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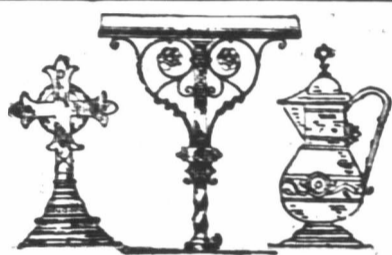
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The heart of London, that region about the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange, which has been dubbed "the financial centre of the world," stands in what is the strangest parish in the city proper. There is in this parish no church, no municipal office, and, it is said, but one inhabitant; yet its value in a parochial and official sense is equal to that of many another parish in the British metropolis with its thousands of taxpayers. This is the parish of St. Christopher-le-Stocks. Some seven hundred years ago it was founded, no one knows exactly how or by whom, and is still existent with all its rights and dignities. The church of this parish stood in Threadneedle Street, on the site of the Bank of England of to-day, but this church was demolished at the time of the improvement of the Bank in the year 1781. The church was a stately edifice, altered and beautified by Sir Christopher Wren after the ravages of the great fire of London and embellished by gifts from the City's wealthy aldermen. The first authentic reference to this church is found in the year 1392, but it is certain that the church was in existence at least a hundred years prior to this date, inasmuch as without the gate stood a pair of stocks for the punishment of those whose offences had been committed within the City limits. These were abolished in 1282, when Edward I. was King. At the time Henry Wallis was Mayor of London the tolls derived from London Bridge were sufficient for its maintenance, so the Mayor, with the Royal permission, established a fish and flesh market "near by the Church of St. Christopher-le-Stocks." The Stocks market was designed to aid

the upkeep of London Bridge, the bridge keeper having power to grant leases for market shops. The church was the spiritual resort of all "godly shop keepers." In 1624 a graveyard was attached to the church and it was upon this that the Bank of England encroached, so that in 1781 the church was demolished. But no doubt to save the consciences of the money makers the parochial rights and dignities were still maintained. The garden with the fountain within the Bank of England marks the site of the burial ground. The last interment took place 100 years ago, being that of one "Jenkins, a bank clerk, 7 feet 6 inches high." So the old Church of St. Christopher-le-Stocks went its way, but its parish remains embracing the open space in front of the Bank and the Mansion House. This parish has one inhabitant, and he enjoys full rights of voting for a member for Parliament, as well as for an Alderman to represent his ward in the City Councils.

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