The Trials of Joseph Evans.

By Bruce Evans.

Trial No. 1.

THOMAS McMARNEY, JOSEPH EVANS, theft : pick pocketing, 5th April, 1832.
The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Ref: t18320405-65
Trial Summary:
Crime(s): theft : pick pocketing
Punishment Type: whipping,
(Punishment details may be provided at the end of the trial.)
Verdict: Guilty, Guilty,
Other trials on 05 Apr 1832
Name search for: THOMAS McMARNEY, JOSEPH EVANS,
Crime Location: St. John-street-road
Associated Records...

Original Text:

Before Mr. Baron Vaughan.
860. THOMAS McMARNEY and JOSEPH EVANS were indicted for stealing, on the 2nd of April, 1 handkerchief, value 3s., the goods of Thomas Baker , from his person .
CHARLES LANCKHAR . I live on Great Saffron-hill. On the 2nd of April, about a quarter-past one o'clock, I was in St. John-street-road, and saw the prisoners and another; I saw McMarney put his hand into the prosecutor's coat-pocket, and take out a handkerchief, which he gave to Evans - I took hold of Evans; he dropped it, and McMarney ran away; I called Stop thief! he was stopped, and brought to me - I took them both to the station.
THOMAS BAKER . I was in St. John-street. This handkerchief is mine - it was in my pocket a few minutes before Lanckhar spoke to me; I did not feel it taken - I saw McMarney run across the road, heard a cry of Stop him! and on turning round saw Evans in custody.
The prisoners put in a written defence, denying the charge. They received a good character.
McMARNEY - GUILTY . Aged 13.
EVANS - GUILTY . Aged 15.
Whipped and Discharged.

Whipping

Offenders (mostly those convicted of petty larceny) were sentenced to be stripped to the waist and flogged "at a cart's tail" along a length of public street, usually near the scene of the crime, "until his [or her] back be bloody".
Publicity was traditionally an essential feature of this punishment, but occasionally even in the late seventeenth century the courts ordered that the punishment should be carried out in prison or a house of correction rather than on the streets. From the 1720s courts began explicitly to differentiate between private whipping, which took place inside or immediately outside Newgate Prison, a house of correction, or the Old Bailey; and public whipping, which was carried out in the traditional way.

Over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the proportion of whippings carried out in public declined, but the number of private whippings increased after 1772 owing to a loss of faith in the alternative punishments of transportation and the death penalty. The public whipping of women was abolished in 1817 (after having been in decline since the 1770s) and that of men ended in the 1830s.

Trial No. 2.

The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Ref: t18320517-108
Trial Summary:
Crime(s): theft : pick pocketing,
Punishment Type: transportation,
(Punishment details may be provided at the end of the trial.)
Verdict: Guilty,
Other trials on 17 May 1832
Name search for: JOSEPH EVANS,
Crime Location: Holborn
Associated Records...

Original Text:

1233. JOSEPH EVANS was indicted for stealing, on the 8th of May, 1 handkerchief, value 2s., the goods of Stephen Williams , from his person; and that he had been before convicted of felony .
STEPHEN WILLIAMS . I am an ironmonger, and live in Newgate-street. On the 8th of May I was walking up Holborn, about a quarter past nine o'clock in the evening; I felt a twitch at my pocket - I put my hand down, and missed my handkerchief - I turned and saw a boy on my right; I accused him of taking it - he said he had not; I turned on the other side, and saw the prisoner - the Policeman came up, and said he had stolen my handkerchief, and had thrown it down - I took it up; this is it.
ABRAHAM LUCAS SCOTT . (City Policeman No. 59) I was passing Holborn at a quarter after nine o'clock - I saw the prisoner and two others behind the prosecutor; the prisoner was the foremost - as I passed he drew the handkerchief, and threw it into the road - I took it up, and took him from the prosecutor - the other two were behind the prisoner when he took it; he threw it behind him, but it missed the boy's hand he intended it for, and fell into the road - I am not mistaken in his person; I had noticed them before they took it.
CHARLES LANKINHORN. I am a shoemaker, and live on Saffron-hill. I have a certificate of the prisoner's former conviction, which I got at Mr. Clark's office - I was present at the trial of the prisoner and Murray; I know him.
GUILTY . Aged 14. - Transported for Fourteen Years .

Learning from history.

There is a tendency to judge history by the standards of the times in which we live. To put these trials in context, they should be related to the conditions at the time they took place. Fortunately, there are detailed accounts, not only of the times but also the locations where they occurred.

In the 21st century, the fact that such severe punishment could be handed out on such flimsy evidence comes as shock. On the basis of the reported proceedings, there seems to have been no-one to defend a boy a couple of months over the age of 14 on charges that could lead to transportation for 14 years.

To put the case into perspective, Joseph Evans was born on 17th November, 1817, which makes him 14 years and 4 months at the time of his first trial. On April 5th 1832, he is put on trial for a crime he was alleged to have committed just three days before. It is probable that he had been kept in custody in the meantime as it would have been difficult to find him again in the masses of people living in crowded conditions in the vicinity of Smithfield Markets in London.

Witness Charles Lanckhar gives his account of three boys, one of whom, McMarney, allegedly took a handkerchief from the pocket of a person named Thomas Baker and handed it to Evans. Lanckhar grabs Evans, who drops the handkerchief, and then hauls the two boys off to the station.

There is another possible scenario. Lanckhar may have had some hold over these boys such as Charles Dickens described in Oliver Twist. Seeing them in the street, Lanckhar removes the handkerchief from Baker's coat pocket (Baker did not feel a thing) and when the boys came near enough, grabbed Evans and accused him of theft. It would not be surprising that Evans' mates bolted immediately. Maybe Baker collaborated with Lanckhar for whatever reason to entrap the boys.

Evans and his co-accused were flogged as a result.

He must have been a tough little character because barely one month later, about 500 metres away in Holborn, he is alleged to have tried the same crime with exactly the same outcome except that he was the only one caught. Three boys were involved once again. This time, the victim, Stephen Williams, felt a twitch at his pocket and initially accused the wrong boy. This did not appear to be an issue in the first trial in which was apparent that Evans was not the one who took the handkerchief from the victim's pocket.

Then one, Charles Lankinhorn, who says he is a shoemaker shows up with a certificate of the prisoner's former conviction, which was a significant factor in the sentence of transportation for 14 years. Were Lanckhar and Lankinhorn the same person? The latter said he was at the first trial and they both lived at Saffron Hill. No doubt, people were living in very crowded conditions there but that being so, it seems strange that he would be aware of Joseph's second offence unless he had some close connection. So what was going on? (See later report of 86 people living in four rooms of one house).

London in 1832.

In 1832, there was a young man soaking up details of life in and around London that would lead him to become one of the most popular authors of all time. In late 1831 or early 1832, 20 year old Charles Dickens commenced working as a reporter at Parliament and later for a newspaper. No doubt he was storing up information, if not in written notes, at least in his mind, on which to draw for the fascinating stories he would start to write in a few short years. In 1837, Oliver Twist started appearing in a magazine.

Charles Dickens gives a word picture of Smithfield in 1832.

It was market-morning. The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle, and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above. All the pens in the centre of the large area, and as many temporary pens as could be crowded into the vacant space, were filled with sheep; tied up to posts by the gutter side were long lines of beasts and oxen, three or four deep. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a mass; the whistling of drovers, the barking dogs, the bellowing and plunging of the oxen, the bleating of sheep, the grunting and squeaking of pigs, the cries of hawkers, the shouts, oaths, and quarrelling on all sides; the ringing of bells and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house; the crowding, pushing, driving, beating, whooping and yelling; the hideous and discordant dim that resounded from every corner of the market; and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng; rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.

In Oliver Twist, Dickens places Fagin and his gang of small boys trained to pick pockets in Clerkenwell, a district of London very close to the places where Joseph Evans was apprehended.

This raises the question of whether Joseph Evans was trapped into a similar situation. There were three boys involved in each incident and on each occasion one was alleged to have stolen a handkerchief, quickly passed it to another who threw it down, apparently to be retrieved later or even by yet another.

Was Lanckhar, alias Lankinhorn, a Fagin, - training boys to pick pockets? What better way to discipline them if they were clumsy or reluctant to carryout his wishes than to have them hauled before a court and have them flogged legally? Then if their shortcomings persisted, to appear at their next trial with evidence that ensured they would be transported to the other side of the world where they could never be able to seek revenge.

Lankinhorn, at a later trial, also caught up with McMarney with a similar outcome for that unfortunate boy.

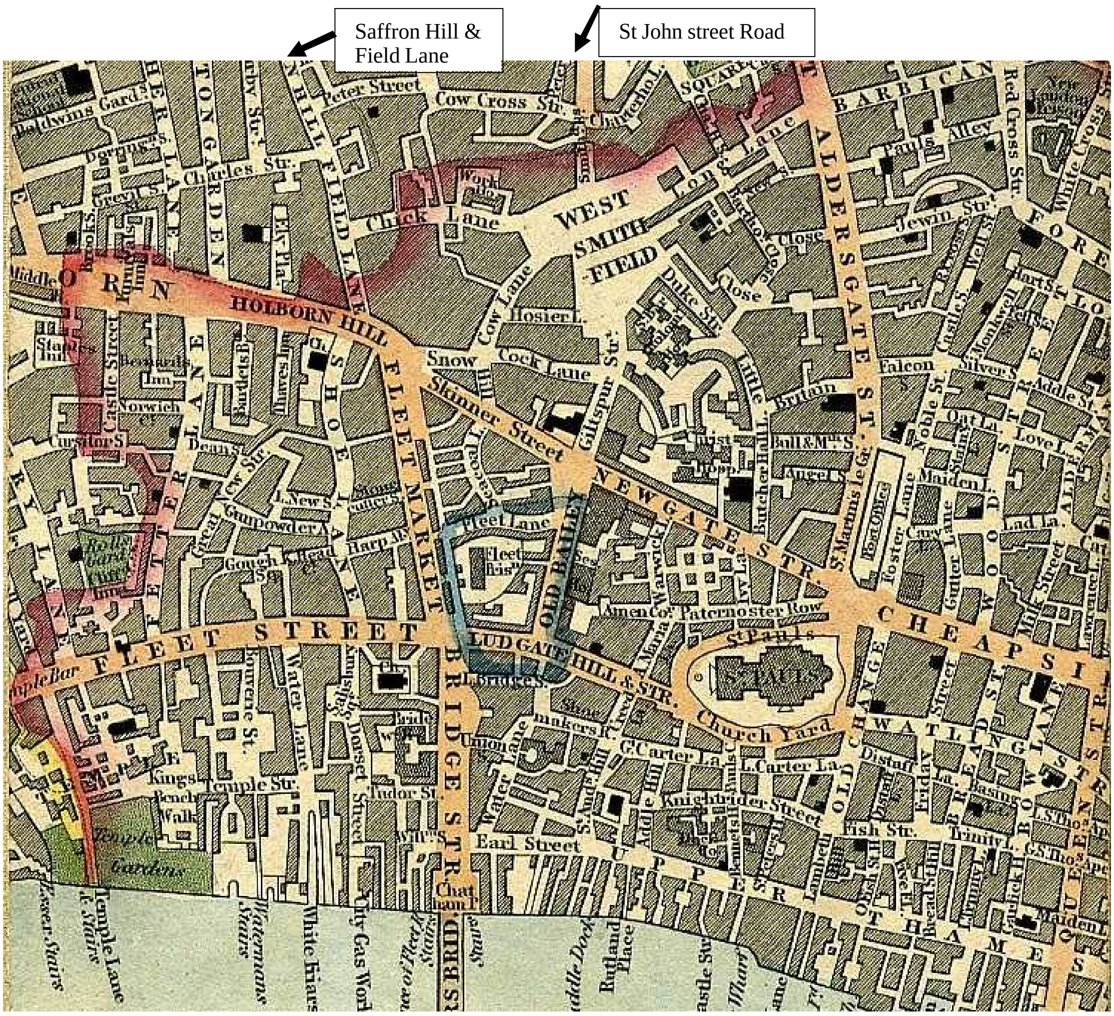
There is every indication that Joseph Evans' career in crime involved the attempted theft of two handkerchiefs with a total value of 5/-. There were at least two others involved, which meant that the net proceeds had they been able to obtain full value for the stolen items, would have been less than 2/- or 20 cents each. For this, he received a flogging and transportation for 14 years.

The following map of London in 1827 shows various locations referred to in the trials. The places mentioned are within 1 kilometre of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Victorian London - Districts - Saffron Hill

Near to the spot on which Snow Hill and Holborn Hill meet, there opens, upon the right hand as you come out of the City, a narrow and dismal alley leading to Saffron

Hill. In its filthy shops are exposed for sale huge bunches of second-hand silk handkerchiefs, of all sizes and patterns; for here reside the traders who purchase them from pickpockets. Hundreds of these handkerchiefs hang dangling from pegs outside the windows or flaunting from the door-posts; and the shelves, within, are piled with them. Confined as the limits of Field Lane are, it has its barber, its coffee-shop, its beer-shop, and its fried-fish warehouse. It is a commercial colony of itself: the emporium of petty larceny: visited at early morning, and setting-in of dusk, by silent merchants, who traffic in dark back-parlours, and who go as strangely as they come. Here, the clothesman, the shoe-vamper, and the rag-merchant, display their goods, as sign-boards to the petty thief; here, stores of old iron and bones, and heaps of mildewy fragments of woollen-stuff and linen, rust and rot in the grimy cellars. Charles Dickens Oliver Twist, 1838



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Saffron Hill 1852.

Twenty years on, Thomas Beams wrote a much more detailed account of conditions on Saffron Hill. In the meantime, Joseph Evans had endured about 12 months imprisonment in a prison hulk on the Thames, a long and arduous voyage in appalling conditions on a convict transport to the other side of the world and a life little better than the slaves of the Americas when he arrived in Australia on June 27, 1833..
An account that follows of conditions on Saffron Hill in 1852 suggests that he was far more sinned against than sinner.
By 1852, his sentence had been served; he had been working as a shepherd, living a lonely life a day's walk from the nearest neighbours. In 1847, his life took a dramatic turn. He married Sophia and by 1852 they had three children, the youngest becoming my grandfather and 10 more were to follow – but little had changed on Saffron Hill.

Victorian London - Publications - Social Investigation/Journalism - The Rookeries of London, by Thomas Beames, 1852 - Chapter 4

Chapter IV

We would next inquire into the origin and present condition of the district called Saffron Hill. It is very interesting to trace the steps by which any particular district degenerated into a pauper colony, because it shows the gradations by which the hotel of the peer may become the hovel of the pauper; and we may, perhaps, learn at what point to interpose, and when it becomes necessary to declare a house unfit for human habitation.

Saffron Hill is now divided and subdivided into innumerable courts and alleys. It is difficult to ascertain the precise period when it became a Rookery, since many of the houses now used as lodging-houses bear the marks of wealth, and were evidently erected with some regard to the comfort of the owners. The streets are narrow, but not more so than many of the lanes and thoroughfares belonging to the Inns of Court, and the alleys in which a large business is carried on in the City; and could you suppose the business of the Courts transferred to Westminster, in thirty years' time many buildings now leased at an extravagant rent might degenerate to the condition of Saffron Hill.

The ground on which this Rookery stands, formerly belonged to the Bishops of Ely, the names of some of the streets, Vine Street, and others, seem to indicate this. The gardens attached to this mansion, as appears from the curious map published by Ralph Aggas, occupied the present site of this district; they formed an irregular parallelogram, extending northward from Holborn Hill to the present Hatton Wall, and Vine Street, and east and west from Saffron Hill to the present Leather Lane; but except a line or cluster of houses on Holborn Hill (some of which belonged to the See of Ely, and were called Ely Rents), the surrounding grounds were entirely open and unbuilt upon.

Ely House, we are informed by Brayley, or Ely Inn, as it was anciently called, stood on the north side of Holborn Hill, and was the town mansion of the Bishops of Ely. Its first occupier was Bishop John de Kirkeby. The modem Kirby Street, near Saffron Hill, is evidently called after him, the "k" being omitted, a frequent Atticism. who, dying in 1290, bequeathed a messuage and nine cottages on this spot to his successors in the diocese.

William de Luda, the next Bishop, annexed some lands and other dwellings to this residence; and in 1298 devised them to his See, on condition that 1000 marks should be paid by his immediate successor towards the maintenance of three chaplains, for the service of the chapel here. On the west side of Ely Place, are the remains of this

very chapel; the present edifice, though well nigh rebuilt, retains still some traces of its ancient glories, the tracery of the east window especially denoting the times of Richard II. Bishop John de Hotham, who died in 1386, enlarged the property by annexing to it a vineyard, kitchen garden, and orchard.

The good Bishop little thought that the memory of his terrestrial paradise would live in the crumbling streets of a Rookery, where it is unsafe to enter by night, and where day lends its light, only to shock you by its revelations. Shakespeare refers to this mansion, with its pleasure grounds, in his Richard III., in which drama the Duke of Gloucester, at the council in the Tower, thus addresses the Bishop of Ely:-

" My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn,
I saw good strawberries in your garden there;
I do beseech you, send for some of them."

This is but the paraphrase of a passage in Hall, one of the old chroniclers. A great feast was given at Ely House, by the Sergeants-at-Law, in November 1531, when eleven new members were added to their body; they kept open house for five successive days; and on Monday, November 18th, which was the fourth and principal day, King Henry himself, with his Queen, Katharine of Arragon, and the foreign ambassadors, were feasted in different chambers.

In the eighteenth year of Queen Elizabeth, an important change took place at her mandatory request. She required the Bishop, who then inhabited Ely House, to resign it to her favourite Hatton: the prelate objected that, as tenant for life, he could not alienate the rights of his successor. On this occasion she is reported to have written the memorable letter :- "Proud Prelate, I understand you are backward in complying with your agreement; but I would have you know that I, who made you what you are, can unmake you; and if you do not forthwith fulfil your engagement, by God I will unfrock you."

Bishop Cox granted to Richard Hatton, after whose family Hatton Garden was called, the gate-house of the palace, (except two rooms, used as prisons for those that were arrested, or delivered in execution to the Bishop's bailiff, and the lower rooms, used for the Porters' Lodge,) the first court-yard within the gate- house to the long gallery dividing it from the second, the stables there, the long gallery with the rooms above and below it, and some other fourteen acres of land, and the keeping of the garden and orchard, for twenty-one years, Hatton paying at Midsummer day a red rose for the gate- house and garden, and for the ground ten loads of hay, and £.10 per annum; the Bishop reserving to himself and his successors free access through the gate-house, walking in the gardens, and gathering twenty bushels of roses yearly. Mr. Hatton undertaking to repair, and make the gate-house a convenient dwelling.

Successive Bishops endeavoured to regain the property thus alienated, and suits were entered into by them with this view. During the Protectorate of Cromwell, Ely House, and its attached offices, were appropriated by the ruling powers to the uses both of a prison and a hospital; and the crypt under the chapel became a kind of military canteen. Thus occupied, and during the protracted suit for the redemption of the Hatton estate, which followed, the buildings were greatly dilapidated, and at length being deemed incapable of repair, the entire premises were purchased by the Crown, under the authority of an Act of Parliament, which received the royal assent, in June 1772.

The situation had been considered suitable for the erection of public offices; that design was eventually relinquished, and this estate was in consequence sold to a Mr. Cole, an eminent surveyor and builder. By him all the old edifices, except the chapel,

were taken down, and the present Ely Place was built upon the vacant ground, about the year 1775.
A few years before this, part of the house was still standing, almost opposite to St. Andrew's Church, its entrance being through a large gateway, or porters' lodge, into a small paved court. To the north-west of the Hall, was then attached a quadrangular cloister; in a field containing about an acre of ground stood the chapel ; the field was planted with trees, and surrounded by a wall ;-a print of the building as it stood before 1772, may be found in the edition of Grose, at the British Museum.
It would seem that the money obtained by the sale of the ground still attached to the Hall was applied, with other sums, to the purchase of a house in Dover Street, Piccadilly, which is now attached to the See of Ely, and on which is carved a mitre.
Ely Place, then, would seem to have been a comparatively modern erection, yet we may not suppose that any part of the genuine Rookery is of an origin so recent; for, in Aggas's map, made in the reign of Elizabeth, there was a row of houses from Cow Lane to about Ely Place, whose backs were opened to the fields.
Clerkenwell, which joins this district, had been, long before this, famous for its St. John's Hospital; Smithfield, previously to this, had a melancholy notoriety; the fires of persecution kindled, and the faithful martyrs perishing in the flames, connect its memory with some of the most touching records of our annals. Clerkenwell is not only referred to as a spot generally inhabited at this time, for part of it was, before this, the resort of thieves, loose characters, and desperados.
Shakespeare mentions Pickt Hatch in his play of the Merry Wives of Windsor; and antiquarians tell us it was near Clerkenwell Green, the refuge of the destitute, the sanctuary of the disorderly. The great Dramatist puts these words into the mouth of Falstaff Act II, Scene 2]:-
"At a word, hang no more about me, I am no gibbet for you, go, a short knife and a thong to your manor of Pickt Hatch; go, you'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue, you stand upon your honour; why, thou unconfinable baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the term of mine honour precise."
This Pickt Hatch is thus characterised in the celebrated memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson:- "Robinson fell a railing at the Colonel, "giving him the base term of rebel and murderer, and such language as none could have learned, but such as had been conversant with the evil society of Picked Hatch, Turbull Street, and Billingsgate, near which last place the hero got his education."
Hatton, the antiquarian, writing in 1708, speaks of Saffron Hill, between Field Lane and Holborne Bridge, and of St. Andrew's, Holborn, as comprising Cross Street, Kirkby Street, Field Lane, part of Chick Lane, all Saffron Hill, Vine Street, Hatton Wall; and of the number of houses in the Liberty of Saffron Hill as 819.
The famous Gordon riots broke out in 1780, in June, - and Newgate was burnt down. The people made a stand at the bottom of Holborn Hill, although they were soon dispersed, but not before they had done much damage; for a large distillery stood on the brow of the hill near Fetter Lane, which was sacked by the mob, the vats were broken up, and their contents ran down the gutters at the side, and many of the mob lay down in the kennel, and drank the raw spirits to such an extent, that some were taken up dead.
This scene must have taken place in the neighbourhood of the Rookery, and we cannot but suppose, that the rioters were recruited by the denizens of these haunts. The distiller had incurred the displeasure of the mob because he was a Papist, and they were hounded on to deeds of atrocious violence, by the cry of "No Popery."
Within the memory of many now living, the object of this attack was residing at

Mitcham, Surrey, where he is said to have reached a good old age; a heavy fine, we believe, was levied on the City of London, from the proceeds of which they, who suffered from the riot, were indemnified.

This district has seen strange scenes then; the imagination paints its infancy in glowing colours, - the lordly Bishop, - some mitred abbot with his stately palace, his garden, through which the impetuous river rushed in its course to the Thames, a pleasant place for eye to look on, with its tiers of terraces and goodly trees,- its aviaries,- its fountains,- its sculptures of fantastic and grotesque forms,- its oratories shaded from observation by hanging groves; and then the long retinue, - the train of attendants,- the pomp,- the state,- the portly form, which seemed to mock the accents of humility which the lips repeated.

Yet, with all this, there were the large charities which graced the old faith, the crowds of poor whose wants and sickness alike were tended, and the learned clerks whom the prelate sustained around him, the goodly company, who under his guidance and beneath his roof, went forth on errands of health to the body, and of comfort to the soul.

The scene changes, and there is the Lord Hatton, Elizabeth's Chancellor, with his train of menials, and the ensigns of a judge's state, in days when the younger sons of decayed families were glad to discharge a menial office about the person of one whom the Queen honoured;- the open fields, ringing to the cry of hounds, or the shouts of the gay train pursuing the sport of hawking in the very neighbourhood of Ely House; and the pleasant village of Islington in the distance, where men went to breathe the pure air of the country. Now squalid misery and crowded courts, the black ditch, and the mouldering Rookery, supply the place once tenanted by forms the painter would love to depict, and by scenes which call up the merry days of good Queen Bess.

The modern condition of Saffron Hill entitles it to high rank among The Rookeries of London; such colonies there are, we need not repeat, in most parishes; St. Giles's does not stand alone, and Saffron Hill has strong claims to the second place. Perhaps for this, it is indebted to Mr. Dickens, whose researches have dragged it into light: some of the scenes of his Oliver Twist are laid there; there, if we remember, the poor friendless boy is enticed into a den of thieves. The place is connected in the minds of many with the disappearance of pocket handkerchiefs, and these thefts are with them types of greater iniquities. The far-famed Jack Sheppard had his lair there, and some few years since, a thieves' house in West Street was the popular exhibition of the day.

The veritable Saffron Hill is bounded by Ely Place on the west; Clerkenwell and St. Saviour's parishes on the east; on the south by Holborn Hill; on the north by Brook Street, generally called Mutton Hill. On the east runs a large sewer, commonly termed the Fleet Ditch, once so wide a creek of the Thames, that at high water vessels of small size came up it to a considerable distance, though more than two hundred years since a protest was entered against its filthy condition, or rather its abuse.

From the back of a cottage the writer was enabled to see the Fleet Ditch, a window opening on it. It is a most unsavoury black stream of some width, it does not so much flow as rush impetuously between the walls of the houses on each side. The stream is only visible from the back of these tenements, it carries along with its current all sorts of refuse, corks, &c. floating on the surface. Its waters are dark and fetid, and it is difficult, even in cold weather, to stand a few minutes in the room when the windows looking down upon it are opened.

In summer, the inhabitants tell you, the stench is intolerable. This may be supposed, when a wide deep open sewer momentarily recharged with putrid matter is running just under the kitchens of the houses.

Clerkenwell, in the neighbourhood, is famed for its Printing Houses; this district for several trades peculiar, we believe, to its precincts. In one street was an establishment where the skins of horses' legs were boiled, and then hung up to dry; and other branches of commerce, not less redolent, were carried on not far off.

The Rookeries of this district consist, for the most part, of lodging houses, where trampers and others of uncertain occupation are received; several thieves live in the neighbourhood: in some of these receiving houses families are taken in, others seem only intended for single men; the rooms are small and the beds closely packed. Two bills were given as setting forth the charges and advantages of their several receptacles. The first is as follows:

“CLEANLINESS V. FILTH! Do you want a comfortable lodging? Then go to 8, Upper Union Court, opposite St. Andrew's Church, Holborn Hill, where you can be accommodated with a single bed at the low charge of 3d. per night, or 1s. 9d. per week, a good fire and every accommodation. Please to notice, the first lodging house on the left from Holborn Hill Gas lamp over the door, Opposite the Public House!!!

"Another runs thus "THE PHILANTHROPIC LODGING HOUSE, 11, Union Court, Holborn Hill. The above house is open for the reception of single men, at the charge of 2d. and 3d. a night, fire for cooking and other necessaries provided. This house is opened for the purpose of providing a home (during the coming inclement season) for those who may be peculiarly situated."

Here, as in most Rookeries, are colonies of Irish, who seem particularly given to courts in which the only egress is a narrow alley. Many a cul-de-sac is there in this district, which the sons of Erin have chosen as their own.

The arrangement of these lodgings is for the most part as follows:-

At the bottom of the house is a low narrow cellar, the receptacle of all sorts of refuse; over this, separated only by thin boards, is the common sitting room allotted to the lodgers, the flooring in many cases much decayed, and not thick enough to prevent the evaporation from below ascending to this apartment: In this room, especially after night-fall, are gathered the motley groups whose necessities, or whose evil deeds force them to take refuge here.

Persons of uncertain occupation, trampers, beggars, thieves, are for the most part housed here; even in the better part of the district, the population is of a fluctuating character, street singers, dogs' meat men, crossing sweepers (in some cases a lucrative trade), pie-men, muffin-Sellers, dealers in lucifer matches, watercresses, fruit, and sweet-meats, cabmen, dustmen, and a host of others, who prefer a desultory to a regular employment, settle in this quarter. They who ply a regular trade, choose out a home where they soon become known, where they frequently live for many years; so that where the inhabitants of a district are migratory, there poverty and recklessness put on their worst garb.

The bed chambers in which these lodgers for the night sleep, are over the common room, and the tenants ascend by a ladder, to a few small rooms where the beds are packed so close, that there is only space to walk between them. We were informed that water is let on three times a week in these courts, and then only in limited quantities, so that there is much quarrelling, and even fighting for the supply. Many ash heaps were found in different streets; and a bystander to whom we spoke on the subject, told us that the dustman always left a portion behind him when he came on

his rounds - though he removed the rest; as though the size of his cart, not the amount of deposit, was the question he was most concerned in.
Some of the inhabitants ran across the court without shoes or stockings; the windows in many places were stuffed up with rags in lieu of the glass which had been broken. Field Lane, in this district, is a place of such bad repute, that policemen are constantly employed in it.
In one house are four rooms, with shop and parlour, the latter is used as a kitchen, where the lodgers sit in the day time, and cook what they require; two of the rooms have two beds in each, in these rooms they take men and their wives,- two families in each room; the double beds, 6d. each. In two rooms, they have four single beds in each, at 4d. each per night. This is a moral house.
In another house there are six rooms; in the two front there are six double beds, - three in each, paying 2d. each person. In the other four rooms are ten single beds; two have three single beds, and two have two single beds in each: charge, 3d. per night. They receive none but males. This is a moral house.
Two houses are used by known thieves, and the police are very often there in search of bad characters, both male and female, also boys and girls.

In another house they have ninety beds (single) for males only.

Two houses are occupied by thieves, both men and women, two beds in each room. A woman was confined in one of these houses, with another family in the same room, which is not ten feet square. On the same side, next door, are two houses, in which they have twenty- four single beds at 3d. per night each, this house is used by known thieves. In one of them are three beds in a very small room, so close that there was not space to pass up the side to make them. They were occupied by six females, paying 1s. 6d. each per week;- the persons in charge of the houses are not the owners, and are not willing to give any information, fearing it might be made public. The parlours, or kitchens of these houses, resemble the tap-room of a low public house. Some of the worst characters in London-men, and in others men and women sitting, conversing, and smoking- using the most disgusting conversation.
We have spoken of the celebrated Thieves' houses. We are indebted to the kindness of the Reverend J. Garwood, one of the Secretaries to the City Mission, for much information on this head, especially for access to the interesting paper published in that Society's journal for October 1844, where is an account given by Mr. Andrew Provan, of this locality.
We acknowledge our deep debt of obligation to that excellent Society. Those only who, like the writer, have long known Mr. Garwood, end been conversant with the workings of this the Parent Society, can appreciate the inestimable amount of good which has been done in this district; these were destroyed six or seven years since, when the line of the New Street was opened between Farringdon Street and Clerkenwell.
The houses were situated in West Street, formerly called Chick Lane; it is supposed that they were built in the year 1683, by a man named McWaullen, or McWelland, chief of a tribe of Gypsies; these buildings went under the name of the Red Lion, but this was only a nom de guerre, to conceal the real character of the place, its true purpose was to be a rendezvous for thieves, and a depot for stolen property: the buildings behind were used as stables, where the horses were kept in constant readiness; these horses were always selected for their speed and breeding;- and among the inhabitants have been at different times, Jonathan Wild, Jack Sheppard, Jerry Abershaw, and Richard Turpin.

Many circumstances contributed to render this district the resort of thieves and low characters; the Fleet Ditch flowed through the middle of it; though its dark and rapid stream was concealed by the houses built on each side, its current swept away at once into the Thames whatever was thrown into it.

In the Thieves' house were dark closets, trap-doors, sliding panels, and other means of escape. In shop No. 3, were two trap-doors in the floor, one for the concealment of property, the other to provide means of escape to those who were hard run; a wooden door was cleverly let into the floor, of which, to all appearance, it formed part; through this, the thief, who was in danger of being captured, escaped; as immediately beneath was a cellar, about three feet square; from this there was an outlet to the Fleet Ditch, a plank was thrown across this, and the thief was soon in Black Boy Alley, - out of reach of his pursuers.

The cellar is described as a most dismal filthy place, the light was let in through a small window, or hole, immediately above the Fleet Ditch. In one corner was a den or cellar concealed by a wall besmeared with soot and dirt, to prevent detection: this measured about 4 feet by 8; here, it is asserted, that a chimney sweep, who escaped from the prison of Newgate, a few years since, was concealed for a long time, and kept alive by food which was let down through an opening, made by removing a brick near the rafters. In a corner on the opposite side, was a small blast furnace, which a gang of coiners had used some years since; and a private still had long been at work in the same locality.

Our informant, who saw the place in its original state, before it was pulled down states, "The most extraordinary and ingenious part of the premises, I consider to be the means of escape. If a prisoner once got within their walls, it was almost impossible to capture him, there were so many outlets and communications. The most active officer had scarcely a chance of taking the thief, if the latter only got a few minutes start of him. There were four means of escape. The staircase was very peculiar, scarcely to be described; for though the pursuer and pursued might only be a few feet distant, the one would escape to the roof of the house, while the other would be descending steps, and, in a moment or two, would find himself in the room he had first left by another door. This was managed by a pivoted panel being turned between the two.

A large room on the first floor back, is said to be the place where the abandoned inmates held their nightly orgies, and planned their future robberies. From the upper room, there were means of escape, by an aperture made in the wall, leading to the house No. 2, containing no less than twenty-four rooms, with four distinct staircases. Here, also, level with the floor, was a shoot or spout, which remained covered, except when required, about two feet in breadth and three feet in length, by which goods could be conveyed to the cellar in an instant.

Immediately behind the premises just described, stood a dilapidated building, lately used as penny lodgings, where men and women slept promiscuously. Scenes commonly occurred here in the middle of the day in the public street, before this house, too gross and revolting to be described."

In the visit we paid, we had an opportunity of seeing much, which the public has already known by hearsay. Several of the courts were entered by a low arch or passage, which was formed of boards and planks; they were uneven squares, or parallelograms, some of them steep, sloping down the hill on which they were built;- they were very narrow,- enclosed on three sides,-open only at the entrance we have described; some were entered by a long alley, or through a stable yard, or by some twisting passage, refuse and dirt-heaps being placed against the walls.

You entered the house, and much the same sort of scene met your eyes, which we have before pictured in Church Lane. We will just state what we saw in one of these wretched abodes, which may be taken as a type of the whole; it is not needful to go over the same ground we have once trodden before, or to present again the same results. The house we select contained five rooms, one of which was inhabited only by a man and his wife; whether the landlord was the occupant here, we know not, but in the four remaining rooms, 86 human beings were massed together; in room we will call No. 1, 28,- No. 2, 27,- No. 3, 14,- No. 4, 17,-No. 3 was the front attic at the top of the house, it was a low square room, inhabited chiefly by Irish. Although our visit took place in the day time, there were three or four families there,- women suckling their children, men lounging about the floor or cooking potatoes, a little heap of sacking for bedclothes; sundry lines running across the room, on which were hung divers articles of clothing; the walls were discoloured, blackened by soot, or the plaster was peeling off; shelves were extemporized with marvellous dexterity.

One of the women had been in Ireland during the fatal Skibbereen fever in 1847; she spoke in warm, and even eloquent terms of the kindness of a Protestant clergyman, whose name was Tyrrell, a man of property, who, having given his substance, at last gave his life, dying by fever, caught in visiting those who were stricken; the poor creatures round her, although Catholics, joined heartily in the benediction she poured out upon his head, saying, "Aye, Sir, he is rewarded for it now!"

There was all the courtesy and warmth of heart about these poverty stricken tenants, which we find generally in the Irish; the language, although betraying the brogue, good and appropriate, reminding us strongly of Miss Edgeworth's description of them, where she says, "That instead of the Englishman's benediction, long life to your honour, the Irishman prays that you may live as long as water runs, or the sun shines." They were playing with, or nursing the children, and when asked whether their rest was not disturbed by the crying of infants, where so many were brought together, the answer was, "the children are very good." In the room we have called No. 4, seventeen men, women, and children, lived and slept; the size of the room was as follows,- length, 10 feet, or thereabouts, width in one part, 8 feet; in the other, where the fireplace was, 5 feet. We doubted whether it were possible that on such an area seventeen people could be placed? The answer was, "We make shift."

This room was half filled with onions, the children must have slept on them; there were a few pieces of the coarsest brownest crockery, old hats and bonnets, no chairs, or tables-two men, and several women and children were here. One of the men was what is called a mud-larker, or one who prowls about the banks of the river, and picks up the coals which are scattered there by the men who unload colliers; another, nearly blind, was supported evidently by the earnings of the rest.

Their welcome to us rung cheeringly on our ears, and the salute which they gave us as we left, was full of warmth, and in a style which would not have disgraced noble blood. Round the room were the same number of cords, cupboards, and shelves, as in the other; a small fire was burning, at which an old woman was cooking. Children seemed, if we may judge by the number we saw, to thrive there, and to be fondled with an affection, the want of which renders many mansions desolate.

You could not but grieve, that so much kindness and courtesy should be neutralised by wretchedness,-and that these poor creatures should live in the neighbourhood of the worst thieves and lowest prostitutes of London.

In another part of the district, were houses for single men; in those tenanted by married couples, four or five families per room seemed the rule.

In Field Lane, and the courts which run out of it, were several lurking places for thieves, lodging houses and places of resort frequented by them; although others, whose only vice is gross intemperance, are often obliged to live in these dens, so that professional men have been known to inhabit these localities, dragged down to this lowest abyss, by their passion for drinking.

Of the thieves, the greater proportion are English; for the most part, the receivers of stolen goods, the negotiators in this fearful traffic, are Jews, who, with their families, reside here, and drive their nefarious trade. These thieves are often the children of honest, though drunken and debauched parents, father and mother spending their earnings, and devoting their spare time to the public house; their children have become the easy prey of the villains who lurk in the neighbourhood; soon do they learn, in thieves' training houses, the jugglery of their trade, and apt pupils do they become.

Even if they were sober, the inhabitants of Rookeries cannot take care of their children,-they are too much from home; the children are allowed to run about, without any one to take care of them, or, if even sent to school, are not quite out of the reach of temptation; and what influence must the example of a thieves' quarter have upon them all. With such a neighbourhood are connected the lowest prostitutes and the worst public houses - for in these two species of enjoyment, the unhallowed gains of felons are wasted, scattered profusely, rather than spent,- these different species of intoxication, the lures which wed them to their infamous calling.

The City authorities, some years since, proposed to build a long street to connect Farringdon Street with Clerkenwell; after having erected a few handsome houses, obstacles were put in their way-the purchase of the houses in the line of road about to be made was not completed, and therefore the works were suspended. The open space thus formed the nucleus for an assemblage of ragged boys; near it is a Ragged School, where a hundred beds, in a large, lofty, and airy apartment, are provided for those pupils who are houseless; and baths and other comforts are attached to the establishment, and it is said that in summer, the poor often sleep under the arches which have already been erected. The proposed street, if carried out, would be a great blessing to the neighbourhood, the inhabitants would never be at rest till the back ground of wretchedness had been removed.

If this wholesale clearance answered its end, other landlords would be tempted to build better houses in the place of the present dens, courts, and alleys. It would be letting light upon Pluto's gloomy dominions, the astonished ghosts would vanish at the unexpected sight, and the spirits of pestilence, hunger, crime, and despair, betake themselves to Rookeries yet unexplored.

But Plough and Plumtree Courts, in the same parish; Harp Alley, Churchyard and Cockpit Courts, in St. Bride's; Crown Court, Hanging Sword Alley, and other worse plague spots than these would be crowded with inmates, room economised, rents raised to the gain of the middleman and the ruin of the poor, unless lodging houses were built to receive those turned out.

Ere we carry on the historical picture, a few remarks cannot be out of place. There were plague spots in former days, and a population dangerous alike to the State and itself. Because, with the exception of the Gordon riots, for forty years later, no popular commotion took place, it is argued that the danger of fostering such a class is exaggerated; that life and property are still secure, though men like these remain; that by speaking of such haunts as these you cannot alarm selfishness, though there is a strong argument addressed to the conscience of the Legislature.

We are not quite so certain that even the first assertion is true. St. Antoine, the St. Guess of Paris, contributed her hordes in the revolution of 1789. The Bastille was reared amidst her precincts, and was the first victim of revolutionary fury. We say not that these divisions of the body social originate popular disturbances, but they are the fuel on which agitation feeds, ready to take fire the moment the flame is kindled by great party feuds.

A hundred years ago the distinction between rich and poor was not so visible, the middle class so large and so wealthy. Now a gulf yawns - is daily growing wider, and we may fear that at no distant time the legend of old Rome may be here brought to pass, the chasm opening only to close because filled up by the best and choicest the country breeds. You have put the weapons into these men's hands, - have taught them, educated them, given them a free press, free to licentiousness, the parent of sedition. They meet, discuss, harangue, plot, combine-wait their time. England's domestic difficulties, her foreign embroilments, a crisis in her councils, a split in her parties, will alike evoke ready instruments to do by violence what should have been done by a paternal Government.

The sketch we have thus far given will describe in what way the most celebrated Rookeries have grown to their present size and condition-a condition not likely to be improved, until the subject of dwellings for the poorer classes really engages the attention of our Rulers.

One remark we cannot forbear. The finest squares of the metropolis are comparatively of modern date,- Grosvenor, Hanover, and St. James's, not two hundred years old,- barely, perhaps, one hundred and fifty. The parish church of St. James was built by Sir Christopher Wren, and some of the carving of the interior is by Grinling Gibbons. We know that these renowned individuals, architect and artisan, flourished towards the close of the seventeenth century, the Church itself having been finished about the era of the Revolution.

The Square near it dates its origin from the same period; and Hanover Square was coeval with the introduction of the reigning family; yet the haunts of poverty have been in many instances what they are for more than two hundred years. These squares have been supplanted by new colonies of aristocratic buildings whose sites are supposed to be better, more airy, laid out on a more commodious plan than were those which were wont to be in vogue.

The citizen spends his first surplus on a country house; though for the greater part of the day he toil in London, his family have the benefit of pure air, country scenery, and a detached abode. Whole streets - once residences - are now warehouses, counting houses, and places solely for business. Why? Because they are supposed to be too close for dwellings: and though the houses are often lofty and spacious, with large courts in front - though they lodged our ancestors - though they are handsomely built, - the very retail tradesman hurries from their neighbourhood to the country house, or the cockney villa. Time is lost in going and returning, though Time, in commercial phrase, be money; the underlings in City establishments are left without the wholesome control of the master during greater part of the twenty-four hours; property is jeopardized; opportunities of correspondence lost, because it is confessedly worth the while of the principal to buy a portion of health at the cost of a portion of emolument, with risk and with certain loss.

Rookeries still survive by their very isolation, by their retention of past anomalies,- possessing still the errors and handing down the discomforts of our ancestors,- sad memorials of the past. Meanwhile, when rebellion recruits her forces she is fed by the denizens of these retreats. It is on record that during the combats in Paris in 1848, and

on the famous 10th of April here, multitudes of strange figures issued from these lurking places, distinguished by their appearance from the rest even of the poor population. They bide their time; the agitator calls, and "they will come when he doth call."
St. Antoine, riddled by bullets as when we last saw it, still remains; shall we neglect our duty, because St. Giles and Saffron Hill, unscathed by war, crumble peacefully beneath the hand of Time?

Punishment.

Living conditions in England in the early 18th century were such that many people thought that transportation for petty offences was doing the culprits a favour. During the period between Joseph's conviction in 1832 and the account of living conditions in 1852, half the population of Ireland had migrated, some no doubt to England, due to the potato famine and other factors. Conditions on Saffron Hill may have worsened during that time.
It is likely that Joseph was soon sent to the hulks to await an available convict transport to the other side of the world. It is unlikely that he had any idea of what he would be facing and fear of the unknown would be constantly with him. He would have been more aware of the conditions on board the hulks.
Hardly less feared by the British criminal class than were the gallows, confinement on the hulks became a dreaded purgatory to be endured for months- sometimes years- by prisoners destined for eventual transport to Australia. The island continent was ripe for a melancholy sort of colonization by those people no longer wanted at home.

Life on board

Appalling conditions
Conditions on board the floating gaols were appalling. The standards of hygiene were so poor that disease spread quickly. The sick were given little medical attention and were not separated from the healthy.
Two months after the first convicts had been placed on board the hulks, an epidemic of gaol fever (a form of typhus spread by vermin) spread among them. It persisted on and off for more than three years.


Conditions on the prison hulks were terrible. © NMM

Dysentery, caused by drinking brackish water, was also widespread. At first, patients, whatever their state of health, lay on the bare floor.
Later they were given straw mattresses and their irons were removed.

Death and disease

Mortality rates of around 30% were quite common. Between 1776 and 1795, nearly 2000 out of almost 6000 convicts serving their sentence on board the hulks died.
Many of the convicts sent to New South Wales in the early years were already disease ridden when they left the hulks. As a result, there were serious typhoid and cholera epidemics on many of the vessels heading for Australia.
Life aboard the 'Retribution'
James Hardy Vaux described the conditions on the hulk Retribution:
There were confined in this floating dungeon nearly 600 men, most of them double ironed; and the reader may conceive the horrible effects arising from the continual

rattling of chains, the filth and vermin naturally produced by such a crowd of miserable inhabitants, the oaths and execrations constantly heard amongst them….
On arriving on board, we were all immediately stripped and washed in two large tubs of water, then, after putting on each a suit of coarse slop clothing, we were ironed and sent below; our own clothes being taken from us….
I soon met many of my old Botany Bay acquaintances, who were all eager to offer me their friendship and services, that is, with a view to rob me of what little I had; for in this place there is no other motive or subject for ingenuity. All former friendships are dissolved, and a man here will rob his best benefactor, or even messmate, of an article worth one halfpenny

A tough life

The living quarters were very bad. The hulks were cramped and the prisoners slept in fetters. The prisoners had to live on one deck that was barely high enough to let a man stand up. The officers lived in cabins in the stern.
The conditions on board were often worse than places like Newgate. Attempts by any prisoners to file away or knock off the chains around their waists and ankles led to frequent floggings, extra irons and solitary confinement in tiny cells with names like the 'Black Hole'.

Cat o’nine tails.

Convict dress

The men were poorly dressed as well as unhealthy. They were supposed to have:
a linen shirt
a brown jacket
a pair of breeches.
But the men who controlled the ships often pocketed the money the government had given for the clothes.

Food on the hulks

The authorities were always keen to keep down the cost of the prisons. They wanted to avoid giving prisoners a better life than the poor had outside the hulks.
The quality of the prisoners' food was therefore kept as low as possible. The monotonous daily meals consisted chiefly of:
ox-cheek, either boiled or made into soup
pease
bread or biscuit.
The biscuits were often mouldy and green on both sides! On two days a week the meat was replaced by oatmeal and cheese. Each prisoner had two pints of beer four days a week, and badly filtered water, drawn from the river, on the others.
Sometimes, the captain of a hulk would allow the convicts to plant vegetables in plots near the Arsenal. This attempt to add something extra to the poor diet of the prisoners depended on the goodwill, or otherwise, of the individual in charge.

Overcrowding

As convict numbers increased, so did the number of hulks. The first two vessels, the Justitia and the Censor, housed 125 and 183 prisoners respectively. The number of convicts held on other vessels varied with their size, but averaged 275-300. Also, each ship would have about 20 officers. On a still, warm day the smell of the prisoners would pollute the river from bank to bank.
Hulk after hulk, hung with bedding, clothes, weed and rotting rigging, lined the river like a floating shantytown. Because of the isolated position of the hulks, convicts were less able than prisoners ashore to arrange special treatment, particularly visits from family and friends.

The hulk *Discovery*.

Thirty years before becoming a prison hulk in 1808, HMS Discovery was Captain George Vancouver's ship during his voyages in the Pacific. She served as a prison hulk for 10 years at Sheerness and a further 15 years at Woolwich. She was then moved to Deptford, where she was broken up in 1834.

Joseph Evans was most likely, still six months from his 15th birthday when he was thrown into one of these frightful prison hulks. It seems that he spent 12 months in these conditions before he was put aboard the convict transport, Asia, for the long, long voyage to Australia.