

discovery of the footprint of a flatfooted person in the sand, bodes all manner of ill luck; and to utter the name of a clergyman or any four-footed beast on board a fishing boat would render the offender subject to bodily peril, and at least destroy all hopes of success on that day.

All along the west coasts of Cornwall, Scotland and Ireland, they make better use of the dreaded cat. They secure favoring winds by burying it alive in the sands of the seashore with its head opposite the desired course of the wind. Up in the Shetlands and Orkneys fishermen wear a lucky belt containing dried offal of three different herrings; and a perfect child's caul, which wards off evil influences and brings good fortune, hanging in the cabin of a fishing boat, is worth from five to eight guineas in any prosperous fishing village.

Among many fanciful superstitions and curious weather omens which I have found to be universal with British fishermen are the following: They never point with the finger to another smack. If the mistake occurs, both hands are instantly upraised and spread in the attitude of blessing. Three idle strokes of a stick in the sand, making a figure resembling a coffin, portend death. It is unlucky to meet a barking dog in the morning. If porpoises tumble about in unusual numbers, or if seagulls leave the open sea and gather noisily along shore, storms will surely come. Whistling at sea is the worst of all ill portents; and nothing is so much dreaded as a whistling woman ashore. If a mop or water-bucket is lost overboard from a smack, the unfortunate craft instantly sets sail for port. Dreaming of anchors is a good omen. A broken looking-glass on board will create a veritable panic. To count fishermen as they march to and from the boats puts them in deadly peril. If blood be drawn during a quarrel on the beach, all fish will leave the locality. Nothing is more unpropitious than the presence of women wherever fishing is in progress; and no fishermen will go to sea when the dead body of one of their number, or family, lies unburied. EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

LONDON, March 27, 1893. In order to appreciate one of the oddest gatherings of the oddest folk in one of the oddest corners of London, one must first know something about those whose strange lives and unique vocations make the noted London "Poverty Junction" what it is.

They are the "pros" or "prossers" or music-hall performers of the world's metropolis. There are from 3,000 to 5,000 of them, great and unknown, men and women, and there are no other folk just like them within the whole world. They provide the "amusement" for the score or more of great music-halls into each of which nightly crowd from two to five thousand people, and for the hundreds upon hundreds of lesser affairs, ranging from the old-time free and-easy, from which the modern music-hall has sprung, to the "penny-gaffs," where audiences of from one to five hundred persons may be found.

Beside these, I would almost venture the assertion, there are thousands of "pubs" or public houses, drinking places with assembly rooms behind the bar, where free "smoking concerts" attract a permanent nightly audience of from a score to a hundred workmen and

the foul rabble that subsist upon their generosity and weakness.

Indeed any one who knows this great city at all in that wandering, vagrant, observant way which leads thought into grave conclusions, would have no hesitancy in saying that a quarter of a million human beings may be found any weekday night in these places "cheery" or more so, from liquor, and from these sources forming their odd ideas of international contrasts; gathering from villainous performers' quips the news and scandals of the day; increasing their contempt of order and law from their endless satire and ridicule; gaining in general and particular deeper hatred of English society above them; and hearing, often with their wives and daughters beside them, the most sacred relations of men and women never spoken or sung of save as a perennial playground for cunning and infidelity; until the heartiest laugh is in response to the broadest entendre, and the loudest roar rises from these great seas of upturned faces when the vilest music-hall indecencies are perpetrated.

Of all these places the "penny-gaff," or outrageously ridiculous pantomime, or voiceless melodrama, or wordless tragedy, in which there is indescribable murder, highway robbery, and other lurid crime, but all enacted without spoken word to evade the law governing dramatic representations, is the least harmful, for it has no bar; and to get his "penny'orth" of play the Whitechapel barbarian is kept for at least two hours away from a public house.

The great London music-hall is simply a larger and more insidiously hurtful type of the free "smoking concert" room. It is practically a gigantic bar or series of tiers of bars, surrounding an auditorium where the thousands instead of scores can be admitted, at a merely nominal entrance fee; where a stage with specialty performers supplant the platform, the pianist and the volunteer; and where the same classes, or more vicious ones, with "Arrys and 'Arriets" of London fill the pit, while every manner of cad, fast fellow of the gentry and nobility, including a good sprinkling of London Bohemia, saunter in the promenades and fill the boxes and stalls.

About twenty different acts called "turns" are done by as many different performers in one evening, and each actor will have from one to four "turns" for the same evening, each at different halls to which he speeds in every sort of conveyance, from a coster's donkey cart to a brougham. Programs are furnished, on payment, and huge numerals, slid into the proscenium sides, correspond with programme numbers.

These shows, with few exceptions in favor of individual performers, are utterly pointless, mirthless, inane and beastly. There are perhaps in all this host of London music-hall "actors" a half dozen who have demonstrated that true art may find reward even in so hopeless a field. Such are George Beauchamp, comedian; Jenny Hill, impersonator of the coster girl, "the ludging-ouse missus," and female characters of that ilk; and Albert Chevalier, whose studies and representations of the London costermonger should give him rank as a really great actor and a man of positive genius.

But between all these odd folk and the London actors of the dramatic stage there is endless emulation ming

led with tantalizing attempts at "free, dery" and airiness on the other side, and a fadeless dread and contempt on the other. The "pros" or "prosser," as he is everywhere known in London, is in nearly every instance a product of the lowest London life. As a rule he was originally a costermonger, stable-boy, "boots," starveling from the traveling booth shows, Billingsgate crate-carrier, or from somewhere out of the East End slums.

If he be of as good quality as from the humblest laboring classes he still, as well as all other music-hall performers, graduates into his profession through one unvarying school of low and often vile training—from the "penny-gaff," or from the "smoking concert" den where he has, as "volunteer" sang, danced, contorted, or slugged, for the free entertainment of the gutter hosts of London. Many of these favorites command salaries of from £50 to £100 per week. But about all of them reach their affluence, and often respectability, out of the same original depths, and along the same vicissitous road.

The only time when dramatic actor and "pros" ever meet is at the annual Christmas plays and pantomimes. Then the "pros" is in demand at the theatres to do specialties. The lofty scorn and the airy defiance between actor and "pros" is then something wonderful to behold.

"What's that?" is the contemptuous query of one actor to another, as a "pros" is espied in the stage wings at Christmas time, waiting to do his "turn" as his act or specialty is called.

"Oh, its only a thing from the 'alls' (the music-halls)!" his companion will s witheringly answer.

"Gor bli mel!" retorts the "pros" with an airy snort at his persecutor, "hit cawnt be *hiss* on the sta-ige," they would'n't 'ave sech bloomin' hobjects in the 'alls!"

In America there is considerable friendly commingling of actors and variety performers. This makes possible the "Rialtos" of our larger cities, which are really noted as haunts of all manner of stage folk, and which are the resort, at certain hours of every day, of all theatrical people. The casual passer lingers curiously within the region. Even one least accustomed to striking city phases is instantly impressed with the unusual character of the neighborhood and with the manner and dress of its frequenters.

But between London actors and London music-hall performers the gulf is impassable. The London actor is a gentleman bred and born. He has been given the best of home and school, often of university training. He is a student; frequently a traveler. His culture has been persistent, sequential and unavoidable. And his excellent social status keeps him permanently in touch with the best rather than the undesirable elements.

The "prosi" being the product of an entirely different set of conditions and environment, is necessarily the endlessly impinging element. He is believed by the gentleman actor and gentleman vocalist to be on the alert to reach his htion; push into his place; secure his sonar and emoluments; just as the boot-blacks, butcher-boys and newsboys of great cities, with special gifts and dauntless energy, surpass trained business men, and at last with prestige and