



Period 3: London—New Riches, New Squalor (1781–1870)

INTRODUCTION

This introduction considers the alarming growth in extent and population of London in the Industrial Revolution and its social consequences, an increase not just in size but in diversity, thanks to the arrival of immigrants drawn by Britain's religious toleration, its political liberties and its economic opportunities. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, for example, were beginning late in the eighteenth century to supplement those who had come earlier from Western Europe. Among the crowds Wordsworth observes on the streets of London in the 1790s are not just "The Frenchman and the Spaniard," or even "The Swede, the Russian", but also American Indians, "Moors, / Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese, / And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns" (*The Prelude* 1805, 7.235–43). The introduction looks at the railways, and their enablement of suburbanisation, and at the beginnings of social and political reform, including the expanding base of education and the consequent creation of a broad reading public.

In the last stanza of Blake's poem "London" (1792) [3.7] the speaker indicates that life for many there is blighted before it begins:

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

We should not take Blake's poem simply as a realistic picture of London, for as Geoffrey Keynes comments "Blake is writing of a mental state symbolised by the social injustices seen every day in London" (verso Plate 46). Nevertheless, social conditions in England in the late eighteenth century were

such that an up-rising along the lines of the French Revolution could well have taken place, as indicated by the Gordon Riots in London in 1780 (see [2.31 HN]), which seemed to Horace Walpole to set the whole of London ablaze. As he wrote on 8th June “I never till last night saw London and Southwark in flames!” (1859, 8.388). The riots were put down after a week, but they scarred the nation’s memory. With the Revolution in France in 1789 as another prompt, a view began to take hold that a booming population might be a danger to the State. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* by Thomas Malthus, published in 1798, gave support to this fear: “Malthus’s core argument was that while human population increased exponentially, food production increased more slowly, in a linear fashion or arithmetic series” (Hodgson, 1). His conclusion was that without controls a nation’s population would always outstrip resources. In effect, Malthus argued that a surging birth-rate was a recipe for social misery. There was, in addition, a widely-shared fear that the “surplus” population would threaten law and order. When Thackeray went “to see a man hanged” it was not the hanging itself that most interested him but rather the behaviour of the London crowd [3.9].

On the other hand, there were those who believed that a numerous people constituted a nation’s chief riches. We sense this in Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (1846–1847) when the wealthy London merchant Mr Dombey reproves Toodles for having so many children:

“You have a son, I believe?” said Mr Dombey.
 “Four on ’em, Sir. Four hims and a her. All alive!”
 “Why, it’s as much as you can afford to keep them!” said Mr Dombey.
 “I couldn’t hardly afford but one thing in the world less, Sir.”
 “What is that?”
 “To lose ’em, Sir.” (ch. 2)

Toodles and his wife go on to produce four more children. For Toodles, the times are good, and there is plenty of bread and butter [3.20]. However, Dickens’s celebration of fecundity here ran counter to the Malthusian creed which dominated economic and political thinking throughout the nineteenth century, and it was partly uneasiness about population tendencies that led the Government, anxious to have information on which to base the management of taxation, military expenditure, policing, the Poor Law and so forth, to order a rudimentary census in 1801. This found that the total population of England and Scotland was approximately 10,500,000, of which about 1,000,000, or one tenth, resided in London. As the nineteenth century proceeded the population increased at an ever greater rate: in 1851, for example, London had 2,286,609 people, more than double the figure for 1801.¹

Even before census taking began it was clear to some that an individual could never be more isolated than when in London and surrounded by crowds. Wordsworth, who lived in London for three months in 1791 and

¹Figures from <http://www.demographia.com/dm.lon31.htm>, accessed 1 May 2018.

again in 1795, experienced a sense of estrangement amidst the throng: “The face of every one/ That passes by me is a mystery!” [3.5]. Moreover, Wordsworth reflects that even when individuals live side-by-side they make no attempt to penetrate that mystery (Wordsworth 1959, 226):

Above all, one thought
Baffled my understanding, how men lived
Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
Strangers, and knowing not each other’s names. (*Prelude* 1805, 7.117–20)

Like Blake, Wordsworth speaks of London’s moral degradation, though for him it is seen mainly in its secluded and hidden parts; lawmakers live elsewhere and are insulated from—and probably indifferent to—the labyrinths below (Wordsworth 1959, 230):

Private courts,
Gloomy as Coffins, and unsightly Lanes
Thrill’d by some female Vender’s scream, belike
The very shrillest of all London Cries
May then entangle us awhile,
Conducted through those labyrinths unawares
To privileg’d Regions and inviolate,
Where from their airy lodges studious Lawyers
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green. (*Prelude* 1805, 7.196–204)

These secret and hidden parts became more numerous as London expanded, steadily absorbing the villages and towns on its borders, until eventually ‘London’ came to signify not just a City but a County.² When Bill Sikes in *Oliver Twist* takes Oliver with him to burgle a house in Chertsey, twenty-five miles west of the metropolis, they pass along Bethnal Green Road until they reach the centre of the City; then they go through Shoreditch and Smithfield and on to Holborn; from there they pass Kensington, Hammersmith, Chiswick, Kew Bridge and Brentford and still have some miles to go before they are truly out of London.³

As the capital expanded it sometimes preserved pockets of rurality close to newly built middle-class villas, as John Ruskin reports on the area of his boyhood, Herne Hill, actually only four miles from Charing Cross [3.11]. Just as often, however, London rolled out its dirt and diseases to its annexes, as Charles Kingsley writes in *Alton Locke* of “those narrow, brawling torrents of filth and poverty and sin – the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was. Go, scented Belgravian!⁴ and see what London is!” [3.41].

²London County was created in 1889 and encompassed 28 local boroughs.

³*Oliver Twist* was serialised in *Bentley’s Miscellany*, 1837–1839.

⁴**Belgravian:** denizen of Belgravia, an affluent district of London.

Kingsley wrote this in 1850. Shortly afterwards, with the glories of the Great Exhibition still fresh in memory, there were fearsome outbreaks of cholera in Soho where drinking water was taken from the Broad Street Pump. In 1854 Dr John Snow surmised that this water was contaminated by leaks from a nearby cesspool, and he concluded therefore that cholera was water-borne. It took some time for his discovery to be acted upon, and Londoners, especially those living in poorer, over-crowded parts, would generally not have reliable access to clean water for several years, even though the Metropolitan Water Board was established in 1855.

Polluted water was probably the greatest material evil that Londoners had to endure in mid-century, when the Thames was still used as a sewer; but there was much other nastiness. Suburban Londoners might try to create a refuge in the midst of squalor, though perhaps few carried this out as wholeheartedly as Wemmick in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. He lives in Walworth, two miles south of the Thames, and treats his cottage as if it were a castle. It is approached by a drawbridge, and has battlements and a cannon. It also has a summer-house, a pig in a sty and a large vegetable garden. "So, sir [...] if you can suppose the little place besieged, it would hold out a devil of a time in point of provisions" (ch. 25). Here is not merely an instance of not knowing one's neighbours: Wemmick's impulse is to hold them at a distance as if they are potential invaders. His work as a lawyer's clerk in an office in Little Britain near Newgate brings him continually into contact with criminals, so perhaps his defence of his Walworth home is understandable.

Increased rates of childbirth, a decline in infant mortality and the movement of people from country to town were the main reasons for the crowding, especially in the East End. But London also attracted hundreds of immigrants each year, some coming from elsewhere in the Kingdom and some from other parts of Europe or even further afield, drawn by Britain's religious toleration, its political liberties or its economic opportunities. Jewish people from Eastern Europe were beginning late in the eighteenth century to supplement those who had come from Western Europe after Cromwell re-admitted them in 1655 (they had been expelled from England in 1290). There were refugees from France after the Revolution of 1789⁵ and from Spain in the 1820s.⁶ The parents of the poets Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti had fled to London from Italy in 1824. Among other notable refugees were Giuseppe Mazzini who resided in London in 1840–1841 and 1847, and Karl Marx, who lived there from 1850 until his death. These came because they perceived that London offered them greater political and intellectual freedom.

Thus although Britain was exporting many of its people to its colonies, its population continued to grow—and London to expand. The coming of the railways made no difference in this respect, for though they helped unify

⁵Some at Tellson's Bank near Temple Bar in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Bk 2, ch. 1.

⁶In Somers Town in the 1820s; mentioned in *Bleak House*, ch. 43.

the country and enabled Londoners to travel more quickly to the provinces, necessarily they enabled provincials to migrate to the capital. Such was the demand that after the first London railway station, London Bridge, was built in 1836, it was followed by eight more main-line terminals by 1866 (Best 1971, 34). Before the coming of the Underground there was no line which linked all these stations together: customers had to find other means to travel from one terminus to another.⁷ Furthermore, all the railway companies were required to stop their lines short of Central London, and paradoxically this encouraged suburbanisation, and created a new large cohort of commuters. Unlike the typical worker's situation in previous centuries, in the nineteenth century the place of work was now usually not the place of residence. In *Dombey and Son* the construction of the railway in the vicinity of Camden Town is shown to cause huge social upheaval: "In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilization and improvement" [3.20]. There is more than a hint of irony in that sentence, but Dickens believes that passengers will be able to see from their coach windows the squalid poverty that formerly would not have confronted them: clearer vision may lead to enlightenment.

A curious feature of the authors represented here and in Period IV is that most were not natives of London. Charlotte Brontë was born in Yorkshire, Wordsworth in Cumberland, De Quincey in Manchester, Cobbett in Surrey, Thackeray in India, Hawthorne and Melville in the USA, Surtees in Northumberland, Kingsley in Devon and Hardy in Dorset. Even Dickens, who seems to know London as if he had grown up with it from birth, did not come to live there until he was ten years old. His central characters, such as David Copperfield, Esther Summerson and Philip Pirrip, come to London only after childhoods in the provinces, and London's qualities are magnified for these new-comers. This is true also for Arthur Clennam of *Little Dorrit*: he *was* born in London, but has spent twenty years in China, and when he returns home finds it particularly nauseating, arriving as he does on a Sunday [3.8].

Strangers or quasi-strangers to London apprehended it all the more sharply because they looked upon it as outsiders. This is the case with Wordsworth on Westminster Bridge [3.12], Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snow [3.1] and Thomas De Quincey [3.19] at St Paul's Cathedral, and Dickens's Rosa Budd in a boat on the Thames [3.16]. These travellers find pleasure in what they behold, as the city's noisome qualities are momentarily disguised—but not forgotten. Melville describes the circumstances of the lawyers in the Temple as 'The Paradise of Bachelors,' but twins this with 'The Tartarus of Maids'; the latter is set in New England, it is true, but its likeness could easily have been found in London, as Wordsworth shows in [3.5].

⁷By walking, cabriolets or horse-drawn buses, introduced in 1829.

Londoners and non-Londoners alike were struck by the variety and social diversity of London. They could be intrigued to find sumptuous wealth less than a stone's throw away from abject poverty—though for artists and writers, filth and degradation are often the very materials for the imagination to work upon, motivated as they can be by the attraction of repulsion. We sense this in Mary Robinson in 1800 [3.2], Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1856 [3.37] and Charles Kingsley in 1850 [3.41]. There is a touch of it too in the pronouncements of Cobbett [3.4]. The same principle is constantly impelling Dickens. It can be seen as well in the work of Henry Mayhew, especially in his series the *London Labour and the London Poor* [3.39]. He records statements from all kinds of Londoners from the lower depths—thieves, beggars, barrow boys, sex-workers, crossing-sweepers,⁸ scavengers and many more (see Quennell 1969, 301–45). Mayhew had begun his interviews in the 1840s and he brought them together in three volumes in 1851. This was the year of the Great Exhibition and his researches counterpointed the national boasting personified in London's showcase at the Crystal Palace, at which Mayhew directed some gentle satire in “The World's Show” [3.21]. With sterner wit, John Ruskin declared that the Crystal Palace “possessed no more sublimity than a cucumber frame between two chimneys” (Vol. 1, Sect. 56).

Well before 1851, London presided over an empire that spread across a fifth of the world. This empire required firm direction from the Colonial Office, sometimes sadly lacking. In the days before the Suez Canal, it would take at least a year for a request or query from the New South Wales administration to be sent to London and to receive a reply; if the Colonial Office dithered, the gap in communication could be even greater. Therefore, there was a tendency for London to be both admired as a centre of political power and purposeful business and yet satirised for its stagnant bureaucracy and indifference. In *Little Dorrit* Dickens depicts a society where members of a narrow privileged class do nothing to advance the welfare of the people in general; instead they seek to recruit to their number the apparently wealthy but actually morally bankrupt financier Mr Merdle [3.23]. One of the weapons employed by this ruling elite to preserve their position is the Civil Service or, as Dickens calls it, the Circumlocution Office, dedicated to the principle of ‘How Not to Do It’—i.e. not to do anything at all. It is partly the ineptitude of Government that is responsible for Mr Plornish's difficulties [3.31]. It is not just ineptitude either: Dickens asserts that the Circumlocution Office is “a politico-diplomatic hocus pocus piece of machinery, for the assistance of the nobs in keeping off the snobs” (ch. 10).

⁸By the end of Victoria's reign there were more than 50,000 horses transporting goods and people around London, producing something in the order of 500 tons of faeces each day, and over 12,000 gallons of urine, most of it deposited in the streets. If you wished to cross the street undefiled, therefore, you needed to employ the essential, but undervalued, services of a crossing-sweeper. See <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Great-Horse-Manure-Crisis-of-1894/>, accessed 24 May 2018.

Nevertheless, the Civil Service underwent a moderate reform when in the 1860s competitive examinations were set for those wishing to enter some of its branches—not to the satisfaction of Anthony Trollope, who had been admitted as a clerk to the Post Office in the old way, using family contacts (1883, ch. 3; see also [3.25 HN]). This change, it is true, was brought about by Parliamentary action, but generally speaking the creative writers of the period had no very high opinion of the motives of the legislators, believing that they could be easily manipulated, as we see in the passage from Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* [3.24]. Disraeli, already an M.P. and a future Prime Minister, may be credited with insider knowledge.

Governed or misgoverned, Londoners had their amenities. There were the theatres, fifteen of them in London in 1836, Drury Lane [3.23] being one, and twenty-six in 1870 (Cruikshank 1949, Charts 2 and 3). There was St Paul's Cathedral [Introduction, n.4, 3.18 and 3.19], parks such as Kensington Gardens [3.13], and recreation grounds such as Blackheath [3.17]. There was the Great Exhibition of 1851 [3.21–3.22] and the International Exhibition of 1861 [3.26]. There were restaurants [3.25] and [3.38] and family life [3.30, 3.32 and 3.33]. There could also be the simple pleasure of seeing and being seen, as with Surtees's comic hero, 'Soapy' Sponge [3.34].

One amenity to be prized above all others as far as writers were concerned was the public's access to literature. An increasing population brought with it an expanding readership. In the first third of the nineteenth century the great novelist of that age, Walter Scott, published his novels as 'three-deckers,' i.e. three volumes at ten shillings and sixpence each, or £1/11/6d, one thirteenth of the total annual income of an average worker. The great novelist in the middle third of the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens, published many of his novels monthly, in serial parts at one shilling a part—much more affordable. Following Dickens, Mayhew, Thackeray, Trollope, Kingsley and many others initially published their works serially before selling them in book form. Most of the publishing houses were based in London, and many newspapers and journals were edited there. All these things helped London dominate English culture, a culture not only for the upper classes, but one shared through literacy with the middle classes and, gradually, the working classes too. In 1841 seven out of ten men and five out of ten women were literate. By 1871 the figures were eight out of ten men and almost eight out of ten women. Book sales were more than commensurate: in 1841, 10,000 books were published; in 1871, 41,000 (Cruikshank, Chart 1).

Amongst our selections in Period III the most poignant are those found early, Blake seeing everywhere marks of woe, Wordsworth isolated when surrounded by crowds, and a bereft Tennyson standing alone on a bald street [3.6]. This is how we end the period too, first with De Quincey, destitute and near-death in a London street, saved by a sex-worker whose own situation is scarcely any better [3.44]. For Rossetti's Jenny, Saturday night in the Haymarket is where sex-workers are bought and sold [3.45]. Finally, we have Hardy's Ruined Maid [3.47], encountered in a London street by a young

friend from the country. She is superficially better off than De Quincey's sex-worker: she has a polished if suspect accent, gay feathers in her hat, a bracelet and fine gloves. But it is doubtful whether she has inner contentment. Her glamour is a veneer which could easily fade—rather as Wordsworth's London, viewed from Westminster Bridge [3.12] early in the morning, will be murky and dim by the end of the day.

Alan Dilnot (Monash University)

AN OPENING MISCELLANY

3.1 CHARLOTTE BRONTE: LONDON AS LIFE AND FREEDOM

Charlotte Bronte's heroine Lucy Snowe in Vilette has spent some time as companion and nurse to Miss Marchmont, an elderly, eccentric, and crippled spinster, Lucy's world being thus confined to two "hot, close rooms." On Miss Marchmont's death she travels to London, and at the age of 23 is enraptured at the wonders of a wide world that offers a freedom she has never known.

Charlotte Bronte (1816–1855) published under the androgynous pen-name of Currer Bell.

From Vilette (1853), Vol. 1, ch. 6

The next day was the first of March, and when I awoke, rose, and opened my curtain, I saw the risen sun struggling through fog.⁹ Above my head, above the house tops, co-elevate almost with the clouds, I saw a solemn, orb'd mass, dark blue and dim—THE DOME.¹⁰ While I looked, my inner self moved; my spirit shook its always-fettered wings half loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life: in that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah's gourd.¹¹

"I did well to come," I said, proceeding to dress with speed and care. "I like the spirit of this great London which I feel around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets, and for ever abandon his faculties to the eating rust of obscurity?"

Being dressed, I went down, not travel-worn and exhausted, but tidy and refreshed [...]

The street on which my little sitting room window looked was narrow, perfectly quiet, and not dirty; the few passengers were just as one sees in provincial towns: here was nothing formidable; I felt sure I might venture out alone.

⁹For London fog, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

¹⁰THE DOME: the dome of St Paul's Cathedral; see **General Introduction**, n.4.

¹¹as fast ... gourd: When Jonah was outside Nineveh, God made a gourd (a shrub) grow quickly to shelter him from the sun. But Lucy's hopes are to be dashed: "God prepared a worm when the morning rose next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered" (Jonah 4:5–7).

Having breakfasted, out I went. Elation and pleasure were in my heart: to walk alone in London seemed of itself an adventure. Presently I found myself in Paternoster Row—classic ground this.¹² I entered a bookseller’s shop, kept by one Jones; I bought a little book—a piece of extravagance I could ill afford; but I thought I would one day give or send it to Mrs Barrett.¹³ Mr Jones, a dried-in man of business, stood behind his desk; he seemed one of the greatest, and I one of the happiest, of beings.

Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning. Finding myself before St Paul’s, I went in; I mounted to the dome: I saw thence London, with its river, and its bridges, and its churches; I saw antique Westminster, and the green Temple Gardens,¹⁴ with sun upon them, and a glad, blue sky of early spring above; and, between them and it, not too dense a cloud of haze.

Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got—I know not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure. Since those days, I have seen the West End,¹⁵ the parks, the fine squares; but I love the city far better. The city seems so much more in earnest: its business, its rush, its roar, are such serious things, sights, and sounds. The city is getting its living—the West End but enjoying its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused, but in the city you are deeply excited.

3.2 MARY ROBINSON: “LONDON’S SUMMER MORNING”

Born Mary Darby in Bristol, Mary Robinson (1756–1800) was well-known in her time as a poet, novelist, dramatist and Shakespearean actress, for which she earned the nickname ‘Perdita’ (from The Winter’s Tale). She married Thomas Robinson in Westminster in 1773, but the marriage was unhappy and she was impoverished until she became mistress of the Prince of Wales (later George IV), when she briefly became a leader in fashionable society. In the last 17 years of her short life she was stricken with illness and cultivated her poetic rather than dramatic talents. She was acutely aware of the injustices and inequalities of English society and was an early sympathizer with the French Revolution. Her “London’s Summer Morning” was written in 1795, though not published until 1800. It shows remarkable clarity of observation of Londoners in the early morning but, while it is very possibly indebted to Swift’s “A Description of the Morning” [2.20], it substitutes close sympathetic observation for Swift’s satirical detachment.

¹²**Paternoster Row** was a pedestrian precinct famous for its booksellers.

¹³**Mrs Barrett:** Lucy’s nurse as a child and now an old friend.

¹⁴**Temple Gardens:** the gardens of the Inner and Middle Temples (see [3.28, n.93]).

¹⁵**the West End:** the fashionable district, including Mayfair, Belgravia, Soho and the City of Westminster.

From Lyrical Tales (1800)

Who has not waked to list [*hear*] the busy sounds
 Of summer's morning, in the sultry smoke
 Of noisy London? On the pavement hot
 The sooty chimney-boy, with dingy face
 And tattered covering, shrilly bawls his trade,
 Rousing the sleepy housemaid. At the door
 The milk-pail rattles, and the tinkling bell
 Proclaims the dustman's [*street-sweeper's*] office; while the street
 Is lost in clouds impervious. Now begins
 The din of hackney coaches, wagons, carts;
 While tinmen's shops, and noisy trunk-makers,
 Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters,¹⁶
 Fruit barrows, and the hunger-giving cries
 Of vegetable vendors fill the air.
 Now every shop displays its varied trade,
 And the fresh-sprinkled pavement cools the feet
 Of early walkers. At the private door
 The ruddy housemaid twirls the busy mop,¹⁷
 Annoying the smart 'prentice, or neat girl,
 Tripping with bandbox¹⁸ lightly. Now the sun
 Darts burning splendour on the glittering pane,
 Save where the canvas awning throws a shade
 On the gay merchandise. Now, spruce and trim,
 In shops (where beauty smiles with industry)
 Sits the smart damsel; while the passenger [*passer-by*]
 Peeps through the window, watching every charm.
 Now pastry dainties catch the eye minute
 Of humming insects, while the limy snare¹⁹
 Waits to enthrall them. Now the lamplighter
 Mounts the tall ladder, nimbly venturous,
 To trim the half-filled lamp; while at his feet
 The pot-boy [*publican's servant*] yells discordant. All along
 The sultry pavement, the old-clothes-man cries
 In tone monotonous, and sidelong views
 The area for his traffic: now the bag
 Is slyly opened, and the half-worn suit
 (Sometimes the pilfered treasure of the base
 Domestic spoiler) for one half its worth,

¹⁶**cork-cutters**: those who cut cork into stoppers for bottles.

¹⁷**housemaid ... mop**: something of a motif in this genre of urban georgic: compare Swift's Moll who "whirl[s] her mop with dext'rous airs" [2.20] and Gay's "careless quean" who flicks water from her mop on passers-by [2.18].

¹⁸**bandbox**: light box for carrying millinery.

¹⁹**limy snare**: sticky material used to catch insects.

Sinks in the green abyss.²⁰ The porter now
 Bears his huge load along the burning way;
 And the poor poet wakes from busy dreams,
 To paint the summer morning.

3.3 CHARLES DICKENS: A LONDON ‘PEA-SOUPER’

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) lived in London from 1822 to 1858, and thereafter maintained a base there at the office of his journal All the Year Round. All but one of his novels has substantial portions set in London, which (he asserted) provided great stimulus for him. The opening of Bleak House provides a graphic description of the city in November but is important also for its symbolic associations. The novel is (among other things) a satire on the English legal system, particularly as it concerns the case of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, which is protracted, involved, and ultimately futile since its mounting cost finally outweighs the value of the estate in dispute. The opening paragraphs form a prelude to the sordid competitiveness that characterizes the Chancery suit and indeed other plots in the novel. People jostle each other with their umbrellas in order to get the best footholds in the mud that covers the streets, as if to suggest in this grubby world mud and money are equated. The dense ‘pea-souper’ fog²¹ is also a metaphor for the human condition with clear outlines of reality being lost and people having no idea where they are or where they are going. There are suggestions that such competition and lack of sense of direction have been the norm ever since Biblical times (Noah’s flood was supposed to purify the world but left only mud when its waters receded), and also in scientific terms (the sight of a megalosaurus on Holborn Hill would not be surprising). The fog is thickest and the streets muddiest at the High Court of Chancery, as if the Lord High Chancellor himself presides over the “groping and floundering” condition of humanity.

From Bleak House (1852–1853), ch. 1

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln’s Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely

²⁰the old-clothes-man ... abyss: The old-clothes-man is a receiver of stolen goods from the burglar (base/Domestic spoiler); he puts the pilfered treasure in his green abyss (an ironical term for the green briefcase used by barristers and lawyers).

²¹For London fog, see General Introduction, n.21.

better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foothold at street corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits²² and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses²³ of collier brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales²⁴ of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar.²⁵ And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.²⁶

Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth.

²² **aits**: small islands in a river.

²³ **cabooses**: small galleys (kitchens) in merchant ships (a **brig** has two masts).

²⁴ **gunwale**: low wooden fence round the edge of the deck.

²⁵ **Temple Bar**: a western gate into the city in the Strand, near the Inns of Court, demolished in 1870 to improve traffic flow. It used to display the heads of traitors.

²⁶ **Court of Chancery**: sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall, the **Court of Chancery** (presided over by the Lord Chancellor) dealt with (among other matters not regulated by common law) trusts and the administration of estates. It was notoriously slow and convoluted in its deliberations.

3.4 WILLIAM COBBETT: THE GREAT WEN

William Cobbett (1763–1835) was a journalist and pamphleteer. He wrote polemics against corruption in government, and against the Corn Laws and other taxes that affected the rural population in particular. His radical ideas for political reform made him unpopular with the Tory establishment; he was imprisoned (1810–1812), and later lived in voluntary exile in the United States (1817–1819) to avoid arrest for sedition. He was a staunch advocate of rural England, and from 1821 to 1833 rode on horseback through many English counties (and Scotland) to observe at firsthand the impoverished condition of country people, which was, he argued, aggravated by the financial status and corruption of cities like London that were swelling in size and wealth at the expense of the countryside. His Rural Rides was collected in book form in 1830 and 1833, and an enlarged edition appeared posthumously in 1853. He coined the term “the Wen” to describe London anatomically as a cystic excrescence on the body of England.

From “Kentish Journal,” in Rural Rides (1853) (written 1821)

[...] Have I not, for twenty long years, been regretting the existence of these unnatural embossments [*protruberances*], these white-swellings, [*tubercular tumours*] these odious wens,²⁷ produced by corruption and engendering crime and misery and slavery? We shall see the whole of these wens abandoned by the inhabitants and, at last, the cannons on the fortifications may be of some use in battering down the buildings. But what is to be the fate of the great Wen of all—the monster, called by the silly coxcombs of the press, “the metropolis of the empire”? What is to become of that multitude of towns that has been stuck up around it? The village of Kingston was smothered in the town of Portsea; and why? Because taxes, drained from other parts of the kingdom, were brought thither.

The dispersion of the Wen is the only real difficulty that I see in settling the affairs of the nation and restoring it to a happy state. But dispersed it must be; and if there be half a million or more of people to suffer, the consolation is that the suffering will be divided into half a million of parts. As if the swelling out of London, naturally produced by the Funding System,²⁸ were not sufficient; as if the evil were not sufficiently great from the inevitable tendency of the system of loans and funds, our pretty gentlemen must resort to positive institutions to augment the population of the Wen. They found that the increase of the Wen produced an increase of thieves and prostitutes, an increase of all sorts of diseases, an increase of miseries of all sorts; they saw that taxes drawn up to one point produced these effects; they must have

²⁷ **wens:** fatty tumours of the head.

²⁸ **Funding System:** Cobbett argues that the Poor Laws, while assisting the poor, only increase their number.

a ‘penitentiary,’²⁹ for instance, to check the evil, and *that* they must needs have in the Wen! So that here were a million of pounds drawn up in taxes, employed not only to keep the thieves and prostitutes still in the Wen, but to bring up to the Wen workmen to build the penitentiary, who, and whose families, amounting perhaps to thousands, make an addition to the cause of that crime and misery, to check which is the object of the penitentiary! People would follow, they must follow, the million of money.

3.5 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: ALIENATION AND ANONYMITY

The *Prelude*, a long autobiographical poem by **William Wordsworth** (1770–1850), was written and revised over many years and the final version was not published until soon after his death, in 1850. It tells of the development of his poetic imagination from childhood on, in various episodes not always chronologically arranged. Wordsworth lived in London in early 1791 and again in 1793; he also paid several visits there later (see [3.12 HN]). He recorded his impressions of the city in Book 7 (“Residence in London”). He enjoyed London’s plays, pleasure gardens, museums, and the oratory of churches, law courts, and parliament, but crowds gave him a sense of estrangement and an unsettling awareness of human beings’ ignorance of each other, as exemplified here in the emblem of the blind Beggar.

From The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind (1850), Bk 7

How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
 Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself, “The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery!”
 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight³⁰ procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
 And once, far-travelled in such a mood, beyond
 The reach of common indication, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
 Abruptly with the view (a sight not rare)
 Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
 Wearing a written paper, to explain

²⁹‘penitentiary’: The building of the National Penitentiary in Millbank, Pimlico, was completed in 1821, the year in which Cobbett was writing his diatribe. The prison was London’s largest.

³⁰second sight: “a supposed power by which occurrences in the future or things at a distance are perceived as though they were actually present” (*OED*).

His story, whence he came, and who he was.
 Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
 As with the might of waters; an apt type [*symbol*]
 This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;
 And on the shape of that unmoving man,
 His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
 As if admonished from another world.

3.6 ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: THE NOISE OF LIFE BEGINS AGAIN

The poem was written by Tennyson (1809–1892) in memory of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam (1811–1833). Tennyson and Hallam met at Cambridge and thereafter became close friends and fellow-poets. Hallam was engaged to Tennyson’s sister Emily. The poem was written between 1833—when Hallam died (in Vienna) at the early age of 22—and 1850, when it was published anonymously. The poem consists of 132 sections of varying lengths but all with the same metre and stanza. Section 7 describes the London streetscape where Hallam once resided in Wimpole Street, now made bleak and “unlovely” by the poet’s acute nostalgia and profound sense of loss. The noise of early morning London in the distance serves to make the silent street more sombre, and the future for the poet the more blank, as day breaks. Later in the poem, in Section 119, the speaker stands once more in Wimpole Street, his mood now serene and the street smelling of the meadow. (See also [3.26 HN])

From In Memoriam A.H.H. (1850), Sect. 7

Dark house, by which once more I stand
 Here in the long unlovely street,
 Doors, where my heart was used to beat
 So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more –
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
 And like a guilty thing³¹ I creep
 At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
 The noise of life begins again,
 And ghastly through the drizzling rain
 On the bald street breaks the blank day.

³¹like ... thing: The poet’s feelings of guilt (perhaps at the possibly homoerotic nature of his intense love for Hallam) make him recall the ghost of Hamlet’s father, who “started like a guilty thing / Upon a fearful summons” when the day dawned (*Hamlet* 1.1.152–3).

3.7 WILLIAM BLAKE: “MARKS OF WOE”

“London” (1794) by poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827) offers a radical critique of the Industrial Revolution that was rapidly transforming (and “blackening”) London and the unchecked capitalism that drove it, deftly characterising its ideology (fifty years before Marx formulated the concept) as “mind-forged manacles,” spurious but powerful mental shackles, and its victims—the boy forced up chimneys to sweep them, the soldier enlisted or press-ganged as cannon fodder, the “youthful harlot” forced to sell her body on the “midnight streets”—as mere commodities to be exploited. But he also suggests that this commodification of values and relationships is a sort of universal acid that cannot be safely quarantined by the ruling classes, and that will eventually corrode even the most sacred institutions, reducing marriage (for example) to nothing more than a permanent form of sex-work.

“London,” from Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794)

I wander through each chartered³² street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry³³ of every man,
In every infant’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,³⁴
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimneysweeper’s cry
Every blackening³⁵ church appals,³⁶
And the hapless soldier’s sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.³⁷

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot’s curse
Blasts the newborn infant’s tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

³²**chartered:** established by charter; privileged, made free.

³³**cry:** (1) street-vendor’s cry; (2) cry of anguish.

³⁴**ban:** (1) curse; (2) proclamation, prohibition.

³⁵**blackening:** (1) with soot from ‘dark Satanic mills’; (2) morally degenerating.

³⁶**appals:** (1) makes pale (with horror); (2) casts a pall over.

³⁷**Runs in blood down palace walls:** The king of France, Louis XVI, was guillotined by the revolutionaries in 1793. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the prophetess Cassandra foretells the king’s murder by crying that the palace smells of ‘dripping blood’.

3.8 CHARLES DICKENS: A SUNDAY IN LONDON

Arthur Clennam is a middle-aged business man. Born and brought up in London he has spent twenty years in China representing the interests of the family firm of which his supposed mother, the wheel-chair bound Mrs Clennam, is the head. At some time far in the past Mrs Clennam has perpetrated a great injustice against Arthur Clennam's birth mother, of whom he has known nothing. Meanwhile, William Dorrit has become an inmate of the debtor's prison, the Marshalsea, for debts that he has no capacity to settle. Society, moreover, is in a state of moral paralysis and Arthur Clennam returns to a city that seems rigid, stagnant and incapable of change. Dickens traces this inertia to a reluctance on the part of many to take responsibility for their actions and a tendency to blame others—hence the subtitle of the novel, "nobody's fault." (For a note on Dickens see [3.3 HN])

From Little Dorrit, or Nobody's Fault (1856–1857), ch. 3

It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the Plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an over-worked people. No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world—all *taboo* with that enlightened strictness, that the ugly South Sea³⁸ gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again. Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it—or the worst, according to the probabilities.

At such a happy time, so propitious to the interest of religion and morality, Mr. Arthur Clennam, newly arrived from Marseilles by way of Dover, and by Dover coach the Blue-eyed Maid,³⁹ sat in the window of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill. Ten thousand responsible houses surrounded him, frowning as heavily on the streets they composed, as if they were every one inhabited by the ten young men of the Calendar's story, who blackened their faces and bemoaned their miseries every night.⁴⁰ Fifty thousand lairs surrounded

³⁸ **South Sea gods:** Sculptures from Easter Island acquired by the British Museum.

³⁹ **Blue-eyed Maid:** Coach that plied between Dover and the Blue-eyed Maid Tavern in Southwark.

⁴⁰ **Calendar:** Story in *The Arabian Nights*, favourite reading for the young Dickens.

him where people lived so unwholesomely, that fair water put into their crowded rooms on Saturday night, would be corrupt on Sunday morning; albeit my lord, their county member, was amazed that they failed to sleep in company with their butcher's meat. Miles of close wells and pits of houses, where the inhabitants gasped for air, stretched far away towards every point of the compass. Through the heart of the town a deadly sewer ebbed and flowed, in the place of a fine fresh river. What secular want could the millions or so of human beings whose daily labour, six days in the week, lay among these Arcadian objects, from the sweet sameness of which they had no escape between the cradle and the grave—what secular want could they possibly have upon their seventh day? Clearly they could want nothing but a stringent policeman.

3.9 WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY: “GOING TO SEE A MAN HANGED.”

*William Thackeray (1811–1863) briefly studied art in Paris and then began a career as a journalist. Though he achieved fame as a novelist, notably with *Vanity Fair* (1848), he continued to write articles for London journals for much of his life. One of his most memorable pieces is “Going to See a Man Hanged”. The man to be hanged was François Courvoisier, who had murdered his employer, and a crowd of 40,000 people are said to have witnessed his execution outside Newgate Prison (see [2.29 HN]). Thackeray concentrates not so much on the execution as on the crowd, as he is uneasy about its volatile mood. For a comparison see Samuel Richardson on “An Execution at Tyburn” [2.30]. For Thackeray see also [3.33 HN] and [3.36 HN].*

From Fraser's Magazine, 22 July 1840

[... Y]onder, glittering through the crowd in Newgate Streets—, the Sheriff's carriages are slowly making their way. We have been here three hours! Is it possible that they can have passed so soon? Close to the barriers where we are, the mob has become so dense that it is with difficulty a man can keep his feet. Each man, however, is very careful in protecting the women, and all are full of jokes and good-humour. The windows of the shops opposite are now pretty nearly filled by the persons who hired them. Many young dandies are there with moustaches and cigars; some quiet fat family-parties, of simple honest tradesmen and their wives, as we fancy, who are looking on with the greatest imaginable calmness, and sipping their tea. Yonder is the sham Lord W—, who is flinging various articles among the crowd; one of his companions, a tall, burly man, with large moustaches, has provided himself with a squirt, and is aspersing the mob with brandy-and-water. Honest gentleman! high-bred aristocrat! genuine lover of humour and wit! I would walk some miles to see thee on the treadmill, thee

and thy Mohawk⁴¹ crew! We tried to get up a hiss against these ruffians, but only had a trifling success; the crowd did not seem to think their offence very heinous; and our friend, the philosopher in the ragged elbows, who had remained near us all the time, was not inspired with any such savage disgust at the proceedings of certain notorious young gentlemen, as I must confess fills my own particular bosom. He only said, “So-and-so is a lord, and they’ll let him off,” and then discoursed about Lord Ferrers⁴² being hanged. The philosopher knew the history pretty well, and so did most of the little knot of persons about him, and it must be a gratifying thing for young gentlemen to find that their actions are made the subject of this kind of conversation. Scarcely a word had been said about Courvoisier all this time. We were all, as far as I could judge, in just such a frame of mind as men are in when they are squeezing at the pit-door of a play, or pushing for a review or a Lord Mayor’s show.⁴³ We asked most of the men who were near us, whether they had seen many executions—most of them had, the philosopher especially; whether the sight of them did any good—“For the matter of that, no; people did not care about them at all; nobody ever thought of it after a bit.” A countryman, who had left his drove in Smithfield, said the same thing; he had seen a man hanged at York, and spoke of the ceremony with perfect good sense, and in a quiet sagacious way. J. S—, the famous wit, now dead, had, I recollect, a good story upon the subject of executing, and of the terror which the punishment inspires. After Thistlewood⁴⁴ and his companions were hanged, their heads were taken off, according to the sentence, and the executioner, as he severed each, held it up to the crowd, in the proper orthodox way, saying, “Here is the head of a traitor!” At the sight of the first ghastly head the people were struck with terror, and a general expression of disgust and fear broke from them. The second head was looked at also with much interest, but the excitement regarding the third head diminished. When the executioner had come to the last of the heads, he lifted it up, but, by some clumsiness, allowed it to drop. At this the crowd yelled out, “Ah, Butter-fingers!” the excitement had passed entirely away. The punishment had grown to be a joke—Butter-fingers was the word—a pretty commentary, indeed, upon the august nature of public executions, and the awful majesty of the law. It was past seven now; the quarters rang and passed away; the crowd began to grow very eager and more quiet, and we turned back every now and then and looked at

⁴¹**Mohawk:** or ‘mohock’, one of a gang of aristocratic hooligans who supposedly terrorized London by night in the C18th; derived from **Mohawk**, the indigenous North American tribe of warriors, a branch of the Iroquois. The **treadmill** was a form of forced labour used in prisons, introduced in 1818.

⁴²**Lord Ferrers:** executed in 1760 for the murder of his steward.

⁴³**Lord Mayor’s show:** an annual celebration in the City of London.

⁴⁴**Thistlewood:** Arthur Thistlewood (1774–1820), one of the radical Cato Street Conspiracy, who had planned to murder the Cabinet; he was hanged until dead and then decapitated, in accordance with the Treason Act (1814).

St. Sepulchre's⁴⁵ clock. Half-an-hour, twenty-five minutes. What is he doing now? He has his irons off by this time. A quarter: he's in the press-room⁴⁶ now, no doubt. Now at last we had come to think about the man we were going to see hanged. How slowly the clock crept over the last quarter! Those who were able to turn round and see (for the crowd was now extraordinarily dense) chronicled the time, eight minutes, five minutes; at last—ding, dong, dong, dong!—the bell is tolling the chimes of eight.

DELIGHTS AND BEAUTIES

3.10 THOMAS HOOD: LET'S ALL GO DOWN THE STRAND

Thomas Hood (1799–1845) was born in London, the son of a book-seller. He wrote many sentimental, comic and satirical poems, essays and stories, and he edited various periodicals, notably *Hood's Own* (1839), the *New Monthly Magazine* (1841–1843), and *Hood's Magazine* (1843). Our extract he contributed (as 'Incog.')

in November 1821 to the *London Magazine*, of which he was assistant editor, 1821–1843. In 1844 appeared his poem "The Bridge of Sighs," concerning a sex-worker who had thrown herself from Waterloo Bridge.

From A Sentimental Journey from Islington to Waterloo Bridge (1821)

I was now in the Strand, close to Temple Bar⁴⁷; and from hence to Waterloo Bridge,⁴⁸ I calculated would be the journey of an hour. Who is there that can walk along this, or any of the principal City streets, without admiring the number of elegant shops, and the still more elegant and wonderful productions which they contain? They are to me the sources of the greatest pleasure; and when time will permit me to do so, I inspect them from the goldsmith's and jeweller's, down to the humblest repositories of the tinman and brazier. Nay, I have been caught, and rallied by my acquaintance for looking in lovingly at the haberdasher's and milliner's.

It is not that I am merely smitten with the beauty of their articles that I look into them with such admiration and delight, but it is because I can there trace an evident and progressive improvement in the arts and manufactures of my country. *This* affords me a delight in which all must participate. Whether we examine those paintings and prints, which are more strictly termed works of

⁴⁵ **St Sepulchre's**: See [2.28], n.137.

⁴⁶ **press-room**: "The Press Room, a dark close chamber, ... obtained its name from an immense wooden machine kept in it, with which such prisoners as refused to plead to their indictments were pressed to death" Ainsworth (1850: 193). The practice (the only form of torture ever sanctioned under English Common Law) was officially abandoned in 1772.

⁴⁷ **Strand ... Temple Bar**: the **Strand** ran west from **Temple Bar** to the City of Westminster.

⁴⁸ **Waterloo Bridge**: opened in 1817 and named to mark victory over Napoleon at Waterloo.

art; whether we examine those fabrics which have been produced by the most complicated machinery, or those minor articles which are the works of the handicraftsman, we shall find that there prevails in all a degree of taste which can only be the result of a general cultivation of mind. It is this that has led to so many ingenious inventions, and has tended above all to promote the general alliance between elegance and utility; and when we contemplate the mighty effects of its progress hitherto, who can calculate its future attainments? Long may it continue its mighty march, to the honour and happiness of my countrymen; and may they, in better days, obtain for their industry and ingenuity those rewards which hitherto have not kept pace with their merits. May they still travel onwards in the path of improvement, and surmounting all obstacles which a meaner ambition would plant in their way, reach that point of excellence and perfection to which man in this world may be destined to attain! Here a bookseller's shop gave a new turn to my speculations. We are certainly a reading people, I thought, as I looked in at the window; but I would fain know if this cultivation of the mind conduces to happiness. I was inclined to decide in the affirmative; for the collection before me suggested the names of Shakespeare, Addison, Milton, and a host of other authors, linked with a thousand reminiscences. Much must depend upon one's course of reading, said I, still running over the titles: *A Sermon to Sinners*, *The Fool's Jest Book*; *Dialogues of the Dead*; *Life in London*; *Tomline's Sea Worthies*; *The Newgate Calendar*; *Cato's Letter to the Country*; *The King's Reply to his People*; *Words to the Wyse*; *Witte's Cronykill*; *A New Spelling Book*. But what have we⁴⁹ here? It happened very strangely, I might almost say miraculously, that I read a solution of my speculation in a book before me. It was called *The Prayse of Ignorance*⁵⁰ [...]

3.11 JOHN RUSKIN RECALLS A CHILDHOOD PARADISE AT HERNE HILL

John Ruskin (1819–1900) was a prolific art critic, essayist, painter, story writer and lecturer. He travelled widely in France and Italy and his experiences abroad stimulated his lifelong love of nature's beauty and his interest in medieval, Renaissance, and modern art. In his Præterita ("Things past")—one of his last works—he recalls his idyllic boyhood at Herne Hill, to which his family moved in 1823 when he was four. Herne Hill was then semi-rural, with large houses and gardens, although it was only four miles from Charing Cross. Particularly when the railways arrived in 1862 there was much sub-division and the district became over-developed. Ruskin's love of Herne Hill, as he remembered it, was analogous to his love of nature and past beauties.

⁴⁹ *A Sermon to Sinners ... A New Spelling Book*: amongst these only *The Newgate Calendar* is notable, for its regular reports of sensational crimes.

⁵⁰ *The Prayse of Ignorance*: Hood would publish an extract from this "Oration" in *Whims and Oddities, First Series*, 1826.

From Præterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life (1886–1889), Vol. 1, ch. 2

When I was about four years old my father found himself able to buy the lease of a house on Herne Hill, a rustic eminence four miles south of the ‘Standard in Cornhill’⁵¹; of which the leafy seclusion remains, in all essential points of character, unchanged to this day: certain Gothic splendours, lately indulged in by our wealthier neighbours, being the only serious innovations; and these are so graciously concealed by the fine trees of their grounds that the passing viator [*wayfarer*] remains unappalled by them; and I can still walk up and down the piece of road between the Fox tavern and the Herne Hill station, imagining myself four years old [...]

The group, of which our house was the quarter, consisted of two precisely similar partner-couples of houses, gardens and all to match; still the two highest blocks of buildings seen from Norwood on the crest of the ridge; so that the house itself, three-storied, with garrets above, commanded, in those comparatively smokeless days, a very notable view from its garret windows, of the Norwood hills on one side and the winter sunrise over them; and of the valley of the Thames on the other, with Windsor telescopically clear in the distance, and Harrow, conspicuous always in fine weather to open vision against the summer sunset. It had front and back garden in sufficient proportion to its size; the front richly set with old evergreens and well-grown lilac and laburnum; the back, seventy yards long by twenty wide, renowned over all the hill for its pears and apples, which had been chosen with extreme care by our predecessor (shame on me to forget the name of a man to whom I owe so much!)—and possessing also a strong old mulberry tree, a tall white-heart cherry tree, a black Kentish one, and an almost unbroken hedge all round, of alternate gooseberry and currant bush; decked, in due season (for the ground was wholly beneficent) with magical splendour of abundant fruit: fresh green, soft amber, and rough-bristled crimson bending the spinous [*thorny*] branches; clustered pearl and pendant ruby joyfully discoverable under the large leaves that looked like vine.

The differences of primal importance which I observed between the nature of this garden and that of Eden, as I had imagined it, were that, in this one, all the fruit was forbidden; and there were no companionable beasts. In other respects the little domain answered every purpose of Paradise to me; and the climate, in that cycle of our years, allowed me to pass most of my life in it.

⁵¹‘Standard in Cornhill’: A lofty erection containing a vertical pipe with spouts and taps to supply water to the public (see *OED* 3.7).

3.12 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: “COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 3, 1802”

William Wordsworth (1770–1850) wrote this celebrated sonnet in early morning on his way to France on 31 July 1802; it is likely that he drafted it at this time and revised it before 3 September. London, in its “bright and glittering” splendour and its features depicted with a sharp focus, is as vividly realized as the natural phenomena of “valley, rock, or hill” when they too are steeped in early sunlight. The poem is also about the poet, whose apprehension of the scene proves his senses are far from “[d]ull,” and who can stimulate others (the readers) into sharing his appreciation of the majesty of the scene. The calm that he sees is also the inner (“felt”) calm that the scene invokes—there is reciprocity between the observer and the observed. However, the emphatic “now” in the fourth line suggests that London’s sleep will not last: when the city wakes, its industry will corrupt the air with smog and noise, trade will disrupt the natural flow of the river, and the crowds will be as disturbing and unsettling as they were in [3.5].

From Poems in Two Volumes (1807)

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
 A sight so touching in its majesty:
 This city now doth like a garment wear
 The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
 Open unto the fields and to the sky;
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
 Never did sun more beautifully steep
 In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
 Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
 The river glideth at his own sweet will:
 Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!

3.13 MATTHEW ARNOLD, “LINES WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS”

Kensington Gardens date from the seventeenth century when they became the grounds of Kensington Palace under William III. They were opened to the public by William IV in the early nineteenth century. They are adjacent to Hyde Park, of which they were once a part, and extend over 270 acres. Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) was a major poet, essayist, and educationalist. He spent much time in London but as Inspector of Schools travelled widely in the provinces. In the poem the Gardens provide opportunity for reflection, and in the life of the glade in which the poet lies, with its “endless active life” of nature and innocent humanity (the child with the broken toy), he finds a calm that is isolated from the “city’s hum”

and “impious uproar.” It is clear from the last stanza that his aesthetic vision in the Gardens promotes an insight into the moral vision for which he petitions the “Calm Soul of all things.” As with Wordsworth in [3.12], the experience of a scene of outer calm provokes a longing for an inner calm that assures a fully integrated harmonious life.

From Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems (1852)

In this lone open glade I lie,
Screened by dark trees on either hand;
And at its head, to stay the eye,
Those black-topped, red-boled pine trees stand.

The clouded sky is still and grey,
Through silken rifts soft peers the sun.
Light the green-foliaged chestnuts play,
The darker elms stand grave and dun.

The birds sing sweetly in these trees
Across the girdling city’s hum;
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day’s employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirred forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretched out,
And eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day’s spoil, the spotted trout.

I, on men’s impious uproar hurled,
Think sometimes, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world,
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new.
When I, who watch them, am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass.
 The flowers close, the birds are fed;
 The night comes down upon the grass:
 The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm Soul of all things! make it mine
 To feel, amid the city's jar,
 That there abides a peace of thine,
 Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
 The power to feel with others, give.
 Calm, calm me more; nor let me die
 Before I have begun to live.

3.14 GEORGE BORROW ON CHEAPSIDE

*George Borrow (1803–1881) was educated in Edinburgh and Norwich. Articled as a solicitor, he early adopted literature as his profession. He travelled widely in Britain, Europe and the East; in Russia and Spain he was the agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society. He made a particular study of Romany culture and his two most famous books, *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857), draw on this in heavily fictionalised autobiographies. He celebrates the romance of the open road, when “the wind’s on the heath,” but he is also able to capture the atmosphere of a city, as he does in this picture of Cheapside.*

*From *Lavengro* (1851), ch. 31*

“O Cheapside!⁵² Cheapside!” said I, as I advanced up that mighty thoroughfare, “truly thou art a wonderful place for hurry, noise, and riches! Men talk of the bazaars of the East – I have never seen them – but I daresay that, compared with thee, they are poor places, silent places, abounding with empty boxes, O thou pride of London’s east! – mighty mart of old renown! – for thou art not a place of yesterday: – long before the Roses red and white battled in fair England,⁵³ thou didst exist – a place of throng and bustle – place of gold and silver, perfumes and fine linen. Centuries ago thou couldst extort the praises even of the fiercest foes of England. Fierce bards of Wales, sworn foes of England, sang thy praises centuries ago; and even the fiercest of them all, Red Julius⁵⁴ himself,

⁵²**Cheapside:** ‘market place’; from Old English *ceapan*, to buy. A broad street near St Paul’s in the City, it was the major market-place of London from the Middle Ages.

⁵³**Roses ... England:** the Wars of the **Roses** 1455–1485, between Yorkists (White Rose) and Lancastrians (Red Rose); ended at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 with the victory of Henry Tudor of Lancaster, who became Henry VII and married Elizabeth of York.

⁵⁴**Red Julius:** Iolo Goch, whose real surname was Llwyd.

wild Glendower's⁵⁵ bard, had a word of praise for London's 'Cheape,' for so the bards of Wales styled thee in their flowing odes. Then, if those who were not English, and hated England, and all connected therewith, had yet much to say in thy praise, when thou wast far inferior to what thou art now, why should true-born Englishmen, or those who call themselves so, turn up their noses at thee, and scoff thee at the present day, as I believe they do? But, let others do as they will, I, at least, who am not only an Englishman, but an East Englishman,⁵⁶ will not turn up my nose at thee, but will praise and extol thee, calling thee mart of the world – a place of wonder and astonishment! – and, were it right and fitting to wish that anything should endure for ever, I would say prosperity to Cheapside, throughout all ages – may it be the world's resort for merchandise, world without end."

And when I had passed through the Cheape I entered another street, which led up a kind of ascent, and which proved to be the street of the Lombards,⁵⁷ called so from the name of its first founders; and I walked rapidly up the street of the Lombards, neither looking to the right nor left, for it had no interest for me, though I had a kind of consciousness that mighty things were being transacted behind its walls: but it wanted the throng, bustle, and outward magnificence of the Cheape, and it had never been spoken of by "ruddy bards"! And, when I had got to the end of the street of the Lombards, I stood still for some time, deliberating within myself whether I should turn to the right or the left, or go straight forward, and at last I turned to the right, down a street of rapid descent, and presently found myself upon a bridge⁵⁸ which traversed the river which runs by the big city.

A strange kind of bridge it was; huge and massive, and seemingly of great antiquity. It had an arched back, like that of a hog, a high balustrade, and at either side, at intervals, were stone bowers bulking over the river, but open on the other side, and furnished with a semicircular bench. Though the bridge was wide—very wide—it was all too narrow for the concourse upon it. Thousands of human beings were pouring over the bridge. But what chiefly struck my attention was a double row of carts and wagons, the generality drawn by horses as large as elephants, each row striving hard in a different direction, and not unfrequently brought to a stand-still. Oh the cracking of whips, the shouts and oaths of the carters, and the grating of wheels upon the enormous stones that formed the pavement! In fact, there was a wild burly-burly upon the bridge, which nearly deafened me. But, if upon the bridge there was a confusion, below it there was a confusion ten times

⁵⁵**Glendower:** Owain Glyn Dŵr, c.1359–c.1415, Prince of Powys, who led unsuccessful resistance to English rule in Wales.

⁵⁶**East Englishman:** Borrow was from Norfolk, a county of East Anglia.

⁵⁷**Lombards:** Lombard Street was originally the place of settlement of goldsmiths from Lombardy in Northern Italy. The Royal Exchange, Banks and the Bank of England are situated there.

⁵⁸**bridge:** Old London Bridge (see [1.2 HN]).

confounded. The tide, which was fast ebbing, obstructed by the immense piers of the old bridge, poured beneath the arches with a fall of several feet, forming in the river below as many whirlpools as there were arches. Truly tremendous was the roar of the descending waters, and the bellow of the tremendous gulfs, which swallowed them for a time, and then cast them forth, foaming and frothing from their horrid wombs. Slowly advancing along the bridge, I came to the highest point, and there I stood still, close beside one of the stone bowers, in which, beside a fruit-stall, sat an old woman, with a pan of charcoal at her feet, and a book in her hand, in which she appeared to be reading intently. There I stood, just above the principal arch, looking through the balustrade at the scene that presented itself—and such a scene! Towards the left bank of the river, a forest of masts, thick and close, as far as the eye could reach; spacious wharfs, surmounted with gigantic edifices; and, far away, Caesar’s Castle, with its White Tower.⁵⁹ To the right, another forest of masts, and a maze of buildings, from which, here and there, shot up to the sky chimneys taller than Cleopatra’s Needle,⁶⁰ vomiting forth huge wreaths of that black smoke which forms the canopy—occasionally a gorgeous one—of the more than Babel⁶¹ city. Stretching before me, the troubled breast of the mighty river, and, immediately below, the main whirlpool of the Thames—the Maelstrom⁶² of the bulwarks of the middle arch—a grisly pool, which, with its superabundance of horror, fascinated me. Who knows but I should have leapt into its depths?—I have heard of such things—but for a rather startling occurrence which broke the spell. As I stood upon the bridge, gazing into the jaws of the pool, a small boat shot suddenly through the arch beneath my feet. There were three persons in it; an oarsman in the middle, whilst a man and woman sat at the stern. I shall never forget the thrill of horror which went through me at this sudden apparition. What!—a boat—a small boat—passing beneath that arch into yonder roaring gulf! Yes, yes, down through that awful water-way, with more than the swiftness of an arrow, shot the boat, or skiff, right into the jaws of the pool. A monstrous breaker curls over the prow—there is no hope; the boat is swamped, and all drowned in that strangling.

⁵⁹**Caesar’s Castle ... White Tower:** The Tower of London, mistakenly thought to have been built by Julius Caesar, but in fact constructed by the Normans.

⁶⁰**Cleopatra’s Needle:** an ancient Egyptian Obelisk in Alexandria. In 1877 it was transported thence to be re-erected on the Thames Embankment.

⁶¹**Babel:** Genesis 11:1–9 tells of the people of Earth who all spoke one language until they tried to build a tower to reach Heaven; God confounded their efforts by causing them to ‘babble’ in a multitude of mutually unintelligible languages. Then as now, London was a polyglot city.

⁶²**Maelstrom:** a powerful whirlpool in the Arctic Ocean off the coast of Norway, and by extension any such whirlpool in a sea or river.

3.15 FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON, “ST. JAMES’S STREET,” 1867

Frederick Locker-Lampson (1821–1895) published a collection of light verse, *London Lyrics* (1857, reprinted and amplified in 1867 and 1876), and an anthology *Lyra Elegantiarum* (1867); he prefaced the latter with an analysis of true vers de société where “sentiment never surges into passion, and where humour never overflows into boisterous merriment”—rules which are perhaps too carefully observed in “*St. James’s Street*.”

From Lyra Elegantiarum (1867)

St. James’s Street,⁶³ of classic fame!
The finest people throng it! –
St. James’s Street? I know the name!
I think I’ve passed along it!
Why, that’s where Sacharissa sighed
When Waller read his ditty;
Where Byron lived, and Gibbon died,
And Alvanley was witty.⁶⁴

A famous street. It skirts the Park
Where Rogers took his pastime;
Come, gaze on fifty men of mark,
And then call up the fast time!
The plats at White’s, the play at Crock’s,
The bumpers to Miss Gunning;
The bonhomie of Charlie Fox,
And Selwyn’s ghastly funning.⁶⁵

The dear old street of clubs and cribs,
As north and south it stretches,
Still smacks of Williams’ pungent squibs,
And Gillray’s fiercer sketches;

⁶³St. James’s Street: runs from Piccadilly downhill to St. James’s Palace and Pall Mall; several exclusive men’s clubs are situated there.

⁶⁴Sacharissa ... Waller ... Byron ... Gibbon ... Alvanley: Sacharissa is Lady Carlisle, praised in poems by Edmund Waller (1606–1687); Lord George Byron (1788–1824), poet; Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), historian; William Arden, 2nd Baron Alvanley (1789–1849), Regency buck or dandy.

⁶⁵Rogers ... White’s ... Crock’s ... Miss Gunning ... Charlie Fox ... Selwyn: Samuel Rogers (1763–1855), poet; White’s and Crock’s, men’s clubs; Miss Gunning, Elizabeth, Duchess of Hamilton, 1733–1790, née Gunning; Charles James Fox (1749–1806), Whig Statesman; Mrs. Selwyn, biting satirist in Fanny Burney’s *Evelina* (1778).

The quaint old dress, the grand old style,
 The mots, the racy stories; –
 The wine, the dice, – the wit, the bile,
 The hate of Whigs and Tories.⁶⁶

At dusk, when I am strolling there,
 Dim forms will rise around me;
 Old Pepys creeps past me in his chair,
 And Congreve's airs astound me!
 And once Nell Gwynne, a frail young sprite,
 Looked kindly when I met her;
 I shook my head, perhaps, – but quite
 Forgot to quite forget her.⁶⁷

The street is still a lively tomb
 For rich and gay and clever,
 The crops of dandies bud and bloom.
 And die as fast as ever.
 Now gilded youth loves cutty-pipes,⁶⁸
 And slang that's rather rancid, –
 It can't approach its prototypes
 In tone, – or so I've fancied.

In Brummell's⁶⁹ day of buckle shoes,
 Starch crávats, and roll collars,
 They'd fight, and woo, and bet, – and lose
 Like gentlemen and scholars:
 I like young men to go the pace,
 I half forgive old Rapid⁷⁰;
 These louts disgrace their name and race, –
 So vicious and so vapid!

Worse times may come. *Bon ton*,⁷¹ alas!
 Will then be quite forgotten,
 And all we much revere will pass

⁶⁶Williams' ... Gillray's ... Whigs ... Tories: Helen Maria Williams (1761?–1827), poet and friend of the Girondistes in the French Revolution; James Gillray (1757–1815) mordant caricaturist; Whigs and Tories, political parties originating in the seventeenth century.

⁶⁷Pepys ... Congreve ... Nell Gwynne: Samuel Pepys (see [2.7 HN]); William Congreve (1670–1729), playwright; Eleanor (Nell) Gwyn (1650–1687), actress and long-time mistress of Charles II.

⁶⁸cutty-pipes: fashionably short ('cut') pipes.

⁶⁹Brummel's: George 'Beau' Brummell (1778–1840), Regency dandy, leader of fashion in London.

⁷⁰old Rapid: character in Thomas Morton's *A Cure for the Heartache*, first performed at Covent Garden in 1797.

⁷¹*Bon ton*: good breeding, good manners (an archaic term even then).

From ripe to worse than rotten;
 Rank weeds will sprout between yon stones,
 And owls will roost at Boodle's,
 And Echo will hurl back the tones
 Of screaming Yankee Doodles.⁷²
 I like the haunts, and many such,
 Where wit and wealth are squandered,
 The gardened mansions, just as much,
 Where grace and rank have wandered, –
 The spots where ladies fair and leal
 First ventured to adore me! –
 And something of the like I feel
 For this old street before me.

3.16 CHARLES DICKENS: GOING UP THE RIVER

This passage from Charles Dickens's The Mystery of Edwin Drood cannot of course be put fully in context since the novel (Dickens's last) was unfinished. (For a note on Dickens see [3.3 HN].) The episode itself, describing a relaxing day on the Thames near London, is probably of no especial consequence in the novel's plot; however, there are details in the characterization of the participants that may well be significant. Lieutenant Tartar proves by his capability and manliness that he may well deserve the hand in marriage of Rosa Bud, the heroine, who does nothing except listen to him as he talks; she later discovers that she too can row (with much assistance). Grewgious, the London lawyer, is the benign and shrewd guardian of Rosa but (with comic irony) steers and rows the boat with hopeless ineptitude. The day's outing ends with the prospect of dark bridges and shadows—the world of John Jasper, the intense, jealous, and passionate would-be lover of Rosa, of the opium den that he frequents, and of the mysterious fate of several of the novel's characters. The novel is set in the early 1840s.

From The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870), ch. 22

“It occurred to me,” hinted Mr Tartar, “that we might go up the river, the weather being so delicious and the tide serving. I have a boat of my own at Temple Stairs.”

“I have not been up the river for this many a day,” said Mr Grewgious, tempted.

“I was never up the river,” added Rosa.

Within half an hour they were setting this matter right by going up the river.

⁷²Boodle's ... Yankee Doodles: Boodle's—a gentlemen's club in St James' St; Yankee Doodles—brash informal Americans.

The tide was running with them, the afternoon was charming. Mr Tartar's boat was perfect. Mr Tartar and Lobley (Mr Tartar's man) pulled a pair of oars. Mr Tartar had a yacht, it seemed, lying somewhere down by Greenhithe; and Mr Tartar's man had charge of this yacht, and was detached upon his present service. He was a jolly favoured man, with tawny hair and whiskers, and a big red face. He was the dead image of the sun in old woodcuts, his hair and whiskers answering for rays all round him. Resplendent in the bow of the boat, he was a shining sight, with a man-of-war's man's shirt on—or off, according to opinion⁷³—and his arms and breast tattooed all sorts of patterns. Lobley seemed to take it easily, and so did Mr Tartar; yet their oars bent as they pulled, and the boat bounded under them. Mr Tartar talked as if he were doing nothing, to Rosa who was really doing nothing, and to Mr Grewgious who was doing this much that he steered all wrong; but what did that matter, when a turn of Mr Tartar's skilful wrist, or a mere grin of Mr Lobley's over the bow, put all to rights! The tide bore them on in the gayest and most sparkling manner, until they stopped to dine in some everlastingly green garden, needing no matter-of-fact identification here; and then the tide obligingly turned—being devoted to that party alone for that day; and as they floated idly among some osier beds, Rosa tried what she could do in the rowing way, and came off splendidly, being much assisted; and Mr Grewgious tried what he could do, and came off on his back, doubled up with an oar under his chin, being not assisted at all. Then there was an interval of rest under boughs (such rest!) what time Mr Lobley mopped, and, arranging cushions, stretchers,⁷⁴ and the like, danced the tight rope the whole length of the boat like a man to whom shoes were a superstition and stockings slavery; and then came the sweet return among delicious odours of limes in bloom, and musical ripplings; and, all too soon, the great black city cast its shadow on the waters, and its dark bridges spanned them as death spans life, and the everlastingly green garden seemed to be left for everlasting, unregainable, and far away.

3.17 NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: A LONDON SUBURB

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), born in Salem, Massachusetts, is best known for his novels The Scarlet Letter (1850) and The House of the Seven Gables (1851). In 1853 he was appointed American Consul in England and lived in London from 1853–1857. His account of his time there, Our Old Home, from which this extract is taken, was published in 1863, first serialised in the Atlantic Monthly and then in one volume by James Osgood, Boston.

From Our Old Home (1863)

⁷³**shirt ... opinion:** i.e. it is a matter of opinion whether Lobley's sleeveless top (as worn by an able seaman from a man-of-war) constitutes a shirt at all.

⁷⁴**stretchers:** the narrow planks placed across the boat for the rowers to set their feet against.

[E]ven when we stepped beyond our own gate, we were not shocked with any immediate presence of the great world. We were dwelling in one of those oases that have grown up (in comparatively recent years, I believe) on the wide waste of Blackheath,⁷⁵ which otherwise offers a vast extent of unoccupied ground in singular proximity to the metropolis. As a general thing, the proprietorship of the soil seems to exist in everybody and nobody; but exclusive rights have been obtained, here and there, chiefly by men whose daily concerns link them with London, so that you find their villas or boxes standing along village streets which have often more of an American aspect than the elder English settlements. The scene is semi-rural. Ornamental trees overshadow the sidewalks, and grassy margins border the wheel-tracks. The houses, to be sure, have certain points of difference from those of an American village, bearing tokens of architectural design, though seldom of individual taste; and, as far as possible, they stand aloof from the street, and separated each from its neighbour by hedge or fence, in accordance with the careful exclusiveness of the English character, which impels the occupant, moreover, to cover the front of his dwelling with as much concealment of shrubbery as his limits will allow. Through the interstices, you catch glimpses of well-kept lawns, generally ornamented with flowers, and with what the English call rock-work, being heaps of ivy-grown stones and fossils, designed for romantic effect in a small way. Two or three of such village streets as are here described take a collective name,—as, for instance, Blackheath Park,—and constitute a kind of community of residents, with gateways, kept by a policeman, and a semi-privacy, stepping beyond which, you find yourself on the breezy heath.

On this great, bare, dreary common I often went astray, as I afterwards did on the Campagna of Rome, and drew the air (tainted with London smoke though it might be) into my lungs by deep inspirations, with a strange and unexpected sense of desert freedom. The misty atmosphere helps you to fancy a remoteness that perhaps does not quite exist. During the little time that it lasts, the solitude is as impressive as that of a Western prairie or forest; but soon the railway shriek, a mile or two away, insists upon informing you of your whereabouts; or you recognize in the distance some landmark that you may have known,—an insulated villa, perhaps, with its garden-wall around it, or the rudimental street of a new settlement which is sprouting on this otherwise barren soil. Half a century ago, the most frequent token of man's beneficent contiguity might have been a gibbet, and the creak, like a tavern sign, of a murderer swinging to and fro in irons. Blackheath, with its highwaymen and footpads, was dangerous in those days; and even now, for aught I know, the Western prairie may still compare favourably with it as a safe region to go

⁷⁵**Blackheath:** in the 1850s part of the county of Kent, but commonly regarded as a London suburb.

astray in. When I was acquainted with Blackheath, the ingenious device of garrotting had recently come into fashion; and I can remember, while crossing those waste places at midnight, and hearing footsteps behind me, to have been sensibly encouraged by also hearing, not far off, the clinking hoof-tramp of one of the horse-patrols who do regular duty there. About sunset, or a little later, was the time when the broad and somewhat desolate peculiarity of the heath seemed to me to put on its utmost impressiveness. At that hour, finding myself on elevated ground, I once had a view of immense London, four or five miles off, with the vast Dome in the midst, and the towers of the two Houses of Parliament⁷⁶ rising up into the smoky canopy, the thinner substance of which obscured a mass of things, and hovered about the objects that were most distinctly visible,—a glorious and sombre picture, dusky, awful, but irresistibly attractive, like a young man’s dream of the great world, foretelling at that distance a grandeur never to be fully realized.

INSTITUTIONS

3.18 WILLIAM BLAKE: ST PAUL’S CATHEDRAL ON HOLY THURSDAY

Blake’s poem describes the annual ritual held on Ascension Day in which many thousand orphans from London charity schools, dressed in their uniforms, processed in pairs into St Paul’s Cathedral, to offer thanks for their welfare under the “wise guardians of the poor.” The children’s innocence is suggested by the seeming spontaneity with which they enter the Cathedral like the easy flow of the Thames, and sing to Heaven “like a mighty wind.” However, the figure of the beadles (there to keep order in the congregation) and the regimentation of the disciplined march of the children intimate that their innocence, despite its being genuine, will be short lived. Blake’s companion poem in Songs of Experience laments that they will grow up into a world of poverty, misery, and “eternal winter” (cf. [3.7]).

“*Holy Thursday*” in Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794)

’Twas on a Holy Thursday,⁷⁷ their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,⁷⁸
Till into the high dome of Paul’s they like Thames’ waters flow.

⁷⁶Houses of Parliament: see [2.31], n.144.

⁷⁷Holy Thursday: also Maundy Thursday, the eve of Good Friday, which commemorates the Last Supper.

⁷⁸beadle: “inferior parish officer appointed to keep order in church [and] punish petty offenders”; wand: “a rod, stick, or switch for chastisement” (OED).

Oh what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
 Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
 The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
 Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the voice of song,
 Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among.
 Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;
 Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.⁷⁹

3.19 THOMAS DE QUINCEY: TOURISTS MUST PAY TO SEE THE SIGHTS OF ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859) was a voluminous journalist and essayist. He suffered bouts of depression, and these, together with other illnesses and extreme poverty, led to his opium addiction. His straitened circumstances, which were the result of a disorganized temperament and life style, compelled him to write copiously for an income. The following is an extract from “The Nation of London,” expressing his indignation at the importunity of tourist guides in St Paul’s, who noisily demanded that he and his companion pay to see the sights of the Cathedral. “The Nation of London” first appeared in Tait’s Magazine (March 1834).

From “The Nation of London,” in Autobiographical Sketches (1853), ch. 7 (written 1834)

The first view of St Paul’s, it may be supposed, overwhelmed us with awe; and I did not at that time imagine that the sense of magnitude could be more deeply impressed. One thing interrupted our pleasure. The superb objects of curiosity within the Cathedral were shown for separate fees. There were seven, I think; and any one could be seen independently of the rest for a few pence. The whole amount was a trifle; fourteen pence, I think. But we were followed by a sort of persecution—“Would we not see the bell”? “Would we not see the model”? “Surely we would not go away without visiting the Whispering Gallery”?⁸⁰—solicitations which troubled the silence and sanctity of the place, and must tease [*irritate*] others as it then teased us, who wished to contemplate in quiet this great monument of the national grandeur, which was at that time beginning to take a station also in the land as a depository for the dust of her heroes. What struck us most in the whole interior of the

⁷⁹**Then cherish ... door:** Alluding to Hebrews 13:1–2: “Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

⁸⁰**Whispering Gallery:** this runs around the bottom of the dome, just below the windows, and is famous for its acoustics: someone who whispers to the wall can be heard distinctly on the other side of the dome, over 100 feet away.

pile was the view taken from the spot immediately under the dome, being, in fact, the very same which, five years afterwards, received the remains of Lord Nelson.⁸¹ In one of the aisles going off from this centre, we saw the flags of France, Spain, and Holland, the whole trophies of the war, swinging pompously [*with due ceremony*], and expanding their massy draperies, slowly and heavily, in the upper gloom, as they were swept at intervals by currents of air. At this moment we were provoked by the showman at our elbow renewing his vile iteration of “Twopence, gentlemen; no more than twopence for each”; and so on until we left the place. The same complaint has been often made as to Westminster Abbey. Where the wrong lies, or where it commences, I know not. Certainly I nor any man can have a right to expect that the poor men who attended us should give up their time for nothing, or even to be angry with them for a sort of persecution, on the degree of which possibly might depend the comfort of their own families. Thoughts of famishing children at home leave little room for nice regards of delicacy abroad. The individuals, therefore, might or might not be blameable. But in any case, the system is palpably wrong. The nation is entitled to a free enjoyment of its own public monuments; not free only in the sense of being gratuitous, but free also from the molestation of *showmen*, with their imperfect knowledge and their vulgar sentiment.

3.20 CHARLES DICKENS: THE BUILDING OF A RAILWAY

Railways originated in England in the 1820s (after many experiments), and after two decades the countryside changed dramatically under their influence. The London and Birmingham Railway, whose construction is graphically described here by Charles Dickens (1812–1870), was engineered by Robert Stephenson and was the first line to connect London with any other city. It eventually opened in 1838. Dickens describes the chaos of its erection in Camden Town, a suburb of London that he knew as a schoolboy. He emphasizes that its construction means the wreckage of an old order: not only are houses demolished or undermined but bridges lead nowhere, streets are impassable, and normal rights of way are blocked. Nevertheless, from out of this hideous inferno (he wryly imagines) civilization will advance in a smoother and improved form. For further a note on Dickens see [3.3 HN].

From Dombey and Son (1848), ch. 6

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown

⁸¹five years ... **Nelson**: Nelson was buried in St Paul's in 1806. This would imply that De Quincey wrote the essay in 1801, which seems unlikely.

up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel [3.14, n.61] towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcasses of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth; and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.

In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilization and improvement.

3.21 HENRY MAYHEW AND GEORGE CRUIKSHANK: THE GREAT EXHIBITION AND THE CRYSTAL PALACE

The Great Exhibition, held from May to October 1851, was the largest (if not the first) of World Fairs: an exhibition of industry, technology, and other fields of science, fine arts, and culture. The works of many nations were on display, but the primary motivation was to show the world the dominance of English invention and workmanship. The manager of the enterprise, which was under royal patronage, was Henry Cole (1808–1882), an enthusiastic promoter of English industrial design. The exhibition was housed in a vast glass structure, known as the Crystal Palace, in Hyde Park. Designed by Joseph Paxton (1803–1865), it was 1851 feet (564 metres) long and 454 feet (138 metres) wide, and built entirely of plate glass. It housed roughly 100,000 objects from all over the world.

Henry Mayhew (1812–1887) and George Cruikshank (1792–1878) in their novel The World's Show whimsically describe the adventures of the Sandboys family on their way from Buttermere to London to see the Exhibition, but the authors become more serious when they discuss the art of the English workmen and how the display of their craftsmanship means more to them than an increase in wages, since it both educates and ennobles them—by no means a rare sentiment in the mid-nineteenth century.

From The World's Show, 1851, or, The Adventures of Mr and Mrs Sandboys and Family, Who Came up to London to 'Enjoy Themselves,' and to See the Great Exhibition (1851), Chs. 12 and 13

The long-looked-for first of May, 1851, had at length arrived, and the morning was ushered in with merry peals from almost every steeple; afar off the drone of the thousand bells sounded like the boom of a huge gong—the signal, as it were, for the swarming of the Great Hive.

For miles round all wore a holiday aspect; the work-people with clean and smiling faces, and decked out in all the bright colours of their Sunday attire, were up and about shortly after daybreak, and, with their bundle of provisions on their arms, were soon seen streaming along the road, like so many living rays, converging towards the Crystal focus of the World.

It was the great Jubilee of art and industry, to which almost every corner of the earth had sent some token of its skill and brotherly feeling, and to which the inhabitants of the most distant climes had come, each to gaze at the science and handicraft of the other. Never was labour—whether mental or manual, whether the craft of the hand or of the brain—so much honoured—the first great recognition, perhaps, of the artistic qualities of the artisan [...]

The Great Exhibition is a higher boon to labour than a general advance of wages. An increase of pay might have brought the working men a larger share of creature comforts, but high feeding, unfortunately, is not high thinking nor high feeling.

Anything which tends to elevate the automatic operation of the mere labourer to the dignity of an artistic process, tends to confer on the working classes the greatest possible benefit.

Such appears to be the probable issue of the Great Exhibition!

Nor can we conceive a nobler pride than that which must be felt by working men when they behold arranged all around them the several trophies and triumphs of labour over the elements of the whole material universe. The sight cannot fail to inspire them with a sense of their position in the State, and to increase their self-respect in the same ratio as it must tend to increase the respect of all others for their vocation [...]

The road to the Crystal Palace had for a long time been an extraordinary scene. Extensive trains of wagons stretched far away, like an Eastern caravan, each waiting for its turn to be unloaded, monopolized one side of the carriageway. Omnibuses,⁸² with their roofs crowded with people, went dashing by, while carts laden with building materials crept leisurely along.

At almost every one of the public-houses some huge flag was flying from the upper windows, and around the doors were groups of men and soldiers either about to enter or depart. Along the edge of the footpath stood hawkers, shouting out the attractions of their wares—some had trays filled with bright silvery-looking medals of the Exhibition—others, pictures of it printed in gold on “gelatine cards”⁸³—while others had merely barrows of nuts, baskets of oranges or trucks of the omnipresent penny ginger-beer.

⁸² **omnibuses**: horse-drawn buses (from Latin *omnibus*, ‘for all’).

⁸³ **gelatine cards**: cheap cards, used as mementos, on which the outlines of the Crystal Palace were delineated in gold against the deep purple background of the card.

Groups of foreigners, their beards yellow with dust, walked along with their hands stuck in their pockets, so as to make their full pantaloons even fuller than ordinary; and as the omnibuses stopped to pick up or set down their passengers, parties of Germans or Frenchmen were heard jabbering loudly within. Along Rotten Row [3.43, n.169] endless troops of equestrians galloped noiselessly along on the soft loose ground at the rear of the Crystal Palace—in front of it an interminable line of carriages drawled slowly past, and while some of those within thrust their heads out at the windows, others leant back, so as to be able to see the height or length of the giant building.

3.22 JOHN RUSKIN: THE CRYSTAL PALACE

John Ruskin approves of the Great Exhibition as a national museum, but as an architectural historian he has very different ideas on the Crystal Palace from those of its designer Joseph Paxton and the general public. He declared in Præterita (1885) that it “possessed no more sublimity than a cucumber frame between two chimneys.” For a note on Ruskin see [3.11 HN].

From The Opening of the Crystal Palace Considered in Some of Its Relations to the Prospects of Art (1854)

It is indeed impossible to limit in imagination the beneficent results which may follow from the undertaking thus happily begun. For the first time in the history of the world, a national museum is formed in which a whole nation is interested; formed on a scale which permits the exhibition of monuments of art in unbroken symmetry, and of the productions of nature in unthwarted growth, formed under the auspices of science which can hardly err, and of wealth which can hardly be exhausted; and placed in the close neighbourhood of a metropolis overflowing with a population weary of labour yet thirsting for knowledge, where contemplation may be consistent with rest, and instruction with enjoyment. It is impossible, I repeat, to estimate the influence of such an institution on the minds of the working classes [...]

In Mr Laing's⁸⁴ speech at the opening of the Palace he declares that “*an entirely novel order of architecture*, producing, by means of unrivalled mechanical ingenuity the most marvellous and beautiful effects, sprang into existence to provide a building.” In these words the speaker is not merely giving utterance to his own feelings. He is expressing the popular view of the facts, nor that a view merely popular, but one which has been encouraged by nearly all the professors of art of our time.

⁸⁴**Mr Laing:** Samuel Laing (1812–1897) was a railway magnate and chairman of the Crystal Palace Company.

It is to this, then, that our Doric and Palladian pride is at last reduced! We have vaunted the divinity of the Greek ideal—we have plumed ourselves on the purity of our Italian taste—we have cast our whole souls into the proportions of pillars and the relations of orders—and behold the end! Our taste, thus exalted and disciplined, is dazzled by the lustre of a few rows of panes of glass; and the first principles of architectural sublimity, so far sought, are found all the while to have consisted merely in sparkling and in space.

Let it not be thought that I would depreciate (were it possible to depreciate) the mechanical ingenuity which has been displayed in the erection of the Crystal Palace, or that I underrate the effect which its vastness may continue to produce on the popular imagination. But mechanical ingenuity is *not* the essence either of painting or architecture, and largeness of dimension does not necessarily involve nobleness of design. There is assuredly as much ingenuity required to build a screw frigate, or a tubular bridge, as a hall of glass;—all these are works characteristic of the age; and all, in their several ways, deserve our highest admiration, but not admiration of the kind that is rendered to poetry or to art.

3.23 THOMAS DE QUINCEY: THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE, DESTROYED

The Theatre Royal in Drury Lane was burnt down in spectacular fashion in 1809. Thomas De Quincey (see [3.19 HN]) muses on the public reaction to public fires, giving this one as an example. De Quincey's essay "On Murder, Considered As One of the Fine Arts" was first published in Blackwood's Magazine in 1827. It comprised a fictional address in satirical vein to a Gentleman's Club and was so popular that he wrote a sequel and later a "Postscript," from which this excerpt is taken.

From "On Murder, Considered as One of the Fine Arts": "Postscript" (1854)

[...] But, on the other hand, the tendency to a critical or aesthetic valuation of fires and murders is universal. If you are summoned to the spectacle of a great fire, undoubtedly the first impulse is—to assist in putting it out. But that field of exertion is very limited, and is soon filled by regular professional people, trained and equipped for the service. In the case of a fire which is operating upon private property, pity for a neighbour's calamity checks us at first in treating the affair as a scenic spectacle. But perhaps the fire may be confined to public buildings. And in any case, after we have paid our tribute of regret to the affair, considered as a calamity, inevitably, and without restraint, we go on to consider it as a stage spectacle. Exclamations of—How grand! How magnificent! arise in a sort of rapture from the crowd. For instance, when Drury Lane was burned down in the first decennium [*decade*] of this century,

the falling in of the roof was signaled by a mimic suicide of the protecting Apollo that surmounted and crested the centre of this roof. The god was stationary with his lyre, and seemed looking down upon the fiery ruins that were so rapidly approaching him. Suddenly the supporting timbers below him gave way; a convulsive heave of the billowing flames seemed for a moment to raise the statue; and then, as if on some impulse of despair, the presiding deity appeared not to fall, but to throw himself into the fiery deluge, for he went down head foremost; and in all respects, the descent had the air of a voluntary act. What followed? From every one of the bridges over the river, and from other open areas which commanded the spectacle, there arose a sustained uproar of admiration and sympathy.

3.24 BENJAMIN DISRAELI: A VIEW OF POLITICIANS

In Benjamin Disraeli's novel the hero Charles Egremont has become interested in the Chartist movement (see [3.41], n.156) and how its cause can be advanced in Parliament. In contrast to Egremont's faith in the Parliamentary system, Lady St Julians and her 'fine lady' companions believe politicians lack integrity and are flattered to be asked to parties, after which they will vote according to their hostess's wishes. The imperious Lady St Julians' contemptuous view of politicians, and her belief that she and her circle can govern by "social influences" are expressed with comic forthrightness.

From Sybil, or, The Two Nations (1845), Vol. 1, Bk 4, ch. 3

[...] "People get into Parliament to get on; their aims are indefinite. If they have indulged in hallucinations about place before they enter the House, they are soon freed from such distempered fancies; they find they have no more talent than other people, and if they had, they learn that power, patronage, and pay are reserved for us and our friends. Well, then, like practical men, they look to some result, and they get it. They are asked out to dinner more than they would be; they move rigmarole resolutions at nonsensical public meetings; and they get invited with their women to assemblies at their leader's where they see stars and blue ribbons, and above all, us, whom they little think in appearing on such occasions, make the greatest conceivable sacrifice. Well, then, of course such people are entirely in one's power, if one only had time and inclination to notice them. You can do anything with them. Ask them to a ball, and they will give you their votes; invite them to dinner and if necessary they will rescind them; but cultivate them, remember their wives at assemblies and call their daughters, if possible, by their right names, and they will not only change their principles or desert their party for you, but subscribe their fortunes if necessary and lay down their lives in your service."

MIDDLE CLASS LIFE

3.25 ANTHONY TROLLOPE: PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

Anthony Trollope (1815–1882) began his career as a clerk in the Post Office and was steadily promoted, becoming an influential civil servant. He was an enormously prolific writer, producing (among other works) nearly 50 novels, the best known of which are the Barchester series (1855–1867) and the Palliser novels (1864–1880). In The Warden, the mild and unassuming Reverend Septimus Harding has been accused of malpractice as Warden of St Hiram’s Hospital in Barchester. Conscience-stricken, Mr Harding travels to London to see the Attorney-General, Sir Abraham Haphazard, to ask his advice, with a view to resigning his post. While awaiting an appointment with Haphazard, the ingenuous and unworldly Mr Harding eats in a distinctly working-class supper house and relaxes in a cigar divan, both of which are entirely new experiences for him.

From The Warden (1855), ch. 16

He found the house easily [...] He was rather daunted by the huge quantity of fish which he saw in the window. There were barrels of oysters, hecatombs⁸⁵ of lobsters, a few tremendous-looking crabs, and a tub full of pickled salmon; not, however, being aware of any connection between shellfish and iniquity,⁸⁶ he entered, and modestly asked a slatternly woman, who was picking oysters out of a great watery reservoir, whether he could have a mutton chop and a potato.

The woman looked somewhat surprised, but answered in the affirmative, and a slipshod girl ushered him into a long back room, filled with boxes for the accommodation of parties, in one of which he took his seat. In a more miserably forlorn place he could not have found himself: the room smelt of fish, and sawdust, and stale tobacco smoke, with a slight taint of escaped gas; everything was rough, and dirty, and disreputable. The cloth which they put before him was abominable: the knives and forks were bruised, and hacked, and filthy; and everything was impregnated with fish. He had one comfort, however: he was quite alone; there was no one there to look on his dismay; nor was it probable that anyone would come to do so. It was a London supper house. About one o’clock at night the place would be lively enough, but at the present time his seclusion was as deep as it had been in the abbey.

⁸⁵**hecatombs**: huge public sacrifices of animals.

⁸⁶**shellfish ... iniquity**: There was indeed a connection (apart from the Biblical prohibition on eating **shellfish** in Leviticus 11:10): such supper houses provided entertainment in the late evening for the working-classes, which included both **shellfish** and the supposed **iniquity** of commercial sex.

In about half an hour the untidy girl, not yet dressed for her evening labours, brought him his chop and potatoes [...]

His chop and potatoes, however, were eatable, and having got over as best he might the disgust created by the knives and forks, he contrived to swallow his dinner. He was not much disturbed: one young man, with pale face and watery fishlike eyes, wearing his hat ominously on one side, did come in and stare at him, and ask the girl, audibly enough, "Who that old cock was"; but the annoyance went no further, and the warden was left seated on his wooden bench in peace, endeavouring to distinguish the different scents arising from lobsters, oysters, and salmon. Unknowing as Mr Harding was in the ways of London, he felt that he had somehow selected an ineligible dining house, and that he had better leave it [...]

Mr Harding had not a much correcter notion of a cigar divan⁸⁷ than he had of a London dinner house, but he was desperately in want of rest, and went as he was directed. He thought he must have made some mistake when he found himself in a cigar shop, but the man behind the counter saw immediately that he was a stranger, and understood what he wanted. "One shilling, sir – thank ye, sir – cigar, sir? – ticket for coffee, sir – you'll only have to call the waiter. Up those stairs, if you please, sir. Better take the cigar, sir – you can always give it to a friend, you know. Well, sir, thank ye, sir – as you are so good, I'll smoke it myself." And so Mr Harding ascended to the divan, with his ticket for coffee, but minus the cigar.

The place seemed much more suitable to his requirements than the room in which he had dined: there was, to be sure, a strong smell of tobacco, to which he was not accustomed; but after the shellfish, the tobacco did not seem disagreeable. There were quantities of books, and long rows of sofas. What on earth could be more luxurious than a sofa, a book, and a cup of coffee? An old waiter came up to him, with a couple of magazines and an evening paper. Was ever anything so civil? Would he have a cup of coffee, or would he prefer sherbet?⁸⁸ Sherbet! Was he absolutely in an Eastern divan, with the slight addition of all the London periodicals? He had, however, an idea that sherbet should be drunk sitting cross-legged, and as he was not quite up to this, he ordered the coffee.

The coffee came, and was unexceptionable. Why, this divan was a paradise! The civil old waiter suggested to him a game of chess: though a chess player, he was not equal to this, so he declined, and putting up his weary legs on the sofa, leisurely sipped his coffee, and turned over the pages of his *Blackwood*.⁸⁹ He might have been so engaged for about an hour, for the old

⁸⁷ **cigar divan**: "a smoking-room furnished with lounges, in connection with a cigar-shop" (*OED*).

⁸⁸ **sherbet**: properly, a cooling Eastern drink with fruit and sugar; here, an effervescent drink made with sugar and bicarbonate of soda.

⁸⁹ **Blackwood**: *Blackwood's Magazine*, published monthly (1817–1980).

waiter enticed him to a second cup of coffee, when a musical clock began to play. Mr Harding then closed his magazine, keeping his place with his finger, and lay, listening with closed eyes to the clock [...]

He was fatigued, and slept soundly for some time.

3.26 ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: “ODE SUNG AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION” (1862)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) was appointed poet laureate in 1850 and thereafter published many poems on royal and public occasions, while maintaining his output of lyrical and narrative poems, notably those on Arthurian subjects. This Ode, however, was occasioned by the International Exhibition of 1861. It was written by request and designed to be sung by a choir of 4000 thousand voices. Albert, the Prince Consort, who had been the moving force behind the International Exhibition, died soon after it opened, and consequently Tennyson introduced a tribute to him in Stanza II. For a further note on Tennyson see [3.6].

I.

Uplift a thousand voices full and sweet,
In this wide hall with earth's inventions stored,
And praise the invisible universal Lord,
Who lets once more in peace the nations meet,
Where Science, Art, and Labour have outpoured
Their myriad horns of plenty at our feet.

II.

O silent father of our Kings to be
Mourned in this golden hour of jubilee,
For this, for all, we weep our thanks to thee!

III.

The world-compelling plan was thine, –
And, lo! the long laborious miles
Of Palace; lo! the giant aisles,
Rich in model and design;
Harvest-tool and husbandry,
Loom and wheel and enginery,
Secrets of the sullen mine,
Steel and gold, and corn and wine,
Fabric rough, or fairy-fine,
Sunny tokens of the Line,
Polar marvels, and a feast
Of wonder, out of West and East,
And shapes and hues of Art divine!
All of beauty, all of use,

That one fair planet can produce.
 Brought from under every star,
 Blown from over every main,
 And mixt, as life is mixt with pain,
 The works of peace with works of war.

IV.

Is the goal so far away?
 Far, how far no tongue can say,
 Let us dream our dream to-day.

V.

O ye, the wise who think, the wise who reign,
 From growing commerce loose her latest chain,
 And let the fair white-winged peacemaker fly
 To happy havens under all the sky,
 And mix the seasons and the golden hours,
 Till each man finds his own in all men's good,
 And all men work in noble brotherhood,
 Breaking their mailed fleets and armed towers,
 And ruling by obeying Nature's powers,
 And gathering all the fruits of peace and crowned with all her flowers.

3.27 CHARLES DICKENS: A LONDON HACKNEY-COACH

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) began his writing career as a journalist. From 1833 he was publishing short pieces, which he later called “Sketches,” in a variety of magazines and newspapers. Later he brought these together in one volume in 1839. All but one of the sixty or so sketches are set in London. (For more on Dickens and his work see HNs to [3.3, 3.8, 3.16, 3.20, 3.31, 3.32 and 3.40].)

Note that a hackney-coach was a horse-drawn carriage let out for hire, whereas a hackney-cab was a new-fangled precursor of the modern taxi.

From Sketches by Boz, 1836–1837

We maintain that hackney-coaches, properly so called, belong solely to the metropolis. We may be told, that there are hackney-coach stands in Edinburgh; and not to go quite so far for a contradiction to our position, we may be reminded that Liverpool, Manchester, “and other large towns” (as the Parliamentary phrase goes), have *their* hackney-coach stands. We readily concede to these places the possession of certain vehicles, which may look almost as dirty, and even go almost as slowly, as London hackney-coaches; but that they have the slightest claim to compete with the metropolis, either in point of stands, drivers, or cattle, we indignantly deny.

Take a regular, ponderous, rickety, London hackney-coach of the old school, and let any man have the boldness to assert, if he can, that he ever beheld any object on the face of the earth which at all resembles it, unless, indeed, it were another hackney-coach of the same date. We have recently observed on certain stands, and we say it with deep regret, rather dapper green chariots, and coaches of polished yellow, with four wheels of the same colour as the coach, whereas it is perfectly notorious to every one who has studied the subject, that every wheel ought to be of a different colour, and a different size. These are innovations, and, like other miscalled improvements, awful signs of the restlessness of the public mind, and the little respect paid to our time-honoured institutions. Why should hackney-coaches be clean? Our ancestors found them dirty, and left them so. Why should we, with a feverish wish to “keep moving,” desire to roll along at the rate of six miles an hour, while they were content to rumble over the stones at four? These are solemn considerations. Hackney-coaches are part and parcel of the law of the land; they were settled by the Legislature; plated and numbered by the wisdom of Parliament.

Then why have they been swamped by cabs and omnibuses [*horse-drawn buses*]? Or why should people be allowed to ride quickly for eight-pence a mile, after Parliament had come to the solemn decision that they should pay a shilling a mile for riding slowly? We pause for a reply;—and, having no chance of getting one, begin a fresh paragraph.

Our acquaintance with hackney-coach stands is of long standing. We are a walking book of fares, feeling ourselves, half bound, as it were, to be always in the right on contested points. We know all the regular watermen within three miles of Covent-garden by sight, and should be almost tempted to believe that all the hackney-coach horses in that district knew us by sight too, if one-half of them were not blind. We take great interest in hackney-coaches, but we seldom drive, having a knack of turning ourselves over when we attempt to do so. We are as great friends to horses, hackney-coach and otherwise, as the renowned Mr. Martin⁹⁰ of costermonger notoriety, and yet we never ride. We keep no horse, but a clothes-horse; enjoy no saddle so much as a saddle of mutton; and, following our own inclinations, have never followed the hounds. Leaving these fleeter means of getting over the ground, or of depositing oneself upon it, to those who like them, by hackney-coach stands we take our stand.

There is a hackney-coach stand under the very window at which we are writing; there is only one coach on it now, but it is a fair specimen of the class of vehicles to which we have alluded—a great, lumbering, square concern of a dingy yellow colour (like a bilious brunette), with very small glasses, but very large frames; the panels are ornamented with a faded coat of arms,

⁹⁰Mr. Martin: possibly the Mr. Martin of Martin versus Solomons, in John Wight, *More Mornings at Bow Street*, London: James Robins, 1827.

in shape something like a dissected bat, the axletree is red, and the majority of the wheels are green. The box is partially covered by an old great-coat, with a multiplicity of capes, and some extraordinary-looking clothes; and the straw, with which the canvas cushion is stuffed, is sticking up in several places, as if in rivalry of the hay, which is peeping through the chinks in the boot. The horses, with drooping heads, and each with a mane and tail as scanty and straggling as those of a worn-out rocking-horse, are standing patiently on some damp straw, occasionally wincing, and rattling the harness; and now and then, one of them lifts his mouth to the ear of his companion, as if he were saying, in a whisper, that he should like to assassinate the coachman. The coachman himself is in the watering-house; and the waterman, with his hands forced into his pockets as far as they can possibly go, is dancing the "double shuffle," in front of the pump, to keep his feet warm.

The servant-girl, with the pink ribbons, at No. 5, opposite, suddenly opens the street-door, and four small children forthwith rush out, and scream "Coach!" with all their might and main. The waterman darts from the pump, seizes the horses by their respective bridles, and drags them, and the coach too, round to the house, shouting all the time for the coachman at the very top, or rather very bottom of his voice, for it is a deep bass growl. A response is heard from the tap-room; the coachman, in his wooden-soled shoes, makes the street echo again as he runs across it; and then there is such a struggling, and backing, and grating of the kennel, to get the coach-door opposite the house-door, that the children are in perfect ecstasies of delight. What a commotion! The old lady, who has been stopping there for the last month, is going back to the country. Out comes box after box, and one side of the vehicle is filled with luggage in no time; the children get into everybody's way, and the youngest, who has upset himself in his attempts to carry an umbrella, is borne off wounded and kicking. The youngsters disappear, and a short pause ensues, during which the old lady is, no doubt, kissing them all round in the back parlour. She appears at last, followed by her married daughter, all the children, and both the servants, who, with the joint assistance of the coachman and waterman, manage to get her safely into the coach. A cloak is handed in, and a little basket, which we could almost swear contains a small black bottle, and a paper of sandwiches. Up go the steps, bang goes the door, "Golden-cross, Charing-cross, Tom," says the waterman; "Good-bye, grandma," cry the children, off jingles the coach at the rate of three miles an hour, and the mamma and children retire into the house, with the exception of one little villain, who runs up the street at the top of his speed, pursued by the servant; not ill-pleased to have such an opportunity of displaying her attractions. She brings him back, and, after casting two or three gracious glances across the way, which are either intended for us or the potboy (we are not quite certain which), shuts the door, and the hackney-coach stand is again at a standstill.

We have been frequently amused with the intense delight with which ‘a servant of all work,’ who is sent for a coach, deposits herself inside; and the unspeakable gratification which boys, who have been despatched on a similar errand, appear to derive from mounting the box. But we never recollect to have been more amused with a hackney-coach party, than one we saw early the other morning in Tottenham-court-road. It was a wedding-party, and emerged from one of the inferior streets near Fitzroy-square.⁹¹ There were the bride, with a thin white dress, and a great red face; and the bridesmaid, a little, dumpy, good-humoured young woman, dressed, of course, in the same appropriate costume; and the bridegroom and his chosen friend, in blue coats, yellow waist-coats, white trousers, and Berlin gloves⁹² to match. They stopped at the corner of the street, and called a coach with an air of indescribable dignity. The moment they were in, the bridesmaid threw a red shawl, which she had, no doubt, brought on purpose, negligently over the number on the door, evidently to delude pedestrians into the belief that the hackney-coach was a private carriage; and away they went, perfectly satisfied that the imposition was successful, and quite unconscious that there was a great staring number stuck up behind, on a plate as large as a schoolboy’s slate. A shilling a mile!—the ride was worth five, at least, to them.

What an interesting book a hackney-coach might produce, if it could carry as much in its head as it does in its body! The autobiography of a broken-down hackney-coach, would surely be as amusing as the autobiography of a broken-down hackneyed dramatist; and it might tell as much of its travels *with* the pole, as others have of their expeditions *to* it. How many stories might be related of the different people it had conveyed on matters of business or profit—pleasure or pain! And how many melancholy tales of the same people at different periods! The country-girl—the showy, over-dressed woman—the drunken prostitute! The raw apprentice—the dissipated spendthrift—the thief!

Talk of cabs! Cabs are all very well in cases of expedition, when it’s a matter of neck or nothing, life or death, your temporary home or your long one. But, besides a cab’s lacking that gravity of deportment which so peculiarly distinguishes a hackney-coach, let it never be forgotten that a cab is a thing of yesterday, and that he never was anything better. A hackney-cab has always been a hackney-cab, from his first entry into life; whereas a hackney-coach is a remnant of past gentility, a victim to fashion, a hanger-on of an old English family, wearing their arms, and, in days of yore, escorted by men wearing their livery, stripped of his finery, and thrown upon the world, like a once-smart footman when he is no longer sufficiently juvenile for his office, progressing lower and lower in the scale of four-wheeled degradation, until at last it comes to—*a stand!*

⁹¹**Fitzroy-square:** Georgian Square located in Fitzrovia.

⁹²**Berlin gloves:** knitted gloves of fine dyed ‘Berlin’ wool.

3.28 CHARLES LAMB: “THE OLD BENCHERS OF THE INNER TEMPLE”

Charles Lamb (1775–1834) was born in London. His father was a clerk to Samuel Salt, a lawyer in Crown Office Row in the Inner Temple, and Charles was brought up there. He was educated at Christ’s Hospital, and afterwards worked at East India House until 1825. He wrote poems and plays, and, with his sister Mary, Tales from Shakespeare (1807), adaptations to make Shakespeare accessible to the young. His most enduring works, however, are his two collections of essays, Essays of Elia, published in 1823 and 1833, ‘Elia’ being his authorial pseudonym.

From Essays of Elia, 2nd Series, 1833

I was born, and passed the first seven years of my life, in the Temple.⁹³ Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said—for in those young years, what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places?—These are of my oldest recollections. I repeat, to this day, no verses to myself more frequently, or with kindlier emotion, than those of Spenser,⁹⁴ where he speaks of this spot.

There when they came, whereas those bricky towers,
The which on Themmes brode aged back doth ride,
Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers,
There whylome wont the Templer knights to bide,
Till they decayd through pride.

Indeed, it is the most elegant spot in the metropolis. What a transition for a countryman visiting London for the first time—the passing from the crowded Strand or Fleet-street, by unexpected avenues, into its magnificent ample squares, its classic green recesses! What a cheerful, liberal look hath that portion of it, which, from three sides, overlooks the greater garden: that goodly pile of building strong, albeit of Paper hight,⁹⁵ confronting, with massy contrast, the lighter, older, more fantastically shrouded one, named of Harcourt, with the cheerful Crown-office Row (place of my kindly engendure), right opposite the stately stream, which washes the garden-foot with

⁹³**Temple:** home of the four Inns of Court, close to the Royal Court of Justice. The Inns of Court are the professional associations for barristers in England and Wales, providing accommodation and chambers, and (before the rise of tertiary legal studies in the C18th) the main site for legal training.

⁹⁴**Spenser:** see [1.14]. These lines are from “Prothalamion” 132–3 (1596; Spenser 1966, 602).

⁹⁵**Of Paper hight:** called ‘Paper.’ Paper Buildings are a set of chambers located in the Inner Temple, built in 1609 from timber, lath and plaster, a construction method known as ‘paperwork’.

her yet scarcely trade-polluted waters, and seems but just weaned from her Twickenham Naiades! a man would give something to have been born in such places. What a collegiate aspect has that fine Elizabethan hall, where the fountain plays, which I have made to rise and fall, how many times! to the astonishment of the young urchins, my contemporaries, who, not being able to guess at its recondite machinery, were almost tempted to hail the wondrous work as magic! What an antique air had the now almost effaced sun-dials, with their moral inscriptions, seeming coevals with that Time which they measured, and to take their revelations of its flight immediately from heaven, holding correspondence with the fountain of light! How would the dark line steal imperceptibly on, watched by the eye of childhood, eager to detect its movement, never caught, nice as an evanescent cloud—or the first arrests of sleep!

Ah! yet doth beauty like a dial-hand
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived⁹⁶

What a dead thing is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dulness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure, and silent heart-language of the old dial! It stood as the garden god of Christian gardens. Why is it almost every where vanished? If its business-use be superseded by more elaborate inventions, its moral uses, its beauty, might have pleaded for its continuance. It spoke of moderate labours, of pleasures not protracted after sun-set, of temperance, and good-hours. It was the primitive clock, the horologe of the first world. Adam could scarce have missed it in Paradise. It was the measure appropriate for sweet plants and flowers to spring by, for the birds to apportion their silver warblings by, for flocks to pasture and be led to fold by. The shepherd “carved it out quaintly in the sun”; and, turning philosopher by the very occupation, provided it with mottos more touching than tombstones. It was a pretty device of the gardener, recorded by Marvell, who, in the days of artificial gardening, made a dial out of herbs and flowers.

Lamb here includes Andrew Marvell's poem "The Garden," then returns to his account of the Temple grounds.

The artificial fountains of the metropolis are, in like manner, fast vanishing. Most of them are dried up, or bricked over. Yet, where one is left, as in that little green nook behind the South Sea House, what a freshness it gives to the dreary pile! Four little winged marble boys used to play their virgin fancies, spouting out ever fresh streams from their innocent-wanton lips, in the square of Lincoln's-inn, when I was no bigger than they were figured. They are gone, and the spring choked up. The fashion, they tell me, is gone by,

⁹⁶Ah! yet ... perceived!: from Shakespeare's Sonnet 104.

and these things are esteemed childish. Why not then gratify children, by letting them stand? Lawyers, I suppose, were children once. They are awakening images to them at least. Why must every thing smack of man, and mannish? Is the world grown up? Is childhood dead? Or is there not in the bosoms of the wisest and the best some of the child's heart left, to respond to its earliest enchantments? The figures were grotesque. Are the stiff-wigged living figures, that still flutter and chatter about that area, less gothic in appearance? or is the splutter of their hot rhetoric one half so refreshing and innocent as the little cool playful streams those exploded cherubs uttered?

They have lately gothicised the entrance to the Inner Temple-hall, and the library front, to assimilate them, I suppose, to the body of the hall, which they do not at all resemble. What is become of the winged horse that stood over the former? a stately arms! and who has removed those frescoes of the Virtues, which Italianized the end of the Paper-buildings?—my first hint of allegory! They must account to me for these things, which I miss so greatly.

The terrace is, indeed, left, which we used to call the parade; but the traces are passed away of the footsteps which made its pavement awful! It is become common and profane. The old benchers had it almost sacred to themselves, in the forepart of the day at least. They might not be sided or jostled. Their air and dress asserted the parade. You left wide spaces betwixt you, when you passed them. We walk on even terms with their successors. The roguish eye of J—ll, ever ready to be delivered of a jest, almost invites a stranger to vie a repartee with it.

Lamb proceeds to describe residents of the Temple who figured large in his youth – Thomas Coventry, Samuel Salt⁹⁷ and Lovel, the latter a picture of Lamb's father. Lamb then concludes:

I have done injustice to the soft shade of Samuel Salt. See what it is to trust to imperfect memory, and the erring notices of childhood! Yet I protest I always thought that he had been a bachelor! This gentleman, R. N. informs me, married young, and losing his lady in child-bed, within the first year of their union, fell into a deep melancholy, from the effects of which, probably, he never thoroughly recovered. In what a new light does this place his rejection (O call it by a gentler name!) of mild Susan P—, unravelling into beauty certain peculiarities of this very shy and retiring character—Henceforth let no one receive the narratives of Elia for true records! They are, in truth, but shadows of fact—verisimilitudes, not verities—or sitting but upon the remote edges and outskirts of history. He is no such honest chronicler as R. N., and would have done better perhaps to have consulted that gentleman, before he sent these incondite⁹⁸ reminiscences to press. But the worthy

⁹⁷Samuel Salt: Salt was Lamb's father's employer.

⁹⁸incondite: poorly constructed or composed.

sub-treasurer—who respects his old and his new masters—would but have been puzzled at the indecorous liberties of Elia. The good man wots not, per-adventure, of the license which Magazines have arrived at in this plain-speaking age, or hardly dreams of their existence beyond the Gentleman's⁹⁹—his furthest monthly excursions in this nature having been long confined to the holy ground of honest Urban's obituary. May it be long before his own name shall help to swell those columns of unenvied flattery!—Meantime, O ye New Benchers of the Inner Temple, cherish him kindly, for he is himself the kindest of human creatures. Should infirmities over-take him—he is yet in green and vigorous senility—make allowances for them, remembering that “ye yourselves are old”. So may the Winged Horse, our ancient badge and cognisance, still flourish, so may future Hookers¹⁰⁰ and Seldens¹⁰¹ illustrate your church and chambers! so may the sparrows, in default of more melodious quiristers, [*choristers*] unpoisoned hop about your walks! so may the fresh-coloured and cleanly nursery maid, who, by leave, airs her playful charge in your stately gardens, drop her prettiest blushing curtsy as ye pass, reductive of juvenescent emotion! so may the youngers of this generation eye you, pacing your stately terrace, with the same superstitious veneration, with which the child Elia gazed on the Old Worthies that solemnized the parade before ye!

3.29 WILKIE COLLINS: A CHILD'S SUNDAY IN LONDON

William Wilkie Collins (1824–1896) was born and lived for most of his life in Marylebone in London, the son of a painter. He was educated there and then travelled with his family in Italy, 1836–1838. He published a biography of his father in 1848 but thereafter wrote fiction, his most famous works being The Woman in White (1860) and The Moonstone (1868). For several years he was a contributor to Dickens's magazine Household Words, where he published his third novel, Hide and Seek, in 1854. (See [3.8] for the extract from Little Dorrit, which this passage clearly influenced.)

From Hide and Seek (1854, revised 1857), ch. 1.

At a quarter to one o'clock, on a wet Sunday afternoon, in November 1837¹⁰² Samuel Snoxell, page to Mr. Zachary Thorpe, of Baregrove [*Belgrave*] Square, London, left the area¹⁰³ gate with three umbrellas under

⁹⁹Gentleman's: the Gentleman's Magazine; published monthly from 1733 to 1922.

¹⁰⁰Hookers: Richard Hooker, 1554–1600, author of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

¹⁰¹Seldens: John Selden, 1584–1654, distinguished English jurist.

¹⁰²November 1837: In 1836 Collins's friend Dickens under the pseudonym Timothy Sparks had fiercely attacked the advocates of stricter Sabbath Day Laws in his pamphlet *Sunday Under Three Heads*.

¹⁰³area: “a sunken court giving access to the basement of a house, separated from the pavement by railings, with a flight of steps providing access” (*OED*).

his arm, to meet his master and mistress at the church door, on the conclusion of morning service. Snoxell had been specially directed by the housemaid to distribute his three umbrellas in the following manner: the new silk umbrella was to be given to Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe; the old silk umbrella was to be handed to Mr. Goodworth, Mrs. Thorpe's father; and the heavy gingham was to be kept by Snoxell himself, for the special protection of "Master Zack", aged six years, and the only child of Mr. Thorpe. Furnished with these instructions, the page set forth on his way to the church.

The morning had been fine for November; but before midday the clouds had gathered, the rain had begun, and the inveterate fog of the season had closed dingily over the wet streets, far and near. The garden in the middle of Baregrove Square—with its close-cut turf, its vacant beds, its bran-new rustic seats, its withered young trees that had not yet grown as high as the railings around them—seemed to be absolutely rotting away in yellow mist and softly-steady rain, and was deserted even by the cats. All blinds were drawn down for the most part over all windows; what light came from the sky came like light seen through dusty glass; the grim brown hue of the brick houses looked more dirtily mournful than ever; the smoke from the chimney-pots was lost mysteriously in deepening superincumbent fog; the muddy gutters gurgled; the heavy rain-drops dripped into empty areas audibly. No object great or small, no out-of-door litter whatever appeared anywhere, to break the dismal uniformity of line and substance in the perspective of the square. No living being moved over the watery pavement, save the solitary Snoxell. He plodded on into a Crescent, and still the awful Sunday solitude spread grimly humid all around him. He next entered a street with some closed shops in it; and here, at last, some consoling signs of human life attracted his attention. He now saw the crossing-sweeper [see **Introduction 3**, n.8] of the district (off duty till church came out) smoking a pipe under the covered way that led to a mews. He detected, through half closed shutters, a chemist's apprentice yawning over a large book. He passed a navigator, an ostler, and two costermongers wandering wearily backwards and forwards before a closed public-house door.¹⁰⁴ He heard the heavy "clop clop" of thickly-booted feet advancing behind him, and a stern voice growling, "Now then! be off with you, or you'll get locked up!"—and, looking round, saw an orange-girl,¹⁰⁵ guilty of having obstructed an empty pavement by sitting on the curb-stone, driven along before a policeman,¹⁰⁶ who was followed

¹⁰⁴**crossing-sweeper ... public-house door**: the **crossing sweeper** will work on the Sabbath when church-goers emerge and expect not to get their shoes dirty in the street; the **chemist** has gone to church and left his apprentice to mind the shop in case of emergency; the **navigator** ('navvy'), **ostler** and **costermongers** are not at work on a Sunday, but cannot drink at the **public house** because it is closed during church attendance hours.

¹⁰⁵**orange-girl**: breaking the law by attempting to sell fruit on the Sabbath; possibly suspected too of soliciting for sex-work.

¹⁰⁶**policeman**: the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 established by Sir Robert Peel introduced police ('Bobbies' or 'Peelers') to the streets of London—hence still a novelty in 1837.

admiringly by a ragged boy gnawing a piece of orange-peel. Having delayed a moment to watch this Sunday procession of three with melancholy curiosity as it moved by him, Snoxell was about to turn the corner of a street which led directly to the church, when a shrill series of cries in a child's voice struck on his ear and stopped his progress immediately.

The page stood stock-still in astonishment for an instant—then pulled the new silk umbrella from under his arm, and turned the corner in a violent hurry. His suspicions had not deceived him. There was Mr. Thorpe himself walking sternly homeward through the rain, before church was over. He led by the hand "Master Zack," who was trotting along under protest, with his hat half off his head, hanging as far back from his father's side as he possibly could, and howling all the time at the utmost pitch of a very powerful pair of lungs.

Mr. Thorpe stopped as he passed the page, and snatched the umbrella out of Snoxell's hand, with unaccustomed impetuosity; said sharply, "Go to your mistress, go on to the church"; and then resumed his road home, dragging his son after him faster than ever.

"Snoxy! Snoxy!" screamed Master Zack, turning round towards the page, so that he tripped himself up and fell against his father's legs at every third step; "I've been a naughty boy at church!"

"Ah! you look like it, you do," muttered Snoxell to himself sarcastically, as he went on. With that expression of opinion, the page approached the church portico, and waited sulkily among his fellow servants and their umbrellas for the congregation to come out.

When Mr. Goodworth and Mrs. Thorpe left the church, the old gentleman, regardless of appearances, seized eagerly on the despised gingham umbrella, because it was the largest he could get, and took his daughter home under it in triumph. Mrs. Thorpe was very silent, and sighed dolefully once or twice, when her father's attention wandered from her to the people passing along the street.

"You're fretting about Zack," said the old gentleman, looking round suddenly at his daughter. "Never mind! leave it to me. I'll undertake to beg him off this time."

"It's very disheartening and shocking to find him behaving so," said Mrs. Thorpe, "after the careful way we've brought him up in, too!"

"Nonsense, my love! No, I don't mean that – I beg your pardon. But who can be surprised that a child of six years old should be tired of a sermon forty minutes long by my watch? I was tired of it myself I know, though I wasn't candid enough to show it as the boy did. There! there! we won't begin to argue: I'll beg Zack off this time, and we'll say no more about it."

Mr. Goodworth's announcement of his benevolent intentions towards Zack seemed to have very little effect on Mrs. Thorpe; but she said nothing on that subject or any other during the rest of the dreary walk home, through rain, fog, and mud, to Baregrove Square.

Rooms have their mysterious peculiarities of physiognomy as well as men. There are plenty of rooms, all of much the same size, all furnished in much the same manner, which, nevertheless, differ completely in expression (if such a term may be allowed) one from the other; reflecting the various characters of their inhabitants by such fine varieties of effect in the furniture-features generally common to all, as are often, like the infinitesimal varieties of eyes, noses, and mouths, too intricately minute to be traceable. Now, the parlour of Mr. Thorpe's house was neat, clean, comfortably and sensibly furnished. It was of the average size. It had the usual side-board, dining-table, looking-glass, scroll fender, marble chimney-piece with a clock on it, carpet with a drugget¹⁰⁷ over it, and wire window-blinds to keep people from looking in, characteristic of all respectable London parlours of the middle class. And yet it was an inveterately severe-looking room—a room that seemed as if it had never been convivial, never uproarious, never anything but sternly comfortable and serenely dull—a room which appeared to be as unconscious of acts of mercy, and easy unreasoning over-affectionate forgiveness to offenders of any kind—juvenile or otherwise—as if it had been a cell in Newgate [2.29 HN], or a private torturing chamber in the Inquisition. Perhaps Mr. Goodworth felt thus affected by the parlour (especially in November weather) as soon as he entered it—for, although he had promised to beg Zack off, although Mr. Thorpe was sitting alone by the table and accessible to petitions, with a book in his hand, the old gentleman hesitated uneasily for a minute or two, and suffered his daughter to speak first.

“Where is Zack?” asked Mrs. Thorpe, glancing quickly and nervously all round her.

“He is locked up in my dressing-room,” answered her husband without taking his eyes off the book.

“In your dressing-room!” echoed Mrs. Thorpe, looking as startled and horrified as if she had received a blow instead of an answer; “in your dressing-room! Good heavens, Zachary! how do you know the child hasn't got at your razors?”

“They are locked up,” rejoined Mr. Thorpe, with the mildest reproof in his voice, and the mournfullest self-possession in his manner. “I took care before I left the boy, that he should get at nothing which could do him any injury. He is locked up, and will remain locked up, because —”

“I say, Thorpe! won't you let him off this time?” interrupted Mr. Goodworth, boldly plunging head foremost, with his petition for mercy, into the conversation.

“If you had allowed me to proceed, sir,” said Mr. Thorpe, who always called his father-in-law ‘Sir,’ “I should have simply remarked that, after having enlarged to my son (in such terms, you will observe, as I thought best fitted to his comprehension) on the disgrace to his parents and himself of his

¹⁰⁷ **drugget**: a coarse woollen cloth used as a floor covering.

behaviour this morning, I set him as a task three verses to learn out of the ‘Select Bible Texts for Children’; choosing the verses which seemed most likely, if I may trust my own judgment on the point, to impress on him what his behaviour ought to be for the future in church. He flatly refused to learn what I told him. It was, of course, quite impossible to allow my authority to be set at defiance by my own child (whose disobedient disposition has always, God knows, been a source of constant trouble and anxiety to me); so I locked him up, and locked up he will remain until he has obeyed me. My dear”, (turning to his wife and handing her a key), “I have no objection, if you wish, to your going and trying what *you* can do towards overcoming the obstinacy of this unhappy child.”

3.30 ELIZABETH GASKELL: HASTE TO THE WEDDING

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) was the daughter of a Unitarian minister. After her mother’s death she was brought up by an aunt in Knutsford, Cheshire, which became the setting for two of her most distinguished novels, Cranford (1853) and Wives and Novels (1866). In 1832 she married William Gaskell, minister of the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel in Manchester. She began her first novel Mary Barton (1848) as a distraction after the death of her infant son. After this she was an active novelist and short-story writer. North and South, which was first serialised in Dickens’s Household Words, was much more concerned with life in the industrialised North of England than with the rural South, but its opening picture of upper-middle-class life in London establishes what the novel’s heroine, Margaret Hale, will give up when she goes to live in the North.

From North and South (1854–1855), ch. 1

“Edith!” said Margaret, gently, “Edith!”

But, as Margaret half suspected, Edith had fallen asleep. She lay curled up on the sofa in the back drawing-room in Harley Street,¹⁰⁸ looking very lovely in her white muslin and blue ribbons. If Titania¹⁰⁹ had ever been dressed in white muslin and blue ribbons, and had fallen asleep on a crimson damask sofa in a back drawing-room, Edith might have been taken for her. Margaret was struck afresh by her cousin’s beauty. They had grown up together from childhood, and all along Edith had been remarked upon by every one, except Margaret, for her prettiness; but Margaret had never thought about it until the last few days, when the prospect of soon losing her companion seemed to give force to every sweet quality and charm which Edith possessed. They had

¹⁰⁸**Harley Street:** well-to-do residential street in Marylebone; today many eminent medical specialists have their practices there.

¹⁰⁹**Titania:** Queen of the Fairies in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

been talking about wedding dresses, and wedding ceremonies; and Captain Lennox, and what he had told Edith about her future life at Corfu,¹¹⁰ where his regiment was stationed; and the difficulty of keeping a piano in good tune (a difficulty which Edith seemed to consider as one of the most formidable that could befall her in her married life), and what gowns she should want in the visits to Scotland, which would immediately succeed her marriage; but the whispered tone had latterly become more drowsy; and Margaret, after a pause of a few minutes, found, as she fancied, that in spite of the buzz in the next room, Edith had rolled herself up into a soft ball of muslin and ribbon, and silken curls, and gone off into a peaceful little after-dinner nap.

Margaret had been on the point of telling her cousin of some of the plans and visions which she entertained as to her future life in the country parsonage, where her father and mother lived; and where her bright holidays had always been passed, though for the last ten years her aunt Shaw's house had been considered as her home. But in default of a listener, she had to brood over the change in her life silently as heretofore. It was a happy brooding, although tinged with regret at being separated for an indefinite time from her gentle aunt and dear cousin. As she thought of the delight of filling the important post of only daughter in Helstone parsonage, pieces of the conversation out of the next room came upon her ears. Her aunt Shaw was talking to the five or six ladies who had been dining there, and whose husbands were still in the dining-room. They were the familiar acquaintances of the house; neighbours whom Mrs. Shaw called friends, because she happened to dine with them more frequently than with any other people, and because if she or Edith wanted anything from them, or they from her, they did not scruple to make a call at each other's houses before luncheon. These ladies and their husbands were invited, in their capacity of friends, to eat a farewell dinner in honour of Edith's approaching marriage. Edith had rather objected to this arrangement, for Captain Lennox was expected to arrive by a late train this very evening; but, although she was a spoiled child, she was too careless and idle to have a very strong will of her own, and gave way when she found that her mother had absolutely ordered those extra delicacies of the season which are always supposed to be efficacious against immoderate grief at farewell dinners. She contented herself by leaning back in her chair, merely playing with the food on her plate, and looking grave and absent; while all around her were enjoying the *mots* [*witticisms*] of Mr. Grey, the gentleman who always took the bottom of the table at Mrs. Shaw's dinner parties, and asked Edith to give them some music in the drawing-room. Mr. Grey was particularly agreeable over this farewell dinner, and the gentlemen staid down stairs longer than usual. It was very well they did—to judge from the fragments of conversation which Margaret overheard.

¹¹⁰**Corfu:** one of the Ionian Islands, a British Protectorate from 1815, with a naval base; ceded to Greece in 1864.

“I suffered too much myself; not that I was not extremely happy with the poor dear General, but still disparity of age is a drawback; one that I was resolved Edith should not have to encounter. Of course, without any maternal partiality, I foresaw that the dear child was likely to marry early; indeed, I had often said that I was sure she would be married before she was nineteen. I had quite a prophetic feeling when Captain Lennox”—and here the voice dropped into a whisper, but Margaret could easily supply the blank. The course of true love in Edith’s case had run remarkably smooth. Mrs. Shaw had given way to the presentiment, as she expressed it; and had rather urged on the marriage, although it was below the expectations which many of Edith’s acquaintances had formed for her, a young and pretty heiress. But Mrs. Shaw said that her only child should marry for love,—and sighed emphatically, as if love had not been her motive for marrying the General. Mrs. Shaw enjoyed the romance of the present engagement rather more than her daughter. Not but that Edith was very thoroughly and properly in love; still she would certainly have preferred a good house in Belgravia,¹¹¹ to all the picturesqueness of the life which Captain Lennox described at Corfu. The very parts which made Margaret glow as she listened, Edith pretended to shiver and shudder at; partly for the pleasure she had in being coaxed out of her dislike by her fond lover, and partly because anything of a gipsy or makeshift life was really distasteful to her. Yet had any one come with a fine house, and a fine estate, and a fine title to boot, Edith would still have clung to Captain Lennox while the temptation lasted; when it was over, it is possible she might have had little qualms of ill-concealed regret that Captain Lennox could not have united in his person everything that was desirable. In this she was but her mother’s child; who, after deliberately marrying General Shaw with no warmer feeling than respect for his character and establishment, was constantly, though quietly, bemoaning her hard lot in being united to one whom she could not love.

“I have spared no expense in her trousseau,” were the next words Margaret heard.

“She has all the beautiful Indian shawls and scarfs the General gave to me, but which I shall never wear again.”

“She is a lucky girl,” replied another voice, which Margaret knew to be that of Mrs. Gibson, a lady who was taking a double interest in the conversation, from the fact of one of her daughters having been married within the last few weeks.

“Helen had set her heart upon an Indian shawl, but really when I found what an extravagant price was asked, I was obliged to refuse her. She will be quite envious when she hears of Edith having Indian shawls. What kind are they? Delhi? with the lovely little borders?”

¹¹¹ **Belgravia:** affluent district in West London, with many elegant residences.

Margaret heard her aunt's voice again, but this time it was as if she had raised herself up from her half-recumbent position, and were looking into the more dimly lighted back drawing-room. "Edith! Edith!" cried she; and then she sank as if wearied by the exertion. Margaret stepped forward.

"Edith is asleep, Aunt Shaw. Is it anything I can do?"

All the ladies said "Poor child!" on receiving this distressing intelligence about Edith; and the minute lap-dog in Mrs. Shaw's arms began to bark, as if excited by the burst of pity.

"Hush, Tiny! you naughty little girl! you will waken your mistress. It was only to ask Edith if she would tell Newton to bring down her shawls: perhaps you would go, Margaret dear?"

Margaret went up into the old nursery at the very top of the house, where Newton was busy getting up some laces which were required for the wedding. While Newton went (not without a muttered grumbling) to undo the shawls, which had already been exhibited four or five times that day, Margaret looked round upon the nursery; the first room in that house with which she had become familiar nine years ago, when she was brought, all untamed from the forest, to share the home, the play, and the lessons of her cousin Edith. She remembered the dark, dim look of the London nursery, presided over by an austere and ceremonious nurse, who was terribly particular about clean hands and torn frocks. She recollected the first tea up there—separate from her father and aunt, who were dining somewhere down below an infinite depth of stairs; for unless she were up in the sky (the child thought), they must be deep down in the bowels of the earth. At home—before she came to live in Harley Street—her mother's dressing-room had been her nursery; and, as they kept early hours in the country parsonage, Margaret had always had her meals with her father and mother. Oh! well did the tall stately girl of eighteen remember the tears shed with such wild passion of grief by the little girl of nine, as she hid her face under the bed-clothes, in that first night; and how she was bidden not to cry by the nurse, because it would disturb Miss Edith; and how she had cried as bitterly, but more quietly, till her newly-seen, grand, pretty aunt had come softly upstairs with Mr. Hale to show him his little sleeping daughter. Then the little Margaret had hushed her sobs, and tried to lie quiet as if asleep, for fear of making her father unhappy by her grief, which she dared not express before her aunt, and which she rather thought it was wrong to feel at all after the long hoping, and planning, and contriving they had gone through at home, before her wardrobe could be arranged so as to suit her grander circumstances, and before papa could leave his parish to come up to London, even for a few days.

Now she had got to love the old nursery, though it was but a dismantled place; and she looked all round, with a kind of cat-like regret, at the idea of leaving it for ever in three days.

“Ah Newton!” said she, “I think we shall all be sorry to leave this dear old room.”

“Indeed, miss, I shan’t for one. My eyes are not so good as they were, and the light here is so bad that I can’t see to mend laces except just at the window, where there’s always a shocking draught – enough to give one one’s death of cold.”

“Well, I dare say you will have both good light and plenty of warmth at Naples. You must keep as much of your darning as you can till then. Thank you, Newton, I can take them down – you’re busy.”

So Margaret went down laden with shawls, and snuffing up their spicy Eastern smell.

3.31 CHARLES DICKENS: DINNER IN HARLEY STREET

Dickens’s Little Dorrit (1857) satirises the excessive bureaucracy of government, the injustice of the legal system, the institution of debtors’ prisons (from which ironically debtors could not be released until they paid their debts), and the stratification of society between rich and poor. In this passage, while the devoted Little Dorrit is sewing for her father in the Marshalsea prison, the magnates of society at the wealthy Mr Merdle’s dinner, pay effusive tribute to him, whose influence and money, are (they argue) the bastions of society, of which they are the humble members and whose welfare is their greatest concern. (See also [3.3 HN] and [3.8 HN])

From Little Dorrit (1857), Bk I, ch. 21

There was a dinner giving [*being given*] in the Harley Street establishment, while Little Dorrit was stitching at her father’s new shirts by his side that night; and there were magnates from the Court and magnates from the City, magnates from the Commons and magnates from the Lords, magnates from the bench and magnates from the bar, Bishop magnates, Treasury magnates, Horse Guards magnates, Admiralty magnates,—all the magnates that keep us going, and sometimes trip us up [...]

When they rose, so many of the magnates had something to say to Mr Merdle individually, that he held little levees by the sideboard, and checked them off as they went out at the door.

Treasury hoped he might venture to congratulate one of England’s world-famed capitalists and merchant-princes (he had turned that original sentiment in the House a few times, and it came easy to him) on a new achievement. To extend the triumphs of such men, was to extend the triumphs and resources of the nation; and Treasury felt—he gave Mr Merdle to understand—patriotic on the subject.

“Thank you, my lord”, said Mr Merdle; “thank you. I accept your congratulations with pride, and I am glad you approve.”

“Why, I don’t unreservedly approve, my dear Mr Merdle. Because,” smiling Treasury turned him by the arm towards the sideboard and spoke banteringly, “it never can be worth your while to come among us and help us.”

Mr Merdle felt honoured by the—

“No, no,” said Treasury, “that is not the light in which one so distinguished for practical knowledge, and great foresight, can be expected to regard it. If we should ever be happily enabled, by accidentally possessing the control over circumstances, to propose to one so eminent to—to come among us, and give us the weight of his influence, knowledge, and character, we could only propose it to him as a duty. In fact, as a duty that he owed to Society.”

Mr Merdle intimated that Society was the apple of his eye, and that its claims were paramount to every other consideration [...]

[...] Bishop then came undesignedly sliding in the direction of the sideboard.

Surely the goods of this world, it occurred in an accidental way to Bishop to remark, could scarcely be directed into happier channels than when they accumulated under the magic touch of the wise and sagacious, who, while they knew the just value of riches (Bishop tried here to look as if he were rather poor himself), were aware of their importance, judiciously governed and rightly distributed, to the welfare of our brethren at large.

Mr Merdle with humility expressed his conviction that Bishop couldn’t mean him, and with inconsistency expressed his high gratification in Bishop’s good opinion.

Bishop then—jauntily stepping out a little with his well-shaped right leg, as though he said to Mr Merdle “don’t mind the apron; a mere form!”—put this case to his good friend:

Whether it had occurred to his good friend, that Society might not unreasonably hope that one so blest in his undertakings, and whose example on his pedestal was so influential with it, would shed a little money in the direction of a mission or so to Africa?

Mr Merdle signifying that the idea should have his best attention, Bishop put another case:

Whether his good friend had at all interested himself in the proceedings of our Combined Additional Endowed Dignitaries Committee, and whether it had occurred to him that to shed a little money in *that* direction might be a great conception finely executed?

Mr Merdle made a similar reply [...]

3.32 CHARLES DICKENS: BRAN-NEW PEOPLE

Dickens in Our Mutual Friend gives a brief vignette of the nouveau riche Veneering family, whose possessions, like their new furniture and friends, are carefully designed to impress. (They eventually go bankrupt and live in France on the jewellery Mr Veneering has bought for his wife.)

From Our Mutual Friend (1865), Bk 1, ch. 2

Mr and Mrs Veneering were bran-new¹¹² people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick and span new. All their furniture was new, all their friends were new, all their servants were new, their plate was new, their carriage was new, their harness was new, their horses were new, their pictures were new, they themselves were new, they were as newly married as was lawfully compatible with their having a bran-new baby, and if they had set up a great-grandfather, he would have come home in matting from the Pantechnicon,¹¹³ without a scratch upon him, French polished to the crown of his head.

For, in the Veneering establishment, from the hall chairs with the new coat of arms, to the grand pianoforte with the new action, and upstairs again to the new fire-escape, all things were in a state of high varnish and polish. And what was observable in the furniture, was observable in the Veneerings—the surface smelt a little too much of the workshop and was a trifle sticky.

3.33 WILLIAM THACKERAY: WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

Thackeray's Vanity Fair, or, A Novel Without a Hero following serialisation in monthly parts was published in book form in 1848. Here, Amelia Sedley, one of the would-be heroines of the novel, lives quietly and complacently in London with her family, while the Napoleonic Wars rage in Europe. She is blindly and naively devoted to her husband George Osborne. However, her comfortable middle-class life is soon to be interrupted when her spendthrift father becomes bankrupt and George, who is unfaithful, is killed at Waterloo, leaving her pregnant. The routine life of the Sedleys is short-lived and illusory.

From Vanity Fair, or, A Novel Without a Hero (1848), ch. 12

[...] Amelia lay snug in her home of Russell Square; if she went into the world, it was under the guidance of the elders; nor did it seem that any evil could befall her or that opulent cheery comfortable home in which she was affectionately sheltered. Mamma had her morning duties, and her daily drive,

¹¹²bran-new: now usually in the form *brand new*.

¹¹³Pantechnicon: a large warehouse for storing furniture.

and the delightful round of visits and shopping which forms the amusement, or the profession as you may call it, of the rich London lady. Papa conducted his mysterious operations in the City—a stirring place in those days, when war was raging all over Europe, and empires were being staked; when the *Courier* newspaper had tens of thousands of subscribers; when one day brought you a battle of Vittoria,¹¹⁴ another a burning of Moscow,¹¹⁵ or a newsman’s horn blowing down Russell Square about dinner time announced such a fact as—“Battle of Leipzig – six hundred thousand men engaged – total defeat of the French – two hundred thousand killed.”¹¹⁶ Old Sedley once or twice came home with a very grave face; and no wonder, when such news as this was agitating all the hearts and all the Stocks of Europe.

Meanwhile, matters went on in Russell Square, Bloomsbury, just as if matters in Europe were not in the least disorganized. The retreat from Leipzig made no difference in the number of meals Mr Sambo¹¹⁷ took in the servants’ hall; the allies poured into France, and the dinner bell rang at five o’clock just as usual. I don’t think poor Amelia cared anything about Brienne and Montmirail,¹¹⁸ or was fairly interested in the war until the abdication of the Emperor; when she clapped her hands and said prayers—oh, how grateful! And flung herself into George Osborne’s arms with all her soul, to the astonishment of everybody who witnessed that ebullition of sentiment. The fact is, peace was declared, Europe was going to be at rest; the Corsican was overthrown, and Lieutenant Osborne’s regiment would not be ordered on service. That was the way in which Miss Amelia reasoned. The fate of Europe was Lieutenant George Osborne to her.

3.34 ROBERT SMITH SURTEES, SPONGE IN THE CITY

Robert Smith Surtees (1805–1864) practised law in London but soon became better known as a sporting journalist and novelist. After 1838 he lived on his inherited property Hamsterley in County Durham where he continued to write novels of hunting and shooting. His works imbue these rural sports with comedy that has a strong satirical edge—there is sharp observation of snobbery and self-conceit. Soapey Sponge is a fine horseman but also a rogue and a cad. Mr Sponge’s Sporting Tour was a great success, being serialized twice before it appeared in book form in 1853.

From Mr Sponge’s Sporting Tour (1853), ch. 1

¹¹⁴**battle of Vittoria:** an allied victory over the French in June 1813.

¹¹⁵**burning of Moscow:** The Russians burnt Moscow in September 1812 so that it would not be taken by the French.

¹¹⁶**Battle of Leipzig:** This was the decisive battle against Napoleon (1813). The allies then invaded France; Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba (1814).

¹¹⁷**Mr Sambo:** the Sedley’s black servant.

¹¹⁸**Brienne and Montmirail:** battles won by Napoleon (1814) before his retreat to Paris.

It was a murky October day that the hero of our tale, Mr Sponge, or Soapey Sponge, as his good-natured friends call him, was seen mizzling¹¹⁹ along Oxford Street, wending his way to the West. Not that there was anything unusual in Sponge being seen in Oxford Street, for when in town his daily perambulations consist of a circuit, commencing from the Bantam Hotel in Bond Street into Piccadilly, through Leicester Square, and so on to Aldridge's, in St Martin's Lane,¹²⁰ thence by Moore's sporting-print shop, and on through some of those ambiguous and tortuous streets that, appearing to lead all ways at once and none in particular, land the explorer, sooner or later, on the south side of Oxford Street.

Oxford Street acts to the north part of London what the Strand does to the south; it is sure to bring one up, sooner or later. A man can hardly get over either of them without knowing it. Well, Soapey, having got into Oxford Street, would make his way at a squarey, in-kneed, duck-toed sort of pace, regulated by the bonnets, the vehicles, and the equestrians he met to criticise; for of women, vehicles, and horses, he had voted himself a consummate judge. Indeed, he had fully established in his own mind that Kiddey Downey¹²¹ and he were the only men in London who *really* knew anything about horses, and fully impressed with that conviction, he would halt, and stand, and stare, in a way that with any other man would have been considered impertinent. Perhaps it was impertinent in Soapey—we don't mean to say it wasn't—but he had done it so long, and was of so sporting a gait and cut, that he felt himself somewhat privileged. Moreover, the majority of horsemen are so satisfied with the animals they bestride, that they cock up their jibs¹²² and ride along with a “find any fault with either me or my horse, if you can” sort of air.

Thus Mr Sponge proceeded leisurely along, now nodding to this man, now jerking his elbow to that, now smiling on a phaëton,¹²³ now sneering at a 'bus. If he did not look in at Shackell's, or Bartley's, or any of the dealers on the line, he was always to be found about half past five at Cumberland Gate, from whence he would strike leisurely down the Park, and after coming to a long check at Rotten Row [3.43, n.169] rails, from whence he would pass all the cavalry in the Park in review, he would wend his way back to the Bantam, much in the style he had come. This was his summer proceeding.

¹¹⁹ **mizzling**: departing.

¹²⁰ **Aldridge's ... St Martin's Lane**: Aldridge's sold horses and carriages; **St Martin's Lane** was also known for its saddlery trade.

¹²¹ **Kiddy Downey**: Possibly a nickname for a real character.

¹²² **cock up their jibs**: stick their noses in the air.

¹²³ **phaëton**: fashionable light four-wheeled open carriage.

3.35 HERMAN MELVILLE: THE TEMPLE

Herman Melville (1819–1891) is famous mainly for his books set in the South Seas and especially for Moby Dick (1851). However, he also published several short stories, one of which, “The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids,” appeared in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine in 1855. The two locations mentioned in the title are loosely related thematically but not otherwise, the first being set in London, the second in New England. “The Paradise of Bachelors” is based on a visit Melville made to London in 1849.

From “*The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids*,” (1855)

The church and cloisters, courts and vaults, lanes and passages, banquet-halls, refectories, libraries, terraces, gardens, broad walks, domiciles, and dressing-rooms, covering a very large space of ground, and all grouped in central neighbourhood, and quite sequestered from the old city’s surrounding din; and everything about the place being kept in most bachelor-like particularity, no part of London offers to a quiet wight [*person* (archaic)] so agreeable a refuge.

The Temple¹²⁴ is, indeed, a city by itself. A city with all the best appurtenances, as the above enumeration shows. A City with a park in it, and flower-beds, and a river-side—the Thames flowing by as openly, in one part, as by Eden’s primal garden flowed the mild Euphrates. In what is now the Temple Garden, the old Crusaders used to exercise their steeds and lances; the modern Templars now lounge on the benches beneath the trees, and, switching their patent leather boots, in gay discourse exercise at repartee [...]

Though to be a Templar, in the one true sense, you must needs be a lawyer, or a student at the law, and be ceremoniously enrolled as a member of the order, yet as many such, though Templars, do not reside within the Temple’s precincts, though they may have their offices there, just so, on the other hand, there are many residents of the hoary old domiciles who are not admitted Templars. If being, say, a lounging gentleman and bachelor, or a quiet, unmarried, literary man, charmed with the soft seclusion of the spot, you much desire to pitch your shady tent among the rest in this serene encampment, then you must make some special friend among the order, and procure him to rent, in his name but at your charge, whatever vacant chamber you may find to suit.

Thus, I suppose, did Dr Johnson [2.18 HN], that nominal Benedick¹²⁵ and widower but virtual bachelor, when for a space he resided here. So, too, did that undoubted bachelor and rare good soul, Charles Lamb [3.28 HN]. And hundreds more, of sterling spirits, Brethren of the Order of Celibacy, from time to time have dined, and slept, and tabernacled here. Indeed, the

¹²⁴**Temple:** Church and grounds used by the Knights Templar in the C12th; now a legal district with two of the Inns of Court, the Inner and Outer Temples [3.28, n.93].

¹²⁵**Benedick:** term for an apparently confirmed bachelor who suddenly marries; from Benedick in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing*.

place is all a honey-comb of offices and domiciles. Like any cheese, it is quite perforated through and through in all directions with the snug cells of bachelors. Dear, delightful spot! Ah! When I bethink me of the sweet hours there passed, enjoying such genial hospitalities beneath those time-honoured roofs, my heart only finds due utterance through poetry; and, with a sigh, I softly sing, “Carry me back to old Virginy!”¹²⁶

Such then, at large, is the Paradise of Bachelors. And such I found it one pleasant afternoon in the smiling month of May, when, sallying forth from my hotel in Trafalgar Square, I went to keep my dinner-appointment [...]

The apartment was well up toward heaven. I know not how many strange old stairs I climbed to get to it. But a good dinner, with famous company, should be well earned. No doubt our host had his dining-room so high with a view to secure the prior exercise necessary to the due relishing and digesting of it.

The furniture was wonderfully unpretending, old, and snug. No new shining mahogany, sticky with undried varnish; no uncomfortable luxurious ottomans, and sofas too fine to use, vexed you in this sedate apartment. It is a thing which every sensible American should learn from every sensible Englishman, that glare and glitter, gim-cracks and gewgaws, are not indispensable to domestic solacement. The American Benedick snatches, down-town, a tough chop in a gilded show-box; the English bachelor leisurely dines at home on that incomparable South Down¹²⁷ of his, off a deal board.

3.36 WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY: “GREAT CITY SNOBS”

Thackeray (1811–1863), educated at the Charterhouse and Cambridge University, travelled in France and Germany 1830–1831. He began his writing career as a journalist and published many satirical pieces in the late 1830s and early 1840s: *The Snobs of England*, by One of Themselves was serialised in *Punch* 1846–1847, and was published in volume form as *The Book of Snobs* in 1848. For further notes on *Thackeray* see [3.9] and [3.33].

From The Book of Snobs (1848), ch. 3

The great City Snob¹²⁸ is commonly most difficult of access. Unless you are a capitalist, you cannot visit him in the recesses of his bank parlour in Lombard Street.¹²⁹ Unless you are a sprig of nobility there is little hope of

¹²⁶“Carry me back to old Virginy”: song composed by E. P. Christy and published in 1847; also known as “Floating Scow of Old Virginy”.

¹²⁷**South Down**: breed of sheep celebrated for the quality of its meat.

¹²⁸**Snob**: “A person who admires and seeks to imitate, or associate with, those of higher social status or greater wealth” (*OED* 3.c). Thackeray’s is the first recorded use of the term in this sense.

¹²⁹**Lombard Street**: since mediaeval times the centre for London’s banking houses.

seeing him at home. In a great City Snob firm there is generally one partner whose name is down for charities, and who frequents Exeter Hall¹³⁰; you may catch a glimpse of another (a scientific City Snob) at my Lord N—’s *soirées*, or the lectures of the London Institute¹³¹; of a third (a City Snob of taste) at picture auctions, at private views of exhibitions, or at the Opera or the Philharmonic. But intimacy is impossible, in most cases, with this grave, pompous, and awful being.

A mere gentleman may hope to sit at almost anybody’s table—to take his place at my lord duke’s in the country—to dance a quadrille at Buckingham Palace itself—(beloved Lady Willhelmina Waggle-wiggle! do you recollect the sensation we made at the ball of our late adored Sovereign Queen Caroline,¹³² at Brandenburg House, Hammersmith?)¹³³ but the City Snob’s doors are, for the most part, closed to him; and hence all that one knows of this great class is mostly from hearsay.

*

And a comfortable thing it is to think that birth can be bought for money. So you learn to value it. Why should we, who don’t possess it, set a higher store on it than those who do? Perhaps the best use of that book, the ‘Peerage’,¹³⁴ is to look down the list, and see how many have bought and sold birth,—how poor sprigs of nobility somehow sell themselves to rich City Snobs’ daughters, how rich City snobs purchase noble ladies—and so to admire the double baseness of the bargain.

Old Pump and Aldgate¹³⁵ buys the articles and pays the money. The sale of the girl’s person is blessed by a Bishop at St. George’s, Hanover Square,¹³⁶ and next year you read, “At Roehampton, on Saturday, the Lady Blanche Pump, of a son and heir.”

*

It used to be the custom of some very old-fashioned clubs in this City, when a gentleman asked for change for a guinea, always to bring it to him in *washed silver*: that which had passed immediately out of the hands of the vulgar being

¹³⁰ **Exeter Hall**: built 1829–1831; associated with Evangelical Christianity.

¹³¹ **London Institute**: the City and Guilds of London Institute for technical education, founded in 1878.

¹³² **Queen Caroline**: Caroline of Brunswick 1768–1821; married to George IV and later rumoured to have been unfaithful to him.

¹³³ **Brandenburg House, Hammersmith**: house owned by the Margrave of Brandenburg from 1792; home of Queen Caroline 1819–1821.

¹³⁴ **Peerage**: i.e. *Burke’s Peerage*, first published 1826.

¹³⁵ **Pump and Aldgate**: connoting a self-made man from a poorer part of London.

¹³⁶ **St. George’s, Hanover Square**: church favoured by the wealthy and fashionable for weddings.

considered “as too coarse to soil a gentleman’s fingers.” So, when the City Snob’s money has been washed during a generation or so; has been washed into estates, and woods, and castles, and town mansions, it is allowed to pass current as real aristocratic coin. Old Pump sweeps a shop, runs of messages, becomes a confidential clerk and partner. Pump the Second becomes chief of the house, spins more and more money, marries his son to an Earl’s daughter. Pump Tertius goes on with the bank; but his chief business in life is to become the father of Pump Quartus, who comes out a full-blown aristocrat, and takes his seat¹³⁷ as Baron Pumpington, and his race rules hereditary over this nation of Snobs.

3.37 ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING: A WRITING WOMAN

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861) grew up in Hertfordshire, but moved with her family to London in 1835. For long periods a near invalid, she nevertheless published poetry from 1826 onwards and developed her literary career, corresponding with other writers and winning respect for her poetry. In 1845 she met Robert Browning (1812–1889) and in 1846 eloped with him to Italy. Her sequence Sonnets from the Portuguese which is based on her love affair with Browning was published in 1850 and has become a popular classic. She went on to write works that attacked tyranny of various kinds: slavery in The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point (1848), the industrial exploitation of children in The Cry of the Children (1844), and the suppression of Italian nationhood in Mother and Poet (1862). Her most ambitious work, however, was the novel in verse Aurora Leigh, from which this extract is taken.

From Aurora Leigh (1856), Book III, 158–203

I took a chamber up three flights of stairs
 Not far from being as steep as some larks climb,
 And, in a certain house in Kensington,
 Three years I lived and worked. Get leave to work
 In this world, –’tis the best you get at all;
 For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts
 Than men in benediction. God says, “Sweat
 For foreheads”; men say “crowns”; and so we are crowned, –
 Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle of steel¹³⁸

¹³⁷ takes his seat as a peer in the House of Lords.

¹³⁸ tormenting circle of steel: György Dózsa (1470–1514), a would-be crusader who led a peasants’ revolt in Hungarian Transylvania, was executed by means of a red-hot iron crown.

Which snaps with a secret spring. Get work, get work;
 Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get.
 So, happy and unafraid of solitude,
 I worked the short days out,—and watched the sun
 On lurid morns or monstrous afternoons,
 Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass,¹³⁹
 With fixed unflickering outline of dead heat,
 In which the blood of wretches pent inside
 Seemed oozing forth to incarnadine the air,—
 Push out through fog with his dilated disk,
 And startle the slant roofs and chimney-pots
 With splashes of fierce colour. Or I saw
 Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,¹⁴⁰
 Involve the passive city, strangle it
 Alive, and draw it off into the void,
 Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as if a sponge
 Had wiped out London, — or as noon and night
 Had clapped together and utterly struck out
 The intermediate time, undoing themselves
 In the act. Your city poets see such things,
 Not déspicable. Mountains of the south,
 When, drunk and mad with elemental wines,
 They rend the seamless mist and stand up bare,
 Make fewer singers, haply. No one sings,
 Descending Sinai; on Parnassus mount,¹⁴¹
 You take a mule to climb, and not a muse,
 Except in fable and figure: forests chant
 Their anthems to themselves, and leave you dumb.
 But sit in London, at the day's decline,
 And view the city perish in the mist
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep Red Sea,—¹⁴²
 The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all the host,
 Sucked down and choked to silence—then, surprised
 By a sudden sense of vision and of tune,
 You feel as conquerors though you did not fight,
 And you and Israel's other singing girls,
 Ay, Miriam¹⁴³ with them, sing the song you choose.

¹³⁹**Druidic idol's fiery brass:** it was believed that Druids burned their human sacrifices in wicker cages; see also [3.41, n.159].

¹⁴⁰For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

¹⁴¹**Sinai ... Parnassus:** Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai; Parnassus was sacred to Apollo, god of poetry.

¹⁴²**Pharaoh ... Red Sea:** Pharaoh's army, pursuing the Israelites escaping from Egypt, was overwhelmed when the Red Sea closed over it as it crossed (Exodus 15:19–21).

¹⁴³**Miriam:** the sister of Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4).

WORKING-CLASS LIFE

3.38 LEIGH HUNT: A LONDON WAITER

James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) was born at Southgate and was educated as a charity boy at Christ’s Hospital. His first collection of poems appeared in 1807. In 1808 with his brother John, Leigh founded and edited The Examiner, a radical weekly journal. In 1813 he was sentenced to two years in jail for libelling the Prince Regent, but he continued to write and to edit The Examiner while a prisoner. A friend of Keats, he was attacked with him as a member of the ‘Cockney School’ of poetry. Though a prolific poet, he is perhaps best remembered now as a gifted essayist. His sketch “The Waiter” appeared in Hunt’s magazine The London Journal, which he edited 1834–1835.

“The Waiter,” from *The London Journal*, No. 63, 13 June 1835

Going into the City the other day upon business, we took a chop at a tavern, and renewed our acquaintance, after years of interruption, with that swift and untiring personage, yclept a waiter. We mention this long interval of acquaintance, in order to account for any deficiencies that may be found in our description of him. Our readers perhaps will favour us with a better. He is a character before the public: thousands are acquainted with him, and can fill up the outline. But we felt irresistibly impelled to sketch him; like a portrait-painter who comes suddenly upon an old friend, or upon an old servant of the family. We speak of the waiter properly and generally so-called,—the representative of the whole, real official race,—and not of the humourist or other eccentric genius occasionally to be found in it,—moving out of the orbit of tranquil but fiery waiting,—not absorbed,—not devout towards us,—not silent or monosyllabical;—fellows that affect a character beyond that of waiter, and get spoiled in club-rooms, and places of theatrical resort.

Your thorough waiter has no ideas out of the sphere of his duty and the business, and yet he is not narrow-minded either. He sees too much variety of character for that, and has to exercise too much consideration for the “drunken gentleman”. But his world is the tavern, and all mankind but its visitors. His female sex are the maid-servants and his young mistress, or the widow. If he is ambitious, he aspires to marry one of the latter: if otherwise, and Molly is prudent, he does not know but he may carry her off some day to be mistress of the Golden Lion at Chinksford, where he will ‘show off’ in the eyes of Betty Laxon¹⁴⁴ who refused him. He has no feeling of noise itself but as the sound of dining, or of silence but as a thing before dinner. Even a loaf with him is hardly a loaf, it is so many ‘breads.’ His longest speech is the making out of a bill *viva voce*—“two beefs – one potatoes – three ales

¹⁴⁴Golden Lion ... Chinksford ... Betty Laxon: all fictional.

– two wines – six and twopence”—which he does with an indifferent celerity, amusing to new-comers who have been relishing their fare, and not considering it as a mere set of items. He attributes all virtues to everybody, provided they are civil and liberal; and of the existence of some vices he has no notion. Gluttony, for instance, with him, is not only inconceivable, but looks very like virtue. He sees in it only so many more ‘beefs,’ and a generous scorn of the bill. As to wine, or almost any other liquor, it is out of your power to astonish him with the quantity you call for. His “Yes, Sir” is as swift, indifferent, and official, at the fifth bottle as at the first. Reform¹⁴⁵ and other public events he looks upon purely as things in the newspaper, and the newspaper as a thing taken in at taverns, for gentlemen to read. His own reading is confined to “Accidents and Offences”, and the advertisements for Butlers, which latter he peruses with an admiring fear, not choosing to ‘give up’ a certainty.

When young, he was always in a hurry, and exasperated his mistress by running against the other waiters, and breaking the ‘neguses.’¹⁴⁶ As he gets older, he learns to unite swiftness with caution; declines wasting his breath in immediate answers to calls; and knows, with a slight turn of his face, and elevation of his voice, into what precise corner of the room to pitch his “Coming, Sir.” If you told him that, in Shakespeare’s time, waiters said “Anon, anon, Sir,”¹⁴⁷ he would be astonished at the repetition of the same word in one answer, and at the use of three words instead of two; and he would justly infer, that London could not have been so large, nor the chop-houses so busy, in those days. He would drop one of the two syllables of his “Yes, Sir,” if he could; but business and civility will not allow it; and therefore he does what he can by running them together in the swift sufficiency of his

“Yezzir.”

“Thomas!”

“Yezzir”

“Is my steak coming?”

“Yezzir”

“And the pint of port?”

“Yezzir.”

“You’ll not forget the postman?”

“Yezzir.”

For in the habit of his acquiescence Thomas not seldom says “Yes, Sir”, for “No, Sir”, the habit itself rendering him intelligible.

His morning dress is a waistcoat or jacket; his coat is for afternoons. If the establishment is flourishing, he likes to get into black as he grows elderly; by which time also he is generally a little corpulent, and wears

¹⁴⁵**Reform**: the Parliamentary **Reform** Bill of 1832 was still fresh in memory.

¹⁴⁶**neguses**: hot drinks made with wine.

¹⁴⁷**anon, Sir**: *Henry IV*, Pt. I, Act 2, Sc. 4.

hair-powder, dressing somewhat laxly about the waist, for convenience of movement. Not however that he draws much upon that part of his body, except as a poise to what he carries; for you may observe that a waiter, in walking, uses only his lower limbs, from his knees downwards. The movement of all the rest of him is by nature, and modified solely by what he bears in his hands.

At this period he has a little money in the funds,¹⁴⁸ and his nieces look up to him. He still carries however a napkin under his arm, as well as a cork-screw in his pocket; nor, for all his long habit, can he help feeling a satisfaction at the noise he makes in drawing a cork. He thinks that no man can do it better; and that Mr. Smith, who understands wine, is thinking so too, though he does not take his eyes off the plate. In his right waistcoat pocket is a snuff-box, with which he supplies gentlemen late at night, after the shops are shut up, and when they are in desperate want of another fillip to their sensations, after the devil¹⁴⁹ and toasted cheese. If particularly required, he will laugh at a joke, especially at that time of night, justly thinking that gentlemen towards one in the morning “will be facetious.” He is of opinion it is in “human natur” to be a little fresh at that period, and to want to be put into a coach.

He announces his acquisition of property by a bunch of seals¹⁵⁰ to his watch, and perhaps rings on his fingers; one of them a mourning ring left him by his late master, the other a present either from his nieces’ father, or from some ultra-goodnatured old gentleman whom he helped into a coach one night, and who had no silver about him.

To see him dine, somehow, hardly seems natural. And he appears to do it as if he had no right. You catch him at his dinner in a corner,—huddled apart,—“Thomas dining!” instead of helping dinner. One fancies that the stewed and hot meats and the constant smoke ought to be too much for him, and that he should have neither appetite nor time for such a meal.

Once a year (for he has few holidays) a couple of pedestrians meet him on a Sunday in the fields, and cannot conceive for the life of them who it is; till the startling recollection occurs—“Good God! It’s the waiter at the Grogram!”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ **funds:** government bonds, usually delivering 3% *per annum*.

¹⁴⁹ **devil:** meat grilled with hot seasoning.

¹⁵⁰ **seals:** stamps engraved with a personal device, to be applied to legal documents.

¹⁵¹ **Grogram:** fictional tavern in London, named after Admiral Edward Vernon (1684–1757), called Old Grogram because he wore suits made of grogram, a coarse fabric made of silk and/or mohair and wool. In 1740 he introduced the custom of diluting the sailors’ rum with water, the resultant drink being known as ‘grog’ (still Australian slang for alcohol).

3.39 HENRY MAYHEW: COVENT GARDEN MARKET

Covent Garden Market rose from humble beginnings in 1656, becoming more and more busy as stalls and sheds gave way to permanent structures. Fruit, vegetables, and flowers were the main merchandise. In 1831 a new market-place had been built to cope with the bustle and congestion. Henry Mayhew (1812–1887) was a prolific writer in most genres. However, he is best known for his depiction of tradesmen and lower-class life in London (as here), and in particular, for his compassionate accounts of the hardships and misery suffered by the London poor. (See also [3.21 HN])

From “Of Covent Garden Market,” in London Labour and the London Poor (1851)

On a Saturday—the coster’s¹⁵² business day—it is computed that as many as 2000 donkey-barrows, and upwards of 3000 women with shallows [*flat baskets*] and head-baskets visit this market during the forenoon. About six o’clock in the morning is the best time for viewing the wonderful restlessness of the place, for then not only is the ‘Garden’ itself all bustle and activity, but the buyers and sellers stream to and from it in all directions, filling every street in the vicinity. From Long Acre to the Strand on the one side, and from Bow Street to Bedford Street on the other, the ground has been seized upon by the market-goers. As you glance down any one of the neighbouring streets, the long rows of carts and donkey-barrows seem interminable in the distance. They are of all kinds, from the greengrocer’s taxed cart¹⁵³ to the coster’s barrow—from the showy excursion-van to the rude square donkey-cart and bricklayer’s truck. In every street they are ranged down the middle and by the kerb stones. Along each approach to the market too, nothing is to be seen on all sides but vegetables; the pavement is covered with heaps of them waiting to be carted; the flagstones are stained green with the leaves trodden underfoot; sieves and sacks full of apples and potatoes, and bundles of broccoli and rhubarb are left unwatched upon almost every doorstep; the steps of Covent Garden Theatre¹⁵⁴ are covered with fruit and vegetables; the road is blocked up with mountains of cabbages and turnips; and men and women push past with their arms bowed out by the cauliflowers under them, or the red tips of carrots pointing from their crammed aprons, or else their faces are red with the weight of the loaded head-basket [...]

¹⁵² **coster**: one who sells fruit, vegetables etc. from a cart in the street.

¹⁵³ **taxed cart**: a sprung cart attracting a small tax.

¹⁵⁴ **Covent Garden Theatre**: the first built in 1732 but destroyed by fire. The second, to which Mayhew is referring, opened in 1809. Plays, opera, and ballets were performed there.

The market itself presents a beautiful scene. In the clear morning air of an autumn day the whole of the vast square is distinctly seen from one end to the other. The sky is red and golden with the newly-risen sun, and the rays falling on the fresh and vivid colours of the fruit and vegetables, brightens up the picture as with a coat of varnish. There is no shouting, as at other markets, but a low murmuring hum is heard, like the sound of the sea at a distance, and through each entrance to the market the crowd sweeps by. Under the dark Piazza little bright dots of gas-lights are seen burning in the shops; and in the paved square the people pass and cross each other in all directions, hampers clash together, and excepting the carters from the country, everyone is on the move.

3.40 CHARLES DICKENS: BLEEDING HEART YARD

In Dickens's novel the hero Arthur Clennam, together with the heroine Little Dorrit, who resides in the Marshalsea looking after her father, visit Bleeding Heart Yard.¹⁵⁵ There the poor inventor Daniel Doyce has his factory, and Little Dorrit's friends, the Plornishes, live. The inmates of the Yard are all hopelessly impoverished and live in fear of strangers in case they are debt-collectors. Plornish, a plasterer, though he constantly looks for employment, is resigned to his ill-luck in either not finding it or losing it when he does find it. (See also [3.8 HN] and [3.27 HN])

From Little Dorrit (1857), Bk 1, ch. 12

As if the aspiring city had become puffed up in the very ground on which it stood, the ground had so risen about Bleeding Heart Yard that you got into it down a flight of steps which formed no part of the original approach, and got out of it by a low gateway into a maze of shabby streets, which went about and about, tortuously ascending to the level again. At this end of the Yard, and over the gateway, was the factory of Daniel Doyce, often heavily beating like a bleeding heart of iron, with the clink of metal upon metal [...]

“Is it so difficult to get work?” asked Arthur Clennam.

“Plornish finds it so,” she returned. “He is quite unfortunate. Really he is.”

Really he was. He was one of those many wayfarers on the road of life who seem to be afflicted with supernatural corns, rendering it impossible for them to keep up even with their lame competitors. A willing, working, soft-hearted, not hard-headed fellow, Plornish took his fortune as smoothly as could be expected; but it was a rough one. It so rarely happened that anybody seemed to want him, it was such an exceptional case when his powers

¹⁵⁵**Bleeding Heart Yard:** now much changed, it exists as a cobbled courtyard off Greville Street, near Holborn Circus.

were in any request, that his misty mind could not make out how it happened. He took it as it came, therefore; he tumbled into all kinds of difficulties, and tumbled out of them; and, by tumbling through life, got himself considerably bruised.

“It’s not for want of looking after jobs, I am sure,” said Mrs Plornish, lifting up her eyebrows, and searching for a solution of the problem between the bars of the grate; “nor yet for want of working at them, when they are to be got. No one ever heard my husband complain of work.”

Somehow or other, this was the general misfortune of Bleeding Heart Yard. From time to time there were public complaints pathetically going about, of labour being scarce—which certain people seemed to take extraordinarily ill, as though they had an absolute right to it on their own terms—but Bleeding Heart Yard, though as willing a Yard as any in Britain, was never the better for the demand.

3.41 CHARLES KINGSLEY: THE MAKING OF A CHARTIST

*The eponymous hero of Alton Locke by Charles Kingsley (1819–1875) is a tailor’s poverty-stricken apprentice. As a budding poet Locke has tried to no avail to write on subjects about which he knows little or nothing, such as the Pacific Islands. He is taken by his exasperated friend the Scottish bookseller Sandy Mackaye to see the slums of St Giles, about which he could write with firsthand knowledge. The misery that he sees is so appalling that he determines to become a Chartist.*¹⁵⁶

From Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet (1850), Vol. 1, ch. 8

[... Mackaye] seized me by the arm, and hardly giving me time to put on my hat, marched me out into the streets, and away through Clare Market to St Giles’s.

It was a foul, chilly, foggy Saturday night. From the butchers’ and green-grocers’ shops the gaslights flared and flickered, wild and ghostly, over haggard groups of slipshod dirty women, bargaining for scraps of stale meat and frostbitten vegetables, wrangling about short weight and bad quality. Fish stalls and fruit stalls lined the edge of the greasy pavement, sending up odours as foul as the language of sellers and buyers. Blood and sewer-water crawled from under doors and out of spouts, and reeked down the gutters among

¹⁵⁶**Chartist:** Chartism was a movement 1837–1857 which advocated better working conditions for industrial and agricultural workers. The name was derived from the People’s Charter (1838), which petitioned Parliament (in vain) for reform of voting rights, including suffrage for all men over 21. The Chartists held protest meetings (sometimes resulting in violence), especially in the Midlands and Wales. Kingsley was one of the leaders of the Christian Socialist Movement founded in 1848, which shared many of the Chartists’ aims but insisted on peaceful methods of improving the people’s welfare by educational and theological means.

offal, animal and vegetable, in every stage of putrefaction. Foul vapours rose from cowsheds and slaughterhouses, and the doorways of undrained alleys, where the inhabitants carried the filth out on their shoes from the backyard into the court, and from the court up into the main street; while above, hanging like cliffs over the streets—those narrow, brawling torrents of filth and poverty and sin—the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was. Go, scented Belgravian! and see what London is! and then go to the library which God has given thee—one often fears in vain—and see what science says this London might be!

“Ay,” he muttered to himself as he strode along, “sing awa’; get yoursel’ wi’ child wi’ pretty fancies and gran’ words, like the rest o’ the poets, and gang to hell for it.”

“To hell, Mr Mackaye”?

“Ay, to a verra real hell, Alton Locke, laddie – a warse ane than ony fiends’ kitchen, or subterranean Smithfield,¹⁵⁷ that ye’ll hear o’ in the pulpits – the hell on earth o’ being a flunkey, and a humbug, and a useless peacock, wastin’ God’s gifts on your ain lusts and pleasures – and kenning [*knowing*] it – and not being able to get oot o’ it, for the chains o’ vanity and self-indulgence. I’ve warn’d ye. Now look there –”

He stopped suddenly before the entrance of a miserable alley—

“Look! there’s not a soul down that yard but’s either beggar, drunkard, thief, or warse. Write anent that! Say how you saw the mouth o’ hell, and the twa pillars thereof at the entry – the pawnbroker’s shop o’ one side, and the gin palace at the other – twa monstrous deevils, eating up men, and women, and bairns, body and soul. Look at the jaws o’ the monsters, how they open and open, and swallow in anither victim and anither. Write anent that.”

“What jaws, Mr Mackaye”?

“They faulding-doors o’ the gin shop, goose. Are na they a mair damnable man-devouring idol than ony red-hot statue o’ Moloch,¹⁵⁸ or wicker Gogmagog, wherein thae auld Britons burnt their prisoners?¹⁵⁹ Look at thae barefooted, barebacked hizzies, with their arms roun’ the men’s necks, and their mouths full o’ vitriol and beastly words! Look at that Irishwoman pouring the gin down the babbie’s throat! Look at that raff o’ a boy gaun out o’ the pawnshop, where he’s been pledging the handkerchief he stole the morning, into the gin shop to buy beer poisoned wi’ grains o’ paradise, and

¹⁵⁷ **Smithfield**: see **General Introduction**, n.5.

¹⁵⁸ **Moloch**: a Canaanite god whose statue was heated with fire into which child victims were thrown.

¹⁵⁹ **wicker ... prisoners**: Mackaye is confusing two legends: (1) **Gogmagog** was the last giant inhabiting Albion (ancient Britain); (2) a huge **wicker** figure in human form was used by the Druids to incarcerate and burn their prisoners.

cocculus indicus, and saut,¹⁶⁰ and a' damnable, maddening, thirst-breeding, lust-breeding drugs! Look at that girl that went in wi' a shawl on her back and cam' out wi'out ane! Drunkards frae the breast! – harlots frae the cradle! – damned before they're born! John Calvin had an inkling o' the truth there, I'm a'most driven to think, wi' his reprobation¹⁶¹ deevil's doctrines!"

"Well – but – Mr Mackaye, I know nothing about these poor creatures."

"Then ye ought. What do ye ken anent the Pacific? Which is maist to your business? – thae barebacked hizzies that play the harlot o' the other side o' the warld, or these – these thousands o' barebacked hizzies that play the harlot o' your ain side – made out o' your ain flesh and blude? You a poet! True poetry, like true charity, my laddie, begins at home. If ye'll be a poet at a, ye maun be a cockney poet; and while the cockneys be what they be, ye maun write, like Jeremiah of old, o' lamentation and mourning and woe, for the sins o' your people [...]"

3.42 WILLIAM MORRIS: "PROLOGUE: THE WANDERERS"

William Morris (1834–1896), poet, writer of prose romances, painter, designer of furniture, printer and 'father' of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. Educated at Oxford, where he discovered the work of John Ruskin [3.11], he was throughout his life "moved by the desire to produce beautiful things"; this desire was accompanied by an intense hatred of modern civilisation. In 1858 he published The Defence of Guinevere, and Other Poems, one of the most accomplished Victorian contributions to the Matter of Britain. Amongst his many other works, notable are A Dream of John Ball (1887) and News from Nowhere (1890), both inspired by the socialist ideals he embraced in later life. Repelled by the Industrial Age, Morris in the Prologue to The Earthly Paradise wistfully evokes Chaucer's London as "small, and white, and clean".

From The Earthly Paradise, 1868–1870

FORGET six counties overhung with smoke,
 Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
 Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
 Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
 And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
 The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;
 Think, that below bridge the green lapping waves
 Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves,

¹⁶⁰**grains ... saut:** Grains of Paradise (seeds from an African plant), **cocculus indicus** (fruit from a tree in India and S.E. Asia), and **salt** were all used as additives to disguise poor liquor or to increase thirst.

¹⁶¹**reprobation:** Calvin's doctrine that God, in His infinite mercy, condemns some people to eternal torment in Hell before they are even born.

Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
 And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
 And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
 Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
 And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne¹⁶²;
 While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's¹⁶³ pen
 Moves over bills of lading: mid such times
 Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

3.43 HENRY MAYHEW: “THE NARRATIVE OF A GAY WOMAN”

Henry Mayhew (see [3.39 HN]) was one of the first English writers to depict *sex-workers and their trade without sentiment and without censure*. “The Narrative of a Gay Woman [i.e. *sex-worker*] at the West End of the Metropolis,” is taken from the fourth (‘Extra’) volume of the *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1861. Mayhew describes her as “about twenty-one years of age, beneath the ordinary height, and with a very engaging countenance.”

From London Labour and the London Poor (1861)

I was born in the county of—, in England, where my father was an extensive farmer, and had a great number of servants. I have three brothers and one younger sister. I was sent to a boarding school at B—, where I was receiving a superior education, and was learning drawing, music, and dancing. During the vacations, and once every quarter, I went home and lived with my parents, where one of my chief enjoyments was to ride out on a pony I had, over the fields, and in the neighbourhood, and occasionally to go to M—, a few miles distant. On these occasions we often had parties of ladies and gentlemen; when some of the best people in the district visited us. I had one of the happiest homes a girl could have.

When I was out riding one day at—, in passing through the town, my pony took fright, and threatened to throw me off, when a young gentleman who was near rode up to my assistance. He rode by my side till we came to a hotel in town, when we both dismounted. Leaving the horses with the hostlers, we had some refreshment. I took out my purse to pay the expenses, but he would not let me and paid for me. We both mounted and proceeded towards my home. On his coming to the door of the house, I invited him

¹⁶²**Guienne**: in the region of Bordeaux, France, noted for its wines.

¹⁶³**Geoffrey Chaucer’s pen**: Chaucer, 1343–1400, famous for *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of verse narratives whose form Morris copied in *The Earthly Paradise*. For several years in the 1380s Chaucer was Controller of Taxes on wines and other goods in the Port of London.

to come in, which he did. I introduced him to my papa and mamma, and mentioned the kind service he had done to me. His horse was put up in our stables, and he remained for some time, and had supper with us, when he returned to —. He was very wealthy, resided in London, and only visited M—occasionally with his servants.

I was then attending a boarding-school at B—, and was about fifteen years of age. A few days after this I left home and returned to B—. We corresponded by letter for nearly twelve months.

From the moment he rode up to me at M—I was deeply interested in him, and the attachment increased by the correspondence. He also appeared to be very fond of me. He sometimes came and visited me at home during my school holidays for the next twelve months. One day in the month of May—in summer—he came to our house in his carriage, and we invited him to dinner. He remained with us for the night, and slept with one of my brothers. We were then engaged to each other, and were to be married, so soon as I was eighteen years of age.

The next day he asked my parents if I might go out with him in his carriage. My mamma consented. She asked if any of our servants would go with us, but he thought there was no occasion for this, as his coachman and footman went along with us. We proceeded to B— Railway Station. He left his carriage with the coachman and footman, and pressed me to go with him to London. He pretended to my parents he was only going out for a short drive. I was very fond of him, and reluctantly consented to go with him to London.

He first brought me to Simpson's hotel in the Strand,¹⁶⁴ where we had dinner, then took me to the opera. We went to Scott's supper rooms in the Haymarket.¹⁶⁵ On coming out we walked up and down the Haymarket. He then took me to several of the cafés, where we had wine and refreshments. About four o'clock in the morning he called a Hansom,¹⁶⁶ and drove me to his house; and there seduced me by violence in spite of my resistance. I screamed out, but none of the servants in the house came to assist me. He told his servants I was his young wife he had just brought up from the country.

I wanted to go home in the morning, and began to cry, but he would not let me go. He said I must remain in London with him. I still insisted on going home, and he promised to marry me. He then bought me a watch and chain, rings and bracelets, and presented me with several dresses. After this I lived with him in his house, as though I had been his wife, and rode out with him in his brougham. I often insisted upon being married. He promised to do so, but delayed from time to time. He generally drove out every day over the finest streets, thoroughfares, and parks of the metropolis; and in the

¹⁶⁴**Simpson's ... Strand:** opened as a chess club and coffee house in 1828.

¹⁶⁵**Haymarket:** theatre district; sex-workers would solicit for business there.

¹⁶⁶**Hansom:** horse-drawn carriage, patented in 1834 by Joseph **Hansom**.

evenings he took me to the Argyle Room¹⁶⁷ and to the Casino at Holborn.¹⁶⁸ I generally went there very well dressed, and was much noticed on account of my youthful appearance. We also went to the fashionable theatres in the West-end, and several subscription balls. I often rode along Rotten Row¹⁶⁹ with him, and along the drives in Hyde Park. We also went to the seaside, where we lived in the best hotels.

This lasted for two years, when his conduct changed towards me. One evening I went with him to the Assembly Room¹⁷⁰ at Holborn to a masked ball. I was dressed in the character of a fairy queen. My hair was in long curls hanging down my back. He left me in the supper-room for a short time, when a well-dressed man came up to me. When my paramour came in he saw the young man sitting by my side speaking to me. He told him I was his wife, and inquired what he meant by it, to which he gave no reply. He then asked me if I knew him. I replied no. He asked the gentleman to rise, which he did, apologising for his seating himself beside me, and thereby giving offence. On the latter showing him his card, which I did not see, they sat down and had wine together.

We came out of the supper-room, and we had a quarrel about the matter. We walked up and down the ball-room for some time, and at last drove home.

When we got home he quarrelled again with me, struck me, and gave me two black eyes. I was also bruised on other parts of the body, and wanted to leave him that night, but he would not let me. In the morning we went out as usual after breakfast for a drive. Next evening we went to the Casino at Holborn. Many of the gentlemen were staring at me, and he did not like it. I had on a thick Maltese veil to conceal my blackened eyes. The gentleman who had accosted me the previous night came up and spoke to me and my paramour (whom we shall call S.), and had some wine with us. He asked the reason I did not raise my veil. S. said because I did not like to do it in this place. The gentleman caught sight of my eyes, and said they did not look so brilliant as the night before. S. was indignant, and told him he took great liberty in speaking of his wife in this manner. The other remarked that no one could help noticing such a girl, adding that I was too young to be his wife, and that he should not take me to such a place if he did not wish me to be looked at. He told him he ought to take better care of me than to bring me there.

¹⁶⁷**Argyle Rooms:** (properly ‘Argyll’), entertainment venue near Regent Street, opened 1808 and rebuilt 1818.

¹⁶⁸**Casino at Holborn:** popular venue for dances.

¹⁶⁹**Rotten Row:** broad track along the south side of Hyde Park, a little less than a mile long, used by fashionable horse riders in the C18–19th. Established by William III in 1690 as the first illuminated road in Britain, its name *Route Du Roi* was corrupted into **Rotten Row**.

¹⁷⁰**Assembly Rooms:** meeting places, especially for balls, for members of the upper classes.

When we got home we had another quarrel, and he struck me severely on the side. We did not sleep in the same bed that night. On coming down stairs to breakfast next morning I was taken very ill, and a medical man was sent for. The doctor said I was in a fever, and must have had a severe blow or a heavy fall. I was ill and confined to my bed for three months. He went out every night and left me with a nurse and the servants, and seldom returned till three or four o'clock in the morning. He used to return home drunk; generally came into my bedroom and asked if I was better; kissed me and went downstairs to bed.

When I got well he was kind to me, and said I looked more charming than ever. For three or four months after he took me out as usual. The same gentleman met me again in the Holborn one night while S. had gone out for a short time, leaving me alone. He came up and shook hands with me, said he was happy to see me, and wished me to meet him. I told him I could not. S. was meanwhile watching our movements. The gentleman asked me if I was married, when I said that I was. He admired my rings. Pointing to a diamond ring on his finger, he asked me if I would like it. I said no. He said your rings are not so pretty. I still refused it; but he took the ring off his finger and put it on one of mine, and said, "See how well it looks," adding, "Keep it as a memento; it may make you think of me when I am far away." He told me not to mention it to my husband.

Meantime S. was watching me, and came up when the man had gone away, and asked what he had been saying to me. I told him the truth, that the same man had spoken to me again. He asked me what had passed between us, and I told him all, with the exception of the ring. He noticed the ring on my finger, and asked me where I had got it. I declined at first to answer. He then said I was not true to him, and if I would not tell him who gave me the ring he would leave me. I told him the man had insisted on my having it. He thereupon rushed along the room after him, but did not find him. On coming back he insisted on my going home without him. He took me outside to his brougham,¹⁷¹ handed me in it, and then left me. I went home and sat in the drawing-room till he returned, which was about three o'clock in the morning. He quarrelled with me again for not being true to him. I said I was, and had never left his side for a moment from the time I rose in the morning till I lay down at night. I then told him I would go home and tell my friends all about it, and he was afraid. Soon after he said to me he was going out of town for a week, and wished me to stop at home. I did not like to remain in the house without a woman, and wished to go with him. He said he could not allow me, as he was to be engaged in family matters. He was absent for a week. I remained at home for three nights, and was very dull and wearied, having no one to speak to. I went to my bedroom, washed and dressed, ordered the carriage to be got ready, and went to the Holborn. Who should

¹⁷¹ **brougham**: four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage, designed in 1839 for Henry Brougham.

I see there but this gentleman again. He was astonished to see me there alone; came up and offered me his arm. I told him I was wearied at home in the absence of S., and came out for a little relaxation. He then asked to see me home, which I declined. I remained till the dancing was nearly over. He got into the brougham with me and drove to Sally's,¹⁷² where we had supper, after which he saw me home. He bade me "good-bye," and said he hoped to see me at the Holborn again some other night. Meantime S. had been keeping watch over me, it appears, and heard of this. When he came home he asked me about it. I told him. He swore the gentleman had connexion with me. I said he had not. He then hit me in the face and shook me, and threatened to lock me up. After breakfast he went out to walk, and I refused to go with him.

When he had gone away I packed up all my things, told the servant to bring a cab, wrote a note and left it on the table. I asked the cabman if he knew any nice apartments a long way off from C—, where I was living. He drove me to Pimlico,¹⁷³ and took me to apartments in —, where I have ever since resided.

When I went there I had my purse full of gold, and my dresses and jewelery, which were worth about £300.

One evening soon after I went to the Holborn and met my old friend again, and told him what had occurred. He was astonished, and said he would write to my relations, and have S. pulled up for it. After this he saw me occasionally at my lodgings, and made me presents. He met S. one day in the City, and threatened to write to my friends to let them know how I had been treated. I still went to the Holborn occasionally. One evening I met S., who wished me to go home with him again, but I refused, after the ill-usage he had given me. I generally spent the day in my apartments, and in the evening went to the Argyle, until my money was gone. I now and then got something from the man who had taken my part; but he did not give me so much as I had been accustomed to, and I used to have strange friends against my own wish. Before I received them I had spouted [*pawned*] most of my jewellery, and some of my dresses. When I lived with S. he allowed me £10 a week, but when I went on the loose I did not get so much.

After I had parted with my jewellery and most of my clothes I walked in the Haymarket, and went to the Turkish divans,¹⁷⁴ 'Sally's,' and other cafés and restaurants.

¹⁷² **Sally's**: a supper-room and clip-joint in the Haymarket, frequented by sex-workers and their clients.

¹⁷³ **Pimlico**: in the City of Westminster, developed during the Regency as an extension to Belgravia.

¹⁷⁴ **Turkish divans**: where gentlemen, recumbent on a divan, could smoke a cigar and drink coffee; see [3.25].

Soon after I became unfortunate, and had to part with the remainder of my dresses. Since then I have been more shabby in appearance, and not so much noticed.

3.44 THOMAS DE QUINCEY: “PRELIMINARY CONFESSIONS”

For a Note on De Quincey see [3.19 HN]. His Confessions of an English Opium Eater was first published in The London Magazine (October 1821) and became immensely popular. In it he recounts that while suffering illness and in a miserable condition, he squatted in an empty house in London. He was befriended by a sex-worker, though he insisted their relationship was chaste. Below is his account of how she saved his life.

From Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1822)

[...] For many weeks I had walked at nights with this poor friendless girl up and down Oxford Street, or had rested with her on steps and under the shelter of porticoes. She could not be so old as myself; she told me, indeed, that she had not completed her sixteenth year [...] One night, when we were pacing slowly along Oxford Street, and after a day when I had felt more than usually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho Square. Thither we went, and we sat down on the steps of a house, which to this hour I never pass without a pang of grief and an inner act of homage to the spirit of that unhappy girl, in memory of the noble action which she there performed. Suddenly, as we sat, I grew much worse. I had been leaning my head against her bosom, and all at once I sank from her arms and fell backwards on the steps. From the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction of the liveliest kind, that without some powerful and reviving stimulus I should either have died on the spot, or should at least have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all re-ascent under my friendless circumstances would soon have become hopeless. Then it was, at this crisis of my fate, that my poor orphan companion, who had herself met with little but injuries in this world, stretched out a saving hand to me. Uttering a cry of terror, but without a moment's delay, she ran off into Oxford Street, and in less time than could be imagined returned to me with a glass of port wine and spices, that acted upon my empty stomach, which at that time would have rejected all solid food, with an instantaneous power of restoration; and for this glass the generous girl without a murmur paid out of her humble purse at a time—be it remembered!—when she had scarcely wherewithal to purchase the bare necessities of life, and when she could have no reason to expect that I should ever be able to reimburse her.

3.45 DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI: “JENNY”

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), the son of political refugees from Italy, was from childhood active as a painter and poet. As a poet he was influenced especially by William Blake and John Keats and as a painter by those who rebelled against the ‘grand style’ favoured by the Royal Academy. In 1848 he became, with John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, a founder member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a movement generally regarded as a revolt against middle-class prudential values and materialism. The movement had the important support of John Ruskin but was criticised by some for seeming to idealise feudalistic medievalism and for privileging sensuality over morals. Rossetti, having published in 1870 “Jenny,” about a London sex-worker, where the speaker addresses Jenny in her London room, was attacked in 1871 by Robert Buchanan in “The Fleshly School of Poetry”. This pamphlet, typifying mid-Victorian narrow-mindedness, greatly distressed Rossetti, but in the next generation his reputation recovered and he was seen as a fore-runner of the Aesthetic Movement. The epitaph on his grave at Birchington-on-Sea in Kent reads “Honoured among Painters as a Painter and Among Poets as a Poet.”

From “Jenny” (1870, written in 1843), lines 111–153

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?
 Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread
 Like winter on the garden-bed
 But you had roses left in May, –
 They were not gone too. Jenny, nay,
 But must your roses die, and those
 Their purpled¹⁷⁵ buds that should unclose?
 Even so, the leaves are curled apart
 Still red as from the broken heart,
 And here’s the naked stem of thorns.

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns
 As yet of winter Sickness here
 Or want alone could waken fear, –
 Except when there may rise unsought
 Haply at times a passing thought
 Of the old days which seem to be
 Much older than any history
 That is written in any book,
 When she would lie in fields and look
 Along the ground through the blown grass,
 And wonder where the city was.
 Far out of sight, whose broil and bale
 They told her then for a child’s tale.

¹⁷⁵purpled: with a decorative edging.

Jenny, you know the city now,
 A child can tell the tale there, how
 Some things which are not yet enroll'd
 In market-lists are bought and sold
 Even till the early Sunday light,
 When Saturday night is market-night
 Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
 And market-night in the Haymarket.¹⁷⁶
 Our learned London children know,
 Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe,
 Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
 On virtue, and have learned your look
 When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
 Along the streets alone, and there,
 Round the long park, across the bridge,
 The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
 Wind on together and apart,
 A fierce serpent for your heart.

3.46 CHRISTINA ROSSETTI, 'IN AN ARTIST'S STUDIO'

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) was born in London at Charlotte Street, Portland Place, the youngest child of an Italian patriot refugee, Gabriele Rossetti, and his wife, Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori, also of Italian descent. Christina early began to write poetry, exchanging bouts rimés sonnets with her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) while still a teenager. At the same time, with her mother and sister, she became intensely involved with the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England, and much of her subsequent poetry was imbued with her faith. Her first book of poetry was privately printed in 1847, she contributed to the Pre-Raphaelite magazine *The Germ* in 1850, and subsequently came to write many poems and stories, although some were not published during her life-time; *Goblin Market* (1862, revised and amplified in 1879), was the last substantial volume of her poetry to be published while she was still alive. She suffered from serious ill-health from the 1870s onwards, and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1892.

She sat as a model to her brother Dante Gabriel (see [3.45 HN]) several times, and had a close knowledge of both his painting and his poetry; she understood too the entanglements of his personal life. The poem which we print here—'In an Artist's Studio'—was written in 1856 but not published until 1896, after her death. Her brother William Michael Rossetti commented that it concerned Dante Gabriel's studio in London, with its 'constantly repeated heads of the lady whom he afterwards married, Miss Siddal'. Elizabeth ('Lizzie') Siddal, 1829–1862, and Dante Gabriel were married in 1860; Elizabeth committed suicide in 1862.

¹⁷⁶Haymarket: London street frequented by sex-workers.

‘In an Artist’s Studio’
 One face looks out from all his canvases,
 One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;
 We found her hidden just behind those screens,
 That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
 A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
 A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
 A saint, an angel; – every canvas means
 The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
 He feeds upon her face by day and night,
 And she with true kind eyes looks back on him
 Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
 Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
 Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
 Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

3.47 THOMAS HARDY: “THE RUINED MAID”

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was an architect in Dorchester and London before he took to writing. He achieved fame with his many novels, particularly those set in the part of south-western England that he called Wessex (Dorset, Devon, Wiltshire, Somerset, Hampshire and parts of Berkshire). Among these novels are popular favourites like Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) and Tess of the d’Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented (1891), the story of another ruined ‘maid’. However, he always regarded himself primarily as a poet. This poem pokes some savage fun at Victorian hypocrisy, which saw a woman’s ‘ruin’ as an irredeemable fall from grace, but a man’s ruin as a mere financial downturn. The irony is that while a ruined man loses money and a degree of autonomy, a ‘ruined’ woman like Amelia may partly gain these things.

From Poems of the Past and the Present (1902; written 1866)

“O ’Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
 Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?¹⁷⁷
 And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty”? –
 “Oh, didn’t you know I’d been ruined”? said she.

“You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
 Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding [*digging*] up docks;
 And now you’ve gay bracelets and bright feathers three!” –
 “Yes: that’s how we dress when we’re ruined,” said she.

¹⁷⁷in Town: in London (since ca. 1700).

“At home in the barton [*farm-yard*] you said ‘thee’ and ‘thou,’
And ‘thik oon,’ and ‘theäs oon,’ and ‘t’other’; but now
Your talking quite fits ’ee for high compa-ny” –
“Some polish is gained with one’s ruin,” said she.

“Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I’m bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!” –
“We never do work when we’re ruined,” said she.

“You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you’d sigh, and you’d sock; [*sigh loudly*] but at present you seem
To know not of megrims [*low spirits*] or melancho-ly!” –
“True. One’s pretty lively when ruined,” said she.

“I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!” –
“My dear – a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain’t¹⁷⁸ ruined,” said she.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, W. H. *Jack Sheppard, A Romance*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1850.
- Best, Geoffrey. *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851–1875*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971.
- Cruikshank, R. J. *Charles Dickens and Early Victorian England*. London: Pitman and Sons, 1949.
- Dickens, Charles. *Dombey and Son*. London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848.
- . *Great Expectations*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1861.
- Hodgson, G. M. “Malthus, Thomas Robert (1766–1834),” in *Biographical Dictionary of British Economists*, ed. D. Rutherford. Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum.
- Keynes, G., ed. *William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Quennell, P., ed. *Mayhew’s London*. London: Hamlyn, 1969, 301–45.
- Ruskin, John. *Præterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life*. 3 vols. Orpington: Wiley, 1885–1889.
- Selincourt, Ernest, and Helen Darbishire, eds. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet’s Mind*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.
- Spenser, Edmund. *Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. Smith and Ernest de Sélincourt. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Trollope, Anthony. *Autobiography*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1883.
- Walpole, Horace. *Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, ed. P. Cunningham. London: Richard Bentley, 1859.

¹⁷⁸ain’t: both dialectal (fitting the old Amelia) and fashionable slang (fitting the new one).