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THE HUMBLE PETITION OF
“Father Peter,”

(THE NORTH-STREET SAINT,)

Alias “Duke Humphreys,”

TO THE EXETER COMMISSIONERS OF IMPROVEMENT.*

YE Guardians of our streets and lanes,
Improvers of our City,
On your attention I have claims,
But more upon your pity.

Two centuries, or less, or more,
Have I been standing here;
My locks with age are waxen hoar,
Furrow'd my cheeks appear.

The heat of summer's sun I've borne,
The winter mov'd me not;
In wet and dry, from night to morn,
Have I watched o'er this spot.

The youth, the man, the dame, the sire,
And lesser folks than they,
Have daily seen my church and spire
Supported on my knee.

The clod-poll from the lab'ring plough,
At market or at fair,
Has waited oft with anxious brow,
To see me change my pray'r.†

But though the clock, with sounding stroke,
Time of his hours bereaves,
Upon my arm I rest my book,
Yet never turn the leaves.

“St. Peter,” or “Duke Humphreys,”‡
No matter which I'm term'd;
'Tis plain I have an ancient phiz,
And am in wisdom learn'd.

We once were four,— in better days
A Saint each corner bore:§
But like the lightning's vanish'd rays,
You see them there no more.

I only, of the goodly band,
Am left the tale to tell,
And soon shall I, by some rude hand,
Be driven hence as well.

For now, alas! my years decline,
And number'd are my days.
Old corner I must thee resign,
For men to mend their ways.

But oh! ye Councillors so wise,
Commissioners so just,
Have pity on these weeping eyes,
And save me from the dust.

Give me a corner of the street,
Which I so long have grac'd,
And when your plans are all complete
Let me be here replac'd.

If you my humble suit will heed,
And grant my last request,
For ever may your schemes succeed—
May you with peace be blest:

And as beneath *my* feet is wrought
The Author of all Evil,||
So may *ye* always set at nought
Your enemy the Devil.

* The North-street improvements will necessarily cause the removal of the old statue that stands at the corner.
† It is punningly related, that when Father Peter *hears* the clock strike he turns over a new leaf; and not unfrequently have simple lookers-on waited for the literal accomplishment of the tradition.

‡ Some antiquaries assert that Duke Humphreys, who is said to have founded St. Mary Steps church, is intended to be represented.

§ There was originally a statue at each corner of the entrance to North and South-street.

|| The rude sculpture under the feet of the renowned Saint is supposed to signify his Satanic Majesty.