

THE PEDLER ON LONDON BRIDGE.

It was a bright May morning early in the present century. London Bridge was densely crowded and almost impassable, as it was wont to be in those times, for it was not the stately structure of Rennie with which we have to deal, but the old, narrow, many arched bridge which for centuries had formed the only link between the city and the adjoining borough of Southwark.

The carts and carriages toiled along, every now and then coming to a deadlock, which generally provoked an angry and protracted wrangle; for there were no police to enforce order or overawe violence. The foot-passengers made their way like men swimming against a rapid current, thankful if they accomplished the passage, after half an hour's exertion, without damage to limb or pocket.

In the embrasures formed by the projecting pier small traders had established themselves, and offered their wares to the passers-by, the slow pace to which the latter were restrained giving them a better opportunity than ordinary of descending on the merits of the articles offered for sale. In one sheltered nook stood an old woman with her basket of oranges and cakes, and at her side a flower girl, with her nosegays of primrose or violet. In another, a hardware man offered his scissors and thimbles and many-bladed pen-knives, or cheap rings and brooches and pinchbeck jewellery.

In one of the abutments, near the city side, on the day referred to, a man was very busy advertising sovereigns for sale. "Here you are, gentlemen," he vociferated; "real golden sovereigns one penny a piece. Only a penny apiece—real sovereigns, fresh from his Majesty's mint! Here's an opportunity that will never happen again—only a penny for a real golden sovereign, twenty shillings' value, two hundred and forty pence—all for one penny! Don't let the chance slip, gentlemen; it will never come again! Buy a hundred sovereigns for a hundred pence!"

The crowd surged by, taking little notice of him, or when any one did make any response to his invitation it was to express surprise at his folly in believing that the public could be so taken in. "You've brightened up those farthings of yours pretty smartly," said one. "If you'd sell 'em four for a penny, you might do some business." "Best mind what you are at my lad," growled an old city clerk; "if you attempt to pass off those Brummagem buttons as sovereigns you may have the constables after you."

The pedler listened to these remarks with the utmost composure. He did not appear to be in any way disturbed though he had stood for nearly three quarters of an hour without receiving a single bid for his wares; nor did his eye ever turn aside from the track which was slung by a band round his neck, except to glance at a man occupying the same niche in the bridge as himself, who was leaning carelessly against the parapet, referring every now and then to the watch which he drew from his pocket.

Presently it seemed as though a customer had come at last. "O papa," said a little boy, "those are the things mother is always wanting. Look here; I've got fourteen which she gave me for bringing a good character home from school. I'll buy four of the sovereigns and take them home to her if I may."

"You're a good boy, Dicky," said the father, "but I am afraid your mother wouldn't get much good out of them. They're only pretence, my lad. In this world no one ever parts with anything under its value. You may give good money and get what is worth very little for it. Come along, and buy your bulls' eyes."

The pair passed on, and presently another man stopped and looked wistfully at the tray.

"If they were only real," he muttered. "Twenty of them would keep me out of gaol, and I might come all right again. There's many a man now to whom twenty real sovereigns are of no more consequence than that chap's medals would be. Ah, but though he doesn't want them himself, he won't give them to me."

He, too, resumed his way, and was succeeded by a very different personage from the last—a buck, in fact, of the first water. His three-cornered hat set jauntily on his head, his green coat, with large brass buttons, his buckskin breeches, showy waistcoat, and the mass of neckcloth round

his throat, were all in the height of the fashion. He paused a moment in front of the pedler, and narrowly scrutinized the contents of his drawer.

"A good imitation that," he muttered, with a fashionable oath; "I wonder whether they would pass at Crocky's. If I could venture fifty of them at the board of green cloth, at a cost of only four and two pence, that would be a deal better bargain than I shall get out of Moses. But no, it wouldn't do. The croupier's eyes are too sharp for that. I should be kicked down stairs and never allowed to come again; and that would be all I should get by it. But it's a pity—upon my life it's a pity!" and so saying, he sauntered on to the money-lender's.

"What is the time now?" asked the pedler of the longer beside him.

"Just a quarter to twelve" was the answer. "You have exactly fifteen minutes to stay, and that is all. Halloa," he added under his breath, "here is a customer at last, I do believe."

As he replaced his watch, a man having the appearance of a decent mechanic, carrying a small bundle, stopped for a moment or two, eyeing with curiosity the contents of the pedler's tray. Then he took up one of the coins and turned it over.

"Well, it's a clever sham," he said, "and it will please my little boy. I've just got a penny left after paying for the tea and sugar, and I'll take one of these home to him."

He laid down his penny accordingly, received one of the coins, and went on his way. He could not put it inside his bundle very well, and he had a hole in his pocket, so he was obliged to keep it in his hand. As he passed on into Gracechurch Street, under the window of the large jeweller's shop a crowd which had gathered round a fallen horse, forced him into the doorway, and he took the opportunity of examining his purchase again.

"Well, it is uncommon like, that I must say," he exclaimed. "I haven't fingered too many of these, to be sure; but all I have seen are as like this as one pea is to another. There can't be any chance of its being a real one, I suppose, that would be too good a joke; and yet there is no harm in asking, and this chap will tell me what it is in a minute."

He stepped up to the jeweller's counter accordingly, and laying his coin on it, inquired of the man "what that might be."

"That?" said the jeweller, taking it carefully up and weighing it on his finger. "Why, what should it be, my good man, but a sovereign?"

"A sovereign, a real sovereign!" exclaimed the other; "you don't mean it, to be sure. Just look again, sir, if you please, and make certain."

"There's no need to look again," said the shopman rather sharply; "I should know gold by this time when I see it. It's as good a sovereign as ever came from the Mint, and is quite new into the bargain. I'll give you twenty shillings for it, if you want to change it."

The journeyman stared once more in the jeweller's face, and then turning short round, he made for the door, elbowing his way without ceremony through the crowd outside, and paying no heed to the angry remonstrances addressed to him on all sides. Two or three minutes sufficed to clear his way through the crowd gathered in Gracechurch Street, and then turning down one of the narrow alleys which in those days intervened between the broad thoroughfare and the river, he hurried on with all the speed he could command. Presently he emerged near the entrance to the bridge, and, still fighting his way vigorously, reached the embrasure where he had left the dealer in sovereigns. Alas, he was gone, and his place was occupied by a vendor of gingerbread nuts, who was commencing his articles with an earnestness which far exceeded that of his predecessor.

"Where is the man who was selling the sovereigns?" exclaimed the journeyman breathlessly.

"Man with the sovereigns!" repeated the person addressed. "I don't know of any such. There was a chap here with a tray about five minutes ago, just as I come up, but he shut up business and walked off with his friend just as twelve o'clock struck."

Not improbably the reader has heard the explanation of this strange occurrence all ready—how two fashionable loungers at the

West End had made a wager as to what would be the consequence if one hundred sovereigns were offered for sale, at one penny apiece, for an hour on London Bridge, during the most busy period of the day. The one party had contended that they would all be bought up the moment they were exposed to view, the other that the public would totally disregard them. The experiment was tried, and with the result which has been related: of the hundred sovereigns only one was sold, and that to a man who had no belief in the value of his purchase.

It may seem strange to us that men should have shown so little discernment. Yet what is it but the very same thing that is going on every day on the bridge which leads from this world to the next! The servant of his Lord stands by the wayside and offers to all the pure gold of everlasting life in his Master's name, and bids them buy it without money and without price. But they pass by it and heed it not, thinking that that which is so freely offered must needs be worthless. Few or none make purchase of it; and they only find out its true value when it comes to be tested by use. Here also the precious prize is offered only during the brief hour of human life. The angel witnesses stand by and mark the throng as it heedlessly passes by, and when the hour is ended the offer is withdrawn. Vain will it be then to strive and haste to redeem the past. There is no repentance in the grave.—Sunday at Home.

"I CAN BEAR ANYTHING NOW."

Going into one of our large West-end-shops early one Monday morning, I observed that the young woman who served me appeared to be suffering from cold. She remarked that the shop was always cold on Monday mornings. I suggested that as customers increased she would not feel the cold so much. I was greatly surprised by her quick reply: "Yes; but I have such a bright prospect before me, I don't mind all these little trials now as I used to." I imagined she might be anticipating a holiday, or possibly marriage, and expressed sympathy in her anticipated pleasures. I said I hoped she might fully realise all she looked for. Her prompt reply was: "Yes, I am sure I shall. I am looking to be with Jesus. He has saved me, and I can bear anything now that I have that prospect."

She went on to tell me that a year and a half ago she entered on this blessed life, and with a glowing smile, remarked: "I have been so happy ever since!" I inquired what she was doing for Him, who had done everything for her, and had given her such a fortune in his love. She replied: "I have a class on Sundays, and I do love it so. I am always looking out for opportunities of speaking a word for Jesus."—The Christian.

SINGULAR CIRCUMSTANCE.

Bishop Chase, of Ohio, on his return from a visit to Washington, stopped at the house of Mr. Beck, in Philadelphia; and while staying there a letter reached him bearing several postmarks. It was written in England by Dr. Ward, Bishop of Sodor and Man, in behalf of an aged person in his diocese, who was needy, but who claimed to be lawful heir to certain property in America. Names were given, and application was made to Bishop Chase for information in the matter, if he could communicate any. He certainly could not. Naturally enough, he read the letter to his friend; but before he had finished Mr. Beck started up in amazement.

"Bishop Chase," he exclaimed, "I am the only man in the world that can give you the information that letter asks for! I have the deeds in my possession, and have had them for forty-three years, not knowing what to do with them, or where any heirs were to be found!"

It was impossible not to see the divine shaping of circumstances in the opening of that letter, so nicely and wonderfully timed. The letter had reached the Bishop's address in Ohio; had followed him to Washington, and followed him again to Philadelphia, till he received it in presence of the only man who could answer it.—Selected.

ADDISON says that the actions of men are like the index of a book; they point out what is most remarkable in them.

PUZZLES.

RIDDLE.

A very useful article,—
Long, short, and broad and thin;
I am not made of iron,
Nor copper, brass, nor tin.
At hotels I am always found,
As you can all attest,
A company of good wise men,
You choose the very best,
When sailing on the ocean,
In steamer, brig or bark,
You're on my whole most surely;
I hear the answer, hark!

GOSLET.

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Read across: A small wax candle; a test; mother of pearl; a manufacturer; the beard of grasses; a vowel; a unit; a jester. Central: Hero of one of Dickens' novels.

BEHEADINGS AND CURTAILINGS.

Behead and curtail to powder and leave a pronoun.
Behead and curtail a celestial body and leave a narrow road.
Behead and curtail almost and leave a title.
Behead and curtail a bird and leave affection.
Behead and curtail a pitcher and leave a pronoun.

JANET FORREST.

GEOGRAPHICAL ACROSTIC.

My first is a city in England.
My second is a cape in North America.
My third is a volcano on an island.
My fourth is a sea in Asia.
My fifth is a city in Prussia.
My sixth is a chain of islands in the Pacific ocean.

My last is a county in England.

The initials reading downward is a group of West Indian islands. And the initials reading upward show to whom they belong.

JAMES ALLAN CLARK.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES.

CHARADE.—Patchwork.
RIMLESS WHEEL AND HUB PUZZLE.

N O B L A
U E
O T C H A M R A
H I M A R
O R I O N O L I T T A P
A T T I R I
E R A M I R O

Perimeter of wheel—NAPOLEON.
Perimeter of hub—HAMILTON.
ENIGMA.—Benjamin Franklin.

TRANSPOSITIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS.—1, Fowl; 2, dog; 3, wolf; 4, cat; 5, pig; 6, horse; 7, man; 8, month; 9, wolf; 10, month, so-called because the people of England were in more danger from wolves at that season than at any other time of the year.

CORRECT ANSWERS RECEIVED.

Correct answers have been sent by Katie R. Nicolson, Howard Buck, and Katie Kirkwood.

"MY BABY always wakes up peevish or crying, and always has," a mother said a few days ago. Her baby is now three years old, and has never once waked up in that happy mood which causes many a well-regulated child to lie and play with hands or feet, a tracting; his mother's attention by that wonderful accomplishment which we call "pat-a-cake." A mother may be sure that there is something wrong about her baby or its environment when it wakes up with discontent manifesting itself so plainly. Sometimes it is because its food is not digested, and often because the air in the sleeping room is impure, and if baby could speak he would tell of a dull troubled head and disturbed stomach. The cause ought to be diligently sought for by every mother, and be remedied, so that the poor baby be no longer defrauded and kept from his legitimate rest and pleasure.

A HOLY life is a voice; it speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either a constant attraction or a perpetual reproof.