

CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

A Family Newspaper: devoted to Religious and General Intelligence.

REV'DS. I. E. BILL & R. THOMSON,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will toward Men."

EDITORS.

VOL. 6.

SAINT JOHN, NEW-BRUNSWICK, JULY 15, 1853.

NO. 26.

THE RIVER ST. JOHN AT FREDERICTON.

BY REV. J. D. CASEWELL.

Hail! thou flowing River, majestic and wide!
How peaceful and brightly thy deep waters glide!
The Spirit of Beauty now gleams from thy face,
And green spots, and wild woods, thy soft margin
grace,
The riches of Commerce float down with thy
streams,
The Indian's bark, like a Goddess of dreams,
The wild fowl wing o'er thee, and utter their lay;
And sweet smelling flowers are kiss'd by thy spray.
At night, in the moonbeams, along by thy side,
Fond beings are walking,—in love they confide;
Their accents so tender, and kisses so sweet,
Mingle music with thine, which glides at their
feet.
The silence of sleep now reign's o'er thy breast,
Though angels may pass thy bright waters uncrest;
To minister good, quite unseen by our eye,
To Spirits in grief, or pale mortals who die.
The River of Death rolls 'tween us and yon shore
Where pure friendship and love, are felt evermore;
Then welcome bright Spirits, unseen though ye
come;
O'er these waters to waft us to Glory our Home.

[From the London City Mission Magazine.]

RAG-FAIR IN LONDON DESCRIBED.

[CONCLUDED.]

We have refrained now for many months from begging appeals. But we are now what possibly some many consider bold in our solicitations. For we are about to ask for the support of five missionaries for Rag-fair, all of whom are needed, although the district is small in territory, to visit efficiently so densely crowded a multitude, in addition to the missionaries already supported in that locality. Our friends have probably been enjoying themselves of late with their summer excursions. We have made no appeals to them while thus engaged in pleasure. They are now returning home prepared to give attention, as we trust, to the sober realities of life. We hope our appeal, though large, will yet, by God's blessing, prove successful, for they will themselves perceive as they read on that the case is a very strong one.

But where is Rag-fair? some of our readers living far west are probably ready to ask, considering that London extends little further east than St. Paul's Cathedral. Mr. Henry Mayhew, in an article inserted in the *Sunday Times*, of August 29th last, entitled "Rag-fair, or the unfashionable world of London," observes:—"The reader who consults one of those bewildering specimens of topographical mosaic-work called maps of the metropolis, with the streets inlaid with tiny black patches of buildings, and variegated with little green circles of parks and squares, as if it were a slab of some tessellated pavement—microcosms of the monster city, where London, crammed into the superficies of a pocket handkerchief, looks like Lilliput, or the magnified image of the world in a drop of water, and where the natural intricacy of the thoroughfares is ingenuously contorted into a perfect plexus of vermicular highways and byways—the reader who consults, I say, any such document, in the vain hope of discovering the precise situation of the district popularly known as Rag-fair, might as well search for the whereabouts of Hicks's-hall or St. Giles's-pond, or start on a pilgrimage, with a dark lantern, in quest of the *rara avis* which Diogenes found so scarce, and which certainly cannot be said to abound in the metropolis. Rag-fair is either unknown or ignored by the great Cockney topographers. It is a kind of poor relation of May-fair, and so, of course,

'cut' by the whole family. Mr. Crutchley clearly never heard of such a place; and as for Mr. Mogg—that daring mind, who has vainly endeavoured to circumscribe space by giving limits to cab fares—he would as soon think of delineating the spots on the sun; especially as none of the frequenters of the unfashionable Fair was ever known to hire a 'Hansom' for the conveyance of himself and his bundle of 'unconsidered trifles' to the place. Nor are the literary *ciceroni*—those polite gentlemen who officiate in the form of 'Guides to Strangers,' and kindly stir up the lions of London for the delight of visitors from the country—scarcely more communicative as to the whereabouts of the Sartorian market than those who construct Chinese puzzles of the metropolis, under the name of maps."

Rag-fair was originally called "Hog-lane." But in the growing refinement of manners, it changed its name to "Rosemary-lane." "Passing through Fleet-street, ascending Ludgate-hill, proceeding along Cheapside, and then striking off towards the Tower, we arrive at Rosemary-lane. Rosemary-lane! how did such a filthy place get so fragrant an appellation? It must have been when it had a hedge-row of elm-trees on each side, with bridges and easy stiles to pass over the fields, very convenient for the citizens to walk, shoot, or otherwise recreate themselves." One would, however, at least have supposed that this "filthy place" would have been satisfied with its 'fragrant name,' to which it was so marvellously little entitled, without desiring again to alter it. But fashion exercises its doings in the east as in the west, and the street, aspiring very high, has actually now received the name, by which it is described in all modern maps, of "Royal Mint-street," availing itself, as a defence of so grandiloquent name, of the happy fortuitous circumstance of its near contiguity to Her Majesty's Mint on Tower-hill. It is a street which runs from Tower-hill to St. George's in the East.

But having stated where Rag-fair is, it may next be asked, "What is Rag-fair? A collection of old clothes' shops on each side of a dirty narrow street, with tables and baskets set up on the edge of the pavement, where almost everything second-hand is sold—old coats, old shirts, old handkerchiefs, and old hats; old shoes that have been familiar with the cobbler's hand; old Tuscan and Dunstable straw bonnets that have been bathed in brimstone smoke again and again; old silk hats with the nap stripped off, and their glossy black turned into a 'whity-brown.' But, though wearing apparel is the staple article of commerce, there is but little objection, in this great mart, to deal in anything by which a penny may be made. Crockery of all kinds; pots and pans; you can get a second-hand dinner dish, or an old pair of bellows. Not a rag is lost with the Rag-fair merchants—scarcely an old rusty nail allowed to go astray. . . . The place is unquestionably a great convenience to that numerous class, whose wages are very low, and whose capacity or ambition does not range very high."

One of our missionaries whom we sent to explore the locality, reports:—"There are exposed for sale, more especially the following articles, in such a way as will catch the eyes of those who come to purchase:—boots and shoes, coats, waistcoats, trowsers, stockings, shirts, and jackets, hats and caps, bonnets, shawls, and gowns, &c., of all sizes and prices, which are made up from articles taken in exchange for glass and china, from families in more respectable parts of London, who have old clothes to dispose of to hawkers."

Although Rag-fair is a place so unknown to the "courtly west," it is much supplied with its commodities of sale from that quarter, and many a wealthy lady or gentleman, familiar only with luxury, in that quarter might possibly recognise some once favourite

article of their own apparel, about to become the property of —, who shall say how low a beggar? Rag-fair is certainly not a pleasant place to walk through, but it is yet a place in which some profitable reflections may be originated. "Hamlet, philosophising in the graveyard, and tracing the 'vile uses' to which we may come, remarks that—

"Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

In Rag-fair—the last home, the cemetery, as it were, of all pomp and vanity—the imaginative mind may find even richer food for speculation. Here the fancy may follow the small-clothes of some Bishop—once black and shiny as Japan ware—sold ere the bloom had left them by his Lordship's menials to some peripatetic dealer—bartered, may be, for a geranium or a sugar basin—and shortly afterwards forming part of the evening costume of some fashionable waiter; then appearing above the Wellington boots of the driver of some mourning coach; next torn to pieces by the 'devil' of the Dewsbury Mills, and converted into shoddy; then re-appearing either as coffin cloth, and made up, perhaps, into the Sunday palette of some dandy lawyer's clerk, or else figuring as the undress trowsers of some private in the infantry; and finally, when unfit for all further vestimentary transmigration, sold as manure for hop plants, and then entering, in the form of 'the bitter principle,' into the porter that coal-heavers and wet-nurses love to imbibe, so that thus we see that if Shakespeare could imaginatively trace the dust of Alexander through the grave till he found him stopping a beer barrel, it is quite as possible to follow the remains of a Bishop's pantaloons through Rag-fair till we discover them imparting a flavor to the very beer itself. The suggestions induced by a visit to the Old Clothes Exchange are, indeed, of no ordinary character. The mind of the stranger instinctively wanders to what may be the destinies of the clothes on his back. . . . The death-bed of a rich man, surrounded by greedy friends and relations, in anxious expectation of the property he is to leave them, is not unlike the appearance that a decently-dressed person assumes in the midst of the old clothesmen of Rag-fair. Every dealer there seems to eye him with a knowledge that they are the legitimate heirs to all he has about him, and that sooner or later every bit of the property must come to them. This one looks with a longing eye to the reversion of his surtout, and that fellow evidently expects ere long to succeed to his boots; and though it cannot be very consoling to one who prides himself on his dress, to think that there is some poor wretch ready to step into his shoes immediately he is fairly out of them, and that others are waiting for the very coat and shirt off his back, still the philosophic mind perceives in the whole scene another exemplification of the great natural law of waste and supply, and that what is the refuse of one form of life, is fitted throughout the world for the use and development of some other."

"In the fullest hour of business it is amusing, and, probably, instructive," writes Dr. Hughson in his 'History and Description of the British Metropolis,' published in 1805, referring to Rag-fair, 'to view this busy scene of vulgarity. . . . We may excite the wonder of our readers by remarking, that for the more speedy circulation of the traffic, several exchanges are built; that there are often shops of the better sort, the owners of which are men of property; and that the annual circulation of money by the multitude who frequent the purfieurs of Rag-fair, amounts to £50,000."

Our readers must not, however, suppose that this magnificent sum of £50,000 is made up of sovereigns, or even to any extent, of the larger silver coins of the realm. Clothing is very cheap in Rag-fair,—we say nothing concerning its quality. The vast multitude of

customers, and not the large amount of their individual expenditure, is what raises the annual expenditure so high. A person in easy circumstances often remarks when he is told that the wages of weavers, or dock labourers, or the like, are certainly under, often very far under, twenty shillings a-week, and that this sum has to support a man and wife with a large family, "I wonder how they obtain clothing," especially when he is reminded that they are sometimes for a long time out of work altogether, and that clothing is ordinarily bought, by the lowest classes of the working orders, not out of money accumulated for the purpose of meeting a heavy payment for some article of dress, but as each article of clothing is required, out of the current week's receipts, little as the margin appears that is left for the wardrobe after the rent is paid, and the wants of so many hungry stomachs supplied. But persons accustomed to run up heavy bills at fashionable milliners or tailors, will scarcely believe the sums for which the classes we are describing are able to purchase the same articles for their own rank in life. Of the missionaries who recently explored Rag-fair, one reported that a man and his wife might be both completely clothed from head to foot for from 10s. to 15s. Another missionary stated that he would buy every article of clothing required by either man or woman, singly. A third missionary reported, "there is as great a variety of articles, in pattern, shape, and size, as, I think, could be found in any draper's shop in London. The mother may go to Rag-fair, with the whole of her family, both boys and girls, yes, and her husband too, and for a very few shillings deck them out from top to toe. I have no doubt that a man and his wife, with five or six children, and £1 at their disposal, judiciously laid out, would purchase them all an entire change. This may appear to some an exaggeration, but I actually overheard a conversation, in which two women were trying to bargain for a child's frock. The sum asked for it was 1½d., and the sum offered was 1d., and they parted for the difference."

It is a somewhat remarkable matter, that so poor a neighbourhood as Rag-fair should receive its new name from so great a depot of riches, as the Mint of London. And it is as remarkable, that the Mint should be erected in the midst of the abode of thieves. Where everything is wretched around, and where refuse is the great emporium of trade to the very poor, there, from 1816 to 1836, was coined £250,000 of copper, £12,000,000 of silver, and considerably above £55,000,000 of gold. The mere building, with the internal machinery of the Mint, was calculated in 1811 to have involved an expense of above a quarter of a million of money. Such is the magnitude of the work, that £55,000 worth of gold could, if required, be received in the Mint one morning in bullion, and returned the next morning in coin. So on another side of this wretched district, and between it and the river Thames, run the walls of St. Catherine's Docks. The mere walls cost only a few years since tens of thousands of pounds, and the capital expended on the formation of these Docks exceeded £2,000,000. The London Docks adjoin. The amount of valuable property at all times within these two Docks is immense. Do not the Docks of London then on the one side of this district, and the Mint on the other, with the absolutely untold wealth which lies in each of them, tend to bring out in strong relief, the fearful iniquity of scarcely a fraction of our wealth being expended on heathenism itself, literally surrounded and pent in as it were, by what may, without a figure, be called MOUNTAINS OF GOLD?