

Having passed the gate, or rather the place where the gate once was, our traveller may be considered as now fairly in the town, with ample leisure to view the beauties of Bridge-street. But it unfortunately happens that Bridge-street at its entrance – or indeed anywhere else – possesses few “beauties” to present to his notice; for if we except a pillar letter box on one hand and a drinking fountain on the other, this part of Bridge-street offers little for either comment or commendation.

The street abruptly widens into what is dignified with the name of the Cow Fair, in the south-east corner of which may be noted the hostelry known as the Crown. So long ago as 1549, there was a Crown Inn in Banbury; for in the records of the Augmentation Office in Westminster, it is stated that in the year above named, the repairs of the tenement of Thomas Payne in Banbury, called the “Crowne” amounted to no less a sum than fifty-seven shillings and three-pence. On the 12th of July, 1859, this inn had as narrow an escape from destruction as it could possibly have met with during the several centuries of its previous hospitality; for on that day, a fire broke out in a carrier’s warehouse adjoining the extensive brewery of Messrs. Hunt and Edmunds, the tall chimney of which may be observed towering aloft behind that respectable-looking residence on the left. The warehouse where the fire originated was wholly destroyed, as were several back buildings between it and the Crown, the east end of which was also ablaze. Luckily, the conflagration was soon extinguished; and that without its having done a tithe of the damage which was at one time to be dreaded, although the public-house in question had a narrow escape.

## THE TOWN HALL

“Is that a dissenting chapel or a grammar school which stands across the street? our traveller may possibly be tempted to enquire, as he notices a semi-Gothic building which certainly possesses no great pretensions to architectural beauty, but which looks as if it were almost half-inclined to dispute his progress; whilst the dumpy little tower that disfigures its broadside – occasionally by way of courtesy designated its front – seems to hint that the builder had suddenly run short of materials, and was compelled to bring his labours to an abrupt termination. [This defect is now partially remedied; for, whilst the present (2nd) edition was preparing for press, this ornament of the hall was ordered to be surmounted by a public clock, and that to be “topped off” with a tapering spirre, which makes it look more like a Chapel-of-Ease.]