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Hogarth moralized

Hogarth, William

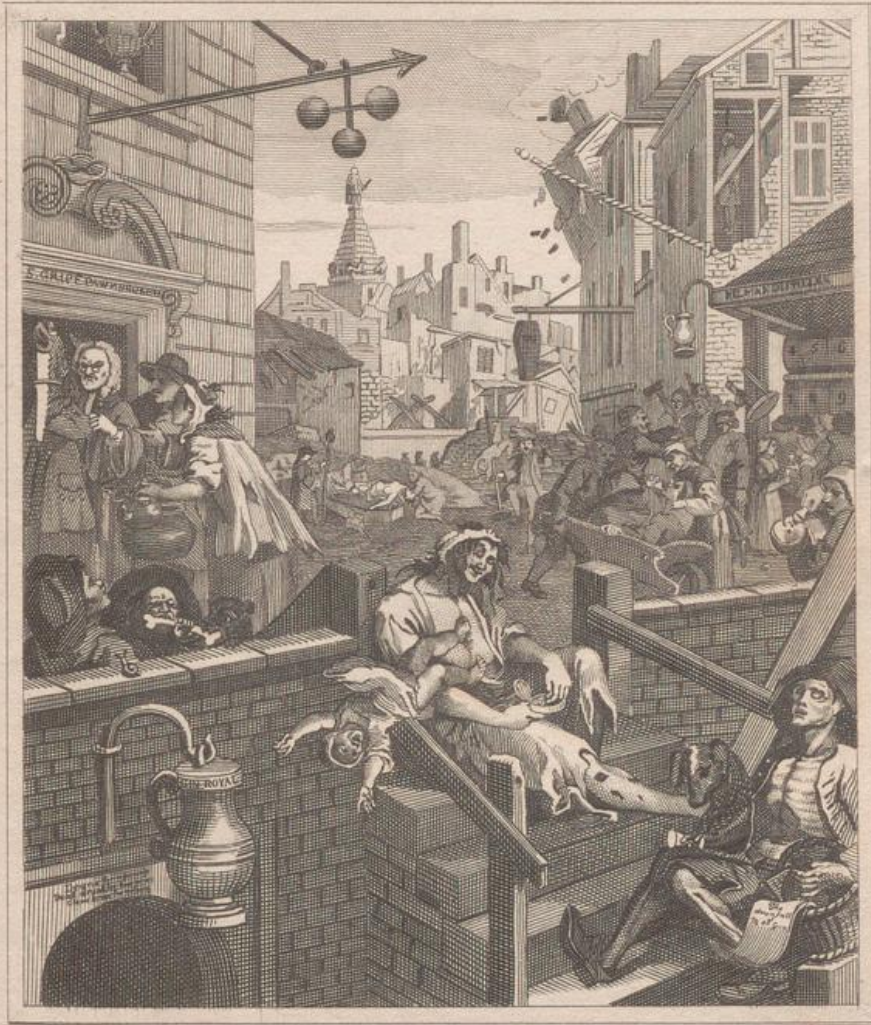
London, 1831

Gin-Lane.

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GIN-LANE.

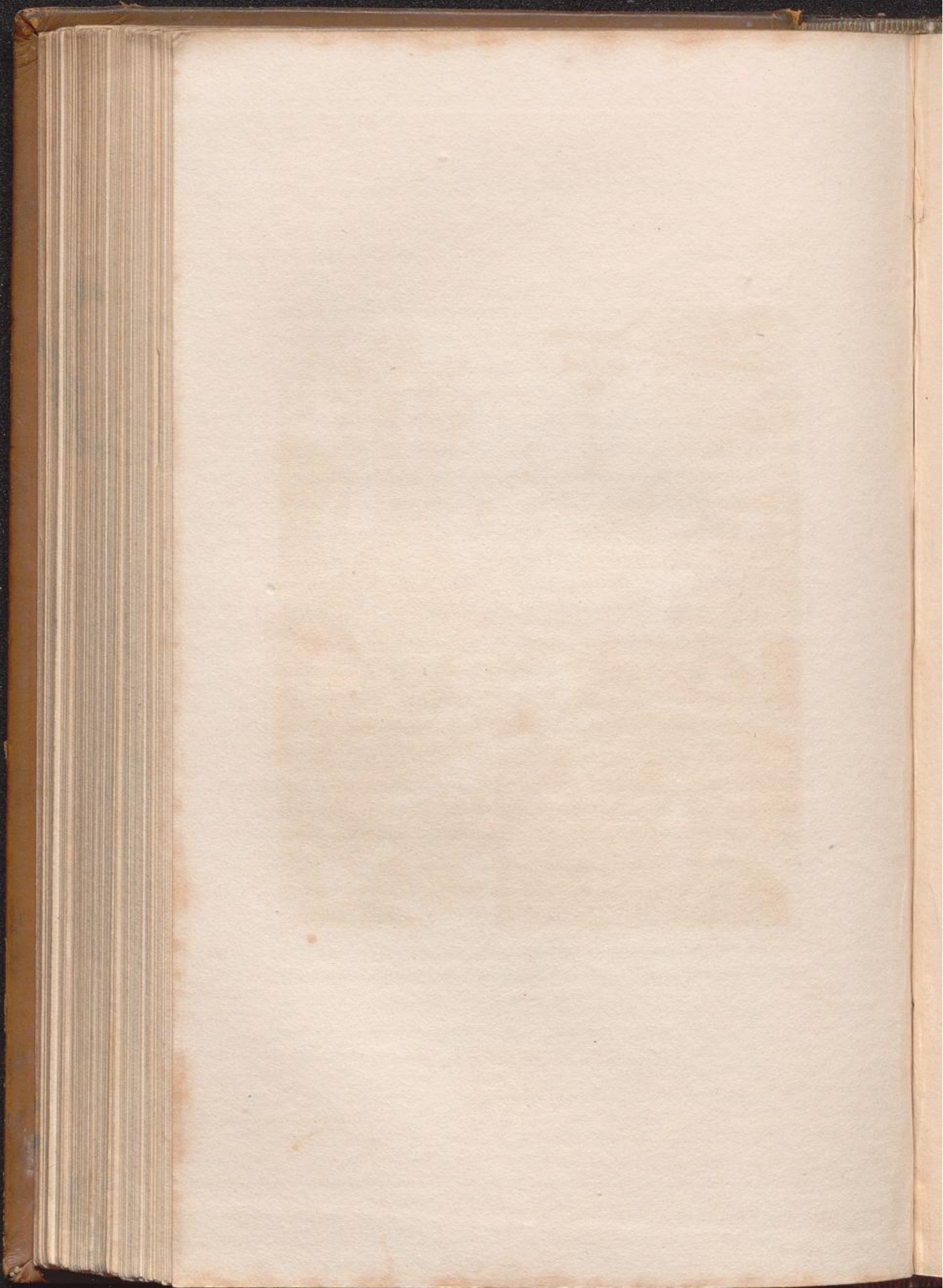
As a contrast to the last print, we observe in this the pernicious effects of British spirits becoming general among the poor. Behold here the scene of health and gladness vanished, and that of disease and wretchedness introduced! How shudders the heart at the ghastly sight! How turns the eye from the pallid view! But as we learn to live by looking on the dead, 'tis hoped this appearance of horror will teach us a lesson of temperance. May it create in mankind an abhorrence of the deadly evil, and make them timely avoid the destruction that attends it!—Let us then probe the wound, in order to its cure. As we remarked in Beer-street the houses to be fair and good-conditioned, excepting that of the pawnbroker's, which was ready to fall, so we perceive the houses here in general old and ruinous, excepting that of master Gripe's. By this we are taught that poverty is the usual attendant on gin-drinking, and that where this vice prevails, none are known to thrive but such as feed upon the property of others. This abominable liquor is, among the vulgar, very justly called by the name of Strip-me-naked, it being found to waste the substance of those poor wretches that accustom themselves to the drinking it, by a continual drain, not leaving them at last the bare necessaries of life; for this infatuating poison leads them on, and almost obliges them to repair the gnawings of one dram by the burning aid of a second. See them, then,



A. Dunbar, sc.

GIN LANE.

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in order to support this endless expence, carrying their things to pawn, whilst they have ought to pledge! Take notice of the broker examining the articles, lest he should lend too much upon them! Remark his grinding disposition in his countenance! Finely is this idea heightened by the boys below; they are both supposed accustomed to the fatal drench, as indeed are all the people present. One is stupified and fast asleep giving the snail (an emblem of the pawnbroker) an opportunity of crawling over him; the other tormented with raging hunger, and having nothing to eat, gnawing a bare bone, which the greedy cur, (equally emblematical) is tearing from him. It may probably be wondered at, why these beggarly loan-offices should have been so long distinguished by the sign of three balls, disposed in so particular a manner; but a moment's consideration will convince us of the propriety, it being universally allowed to be *two to one*, that things once lodged in these houses are ever got out again. As a proof that this custom of drinking gin is encouraged among the poorer people, and prevails among all ages of them, before the house of Killman, the distiller, is a woman pouring this deadly potion down her infant's throat; two charity girls drinking to each other in the same, and one drenching her mother, who is already so much intoxicated as to be under the necessity of being wheeled home in a barrow. The customary use of this liquor is as destructive as a pestilence, destroying numbers of people yearly, bringing on death by various ways. Some it fills with diseases, others it throws into a decline; some it drives to despair, and others it maddens. A picture of the first we have in the drunken beast upon the steps, whose legs are broken out in ulcers; she is

taking snuff, careless of her infant, who is falling from her arms into the area of a gin-cellar, over whose entrance is humourously written a public invitation, viz. "Drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence, clean straw for nothing." Though rather foreign to our purpose, yet led to it by the figure before us, I cannot help taking notice of another bad custom among the poor, that of snuff-taking, which some will do in great quantities, wasting sixpence or more a week in that useless pernicious drug, while their children are crying for bread, and they have none to give; of the second, we have a representation in the man at the bottom of the steps, who lived by selling of gin, and is supposed to have just expired, worn away by the frequent use of it; and in the woman at the back of this plate, whom two men are putting into a shell, by order of the beadle of the parish,* whose chief attention seems fixed upon the care of her child beside it: of the third, is the barber, hanging in his chamber above; murdered by his own hands; and of the fourth, are the cripple fighting, and the madman behind dancing, with a pair of bellows on his head and a spit in his hand, on which he has spitted an infant in the absence of its mother. These, with the rest, are most melancholy instances of the dreadful consequence of the sin of drunkenness, which however it may escape the punishment of human justice, will most assuredly meet with the vengeance of divine.†

* Viz. St. Giles in the fields.

† This plate is enriched with the following stanzas.

Gin, cursed fiend, with fury fraught,
 Makes human race a prey;
 It enters by a deadly draught,
 And steals our life away.

If, then (as I meet with it in the remarks of a very eminent enquirer) after the most accurate calculation it be certain, that since the introduction of spirituous liquors (for it is not gin only that is destructive) the number of births, yearly, has been for some time decreasing, so that it is now a fourth part less than it was forty years ago; and the burials increasing at a dreadful rate, so that the nation, in London only, has lost near fifteen thousand people every three years; the fruit of the womb being blasted before it has seen the light; besides, the lives of those who have come into the world being shortened; if it be certain, as it is affirmed by tradesmen in the city, that the bodily strength of the people is so decayed, within the memory of those alive, that working men are not able to carry two thirds of what they could formerly, with ease; if it be evident that, by the excessive use of these liquors, the spirit of industry must be sunk, and the hands which should carry on the trade and manufactures of the nation enfeebled; if it be in the power of every miscreant to inflame his blood, and fit himself for the execution of the most horrid barbarity for two-pence; if villains, by an inflaming draught of gin, derive boldness to perpetrate mischief; if, by this means, we find that neither our lives or properties are safe; if the number or good condition of a people are the strength and

Virtue and truth, driv'n to despair,
It's rage compells to fly;
But cherishes with hellish care,
Theft, murder, perjury.

Damn'd cup, that on the vitals preys,
That liquid fire contains,
Which madness to the heart conveys,
And rolls it through the veins!

security of a nation, and both these are by the prevalency of this poison daily declining, and of consequence our naval and military force decaying; if the number of the poor be, through the effect of a universal debauchery daily increasing, and consequently the consumption of the food, cloathing, and household-furniture lessening, and our home-trade, and manufactures sinking; if the infection be every day spreading from the capital through the manufacturing towns and provinces; if health, life, and soul are all going to destruction, gibbets groaning with the load of encreasing malefactors brought to a dreadful end by the force of this maddening drench; if death and hell are ever opening their jaws and swallowing our wretched fellow-creatures by thousands; if these things are so, is it not time to blow a trumpet and sound an alarm, an alarm that may reach the ears of those who have it in their power to remedy this calamitous evil, and prevent the impending misery?*

* [The striking moral tendency of these two prints does immortal honour to the worthy Hogarth; he did all that he could do in writing, as it were, the word Poison upon every "quartern" measure in the kingdom!—neither is the wrath of his commentator much overcharged. May "answering" or rather unanswering "gin-shops"—now that the beer trade is thrown open,

"Sourer sighs return!"]