

greatness to the French revolution. Thus they stand without any moral support or prestige, and can remain on top only by means of making themselves indispensable to those noblemen who eighty years ago erected their throne and may at any time kick them down again. Hence the Bernadottes become far more nervously 'Swedish-minded' and aristocratic than they would have been if they had descended from a good old royal family of Sweden.

"Therefore the Bernadottes will have to give up their chances in Norway. The king clings to our conservative party as long as he can, though he must, as an educated European, despise these people who trample their own flag in the mire and receive humiliations for their country by kissing his hand. But let him only depend on his 50 members of the Storting. He has hardly considered how easily those 50 can be carried away if matters are carried so far that a national storm sweeps the country."

The Muscovite octopus is drawing its tentacles ever closer and tighter around poor Finland. The Czar has made solemn promises that he would respect the rights of Finland. But these are misconstrued, distorted, and what can two million people do against one hundred millions?

A pleasant ray of light appeared lately on the gloomy path lying before Finland. A Finnish millionaire, Dr. H. F. Axtell, of Paris, who died recently in that city, has bequeathed nearly all his wealth to his country. The chief items are: His rich collection and 1,300,000 marks will go to a national museum; 800,000 marks to the university of Finland as aid to students of either sex; and 200,000 marks to the Latin school of Vasa. It is expected that these endowments, if properly managed, will contribute a great deal toward maintaining the national feeling of the people of Finland.

Dr. Axtell has also donated 100,000 marks to the academy of sciences of Stockholm and 100,000 marks to the Nordisk National museum of Sweden's capital.

The government of Canada sent agents to Iceland last winter to spread information about British America among the Icelanders. The agitations will probably result in a largely increased emigration. In view of the fact that most of the emigrants are able-bodied men and women, the agents are very unpopular among those people who have no idea of emigrating themselves. One of the agents announced the other night that he would give a lecture on America in a certain hall at Reykjavik, and several hundred people greeted the speaker when he mounted the platform. But it was a peculiar greeting. As soon as he had said, "Ladies and gentlemen," he was interrupted by the most vigorous hissing, and whenever he opened his mouth, the game was repeated, until he had to leave the platform and admit his defeat. The educated, well-to-do classes were the leaders in this demonstration.

Denmark has been visited by an unusually large number of disastrous fires since January 1st, and the managers of the fire insurance companies are seriously discussing the necessity of raising their rates.

WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS.

LONDON, May 29, 1893.—In that most unsavory portion of London lying between Bethnal Green, Billingsgate Market and the London Docks I have passed many strange days and stranger nights among those most curious and interesting folk known as the London costermongers.

It all came about in an accidental way, as most pleasant things are sure to happen to the vagrant traveler who loiters rather than rushes through old-world scenes, and so cheap withal that when I came to figure expenditure and found that not ten pounds had been required to give me a permanent status with the entire fraternity, I felt some twinges of conscience that my footing made so beggarly a showing. Two pounds ten were invested in a coster's cart and donkey; three pounds went to prevent a domestic tragedy; eighteen shillings bought a second-hand coster's barrow outright; four shillings were paid for a "pegging" chaffinch; twelve shillings and sixpence took me to the Derby as a coster in the costers' annual parade; another two pounds was lost on the supposititiously unimpeachable judgment of a coster companion who introduced me to several brilliant "pegging" contests in the Whitechapel districts; and the remaining fifteen-six was squandered without compunction in coster tea-parties, by the side of coster rat-pits, in coster "penny gaffs," and at coster tap-rooms; all of which, as I have taken the reader thus far into a personal confidence, should be susceptible of rigid explanation.

To begin with, that all this and these London folk may be understood, there must be something said about costers in the abstract. There are from 50,000 to 60,000 of them in the great metropolis. They are the hawkers of fish, vegetables and fruit. It is not true as with us when any one that hawks is a hawker that any one who "costers" in London would be a coster. The costers are a separate race. They are the only hawkers here. They are a distinct, characterful and integral part of this great and ever wonderful Babel of London. It is known that they have been precisely what they now are for nearly 500 years.

The earliest record of London costermongers' cries is said to be in Lydgate's poem of "London Lyckpenny" in the time of Henry V., about 475 years ago. Shakspeare refers contemptuously to "these coster-monger times," Ben Jonson makes his *Morose* swoon if he hears a costermonger's cry; and Dr. Johnson gives the derivation of "costardmonger" as originating in the street sale of apples or costards "round and bulky like the head."

The result is that the costermongers of the London of today form almost a little realm of their own, ever changing in confines yet changeless in character and antiquity; with a purer strain of blood, of its kind, than half of the English nobility; and with ancient customs and traditions remaining inexorable laws of guidance to themselves; all to a more marked degree than is true of any equal number of people in any corner of Europe.

At his daily labors the coster will have on his head a small cloth cap well to one side, with the visor either pointed to the sky or sawing one side of his neck. He is never without his black or flashily

colored silk "kingsman" or heavy, loosely gathered neckerchief, always tied in a sailor's knot and the ends tucked in the folds of his gay woolen shirt, the whole exposing a fine, well corded and often hairy neck and chest. His waistcoat is long, like a jockey's, with capacious pockets and huge tabs, and always of corduroy or velveteen. His trousers are half Mexican in cut, of corduroy or coarse ducking, and their wide bottoms flap over the best shoes worn by any lowly men in London. Added to this are pearls or polished metal buttons innumerable.

In the matter of buttons their "best togs" for Sundays and holidays are truly startling. Whether of metal or pearl, they are from a half inch to an inch in diameter, and are set as thickly as they can be placed around the cap band and visor edge, down the edge of the waistcoat from throat to point, above every pocket, and along the edges of all lapels, upon the sleeves nearly from wrist to elbow, and along the wide plush side stripes of the trousers, from just below the knees to the very edge of the trousers leg, so that the last button clicks and patters against the pavement and the shoe.

The coster women are none the less striking in their garb and appearance. Like the men, they are all well shod, and wear short coarse serge petticoats showing their ankle and shapely feet. Their waists are always low at, or left open in, the neck, and usually the latter, as with the men, is adorned with a flashy silk neckerchief, while a small woolen plaid or silk shawl covers the shoulders, its ends crossed upon the breast, where it is always fastened with a brooch of huge dimensions.

But the hair and the headgear are most distinctive. From these alone a coster girl is anywhere recognizable. The hat is of straw or felt, and always as large as a coster's cartwheel. It protrudes alarmingly in front, and above this canopy waves a forest of ostrich plumes. Coster girls belong to clubs for the purchase of these prized feathers, and there is no ordinary sacrifice they will not make to possess the largest plumes that can be bought. The hair is bestowed behind in a large braid. A "part" extends from this immediately over each ear, and a heavy, straight tab lies against either cheek. Above the forehead the hair falls straight almost to the brows, but is then frizzled and curled until it stands upward and outward like monstrous matted *Chevaux de frise*.

The nearest approach to a home among the costers is where the coster is fairly well-to-do, and owns the donkey and cart or a couple or three. In these extremely rare instances you will often find the coster, his wife or mate, their children and the donkeys in one basement room together. But the character of the man's and the woman's work keeps them upon the street. They eat at cheap chop-houses and coffee stalls. Their evenings are passed at the tap-room, the "penny gaff" shows, the rat-pit and the cheap music halls.

Boys and girls leave their parents and mate at from fourteen to sixteen years. They take furnished rooms in the coster districts of Leather Lane, Drury Lane, Shoreditch, Old Street Road, Marylebone-lane, Dockhead, Bethnal Green, Whitechapel, Camberwell and the like, and are at once ull-fledged costers.