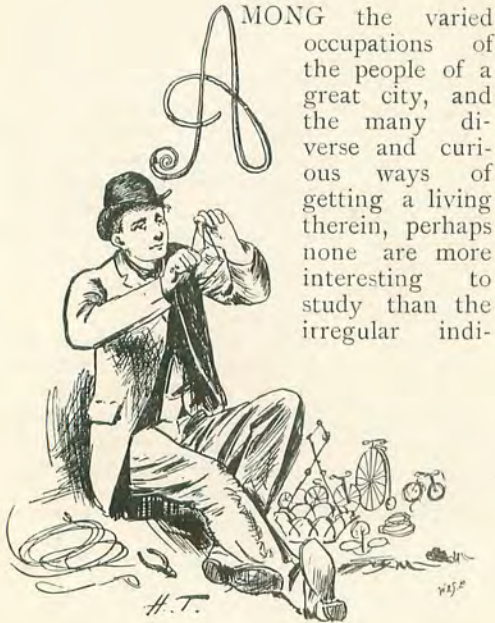


Street-Corner Men.



AMONG the varied occupations of the people of a great city, and the many diverse and curious ways of getting a living therein, perhaps none are more interesting to study than the irregular indi-

viduals who may be seen at various street corners, and almost on any night of the week, in the various High streets and main thoroughfares of the suburbs, cajoling, lecturing, flattering, preaching, and dogmatically and assertively declaring, by all and every kind of method, the advantages to the public of an investment in their particular kind of goods or a subscription towards the open-air entertainment they provide. The copper wire-worker, who with aid of pliers rapidly evolves models of bicycles, ordinaries and safeties, flower-stands, vases, card-baskets, &c. ; the glass collar-stud and inexhaustible glass fountain-pen seller; the little old man who, with candle and old kettle, constantly pierces holes in the latter to mend with his patent solder, "Two sticks a penny, any child can do it"; the public benefactor and proprietor of a patent corn solvent; the conjuring-cards seller, "any one, man, woman, or child, can perform these ere tricks the same has wot hi do"; the boot-blacking stall-keeper; the silverer of old brass articles; the herb-vendor of penny packets to mix with tobacco to destroy the ill effects of nicotine, with printed placard of illustrious personages' opinions of smoking; the purveyor of old monthly parts of various illustrated

magazines and periodicals, the umbrella seller, the conjuror, the open-air reciter; these and many others, with every kind of dodge and manœuvre to extract pence from the pockets of the people, are the street-corner men of this great metropolis.

A curious fact about these itinerants is observable; the majority are selling medicines or compounds to cure the ills of the flesh, presumably the needs and necessities of the people in the direction of cheap medicines receiving more attention, and the trade being more lucrative, than the retailing of articles of a domestic character. Their methods of attracting attention are various. One well-known character about the London streets regularly prefaces the sale of his patent digestive cure-all, kill-pain, stomach-regulating tonic with a rather elaborate experiment with two wine-glasses, apparently clean and empty, somewhat on the lines of the conjuror's manipulation of a variety of drinks.

A little cold water poured into one makes no change, but with the other a muddy, dirty-red coloured liquid is the result, typical of a disordered state of health.



"TWO STICKS A PENNY."



"Now," triumphantly declares the street quack, "you will see the magical effect of my patent curative, blood purifying, health-restoring, digestive tonic." Two drops of this into the muddy, dirty-red liquid chemically restores the water to its former apparent purity, and the effect upon the health of the purchaser is analogously equally efficacious. Strong lungs, a tremendous voice, and emphatic declarations help to sell a great number of bottles.

Another regenerator of his race begins from the platform of a smart pony and trap, by an amusing account of having landed from New York with the traditional half-crown in his pocket, and, wandering down the White-chapel-road, was attracted by a quack medicine-vendor.

"OLD MONTHLY PARTS."



"EXPERIMENT WITH TWO WINE-GLASSES."

"The idea then struck me," he continues, "that I would never rest until, unaided and alone, I had become the greatest doctor of the London streets. That proud position I now enjoy. 'How do you do it, Shaw?' says one. 'Mere luck,' says another. How have I done it? I will tell you how I have done it. Take my health-giving hop-bitters; not Dr. Soules' hop-bitters, for which you have to pay 1s. 1½d. and

2s. 7½d. a bottle, but take my patent hop-bitters, one penny a packet, and you will never again be troubled—," and here follows a splendid list of every ailment that could possibly afflict suffering humanity. Having sold out all his hop-bitters, he would then bring on the scene, utterly and defiantly regardless of any copyright of the title, his famous tooth-powder "Cherry Blossom," which was to "purify the breath, cleanse the teeth, harden the gums, renovate the teeth, stop decay, beautify the complexion," &c., and in general make life a paradise, all for the small sum of one penny a box. Occasionally a boy is had up from the crowd, and his teeth



"THE GREATEST DOCTOR OF THE LONDON STREETS."

cleaned for him with a small piece of wadding, though generally a fairly good specimen dentally is selected.

The writer once stopped to listen to another type of quack, more modestly served with the usual naphtha lamp and small box on stand. He was a man with a fierce eye and very sallow complexion, who rejoiced to find one of his audience at the time afflicted with face-ache or neuralgia. He had an instantaneous cure by inhalation, and, indeed, if unable to discover a face bound up with a handkerchief or some other apparent evidence of neuralgic pains, would boldly and thunderingly accuse any particular one of the listeners of sciatica, neuralgia, tic-doloureux, or some other complaint, to the blushing confusion and ineffable distress of the victim of his declaration.

Another gentleman, with every assurance, declared solemnly that he was not there for himself, he was working on behalf of a very dear friend laid on a bed of sickness. He (the quack) had made enough and plenty of money to last him all his lifetime, and, apparently forgetting what he had said before, was selling his herbal compound purely, solely, and simply for the benefit of the people.

If he hadn't enough to last him a lifetime, he was apparently pretty well off, as his well-appointed pony and trap sufficiently testified.

But the open-air entertainments are, of course, if not more amusing, certainly more attractive to the crowd.

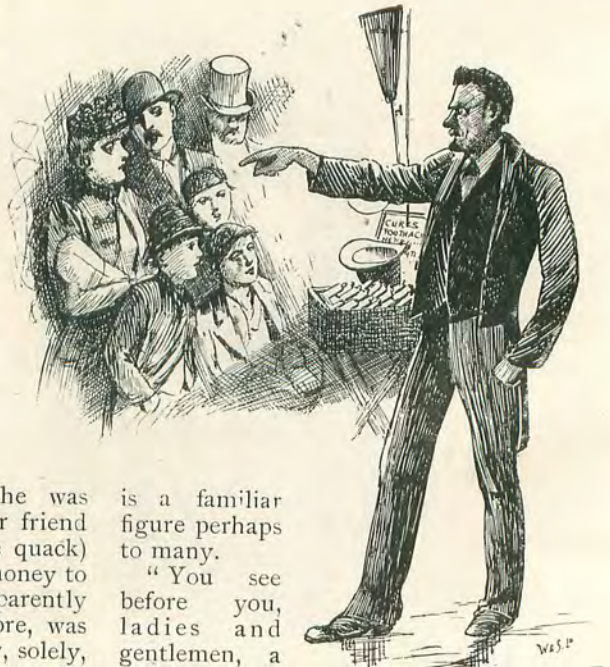
We have seen more than one very excellent conjuror at a street corner, and as it is necessarily more difficult to perform in the

open with little or no apparatus, and the audience completely surrounding one, perhaps they may be entitled to some credit.

Guinea-pigs discovered under an old hat, which had the moment before been lifted to show its emptiness by a small wand held at tucked-up-sleeved

arms' length, rapid manipulation with cups and marbles, card tricks neatly shown, and other feats of legerdemain are comprised in the street conjuror's programme.

Open-air recitations have become very prevalent of late years. Here is one who



"AN INSTANTANEOUS CURE."



"A CONJUROR."

and accomplished elocutionist, one who has travelled throughout the whole of the countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America." It is no use, apparently, unless one is thorough in one's statements. "I have given recitations in the bleak frost-laden countries of Northern Russia and Siberia, in the balmy climates of the South, the burning deserts of the East, and the wild backwoods of America, and for the small sum of 6d." (collected in advance) "will give you any recitation you chuse to hark for, from Homah or Shakespeah down to George R. Sims. I require 6d. only, to get my night's lodging."

Nobody venturing to suggest a subject—or, if they do, it's about the same—our hero impressively gives out "Christmas Day in the Workhouse," by George R. Sims, fairly enough recited; at the conclusion of which another street-corner is sought for the same performance.

Another class of street-corner men are more of the "Cheap Jack" kind of individual. The wily lures of some of these gentlemen are not always discoverable by a cursory attention to their methods. Imagine coming upon a young fellow in a trap, with the usual flaming naphtha lamps, solemnly holding a boy whose head has a white kerchief over it, looking much like a small culprit prepared for the hangman,

and the said young fellow, with great volubility, explaining some extraordinary and curious phenomenon which would happen, if sufficient attention were paid, but of which it is impossible to make head or tail. This is the simple dodge to collect an audience. That once done, the handkerchief is whipped off, the boy nimbly jumps down, and a copy of *The Evening News and Post* is carefully scanned to point out the advertisement of the young fellow's master, who, purely for advertising purposes, has sent him to this street-corner to sell, or rather, give away, for the audience is emphatically assured that all money taken will be returned, the celebrated pure Abyssinian double electric gold rings to be had at his master's establishment only, at the advertised price of 1s. 4d. "I hark only one penny from each person for one of these rings. I am not allowed to sell less than one dozen, the same as hadvertised at 1s. 4d." (here the advertisement in *The Evening News* is again referred to, this time the paper upside down; but that is of no consequence); "and all those who purchase this ring, stay where you are; don't go away."

The dozen disposed of, the purchasers are requested to hold up their hands, and the pennies are duly returned. So far, so good. The next article would be a magnificently chased, pure Abyssinian double electric keeper ring, looking sparkingly bright in the glare of the lamps, for which twopence is asked, though sold at the head establishment at 2s. 6d., and the purchasers are earnestly entreated not to go away.

Obvious deduction, the twopence of course to be returned. Two dozen only allowed to be sold of these. When duly disposed of, and another dozen tried in defiance of the strict regulations, it is found with the very extreme of irrelevance that time does not permit of several gold and silver watches being given



"AN ACCOMPLISHED ELOCUTIONIST."

away, so the "tuppences" are swept into the young fellow's pocket, to enable him, as he says, to give the audience another chance.

Diving quickly into a large box, paper packets are produced warranted to contain something, if only a bent wire button-hook, two of these being sold for 1d.

The sale slackening, one or two are opened, and out fall ivory-handled pocket knives, gold and silver alberts, broches, &c. A fictitious rush thus created, divings into the box are rapid and frequent, with a large occurrence of bent wire button-hooks and waste-paper among the sold packets. Apparently the public rather enjoy the joke of this chance lottery.

We once came across a very good-

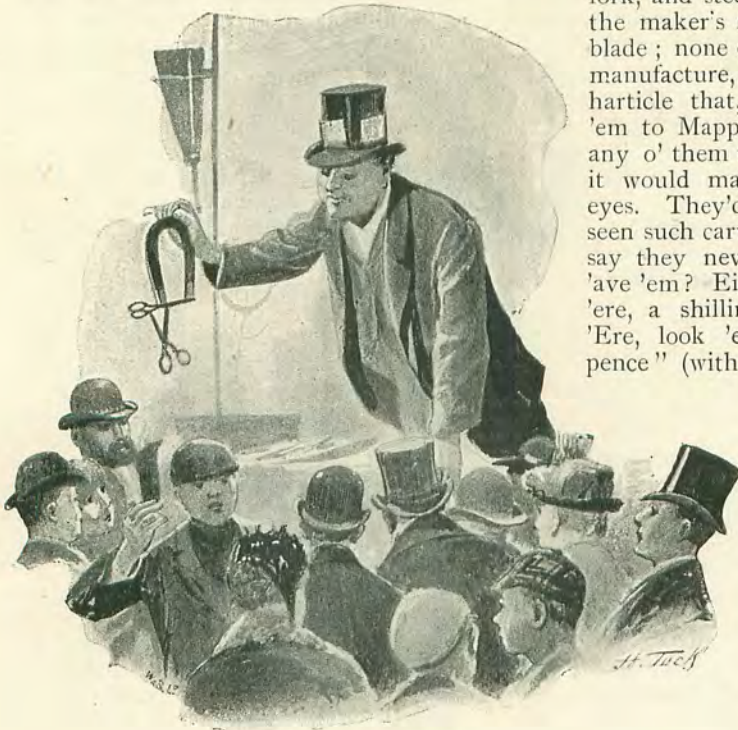
tempered-looking sort of Cheap-Jack who was selling for sixpence what he called the great Parisian novelty, a pocket knife that had a glazier's diamond in the head (with which he cut up quantities of glass), two blades, a file, scissors, corkscrew, gimlet, and goodness knows what besides; and he had in addition albums, scissors, plated spoons, and all kinds of domestic cutlery.



"A DODGE TO COLLECT AN AUDIENCE."

"What! Don't want no albums! Well, what shall I show yer? I've tried yer with everything. But there, I hain't agoing to despair. I've got a little harticle here—I hain't a-going to tell yer no more lies to-night; if I do, may I be a teetotaler—I've got a little harticle here—and I've honly got a very few, so you'll have to be quick—a carver, carving fork, and steel, real Sheffield make, the maker's name stamped on the blade; none o' yer German-sausage manufacture, real English; a little harticle that, if yer wos to take 'em to Mappin's or Benetfink's, or any o' them there places, I tell yer, it would make them open their eyes. They'd tell yer they'd never seen such carvers before, and I dare say they never did. Now, who'll 'ave 'em? Eighteenpence, fifteen—'ere, a shillin'; who'll 'ave 'em? 'Ere, look 'ere, ninepence, eightpence" (with a bang), "sixpence!

Now who'll 'ave 'em? If I can't sell 'em to yer, I'll give 'em to yer. Fancy, 'ere's a present for the missus! Why, you'd be able to buy twice as much meat for yer Sunday's dinner; the carvers 'ud cut it up so quick; and, after dinner, you could sit at the winder and blow



"DOMESTIC CUTLERY."

yer bacca ; and all for the small sum of sixpence ! Now hain't that much better than sharpening hup the hold knife on the winder-sill in yer shirt sleeves, when the people's a-coming out o' church down below ? Now, who'll 'ave 'em, honly sixpence, and I'll make yer a present of the sheet of paper they're wrapped in ? ”

And so he went on, when one article hung fire promptly introducing fresh ones.

Many other street-corner men there are ; the sweetstuff man, for instance, who sells

so rapidly that two boys are employed to open the bags for him—one penny a quarter of a pound—and occasionally mohair lace sellers, puzzle and toy retailers, shipwrecked mariners, street butchers, song sellers, negro entertainers, and others ; but we have endeavoured, within the limits of this article, to indicate only some of the characters who make a speciality of a street-corner pitch, rather than the heterogeneous army of those who may be termed the kerbstone characters of the London streets.



“A SWEETSTUFF MAN.”