, they meet a sudden check, and frequently fly to the height of thirty or forty feet.

To erect a beacon, or "light of all nations," on such a spot as this seems at first impossible; but what will not man project, and Englishmen execute? The first lighthouse actually reared on these rocks was built in 1696, by Mr. Winstanly, of Essex; and so satisfied did he feel of the stability of the structure, that he expressed a wish to be in it during the greatest storm that ever blew under the face of the heavens.