

THE
CURIOSITIES
OF
LONDON;

CONTAINING A
DESCRIPTIVE AND ENTERTAINING SKETCH
OF THE
BRITISH METROPOLIS,
FOR THE
AMUSEMENT OF YOUTH.

ORNAMENTED WITH NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS.

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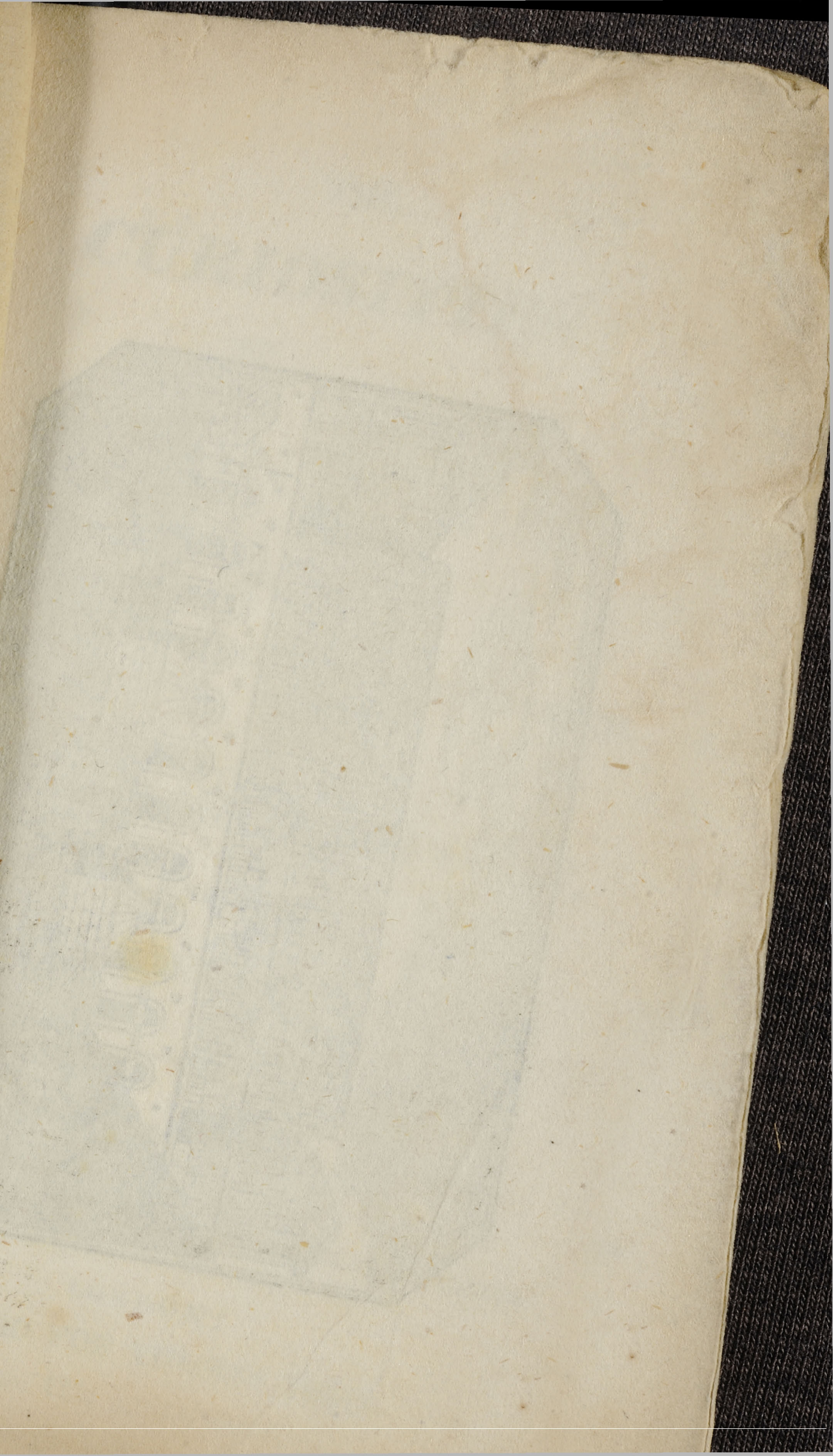
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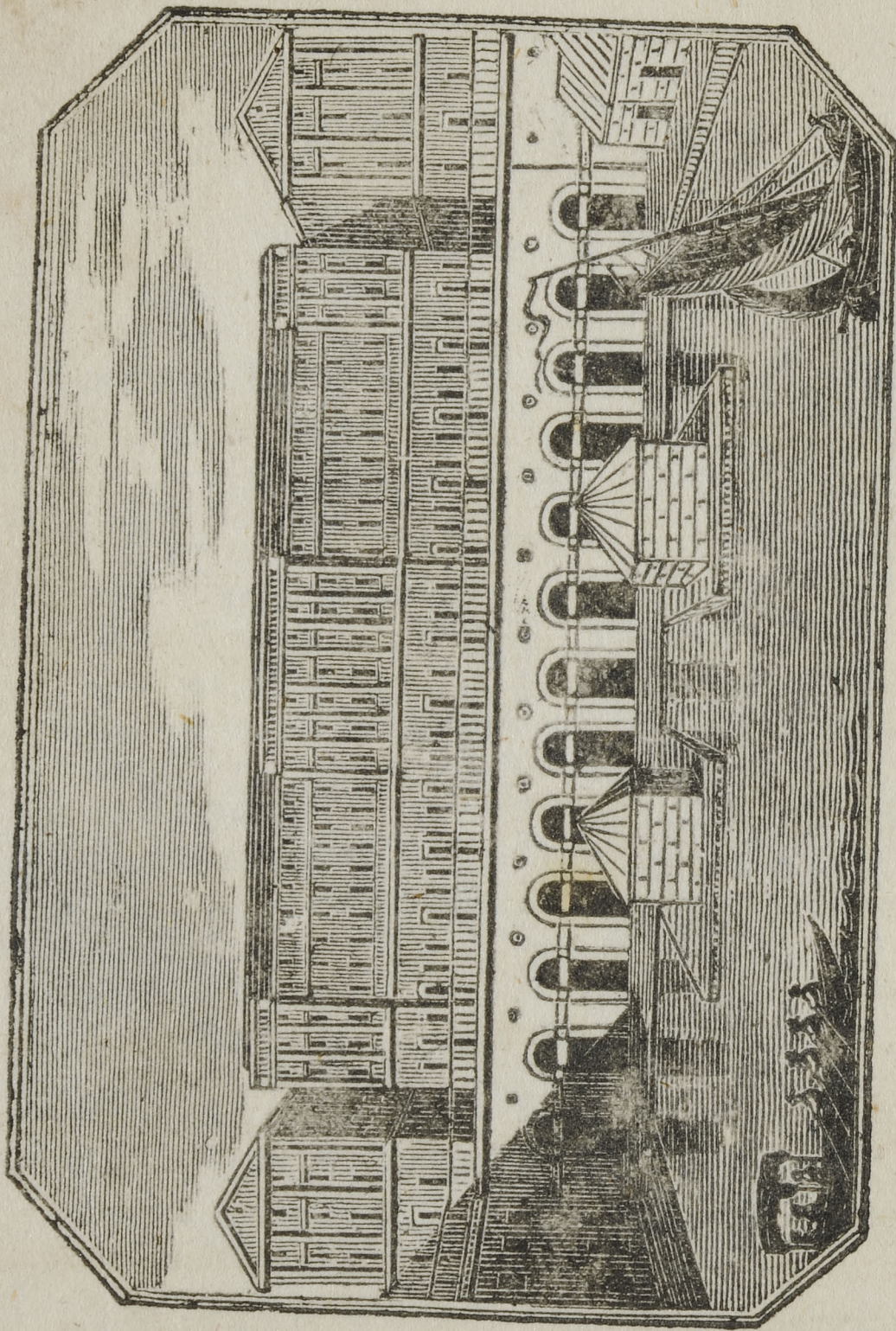
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LONDON.



GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LONDON.

LONDON is situated in the latitude of 51 degrees 31 minutes north; at the distance of 500 miles south-west of Copenhagen; 190 west of Amsterdam; 660 north-west of Vienna; 225 north-west of Paris; 690 north-east of Madrid; 750 north-west of Rome; and 1500 north-west of Constantinople.

It extends, from west to east, along the banks of the river Thames, being distant from the sea about sixty miles. It consists of three principal divisions; the city of London, the city of Westminster, and the borough of Southwark, with their respective suburbs. The

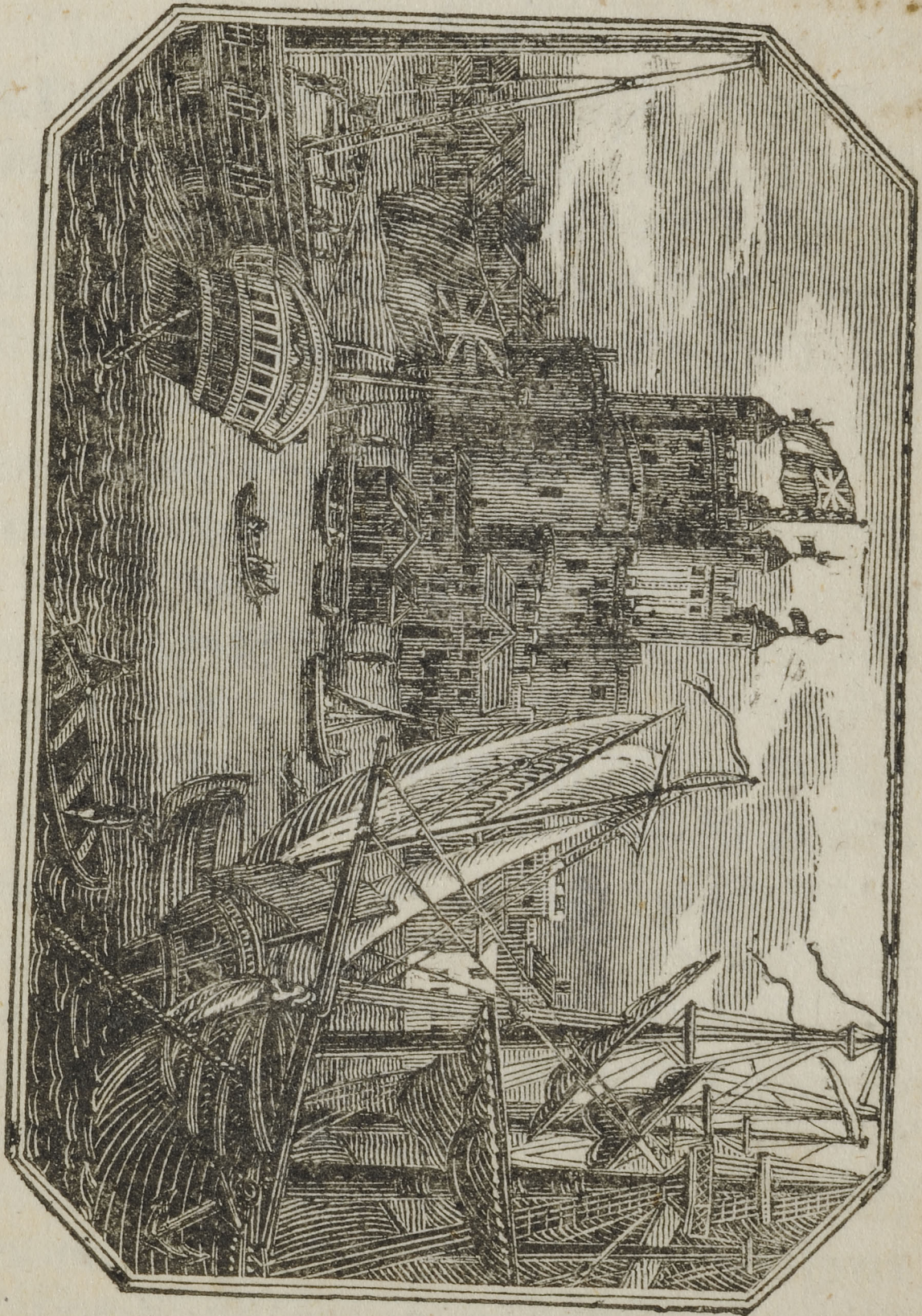
two former divisions are situated on the northern side of the Thames, in the county of Middlesex, great part of them lying on hills, and forming a grand and beautiful amphitheatre round the water; the latter, on the southern bank, in the county of Surry, on level ground, and anciently an entire morass.

The length of London from Hyde Park corner to Poplar, is about seven miles, exclusive of houses that on each side line the principal roads to the distance of several miles in every direction; the breadth is irregular, being, at the narrowest part, not more than two, and at the broadest, almost four miles. The soil is chiefly a bed of gravel, but is in many places mixed with clay. The air and climate are neither so settled nor temperate as some other parts of the world; yet London is, perhaps, the most healthy city of Europe, from a variety of circumstances. The tide in the river flows 15 miles higher than London; but the water is not salt in any part of the town, and it is natu-

rally very sweet and pure. The river is secured in its channels by embankments, and when not swelled by the tide or rains, is not more than a quarter of a mile broad, nor in general more than 12 feet in depth; at spring tides it rises 12 and sometimes 14 feet above this level, and of course its breadth is increased. The principal streets are wide and airy, and surpass all others in Europe, in their convenience for trade, and the accommodation of passengers of every description; they are paved in the middle, for carriages, with large stones in a very compact manner, forming a small convexity to pass the water off by channels; and on each side is a broad level path, formed of foot passengers. Underneath the pavements are large vaulted channels called sewers, which communicate with each house by smaller ones, and with every street by convenient openings and gratings, to carry off all filth that can be conveyed in that manner into the river. All mud or other rubbish, that accumulates on the surface of the

streets, is taken away by persons employed by the public for the purpose. London does not excel in the number of buildings celebrated for grandeur or beauty; but in all the principal streets, the metropolis is distinguished by an appearance of neatness and comfort. Most of the great streets, appropriated to shops for retail trade, have an unrivalled aspect of wealth and splendour. The shops themselves are handsomely fitted up, and decorated with taste; but the manufactures with which they are stored form their chief ornament. It has been estimated that London contains about 8000 streets, lanes, alleys, and courts; 60 squares, and 160,000 houses, warehouses, and other buildings. London abounds with markets, warehouses, and shops, for all articles of necessity or luxury; and, perhaps, there is no town in which an inhabitant, who possesses the universal medium of exchange, can be so freely supplied as here with the produce of nature or art, from every quarter of the globe.

THE TOWER.



TOWER OF LONDON.

THE antiquity of the Tower of London, and the awful transactions which have so frequently happened in it, induce us to begin our description of this great city with an account of this fortress.

The Tower of London was anciently a palace, inhabited by various sovereigns of England, till the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Fitz-Stephen says, it was originally built by Julius Cæsar, but there is not any proof of the truth of this story.

William the Conqueror erected a fortress on part of the present site of the Tower, to overawe the inhabitants of London, on his gaining possession of the city; and we may date the origin of the Tower from this transaction. About twelve years after, in 1078, the conqueror erected a larger building than the first, either on the site of the first fortress, or near it. This building, re-

paired or rebuilt, by succeeding princes, is that which is now called the White Tower.

This tower is situated in the centre of this fortress, and it is a large square, irregular building, with four watch towers, one of which is used as an observatory. The first and upper floors contain the armories; and upon the summit is a reservoir, which in case of necessity, would supply the whole garrison with water. The upper story is filled with armorers tools, matches, sheep-skins, tanned hides, &c.; and in this tower are likewise kept models of the new-invented engines of destruction from time to time presented to government.

The Church of St. Peter and Vincula, is less remarkable for its architecture, than for containing the ashes of many noble persons, who have suffered by the hands of the executioner, either within the Tower or upon the hill.

The next object is an antique chapel, dedicated to St. John. Its form is oblong: and twelve short round pillars

support the roof. The columns, it is said, reach down beyond the floor, through an apartment beneath, which is now a magazine for gunpowder. Above is a gallery supposed to have been for the ladies, as it looks through arched windows into the body of the chapel.

Over the inlet which communicates with the Thames on the south side, there is a drawbridge for receiving or sending out naval stores. On the wharf, which is a charming promenade, there is a platform, on which sixty-one pieces of cannon are mounted; these are fired on all public occasions. Parallel with the wharf within the ramparts upon which cannon are also mounted, there is a pleasant platform called "The Ladies Line," shaded by a row of trees, and overlooking the river and the shipping. The principal entrances to the Tower at present are by three gates on the outside of the ditch; one of these leads to a stone bridge thrown across the ditch; the third gate, the strongest, is at the farthest extremity of this bridge. When these gates are opened

in the morning, all the forms of a regular garrison are observed; the yeoman porter, then going with a serjeant's guard to the governor's house, demands the keys. Having obtained them, he proceeds to the innermost gate, and when he has passed it, it is again closed. After opening the outer gates, he returns again to the innermost, and calls to the Wardens within to take "King George's Keys." The same ceremonies are observed at night, with this difference; that is, when the governor is returning with the keys to the governor's house, a part of the main guard, drawn up under arms, challenge him with "Who comes there?" To which he replies, "The Keys." The guards answer "Pass Keys," and rest their firelocks. The yeoman porter says, "God save the King," and the ceremony closes with a general "Amen."

The wild beasts are kept in a yard at the right hand of the west entrance. They are still shewn for a shilling, and the keeper will relate their names, genealogies, &c. They are kept remark-

ably clean and healthy; those whelped in the Tower are fiercer than the wild ones. The dens are very large; and formerly several monkies were kept, but one of them having torn a boy's leg in a dangerous manner, they were removed.

The Volunteer Armory contains arms piled in beautiful order for 30,000 men, with pikes, swords, &c. in immense number, arranged like stars and other devices. At the entrance of the room stands a fine figure of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, in bright armour, with his lance, eighteen feet long. The Sea Armory in the White Tower contains arms for nearly 50,000 seamen and marines; here are some elegant pieces of brass cannon.

The Jewel Office is a dark stone room of small dimensions, a few yards eastward of the grand store-house. In this place are preserved many costly curiosities, which are shewn by candle light; and between the exhibitor and spectator is a strong iron railing to the top of the ceiling, as a prevention of

similar attempts to steal the crown, &c. as was effected by a desperado called Blood, in the reign of Charles II.

When the king goes to the parliament house, the keeper of the jewel office, attended by the warders of the Tower, privately carry, in a hackney coach, his Majesty's crown and that of the Prince of Wales, to Whitehall, where his Majesty and the Prince robe themselves. After the ceremonies of the day are over, the crowns are conveyed back to the Tower by the persons who brought them. Visitors are not permitted to see any part of the Mint.

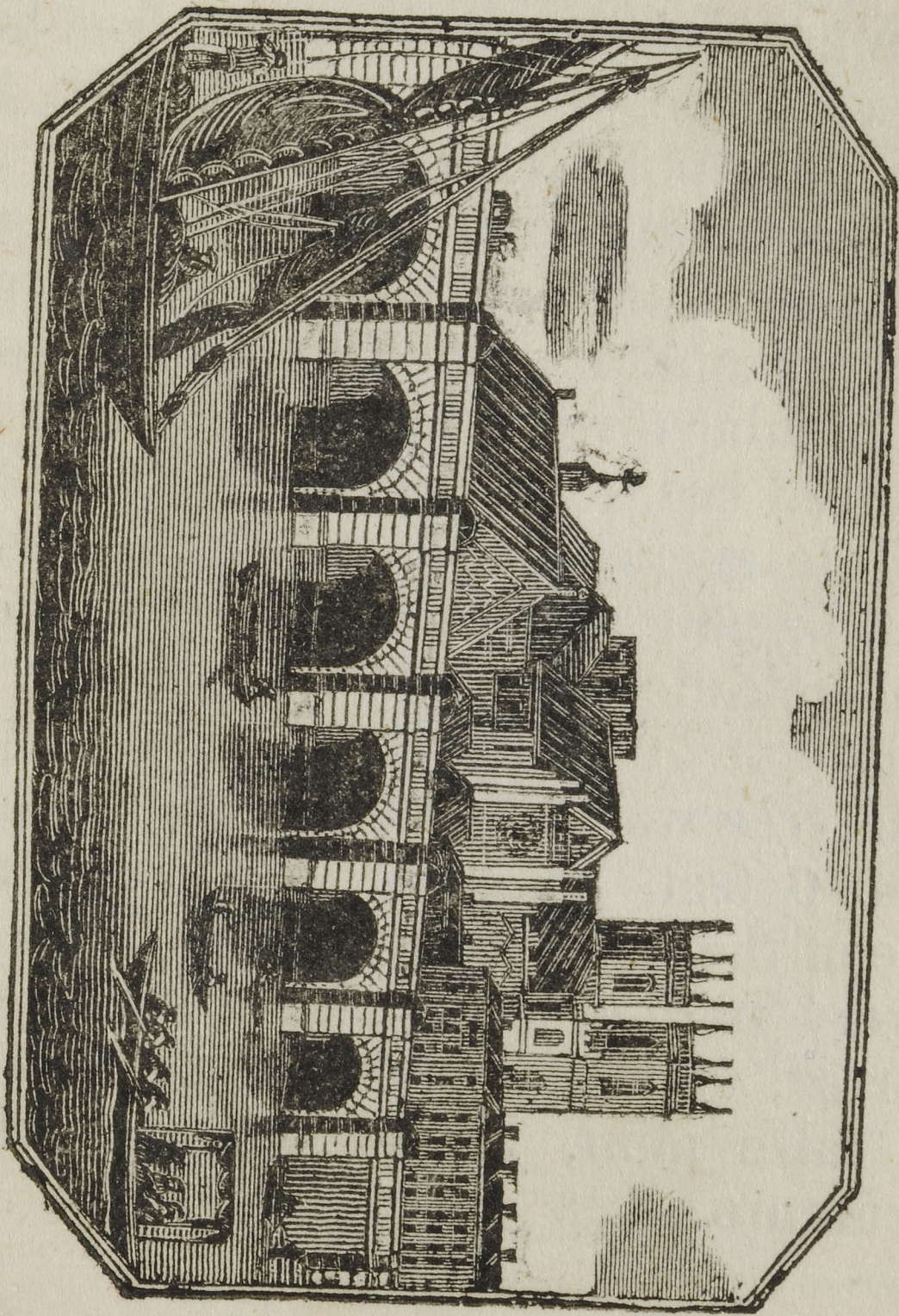
The names of the different towers within the walls, may be learned from the Warders.

The White Tower, Beauchamp Tower, and the Bloody Tower, are the most curious. The first was the usual residence of those kings that chose to reside there. The second was that in which Anne Boleyn wrote the memorable letter to Henry VIII. In the wall of a room, now a mess-room for officers, are undoubted autographs of many of

its illustrious tenants; viz. those of Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1553. Lady Jane Grey, and the Earl of Arundel, 1572. The Bloody Tower, near Traitor's Gate, is that where Edward V. is said to have been smothered by order of Richard the Third.

The Tower is generally garrisoned by the guards, but since the present war, it has occasionally contained some part of the militia of the Tower Hamlets. It is still used as a state prison; but the prisoners are kept in the warder's houses, and are generally permitted to walk on the inner platform, in the day-time, accompanied by a warder.

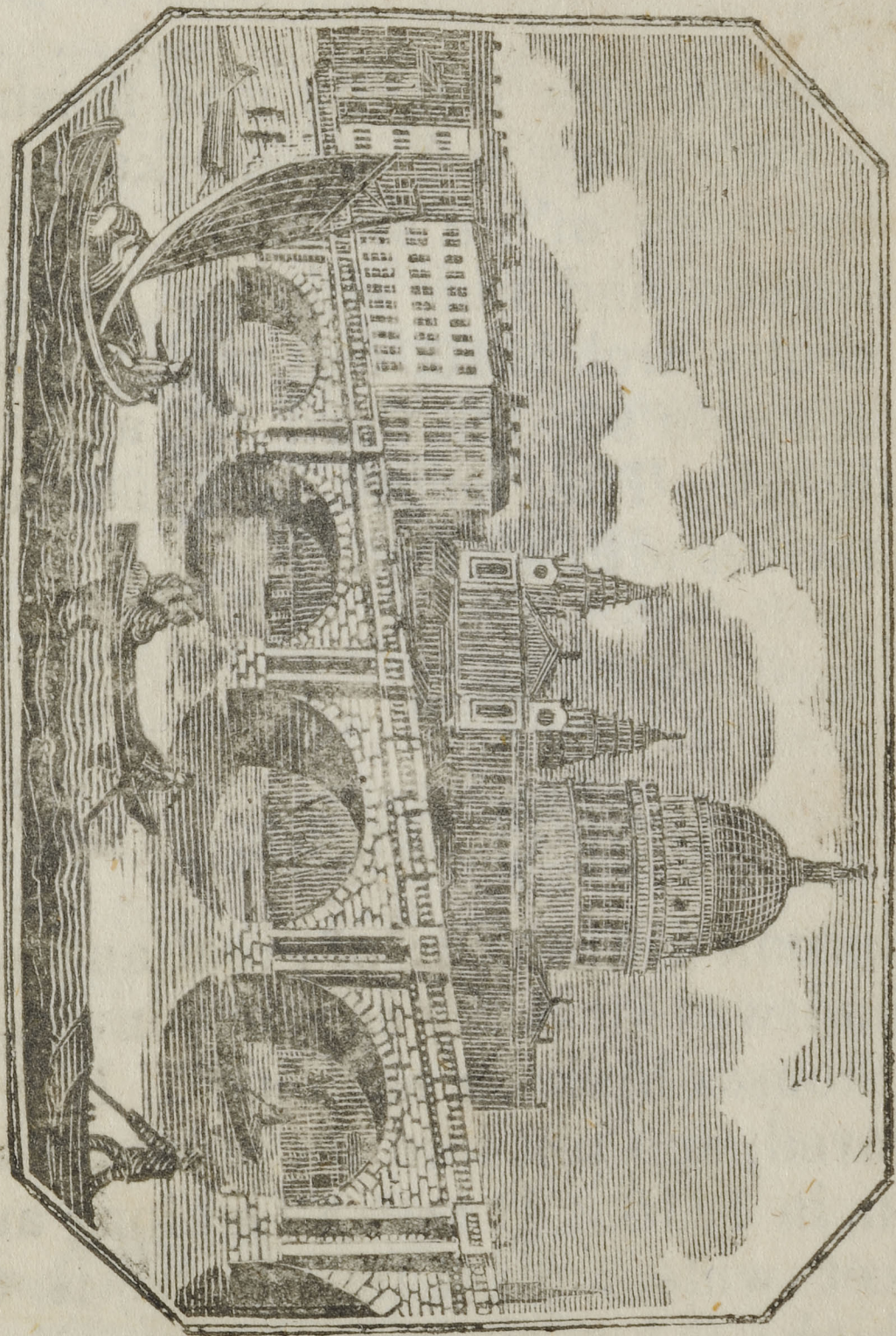




WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

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WESTMINSTER BRIDGE was first built between the years 1738 and 1750, and cost 389,500*l.* It is 1223 feet long, and 44 feet wide; containing 14 piers, and 13 large and two small semi-circular arches; and has on its top 28 semi-octangular towers, twelve of which are covered with half domes. The two middle piers contain each 3000 solid feet, or 200 tons of Portland stone.— The middle arch is 76 feet wide; the two next 72 feet, and the last 25 feet. The free water-way between the piers is 870 feet. This bridge is esteemed one of the most beautiful in the world. Every part is fully and properly supported, and there is no false bearing, or false joint, throughout the whole structure.



BLACKFRIAR'S BRIDGE.

BLACKFRIAR'S BRIDGE.

BLACKFRIAR'S BRIDGE was finished in the year 1769, and is remarkable for the lightness of its structure. It has eight piers and nine elliptical arches. The centre arch is 100 feet wide; those on each side 93, the third 80, and the fourth 70. The length is 1100 feet, and the breadth 42 feet.

LONDON BRIDGE.

LONDON BRIDGE is of great antiquity; and was for many ages encumbered with houses built on each side. It was improved, and put into its present condition, in 1756. It is 915 feet long and 45 feet wide, and at the centre is 60 feet high; it has 19 arches, but no two are alike. The center arch is semicircular, and was built in 1756, by throwing two into one; and is now 72 feet in

diameter. The other are of different forms, and run from 8 to 20 feet wide. But it is at this time considered as a building so unfit for its situation, that it is intended to take it down; and, among other plans, an iron bridge, of an immense arch, has been proposed in its stead, and approved by a committee of the House of Commons.

A very heavy fall of water occurs at this bridge, occasioned, in part, by the enormous size of the sterlings, and by the small breadth of free water way. The obstruction to the navigation from this cause, and the number of lives which are every year lost in consequence, are sufficient reasons for removing the bridge, and erecting a more commodious one in its place, as soon as possible.



ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

FROM Blackfriar's Bridge we have a handsome view of this magnificent cathedral, which stands in the center of the metropolis, on an eminence situated between Cheapside on the east, and Ludgate-street on the west.

The body of this church is in the form of a cross. Over the space where the lines of that figure intersect each other, rises a stately dome, from the top of which springs a lantern adorned with Corinthian columns, and surrounded at its base by a balcony; on the lantern rests a gilded ball, and on that a cross (gilded also) which crowns the ornaments on this part of the edifice.

The length of this church, including the portico, is 500 feet; the breadth 250; the height, to the top of the cross, 340; the exterior diameter of the dome, 145; and the entire circumference of the building, 2,292 feet. A dwarf

stone-wall, supporting a beautiful balustrade of cast iron, surrounds the church, and separates a large area, which is properly the church-yard, from a spacious carriage-way on the south side, and a broad convenient foot pavement on the north.

The dimensions of this cathedral are thus very great; but the quantity of ground the architect chose to cover, is not that by which it is chiefly distinguished; since the grandeur of the design, and the beauty and elegance of the proportions, very justly rank this church, among the noblest edifices of the modern world.

The church is adorned with three porticos: one at the principal entrance, facing the west, and running parallel with the opening of Ludgate-street; and the other two facing the north and south, at the extremities of the cross aisle, and corresponding in their architecture. These fine ornaments, whether considered separately, or as they afford variety and relief to the form of the edifice, deserve to be peculiarly

regarded. The western portico, perhaps, combines as much grace and magnificence as any specimen of the kind in the world. It consists of twelve lofty Corinthian columns below, and eight composite above, supporting a grand pediment; the whole resting on an elevated base, the ascent to which is by a flight of twenty-two square steps of black marble, running the entire length of the portico. The portico at the northern entrance, consists of a dome, supported by six Corinthian columns, with an ascent of twelve circular steps of black marble. The opposite portico is similar, except that the ascent consists of twenty-five steps, the ground on that side being in this proportion lower. The great dome is ornamented with thirty-two columns below, and a range of pilastres above. At the eastern extremity of the church, is a circular projection, forming a recess within for the communion-table. The walls are wrought in rustic, and strengthened and ornamented by two rows of coupled pilasters, one above the other, the lower

being Corinthian, and the other Composite. The northern and southern sides have an air of uncommon elegance. The corners of the western front are crowned with turrets of an airy and light form. The successive dome, lantern, ball, and cross have no relation to each other; nor have the three uppermost any connection with the general character of the building. But it is due from every compiler of a description of London, to Sir Christopher Wren, the great architect of this noble edifice, to say, that had his fine taste and exalted genius been uncontrolled in forming the plan, this capital would have boasted of a more pure structure than the present cathedral. Sir Christopher Wren invented the successive plans for this work; the first of which, the purest and favourite of himself, was rejected by ignorance and superstition, for its too near approach to the sublimity of the Grecian temples. Fortunately for the architect's fame, the model (by Sir Christopher Wren) of that plan is preserved, and is to be

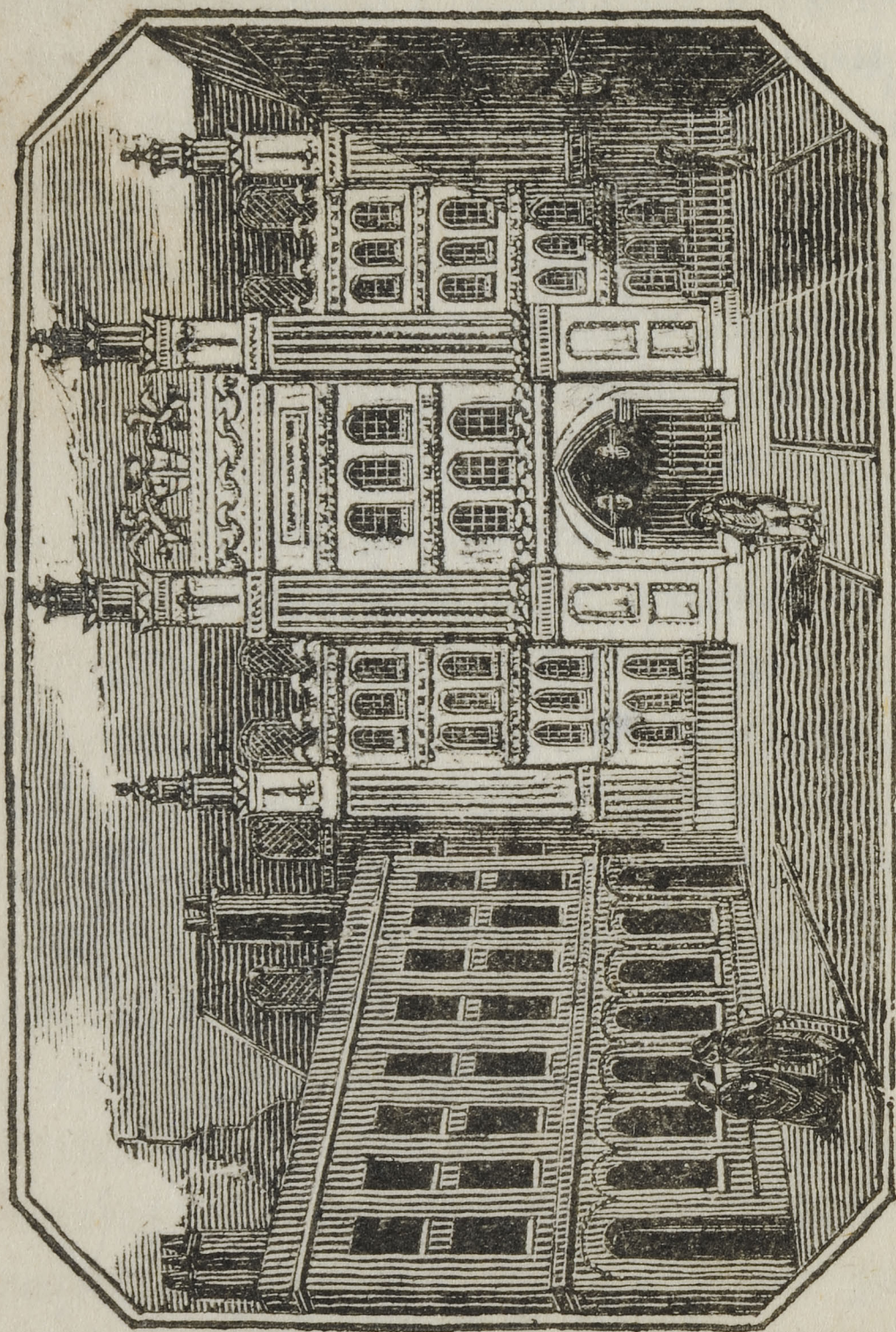
seen at the cathedral. And, after all, the metropolis of England may deem herself happy in possessing a cathedral, so little debased with the corruptions of architecture as is this beautiful pile.

The inside of St. Paul's is so far from corresponding in beauty with its exterior, that it is almost entirely destitute of decoration. The interior part of the dome is painted by Sir James Thornhill, a contemporary with the architect, who was but ill qualified to run a kindred course with him. An attempt has, of late years been made to relieve the sullen style of the inside, by the ornaments of statues and monuments, erected to the memories of great men; and the plan deserves high praise, as departing from the taste of monumental architecture. Three statues and a variety of monuments are placed in proper situations, and on a plan of general propriety.

This cathedral was built at the national expence, and cost 736,752l. 2s. 3½d. exclusive of the iron balustrade on the wall surrounding the space that is

properly the church-yard, which, with its seven iron gates, weigh 200 tons and 81 pounds, and cost 11,202l. 0s. 6d.— This immense edifice was reared in 35 years, the first stone being laid on the 21st June, 1675, and the building completed in 1710, exclusive of some of the decorations, which were not finished till 1723. The highest stone of the lantern was laid on by Mr. Christopher Wren, son of the architect, in 1710. St. Peter's, at Rome, was 135 years in building; a succession of twelve architects being employed on the work, under a succession of nineteen popes. St. Paul's was built by one architect, Sir Christopher Wren; by one mason, Mr. Strong; and while one prelate, Dr. Henry Compton, filled the see.





GUILDHALL.

GUILDHALL.

GUILDHALL is a handsome Gothic building, situated at the northern extremity of King-street, Cheapside. It is the public hall of the city of London, in which are holden the various courts, the meetings of the citizens to chuse their members of parliament, lord mayor, sheriffs, &c. and in which most of the grand city entertainments are given. It was originally built in 1411: before which time the public hall was holden at Aldermanbury. It was erected by voluntary contributions, and was twenty years in building. It was greatly damaged by the fire of 1666, after which the present edifice, with the exception of the new Gothic front, finished in 1789, was erected in its place.

The hall is a noble room, 153 feet long, 48 broad, and 35 in height. The roof is flat, divided into pannels; the

floor is of stone; and the walls are adorned, on the northern and southern sides, with four Gothic demi-pillars, painted white, and veined with blue, the capitals being gilded. Here are portraits of some of our sovereigns, and of several judges; among which are Sir Matthew Hale and his eleven contemporary judges, who composed many differences between landlords and tenants after the great fire; also two monuments, to the memory of Lord Chatham, and the celebrated Beckford, lord mayor of London. In the latter, by Bacon, Mr. Beckford is represented in the attitude in which he replied to his present majesty's answer to the address, remonstrance, and petition, of the lord mayor, aldermen, and common council, of the City of London, on the 23d of May, 1770. On a black marble table, in letters of gold, are the words of his reply. There has also, among many others, lately been added a fine monument to the memory of Lord Nelson, and one of the Right Hon. Wm Pitt.

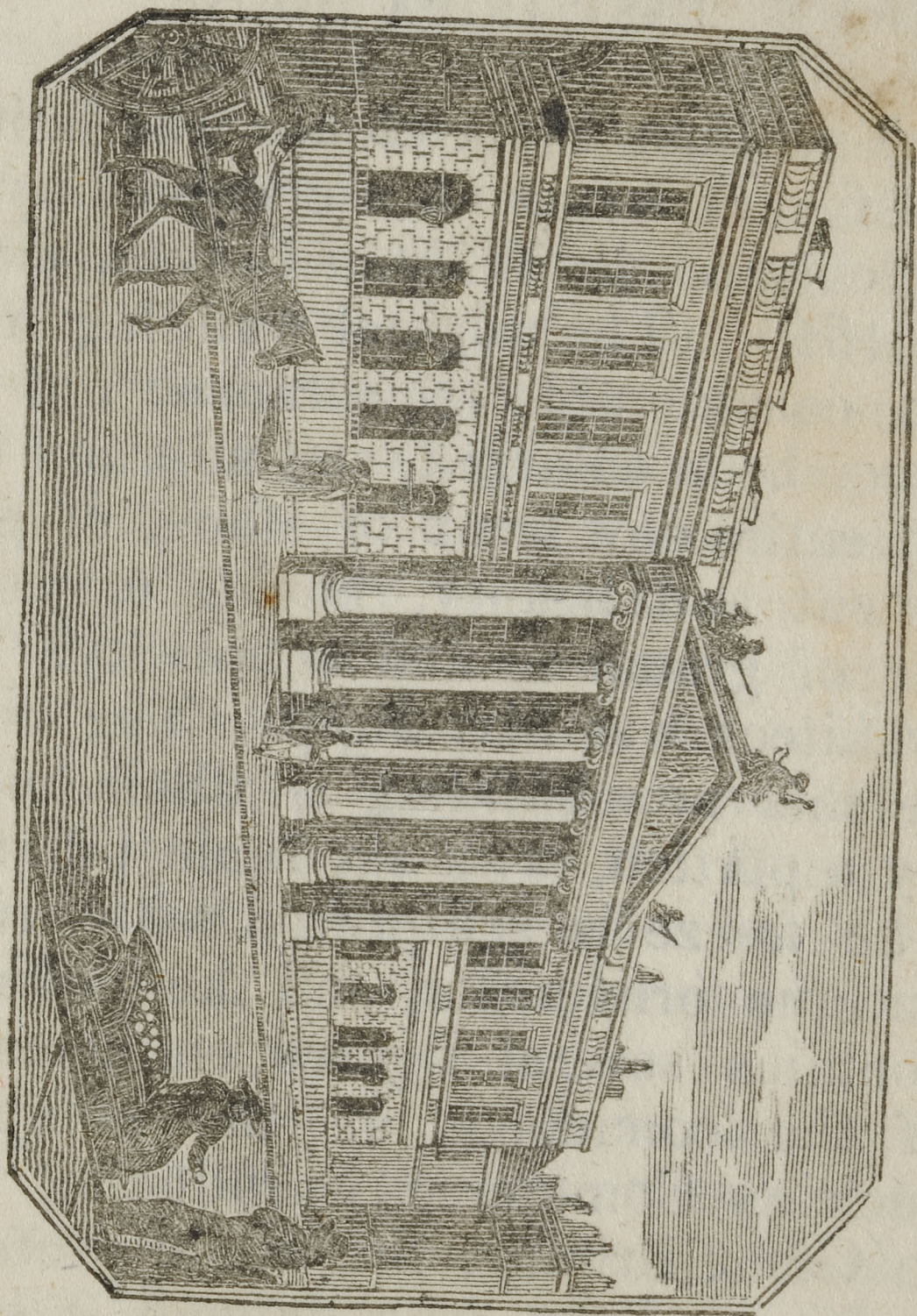
Behind the statue of Alderman Beckford, is a fine Gothic window, of stained glass, which was repaired in 1807, in a very able manner. The statue of Alderman Beckford has also been cleaned, and the inscription repaired.

Opposite to the great door, is a balcony, in the front of which is a clock and dial, in a curious oaken frame; at the four corners of which are carved the four cardinal virtues; and, on the top, Time, with a cock on each side of him. On each side of the balcony stands an enormous giant, with a black and bushy beard. One holds a long staff, with a ball stuck with pikes, hanging at the end of it; the other a halbert. They are supposed to be an ancient Briton and a Saxon. This balcony is supported by four iron pillars in the form of palm-trees. Under the balcony is a flight of steps, leading to various offices. On the right hand are those belonging to the chamberlain: one, where he sits to make freemen, and perform other duties of his office; and the other the treasury. Fronting the steps is the

court of king's bench; in which the sessions of the peace for the City of London, and the mayor's courts, are holden. On the left hand is the court of common pleas, and up-stairs, the court of exchequer. At the back of the hall is an elegant room, for the lord mayor, aldermen, and common council, to hold their records in. In the common council chamber is a fine collection of paintings, which were presented to the City of London by the late alderman Boydell. Among them is Mr. Copley's celebrated picture of the siege of Gibraltar. The collection may be seen by application to any of the servants belonging to Guildhall, of whom may be had a book, accurately describing the several pictures.



EAST INDIA HOUSE.



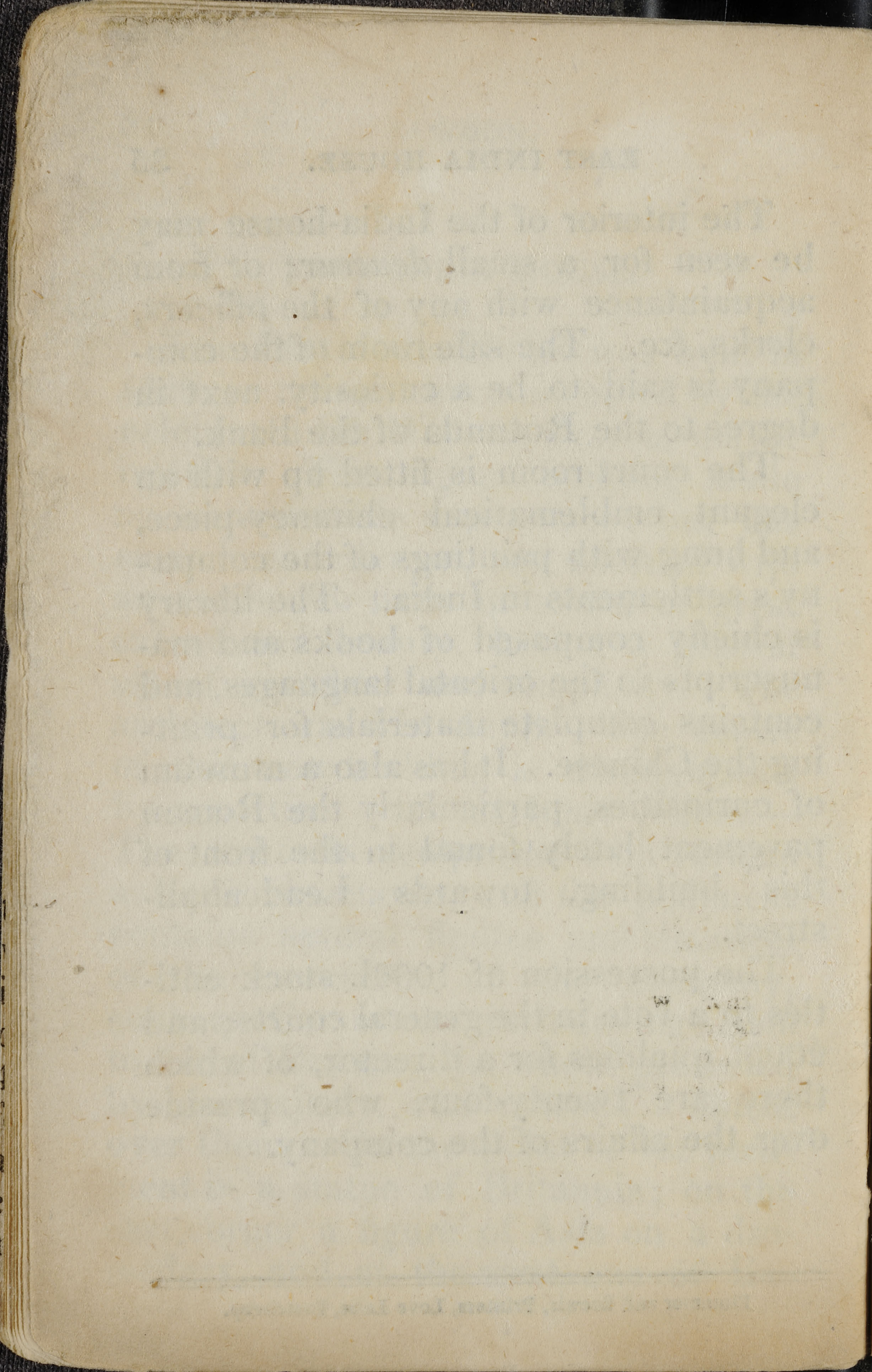
EAST INDIA HOUSE.

THE East India House was built in 1726, on the spot once occupied by the celebrated Sir William Craven, mayor in 1610. The original building made no considerable appearance: but has since been enlarged, and adorned with an entire new front of stone, of great extent and beauty, having a general air of grandeur and simplicity. The architect was Mr. Jupp. The centre of this new building is distinguished by a portico, with six Ionic pillars.—The freeze is sculptured with various antique ornaments, and the pediment contains several figures emblematical of the commerce of the company, such as Commerce introducing Asia to Great Britain; the whole protected by his majesty, who extends a shield over them. On the point of the pediment is a statue of Britannia; on the east corner a figure of Asia on a dromedary, and at the west, one of Europe.

The interior of the India-house may be seen for a small *douceur*; or from acquaintance with any of the officers, clerks, &c. The sale room of the company is said to be a curiosity, next in degree to the Rotunda of the Bank.

The court-room is fitted up with an elegant emblematical chimney-piece, and hung with paintings of the company's settlements in India. The library is chiefly composed of books and manuscripts in the oriental languages, and contains complete materials for printing the Chinese. It has also a museum of curiosities, particularly the Roman pavement lately found in the front of this building, towards Leadenhall-street.

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