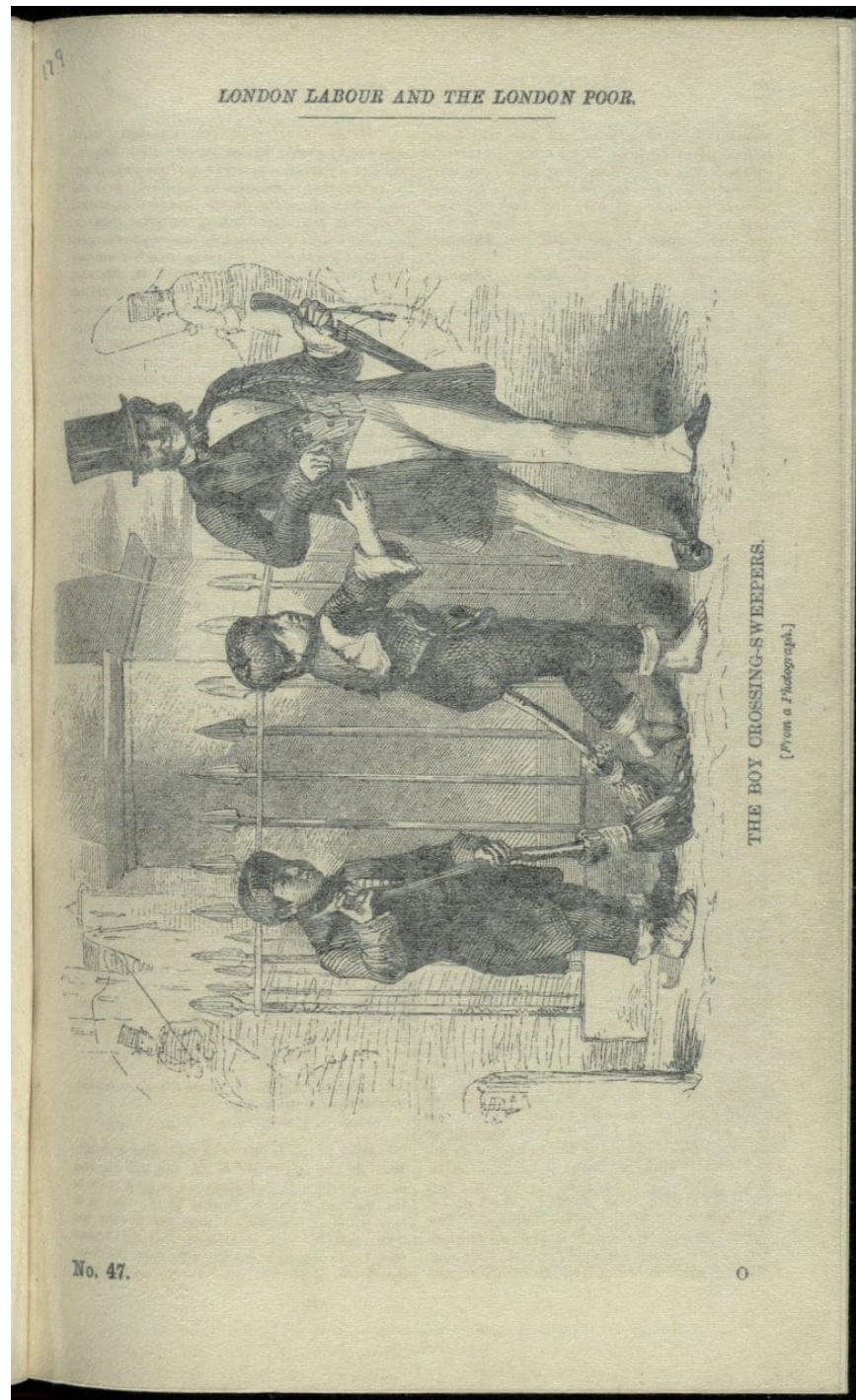


# The boy chimney sweeper



*I was fifteen on the 24th of last May, sir, and I've been sweeping crossings now near upon two years... When we gets home at half-past three in the morning, whoever cries out "first wash" has it. First of all we washes our feet, and we all uses the same water. Then we washes our faces and hands, and necks, and whoever fetches the fresh water up has first wash; and if the second don't like to go get fresh, why, he uses the dirty - Crossing-sweeper.*

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# The mudlark<sup>1</sup>



THE MUD-LARK.

[From a Daguerreotype by BEARD.]

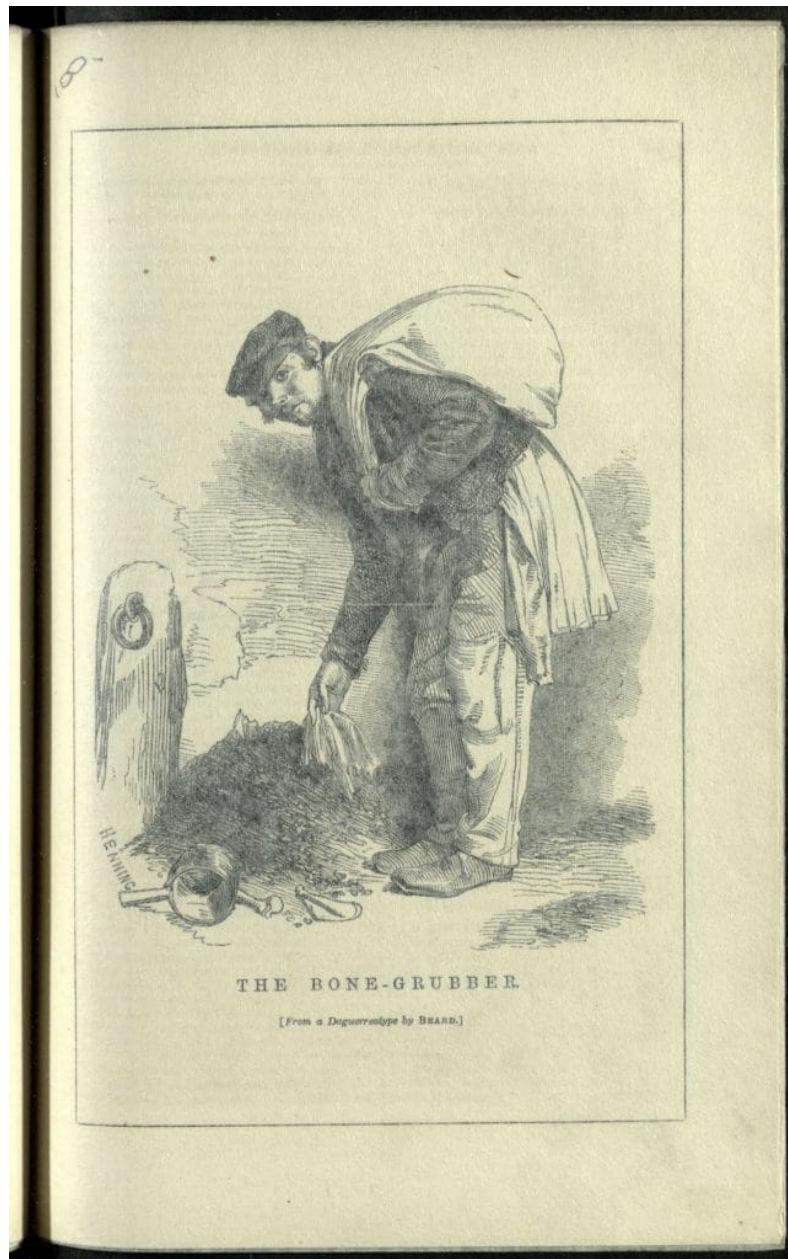
*'He had been three years mud-larking, and supposed he should remain a mud-lark all his life. What else could he be? For there was nothing else he knew how to do' – Mud-lark, nine years old.*

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<sup>1</sup> Mudlark: a scavenger of sewage or riverbanks looking for refuse to sell



## The bone grubber<sup>2</sup>



*'Many a night I've slept under an arch of a railway when I hadn't a penny to pay for my bed .... I've lost my health since I took to bone-picking, through the wet and the cold in the winter, for I've scarcely any clothes, and the wet gets to my feet through the old shoes...'- Bone-grubber.*

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<sup>2</sup> Bone-grubber: a scavenger of waste such as bones and rags to sell

# The little watercress girl

Taken from *London Labour and the London Poor*: Henry Mayhew (1851), Vol I, pp. 157-8.

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The little watercress girl who gave me the following statement, although only eight years of age, had entirely lost all childish ways, and was, indeed, in thoughts and manner, a woman. There was something cruelly pathetic in hearing this infant, so young that her features had scarcely formed themselves, talking of the bitterest struggles of life, with the calm earnestness of one who had endured them all. I did not know how to talk with her. At first I treated her as a child, speaking on childish subjects; so that I might, by being familiar with her, remove all shyness, and get her to narrate her life freely. I asked her about her toys and her games with her companions; but the look of amazement that answered me soon put an end to any attempt at fun on my part. I then talked to her about the parks, and whether she ever went to them. "The parks!" she replied in wonder, "where are they?" I explained to her, telling her that they were large open places with green grass and tall trees, where beautiful carriages drove about, and people walked for pleasure, and children played. Her eyes brightened up a little as I spoke; and she asked, half doubtingly, "Would they let such as me go there - just to look?" All her knowledge seemed to begin and end with watercresses, and what they fetched. She knew no more of London than that part she had seen on her rounds, and believed that no quarter of the town was handsomer or pleasanter than it was at Farringdon-market or at Clerkenwell, where she lived. The poor child, although the weather was severe, was dressed in a thin cotton gown, with a threadbare shawl wrapped round her shoulders. She wore no covering to her head, and the long rusty hair stood out in all directions. When she walked she shuffled along, for fear that the large carpet slippers that served her for shoes should slip off her feet.

"I go about the streets with water-creases, crying, 'Four bunches a penny, water-creases.' I am just eight years old - that's all, and I've a big sister, and a brother and a sister younger than I am. On and off, I've been very near a twelvemonth in the streets. Before that, I had to take care of a baby for my aunt. No, it wasn't heavy - it was only two months old; but I minded it for ever such a time - till it could walk. It was a very nice little baby, not a very pretty one; but, if I touched it under the chin, it would laugh. Before I had the baby, I used to help mother, who was in the fur trade; and, if there was any slits in the fur, I'd sew them up. My mother learned me to needle-work and to knit when I was about five. I used to go to school, too; but I wasn't there long. I've forgot all about it now, it's such a time ago; and mother took me away because the master whacked me, though the missus use'n't to never touch me. I didn't like him at all. What do you think? he hit me three times, ever so hard, across the face with his cane, and made me go dancing down stairs; and when mother saw the marks on my cheek, she went to blow him up, but she couldn't see him - he was afraid. That's why I left school."