A WALK IN A WORKHOUSE.

A FEW Sundays ago, I formed one of the congregation assembled in the chapel of a large metropolitan Workhouse. With the exception of the clergyman and clerk, and a very few officials, there were none but paupers present. The children sat in the galleries; the women in the body of the chapel, and in one of the side aisles; the men in the remaining aisle. The service was decorously performed, though the sermon might have been much better adapted to the comprehension and to the circumstances of the hearers. The usual supplications were offered, with more than the usual signicancy in such a place, for the fatherless children and widows, for all sick persons and young children, for all that were desolate and oppressed, for the comforting and helping of the weak-hearted, for the raising-up of them that had fallen; for all that were in danger, necessity, and tribulation. The prayers of the congregation were desired "for several persons in the various wards, dangerously ill," and others who were recovering returned their thanks to Heaven.

Among this congregation, were some evil-looking young women, and beetle-browed young men; but not many—perhaps that kind of characters kept away. Generally, the faces (those of the children excepted) were depressed and subdued, and wanted colour. Aged people were there, in every variety. Mumbling, blear-eyed, spectacled, stupid, deaf, lame; vacantly winking in the gleams of sun that now and then crept in through the open doors, from the paved yard; shading their listening ears, or blinking eyes, with their withered hands; poring over their books, leering at nothing, going to sleep, crouching and drooping in corners. There were weird old women, all skeleton within, all bonnet and cloak without, continually wiping their eyes with dirty dusters of pocket-handkerchiefs; and there were ugly old crones, both male and female, with a ghastly kind of contentment upon them which was not at all comforting to see. Upon the whole, it was the dragon, Pauperism, in a very weak and impotent condition; toothless, fangless, drawing his breath heavily enough, and hardly worth chaining up.

When the service was over, I walked with the humane and conscientious gentleman whose duty it was to take that walk, that Sunday morning, through the little world of poverty enclosed within the workhouse walls. It was inhabited by a population of some fifteen hundred or two thousand paupers, ranging from the infant newly born or not yet come into the pauper world, to the old man dying on his bed.

In a room opening from a squalid yard, where a number of listless women were lounging to and fro, trying to get warm in the ineffectual sunshine of the tardy May morning—in the "Itch Ward," not to compromise the truth—a woman such as HOGARTH has often drawn, was hurriedly getting on her gown, before a dusty fire. She was the nurse, or wardswoman, of that insalubrious department—herself a pauper—flabby, raw-boned, untidy—unpromising and coarse of aspect as need be. But, on being spoken to about the patients whom she had in charge, she turned round, with her shabby gown half on, half off, and fell a crying with all her might. Not for show, not querulously, not in any mawkish sentiment, but in the deep grief and affliction of her heart; turning away her dishevelled head: sobbing most bitterly, wringing her hands, and letting fall abundance of great tears, that choked her utterance. What was the matter with the nurse of the itch-ward? Oh, "the dropped child" was dead! Oh, the child that was found in the street, and she had brought up ever since, had died an hour ago, and see where the little creature lay, beneath this cloth! The dear, the pretty dear!

The dropped child seemed to o small and poor a thing for Death to be in earnest with, but Death had taken it; and already its diminu-
tive form was neatly washed, composed, and stretched as if in sleep upon a box. I thought I heard a voice from Heaven saying, It shall be well for thee, O nurse of the itch-ward, when some less gentle pauper does those offices to thy cold form, that such as the dropped child are the angels who behold my Father’s face!

In another room, were several ugly old women crouching, witch-like, round a hearth, and chatter- ing and nodding, after the manner of the monkies. " All well here? And enough to eat? " A general chattering and chuckling; at last an answer from a volunteer. " Oh yes gentleman! Bless you gentleman! Lord bless the parish of St. So-and-So! It feed the hungry, Sir, and give drink to the thirsty, and it warm them which is cold, so it do, and good luck to the parish of St. So-and-So, and thankee gentleman!" Elsewhere, a party of pauper nurses were at dinner. " How do you get on? " " Oh pretty well Sir! We works hard, and we lives hard—like the sodgers!"

In another room, a kind of purgatory or place of transition, six or eight noisy mad- women were gathered together, under the superin- tendence of one sane attendant. Among them was a girl of two or three and twenty, very prettily dressed, of most respectable appearance, and good manners, who had been brought in from the house where she had lived as domestic servant (having, I suppose, no friends), on account of being subject to epileptic fits, and requiring to be removed under the influence of a very bad one. She was by no means of the same stuff, or the same breeding, or the same expe-rience, or in the same state of mind, as those by whom she was surrounded; and she pathetically complained that the daily association and the nightly noise made her worse, and was driving her mad— which was perfectly evident. The case was noted for enquiry and redress, but she said she had already been there for some weeks.

If this girl had stolen her mistress’s watch, I do not hesitate to say she would, in all probability, have been infinitely better off. Bearing in mind, in the present brief description of this walk, not only the facts already stated in this Journal, in reference to the Model Prison at Pentonville, but the general treatment of convicted prisoners under the associated silent system too, it must be once more distinctly set before the reader, that we have come to this absurd, this dangerous, this monstrous pass, that the dishonest felon is, in respect of cleanliness, order, diet, and accommodation, better provided for, and taken care of, than the honest pauper.

And this conveys no special imputation on the workhouse of the parish of St. So-and-So, where, on the contrary, I saw many things to commend. It was very agreeable, recollecting that most infamous and atrocious enormity committed at Tooting— an enormity which, a hundred years hence, will still be vividly remembered in the bye-ways of English life, and which has done more to engender a gloomy discontent and suspicion among many thousands of the people than all the Chartist leaders could have done in all their lives— to find the pauper children in this workhouse looking robust and well, and apparently the objects of very great care. In the Infant School— a large, light, airy room at the top of the building— the little creatures, being at dinner, and eating their potatoes heartily, were not cowed by the presence of strange visitors, but stretched out their small hands to be shaken, with a very pleasant confidence. And it was comfortable to see two mangy pauper rocking-horses rampant in a corner. In the girls’ school, where the dinner was also in progress, everything bore a cheerful and healthy aspect. The meal was over, in the boys’ school, by the time of our arrival there.

and the room was not yet quite re-arranged; but the boys were roaming unrestrained about a large and airy yard, as any other schoolboys might have done. Some of them had been drawing large ships upon the schoolroom wall; and
if they had a mast with shrouds and stays set up for practice (as they have in the Middlesex House of Correction), it would be so much the better. At present, if a boy should feel a strong impulse upon him to learn the art of going aloft, he could only gratify it, I presume, as the men and women paupers gratify their aspirations after better board and lodging, by smashing as many workhouse windows as possible, and being promoted to prison.

In one place, the Newgate of the Workhouse, a company of boys and youths were locked up in a yard alone; their day-room being a kind of kennel where the casual poor used formerly to be littered down at night. Divers of them had been there some long time. "Are they never going away? " was the natural enquiry. "Most of them are crippled, in some form or other," said the Wardsman, "and not fit for anything." They shank about, like dispirited wolves or hyenas; and made a pounce at their food when it was served out, much as those animals do. The big-headed idiot shuffling his feet along the pavement, in the sunlight outside, was a more agreeable object every way.

Groves of babies in arms; groves of mothers and other sick women in bed; groves of lunatics; jungles of men in stone-paved down-stairs day-rooms, waiting for their dinners; longer and longer groves of old people, in upstairs Infirmary wards, wearing out life, God knows how--this was the scenery through which the walk lay, for two hours. In some of these latter chambers, there were pictures stuck against the wall, and a neat display of crockery and pewter on a kind of sideboard now and then it was a treat to see a plant or two; in almost every ward, there was a cat.

In all of these Long Walks of aged and infirm, some old people were bed-ridden, and had been for a long time; some were sitting on their beds half-naked; some dying in their beds; some out of bed, and sitting at a table near the fire. A sullen or lethargic indifference to what was asked, a blunted sensibility to everything but warmth and food, a moody absence of complaint as being of no use, a dogged silence and resentful desire to be left alone again, I thought were generally apparent. On our walking into the midst of one of these dreary perspectives of old men, nearly the following little dialogue took place, the nurse not being immediately at hand:

"All well here?"

No answer. An old man in a Scotch cap sitting among others on a form at the table, eating out of a tin porringer, pushes back his cap a little to look at us, claps it down on his forehead again with the palm of his hand, and goes on eating.

"All well here?!" (repeated.)

No answer. Another old man sitting on his bed, paralytically peeling a boiled potato, lifts his head, and stares.

"Enough to eat?"

No answer. Another old man, in bed, turns himself and coughs.

"How are you today?" To the last old man. That old man says nothing; but another old man, a tall old man of a very good address, speaking with perfect correctness, comes forward from somewhere, and volunteers an answer. The reply almost always proceeds from a volunteer, and not from the person looked at or spoken to.

"We are very old, Sir," in a mild, distinct voice. "We can't expect to be well, most of us."

"Are you comfortable?"

"I have no complaint to make, Sir." With a half shake of his head, a half shrug of his shoulders, and a kind of apologetic smile.

"Enough to eat?"

"Why, Sir, I have but a poor appetite," with the same air as before; "and yet I get through my allowance very easily."

"But," showing a porringer with a Sunday dinner in it; "here is a portion of mutton, and three potatoes. You can't starve on that?"

"Oh dear no, Sir," with the same apologetic
"Not starve."
"What do you want?"
"We have very little bread, Sir. It's an exceedingly small quantity of bread."

The nurse, who is now rubbing her hands at the questioner's elbow, interferes with, "It ain't much raly, Sir. You see they've only six ounces a day, and when they've took their breakfast, there ain only be a little left for night, Sir."

Another old man, hitherto invisible, rises out of his bedclothes, as out of a grave, and looks on.

"You have tea at night?" The questioner is still addressing the well-spoken old man.
"Yes, Sir, we have tea at night."
"And you save what bread you can from the morning, to eat with it?"
"Yes, Sir– if we can save any."
"And you want more to eat with it?"
"Yes, Sir." With a very anxious face.

The questioner, in the kindness of his heart, appears a little discomposed, and changes the subject.

"What has become of the old man who used to lie in that bed in the corner?"

The nurse don't remember what old man is referred to. There has been such a many old men. The well-spoken old man is doubtful. The spectral old man who has come to life in bed, says, "Billy Stevens." Another old man who has previously had his head in the fireplace, pipes out,

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"Charley Walters."

Something like a feeble interest is awakened. I suppose Charley Walters had conversation in him.

"He's dead!" says the piping old man.

Another old man, with one eye screwed up, hastily displaces the piping old man, and says:

"Yes! Charley Walters died in that bed, and–and–"

"Billy Stevens," persists the spectral old man.

"No; no! and Johnny Rogers died in that bed, and–and– they 're both on 'em dead– and Sam'l Bowyer;" this seems very extraordinary to him; "he went out!"

With this he subsides, and all the old men (having had quite enough of it) subside, and the spectral old man goes into his grave again, and takes the shade of Billy Stevens with him.

As we turn to go out at the door, another previously invisible old man, a hoarse old man in a flannel gown, is standing there, as if he had just come up through the floor.

"I beg your pardon, Sir, could I take the liberty of saying a word?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"I am greatly better in my health, Sir; but what I want, to get me quite round," with his hand on his throat, "is a little fresh air, Sir. It has always done my complaint so much good, Sir. The regular leave for going out, comes round so seldom, that if the gentlemen, next Friday, would give me leave to go out walking, now and then– for only an hour or so, Sir!–"

Who could wonder, looking through those weary vistas of bed and infirmity, that it should do him good to meet with some other scenes, and assure himself that there was something else on earth? Who could help wondering why the old men lived on as they did; what grasp they had on life; what crumbs of interest or occupation they could pick up from its bare board; whether Charley Walters had ever described to them the days when he kept company with some old pauper woman in the bud, or Billy Stevens ever told them of the time when he was a dweller in the far-off foreign land called Home!

The morsel of burnt child, lying in another room, so patiently, in bed, wrapped in lint, and looking steadfastly at us with his bright quiet eyes when we spoke to him kindly, looked as if the knowledge of these things, and of all the tender things there are to think about, might have been in his mind– as if he thought, with us, that there was a fellow feeling in the pau-
per nurses which appeared to make them more kind to their charges than the race of common nurses in the hospitals— as if he mused upon the Future of some older children lying around him in the same place, and thought it best, perhaps, all things considered, that he should die— as if he knew, without fear, of those many coffins, made and unmade, piled up in the store below—and of his unknown friend, "the dropped child," calm upon the box-lid covered with a cloth. But there was something wistful and appealing, too, in his tiny face, as if, in the midst of all the hard necessities and incongruities he pondered on, he pleaded, in behalf of the helpless and the aged poor, for a little more liberty — and a little more bread.
Article:  ‘A Walk in a Workhouse’ by Charles Dickens

Journal:  *Household Words*, Volume I, Magazine No. 9, 25 May 1850, Pages: 204-207

Author(s):

- Charles Dickens

Dickens, Charles I  
*Mr. C. D., C. D.*,  *Charles Dickens, C. Dickens I*, 1812-1870, novelist.  
Organized theatricals; gave readings based on his works.  

In the partnership agreement under which *H. W.* was set up, Dickens was, with the publishers Bradbury & Evans, with Forster and with Wills, one of the joint proprietors; he held an interest of one-half share. On Forster's relinquishing his one-eighth share in 1856, Dickens divided that one-eighth between himself and Wills. Dickens's salary as editor was £500 a year; he was to receive payment also for what he wrote in the periodical (Lehmann, ed., *Charles Dickens As Editor*, pp. 19, 195-97). (In the Office Book, Wills did not record the payments made or credited to Dickens for his *H. W.* writings.)

Dickens set the editorial policy of *H. W.* and supervised its being carried out. He had, in Wills, a capable and efficient subeditor on whose judgment he came more and more to rely; yet, especially in the early years of *H. W.*, he concerned himself with every detail of its production. Before the first number appeared, he wrote to friends and acquaintances asking them to become contributors. He read - especially during the early years of *H. W.* - hundreds of MSS, some submitted directly to him, others referred to him by Wills for final acceptance or rejection. When possible, he conferred weekly, sometimes more often, with Wills on editorial matters. When personal conference was not possible, he sent his instructions and suggestions by letter - instructions and suggestions ranging from matters of editorial policy to matters of typography and punctuation. He revised - sometimes almost entirely rewrote - contributed papers; he read proofs - sometimes revises of proofs that he had in the first place altered or emended. He suggested subjects for articles; he sent to the office materials to serve as the basis for articles. On occasion, he made excursions in company with a staff member to gather material for articles. He wrote much for the early volumes of *H. W.*, comparatively little for the later volumes. Morley's writings in the periodical exceeded his by some 300 pages. Nevertheless, as he stated when he brought *H. W.* to a close ("A Last Household Word"), his name had been, "as his pen and himself" had been, "inseparable from the Publication" throughout its entire existence.
Most of Dickens's writings in *H.W.*, like almost all contributions of other writers, appeared anonymously. Only *Hard Times*, the one of his novels that he serialized in the periodical, carried with the title of the work in each instalment the ascription "BY CHARLES DICKENS." Four weeks before the serialization of that book began, it was announced: "NEW TALE by Mr. CHARLES DICKENS"; thereafter, each week's *H.W.* number announced the portion of *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens that was to appear the following week; before the appearance of the final chapters, as also after the completion of the serialization, *H.W.* published advertisements for the novel in book form as a Bradbury & Evans publication. *A Child's History of England*, Dickens's only other extended work in *H.W.*, appeared in the various instalments without Dickens's name after the title, but, during the serialization, advertisements in *H.W.* for the *History* in book form as a Bradbury & Evans publication stated Dickens's authorship.

Of various other of his *H.W.* writings Dickens also made his authorship known. "Personal," his statement concerning the "domestic trouble," bore his name as signature. "Curious Misprint in the Edinburgh Review," his reply to J. F. Stephen's article "The License of Modern Novelists," announced: "the hand of Mr. Dickens writes this paper." In "A Nightly Scene in London," it was "I, the Conductor of this journal," who told of coming upon the poor souls crouched before a Whitechapel workhouse. The footnote that Dickens added to "Three Graces of Christian Science" he signed "C.D." Writing in first or third person, Dickens also made clear that he was author of the introductory and closing comments in *H.W.* ("A Preliminary Word," "All the Year Round," "A Last Household Word"), as of "Pet Prisoners," the detective police articles, "The Guild of Literature and Art," "The Late Mr. Justice Talfourd," and "To Working Men." In bold type, the words "CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS" appeared on the *H.W.* masthead; in small type they spanned the verso and recto of facing pages. In the first five years of *H.W.*'s publication, Dickens's name appeared in more than seventy-five *H.W.* advertisements and announcements in connection with the periodical and one of its supplementary publications, and in connection with *A Child's History* and *Hard Times* (in some advertisements and announcements his name appeared as many as three times). In the last year of *H.W.*'s publication, readings by Mr. Charles Dickens were announced in forty-one *H.W.* numbers. Dickens was omnipresent in his periodical.

In view of this fact, as also for other obvious considerations, Dickens naturally wanted in *H.W.* stories and articles no laudatory references to himself - or references that might be so construed. Thus, in "Our Society at Cranford," he substituted mentions of Hood and Hood's writings for Mrs. Gaskell's mentions of Boz and Boz's Pickwick and Christmas Carol: "... with my name on every page of Household Words," he wrote to Mrs. Gaskell (Dec. 5 [4], 1851.), "there would be - or at least I should feel - an impropriety in so mentioning myself." In a letter to Cunningham, June 24, 1853, he referred to his "usual precaution" in deleting from articles references that "unmistakably" applied to himself. An exception to this policy was the publication in *H.W.* of a personal letter from John Pascoe Fawkner, in which Fawkner stated that Dickens's writings had "beguiled many an hour of my life," and wished Dickens "many years of healthful employment in the highly useful manner" in which he had been so long engaged ("A Colonial Patriot").

But the observation of a reader (a reader of "a quick wit and a happy comprehension," as Dickens characterized him) that Dickens's writings had the tendency "to hold up to derision
those of the higher classes" also found a place in *H.W.* pages ("Ready Wit").

Impersonal references to himself and to his books Dickens had no objection to. Mention of "Mr. Dickens" appeared of necessity in Morley's "Our Wicked Mis-statements"; in occasional articles by non-staff writers mention of Dickens was appropriate and unobtrusive. References to his novels - *Pickwick, Oliver Twist, Nickleby, Chuzzlewit, Dombey, Copperfield, Bleak House, Hard Times, Little Dorrit* - their characters, place-names, distinctive phraseology - appeared in one or more items by Stone, Dodd, Capper, Oxenford, Miss Lawrance, Payn, Morley, Costello, the Rev. James White, Samuel Sidney, Kent, Percy Fitzgerald, Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Linton, and Thornbury. (The reference to Mrs. Gamp in "Railway Waifs and Strays" could be by either of the joint authors - Wills or Hill.) Of these references, the most extended was Fitzgerald's recital, in "My Long Lost CheeryId!", of the plot of a melodrama based on Dombey; the most amusing was White's depiction, in "Fiction Crushing," of a Dora-like wife who comes to despise her Copperfield prototype. In at least seven of his own articles, and in one by him and Wills, Dickens referred to characters in his novels. In a footnote to "Pet Prisoners" he mentioned American Notes, and in "That Other Public" he quoted from the book.

Various of Dickens's *H.W.* writings elicited praise from contemporaries. Among his articles in the early volumes, for example, "A Child's Dream of a Star" seemed to Percy Fitzgerald written with Dickens's "most delicate touch"; and nothing, thought Fitzgerald, could be "more witty or sarcastic" than "Red Tape" (Memories of Charles Dickens, pp. 137, 155"). Crabb Robinson found one of the "Raven" articles "a witty paper," "a capital satire" (On Books and Their Writers, II, 704). The Quart. Rev. (June 1856) mentioned Dickens's "excellent papers" on the London detective police. Mrs. Cowden Clarke wrote to a friend: "The 'Christmas Tree' paper is charming, is it not?" (Letters to an Enthusiast, p. 32). Among Dickens's articles that antagonized certain readers were "Frauds on the Fairies," "Pet Prisoners," and "Whole Hogs." Dickens's remonstrance, in "Frauds on the Fairies," against George Cruikshank's rewriting "Hop-o'-My-Thumb" to serve propaganda purposes provoked a reply from Cruikshank, in which he justified his treatment of fairy tales and set Dickens right "upon one or two points" (George Cruikshank's Magazine, Feb. 1854). Dickens's comments on prison chaplains, in "Pet Prisoners," resulted in his being "severely mauled at the hands of certain Reverend Ordinaries" ("Small-Beer Chronicles," A.Y.R., Dec. 6, 1862). "Whole Hogs" aroused the indignation of temperance advocates (Kitton, "Introduction" to Old Lamps for New Ones and Other Sketches and Essays, by Dickens; also, Dickens's *H.W.* article "Sucking Pigs"). Dickens's statement, in *H.W.*, concerning his domestic affairs was generally condemned as in poor taste.

Dickens's relationship with most of his contributors was amicable. To some who were newcomers in the field of writing he at times wrote detailed criticisms of their submitted MSS, with words of advice and encouragement. Among *H.W.* writers who, at one time or another, showed their regard for him by dedicating to him a book were Marston, the Rev. James White, Wickenden, Forster, Prince, Landor, Charles Knight, Samuel Skynie, Wilkie Collins, Marguerite Power, Duthie, Spicer, Wills, Yates, Lever, Kent, Percy Fitzgerald, Payn, and Thornbury. Hans Christian Andersen, who was technically not a contributor, but one of whose stories appeared in *H.W.*, dedicated three books to Dickens.

Of the items included by Dickens in Reprinted Pieces, "A Plated Article," recorded in the Office Book as by Dickens and Wills, was reprinted by Wills in his Old Leaves: Gathered from
As Dickens's letters and as occasional comments by contributors indicate, Dickens made changes - deletions, additions, emendations - in more items than those for which the initials "C.D." appear in the Office Book jointly with the name of a contributor. Thus, it is not inconceivable that he might have written the hymn, sometimes attributed to him, that concludes "Poor Dick's Story" in the 1856 Christmas number (see identification note on Harriet Parr). The attribution, however, seems to be in error.

Harper's reprinted, in whole or part, seventeen of Dickens's H.W. articles and stories (including "A Plated Article," claimed by both Dickens and Wills), three acknowledged to H.W., nine to Dickens personally, and five unacknowledged to any source. Harper's reprinted as by Dickens eight items not by him (see Elizabeth Gaskell, Home, Sala, Morley, the Rev. James White, Harriet Martineau, Wilkie Collins, Eliza Lynn Linton). Two of Dickens's items were included in the Putnam volumes of selections from H.W.: Home and Social Philosophy, 1st and 2nd ser. The collection of Dickens's H.W. items published in 1859 by the Philadelphia publishing firm T. B. Peterson, Dickens' Short Stories. Containing Thirty-one Stories Never Before Published in This Country, contained no items that Dickens had not included in Reprinted Pieces. D.N.B.

Author: Anne Lohrli; © University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Dickens served a full newspaper apprenticeship, beginning as a teenage penny-a-liner for The British Press (1826). Having taught himself shorthand in the late 1820s, Dickens practised the craft in the antiquated courts of Doctors' Commons before moving up to join the select band of parliamentary reporters, working first for his uncle's voluminous Mirror of Parliament, then for the radical True Sun during the stormy passage of the Reform Bill through parliament (1832), and finally securing a coveted reporter's job on the newly-reorganised Morning Chronicle, under veteran Benthamite editor John Black (1783-1855). There he undertook varied work - theatre reviewing, election reporting, express reporting of extra-mural political events, as well as enduring the daily grind of parliamentary debates. Given the fluctuating demands for space which the latter placed on a 7-column broadsheet like the Chronicle, room was soon found for Dickens's witty sketches employing, amongst a wardrobe of other styles, the rhetoric of political journalism to narrate the world of everyday Londoners. These came to be signed 'Boz', and between 1836 and 1839, together with tales from the Monthly Magazine and Bell's Life in London they were republished to extensive acclaim, overlapping with the monthly release of 'Boz's next great success, The Pickwick Papers (1836-37).

Thereafter, Dickens's writing ventures all self-consciously straddled the permeable frontier between journalism and popular literature. He left the daily press for the more genteel world of monthly magazines, with the editorship of Bentley's Miscellany (1837-39), but sought to reconnect with satirical weekly journalism through editing Master Humphrey's Clock for Chapman & Hall (1840-41). This was something of a misfire, in journalistic terms, though it bequeathed Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge to literature. So too was Dickens's involvement with the Daily News (1845-46); critics point to the fact only 17 issues of the new Liberal broadsheet were published under his watch. Yet Dickens's effectiveness, as celebrity launch editor, should not be underestimated; his news-gathering and recruiting arrangements stood the test of time,
and he led from the front with a series of inventive contributions on social and cultural issues. Even while seeking to reposition himself as a serious novelist with *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), Dickens returned to newsprint, with around 30 anonymous reviews and irony-laden leaders for the *Examiner* under John Forster (1848-49). These were a prelude to his return to full-time editing and leader-writing, with *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* - hugely successful enterprises in weekly magazine journalism which, however, did not prevent Dickens from writing a further eight serial novels and undertaking punishing tours as a public reader in Britain, France, and America. Dickens is now widely recognised - and was during his lifetime - as a crucial contributor both to the popular appeal and the respectability of the mass-market newspaper and periodical press.


Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

**Genre(s):**

- **Prose: Report**
  A 'more or less detailed description of any event ... intended for publication'; an 'account given ... on some particular matter, esp. after investigation' (OED) involving e.g. fieldwork, first-hand experience, original research.

- **Prose: Short Fiction**
  Fictional narrative published in a single instalment, e.g. a short story, 'with a fully developed theme' (OED), or which is simply self-contained.

- **Cross-genre**
  A cross-genre or hybrid-genre article is one which is deemed to purposefully blend rhetorical and stylistic features and incorporate iconography from more than one pre-existent genres. Depending on the genres crossed, this can also be referred to as: creative non-fiction, witness literature, 'Gonzo' journalism, immersion journalism, narrative non-fiction. The blurring of boundaries is frequently defined as 'New' (hence the slightly puzzling recurrence of the term 'New Journalism' to describe approaches to periodical writing in the late 19th-century, mid-20th and early 21st centuries, as clearly it was alive and flourishing in Dickens's Wellington Street offices from 1850 onwards).

**Subject(s):**

- Charity; Philanthropists; Philanthropists—Fiction; Benevolence
- Children; Childhood; Pregnancy; Childbirth; Child Rearing; Adoption; Child Labor
- Crime; Criminals; Punishment; Capital Punishment; Prisons; Penal Transportation; Penal Colonies
- Education—Great Britain; Universities and Colleges; Schools
‘A Walk in a Workhouse’ by Charles Dickens

*Household Words*, Volume I, Magazine No. 9, 25 May 1850, Pages: 204-207

- Family Life; Families; Domestic Relations; Sibling Relations; Kinship; Home;
- Great Britain—Social Conditions—Nineteenth Century
- Health; Diseases; Personal Injuries; Hygiene; Cleanliness—Fiction
- London (England)—Description and Travel
- Poverty; Poor Laws—Great Britain; Workhouses—Great Britain
- Public Health; Sanitation; Water
- Religion; Religion and Culture
- Social classes; Class distinctions; Aristocracy (Social Class); Aristocracy (Social Class)—Fiction; Middle Class; Working Class; Servants;

**Citation (MHRA):** Dickens, Charles, 'A Walk in a Workhouse', *Household Words*, I, 25 May 1850, 204-207

**N.B.** The layout of prose articles exported to PDF follows the two-column format of the original, but does NOT preserve the original line breaks. The layout of poems exported to PDF follows the original line breaks, but does NOT attempt to replicate the original indentation or stanza structure. For all these features please refer to the facsimile pages on DJO.