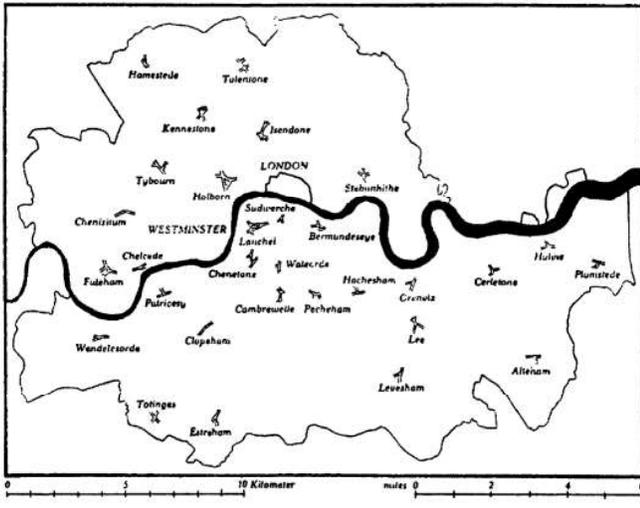
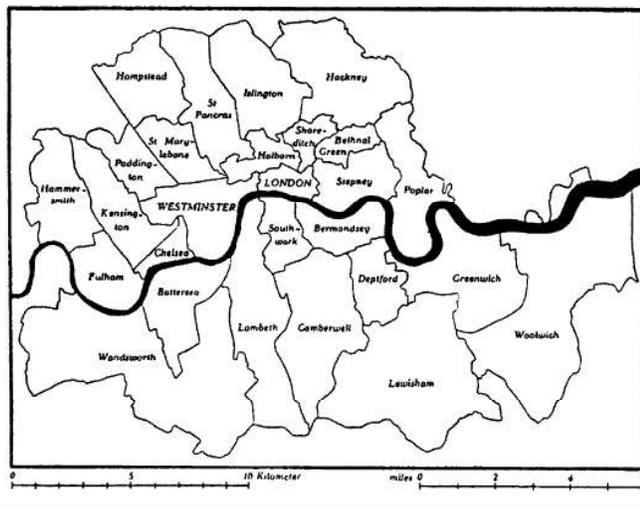


2 ■ A tale of two cities



Villages near London mentioned in the *Domesday Book* from about the year 1080. Each village name signified a group of houses near a crossroad.



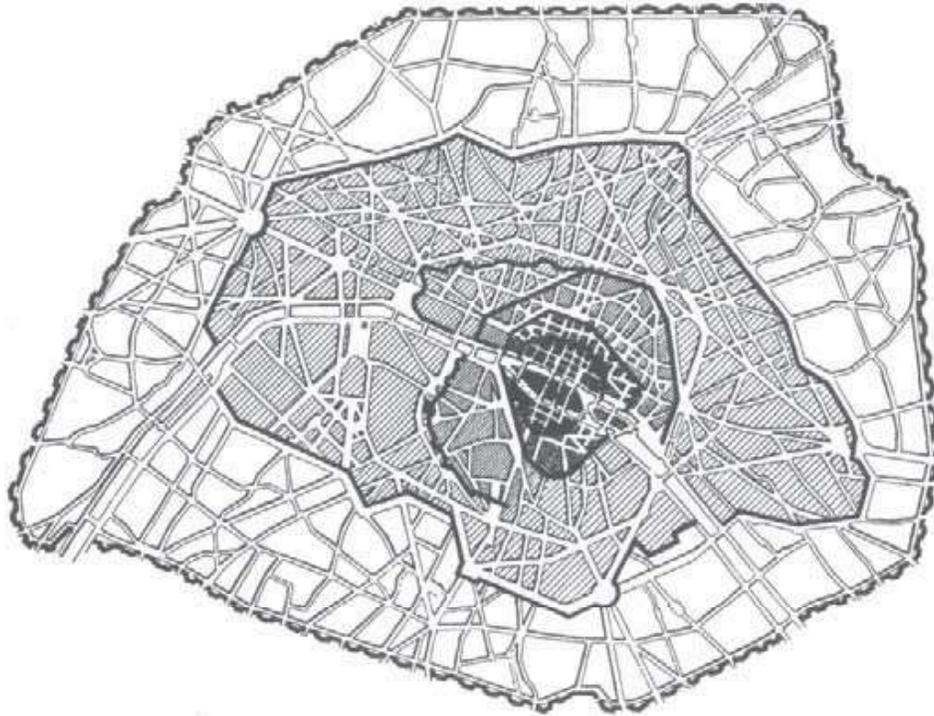
The boroughs that form the County of London today. The nucleus of each borough is one of the old villages, every one of whose names can be traced back to the *Domesday Book*,

the ridiculous. The two dominating towns were London proper, “the City of London,” the seat of trade, and “the City of Westminster,” the seat of government. The relations between these two have been decisive for England’s history. The king (as well as the Government) does not reside in the City of London. When he comes there he is received with all the honors shown a foreign potentate visiting a free city. London’s Lord Mayor comes to the spot where in the older days the gate of the city stood and, with great ceremony, hands over to the king the keys of the gate which no longer stands there.

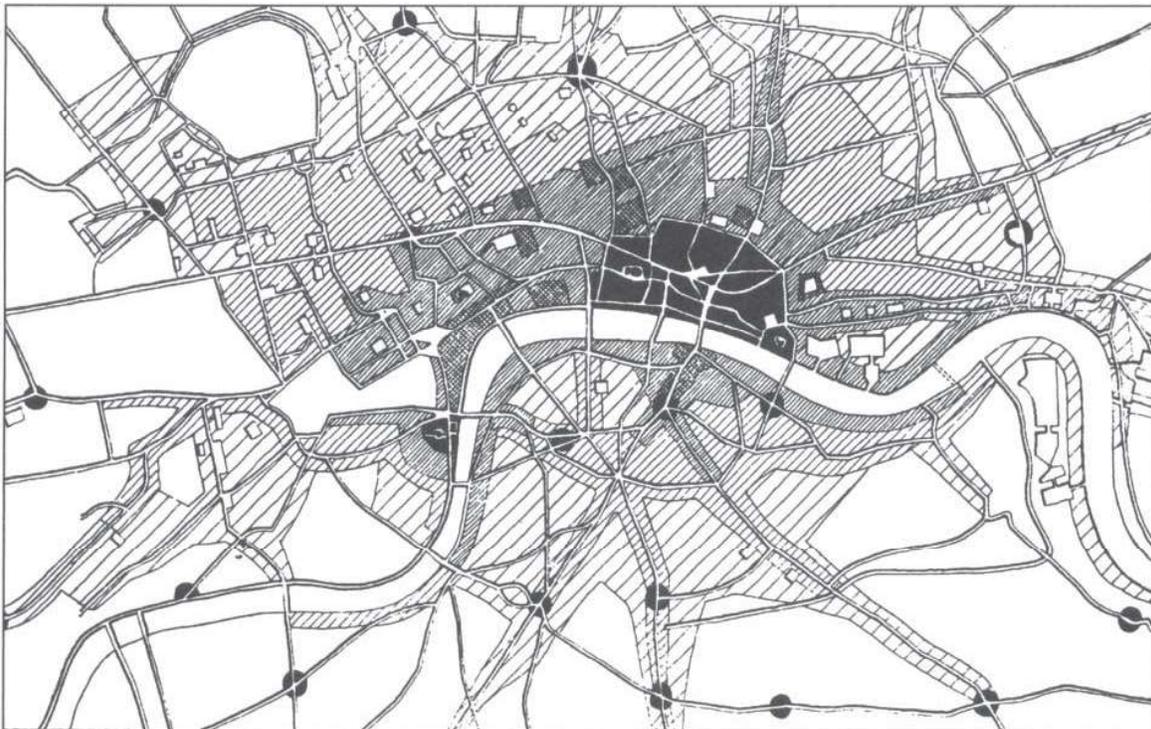
When Henry IV of France, as a building speculator on the grand scale, built the *Place Royale*, now the *Place des Vosges*, it was a new and epoch-making idea. This was early in the 17th century. (Henry IV died in 1610.) At about the same time there lay a large, unbuilt area between London and Westminster where, earlier, a convent had stood. After the Reformation, Henry VIII had given the confiscated property to a nobleman who had been of great service to the royal house. Around 1630, this convent garden, or, as it is now called, Covent Garden, was ripe for exploitation and the fourth Earl of Bedford decided to utilize his land for a great building enterprise. But he wished to do it in just as stately a manner as the French king had carried out his building speculation. It was to be a monumental square with a church on its axis. The Earl employed the country’s first architect, Inigo Jones, to design the church and the facades of the buildings and to plan the arcades that were to surround the square. What was to be hidden behind the facades was left to the tenants to decide. The project turned out to be a much more classical, more Italian *place* than the *Place des Vosges*. The church was lower than all the other buildings but it seemed large because it had the largest detail, a great portico of columns. But this monumentality did not last very long. While the *Place des Vosges* became the scene of knightly sports and tournaments, Covent Garden became a vegetable market which filled the coffers of the Bedford family. In Paris the court took over the square, in London, trade—which gives a very good idea of part of the difference between the two cities.

The arcades of Covent Garden, however, really took on something of the same significance of the arcades of ancient market places. They became a popular meeting place where friends strolled together, gossiping and discussing the news of the day. The arcade that led to some of the famous coffeehouses and to the Covent Garden Theatre became a London institution and has left many traces in English art and literature.

These two real estate projects, *Place des Vosges* in Paris and Covent Garden in London, had many traits in common. But as time went on, the development of the two cities greatly diverged. Paris became more and more a consumer city, a place where the enormous fortunes, made on the great manorial estates of the aristocracy, were spent on luxuries. While there was a general decree prohibiting construction on hitherto unbuilt land, the government encouraged all building which served to glorify the monarchy. Therefore, if one wanted to build on an empty site, all that was necessary was to fix upon a project which included a monumental place with a statue—and, lo! there was no longer any ban on building. It was even possible to obtain a subsidy from the government for the enterprise. This became the salvation of many a ruined nobleman, as for instance, the Duke de Vendome. In 1677 his creditors got together to find out if they could not make something out of his large holdings. The architect Mansard drew up plans for a great building enterprise around a monumental place with a statue. It turned out to be a long, troublesome undertaking. The plans were changed several times. In 1699 Girardon’s equestrian statue of Louis XIV was erected. The property

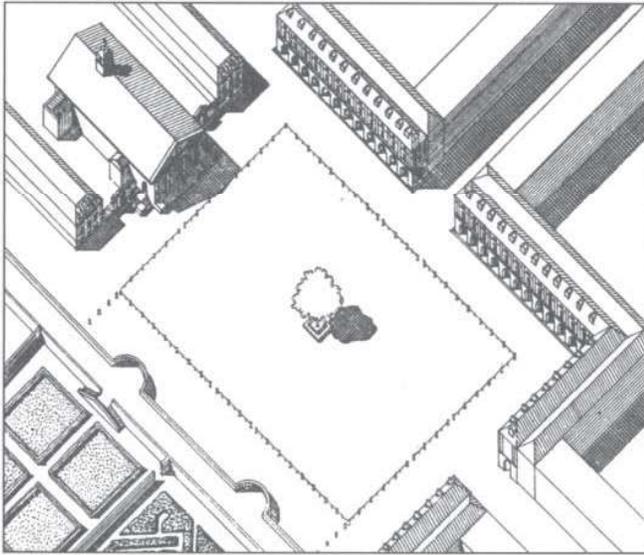


The development of Paris. (North upward) Central core early Middle Ages, around this heavy black lines show boundaries of c. 1180, 1370, 1676, 1784–91 and 1841–45.



London's development. (North upward) Black denotes inhabited districts in early Middle Ages. Cross-hatching denotes later medieval settlements (convents, temple, buildings in Westminster and London) finely hatched around these. London c. 1660, thereafter c. 1790 and finally 1830.

4 ■ A tale of two cities



Covent Garden Square in London in its original form. In foreground, left, the Earl of Bedford's garden. Facing square St. Paul's Covent Garden, designed as a temple. The square was to be a classic forum with arcades and a public meeting place in the portico of the church.



Place Vendôme, Paris. Section of Turgot's plan, 1731. In center, equestrian statue of Louis XIV with the magnificent, regular façade buildings around it which is in no way related to the buildings and courts behind.

then passed into the hands of the municipality which carried out the project according to the final plan. In 1701 the facades were finished and not until then did the sale of the building lots behind them begin. There was no connection between the facades and the houses they hid. On the other hand, the height of the houses was carefully adapted to the 17-meter (56-foot) high monument so that the equestrian statue was seen rising above the cornices.

The Duke de la Feuillade also obtained permission to carry out a large building project around a circular plaza with a statue of Louis XIV. It was called the *Place des Victoires* and was laid out in 1697 just across the old city boundary, which had been pushed further out after the Cardinal's palace and the *Tuileries* had been built in the 16th century. Instead of the usual equestrian statue, this time the monument was a standing figure of the king being crowned with laurels by the goddess of victory. It exists no longer. Like other royal monuments, it was destroyed during the French Revolution.

The 18th century map of Paris shows other characteristic traits. Though the city's fortifications were no longer of vital importance, definite boundaries continued to be maintained. They were marked by the *Grands Boulevards*. The word "boulevard" is a corruption of the nordic *bulvirke* (bulwark) which means a palisade, a medieval form of defense work used before the employment of real walls and ramparts. The boulevard is the line of fortifications, itself, but when these were converted, in Paris, into broad, tree-lined wall streets, the designation "boulevard" was kept. And when, much later, under Napoleon III—as described in the chapter on Paris *Boulevards*—broad, radical thoroughfares, also planted with trees, were cut through the old city on all sides, these, too, were called boulevards. Today, the word simply means a broad, tree-lined avenue. However, in the 17th century the boulevards were actually boundary lines beyond which buildings could not be erected because uncontrolled expansion of the city was considered very dangerous. The result was, naturally, that the population within the walls became more and more dense.

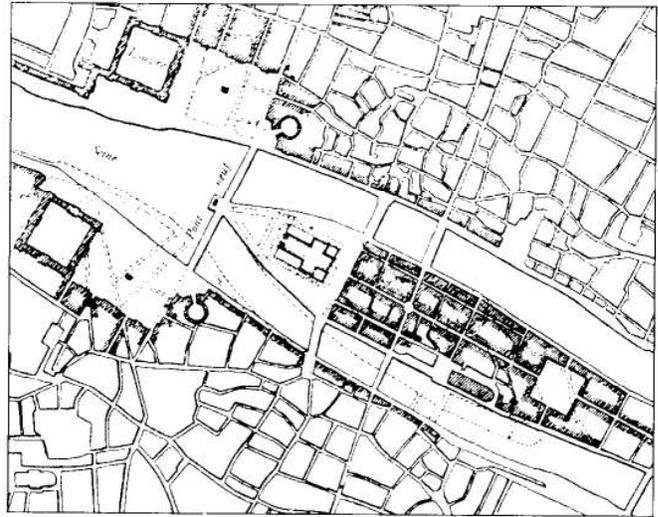
There were building bans in London, also, but no clearly defined city boundaries because the town had spread beyond the Roman walls so early in its history. It expanded particularly toward the west, until London and Westminster had completely merged. In the new districts there were many open spaces. These were of two kinds, originating from different causes. Some of them were old village greens and fields, which from time immemorial had been set aside for the use for the inhabitants for sports, games and archery. Every form of custom and tradition has always been of great importance in England, where laws have never been collected into a logical system but have remained a simple record of rules and regulations naturally evolved from the daily life of the people. There are many accounts of the armed resistance of the inhabitants when building speculators attempted to exploit these old playing fields. They often became regular pitched battles with a number of wounded and even some dead. And in every case it was the defenders of the open spaces who held the field and won the support of the government. To this day there are still greens and commons spread all over London, where young people meet every Saturday all summer long, to play cricket, just as young people did when these green areas were parts of individual villages. In the center of the city the open spaces that have been preserved have become playgrounds, bandstands, public tennis courts, and other areas of recreation.

The other type of open spaces came into existence in the course of great building speculations. Covent Garden, the first real “square” in London, was such a great success that others followed it. West of London’s “City” lay a number of old manorial estates and country houses. As the urban development approached nearer and nearer, the grounds of these estates were parceled out for building. The owners, however, desired to keep their old homes as long as possible, with sufficient open space around them, preferably toward the north where there was a splendid view of lovely, purpling hills crowned by the old villages of Hampstead and Highgate. Therefore, a large square was laid out in front of the house, which thus closed the south side of the square; new buildings were erected on the east and west sides, and the north side was kept open. Later, as the district grew, the north side was also built up, and a new London square had come into being.

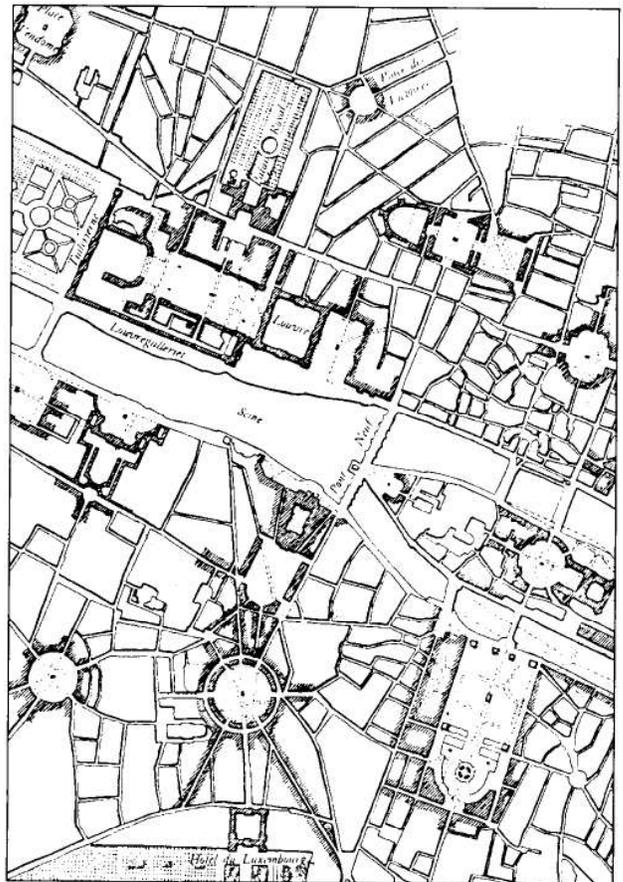
In Paris they were just as much interested in open spaces as in London but these continued to be of a different type. They were statue *places*. Louis XIV or, as he was named on the monuments, Louis le Grand, had had his *places*. Louis XV, *le bien aimé*, must also have his. The object was not only to glorify the monarchy, but also to beautify the city and rid it of slums. The old districts, in which houses were crowded together and unsavory, were always present like a bad conscience.

In 1748 a great competition was held for the design of a monument *place* for Louis XV. The many plans that were sent in were reproduced in a large volume of engravings, published in 1765. But long before that year they had been spread all over Europe by newspapers and had been studied and copied even so far away as Denmark. The author of the stately work, Patte, had entered all the proposals on a map of Paris so that it resembled a city of royal places. And the proposals were by no means modest ones. One competitor submitted a plan for a new *Louvre* on the left bank of the Seine, duplicating that on the right bank, and with the entire western end of the *Isle de la Cité* turned into a monumental *place*, in keeping with great, new places on both banks. Some proposed the destruction of large numbers of houses to make way for circular, quadrangular or octagonal *places*. There was also a design for a complete system of squares, three monumental market places connected with each other by arcades. These many projects, however, did not lead to any slum clearance of the old districts. Instead, unbuilt land in front of the *Tuileries* was chosen as the site of the new *place*, bordered on one side by the Seine, on two others by rows of trees, and on the fourth side by new monumental buildings. In the centre a colossal equestrian statue of Louis XV was raised—now, long since vanished and replaced by a large obelisk.

In the 18th century London continued to spread out, adding new residential sections around open squares. The landlords were the great landowners who were not used to selling their property but only to leasing it out on long term. This had been the custom since the Middle Ages and it had been a good one for agriculture. Now, the same system was continued after the property had become urban. The realization of the appreciation of ground values took place only at long intervals, when a tenancy, which might run for 99 years, had terminated. But the owner could afford to wait. In London, which was a commercial city and where it was now possible to build as far out as one wished, speculators thought in terms of *building* speculation rather than *land* speculation, which are two very different things. Money was invested in firms of enterprising builders, and returns came as soon as the houses were finished and sold. The money was used to *produce* something, and the investor was not interested in building as many houses that were as attractive as possible. And as it was attractive to live in a house facing an open square, squares were naturally laid out.



Examples of some of the unaccepted proposals for a monumental square in Paris in honor of Louis XV. This one is for a large square, to be built in front of the *Louvre*, containing an obelisk, and on the opposite bank a new *Louvre*, symmetrical with the old, and a new square. At the same time the entire *Isle de la Cité*, with the exception of *Notre Dame*, was to be regulated and rebuilt. Scale 1:20,000. North upward.



Proposals for monumental squares in Paris in honor of Louis XV; results of a competition, 1748—published 1765—and never carried out. At top are seen two squares from Louis XIV’s time: *Place Vendome* and *Place des Victoires*. Scale 1:20,000. North upward.



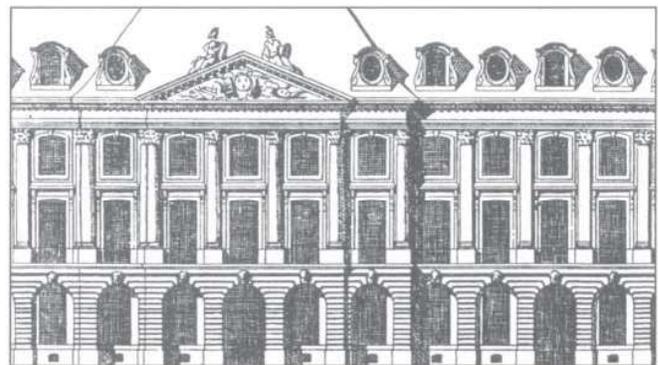
Section of London map, 1804. Reproduced on a scale of 1:20,000. North upward. The map shows a number of the squares laid out in the 17th and 18th centuries.

When a district was no longer fashionable, the original residents moved to a new one, lying further out, which beckoned with modern houses, larger open spaces and gardens.

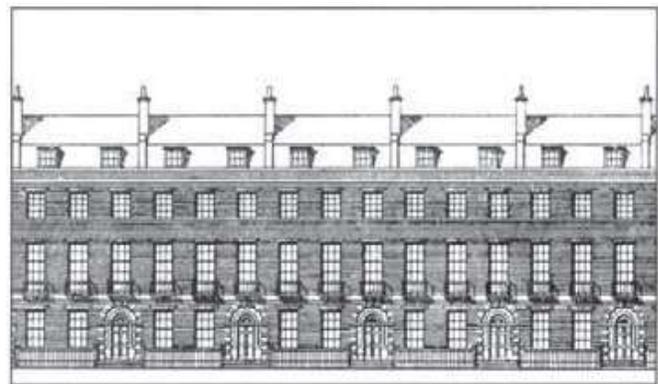
The monumental *places* of continental cities, on the one hand, and London's squares, on the other, were very different. The monumental *places* were great Baroque creations in which the house facades were of paramount importance and that which lay behind them quite unimportant. In the *Place Vendome*, as already noted, there was no connection between the subdivisions on the façades surrounding the *place* and the courtyards and rooms of the buildings behind them. The Baroque *place* was entirely dramatic in conception, forming an effective vista with entrance, approach and climax. Such effects were not found in London, where all four sides of the squares were generally the same. In the centre there was usually a fenced-in garden to which all the families living in the square had a key. The planting in them was informal and trees were allowed to grow naturally, becoming well formed and large. They were mostly plane trees. Neither Baroque nor Rococo found favor in these districts, where the houses were simple, anonymous brick buildings, their facades relieved only by sharply indented window-openings. In all the houses heating was done by coal fires on open hearths, which spread a layer of soot over the whole city. The houses became black. It was discovered that there were only two things to do about this. Either the brick walls could be covered with stucco and then oil painted, washed every year, and painted again when necessary; or you could make a virtue of necessity by painting the houses black from the start and, to relieve the gloom, draw up the brickwork joints with very fine white lines and paint the window casings a very light color. This was done in many cases and the charming effect became a characteristic London trait.

On each building lot there was only one house for one family. It might be a very large household with many family members and servants. In Paris there were usually many families in each house. At the entrance there was (and still is) a special Paris institution, *le concierge*. No one could enter or leave without passing him. He knew every inhabitant of his little kingdom on the other side of the entrance and saw to it that they received their mail and anything else brought to the door for them...

Under the influence of Carlyle, Charles Dickens wrote a book in 1859 which was very different from all his other books. Instead of describing his own time, he produced an historical novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. It has not the documentary interest of many of his other books and there is, undoubtedly, some exaggeration in his description of monarchical Paris as compared to free London. But with amazing power he conjured up the two cities in unforgettable visions. As a symbol of Paris stands the minute and harrowing description of a staircase leading up through a tall tenement house, a steep and foul shaft with the doors of innumerable flats opening on to it. It symbolized the Paris that was tightly constricted within closed boundaries and which had to grow vertically because it could not spread out. At the very top of this dismal winding staircase was the miserable room where the noble and unhappy Dr. Manette had been brought after his mysterious release from the Bastille where he had been a life prisoner. Later in the book he is brought to London by friends and there we see him, sitting under a plane tree in his garden in Soho, a district of lovely squares where many emigrants found refuge. It is the London of the open spaces, with its air of humanity and with its green trees and black houses. ■



Section of façade, *Place Vendome*, Paris. Scale 1:500.



Façades on Bedford Square, London. Scale 1:500.