Waterloo Bridge, crossing the Thames at Somerset House, was built by Rennie in 1817. Canova considered it "the noblest bridge in the world, and worth a visit from the remotest corners of the earth." It was at first intended to call it the "Strand" Bridge; but it was eventually named "Waterloo," in honour of the victory just won. Yet Waterloo Bridge is not without its dismal associations. So many people, for instance, have committed suicide from it, that it has been called the "English Bridge of Sighs." It suggests Hood's ballad of the "Unfortunate":

"The bleak wind of March 
Made her tremble and shiver: 
But not the dark arch 
Or the black flowing river."
CHAPTER III
RAMBLES IN THE CITY

"I have seen the West End, 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, 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."—C.
Brontë: "Villette."

"And who cries out on crowd and mart?
Who prates of stream and sea?
The summer in the City's heart
That is enough for me."

—Amy Levy: "A London Plane Tree."

The City is, by common consent, the most interesting and
vital part of the metropolis,—interesting, not only for its
Between the people of the East, and those of the West, it is not merely a question of distance; for, as a matter of fact, the two types are often closely interwoven. Thus, there is an

“East in the West,” where, not infrequently, slums and mean streets lie in near juxtaposition to squares of lordly pleasure-houses, and where recently erected “model dwellings” for workmen flourish in the very hearts of the Grosvenor and

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right to the sky,—with no roads, and no walls,—and no trespassin
boards,—and no pleecemen;” but these joys have their limita-
tions,—and, after a fortnight's holiday,—even poor slum
children are generally glad to get back home. Even in tender
death,” “which Mr. Gladstone attributed greatly to the fact of his living in Bloomsbury Square.” But, with all respect to Mr. Gladstone, it may be submitted that Panizzi would have died anywhere, while, on the other hand, he could not have lived anywhere except in his beloved Museum-land. Bloomsbury, too, is Whig territory, and it was too bad of Mr. Gladstone to identify it with the Inferno.

Its social glory may have passed away from Bloomsbury, but pathetic little scenes from a lower strata of life daily enact themselves here before our eyes. For the poor we have, indeed, always with us. Here, for instance, to a certain humble street corner, has come for many years an old blind man who sells collar-studs. He arrives punctually—every morning, led along carefully by his wife. Once arrived, his mode of procedure is always the same.

He first goes to an iron railing attached to an uninviting blind wall, and proceeds, with a key, to extract thence a rickety wooden seat, padlocked on to the railing. This he takes to his accustomed spot, an old hoarding of ancient date, where he is allowed by sufferance of the authorities; when the hoarding is removed, the old man will lose his means of living unless he find another haunt. His wife helps him across the road, and leaves him to sit patiently all day, east wind, wet, or shine, selling studs. At five o’clock she again appears to fetch him home to tea. Once I witnessed a little domestic drama between the two. It arose thus. The old man had been talking one day to another woman,—a decrepit old waif she was,—and, when the wife returned, the poor old husband had to expiate his flirtation sorely. His wife “let him have it” all the way over the return crossing, undeterred by passing ‘buses, or cabmen’s jeers, from “speaking her mind”; and she was still hard at it, to judge from her thin shoulders and her gesticulations, as they passed out of sight together into the foggy night.

“Pavement artists,” too, select the near neighbourhood of the
squares as their favoured haunt. These "open-air pastellists," as they have been called, are a curious, unshaven, dilapidated race, with an indescribable "come-down-in-the-world" look about them; and their lot seems hardly an enviable one. Their "plant," it is true, is not large; a few coloured chalks and a soft duster form all their necessary stock-in-trade.

Gifted often with a fair amount of technical ability, they lead the passer-by to wonder, whether, given happier circumstances and a less vivid acquaintance with the bar of the public-house, they might not now be exhibiting their efforts on the sacred walls of the Royal Academy. Not that the Royal Academy pictures themselves would, for that matter, if they could be painted on the pavement, draw so many coppers as the lurid
stock-in-trade of the four quaint diverging alleys of the neighbouring Red Lion Square, already mentioned. It is a great mistake, however, to imagine that because a shop is dirty and tumble-down, its wares will necessarily be cheap. Though Bloomsbury shops may be slightly cheaper than those of Soho and Wardour Street, yet here, too, the engaging and generally picturesque old dealer has, in the case of old china, a keen eye to business; and as regards old books, that apparent disinclination to sell which is so general among second-hand book-sellers, as to suggest that it is not without its magnetic charm for the buyer. Some old gentlemen seem, indeed, to utilize most of the available light of a London winter’s day at the outside counters of these dusty second-hand book emporiums. So long do they browse, shivering and blue-nosed, in ragged “comforters” and very inadequate great-coats, that one is tempted to believe the story of the old scholar who read the whole of a long-sought classic in a winter’s stolen hours at the counter. Seldom, in these days, do the “twopenny” or “fourpenny” boxes, that used to yield such prizes, now repay the book-hunter. Old school books, old guide books, and old sermons, “the snows of yester-year,” now mainly fill them. And, indeed, with such a mine of fiction as Mudie’s close by, where kind gentlemen recommend appropriate reading to timorous old ladies, or, better still, with such privileges as may be obtained in the neighbouring Reading Room of the British Museum, practically “for the mere asking,” it is a strange taste to prefer to stand and shiver at a dingy book-counter. Once inside the sacred portals of the Reading Room (the stranger having satisfied the Cerberus at the wicket gate that he or she is “over twenty-one,” a point on which there is not generally, as regards the Reading Room clientele, much doubt), a warm atmosphere, a comfortable seat, and a luxurious leather desk await the jaded wayfarer; with, further, polite attendants in the innermost circle to assist, if necessary, his researches; and, should he be hungry, a further possibility of a cheap lunch.
of sausage and mashed potato flanked by zoological and geological buns in the refreshment room, a locality now somewhat unkindly sandwiched between Greek heroes and Egyptian gods.
evening dress is imperative. As to the others, the audience is recruited from among the lower middle class.” This, although it contains a small element of truth, is, nevertheless, a manifest exaggeration. For smart society is a great supporter of the drama, and even royalty, whose attendance in the theatre is always announced beforehand by the supply of white silk programmes in the royal box, occasionally vouchsafes its presence. Especially is there always a great furor over the procuring of “first night” seats at the best London theatres. So far, indeed, as the audience of the stalls is concerned, the “first-nighters” are, more or less, always the same people; influential magnates, editors, aristocratic “patrons of the drama,” and a certain proportion of smart London people, those of whom it has come to be known that they make a point of attending every “first night” of any distinction. Sometimes invitations are issued; sometimes, it is a case of making early application. The entrée to certain first nights is a kind of social distinction. Often a supper party is given after the performance, on the cleared stage; at such gatherings a spirit of geniality prevails, and smart society does obeisance generally to the bright particular stars of the drama. With the more plebeian pit and gallery it is otherwise. These unreservedly express their feelings, and, after first representations, voice the sentiments of the multitude. These, if the curtain be at all belated in rising, raise the house by din and hubbub; the noise that they make, indeed, is apt to scare the uninitiated; it resembles a revolution on a small scale. The pit and gallery are very intent on getting their money’s worth; for they always pay for their seats, and pay, not only in coin of the realm, but in sad and weary hours of waiting in the cold, drizzled street. Who has not noticed, on days of bright spring weather and dreary autumn alike, a long crowd of patient men and women waiting uncomplainingly in a long file till the theatre doors should open and admit them? At the Lyceum, the file,—and this not only on first nights,—extends
far round the corner into the Strand. At the Haymarket Theatre, or the newer Her Majesty’s, it reaches far up towards Piccadilly Circus. Sometimes a few among the patient crowd have provided themselves with campstools; sometimes, too, kindly managers or thoughtful ladies like Miss Ellen Terry send out five
largely identified themselves, is carried on, on inferior lines, to-day in Hatton Garden, Little Saffron Hill, and Clerkenwell. Here is the poorer Italian colony; organ-grinders, ice-cream-barrow-men, “hokey-pokey” sellers, and their like. Here, among a population of more or less honest toilers, congregate the waifs and strays of civilisation, people who, owing perhaps to their peripatetic and uncertain trade, could hardly help being loafers, even were they not mainly Neapolitans to boot: a difficult word, which has been corrupted by the low English in the vicinity, into first “Nappleton” and then simply “Appleton.” City improvements have, however, ousted the chief Neapolitan colony from Great and Little Saffron Hills; and Eyre Street Hill, with its adjacent slums and alleys, is now their peculiar haunt. In the worst byways, and after dark, this is said to be a dangerous quarter to visit, Neapolitans being always proverbially ready with the knife. . . Nevertheless, on fine spring days, it is not unpicturesque; the gay dresses of the women, the groups of handsome, dark-eyed youths, and the merry, brightly-clad children, lending almost an Italian charm to the scene. And the charming, curly-haired boys—the pretty and pathetic Savoyard, with his beloved monkey in a red coat—who does not know them? The men have other resources, as well as ice-creams and street-organs. Some of them hire themselves out as artists’-models to the big studios, a business which is well paid, and to which the picturesque Italian beauty well lends itself. Some, more skilled, are perhaps modellers of stucco images, which are hawked about the streets by others; some are knife-grinders, who go about with a wheel, and make, it is said, the best earnings of all. In the summer these poor exotics from the land of the sun manage to live, no doubt, pretty tolerably; in the winter, surely not even the chestnut-roasting apparatus that they hawk from street to street can suffice to keep them warm! They generally live in human rabbit warrens, under the patronage of a “padrone,” a sort
of modified and amiable slave-dealer, who imports them from their native land, and pockets, as price, a share of their earn-
ings. They live poorly and frugally; and those of us who know the long street of Portici, will not, in the fouler air of
“These streets of London, where the poor do their marketing, are, on
Saturday night, gay with light and thronged with people. Because of the
next day’s rest, there is, until past midnight, an open market, which
invades the pavement with costers’ barrows heaped with fruit, butchers’
stalls, booths of incongruous articles, kitchen utensils, old tools, all the
bric-à-brac of the second-hand suburban shop; vehicular traffic is sus-
pended; all barriers are encroached upon; every one walks in the middle
of the street. Dealers and brokers offer shoes, clothing, hats, boots, plates
and dishes, all at ridiculous prices.”

Curious, indeed, are the bits of life and character that are
to be met with on these London by-ways. Not changed one
whit in essentials since Dickens’s time, they recall his wonderful
insight, observation, and inimitable cockney touches. There
are small differences, of course; the street matrons, for
instance, have changed their former floppy caps for battered
sailor hats, or other articles of damaged head-gear; the use of
their nails, as an offensive weapon, for the more formidable
“hat-pin.” The traditional dress of the self-respecting
feminine street-dealer is, however, still as sternly conventional
in its way as the Mayfair belle’s. At the present day it
consists, usually, of a black cloth or plush jacket, a vividly
red or blue skirt, a large white apron, a black hat of either the
“feather” or “sailor” variety, slovenly boots down at heel,
and,—most important point of all—long and conspicuous gold
earrings. Thus attired, the lady street-vendor haggles and
chaffers all day in a conscious elegance and propriety. The
ladies of the profession generally monopolize the itinerant
greengrocery trade; and among their customers you may still
see some Mrs. Prig, carefully selecting a juicy “cowcumber”
for the supper of her “friend and pardner, Sairey Gamp”;
while yonder, perhaps, is some Mrs. Tibbs, or Mrs. Todgers,
carefully appraising the piece of steak destined for the dinner
of her rapacious boarders, and weighed down by all the dist-
tracting cares of paying guests. Near by, perhaps Jo, that
poor vagrant, finger in mouth, eyes wistfully a juicy plateful of
shellfish that the “winkle-barrow” man has just got ready for
a customer. Then, maybe, a hansom rattles by with a jaded
diner-out, yawning from a sense of the emptiness, not of his
stomach, but of society and life, and you recall almost uncon-
sciously Molloy's haunting words:

"Go thy way! Let me go mine,
I to starve, and thou to dine."

Let us, however, hope that those who really "starve" are few in
number. For the barrow-men, who pay small rates as compared
to shop-owners, give good value in return for their money, with
much homely wit and caustic joking thrown in; and poor, indeed,
must be the household that cannot enjoy, on Saturday night,