



RANSOM NOTES



Link-Boys A Vanished Occupation - Or Is It?

Gone is the soda jerk. Where is the door-to-door milk man and his horse and cart? Do you miss the human pinsetters at your friendly bowling alley, or maybe you're so young you never experienced such a position? Who today earns a living using a portable typewriter? Jobs disappear.

While in high school, I worked as a shoe clerk. In order to assist in the fitting of shoes, we had clients step up on a machine, stick their feet in an opening, and behold, we could see their toes wiggle. Those machines vanished forever. Yes, creative inventors and researchers assist in the elimination of jobs. Sometimes this is good, as we now know that the ex-ray machine was not a healthy way to see if your toes were smushed in the new penny loafer.

Have you ever heard of a 'knocker-upper'? Long before alarm clocks or phones were created, industrial-era workers would need help waking up early in the morning. They would hire knocker-uppers. These special early risers would walk the streets with sticks, tapping on their clients' bedroom windows each morning. One variation on the process was a lady who roused her sleepyheads by shooting peas at their window panes.

The lost job that intrigues me is the 'link-boys'. These fellows would carry a flaming torch, or link, to light a person's way at night between tavern and tavern. Actually, typically they were low-class, young males that escorted pedestrians through many of the dark streets. With the installation of street lamps, these young men were out of a job.

Without light, one may lose their way, stumble, or perhaps even fall into a fish pond or thorny rosebush. Light is necessary for a 747 to land safely during a midnight flight or to watch your teen-ager's evening soccer match. The instant the power goes down during a storm, we scramble to call the light company or to find the unused candle in the cupboard. We each have become dependent on light.

God recognized the need for light at the time of creation. Daily, the sun shines brightly, well at least in some parts of the world, but even minus the sun, we have light for much of our twenty-four hour day. Jesus announced to the people, as recorded in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Sounds like Jesus is the perfect, eternal, forever 'link-boy'.

The book of John opens with this announcement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1, 4). This light preceded the link-boys. He outshines each of us and his light does not lose power in the height of a tornado.

Not only, however, is Jesus the forever, eternal light that never needs replacing, but his followers have a 'light' responsibility. Paul told the Philippians, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life" (Philippians 2: 14-16a).

Sounds like maybe we need to also become 'link-boys and link-girls'. To re-enforce that concept, think about what the Master said during the sermon on the mount. "**You are the light of the world.** A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven**" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Our joy is not a vanished occupation. We are His lights in a dark world forever and ever. No retirement plan is available. Well, maybe at death our light might change a bit, but having not died myself, I cannot speak with authority. Each Christian must reflect Christ's love, compassion, and forgiveness, both in words and actions. We are the candles in a world of darkness, hate, and sin. Therefore, keep your battery charged and your light burning brightly each day of your life.

Be a Link-Person for the Lord, showing others the way to Christ and His Kingdom.

