

**LONDON** ...London with its truly magnificent structures, both sacred and profane, might be ranked among the finest cities, but many of its streets are dirty and ill-paved, its houses are not very well built, of brick without any architectural adornment, and blackened by the smoke of coal fires, and this confers upon the city a gloomy air which considerably diminishes its attractions. The riches of London, if not of all England, are owing to the Thames. In all my travels I never saw a finer sight than this river, from its mouth to London Bridge. For besides its being continually covered with ships, barges, boats going up and down the river with the flow of the tide, its banks also are adorned with a variety of fine scenes: towns, villages, and country-houses. Among others to be seen is the great and magnificent Hospital of Greenwich, founded in the reign of Charles II for the invalids of the Navy. London stands on the left side of the river, where it forms a crescent.

*Lettres et mémoires*, London, 1747.

CHARLES LOUIS POLLNITZ  
April 1733

...The throng and noise of people, coaches and carts was so great that we could hardly move forwards or hear each other speak. But what gave us heart in spite of these disasters was the succession of shops along either side of the whole long thoroughfare, so plentifully supplied with all manner of merchandise that they alone sufficed to give us an idea of the great opulence of the city and the realm. You will be expecting me to tell you much of London, and I can only tell you a little. No sooner had I arrived there than an old gentleman wished me to accompany him into the country, or rather to the suburbs of the city, since it was only fifteen miles away. No countryside can be more pretty and pleasing to see, and in this neighbourhood for thirty miles about is one continuous garden, with charming habitations. Apart from a few counties, there are no high mountains in this kingdom, nor any completely flat plains but of the smallest dimensions, so that the terrain is all of low hills interspersed here and there with small pleasant valleys with little streams running through them, and delightful vistas present themselves on all sides...

...A magnificent square edifice although in the Gothic style met my eyes, at the end of a very long and wide avenue of trees, whose age and size inspired awe and reverence in me. As I drew nearer my pleasure increased, for I saw an extensive grove of ancient oaks hedging it about, and wide green meadows peopled by an immense number of fallow-deer, and then a lake of clearest water which, by means of a most beautiful waterfall among artificial rocks which wonderfully imitate nature, passes on its water to a lower lake and thence into a river; this flows on past a temple, which spans it like a bridge, to a mill below, where these waters, gushing out again into the open, regain their liberty and flow where they will. These lakes and this river, abundantly rich in water-fowl and exquisite fish, serve as a moat to the venerable edifice, rich in gardens and woods, where nature and art compete, and perfect the delights of my sojourn.

*Lettere familiari*, London, 1758.

VINCENZO MARTINELLI  
1748

...Although I had already seen many capital cities, nevertheless the capital of the British Empire impressed me in a particular fashion, by the number of its inhabitants and because at every step I received evidence that it justly enjoys the reputation of being the richest city in the Universe, and that in the building of it consideration was also given to its populace, since everywhere wide footpaths have been built, and by night it is well-lit by lanterns placed along the sides of the streets. What has surprised me even more is to see wide squares containing a garden in which the inhabitants of the surrounding houses, who possess

a key to it, may go to stroll. The Thames astonished me by the depth of its waters, so great as to allow large vessels to sail right up into the city.

*Mémoires secrètes des Cours et des Gouvernements*, Paris, 1793.

GIUSEPPE GORANI  
1791

...I went to Greenwich, which is a place about two leagues distant from London. Here is a famous Hospital for the Sick. It is a splendid and an astonishing building. I do not believe that there is anything between Greenwich and Rome to equal it. For me, it is the greatest piece of architecture that I have ever seen. At its feet there flows the Thames, and it is a beautiful sight to watch the continual coming and going of many vessels. Here, furthermore, the Thames is only a quarter of its width at London, for it is the tide which broadens it. The ebb and flow of Ocean have this effect, that the Thames runs towards London during the flood tide, towards its mouth during the ebb; moreover the ebb and flow of the river itself is very noticeable, so that the waters visibly diminish and increase with the usual cycle of the sea's tides. The Thames, then, is sustained by the sea, and it is this which makes it as wide as our Po where it is broadest. This Hospital for the Sick is for the Invalids of the Navy.

...Also at Greenwich there is the royal park. It is full of deer which, since they are never hunted, are tame. In the park is the Observatory of the Royal Society. I went to see it; it is nothing special. There I examined the famous device which has become the prime longitude. On the right of the Observatory is a parapet from which you may see a panorama such as I have never enjoyed anywhere in the world. London can be seen, Greenwich below, the course of the Thames, the Hospital opposite; in fact I could not describe all that can be seen, but so truly enchanting is this prospect that I could stand there for whole days at a time.

...London is extremely large, and will continue to become larger. The houses rise from the ground like mushrooms. From one year to the next it is not uncommon to see the building of half a street. This happens because there is very little solidity in their construction. The walls are fragile, having as framework vertical and horizontal beams, the interstices being filled with bricks. The shock of a fairly serious earthquake would turn London into a heap of ruins — the English never build for posterity. Each man builds his house for himself, he builds in order to rent it out, not thinking beyond his own lifetime. So expert are the architects in this matter of the lifetime of the houses that they do not misjudge by a single year. At the predetermined time they fall, and someone else rebuilds on the ruins with the same degree of soundness.

...Notwithstanding this, London is as beautiful as it is large. The streets are broad, for the most part straight, and flanked by two wide pavements. When the weather is dry it is like walking in a room. It is not that palaces are to be found in London, but the wideness, the length and straightness of the thoroughfares, the uniformity with which the houses are built, make up a whole which is more impressive than a number of fine works of architecture scattered here and there. There is also St. Paul's church, which is almost an exact copy of St. Peter's in Rome, except that it is about one-third smaller. Then there is the famous bridge at Westminster, remarkable for its length. From it one can see London along the banks of the Thames, which, as it bends to the right and spreads the city out right before one's eyes, is a most beautiful river.

London is almost always enveloped in the thick and heavy smoke of its many chimneys, in which mineral coal, the only kind of fire in use here, is burned. I find it preferable to a fire of wood: it gives more heat, it burns as well, and does not crackle. The fog which it

produces, for all its notoriety, is for me much less unpleasant than that of Paris. It is no more than a light smoke, which I should say is healthy, whereas the fog of Paris smells bad and inflames the eyes so that at times one has difficulty in keeping them open. Nor is it any more true that the sun rarely glances at London. A gust of wind disperses the smoke, and the sky is clear; this happens not infrequently.

The broad Thames is entirely covered for some miles downstream from London with ships and cargo vessels which form a forest of masts and another city on the water.

...I shall give you an idea of the fashion in which London is built... The streets are broad and hold the attention not by being flanked by great buildings but because the houses are built one after another with much love of order. There are some long stretches built in a straight line, the walls just as much so as the height and the windows. Taken separately, their distinction is slight, but as a unit they are wonderfully effective. This uniformity makes one part of London so like another that it is with difficulty that one learns to find one's way about alone... On either side there are fine wide pavements, raised a hand's breadth above the streets, but the street in the middle is very badly paved... Not all of London is beautiful. The new city of Westminster, which is a good third of the whole, corresponds to all that I have said; but the old city is filthy and generally ugly.

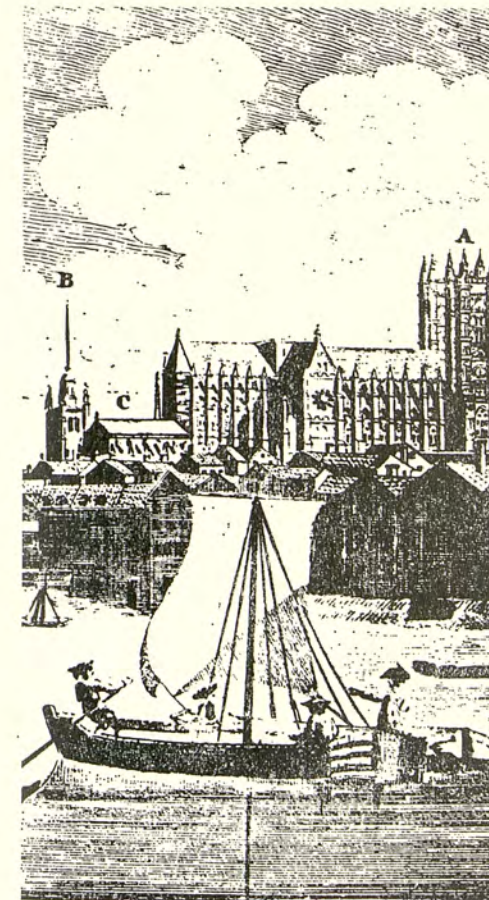
...I have had a good journey. It is not as short as is supposed, being a good 105 leagues, that is 105 of our miles. I suffered no ill effects from the short sea crossing from Calais to Dover. This is a voyage of seven leagues, which one can very often make in three hours. I was not impressed by the novelty of it. There is nothing more boring and monotonous than this immense basin of salt water.

...Here everything is on a large scale, in Paris everything is elegant. If Paris is large, London is enormous. As yet I have seen only a part of it, but I judge from this fact alone, namely that at night this city is lit up for six miles around. Arriving yesterday night, when I saw well-lit streets I said 'Here we are, in London!'

...The suburbs of the city begin six miles from its centre. Furthermore, it is illuminated as no other city is in Europe. There are lamps on either side of the street, lamps which are well made, as are all things which serve useful purposes in life here in London.

*Carteggio di Pietro e di Alessandro Verri dal 1766 al 1797*, Milan, 1923.

ALESSANDRO VERRI  
1768



...The first sight of London and its environs... Four leagues or more from London we turn aside slightly from the main road for a foretaste of the delightful countryside around it. What a beautiful surprise it is! The eye passes to and fro over countless squares of verdant meadowland surrounded with leafy trees, nor does it stop until it meets, at a great distance, the sky. Are these perhaps the much-vaunted English gardens, or do the English perhaps do nothing but lay out their land as gardens? The road is lined throughout with pleasant little country cottages, given prominence by their gardens and by the running streams which water them. While I revel in enchantment of this modern Tempe, the attentive interpreter who accompanies us shouts in my ear 'Here is London, here is London!' At this august name I bestirred myself; the endless mass of so many roofs and towers which confronted me at a single moment almost frightened me, and it held me rapt for a considerable time. It seemed that I saw a map engraved by the hand of a master and artfully thrown into relief by the mysterious optical device of M. de Charles. Our foaming steeds rush us along, and, traversing in less time than I can say it the large suburb of St. Thomas and the very pretty London Bridge over the majestic Thames, bring us to the spacious and airy quarter of St. Paul's, which at first I took to be an arcade of cupboards with mirrors, within

which were contained the most precious objects in the kingdom. The brightness of the shining glass, the harmony of the design of the shops, the abundance of goods of every kind displayed therein, the whole combination, in short, of what I have described and what I have left unsaid, served not a little to make my heart beat faster. How many times would Mademoiselle Merelle have uttered with emphasis her expressive 'charmant'!

*Lettere scritte da più parti d'Europa a diversi amici e signori suoi nel 1783, Pavia, 1785.*

FRANCESCO LUINI  
1783

...Having at last left the shores of France, no sooner had we disembarked at Dover than the coldness of the weather was reduced by half, and we found almost no snow at all between Dover and London. I liked England at once as much as I disliked Paris at first sight, and I liked London very much indeed. The streets, the taverns, the horses, the women, the universal well-being, the life and the activity of this island, the cleanliness and comfort of the houses, although they are very small, the absence of beggars, a perpetual circulation of money and industry, distributed as much through the provinces as in the capital: all these real and unique endowments which this fortunate and free land possesses won my heart from the very first, and in the two other journeys which I have made there before this I have never changed my opinion; for in all these ramifications of public felicity, which are the outcome of the best government, the difference between England and all the rest of Europe is too great. So that although I have not given any deep study to the constitution of the country, mother of such prosperity, I have well been able to observe and evaluate its divine effects.

*Vita, Giornali, Lettere, Florence, 1861.*

VITTORIO ALFIERI  
April 1768

Talking of London, he observed, 'Sir, if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists'.

...On Saturday, July 30, Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. ...We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where we took oars and moved smoothly along the silver Thames. It was a very fine day. We were entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river. ...I was much pleased to find myself with Johnson at Greenwich... He remarked that the structure of Greenwich Hospital was too magnificent for a place of charity, and that its parts were too much detached, to make one great whole.

In London, a man may live in splendid society at one time, and in frugal retirement at another, without animadversion. There and there alone, a man's house is truly his *castle*, in which he can be in perfect safety from intrusion whenever he pleases. I never shall forget how well this was expressed to me one day... 'The chief advantage of London... is that a man is always *so near his burrow*.'

*Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson, 1791*

JAMES BOSWELL  
1763 and 1779

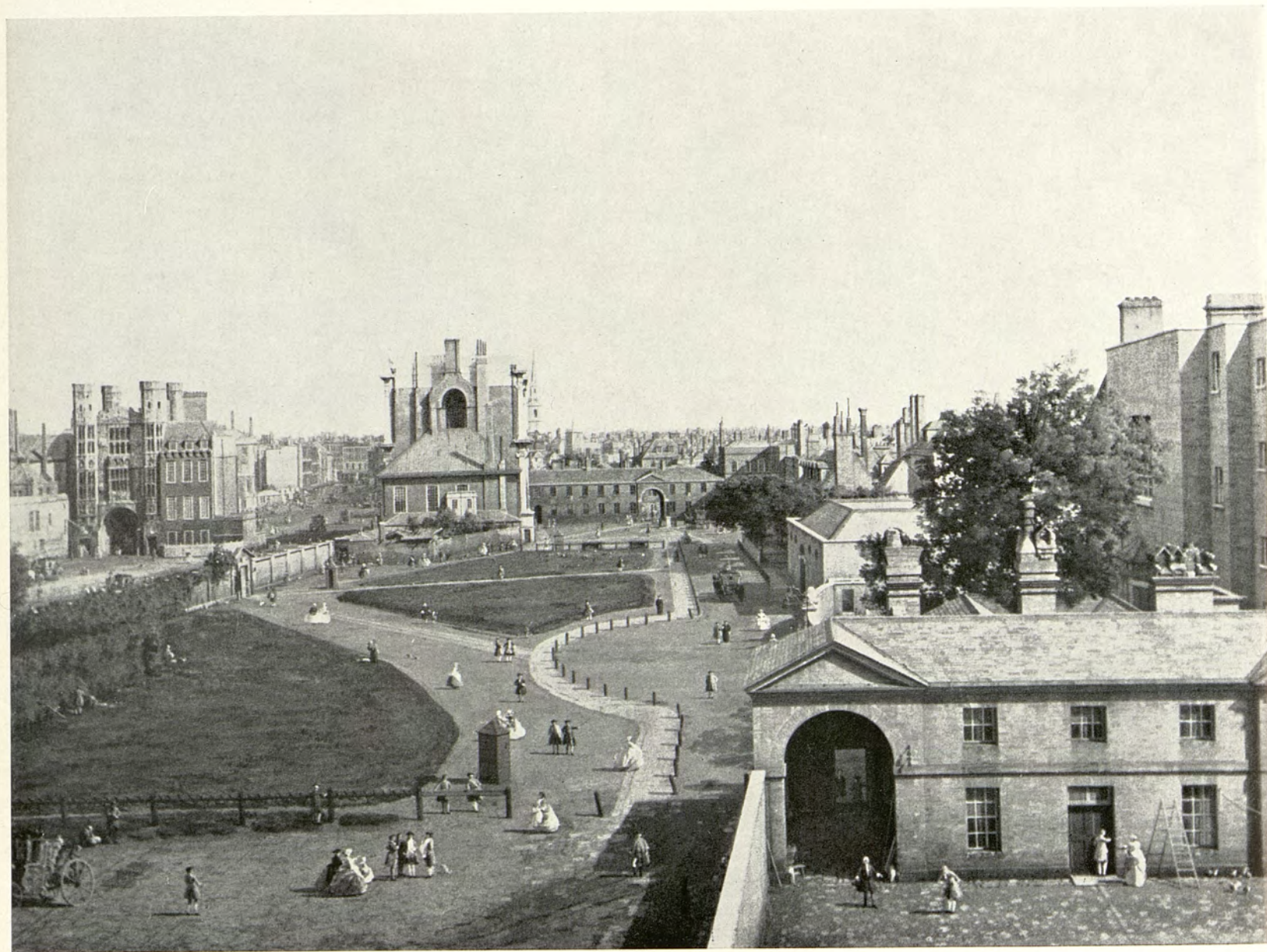
203. MARCO RICCI: *Capriccio with a fantastic view of London* (detail). Venice, Sonino Collection.

Marco Ricci was in London from 1708 to 1710. In the background of this painting, with its ancient ruins, appears the view of an ideal city which includes the dome of St. Paul's, completed by Wren in 1711.



204. CANALETTO: *Whitehall and Richmond House*. Goodwood, Collection of the Duke of Richmond.

The view from a raised position, probably a window in Richmond House, whose stables are in the right foreground. The 'Privy Garden' is bounded on the right by the buildings of Montagu House, and a hedge and wall divide it from Whitehall on the left. At the end of the garden is the Banqueting Hall, behind which are to be seen the spire of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and one of the towers of Northumberland House. On the left is the Holbein Gate, demolished in 1759, behind Charing Cross.



205-206. CANALETTO: *Festival on the Thames* (details). Prague, National Gallery.

View of London and the Thames during the festivities of Lord Mayor's Day. The left bank is dominated by St. Paul's Cathedral, rising above the warehouses and other buildings of the port. To the right of St. Paul's, among the spires of the City churches, is the Monument, and in the distance are the old London Bridge and the Tower of London. At the extreme right of the painting is the right bank of the river, with trees and boats under construction. In the middle of the Thames is the Lord Mayor's barge surrounded by other boats.



207. CANALETTO: *Northumberland House*. Minneapolis, Institute of Arts.

There is a painting of this identical subject in the collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle. In the centre is Northumberland House with the façade constructed in 1752, surmounted by the figure of a lion cast in lead which is now at Syon House. Beyond the mansion is the beginning of the Strand; among the buildings on the left is the Golden Cross Inn with its sign, and other taverns. On the right is the equestrian statue of Charles I by Hubert Le Sueur.



208. CANALETTO: *Westminster Abbey with the procession of Knights of the Order of the Bath* (detail). London, Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

This painting can be dated precisely because it commemorates the installation of Knights of the Order of the Bath in the Chapel of Henry VII on 26 June 1749. It was therefore executed during Canaletto's first stay in London.



209. CANALETTO: *Westminster Abbey with the procession of Knights of the Order of the Bath* (detail). London, Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

The West front of the Abbey dominates the right hand part of the painting. To the left is the Church of St. Margaret with the Union Jack fluttering from its tower, behind it the sloping roof of Westminster Hall, and on the left are the houses of King Street, in approximately the position of the present Parliament Street.



210. CANALETTO: *Westminster Abbey with the procession of the Knights of the Order of the Bath* (detail). London, Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

The procession of Knights in their red robes and plumed hats leaving the Abbey for the House of Lords. At the end of the procession is the Great Master followed by the Dean of Westminster in his capacity as Dean of the Order, and the path of the procession is lined by soldiers in scarlet uniform.

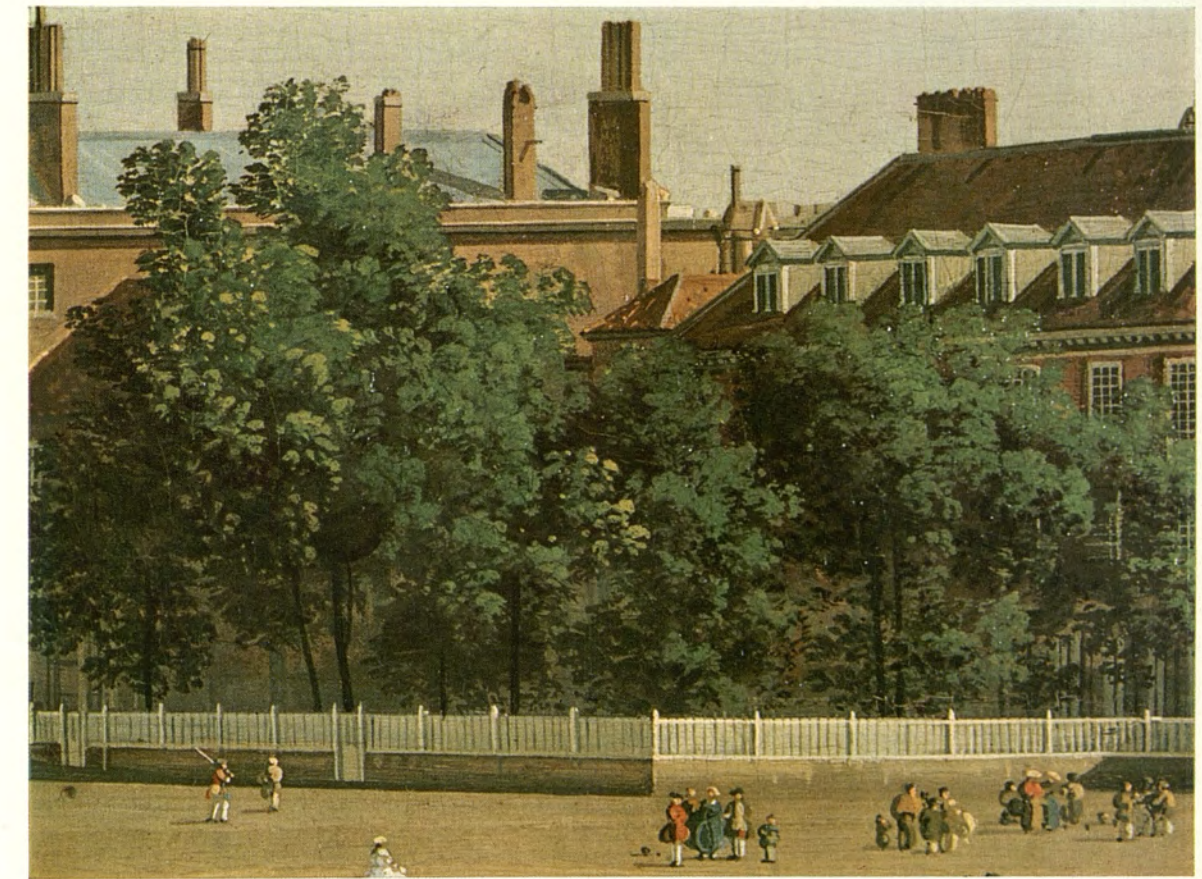


211. CANALETTO: *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House*. Windsor Castle, Royal Collection.

On the left is the terrace of Somerset House. In the curve of the river are St. Paul's and the City, with the spires of its numerous churches and the Monument. On the right, beyond the curve, old London Bridge.



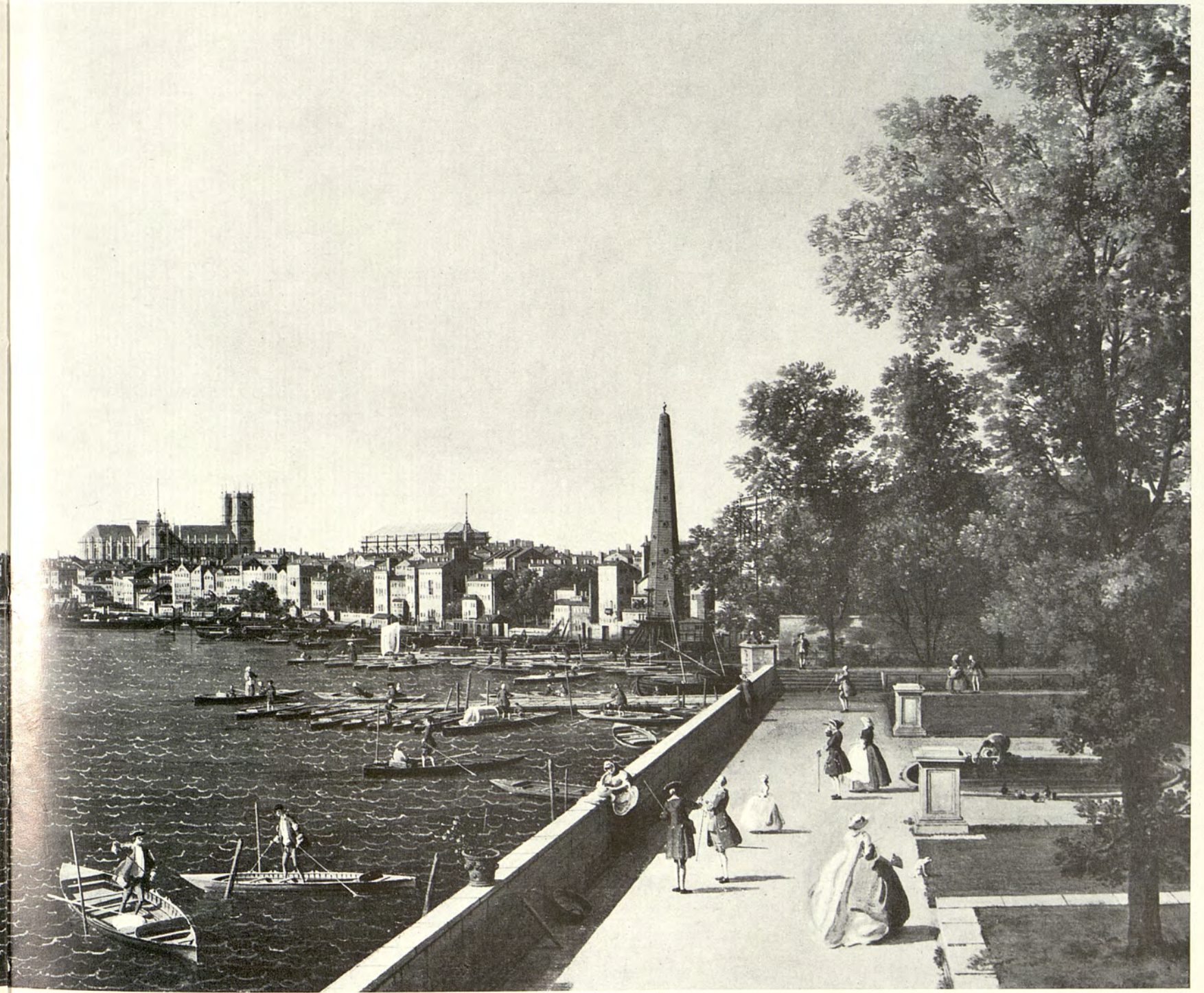
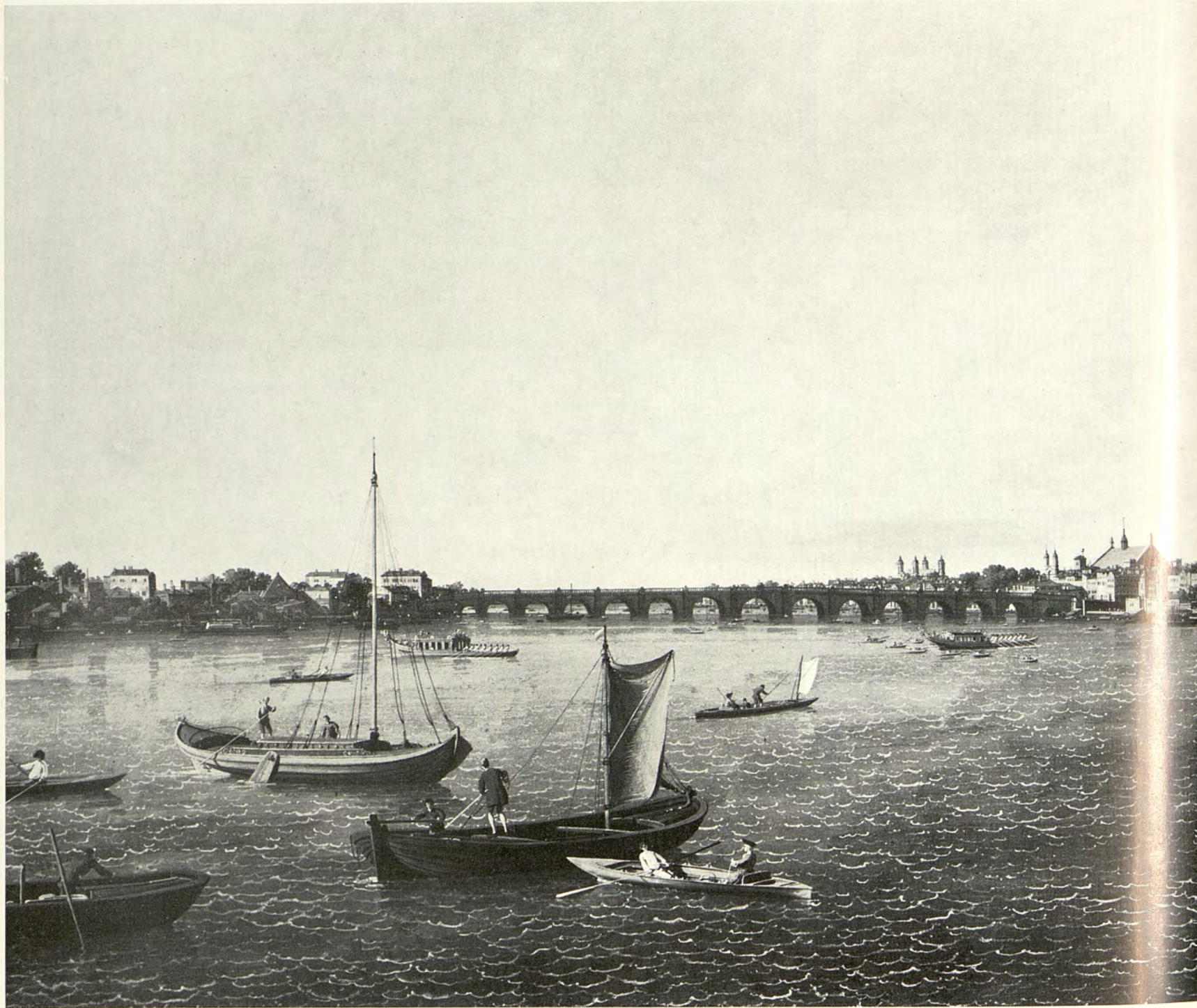
212-214. CANALETTO: *The Old Guardhouse from St James' Park* (details). Basingstoke, Collection of the Earl of Malmesbury.  
This is probably one of the first works executed by Canaletto during his first visit to England. In the centre is the old Guardhouse which was demolished in 1749-50. (Canaletto later painted the new Horse Guards). On the left is the Admiralty and behind it the spire of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.



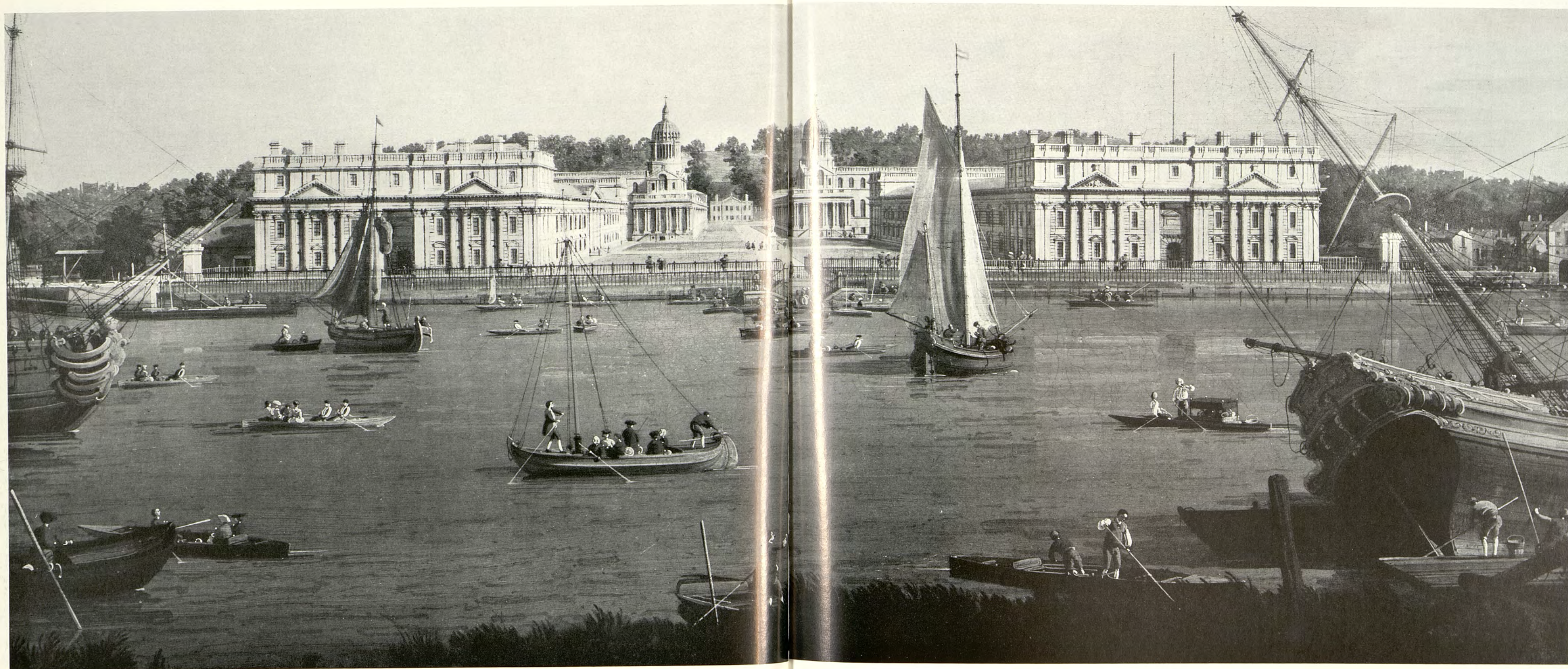


215. CANALETTO: *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House*. Windsor Castle, Royal Collection.

Companion to Pl. 211, this painting is from the same viewpoint but looking upstream. On the right in the foreground is the terrace of Somerset House, the wooden tower of the boatyard and, beyond the houses and warehouses of the left bank, the Banqueting Hall, the side of Westminster Abbey with the tower of St. Margaret's, the roof of Westminster Hall and Westminster Bridge, which appears to be completed so that the painting must be post-1746. Beyond the bridge can be seen the four towers of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Smith Square.



Greenwich Hospital is seen from the left bank of the river. On the left of the painting is the Queen's House, on the right that of Charles II, and beyond the square with the statue of George II are the two domed additions of William and Mary.

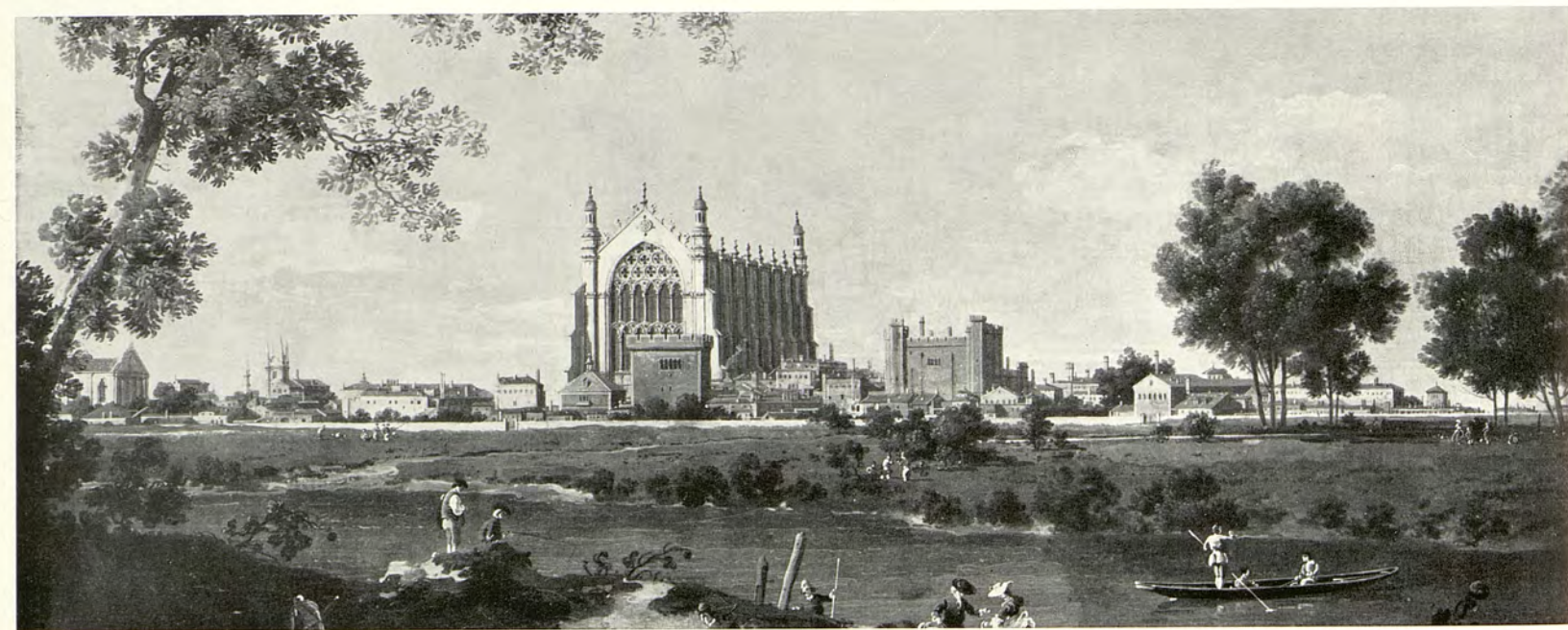


217. CANALETTO: *View of London and Westminster Bridge*. Prague, National Gallery.

The view is from a raised position on the right bank near Lambeth Palace, which can be seen in the foreground, and is a companion painting to that of the Thames on Lord Mayor's Day (Pls. 205-6). On the left bank are the four towers of St. John the Evangelist, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Hall and the spires of various churches, and on the right in the distance, the dome of St. Paul's.

218. CANALETTO: *Eton College*. London, National Gallery.

The chapel and school buildings are seen from the east, across the Thames. The small building in front of the chapel is probably the old kitchens. Some topographical details are incorrect, and the various buildings on the left and along the horizon are probably imaginary, but the position of the chapel relative to the school buildings is accurate. The painting is probably of 1747, the year in which Canaletto visited Windsor.

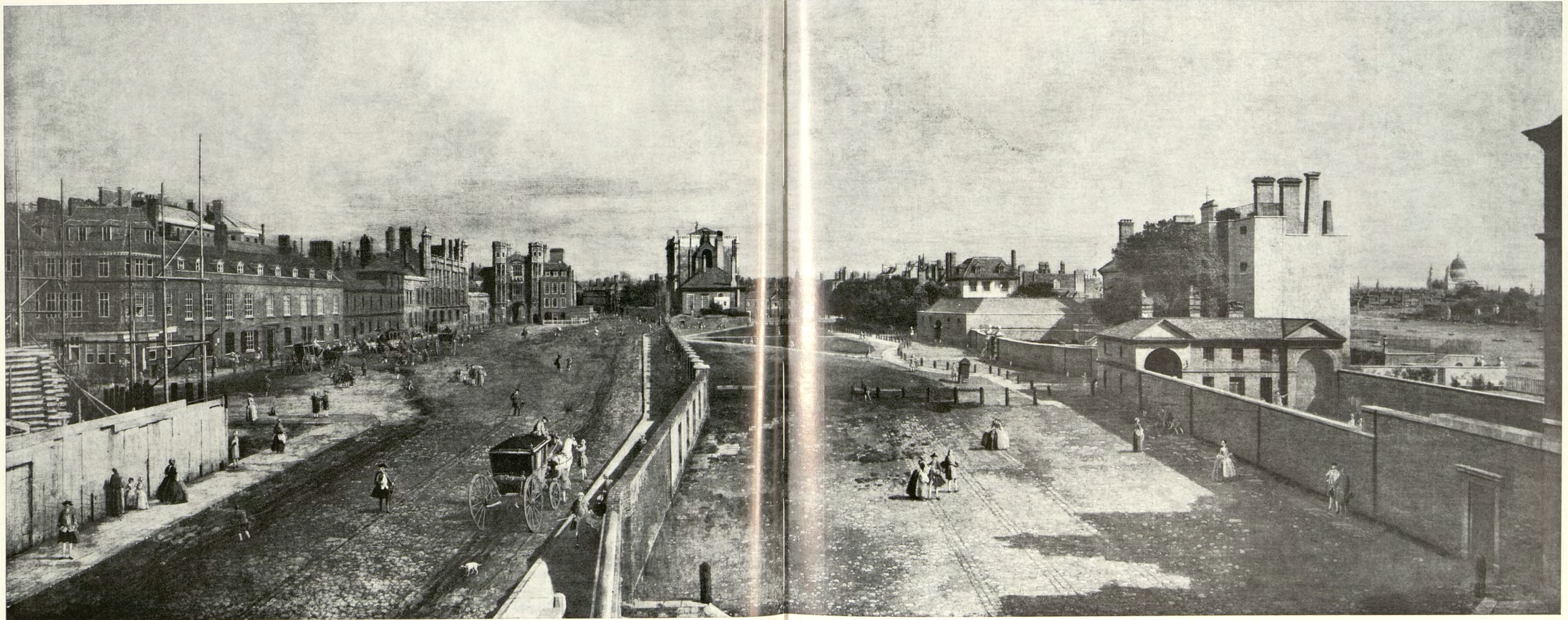


219. CANALETTO: *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House* (detail). Haddington, Collection of the Duke of Hamilton and Brandon. The painting is a smaller version of the Windsor view (Pl. 215) and differs from it in a few details, and it is also from a slightly different viewpoint. A drawing at Windsor seems to refer to this painting rather than to the other.



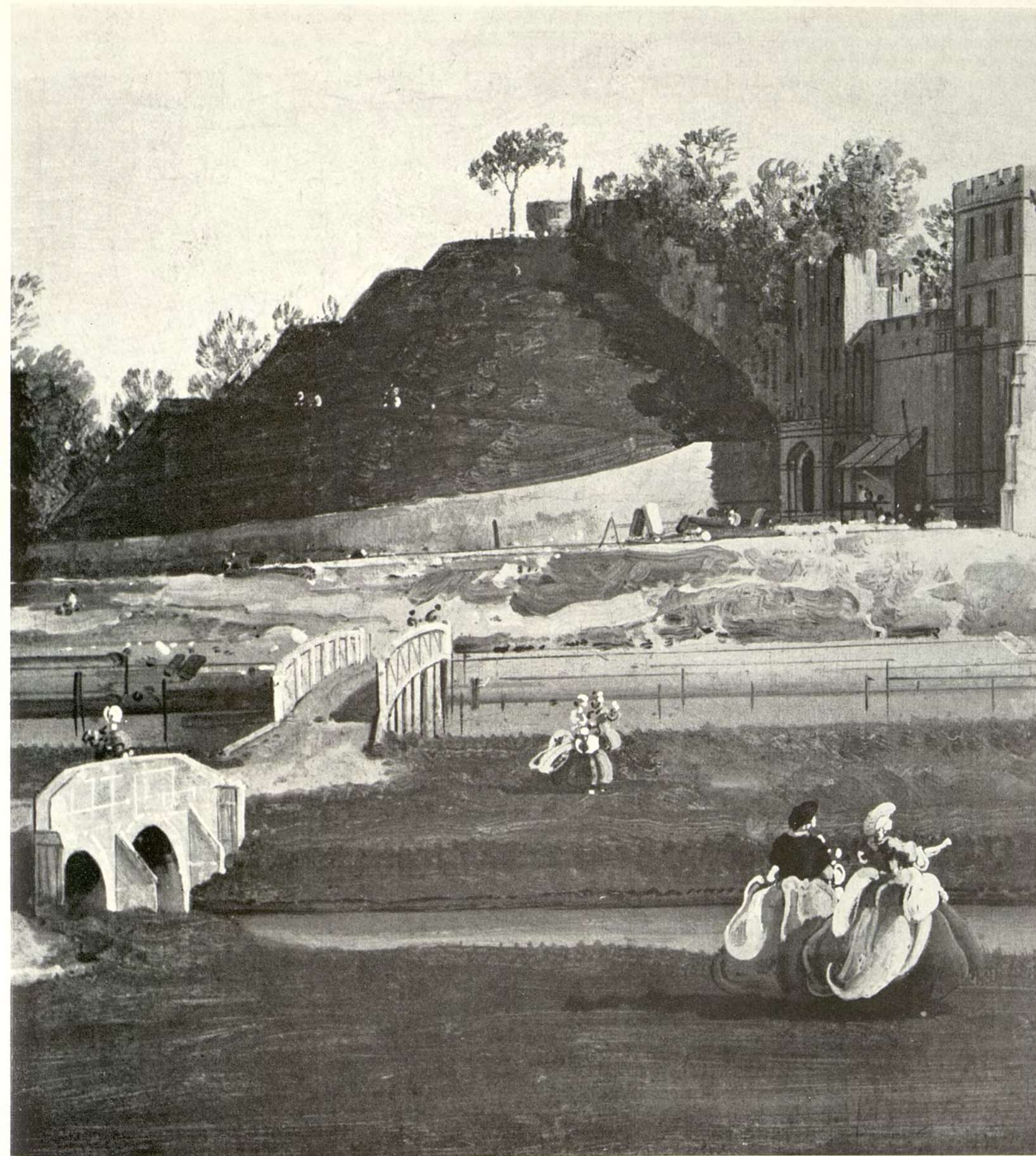
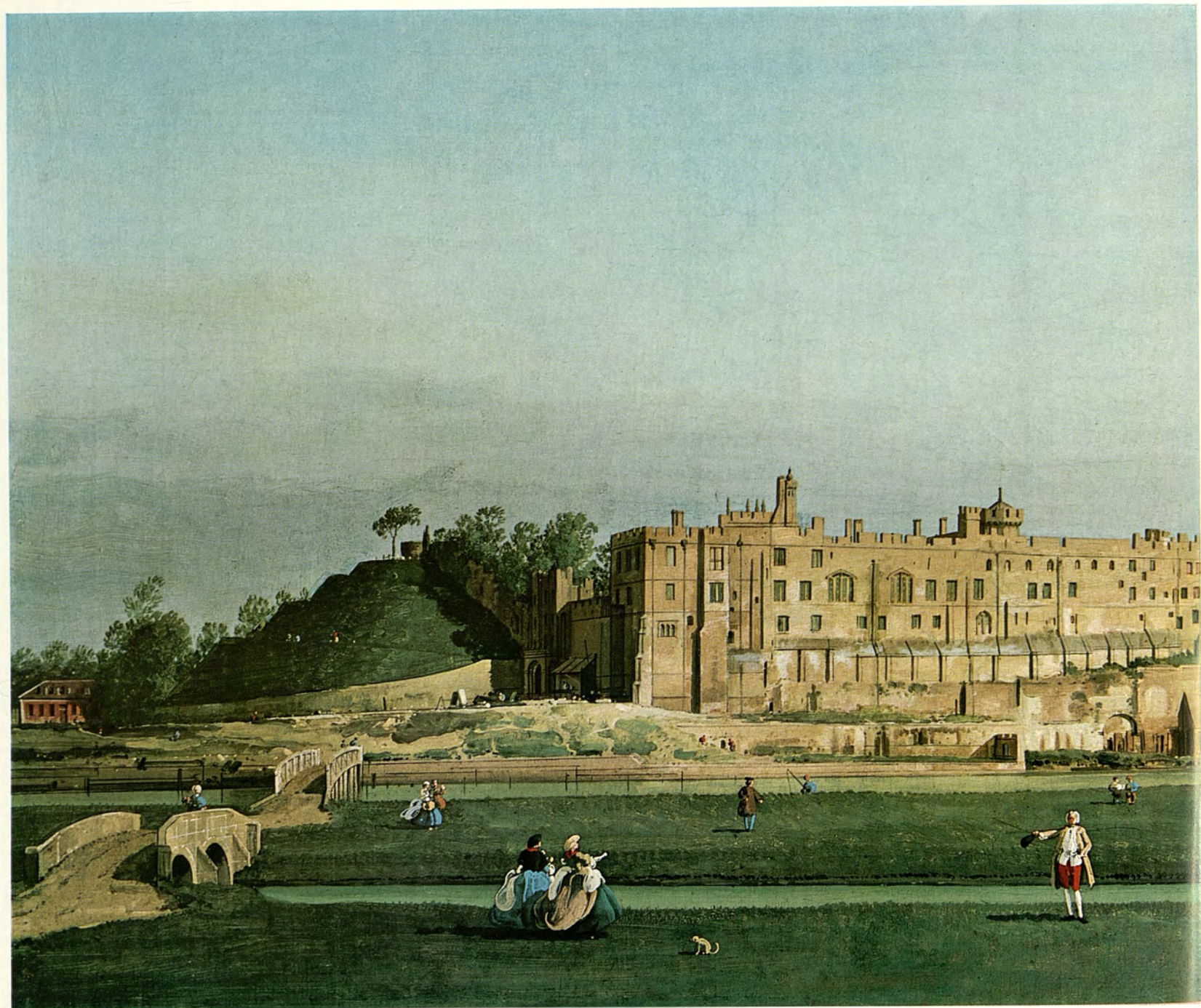
220. CANALETTO: *Whitehall and the Privy Garden*. Bowhill, Collection of the Duke of Buccleuch.

The view is similar to that in the collection of the Duke of Richmond, but the viewpoint is slightly to the left of the other, above the wall which separated Whitehall from the Privy Garden. On the right is a corner of Richmond House and its stables, behind which is seen the rear of Montagu House. Between the two houses are the Thames and, in the distance, St. Paul's. In the centre is the side of the Banqueting Hall and on the left the Holbein Gate. Further left and in the foreground is the scaffolding for a house which is being built on the site of what is now Parliament Street. This large canvas was painted probably in 1751. Canaletto always refused to sell it, and took it back with him to Venice, where it was later acquired by Dr. Hinchliffe.

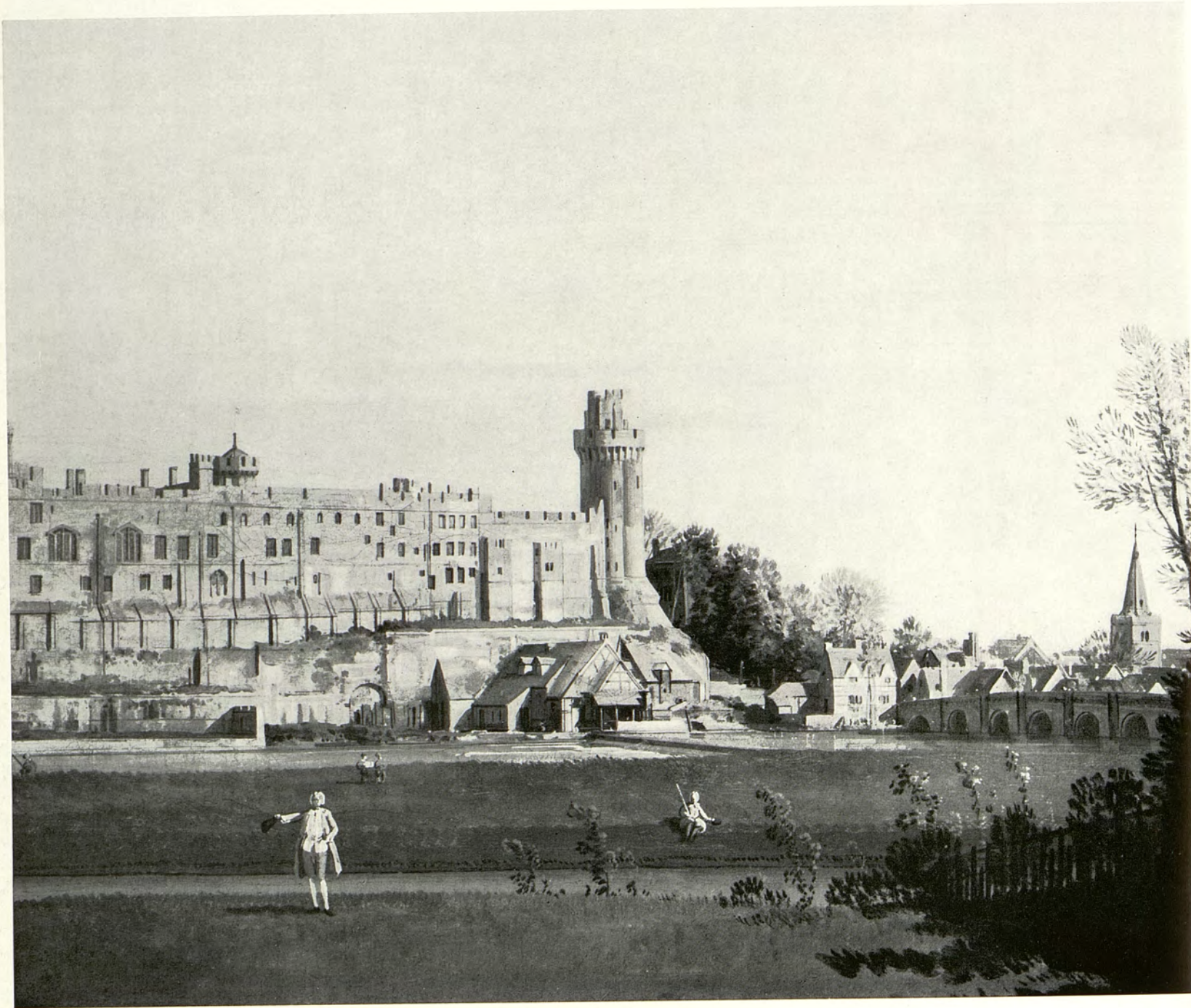


221-222. CANALETTO: *View of Warwick Castle* (details). Warwick, Collection of the Earl of Warwick.

One of many views of this subject by Canaletto, all from different viewpoints, this shows the castle from the south, across the river Avon. In the centre is the castle, to the left Ethelfleda's Mound and two small bridges. This painting has never left the possession of the Greville family; it was probably painted by Canaletto for Francis Greville who was created Earl of Brooke in 1746 and Earl of Warwick in 1759.



223. CANALETTO: *View of Warwick Castle* (detail). Warwick, Collection of the Earl of Warwick.  
This detail shows Caesar's Tower, the mill and dam below, the main bridge over the river, and the Church of St. Nicholas beyond it.



224. CANALETTO: *Somerset House* (detail). Minneapolis, Institute of Arts.  
The view of Somerset House from the Thames, with the wide terrace animated by a variety of figures.



225. ANTONIO JOLI: *Whitehall from the north side, with the Banqueting Hall and the Holbein Gate* (detail). London, Private collection. Beyond the Banqueting Hall is the wall of the Privy Garden, and on the right can be seen part of the Holbein Gate.

