

BILLINGSGATE SCENES.

THE FAMOUS FISH MARKET AS IT IS IN THESE DAYS.

When London Folk Get Their Share of Treasures From the Deep—Sights and Sounds That Impress the Visitor to the Queer Old Locality.

LONDON, Sept. 19.—You can fairly smell Billingsgate market, the greatest wholesale fishmarket of London, and the most important fishmarket in all the world, long before you can see it. It is not an unpleasant odor. It has a hint of the sea-air in it. Floating to your senses, along with the coming of the first rays of the morning sun broken by the grim and lofty monument, it tells more than of the stuffy market and its steaming throngs. It carries the fancy pleasantly along past London's grim waterside structures and the webs of spars and rigging, down the widening Thames, and on past pretty Margate to the wide free reaches of the blue North sea. There in that wondrous sea harvest field, from Dover to Upper Norway are rocking the fisher fleets.

Billingsgate market still stands just where it has stood for centuries. How many centuries no man knows. Iconoclasts without reverence for even the antiquities of fish say a fellow by the name of Billing owned a wharf upon the same spot in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and hence its name. But I have seen the preamble to an act of parliament (in 10 and 12 of William III.) to make Billingsgate a free market for the sale of fish, in which, among other "whereases" is one reciting that "Billingsgate has time out of mind been a free market for all manner of lobsters and shell fish." Tradition, which is good history when authorities differ, lends the place its more fitting antiquity and insists that it owes its origin to Belin an ancient king of the Britons, who flourished 400 years B. C., and who, observing an opportunity for gain, like a true Briton erected a gate here through which the fishermen of his day, after floating upon the Thames with the tide in the hide-bottomed currachs, were made to pass and pay toll before they could sell their fish; and hence the name Belin's-gate, finally corrupted to Billingsgate.

However all this may be Billingsgate is the oldest wharf on the Thames, and that is saying much for it on the line of age. The market building and the ground it stands upon is owned by the London municipal authorities. Its river frontage is 200 feet, and its superficial area is 40,000 square feet, affording sites for seventeen shops and two large public houses. It is located in the densest part of what may be termed waterside London, on the north bank of the Thames.

The varieties of fish which are in their respective seasons delivered at Billingsgate market number nearly 100. During this month I have noticed perch, periwinkles, pike, anchovies, roach, salmon, gurnets, haddocks, herrings, flounders, turbot, sprats, jack, ling, plaice, dorset, prawns, catfish, mullets, whelks, coalfish, trout, soles, pilchards, eels and conger eels, fish, cod, bream, brill, hake, shad, weavers, skate, smelts, whitebait, tench, sturgeon and perhaps a dozen other varieties; and the total weight is from 12,000 to 15,000 tons per month, or 150,000 tons per year!

Over three-fourths of all the fish consumed by London passes inspection at Billingsgate. As the market is city property the officials for this purpose, four in number, are appointed by the Court of the Fishmongers Company, one of the ancient but still thoroughly active Guilds, or Trades Companies of London. It has a fine Fishmonger's hall near London bridge, and expends many thousands yearly in preventing the sale of decayed fish. All fish condemned by its inspectors are immediately conveyed to a waiting barge, treated with carbolic acid and sent to fertilizing works at Rainham, where, after being baked dry, they are ground to powder, and sold at about £5 per ton to the strawberry and hop farmers of Kent for fertilizing purposes.

The fish steamers arrive alongside the market at all hours of the night and early morning. At precisely 5 o'clock in the morning the market opens. Long lines of plank are laid from the market quay, over barges and pontoons to the steamers' decks and every ounce of fish is brought over these in baskets and bags on porters' backs. At the same time the railway vans are unloading on the landward side. But six can be cared for at the same time. The confusion and entanglement are indescribable. One who witnesses the scene for the first time is filled with amazement that the largest and most civilized capital in the world will tolerate such antiquated methods. But the porters are wonderfully dextrous, alert and carry incredible loads. I have seen many laden with from 200 to 300 pounds weight. They will positively frisk under a barrel of herrings which weighs 200 pounds, and there is no question that many of these fellows can easily get about the market with upwards of 400 pounds properly distributed upon head and back.

These Billingsgate porters are regarded as the strongest, quickest and most athletic men in London. They live in every respect like the water rats of the Thames and the aristocracy of the Whitechapel district. Their only earthly ambitions are to eat, drink, visit "penny galls," rat and dog fights, and excel in pugilism. They are big, brawny, hairy-chested fellows of apparent endless good-nature, but are brutes by heredity, instinct and deepest yearning. Whatever their want of character outside the market, a more demure and lamb-like set of fellows was never seen than they are while on duty here. They are licensed, and the strictest regulations exist regarding their conduct, even to the character of language. To lose their license is worse than imprisonment as a criminal. Their "reputations" among their fellows, the costers, and the East End slums are gained by their prowess and strength here. It is their world, their highest, broadest outlook, and they are really curiosities in social or literary study.

The pugilists of London chiefly have their origin among the Billingsgate porters. They have their regular champions at "seven stone six," "eight stone six" and "eleven stone," and officer 790, policeman

F. Wade, informed me that there is not a man among them who has not at sometime or another appeared in a Whitechapel ring. Bill Goode, who fought Slavin, is still a licensed porter here. Among many curious characters is one Cornelius Callahan, known as "Mike, the Tipster." He is a neer-do-well and a privileged person. He makes great ostentation of his knowledge of the state of the market. Getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning he prowls about the fishing steamers, and then just before the market opens he slips about among buyers and sellers and whispers "the tip of the day" in their ears. The "happenings" are always forthcoming. On Saturday afternoon, just before the market is closed for the week they "have a game with Mike." He regularly appears for his buffeting, and often in the rough play that ensues poor Mike is nearly killed. Then the hat is passed and from six to ten shillings is always paid the willing victim.

All Billingsgate fish are sold by auction, and a veritable Babel in the place is from five to eight or nine o'clock. There are two classes of sellers. One comprises the regular commission men to whom the fishermen consign their catches, and the other is a thoroughly hated but most prosperous class, known to Billingsgate from time immemorial as "bummarchs." These are really middle men who practice all possible arts to combine and force the regular commission men, who have but a short limit of time in which to sell, and dispose of lots at ruinous prices, and through similar combination often compel retailers to purchase at exorbitant rates.

But however interesting may be the interior of Billingsgate to the casual visitor, the adjacent thoroughfares from midnight, when the first retail buyers begin coming, until the close of the market at 9 o'clock, provide more strange and curious pictures and groupings. There is no other place in London where such a vast and so odd a jumble of vehicles and folk may at any one time be seen. Over 4,000 vehicles for the bringing or taking away of fish are here. With them are 10,000 coster men and women and an unnamable, indescribable host of pretty street vendors and hangers-on. If you can arrive here on a foggy morning early when the first rays of the sun are filtering through the fleecy folds of mist flapping up with the tide along the Thames, you will then know old Billingsgate as Dickens and Thackeray knew it, and will long for power and space in which to paint with pen or pencil one of the strangest, oddest scenes to be found in this mighty London town.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

A SAILOR'S BURIAL.

Graphic Account of the Scene at a Funeral at Sea.

When maritime Jack dies he is buried without much undue ceremony. A brief prayer, a shotted hammock, the lee rail, and all is over. But on board a ship-of-war a sailor's funeral is pathetic in its dignified simplicity. No muster of the ship's company is, naturally, so sad as this, and you can see it on the faces of all when the subdued shrilling of the boat's whistle is followed by the long drawn out and modulated call of "All hands bury the dead!" The men come aft quietly and take their allotted stations. To leeward, if it be at sea, or upon the port side of the quarter-deck if not in port, the seamen are ranged in the front rank; behind them are the ordinary seamen; and in rear of both, the apprentices and the landsmen. In the gangway forward of the mainmast, on such ships as still have sail power, senior petty officers stand at attention. Around the coffin folded in the jack or national ensign, are grouped the pall bearers, selected usually from the dead man's mess or gun division, and close at hand, resting on arms, the marine guard is paraded. Nearest the coffin are the chaplain and the captain, and then in order of their rank stretch aft the other officers of the ship.

The ensign at the peak or staff flutters tremulously at half mast, and from overhead the yard and stay tackles swing lazily, ready to lift the coffin on board. When the weather permits the way of the ship is stopped, and, if it may be, little flickers of sailing steam curl upward and to leeward like incense, and the wind in the backed and fretting topsails murmurs a dirge. The order to "uncover" is passed gently, and while the beautiful words of the burial service are being read the hush of the living is accentuated by the low accompaniments of sea sounds—by the rumple of eager waters eddying sternward, and by the surging of the breeze in the hollows of the canvas and through the rigging and gear. When the closing prayer is said, the last blessing given, the tackles are manned, the coffin is stripped of its flags and slung in straps, and slowly, reverently, is hoisted above the rail and clear of the ship, until it is poised over the billows. His marines load, aim, fire, in all three volleys that awaken rattling echoes in the hidden spaces of the ship; the bugle sounds "taps" tenderly and sweetly, with a newer meaning of sleep and rest; the coffin swings further out, and is lowered gently until the foam and sponderift moisten it; the tackles are detached with sudden jerk, and in an instant the weighted box shoots downward, bedded in foam and bubbles, and all is over until the sea gives up the dead.

In a little while the cheery whistles trill out a call to duty, the half masted ensign climbs to the dasher block, the ship is brought to her course and dazedly the men take up the weary routine of the lives so sadly broken. An unusual quiet rests upon the vessel and around the mess tables; but in the groups gathered to smoke during the supper hour and alter the hammocks are piped down the "virtues"—those heroic and honest sea virtues—of the dead sailor are recalled and with a tenderness born of a comradeship closer than any other men except soldiers may know.—N. Y. Tablet.

Manufacturing Toys.

The largest toy factory in the world is in New York, where playthings in tin are manufactured literally by the million. It stands five stories high, and turns out 1,607 distinct varieties of tin toys. No. 1 in the catalogue is a tin horse; 1,607 a tin menagerie. The output of circular tin whistles is twelve million per annum. To make a tin horse twelve inches long, dies have to be cast costing \$3,000. Jumeau, of Paris, makes 2,000 dolls a day, nearly all of considerable size; every year France exports toys to the value of three millions sterling, chiefly dolls; of which toy in various sizes 26 millions are estimated to be manufactured and sold in Europe annually.

COURT LADIES IN SIAM.

Ill-natured Gossip About Some of the Inmates of the King's Harem.

The Siam Free Press, published at Bangkok, is very outspoken in its references to all matters concerning the royal family, and has even dared to speak in uncompromising terms of the beauty of the ladies of the harem. The editor, presumably English, has a very poor opinion of Siamese ideas of female loveliness. He says a Siamese beauty requires only a yellow face, bright eyes, and a small waist to be regarded as very charming, and it, in addition to these attractions, she is not over four feet ten inches in height she may aspire to the highest places. Above that stature she is out of the race, and it is very rare to see a tall, handsome woman among the Siamese. If any of the ladies have pretty mouths, they are quickly disguised by betel chewing. The Siamese think that white teeth are too much like those of their remote animal progenitors, and so they darken their teeth in an attempt to destroy the resemblance. Nearly all the beautiful young women, according to Siam's standard of beauty, are inmates of the palace, or are distributed among the various princes and minor officials. Beauty in Siam, as in not a few other countries, compensates for want of rank or birth, and blue blood is recruited and reinvigorated by selections from the ranks of the lowest kingdom. The highest in the land do not disdain to mate with the offspring of slaves, and the children of these unions are royal highnesses, and keep their little courts with great ceremony.

Here is an incident printed in the Free Press: A princess of Siam, sister of the king, collected a number of children for the purpose of teaching them to dance, and many members of the nobility eagerly sought places for their daughters in the hope that their graceful dancing might bring suitors and, better still, high prices, by which means they might pay their gambling debts. Among the number was a pretty girl of ten, with a yellow face, bright eyes, small waist, and limbs well rounded and plump. During a rehearsal the King passed, and being struck with her beauty, begged that she be placed in his corps de ballet, which was immediately done. The child was of ignoble origin, but after her master had imposed his hands on her the stain was removed, she was announced as his adopted daughter, and a year later she became a member of the harem. Here she was petted and caressed, though her father was still a slave carpenter with debts unpaid. The child of some years ago is now a thin and faded woman. She has had her day and is no longer noticed.

Another royal beauty was the daughter of a hard-handed peasant who, unable to pay his taxes, was reduced to slavery and driven to sell his daughter for the small sum of \$65. She became a noble lady, and her daughter, in turn, became the principal wife of the King, but after a reign of eleven years she had to make room for a younger favorite. The newspaper says also that there is in the palace a handsome young girl who has had the unparadonable audacity to grow stout, yet such is her influence still that her smile brings bracelets of gold to those whom she favors, and her frown anklets of iron. Her powerful hand still directs the destinies of the kingdom.

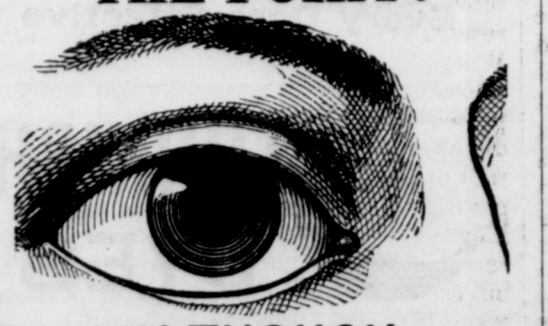
It is quite certain that in no other capital of the world do newspapers speak so freely and with such gossiping recklessness of the ruler and the ladies of his household as in the capital of Siam.

A Modern Monte Cristo.

A band of fabricators of false money were arrested at Verona the other day. In connection with them, or surmised to be, is a certain Basilio Giovanardi, of whom the Italian papers recount extraordinary stories. He is 33 years of age, and is very well known in the provinces near Verona, and has been considered by the people there as a sort of Count of Monte Cristo. His life, in fact, seems to have been a mystery.

Nine years ago he was a poor workman in a factory near Verona. One day, however, he told his employers that he would leave them, as he also was going to do the Signore (the gentleman). In fact he went away, and after a time was seen in Verona, well dressed, spending money very freely, and throwing away 1,000-franc notes at a time on the most silly amusements. Every one began to wonder where and how he had fallen into such good fortune, but no one could tell. He went in for horses, and often had as many as thirty of them at a time in his stables. His rooms also were furnished in a magnificent manner. He would, however, sell off occasionally his horses and furniture and go off on long journeys, and always came back evidently richer than ever. His fingers were always covered with magnificent diamond rings, and he wore precious jewels on his person in the shape of scarfpins, watch chains, &c. One day he returned to Verona with a case full of gold Geneva watches. This was heard of by the police, and he was arrested on the accusation of smuggling, but al-

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most immediately was let off, as there was no proof, and he showed a receipt which made it clear he had bought the watches on his own account. In a shop at Verona he showed the proprietor, whom he knew, 110 notes of 1,000 francs each, that he had in his pocket. On several other occasions he was seen to light his cigars with 10 franc notes. The police hearing of all this, kept watch, and he is now arrested as having to do with the coinage of false money.

Great excitement is being felt at Verona about his arrest, and at the revelations with regard to this well-known character that may be brought to light in the coming trial.—London Tablet.

Wealthy Scientific Men.

At the top of the list of rich men of science is Alexander Graham Bell, whose profits on the telephone are represented by eight figures. Next comes Edison with a seven figure fortune. Brush of electric light fame, Elihu Thompson and Edward Weston are more than millionaires. Frank J. Sprague was a junior officer in the United States Navy. He is now living in the mansion which was built for the Grants. His company sold out to the Edison company for \$1,500,000, and half of it went to the inventor.

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