

# London Shadows

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George Godwin

Illustrated by John Brown

## London Shadows

A little to the north of Hatton-garden and Leather-lane is a neighbourhood of the worst description, and which certainly requires some interference. Nearly opposite Hatton-garden this populous and dirty place is reached by steep descents, opposite Leather-lane, by a flight of steps. The latter brings us to the first platform, if we may so call it: here are two long rows of houses, with courts leading from them. These courts, as in fact are most of the neighbouring houses, are occupied by the Irish and others engaged in Leather-lane market. One of them in particular we found in a shocking condition. A tank for water was placed, for the convenience of the numerous inhabitants, in such a position as to render the water impure in a few hours; but on Monday, at one o'clock, there was no water in the cistern, nor had there been *a drop for the accommodation of scores of pent-up women and children since Saturday evening*. On Saturday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the water is turned on, and, as we are told, continues to run for rather more than half an hour. The inhabitants rush out, and such of them as have any vessels contrive to fill them, after a struggle, which suggests to the beholder the arrival of parched travellers at a spring in the desert. Many, however, have nothing which will hold a sufficient quantity of water; and even in the case of those who have, the water, after remaining in a room occupied by many persons, surrounded by impurities, must be rendered unwholesome before the Sunday morning. By that time the water has become precious. The costermongers return late on the Saturday night or early on Sunday morning, and require a supply of water to render themselves, after their dirty work, decent and comfortable on the Sunday. This, in the present state of things, is generally impossible. "I cannot be clean if I would," -a poor young wife said to us. She was certainly not *nineteen*, but had a baby in her arms and one about two years old by her side!

When we visited the place the dust-bin was full, and the pavement strewn with vegetables and other refuse. The state of the exterior was so bad, that it was unnecessary to enter the dwellings in order to understand their condition. Here, King Fever and his friendly potentate, Cholera, may revel in all their terrors. And remember, this place is in the midst of London.