



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

DEAR MR EDITOR,—Allow me a word or two about "Solomon's Temple," which I think you smart "Special Contributor" knows very little about. I was born in it; and I can tell you, among other things, as the result of many years' experience, that it was the best place in the town for the games of "big" and "spy-eye," provided you could escape poor old James Magee and his much dreaded whip. I'll give you a few things, by and by, about James Magee; at present let me dot down what I can remember of the ownership of this old building—"my first and dearest home."

I can just remember it as the property of Dr Robinson, a gentleman who collected his own rents, and took good care that no disreputable person got into his property. He was as careful to set himself against dirty people as against rogues; and though there was always (since I can remember) a middenstead in front of Solomon's Temple, there was less fever and disease in this building than in almost any other part of Whitehaven. It was no "perennial fever bed, where disease ran riot, and every epidemic abroad was sure to stop and claim its victims." I am not writing a fine paper, Mr Editor; I am telling you what I know.

You are perhaps not aware that Solomon's Temple formed only one of the three sides of a quadrangle the centre of which was the much talked of middenstead. As you stood with your back to the "Barracks" the right hand row of houses was "Temple Lane." The left entry was "Martin's Arch"—we lads called it that at any rate; and a comfortable place it was for telling stories under on a wet night. In front of you was "Solomon's Temple."

Now, walk round the lanes with me, sir, if you have time, beginning at "Martin's Arch." Mr Martin was a black and white smith, and one of the cunningest workmen of his craft. He was at least the third of his line of that trade; they were all capital workmen, and I believe no one ever charged them with being bad neighbours or unfair tradesmen. Martin's Arch, from the line of Catherine Street to the front of Solomon's Temple, was all their own. Edward Martin, the last blacksmith of his race, was a little man of extraordinary sharpness, and when he got a glass too many you cannot imagine how funny he could be. His eldest son was my old playmate and friend, Tom; and if these lines should meet Tom's eye I am sure he will forgive me the few kindly reminiscences of old times. I was rather a favourite with Mr Martin; and, accordingly, on a particular Saturday morning that I shall never forget, I was deputed by a lot of our comrades (Tom's and mine) to go, in a well behaved manner, to the door, and ask "if Tom might come out to lake."

Do you know what "lake" means, Mr Editor, or have you forgotten it in these new-fangled days of Whitton? Well, if you don't know you ought to know, so I'm not going to tell you. I did as I was commissioned; knocked at the door, and said—"If you please may Tom come out to lake?" Mr Martin was on his high horse at the time, and poor Tom had had very little chance of getting out. But his deliverance was at hand. The old gentleman seized on me, dragged me forward to an arm chair, in which he somewhat unceremoniously set me; then he drew another chair opposite to me, and for four mortal hours held me there, whilst he preached to me from his well-known text of "Martin's a hero! Rocks of Gibraltar, Golden Mice, and Silver Tea Pots," &c. You need not bother to imagine my vexation; take the fact, and let me add that Martin's Arch and house, and even the blacksmith's shop, wore as clean as "hip." You cannot find such a shop as Mr Martin's in these days.

Between the horse and shop there was a Dame's school—a gem of a school—kept by old Mrs Wise; and there, sir, you might have seen a pretty little girl, your humble correspondent's first sweetheart. Ah! sir, you *should* have seen her, in her nice clean "slip," making Dame Wise's school like a little Paradise. We (the lads) were all in love with her. For her approval we tried our best to learn the alphabet from A to Z, and spell "cat" and "dog," and many even more difficult words. To her we made our daily contributions of "sweet marbles"—Kitty Quah sold excellent sweet marbles, at six for a halfpenny, and none of us little urchins ever thought of tasting them till we had offered the first-fruit of our purchase to our little "tete-ha-a-f, Agga Dize." Shall I translate for you, sir? "Tete-ha-a-f" was our best equivalent for "sweetheart," and "Agga Dize" was all we could make of "Agnes Wise." That was her name, sir. Poor thing! she has long been laid beneath the green sod. She visited Whitehaven, after a long absence, worn almost to a skeleton; and in Temple Lane—in Solomon's Temple—dirty, much abused Solomon's Temple—I had the pain of taking for the last time the all but dying hand of my dear little "tete-ha-a-f, Agga Dize." Her other most unwavering admirer, and my old friend, George Tierney, had long been dead. Miss Wise had for several years been Mrs Somebody whom we never knew, and she had come home to die. Peace be to her memory, and to the memory of all our schoolfellows and her sweet-hearts who have got away before us to the long home!

At the bottom of Martin's Arch was Robert and William McDonald's weaving shop, as respectable a shop as ever was anywhere; and then, at the corner of Solomon's Temple—in a house always "as clean as a new made pin," lived James and Jane Magee. You remember, sir—you *must* remember—James Magee? Don't you see his erect form, and hear his scraps of French, picked up while he was wounded and in hospital in France after the Battle of Waterloo? "The French did that day?" Then you remember, sir, how James Magee made his stories all the sweeter to us youngsters by the nice bits of "Spanish" (none of your fine words for me!) he carried in his pocket; and how he made his presents in appropriate French terms, which no mortal, French, or English, or high Dutch, ever understood. And then, surely you know how he spoiled our games at "tig," and "spy-eye," and "cooks" with that much dreaded whip? Oh! yes, you must know all these things; I am sure you must.

And old Abraham Flowers, too, the man-o'-war's-man, who lived close to James Magee, but at last went away to Chelsea Hospital to grope out his few remaining days? And, just over the head of James Magee, you cannot have forgotten the respectable family of Wise—nearly related to my little sweetheart. You may be thankful, sir, that you were not present, as I was, when that family was broken up by the death of father and mother, and when the poor little children were taken away to the poor-house. I shall never forget that,—if I live till I am a hundred years of age. Driven at once from comfort and kind parents to the poorhouse—Oh! Mr Editor, I hope you will never hear such a wail of woe as I heard that day.

I fear I am taking up too much of your time, but I want to photograph for you Solomon's Temple, as it was, before any one could say of it—what your correspondent said last week. May I go hurriedly round the lane?