

PICTURESQUE LONDON

By DONALD J. GRAY

THERE ARE MORE than 200 titles in the London collection of the Lilly Library describing the nineteenth-century city in the picturesque mode. In this mode writers and artists typically made the city into a gallery of the odd and quaint. They sought out the strange colonies and customs of its out-of-the-way corners, or they told the curious history of its familiar buildings and streets. They described the city made unfamiliar by night, or during a holiday, or from the special perspective of a detective or a flower-girl. They went to the police-courts and docks, and into the slums and the *demi-monde*, to find the unusual, and sometimes the sordid, and then they recounted what they saw from a distance and in compositions that make it entertaining. The characteristic form of their accounts is that of the sketch, verbal or pictorial: a striking, often strongly personal impression of a place or character. The characteristic structure, tone, and purpose of their collections of sketches are those of an amusing walk through the city during which each curiosity is remarked, exclaimed over, and left behind as the next scene comes into view. Little is connected; little is judged or speculated upon. Each of the sights of the city, even the grotesque, squalid, and reprobate, is taken as yet another sign of its astonishing size and diversity, its delightful contrasts and surprise, its eccentric energies.

The books of sketches in the picturesque mode in the London collection may be classified as: 1) collections of views of London, usually illustrations of important or historically interesting buildings, accompanied by brief

prose commentaries; 2) pictorial and verbal sketches of contemporary London scenes, events, and characters; 3) illustrated collections of London street cries; 4) antiquarian sketches, mostly verbal, with some illustrations; and 5) histories of particular wards, boroughs, parishes, and suburbs of the metropolis.

The books in the second and last of these categories are especially useful as sources of information about unusual aspects and pockets of life in nineteenth-century London, especially its public and private amusements, its ceremonial, commercial, and street life, its odd occupations and curious quarters. The collections of views, sketches of London scenes and character types, and some of the collections of antiquarian sketches are useful as repositories of illustrations of the contemporary city, including illustrations of some of the survivals from its past. These books include drawings by Thomas Shotter Boys, Thomas Rowlandson, Gustave Doré, and Charles Dana Gibson, among other artists, and some of the late-century books include photographs of the city. The books in all these categories are interesting in their attempt to take and to show the city as amusing and charming, if not beautiful. The very fact that these artists and writers found the life and appearance of London to be picturesque is, all by itself, important to any study of nineteenth-century attitudes toward the city. Even more can be learned by looking closely at what these artists and writers saw as picturesque, how they rendered it, and how their perspectives and tactics changed as decade by decade the city became larger, more exciting, more threatening, and less comprehensible.

Except for the collections of street cries published as juvenile literature, which sold for 6d. or 1s., few of these books were cheap. Some collections of prose sketches

and histories of particular districts of London, especially after mid-century, sold at five or six shillings a volume, and sometimes were remaindered for 3s. 6d. But more often such books were priced like novels, at ten or twelve shillings per volume. Charles Knight's *London* (1841-44), for example, clearly intended for a general audience, sold for 63s. in its six-volume edition, and 38s. in a later three-volume edition. Collections of views and books in which illustrations were important were often much more expensive. *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872), by Blanchard Jerrold and Gustave Doré, sold for 72s.; Thomas Shotter Boys' *Original Views of London As It Is* (1842) sold for 84s.; and John Thomas Smith's *Antiquities of Westminster* (1807) originally was priced at 105s. It seems clear that the audience of these books was a part of that moderately prosperous, educated, middle-class audience that bought, or procured through subscription libraries, the novels, travel books, histories, and biographies that Victorian publishers typically brought out in editions of 750 or 1000 copies, hoping for a larger sale but turning a profit if they sold only the bulk of the first edition. Few of these books on picturesque London went into a second edition. The interests they satisfied were, then, rather special, but they were steady. All through the nineteenth-century there seem to have been buyers and readers enough to make a market for books in which the city was perceived as neither fearful nor singularly grand, but rather as oddly amusing, quaint, and even conventionally pretty.

1) *Collections of Views*. Some of the collections of engravings of London views, usually published with an accompanying prose commentary that is clearly subordinate to the pictures, are picturesque in a quite conven-

tional way. These books contain drawings of buildings and streets, or of vistas onto parks and the river, in which human figures occasionally appear only to balance a composition or to suggest scale. Their atmosphere is clear and bright, and their masses delicate and pleasing. The intention of their artists is exemplified in Samuel Ireland's *Picturesque Views, with an Historical Account of the Inns of Court, in London and Westminster* (1800), which is "designed to celebrate the magnificence and antiquity of the public structures, which embellish a flourishing and wealthy city." William Henry Pyne's *The Microcosm of London* (1808-10), originally published in parts and then in three volumes, handsomely renders the public places of the city for the same reason. The collection is arranged like a dictionary, from the "Academy, Royal" and Astley's to "View of London, from the Thames," and in each of its seventy-five or so finely printed colored plates the architectural details are drawn by Augustus Charles Pugin (the father of Augustus Welby Pugin) and the human figures are by Thomas Rowlandson. Thomas Shotter Boys' *Original View of London As It Is* (1842: the Lilly holds a reproduction of this two-volume collection published in 1954-55); Robert Wilkinson's two-volume *London Illustrata: Graphic and Historic Memorials of Monasteries, Churches, Chapels, Schools, Charitable Foundations, Palaces, Halls, Courts, Processions, Places of Early Amusement, and Modern and Present Theatres, in the Cities and Suburbs of London and Westminster* (1819-25); and the reproduction of drawings by Thomas Shepherd in *The World's Metropolis, or Mighty London, Illustrated by a Series of Views Beautifully Engraved on Steel of Its Palaces, Public Buildings, Monuments, and Streets* (ca. 1860) similarly display the best-looking places of, to quote the preface of *The World's Metropolis*, "the most populous, the largest, the most

commercial, and the richest city in the world . . . ; the emporium of all nations, and the safest and wealthiest point of the universe." Shepherd's drawings were especially current at mid-century, and must have been important in affecting the ideas of many mid-Victorians about how London looked, or could be made to look. The engravings of *The World's Metropolis* were published uncolored under the title *Mighty London*; some were also published in the two series of *Views of Mighty London*, and in *Les Beantes Architecturale de Londres*, published in London by Ackerman and in Paris by H. Mandeville. All of these books are in the Lilly.

The Lilly also holds a complete set in the original eighty-eight parts of John Tallis' more utilitarian but equally attractive *London Street Views* (1838-40). The *Street Views* were originally published in numbers at 1 1/2d. per number (the Lilly also holds a collection of some of the views published in one volume in 1846-47). Each number is given to three or four of the major streets of the city. The number contains two engravings of principal buildings of the neighborhood, short prose descriptions of each street depicted, a directory to the shops and businesses of each street, small maps, and—the main feature—a "Street Chart" in which the buildings on either side of the street are represented in the clarified style of an architectural drawing, with the names of "the Public Buildings, Places of Amusement, Tradesmen's Shops, Name and Trade of Select Occupiers" neatly lettered on or above the drawing of the street front. Tallis intended his *Street Views* principally "To Assist Strangers Visiting the Metropolis, Through Its Mazes Without a Guide." The interest of the collection now, in addition to the attractiveness of the drawings, is that it shows the different kinds of businesses that congregated in differ-

ent neighborhoods, the mixture of churches, public, and private buildings, and of residential and commercial uses in many streets, and the relatively low elevations and varied facades of the street fronts of Victorian London. Some information is also included on tax rates and rents.

Some other collections of views are less elaborately produced than these books. *London in Miniature* (1816), a set of forty-seven small engravings (the edition in the London collection was published in New York), Charles Knight's *Pictorial Half Hours of London Topography* (1840), Tallis' *Illustrated London* (1851), and Herbert Fry's *London in 1880: Illustrated with Bird's Eye Views of the Principal Streets* (1880), like Tallis' *Street Views*, depict parts of the city as it appeared in these different decades to observers apparently more concerned to document it than to display its magnificence. *The Queen's London* (1896), a "Pictorial and Descriptive Record of the Streets, Buildings, Parks and Scenery of the Great Metropolis," is a collection of photographs that also document, without exclaiming over, London's bustle and variety, its new buildings and splendid survivals, its everyday as well as its exotic street life. If these plain or documentary views of the city are picturesque, it is because part of their appeal must have been to interests also satisfied by the views like those of Ireland, Boys and Shepherd, a wish to see and marvel at the spectacle of a city whose scale and diversity were among its excitements.

There are a few late-century books in the London collection in which the city is picturesque and enjoyable only when it is seen not in the large, or even in the present, but very selectively. Percy Fitzgerald's *Picturesque London* (1890) is intended to "show that the Metropolis is as well-furnished with the picturesque as any foreign city, and that there is much that is romantic and

interesting, which, without a sympathetic guide, must escape notice." Fitzgerald, however, finds the picturesque in drawings and descriptions of old churches, a Roman bath, the inns of court, and similar architecture of the past. *Charing Cross to St. Paul's* (1893), reproductions of pen-and-ink vignettes by Joseph Pennell, *London as Seen By Charles Dana Gibson* (published in New York in 1897), and W.J. Loftie's *The Colour of London, Historic, Personal, and Local* (1907), a commentary on some remarkable drawings by a Japanese artist, Yahia Makimo, are similarly selective in their subjects and refined or exotic in their treatment. Fitzgerald quotes Boswell's remark that London can be a different reality to each perception, "but the intelligent man is struck with it as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety." But Fitzgerald does not try to comprehend the whole of the contemporary city. Instead, like some other late-century writers and artists in the picturesque, he cherishes what he calls "bits," usually survivals of the past, pieces of the whole that perhaps early in the century were pleasing because they bespoke the richness of experience in the city, but which now seem to please because they alone are colorful and comfortable amid the mass and stir of a London made in the nineteenth century.

2) *Sketches of Contemporary London Scenes and Characters*. Perhaps the most popular kind of book about picturesque London in the nineteenth century was a miscellany of prose sketches, always illustrated, of unusual places and events in the city. In *Sketches in London* (1838), for example, James Grant describes a day or an evening in a prison, a workhouse, Parliament, a lunatic asylum, a gaming house, at Bartholomew and Greenwich Fairs, in a penny theatre, and similar places. His object,

he writes, is "to exhibit London in some of the more striking aspects it assumes; and at the same time to lay before the reader such information respecting this modern Babylon, as may prove instructive as well as amusing." Sometimes, as in a sketch about the police, Grant does set out some facts about his subjects. More often, he tries rather to fix the feeling of a place or event, occasionally by inventing characters and episodes and dramatizing them in dialogue, often using the slang, dialects, and rhythms of the speech of the city. Grant's use of the devices of fiction and his knowledge of the odd and striking features of the city place his book in a line that includes Dickens' *Sketches by Boz*, published two years earlier, and the narratives of nights at the opera and days at Tattersalls that make up the fictions of Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821) and other stories and sketches of the "fast" life of the city.

The line continues, with very little change, through the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth. Authors of sketches continue to look high and low, and around corners, to find colorful London types (the comic actor, cabmen, clubmen), out-of-the-way places (ginships, the docks, the House of Commons smoking room), and interesting but not really exceptional events (Rag Fair, housekeeping in Belgravia). The titles of their collections continue to suggest that in them the reader will ramble around London in the company of an entertaining, knowing, curious, detached guide to scenes the ordinary Londoner rarely encounters or never really looks at: *Oddities of London Life* (1838); *The Little World of London* (1857; "random sketches . . . with an eye to the picturesque"); Henry Mayhew's *London Characters: Illustrations of the Humour, Pathos, and Particularities of London Life* (1874; some illustrations by W.S. Gilbert); J. Ewing Ritch-

ie's *Here and There in London* (1859) and *About London* (1860); Mark Lemon's *Up and Down the London Streets* (1867); *Wonderful London: Its Light and Shadows, of Humour and Sadness* (1878); George Augustus Sala's *Twice Round the Clock; or, The Hours of the Day and Night in London* (1862) and *Living London* (1883); Clarence Rook's *London Side-Lights* (1908). Like Egan, Dickens, and Grant, the writers of these sketches often worked as journalists. Sometimes a scene in a slum will end in a plea for private-or publicly-supported model housing, or a frivolous character in fashionable life will be mocked. But usually these writers report rather than judge or argue. They play the privileged against those who have gone under, humor against pathos, scenes that satisfy curiosity against scenes that shock, only to make the point that life in London is wonderfully diverse.

The subjects of the sketches of *Gavarni in London: Sketches of Life and Character* (1849: another edition in the London collection is titled *Sketches of London Life and Character*), for example, are often poor, distressed, or criminal. Along with evenings at the opera and Vauxhall, the prose and illustrations of the book describe beggars, street acrobats and musicians, crossing sweeps, coal heavers, and thieves. Gavarni (Hippolyte Chevalier) was a journalist and caricaturist who conducted the Paris *Charivari*, one of the models for *Punch*, and who came to London after the 1848 revolution. His book is a collaboration with Albert Smith, who edited it, Henry Mayhew, Robert Brough, and other writers for the London theatre and comic press. The usual work of all the contributors in forms of mid-Victorian entertainment made it easy for them to match Gavarni's lightly grotesque line with their own wry, detached commentary and thus to entertain their readers with the curiosities of misery as

well as frivolity. Even the deprivation sometimes grimly depicted in the plates Gustave Doré contributed to *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872) were quite properly placed by his collaborator, Blanchard Jerrold, within the conventions and appeal of this way of seeing the picturesque in slums and derelicts as well as gardens and old buildings:

It is impossible, indeed to travel about London in search of the picturesque, and not accumulate a bulky store of matter after only a few mornings. The entrance to Doctors' Commons; Paternoster Row; the drinking fountain in the Minories surrounded with ragged urchins; the prodigious beadle at the Bank; . . . a London cab stand; a pawnbroker's shop on Saturday; the turning out of the police at night; the hospital waiting room for out-patients; outside the casual ward; the stone yard in the morning; . . . the costermongers; the newsboys— . . . London an ugly place, indeed! . . . The work-a-day life of the metropolis, that to the careless or inartistic eye is hard, angular, and ugly in its exterior aspects; offered us pictures at every street corner.

Arthur Symons' *London: A Book of Aspects* (1909) is an interesting exception to the usual tone and statement of these collections of verbal and pictorial sketches of odd people and places in London. Symons, like other writers of picturesque sketches, takes London in its striking aspects. He is attracted by its look at night and in mist, and he is moved by its energy. But his mood changes: "First comes a splendidly disheartening sense of force, forcing you to admire it, then a deep sense of helplessness. London seems a vast ant-heap . . . In London men work as if in darkness, scarcely seeing their own hands as they work, and not knowing the meaning of their labour." He can no longer find the quaint London of Walter Savage Landor: "The old habitable London exists no more." It has been destroyed, he thinks, by the pace and privacy with which people move around in automobiles and

trains without seeing one another or the landscape, by a distribution of wealth that puts the rich and poor into distinct precincts, and, above all, by the size of the city. "Life in great cities," Symons concludes, "dishumanizes humanity."

But the picturesque, even at the end of the century, does not usually tolerate such bleak conclusions. The three-volume *Living London: Its Work and Its Play, Its Humour and Its Pathos, Its Sights and Its Scenes* (1902-3), edited by George R. Sims, is more typical. The book includes hundreds of drawings and photographs, as well as prose descriptions of subjects which range from "Sweated London," street gangs, and doss houses to clubs, "Ballooning London," and the telephone exchange. Sims and his collaborators are not at all unsettled by this variety. These scenes are all part of the "breathing, pulsing panorama that is London," and they describe them with confident comments (London County Council inspectors have improved conditions in the doss houses) which add to their air of knowing how to deal with this multitudinous London, of being able to move in it with the assurance that the more they see, the more interesting the city will be shown to be. As Sims writes in his own book, *Off the Track in London* (1911), it is only when one deliberately seeks the unusual and strongly marked that one sees "this vast city as it really is" and understands "something of the wonder-world of London, which is the world's wonder."

Some of the books given exclusively to the depiction of odd characters on the streets of London also record human degradation and pain that are picturesque only because artists and writers stand at a distance from them. *Extraordinary Characters of the Nineteenth Century*, published by J. Parry in 1805, and *Portraits of Curious Char-*

acters in London, published by the house of Darton (1809, 1814) present pictures and anecdotes of urban freaks and eccentrics with an intention, at least in the Parry collection, "to furnish amusement, and, it is hoped, instruction, for a leisure hour." Both collections are remarkable for their anecdotes about once respectable people who have fallen into poverty and eccentric habits. But if it is there that the instruction lies, it is overwhelmed by a fascination with the volume and range of eccentricity that may be observed in the city. In *Vagabondia; or, Anecdotes of Mendicant Wanderers Through the Streets of London; with Portraits of the Most Remarkable* (1817; reprinted 1874 and 1883) and *Etchings of Remarkable Beggars, Itinerant Traders and other Persons of Notoriety in London and Its Environs* (1815-16), the antiquarian John Thomas Smith regards the dwarfs, cripples, and sometimes crazed beggars who are his subjects as "public and disgusting nuisances" who will soon disappear from the streets of a progressive metropolis. But before they disappear, Smith adds, regarding them now not as nuisances but as quaint survivals threatened by progress, he ventures to hope that "a likeness of the most remarkable of them . . . would not be unamusing."

The London collection also includes a remarkable collection of photographs of *Street Life in London* (1877-78; republished in 1881 as *Street Incidents*) by John Thompson. Thompson's photographs are of cabmen, flower women, gypsies, recruiting sergeants, a group of women who live in the streets, a "Dramatic Shoe Black," and other unusually dressed, usually poor, sometimes abject people of the streets. His careful compositions give his subjects a dignity and odd integrity that suggest that Thompson took their pictures not to exploit their appearance or to arouse pity for them, but simply because

he liked the way they looked. The prose commentary, by Adolphe Smith, also expresses sympathy, admiration, and occasionally even envy. Smith likes gypsies, for example, because they “would rather not be trammelled by the usages of . . . regular settled labor.” Although he tells stories of the accidents “that may bring a man into the streets, though born of respectable parents,” he is more taken by the people of the street not as failures, but as industrious and tough survivors, like John Day, the temperance sweep, who once drank and prospered when he stopped, and the family photographed after a street flood in Lambeth, which in its calamity managed to save its piano.

3) *Illustrated Street Cries*. These responses to the urban poor and working class of curiosity, sympathy, admiration, and perhaps a willed ignorance of some of the darker meanings of their dress and untrammelled occupations are all apparent, sometimes mixed together, in the collections of street cries that were popular, especially as juvenile literature, from at least the middle of the eighteenth century through the first third of the nineteenth. The Virginia Warren collection in the Lilly Library contains scores of these books. Typically they are made of pictures, usually woodcuts, but occasionally highly finished engravings, of street sellers with the words of their cries printed beneath. In one tradition of these collections the street sellers are made picturesque in much the same way that London is made picturesque in early nineteenth-century engravings of handsome architecture and pleasing vistas. In Paul Sandby's *Twelve London Cries from the Life* (1760), and in a set of engravings of Francis Wheatley's *Cries of London* (1793-[1797]), the line is soft, the background full of shadows and soft

masses, the faces are made regular and the poses graceful. (The Wheatley collection also adds music for the cries.) In William Marshall Craig's *Description of the Plates, Representing the Itinerant Traders of London, in Their Ordinary Costume: with Notice of the Remarkable Places Given in the Background* (ca. 1812), and again in *London Cries and Public Edifices, from Sketches on the Spot*, by Luke Limner [John Leighton] (1847, 1851), the street sellers are seen as literally part of the architecture of the city. They are placed in front of famous buildings, and drawn to harmonize with the correct drawing of architectural detail. There is perhaps some wit in these juxtapositions, as when in Leighton's collection a match-seller, described as the poorest of itinerants who "subsist as much by donations as by the sale of their wares," is placed before the Bank of England. But the implication more often is that the street-sellers are no different from the buildings as interesting sights of the city. Craig's drawings, in fact, first appeared in an early nineteenth-century guidebook, Phillips' *Modern London* (1805). The London collection also includes collections of drawings of London street vendors and other odd characters by George Cruikshank (1829) and Thomas Lord Busby (1820).

Another tradition of books containing street cries is epitomized in Thomas Rowlandson's *Cries of London* (1799) and *Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders* (ca. 1820), the latter published as a companion to Samuel Leigh's guidebook, *The New Picture of London*. Rowlandson's London is full of life: his street sellers are not posed before buildings, but hard at work in scenes busy with boys, dogs, wagons, and people who actually seem to live in or use the lightly sketched architecture of the backgrounds. It is caricature, and Rowlandson sees only the surface of the working lives he draws. But it is a

caricature of noise and bustle that amuses not just because of its oddity, but also because of its own delight in the force of the people and scenes whose surface reality is vigorously rendered.

The spirit of Rowlandson's caricature was anticipated and preserved in the many books of illustrated street cries published as juvenile literature. These were usually priced at sixpence or less, contained two dozen or so simple woodcuts of street sellers, with the words of their cries and often a paragraph of information and moral reflection appended to each illustration. The preface to the first volume in a popular series, *The Cries of London as They are Daily Exhibited in the Streets*, published by Francis Newbery in 1775, emphasizes that knowledge is to be gained and virtue to be found in ordinary work, and not "in sleepy Cloisters" and "the subtilties of vain philosophy": "In England we find many a hero, many an honest man, and many a shrewd Philosopher . . . among the lowest and most unstudied; at the same time that we discover even among the Great, many who are utterly ignorant of every author except Hoyle, many a coward and many a Knave." This truculent practicality is assisted by a common-sense moralism in the verses that accompany each of the colored woodcuts. The verse appended to an illustration of a seller of mouse traps, for example, concludes: "And this advice still let me give / Void of excess be sure you live, / Else will disease your vitals sap, / For death lies lurking like a trap." But Newbery's preface also contains "A Poetical Description of the British Metropolis," a poem in which the streets of London are taken not as texts for moral instruction, but as the source of plain delight.

Houses, churches, mix'd together,
Streets unpleasant in all weather;

Prisons, palaces, and shops,
Courts of justice, fatal drops [i.e., Newgate];
Exhibitions, masquerades,
Bridges bright—grand arcades. . .
Pipers, fiddlers, tumblers, harpers,
Puppets, pickpockets, and sharpers;
Beaux and pimps, and many a harlot,
Gamesters drest in lace and scarlet; . . .
Tipsy barrow-women tumbling,
Dukes and chimney-sweepers jumbling:
Lords with milliners debating,
Ladies with their footmen prating;
Chairmen, carmen, kennel-rakers,
Catchpoles, bailiffs, and thief-takers; . . .
Many a bargain, could ye strike it—
This is London. How d'ye like it?

A tenth edition of Newbery's collection was published by his successor, John Harris, in 1810. It included the "Poetical Description" as well as a concluding piece in which the cries of this "fantastical crew" are mingled. This pleasure in the variety of the city is also manifest in some other collections of the cries of London's "moving market" published around the turn of the eighteenth century. *The Cries of London, As They Are Heard Daily*, published by J. Chappell early in the nineteenth century, opens with its own huckster's cry: "Then who would not up to London come, / To see such pretty sights / To see the bears and monkees dance, / And other strange delights." The note of advocacy of the industrious street sellers that is sounded in Newbery's collection, and an accompanying hostility to the affluent idle, also appears occasionally. In a late eighteenth-century collection a street-singer peddles "Wilkes and Liberty: A New Song," and an oyster seller is praised as more honest than "her betters." The preface to an early-nineteenth-century book, *Innes' Edition of the Cries of London, or, Pretty Moving*

Market, opens the collection disturbingly: "If half the world knew how the other strives,/ 'Twould spoil the comfort of their easy lives."

But increasingly in the nineteenth century the compilers of these books seem to use their pictures as occasions for offering useful information rather than political or social opinions. The first edition of *London Cries*, a collection published in 1810 by the house of Darton, another publisher of juvenile literature, opened with the statement that the intention of its poems and paragraphs was to assure that "while the eye traced terms familiar to the ear, from daily observation, the mind might gather a portion of instruction." What was to be learned in Darton's collections, which continued at least until mid-century, resided in invitations to reflect on how hard a water-cress seller worked, "the nature of the event" commemorated by hot-cross buns, and "the length of time we have enjoyed the comfort and convenience" of earthen ware. After the 1820's the popularity of these collections seems to have declined. In the few titles in the Warren collection published in the 1830's and 1840's, the pictures and cries appear without a gloss, and in a collection published by Darton in 1831 (and reprinted in 1840) the drawings are used only to illustrate an alphabet. The brightness and vigor of the woodcuts and engravings in the books published by Darton and others still make the city's streets attractive. But increasingly, perhaps as the streets themselves changed, the street sellers seem to be not so much picturesque citizens of London as they are familiars of that world of odd antiquities, like the characters of nursery rhymes, who made up part of nineteenth-century children's literature.

4) *Antiquarian Sketches*. The preface to Richard Thomson's *Chronicles of London Bridge: By an Antiquary* (1827) articulates a motive that, to some degree, seems to have had weight in all the many antiquarian sketches of London published in the nineteenth century. Compiled after the construction of the new London Bridge—the chronicles end with the laying of its first stone in 1825—they begin with a whimsical cry against the alterations that try “the strength of a London antiquaries’ Heart”:

What with pullings-down, and building-up; the turning of land into canals, and covering over old water-ways with new paved streets; erecting pert plaster fronts to some venerable old edifices, and utterly abolishing others from the face of the earth; London but truly resembles the celebrated keepsake-knife of the sailor, which, for its better preservation had been twice rebladed, and was once treated with a new handle.

Then, looking at the old bridge by moonlight, the tide glittering with silver fish and the bridge’s lamps shining like stars, the chronicler engages himself to tell “the interesting story of thy foundation, thine adventures and thy fate” so that when the bridge too disappears, it will live at least in memory.

And in pictures: like other books of this kind, the *Chronicles* is profusely illustrated with new drawings and reproductions of old woodcuts and engravings. John Thomas Smith, keeper of prints and drawings in the British Museum, published several volumes of antiquarian drawings and commentary, including *Antiquities of Westminster . . . Containing Two Hundred and Forty-Six Engravings* (1807), *Antiquities of London* (1791-1800), and *An Antiquarian Ramble in the Streets of London* (second edition, 1846). After mid-century John Timbs began publishing a series of antiquarian books, including *Curiosities of Lon-*

don, *Exhibiting the Most Rare and Remarkable Objects of Interest* (1855; enlarged edition 1867), *Romance of London: Strange Stories, Scenes, and Remarkable Persons of the Great Town* (1865), *London and Westminster: City and Suburb, Strange Events, Characteristics, and Changes of Metropolitan Life* (1868), and *Clubs and Club Life from the 16th Century to the Present* (1872). Antiquarian sketches of this kind were also common in periodicals. *London Scenes and London People* (1863; fourth edition, 1880), sketches of ancient customs and events by "Aleph" (William Harvey), was reprinted from newspapers, and Edward Walford's *Londoniana* (1879) is a collection of sketches, "mostly of an antiquarian cast," first printed in *The Times*, *Once a Week*, *The Builder*, and other journals.

In all these books the antiquarian usually means the colorful and curious of the centuries preceding the nineteenth—the beaux and high play of the eighteenth century, the origins of the Lord Mayor's ceremonies, executions in the Tower, fairs in the streets and on the frozen Thames. Timbs included in his books anecdotes about the O. P. Riots, Cobbett's eccentricities, and the literature of Seven Dials, and Harvey included a sketch on early nineteenth-century street music. It is probable that in antiquarian books published around the turn of the twentieth century—E.S. Machall Smith's *Our Rambles in Old London* (1895), George L. Apperson's *Bygone London Life* (1903)—what Symons called the London of Landor, perhaps even some of the pert plaister fronts that so depressed the chronicler of *London Bridge*, were frequently summoned up to invest late-nineteenth-century London with the charm of its early-nineteenth-century past. For one interest of all these books is that one can see again the need to make a growing and changing London knowable and pleasing by fastening on to what

has not changed, and therefore stands out from the dominant line, mass, and character of the contemporary city.

5) *Histories of Particular Places*. The London collection contains more than 100 histories and descriptions of London wards, parishes, districts, boroughs, and suburbs, from Highgate and Hampstead to Southwark, Lambeth, and Uxbridge, and of particular buildings and places. It is not practical here to try to do more than to call attention to their number and very generally to suggest their features. Early in the century this kind of book was more often given to a building or place—for example, Edward Wedlake Brayley's *History and Antiquities of the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster* (1818-23)—than it was to one of the neighborhoods of the city or suburbs. When a book was written about a London district or about one of the villages being absorbed into the metropolis, it was often antiquarian as well as historical in its interests, like Thomas Faulkner's *History and Antiquities of Kensington* (1820) and Douglas Allport's *Collections Illustrative of the Geology, History, Antiquities, and Associations of Camberwell* (1841). These attractions toward London buildings and places with historical associations, and these interests in the past of villages, parishes, and boroughs that were beginning to change, did not abate during the century. There are still titles like *Bygone Southwark* (1895), John Lloyd's *The History, Topography, and Antiquities of Highgate* (1888), and *Ludgate Hill: A Narrative Concerning the People, Places, Legends and Changes of The Great London Highway* (1892) published in the two or three decades before the first World War.

In these last decades of the century another kind of book began increasingly to appear in which, one by one,

by design and accident, each of the distinct parts of London was written up as if it were a city of its own. Some of these books, like W.J. Loftie's *Kensington Picturesque and Historical* (1888) and Charles James Feret's glossy three-volume *Fulham Old and New* (1900), called in the past to help make the present attractive. But when Walter Besant wrote *East London* (second edition, 1902), he found a place with little history; it had all been created, he claimed, after 1830. It also had no center, and no hotels, guilds, or bookstores. Yet the place had its complexities, even its "bits and corners" of beauty, and Besant wrote up its people, their work and pastimes, the landscapes of their streets and of the Pool, and so filled an informative and well-made book that includes many handsome black-and-white illustrations, some of them by Phil May and Joseph Pennell. Early in the twentieth century a series of relatively inexpensive (1s6d. or 2s.) books like Besant's was published under the title "The Fascination of London." It included volumes on Shoreditch and the East End (also by Besant), Chelsea, Clerkenwell, Hampstead and Marlebone, Mayfair, Belgravia and Bayswater, Kensington, Hammersmith, the Strand, and Westminster. These precincts surely hold different fascinations, some of them presumably historical and antiquarian. The series title, however, suggests again that one of the fascinations of London, of the entire, now enormous early twentieth-century metropolis, is simply that it contains so many distinct places of interest. The form of the series also suggests an idea that is manifest in many of the ways to see and write about London in the picturesque mode. By the end of the century one common way to enjoy the variety of London is not to contemplate the whole, and not even to play its contrasting districts and modes of life against one an-

other for the surprise and excitement of their dissonance, but rather to take the city in its parts.