

thing this moment, he'd bring the right 'un. My daughter, who, young as she is, keeps house for me now, knows all his ways, and easily understands what I've sent him for; nor he won't take it from her if it aint right—not he. They're just as good friends as ever, the girl and him, but she's only a very young thing yet, whilst he's old, poor chap, and not so fond of moving about as he used to be. However, sir, he's been out with me a'most every night as I've been on watch this eight years, and I hope he'll last a good long time yet, for he's treated well and taken much care of, honest chap. And now you know so far, I'll just tell you of that night when he got lamed so. I'll just have a look round, and be back again in no time: I won't keep you a minute."

With this he rose from his stool, and walked a few paces out to where he could get a good sea view, scanned the horizon narrowly with his glass, gave a look aloft, and again came and seated himself on his rickety contrivance.

"Now, sir," said he, "I'm brought to again, and 'll go on with my yarn. Lie down, mate, and make yourself easy; I aint a-going to move again for a bit, I dessay."

Bo'sun resumed his comfortable position, and Rogers proceeded.

"I was off' duty one night in the autumn some five or six years ago, and had just had my supper and was thinking of turning in, when there was a knock at the door, and in walked our skipper.

"'Rogers,' says he, 'slip on your boots again; I want you.' You see, sir, I'd taken 'em off, and was a having a toast at the fire afore going to my hammock. Well, I slips 'em on again sharp, and gets ready to go out, for I knew by the skipper's manner that there was something in the wind.

"'Look to all your arms, and leave that cur of yours at home to-night; we musn't have a sound, and he might spoil all with his barking. Now look sharp, and get down to the boat-house as soon as you can.'

"'Ay, ay, sir!' says I; and off he sails.

"Well, I uncharged my pistols, and loaded 'em again carefully, stuck 'em in my belt, buckled on my cutlass, and ran up-stairs to give Mary a kiss and tell her I was ordered on duty, for she'd gone to bed poorly: she aint strong, sir, and never was. Having done that, and told her to be sure and go to sleep and not be worrying about me, I came down-stairs again and went to the door to go out. Uncommon anxious old Bo'sun was to go with me; but I dursn't take him for the life of me, so I shoved him back and locked the door, and went straight down to the boat-house ten knots an hour. There I found all our men mustered, and the skipper a-fidgeting about for all the world like a cockroach on a hot stove lid, as if he wanted to be off uncommon.

"'Now, lads,' says he, 'you're all here, so I'll tell you what you've got to do. I've heard from a source on which I can rely, that that blackguard Long Jim is going to run a cargo at the Point to-night, just opposite the Devil's Ladder;' (that's a pathway cut zig-zag up the face of the cliff, sir), 'and I mean to have him at last: he doesn't dream

of any one knowing it, and thinks he'll do it quite easily. There will be rockets and signals going on about four miles to the eastward; take no notice of them, as it is only to draw us there whilst he does his business at the Point; but just do as I tell you, and come along.'

"With these words, out he bolts, and we arter him. It was as dark as pitch almost, and there was a nasty drizzling rain, which made it altogether as uncomfortable a night as you'd wish to see; but, for all that, we were ready enough for the work we had in hand, for this fellow had baffled us several times, and we'd been more than once jeered at and chaffed about him. After a stiffish walk all along underneath the cliff, we came to the place named, and here the skipper gave us his orders in a whisper.

"'Now, then, how many are there of you?' Ten. Very good! You, and you, and you,' picking out three of us, 'go up to the third slant in the pathway, and gently too, so as not to make a sound. The rest, except Rogers and Humphrey, go round the Point and hide yourselves until you are called. You stay here, Humphrey, and when you have seen the blue light out at sea, run up and join the party on the pathway, and let them know: they can see nothing from their position, because of that high ledge of rock between them and the sea. Now, Rogers, sneak down among those great stones, until you get to the water's edge almost, where you can see the top of the cliff as well as out to sea; keep your weather eye open, mind, for very much will depend upon you. First of all, they'll show a blue light out there somewhere, which will be answered by a similar light on the heights. This will be done twice, and they will then land. Lie quiet until they have all passed your hiding-place and have set foot up the pathway; then return as quietly as you can, summon the men from the other side of the Point, and cut off their retreat: and, by-the-by, should the signal-man come down after showing his light, he must be stopped and secured, but without noise. Now, do you all clearly understand?'

"'Ay, ay, sir!' we answered.

"'Well, then, off to your posts; and remember, whatever you do, make no noise. I am going over to F—as fast as I can, to get the cutter out, in case anything should prevent the landing. So good night, lads.' And away he went as silently as a ghost."

[To be continued.]

LITERARY "PACKMEN."

THE profession of the pedlar, or travelling packman, has dwindled down to comparative insignificance since the days when pack-horses were an institution in this country. We have made most marvellous changes since then—from a plodding jade of a horse, or a whole train of them, laden with packed bags, nicely balanced on each side, and following a leader jingling with bells, at the rate of twenty miles a day, to a train of twenty or thirty baggage vans, each loaded with its six or seven tons, and following the

great iron horse at the rate of twenty or thirty miles an hour. And yet, vast as is the change, it has been accomplished in what, now that it is past, appears but a mere span of time. We can remember the pack-horse, pomegranates and all, very well, as we used to see him with his camel-like hunch of goods, in the days when we carried a green-baize satchel containing a duodecimo Lindley Murray, a Walkingham's Arithmetic, a blotted Eton Grammar, and that dog's-eared square quarto Entick, etc., constituting our own pack, as, "with shining morning face," we crept "unwillingly to school."

In those days the pedlar's vocation was a thriving one, and we can well believe, though we never fell in with any such a phenomenon ourselves, that it may have contained within its ranks even such a man as Wordsworth has pictured in the first book of "The Excursion"—a man who, philosophizing on nature and humanity as he went plodding under his pack,

"Through hot and dusty ways or pelting storm,"

might, after a reasonable space of time, and while his energies were yet unsubdued, find that

"provision for his wants

Had been obtained,"

and be enabled to put in practice the very prudent resolution,

"To pass the remnant of his days, untask'd
With needless services, from hardship free."

But our business is not with pedlars and packmen in general, but with literary packmen; and we allude to the general pedlar only because, in the days we speak of, he was very much the medium by which such literature as penetrated the remote and secluded parts of the country found its way thither. In the hamlets, villages, and even the smaller market-towns of the country, there was no such a personage as a bookseller to be met with in the first years of the present century; nay, we could point to places which had their bi-weekly markets, and yet which, so late as the year 1820, were without their bibliopole. People resident in such districts, if they patronised literature at all, received it at the same hands which supplied them with linen and woollen goods, with ribbons and laces, and personal adornments; and the contents of a pedlar's pack often consisted fully as much of food for the mind as of gear for the body. That some of them were reading men, we happen to know, and know also that they had the wit to appreciate what they read. On the upper shelves of our bookcase there are yet the thumbed and tattered remnants of a small collection of the English Classics, bought five-and-thirty years ago or thereabouts of a travelling pedlar, who found us out in a lonely hamlet in Somersetshire, every one of which the vender had perused first himself, and could recommend to a customer.

These men were often but indifferent characters, and, for the sake of gain, would secretly circulate books of a depraved kind. We are inclined to think, however, that on the whole they did more good than harm, and cannot help entertaining a feeling of obligation towards them. Hugh Miller, in his "Autobiography," gives a humorous account of one of these worthies, which is worth

quoting. "There was," says he, "a vagabond pedlar, who travelled at this time the northern counties, widely known as Jack from Dover, but whose true name was Alexander Knox, who used to affirm that he was of the same family as the great Reformer. The pedlar himself was, however, no reformer. Once every six weeks or two months he got madly drunk, and not only 'perished the pack,' as he used to say, but sometimes got into prison to boot. There were, however, some kind relations in the south, who always set him up again; and Jack from Dover, after a fortnight of misery, used to appear with the ordinary bulk of merchandise at his back, and continue thriving until he again got drunk. He had a turn for buying and reading curious books, which, after mastering their contents, he always sold again; and he learned to bring them, when of a kind which no one else would purchase, to my mother, and recommend them as suitable for me. Poor Jack was always conscientious in his recommendations. I know not how he contrived to take the exact measure of my tastes in the matter, but suitable for me they invariably were; and, as his price rarely exceeded a shilling per volume, and sometimes fell below a sixpence, my mother always purchased, when she could, upon his judgment. I owed to his discrimination my first copy of 'Bacon's Wisdom of the Ancients, done into English by Sir Arthur Gorges,' and a book which I had long after occasion to refer to in my geological writings—Maillet's 'Telliamed,' one of the earlier treatises on the development hypothesis, and . . . 'Poems of Gawin Douglas and Will Dunbar,' and another collection of 'Ancient Scottish Poems,' from the MS. of George Bannatyne."

That some of the packmen who had a literary turn should abandon their linens and woollens, their ribbons, frippery, and trinkery, and take up solely with literary wares, was not to be wondered at. Thirty or forty years ago there were peculiar facilities for carrying on a profitable trade in book-hawking, and advantages connected with such a trade which no longer exist. In rural districts, as already mentioned, there were scarcely any booksellers, and the hawker had the trade in his own hands; then books were always published at a high price, and bore a good profit; and the man who went into the market with ready money, as the pedlar was obliged to do, might make from thirty to forty per cent. increase of his capital in the regular course of business. The small editions of Walker's Classics, and subsequently of Dove's, were admirably adapted, both from their portability and the excellent judgment which had been shown in their selection, for this kind of commerce; and hundreds of thousands of them permeated the land among the pedlar's stock, and are to be found to this day in the remotest and most out-of-the-way districts, forming part and parcel of the domestic library. The men who followed this exclusive trade were mostly of the nomadic class, who had little relish for plodding the same route over and over again, and you rarely saw one of them a second time, save after a very long interval.

Quite a different specimen from the book-pedlar,

or hawker, was the touter of books in numbers. This man laid out a beat for himself, which he traversed weekly, or perhaps monthly; and his main object seems to have been to dig a big hole in your pocket "by force of numbers." Our recollections of this persevering genius are not half so pleasant as they might have been, had we turned a deaf ear to his seductions. We have indignant reminiscences of a certain "Cruden's Concordance," printed on a kind of stone-coloured tea paper, which cost us nearly four pounds sterling by the time it got wrapped in decent calf skin, but which, long before that time, was selling in the shops, in quite as good a garment, at twenty-eight shillings. We had paid the difference for the pleasure of having the work dribbled out weekly in blue paper covers, and we were but one of some thousand or so subscribers who had contributed, for about three years, to a "losing bank." Large fortunes were made by speculators in this sort of literature, during the first decades of the present century; and, looking to the margin of profit exhibited by the Concordance transaction, the fact is easily explained. Some huge monuments of the trade yet remain, in the shape of gigantic Bibles and voluminous illustrated histories, stored up among the penates of many a farmhouse and rural residence. The touter of books in numbers still survives; but he has undergone a change; the decrease in the money value of books of all kinds has cropped his large profits to something like average dimensions, and, having a better informed public to deal with, he must give the money's worth for the money.

The most characteristic literary hawker of the present day is the trash packman of London, and the suburbs, within five or six miles of St. Paul's. Nothing derogatory is signified by the word "trash," in connection with this subject; "trash" and "trash-shops" being merely technical trade terms, used to designate cheap serial literature, and the places where it is sold retail. The function of the trash packman is to supply innumerable small shopkeepers, who sell cheap literature, either as their staple article, or in connection with snuff and tobacco, with lollypops and sweetstuff, with toys and walking-sticks, with apples, oranges, and nuts, with red herrings and treacle, small beer and vinegar, with brass bracelets, brooches, rings, and Birmingham ware, or even with coals and potatoes. It is for his special convenience, though that fact is modestly kept in the background, that the cheap serials are issued so long before the nominal date of their publication; the cheaper they are, and the larger their circulation, the earlier do they issue from the press. Were they to come from the printer only on the eve of publication day, the packman would never be able to get them to the counters of his customers, who, for the most part, have themselves no connection with the publishing houses, and rely solely upon him for their supply. He is the most unwearied and punctual of purveyors; and in all weathers you may see him pelting along on his route, laden with the ponderous reams and quires which melt away gradually as he continues his circuit from shop to shop. His

wares are far more various and manifold than the general reader is aware. Besides those journals which are well known and extensively popular, he has a catalogue of others, altogether as obscure and ephemeral, the first numbers of which are generally given away, or added, as a bonus, to some other periodical, with a view to secure a welcome reception for the numbers which are to follow. These are mostly of the melo-dramatic, demonological, or stirring and startling class of narratives—speculations which as often fail as remunerate their originators, but which, spite of all failures, are constantly springing up in some form or other.

The remuneration of this industrious disseminator of the cheap literature of the day is not, we imagine, very large; and it is rather a mystery how he is remunerated at all, seeing that he sells at five-and-twenty per cent. under the published price, and therefore must exist himself on that meagre margin—whatever it may be, for we confess our inability to define it—which is expressed by such terms as quirage, dozenage, per-centage, etc. Perhaps he supplements his wholesale transactions by a small independent trade in retail, which he is able to carry on concurrently with his larger operations, and along the same beat.

The reader will perceive that literary packmen may be very useful agents, circulating sound sense and good instruction; or, on the contrary, they may be perambulating nuisances, carrying infection into the moral atmosphere wherever they go. The tendencies of the times are, however, happily in favour of their being beneficially employed, and it behoves every man who wields a pen to see that, so far as he himself is concerned, they are so.

THE CALCUTTA MALL.

At last the golden orb of day, after his brilliant career across the azure vault of heaven, and after

"Hurling fierce splendour through the saltry air,"

betakes himself to his gorgeous crimson bed across the Hooghly. The fact is physically announced to me by the perception of a gradual mitigation in the heat as I lie recumbent, divested of all but the airiest of habiliments, attempting to snatch a brief forty winks to brace up my energies for the coming visit to the Calcutta Mall. But still more practically is the event of closing day made significant by the silent entry of my sable valet, who proceeds to business by opening the venetians, and letting a flood of light into my hitherto darkened chamber; he then arranges my wardrobe, and, after certain manual telegraphic signals from the window, to summon the water-carrier to give me a bath, formally announces that everything is ready. My valet is resolute: any attempt to court still further slumber would be absurd. As the water-carrier enters the bath-room, I rouse myself, and emerging from the precincts of the musquito-curtains, enjoy the luxury of the huge skinful of freshly-drawn cool water that is poured over me; I then rapidly perform my toilette, under the joint administrations