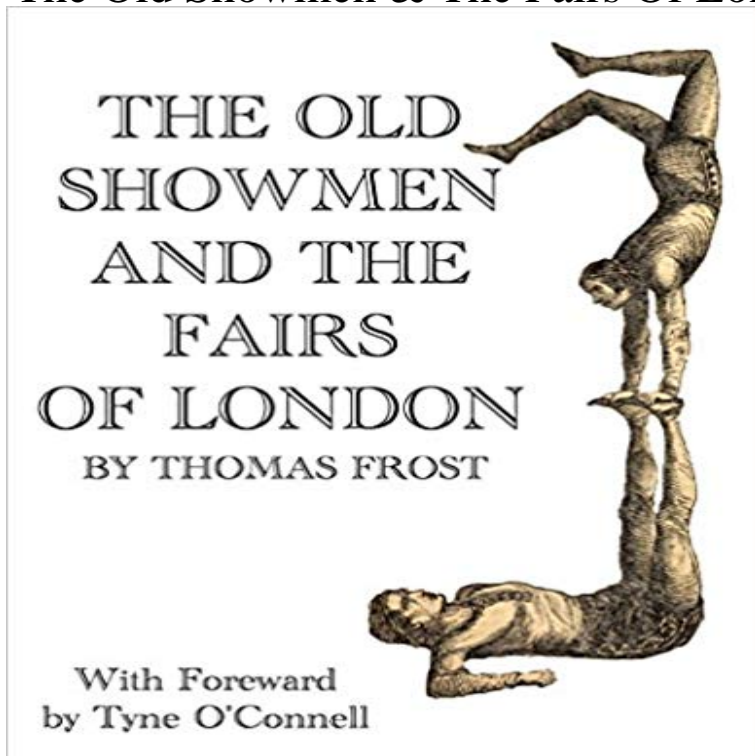


## The Old Showmen & The Fairs Of London



An entertaining and often hilarious read, *Old Showmen of London* is an essential book for anyone interested in the history of London as well as those intrigued by the Showmen, fairs and circus acts from medieval to Victorian times written from first hand stories of the Old Showmen & Women themselves as told to Thomas Frost. Fans of *Cirque Du Soleil*, *Steam Punk* and *Burlesque* will also enjoy the first hand accounts of these extraordinary Showmen & women and the lives they led.

Frost himself was born in 1820 and grew up in Croydon - long since swallowed by London - surrounded by the faded peeling notices for London fairs and performers of the 1700s. Frost bore witness personally to the end of an era when the metropolis was still firmly connected to the 1700s. But

what makes this book unique from other history books about London Showmen & women is that Frost tracked them down in the 1860s and spent time with them recording their stories for posterity.

Although he researched archives and had Pepys & Evelyns diaries, it is by capturing the Old Showmens personal first-hand stories that he transports us back through time so we can truly visualise the extraordinary sights, oddities and entertainments on offer to the London public placing the reader amongst the action of the London fair, back to the London depicted by Hogarth - the London of the Restoration, the London as Byron, Jane Austin, Nell Gwynn, The Mayfair Blue Stockings Salons and Thackeray experienced it. Jane Austin had died only three years before Frosts birth. It was only 120 years since the Restoration. Just as now, people are fixated with the Edwardians and Victorians, and speak knowledgeably about the memories of their grandparents, for Frosts generation, born into the Georgian age, the Restoration and the reign of Queen Anne were still discussed in ale houses. Queen Victoria

was born the year before Mr Frost. He was 17 before she had even ascended to the throne. He saw the end of an age with his own eyes and with this book he gifts it to us. This was the first book ever written about these Old Fairs and the Showmen and women who performed at them and we are fortunate that he spent the years he did, taking the time to meet and speak personally with the remaining Old Showmen about their lives touring the London Fairs. The names of these entertainers were legendary and known to all strata of London society. The Double Cow The Female Samson OBrien, the Irish Giant The Female Salamander A Learned Pig Lorenzo and the Tigress De Berars Phantasmagoria These names were to Frosts generation what Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Cole Porter, Mae West, Marilyn Monroe and Louis Armstrong are to us. This book is a unique exciting and often hilarious wander through the history of London - told by the people living it.

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