

apprentices—vacuous and vainglorious "Simon Tappertits"—filled with fine frenzy and mock heroics that they may ever bear the, to them, true British stamp of the cock sure cockneys and beery ruffians of the hour.

All of these chromo cockneys never open their mouths without effort to out-do their moral and mental superiors, the costermongers. They occasionally break loose from their London environment and travel in Ireland in Scotland, on the continent and in America.

A shilling with them is a "bob," a sovereign is a "quid," a donkey is a "moke," a cab-horse is "cat's meat," to drink liquor is to "take a wet," a glass of ale is a "tankard o' bitter," every one accosted is "guv-er-nor," and a woman is a "donah" or a "cow." This sort of thing may possess a certain sociological and literary interest when confined to the characterful class from which it emanates; but every one of these pretentious cockneys, whether met in London or on their ruffianly travels about the world, should be set down for precisely what they are. They are no more representative Englishmen than a New York dude, carrying the manner, epithets and clothing of a Bowery boy about the world, would be a typical American. They are simply cads; a disgrace to intelligent English people and an insulting human parody upon the ignorant though sturdy and genuine costermongers they sadly mimic, possessing more than all their vices and totally lacking the least of their humble virtues.

The longer one studies these curious lowly folk of London the greater is the wonder that they have not proven a more fruitful subject for the novelist, or at least for such masters of character painting as Thackeray, Reade and Dickens. They have always been utilized as the butt of quips and quirks by the penny-a-liner, the wits of *Punch*, the newspaper paragraphers, and, in a low sort of way, to raise the loudest guffaws at the myriad music halls of London. But not until quite recently has their character been seriously studied by a man of real genius, or their weaknesses, virtues and traits appealing to universal human recognition, been portrayed by a man of subtle perception and ardent sympathies.

That man is Albert Chevalier. Of French, Welsh and Irish extraction he was destined by his parents for the priesthood. But instead he became a successful actor of the legitimate comedy under the Bancrofts, the Kendals and later at the Court theatre under manager Hare. In time he found himself a popular leading comedian without an engagement. Offers came to him for engagements in burlesque as second comedian. This was going backward; something a London actor cannot afford to do. Some of his work in comedy had brought him among the costermongers for character study; and he remembered that any song he had sung in his various characters bearing on these droll folk had been received with peculiar favor. He suddenly resolved to turn music hall singer, a resolution which carried out in London ordinarily means complete social ostracism. But from this time this determination was reached Chevalier must be considered in the light of poet, composer and singer. He continued his coster studies with a positive genius, a splendid education

and a successful actor's alert perception of what is necessary, as with the painter, to not only reveal by true realism, but to reveal in the subtler power of suggestion, behind them; and the result was that since his first singing of "The Coster's Serenade" at the London Pavilion, in February, 1891, he has held the extraordinary position of being the only performer upon any stage so unique in his line of rendition and so masterful in his artistic skill as to prevent the slightest attempt at rivalry.

He is but thirty years of age, yet his income from his nightly performances at four leading London music halls and from royalties on his songs is from \$600 to \$1,000 per week—nearly equaling the salary of the President of the United States; and all this from merely discovering the costermongers of London and revealing them to the people of London. It has been done in a way to reach their hearts as well as their sense of humor lastingly, as is shown in the fact that his present engagements are permanent for a period of five years. He is a quiet, studious fellow, and while his incomparable success has opened to him the doors of the great and noble houses in London, where his genuine scholarship and refinement would render him a social acquisition without the glamour of success, he leads a modest life in his own pretty home alongside the Thames, almost under the shadow of Windsor Castle, where his books, his punt and fishing-rod are his chief companions.

This much regarding the man's personality. To convey to others who are unacquainted with costermongers themselves the peculiar conditions of London life and society which make it possible for a man to derive a princely income from creating and interpreting—for Chevalier is more than a mere singer upon the stage—two or three coster songs each year is a difficult task. London is almost a great world in itself. Its costers, distinctive in character, vocation, speech, traits, habits and customs, had previously remained an almost unknown people to what may be regarded as intellectual London. If Charles Dickens were living and had written a great work of fiction in which coster life and love had been delineated so powerfully that all London stood amazed at its own ignorance of its own lowly, the coster man and woman could not have been more firmly set upon the pedestals of sentiment than Chevalier has placed them, through his strong flash-lights and bold, broad strokes of delineation in character representation and song. He has brought to almost universal attention the mirthful and serious sides of coster character. He has shown that there are coster comedy and tragedy like that possible to your life and mine. In one after another of his marvelous song impersonations like "The Coster's Serenade," "The Coster's Courtship," "The Future Mrs. 'Awkins," "Wot Cher," "The Nasty Way 'E Sez It," and "Our Little Nipper," he has brought the very heart throbbings of this uncouth class, often through pathetic tenderness, so close to those of his hearers, that the great London public, from prentice boy to prince, have awakened to the fact that costers are actually human creatures, possessing at least some of the common attributes of humankind.

Chevalier found that there costers really

made love to each other; that they were rude Romeos and Juliets among them; and such hints as these are given of the gentle passion between pearl-buttoned Jackeys and their "donahs:"—

You ain't forgotten yet that night in May.
Down at the Welsh 'Arp, w'ich is 'Endon way?
You fancied winkles an' a pot o' tea;
"Four 'alf," I murmured, "'s good enough for me;
Give me a word of 'ope that I may win"—
You prods me gently with the wrinkle pin:
We was as 'appy as could be that day,
Down at the Welsh 'Arp, w'ich is 'Endon way.

"Wot Cher" is an inimitable delineation of the coster in his roystering, hilarious mood "The Nasty Way 'E Sez It," which has been pirated and put to ignoble use in America, though told, in the uncouth coster way of a sneering fault-finding "pal," is a most wonderful satire on that omnipresent class of croakers who descend like harpies upon all well earned comfort and content. His latest creation, "Our Little Nipper," discloses the coster parental love for and pride in the coster boy, who is assiduously "taught" by his radiant father

"Not in books, of course, for them 'e can't abide"—
"But in artful little Ikey's little ways
As makes the people sit up w'ere we stays."

Chevalier's influence has been healthful and good. While, as in London parlance, coster stock is looking up, there is decidedly less of imitated cockneyism and coster slang among the lowly, and less every-day buffoonery among the cockney cads of London. Defining and revealing costers as a class have brought them into line for social and literary contemplation. This of itself gradually tends to confine imitators to a very low class of minds whose influence upon manners and speech is without weight, and delineators to a very high order of intellect, as with Chevalier, with painters and with novelists, who will do the coster no harm, and who will mist the public's eye or touch the public's heart in a way that always makes it better for a thrill of mirth or sadness.

Chevalier's coster dialect is admirably clean; too clean to be the real thing; but he uses enough of their original expressions to place the real coster before his great audiences. From having lived and toiled among them, my note-books are full of their curious forms of speech. They cannot be reproduced in print, owing to their terrible profanity and awful commingling of obscenity, while it must be remembered that the coster is absolutely unconscious of either, and would instantly "put up his fivers" to any one who would seriously intimate that he was not scrupulously respectful and polite. They are all, men and women, wonderful whistlers, and they have an odd sort of call and answer, a monotone accentuated thus:

"Ta-ta ta! ta-ta; ta-ta!"
"Ta-ta-ta! ta-ta!"

In their greetings they are most effusive.
EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

DON'T DESPISE small things, or be discouraged because you seem to have only a small part in the great world's business. It takes 3,750,000 bees, working upon and depriving of their nectar 62,000 clover blossoms, to collect a single pound of honey.