WALL STREET AND ITS SLAVES OF OTHER DAYS

Old Time Coffee Merchant Tells of the Time When Blacks Were Bought and Sold in the Financial Centre

ABRAM WAKEMAN, one of the old time coffee merchants of New York, has unconsciously furnished another brick to be thrown at Wall Street by those gentlemen from Missouri and elsewhere who for various purposes get to be chairmen of investigating committees. Year after year, decade after decade such inquests of financial coroners have been sitting on the corpse of Mammon, as represented by that district wherein men and women purchase and sell securities. And just as regularly when Mammon gets good and ready the earnest, horrified financial coroners are shaken off and Mammon starts on his job again, just as if nothing ever had happened to annoy him or ever would.

Now Mr. Wakeman comes along with a book of historical narrative, wedded to personal reminiscence, about "Lower Wall Street and Vicinity," which is put forth by the Spice Mill Publishing Company, for his friends and associates among veteran business men of the city, and informs the rising generation that even Capt. Kidd himself, the redoubtable, gory, fascinating, piratical Kidd, was unable to withstand contact with Wall Street and remain virtuous. Mr. Wakeman does not make this charge directly; he leaves it to be inferred from earlier historical data which he quotes. But the discriminating reader, especially if he is getting ready to "lam Wall Street one for luck," can have no doubt as to the facts in the case.

Originally William Kidd resided in Pearl street, among quiet, respectable people. Then, for some reason, the lure of Wall street proved too strong and he purchased a home there, the first house built on the north side of that thoroughfare. The lot obtained by Mr. Kidd is now the site of 56 Wall street, and he paid for it the sum of £60 somewhere about the year 1690. Parenthetically it may be added that despite the efforts of uplifters to have Wall street sold for taxes the site of 56 is still worth as much as the $300 paid for it by Kidd.

Now begins the story of swift and sudden downfall. The erstwhile respectable resident of quiet Pearl street moved into his new home and commenced to branch out into real estate deals in partnership with Gov. Dongan. At once the uplifting investigator from Missouri or elsewhere will notice this alliance between a professional speculator and a man holding high political position.

Undoubtedly the firm prospered. This is more than indicated by the fact that in 1695 Col. Robert Livingston of New York brought Capt. Kidd to the attention of the English Government at a critical time. One of the most profitable of legitimate business enterprises then followed was the slave trade. Many a good and honest citizen had his savings invested in a ship which sailed from New York to Africa, where the crew landed, swooped down on a village of unsuspecting natives, bound them in chains and carried them off to America. When they reached New York the slaves could readily be sold for large sums of money.

But the slave trade had one drawback. It was so exceedingly profitable that envious and utterly dishonest souls, regardless of the moral law and ignorant of the higher ethics, ruthlessly fitted out other ships, better armed and manned than the slave traders, and without a qualm of conscience descended upon one after another, seized the slavers, captured the crews and carried the cargoes of African natives to ports other than New York, where they were sold to the satisfaction of everybody excepting the original investors hustling in and around Wall street.

Of course this sort of thing couldn't go on. It had to be stopped. The men and women who had trustfully placed their surplus cash in ships couldn't afford to lose it. Stealing had to be punished and the pirates of slave carrying vessels must needs be made examples. So Col. Livingston looked around for a man of resolute determination able to cope with the impious pirates; he heard of Capt. Kidd, he learned of the real estate deals, undoubtedly. He decided that here was a person eminently qualified to handle the job, and recommended him to the English Government as one "whose fitness for such service was well understood in New York." The King and a few noble lords joined in a pool for providing a proper ship, Col. Livingston also subscribing to the fund. It is interesting to note that "the profits were to be divided among the owners of the ship, allowing a liberal share to Kidd." By which the analytical mind may perceive that the scheme of the English King and his partners was neither wholly philanthropic nor entirely unselfish.

Everything went smoothly, and early in April, 1696, the ship set sail from Plymouth. Pacing the quarter deck was the commander, rejoicing in his commission issued under the great seal of England, and directed to "the trusty and well beloved Captain William Kidd, commander of the ship Adventure Galley." In due time Kidd arrived off the American coast, where he sailed up and down, occasionally entering the harbor of New York. If he had not again set foot in the confines of Wall Street all might have gone well with him. But Capt. Kidd had a relapse. He simply couldn't keep away.

He did go to Wall Street, once more at least, for it is on record that the Assembly of the Province of New York granted him the sum of £250 "as a complimentary return for his services" in protecting the owners of slave ships. And then evidently realizing that if he stayed too long in Wall Street the street would "get him," he hiked down the bay one morning, blithely bowled past Sandy Hook—and before the year was out the astounded and outraged New Yorkers who owned slave ships learned that he, their protector, the recipient of their bounty, their trusty Capt. Kidd, himself had turned pirate and was looting the slave ships which he was paid to guard from other pirates.

Of course there could be but one ultimate ending of such an unprincipled scoundrel. He amassed a fortune by practising his profession off the coasts of Africa and Madagascar in a short time; then swollen by wealth, his head turned by financial success, he reappeared in Long Island Sound one day, landed on Gardiner's Island and there buried a quantity of gold, silver, jewels and other precious stones, as well as fifty-seven bags of sugar, forty-one bales of merchandise, seventeen pieces of canvas, one large loadstone and other articles too numerous to mention. All this treasure was buried in the presence of John Gardiner. He knew enough, did the sharp pirate, not to trust himself or his goods to Wall Street.

Anyhow Capt. Kidd buried his loot on Gardiner's Island and without even stopping in town long enough to glance at ticker quotations he departed for Boston, where he hoped to sell his ship and live ever after the life of a sober, quiet, useful citizen respected by the entire community. But as fate would have it some plain clothes man of the time spotted him and probably hoping for a reward placed him under arrest. Later Capt. Kidd was taken to England, where he was tried, convicted and hanged in chains at Execution Dock, May 12, 1701. His wife and daughter lived for some time afterward here in New York, residing in seclusion down on the lower East Side. Such in brief is one important lesson in the moral law to be drawn from Mr. Wakeman's book; and there are many others to be found in its pages, which, while retelling history more or les familiar, have at this moment particular bearing on current events of national interest.

For example, take President Wilson's recent veto of the literacy test for immigrants. This may be the latest evidence of a problem which long has troubled many a thoughtful soul, but it is by no means the first time it has come to the surface. Some persons believe that the country's wealth would be increased by admitting to the United States every able bodied man of normal mentality who wants to come here provided he is free from criminal tendency. For a generation or more others, however, have been mightily disturbed by the oncoming of a multitude of immigrants, fearing they could not be absorbed and assimilated in such numbers.

The early Dutch residents of Manhattan Island, on the other hand, took a calm and businesslike view of the immigration question so far as it concerned them personally. For a while they had kept informed as to the rapid growth and prosperity of the New England colonies and finally the more thoughtful decided that New England was getting ahead of them because Old England stood back of New England, while they of New Amsterdam were getting a raw deal principally because of neglect from their own home Government; they were being left to shift for themselves, in other words. At least they accounted in this manner for the speedy way in which riches and power spread through New England. And when Capt. Nicolls appeared, in 1664, politely requesting the Dutch to surrender Manhattan Island in the name of the Duke of York they made none but a wordy resistance. Canny old fellows those Dutchman were, it seems.

Of course they had to resist in some way in order to "save their faces" and their reputations. So while they did not commit the folly of armed resistance, which might have meant serious danger in addition to the discomfort of drilling, marching, fighting, staying out o' nights in cold, uncomfortable darkness, they spoke their protest; they talked, argued, discussed, in the warmth and cosiness of their easy chairs, it may be inferred, puffing their long pipes, sipping their schnapps and all the time inwardly praying that Capt. Nicolls wouldn't grow discouraged and leave them to their former fate. And he didn't. He took possession of the city and renamed it New York in honor of the Duke, to the apparent satisfaction of nearly everybody.

One there was, however, who had no use for the incoming English, perhaps for one reason because their coming would mean his outgoing, speaking politically. Peter Stuyvesant, the Governor, was in favor of giving battle to the enemy, of smiting them hip and thigh and driving them far into the wilderness of what is now the region between Union Square and Madison Square, there to be scalped by ferocious redmen or to be devoured by equally savage animals of other colors. In vain did the courageous Gov. Stuyvesant appeal to his fellow Dutchmen to rise, to march with him against the foe and annihilate them. But what was the use? Where was the sense of fighting and becoming impoverished when they could just as easily keep on living peaceably and by trade with the new arrivals increase their wealth?

Common sense overruled patriotism. Capt. Nicolls was given the "glad hand" and the freedom of the city; he would have taken it anyhow, so the gift did not represent such a great sacrifice after all. And the Dutchmen settled down anew to their ordered lives, confident that purveying schnapps would be more profitable than proclaiming war. But Stuyvesant was implacable. Disgusted, contemptuous, he retired to his distant country home, the Bowerie, where he died eight years later.

Ancient history known to every school child? Of course, but it is recalled with delightful informality by Mr. Wakeman, who includes in his new volume a good many interesting details about early years in New York which are not so familiar. For example, how many of the thousands daily traversing Wall street even notice that the south side of that thoroughfare is very irregular while the north side is delimited with care? And how many even of the observant know that this results from the fact that the original palisade was built along a line now forming the north side of the street? The wall had to be built straight, and it was. When it was taken down in 1698 the palisade line became the northern street line.

That palisade erected along the northerly side of Wall street, by the way, was barely a year old when in 1655 the supposedly placid Dutch ancestors of modern Manhattanites exhibited an unexpected phase of what was undoubtedly a multifarious and variegated character stem, so interwoven with contending forces, with ramifications so far reaching, so sudden, so astonishing, that even Wilsonian psychology could not sound its ultimate depths. The population of the peaceful town numbered about 1,000 at the time referred to, but temporarily was less because Gov. Stuyvesant and his forces had set forth for the shores of Chesapeake Bay, there to protect another Dutch settlement, which feared itself to be in danger of attack by a colony of Swedes.

Now it happened that the summer of 1655 was a particularly favorable summer for the growth of small fruits. And this is what caused an explosion of Dutch wrath, and a battle and afterward a massacre.

Henry van Dyck, whose farm lay just below Rector street, and near the North River, had been watching for weeks the luscious peaches on his trees. Day after day he saw them turning from small, green, discouraging spheres into larger, rounder, fuller examples of delectable fruit. As August waned they became yellow, tinged with pink, which deepened to rosiness, and their forms swelled with sweet juices. Day by day he watched them, night by night he dreamed of them, seeing himself engulfed to the ear tips in peach pies, peach shortcake, peach dumplings, so large and deep that he could almost swim in them. And then one fateful afternoon in strolling through his orchard he saw an Indian maiden helping herself to his peaches without his permission.

Now if Henry had been a man of other temperament, a youthful, ardent, poetic soul, results might have been different. Had he been of a calm, judicial, philosophical nature he might have reflected that the peach trees, the land on which they grew, the very island of Manhattan and all the vast continent beyond, belonged by inheritance to this lithe young Indian girl and her people; that he was merely a squatter, one of the keen citizens from the world beyond the seas who previously had buncoed the Indians out of Manhattan Island by payment of 60 guilders, worth $24, which the Indians didn't want and had no use for excepting to trade it back again for firewater and bits of colored glass worth about 24 cents.

But Henry didn't think of this. All he thought of was peaches; he didn't even think of that lissome, graceful, individual peach plucking fruit from a tree excepting as being a target. So he shot her; and when the morning of September 15 broke it found the city in possession of Indian braves, more than 2,000 of whom were marching through the streets, although offering no violence.

One might think that after a good many earlier experiences those Indians would have had their suspicions aroused; however, they were persuaded to depart and spend the night on Nutter's (now Governors) Island, possibly on the plea that it was more healthful, with fewer mosquitoes and less noisy. At any rate they withdrew from New Amsterdam, but during the night they came back, went up to Van Dyck's farm, wounded him and wounded Capt. Vandergrist and then turned their attention to citizens who had taken refuge inside the fort.

The Indians didn't have any fort, and few if any weapons besides arrows and spears and tomahawks. So they were driven off and departed in canoes, leaving behind them several dead warriors. All whites looked alike to those redskins, for which reason they paddled their war canoes across the North River to Pavonia, where they landed, killed somewhat more than a hundred, took 150 prisoners and vanished.

Perhaps Washington Irving is responsible for the widespread belief that the early Dutch of New Amsterdam were men of little spirit, no temper and wholly devoid of ruder passions, such as revenge; that they always were kindly, sympathetic folk, slow to anger, preferring comfortable pipes and schnapps to swords and muskets. Be that as it may, in 1643 the self-same Dutchmen laid aside their pipes and schnapps long enough to send an expedition against Indians, who were so careless as to keep on living across the East River, within the territory now enclosing Brooklyn, Flushing, Oyster Bay, Coney Island and lands adjacent thereto. They sailed away across the tempestuous East River, landed on Long Island, marched across it to a greater or less distance, met some savages, killed a few, took others prisoners and returned home, there to be joyfully welcomed by those who had stayed safe ashore within the walls of the fort.

As an evidence of their complete happiness and in the exuberance of childish spirits the people seized the captives and proceeded systematically to torture them to death. One was hacked to pieces with knives, another was flayed alive, strips of his flesh being sliced from his living body, after which he was chased by a mob into what is now Beaver street, where some ill advised Dutchman spoiled the game by cutting off his head.

Toward the close of that seventeenth century there were 750 dwelling houses within the city's limits, with a population of 2,500 whites and 750 negroes, including both slaves and freedmen. It was at about this time that New York city's slave market became regularly established.

Originally it was intended to be merely an ordinary market house and was erected just above what is now 87-89 Wall street; but later it gradually assumed the character of a place of meeting for slaves during the period when their masters had no use for them. All negro and Indian slaves available for hire were instructed to "take up their standing" in the market house "in order to be hired, whereby all persons may know where to hire slaves as occasion shall require, and all masters discover where their slaves are hired."

In the earlier days of the city this spot was a great slave market, and advertisements in nearly all the little weekly papers contained offers of men, women and children who were for sale, as well as offers of reward for those who had run away. For example, an advertisement in the New York *Weekly Post Boy*, August 7, 1749, reads as follows: "Just imported from Africa and to be sold on board sloop Rhode Island at Mr. Schuyler's wharf, a parcel of likely men and women, also negro boys and girls."

From the *Post Boy*, July 23, 1770: "Just arrived from Africa a parcel of negroes consisting of men, women, boys and girls, to be sold on board brig York, William Merciers, commander. Most of them have had the smallpox."

From the *Post Boy*, July 23, 1770, "To be sold on board the brigantine Elliot, Paul Miller, master, from Africa, at Van Zant's wharf, a parcel of young, healthy, new negroes, men, women, boys and girls, from 10 to 22 years old, at low prices." Summer bargain rates, as it were.

In addition to buying and selling negro slaves the benighted inhabitants of the New York of such days passed laws permitting themselves to seize the children of Indians for debt; and that a custom of bondage was in vogue may be inferred from an advertisement in the *Post Boy* which announced that "a likely girl whose service has ten years to run is offered for sale." Another advertisement, published September 30, 1754, reads as follows:

"Just imported on the ship Anne and Elizabeth, Capt. Peter Crawford, a considerable number of German passengers, chiefly young people unmarried. Their time to be disposed of by Phillip Livingston or said master."

The price of slaves varied from time to time, but in the New York *Gazette and Weekly Mercury* of February 13, 1775, may be found market quotations printed by Mr. Tongue, the first merchandise broker of New York, who had come here the year previous from London. It is curious to reflect that this advertisement was printed only a year before the Declaration of Independence was issued and the thirteen Colonies grappled with England in a war for human rights and liberties:

TO BE SOLD.

At the office of William Tongue, broker, at the house of the late Mr. Waldron, near the exchange (lower end of Broad street), the following goods and merchandise, viz.:

	Price.
One negro wench, 22 years old, has had the smallpox, is a useful domestic	£80
One negro wench, 40 years old	50
One negro wench, 30 years old	50
One negro man, 27 years old, is a good farmer	90
One negro man, 27 years old, is a tolerable cook and gardener, &c.	100
One negro boy, 16 years old	90
One negro wench, 30 years old, with or without her son, 5 years old	60 or 80
One fine negro wench, 22 years old, every way very useful	80

Those days, as well as the Revolutionary war days following and the earlier days still, were some strenuous in "the city of Manhattan or New York," as it was to be called after 1764. For instance, in 1741 had occurred what was called "the Negro Plot." Several blacks, sailors on board a Spanish ship brought to New York as a prize and here sold, were accused of starting fires in several parts of the town. What evidence, if any, existed against them it is difficult to discover, but they were accused, nevertheless, and arrested.

From some source sprung up the belief that a plot had been hatched for the destruction of the city and the massacre of all of its inhabitants, and the calm reader of to-day may understand something of the state of frazzled nerves which afflicted New Yorkers of 1741 by remembering that the negro sailors probably numbered less than a score, whereas the population of the city approached 10,000. So rattled did the people become that after arresting the negro sailors they proceeded to take supposed vengeance on other blacks. Eighteen were hanged and seventy-one transported, while a stake was set up in the vicinity of the Five Points and there fourteen negroes were burned alive.

Yet so complex is human nature, so interwoven its strands of ferocity and childish playfulness of spirit, that nearly a decade prior to this exhibition of savagery three eminent and far seeing citizens, John Chambers, Peter Bayard and Peter Jay, saw opportunity waiting for them in the open space in front of Fort Amsterdam, which was formerly used as a parade ground. Parades didn't amount to much in their minds and they evidently inspired the city fathers with the same idea, for ere 1732 had passed into time gone forever the three had leased this open space for a period of eleven years at the rental of a peppercorn. Straightway they fenced it in and thereafter it was used as a bowling green. The site still goes by the same name, only spelled with capital letters, and in all probability the rental value has not decreased materially since then.

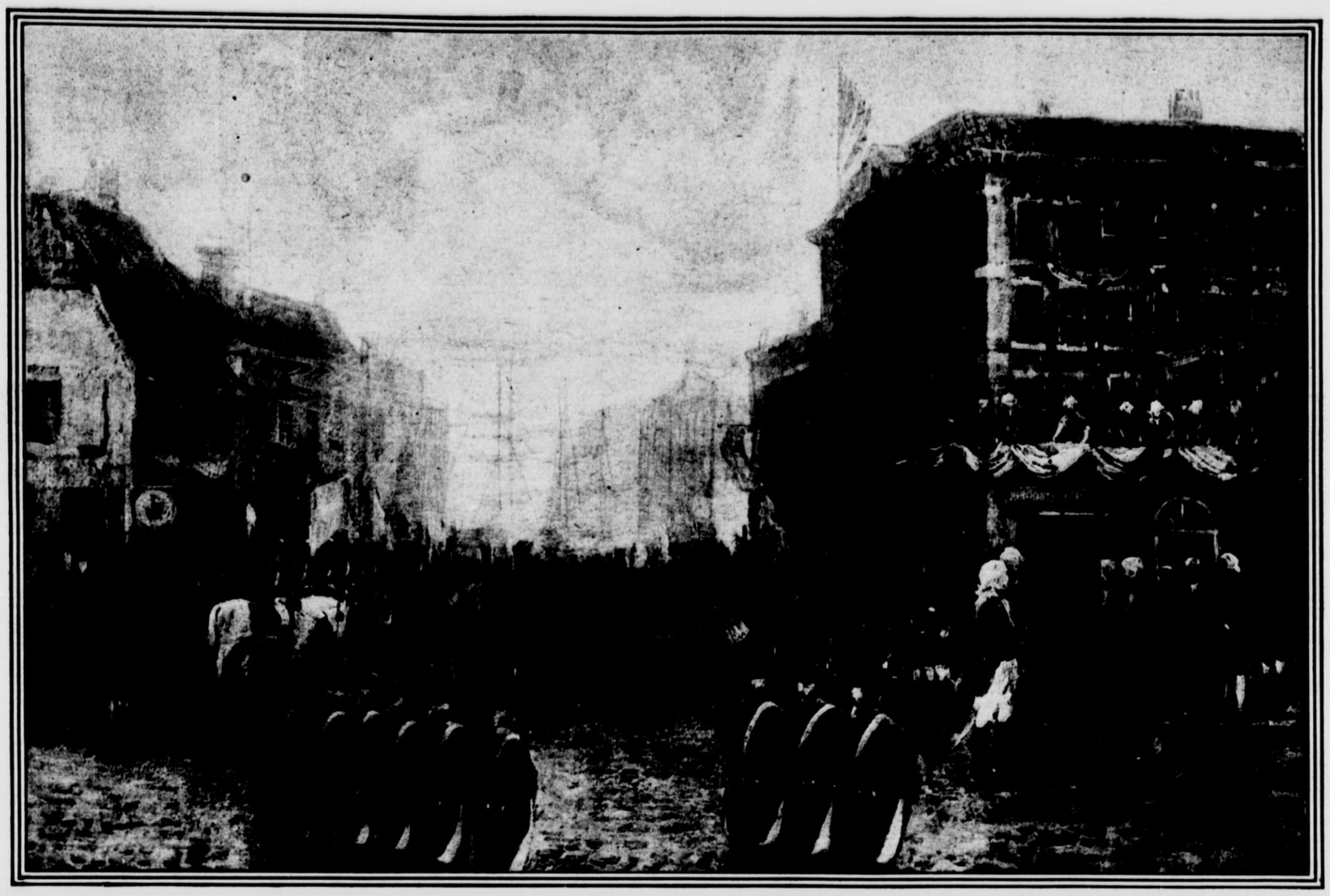
One of the interesting chapters of Mr. Wakeman's book has to do with the streets of New York, especially with the origin of street names. Stone street was so called because it was the first street paved with stones. In 1657 a part of it was called the Brouwer's straat, and another part Hoogh straat. Seven years later a part was called Stone street and another part High street. Eleven years later the whole thoroughfare was called Duke street, and in 1797 it was all called Stone street, owing this honor to the energy of a woman—probably a forerunner of those active and energetic leaders of the present time who are bursting into all sorts of reform, municipal and other.

According to Alber Ulmann, quoted by Mr. Wakeman, one of the earlier colonists was Herr van Cortland, who had a brewery and a wife. Like all true Hollanders, she abhorred dust and dirt, and complained over and over again that she could not keep her house clean because of the unsightly condition of the road, from which came mud in wet weather and clouds of dust in dry seasons. In all probability she brought her husband to realize something of her feelings, and then protested so vigorously to the authorities that rather than hear her further, and possibly to make home more peaceful for a man so respected and influential as Herr van Cortland, they agreed to put down a rough stone pavement, and did so.

This was regarded as a wonderful piece of work, and people came from all over the town to look at it. In the evenings they would sit around in public houses discussing it, some of the older, more cautious and more conservative shaking their heads and prophesying, no doubt, the quick decadence of the settlement because of such reckless innovation. But the enterprising lady had her way and her paved street; she could keep her house clean as a whistle after that, and soon all became reconciled, even when as a joke the thoroughfare was called "the Stone street," by which name it has been known ever since.

The department store of to-day had its predecessors in mercantile houses managed by leading business men during the Revolutionary period. Peter Goelet's store was at 48 Hanover Square and he announced on one occasion that he had received "in the last vessels from London a very large and general assortment of ironmongery, cutlery, saddlery and hardware, all kinds of tools and materials for clock and watchmakers, gold and silversmiths, joiners, carpenters, black and gunsmiths, saddlers, shoemakers, &c.

The old Merchants' Coffee House, erected about 1737 at the southeast corner of Wall and Water streets, is believed by Mr. Wakeman to have been "the true Cradle of American Liberty."



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Charles P. Gruppe's painting of old Merchants Coffee House, which was located at the southeast corner of Wall and Water streets during 1737-1804.

The Downfall of Capt. Kidd, Who, Like Present Day Folk, Was Unable to Resist Lure of Famous Street

Exposing the Modern Ventriloquist

THE modern ventriloquist is not a ventriloquist at all, or at least he doesn't have to be one. He usually stands on the opposite side of the stage from his manikin, and when not asking questions of the latter puffs vigorously away on a big black cigar.

Yet you hear the dummy answering him with a ready line of repartee, delivered in stentorian tones. Nor is that all, for he turns and twists his head, waves his arms, kicks up his feet and otherwise acts in a very lifelike manner.

The secret of the dummy's voice is the loud speaking telephone, and of his actions various electro-magnets. As may be guessed, both are operated by some one off the stage.

At a recent entertainment given by employees of a large electrical company in Chicago one of the features of the programme was a ventriloquist act presented by W. D. Lindsey, assisted by a little wooden dummy called "Know-it-all." The manikin not only talked remarkably well but moved his arms and head and wagged his jaw like a lightning rod agent. As an encore he sang one of Caruso's songs, and the audience was about ready to vote Mr. Lindsey the best ventriloquist ever when, to the astonishment of every one, the full orchestral accompaniment came forth from the mouth of the little man! Then the secret was out.

In order to produce these effects the dummy figure is fitted inside with a loud speaking telephone receiver, with the horn or large mouthpiece pointing toward the audience. The receiver is connected with a special transmitter in an anteroom some distance away. An ordinary operator's breast transmitter is also concealed in the body of the dummy, so that whatever is said by the ventriloquist on the stage is transmitted to the operator in the anteroom, enabling him to speak for the dummy at the proper time.

When speaking into the special transmitter the operator, by manipulation of a telegrapher's key which controls an electro-magnet, causes the dummy's jaws to move so that the words apparently come from his mouth. With other keys the operator is enabled to turn the head and to move the arms and feet of the dummy. The wiring from the megaphone receiver and from the relays which operate the dummy's jaws, &c., is run down the two front legs of the chair on which the dummy sits.

The telephone ventriloquist.