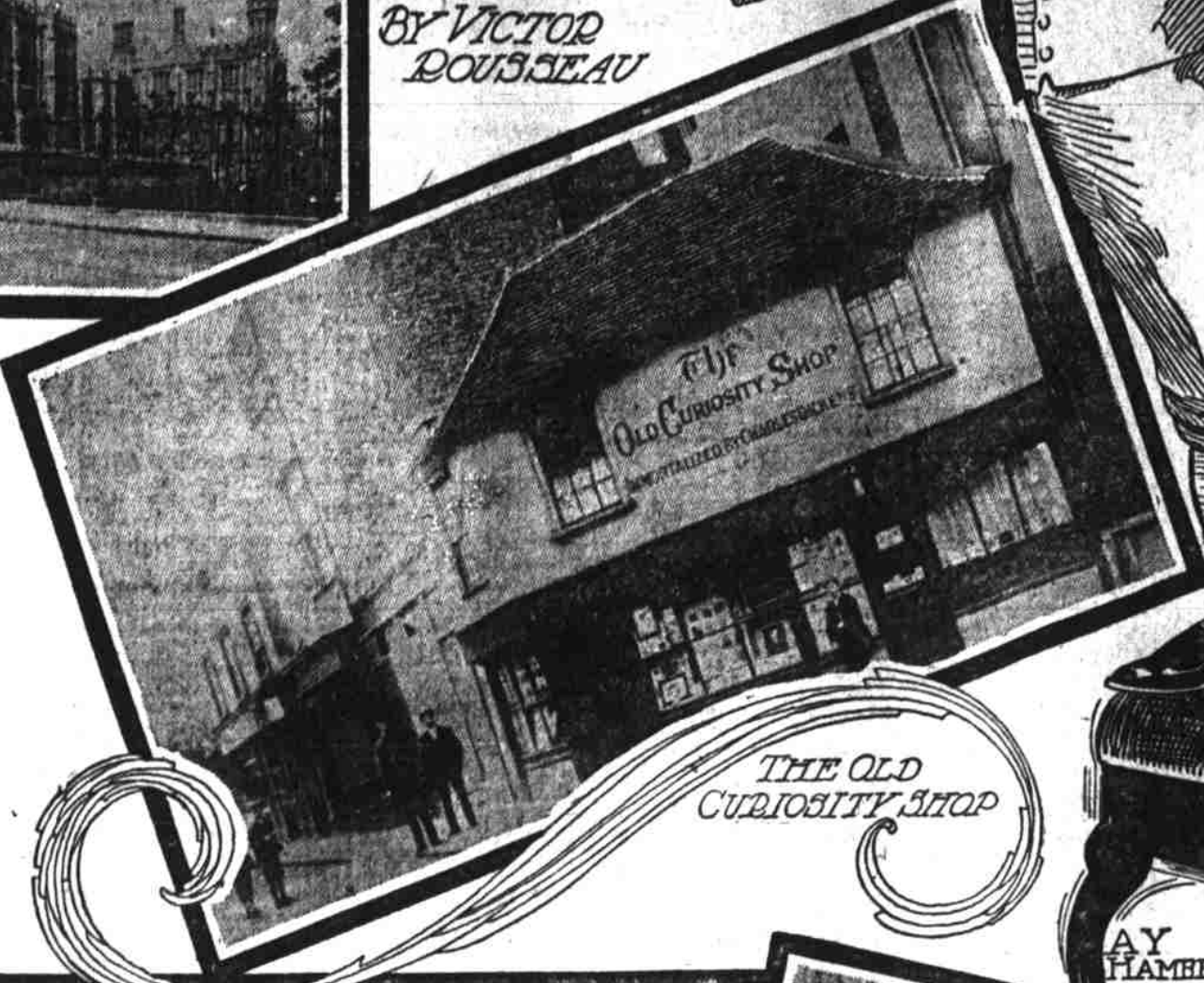


A Ramble in DICKENS LAND

BY VICTOR ROUSSEAU



LINCOLN'S INN HALL

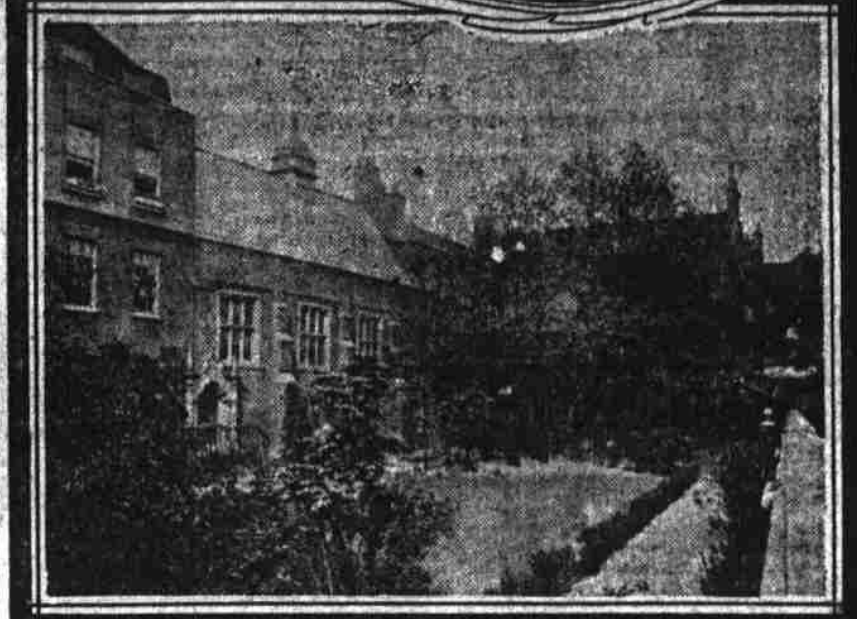


THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

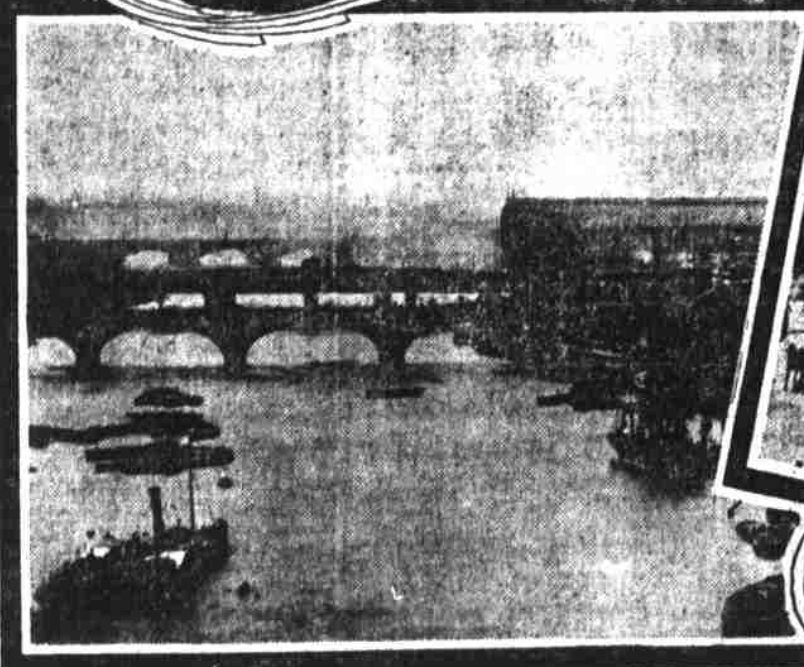


AY HAMBLETON

FOUNTAIN COURT TEMPLE GARDENS



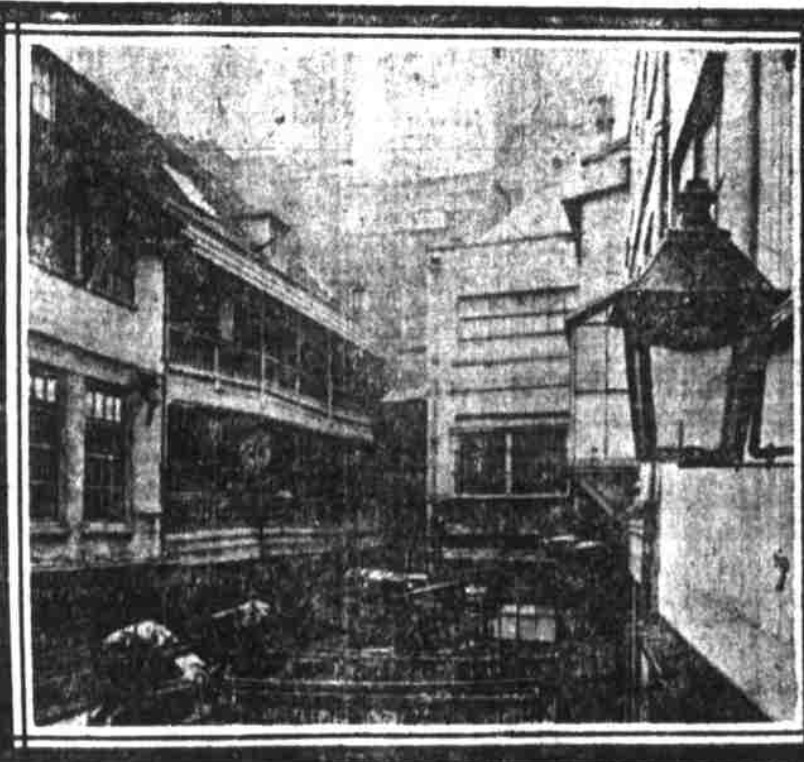
COURT OF STAPLE INN



THE POOL OF LONDON



LONDON BRIDGE



YARD OF "THE GEORGE INN"



STAPLE INN HOLBORN

It is not quite correct to speak of London as Dickens' Land, for the great novelist has set the seal of his dominion upon Bath, Ipswich, Rochester and other provincial centers, and along many a high main road of England where relays of horses and postillions waited for travelers at little wayside inns that have long since been ousted by the all-conquering railway. Nevertheless, London is the heart of Dickens' domain. He knew and loved every yard of it, its roaring streets, its ancient churches, the little, obscure courtways which he hid behind such thoroughfares, its lanes of court, its fields and bridges, markets, its stumps and palaces and its Thames, river of mysteries, whose mud banks, clustering ships and dark, old warehouses held him in gloomy fascination. He never leaves London long; and he returns to it in book after book with inexhaustible fertility of ingenuity.

Much of what was worst in his London has disappeared, along with much that was picturesque. Many of the old stumps have been wiped out by the completion of Queen Victoria street, which extends between Chancery and the Thames, through those formerly crooked and descending streets which Arthur Clennam traversed on his arrival in London, and by the building of the Law Courts and cutting of Kingsway between the Strand and Holborn. He cannot visit the haunts of Fagin and his promising pupils in Snow Hill and Field Lane, for Holborn Viaduct has swept them away. Nearly all the old inns have also gone. Nevertheless, we may still pursue the trail of Mr. Pickwick, hot in pursuit of Jingle; we may see David Copperfield's rooms on the top floor at 15 Buckingham street, Strand, where Dickens lived, or stroll with him under Blackfriars arches; and we shall for long be able to visit Lincoln's Inn, where the great Jarndyce case actually terminated at last, and follow Miss Flite along Chancery Lane and in the parlous of Holborn.

We may appropriately start our pilgrimage upon London Bridge, the seat of the metropolis, which unites the city, on the Middlesex bank, with the borough, upon the Surrey shore, a rambling district that still presents in places the aspect of an overgrown village. If the northern portion of London has improved since the days of Dickens, the borough has deteriorated. Its lines of mean, dirty streets, which stretch along the river frontage for many miles and extend southward to Dulwich and Camberwell, are indescribably squalid and poor. As we cross London Bridge we see ocean vessels, jammed closely against the low arches, unloading on either side of the river; and eastward, looming through the haze, the bascules of the Tower Bridge. It was on London Bridge that Nancy met Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow, and asked Rose to come to the steps upon the Surrey shore and speak with her; and here Claypole overheard the conversation which led to her murder. Not far to the eastward stands the Tower of London, dating back to the twelfth century, though Julius Caesar is said to have first built a fortress here. It was near the Tower that Mr. and Mrs. Quilp had their residence. "In her bower on Tower Hill Mrs. Quilp was left to pine in the absence of her lord," Quilp had a dreary, rat-infested yard upon the Surrey shore, known as Quilp's Yard, "in which were a wooden counting house, burrowing all away in the dust, as if it had fallen from the clouds and pried into the ground; a few fragments of rusty anchors, several large iron rings, some bales of rotten wool, and two or three heaps of old sheet copper, crumpled, cracked and battered." Many of these dreary yards exist; and when the tide is low and the mud dries to the quays and straggled vessels and decaying wharves, we can appreciate the gloom which Dickens' experiences at Mordstone and Grinby's always led him to associate with the river.

"In the borough especially," writes Dickens, in "Pickwick," "there still remain some half-dozen old inns which have preserved their external features unchanged, and which have escaped alike the rage for public improvement and the encroachments of private speculation. Great, rambling, queer old places they are, with wide galleries and passages and staircases wide enough and antiquated enough to furnish materials for a hundred ghost stories."

Dickens had an extraordinary affection for such old inns. In his earlier days they were of the highest importance, for even in London the modern hotel had not been thought of, and travelers of the highest rank stayed in them. In the speech of Mr. Pickwick anyone seems to have been able to go into the coachhouse and ask for a carriage and pair with the most perfect confidence that his order would be complied with.

But time has been scoring heavily of recent years, both in the borough and in the north portion of London. The Golden Cross has been transformed. The White Horse in Piccadilly is gone. It may be said that there still exists a Saracen's Head on that particular part of Snow

Hill "where omnibus horses going eastward seriously think of falling down on purpose," from which Nicholas Nickleby departed on his eventful journey into Yorkshire; but it is a parvenu such as Dickens could have known its arrogant pretensions, would have despised. The White Hart, in the borough, where Mr. Weller first saw his master, and where Mr. Jingle was run to earth after his elopement with the spinster aunt, remained even a few years ago, then a quadrangle paralleled out among tenants of humble rank. Now this, too, has gone, and a new block of business offices occupies the site of it.

Yet, strangely enough, there is still to be seen, just off the borough High street, a portion of a famous institution which had been demolished before the time of Dickens himself. Cross London Bridge and go down High street until you see the clock of St. George's Church in front of you. On the left you will find a squalid passage called Angel Court. It leads into what seems at first a cul de sac, but is, in fact, a winding alley that communicates, after purposeless turnings, with a side thoroughfare. Upon the right appears a gloomy and forbidding wall, frowning upon a lower wall upon the left, topped with wooden pinnings. This is actually the lower wall of the Marshalsea, the debtors' prison, which is described so vividly in "Little Dorrit" and elsewhere.

Its crumbling bricks, the sunless flags beneath it, the winding passages which do not seem to lead to any place in particular, the general atmosphere of misery and discomfort, still seem to convey something of the wretchedness of those unhappy prisoners who haunted it.

Let us pass from the shadows of this place, and recrossing the Thames, enter the city of London. Under the monument, a tall shaft which was erected to the commemoration of the great fire of 1666, we enter into a maze of narrow streets, teeming with traffic and pedestrians. We are in the business center of the world. Passing through Chancery into Green's street, we emerge upon the Guildhall, a gray old building set somewhat back from the main current of traffic, holding its many memories within a shrine of silence. Here Garnet, the Jesuit, was tried for his connection with the Gunpowder Plot in 1605; here Anne Askew was condemned for heresy in the eighth Henry's reign; here, too, the Duke of Gloucester was proclaimed king by Buckingham in 1688. Richard Whittington was associated with the Guildhall, and his executors paid to have the Gores paved with Purbeck marble. But for us the Guildhall has more immediate interest in that it was the scene of the famous Bardell vs. Pickwick trial. The Lord Mayor holds his court here and has jurisdiction over all actions if the amount exceeds £50 and

the cause of the action took place within the city limits. The court sits every month, and the presiding judge is either the recorder or common serjeant or a deputy appointed by them. However, there exists the right of appeal from this court's decisions, and we must hold Lawyer Perker guilty of grave dereliction of duty in not advising Mr. Pickwick to take advantage of this opportunity.

Wandering into Aldersgate street we look up suddenly and perceive upon a wall the little British. Here lived the formidable Mr. Jaggers, "just out of Smithfield and close by the coach office." It is a narrow, winding passage-way, still containing the offices of many lawyers, though the coach office was swept long ago into the limbo of the past. It opens upon the meat market of Smithfield, where Protestants were burned in Mary's reign. Dickens writes of this with horror. "The stoniest place, being all asper with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me," says Pip, in "Great Expectations." And Dickens writes in "Oliver Twist": "It was on a market day. The ground was covered nearly ankle-deep with filth and mire." But in 1852, and in the new Smithfield we see only butchers in blue aprons, wagons and innumerable carcasses of beefs hanging in cleanly stalls above a matted floor. Let us accompany Pip

back through Little Britain until we see the great black dome of St. Paul's, supported by a gilt cross, dominating and dwarfing the buildings round it. St. Paul's Churchyard, where are seats, flowers and shrubs, is filled with idlers, clerks and working girls, eating their noon lunch. On the south side is Dean's Court, described by Weller as "Paul's Churchyard, low archway on the carriage side, bookseller's at one corner, hotel on the other and two porters in the middle as tests for horses." Here Samuel Weller, senior, pledged himself unintentionally to marry Susan Clarke, Markis o' Granby, Dorking; here, too, David Copperfield resolved to be a doctor, described by Steerforth as a "sort of monkish attorney." But the bookshop has gone and the hotel has gone; the tents have gone as well, and the whole court of porters was swept out of existence by a wave of reform in the middle of the last century.

Let us leave the precincts of the cathedral and descend Ludgate Hill into Fleet street, famous for its newspaper office, and thence to the griffin outside the Law Courts in the Strand, where Temple Bar formerly stood to denote the boundary of the city. We are now in the heart of legal London, Borough of Holborn, perhaps the oldest portion of the metropolis and that most loved of Dickens, a quaint medley of medieval

piety and eighteenth-century slums, of noisome alleys and of stately gardens. Here are the Inns of Court, now swiftly disappearing before the march of time. "Curious little nooks in a great place like London, these old inns are," said Mr. Pickwick; and at that date they flourished as they had done for centuries, with no prospect of dissolution. But Barnard's Inn has gone; Clifford's has been purchased and is for sale for building purposes; the Serjeant's Inns ceased to fulfil their functions when the serjeants were abolished; Staple Inn is in extremis. Gray's Inn, in Holborn; Lincoln's Inn, round which the entire story of "Bleak House" centers, and the Temple, with its innumerable courts and gardens, alone retain their pristine glory undiminished and unquenched.

Lincoln's Inn, which fronts upon Chancery Lane, was traditionally the residence of the Earls of Lincoln. Henry de Lacy, who died in 1332, is supposed to have assigned the family residence in Holborn to the body of lawyers. It has been found, however, in the cartulary of the Abbot of Malmesbury in the Cotton collection in the British Museum that the Abbot's mansion in Holborn was known as Lincoln's Inn in 1380. Thomas of Lincoln, a serjeant practicing in the Court of Common Pleas, whose name appears in the Year Books of Edward III, formerly owned the property. He probably gathered round him a body of apprentices-at-law, who took up their residence there. It is said that Ben Jonson worked as a bricklayer upon the old gateway. The chapel on the right of the entrance, shown in the illustration, was designed by Inigo Jones. Its stained-glass windows are considered to be one of the best examples of this kind. Archbishop Laud, whose stained-glass windows at his Lambeth palace, were which those in Lincoln's Inn Chapel should pass unnoticed by the fanatical Puritans, but remained silent upon the subject, "lest he should thereby set some furious spirit at work to destroy those harmless, godly windows, to the just dislike of that worthy society."

After the building of the new law courts in the Strand, Lincoln's Inn lost many of its historical associations. "Michaelmas term lately over, and the lord chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall," writes Dickens in the opening chapter of "Bleak House." It was the Chancery Court and the great Jarndyce suit was in progress. Miss Flite was peregrinating Chancery Lane, entering the Inn under the old gateway over which Cromwell once had resided. Chancery Lane, which figures continually in this story, is a long, narrow passage skirting the front of the Inn, connecting the Strand with Holborn, and is given up largely to law offices and shops for the sale of legal supplies. On either side of the Inn are some of the worst slums in London. The group of adjacent alleys, among which Krook's rag and bone shop existed, has been pulled down, but Cook's court, Curator street, which is really Tooke's court, still exists. On the west of Lincoln's Inn, among the stumps of Drury Lane, extends Kingsway, a fine new street, which has demolished most of the unwholesome tenements of this section of Holborn. Five years ago one could still see the spot where Nemo died and the gloomy burial ground. There was a little inclosure at the end of a passage leading out of a flagged, winding alley near Drury Lane, called Russell court. Looking up this one could see the raised gate at the end and the small graveyard surrounded by houses, as Jo and Lady Dedlock saw it. Dickens often alludes to this "little tunnel of a court," and to "that hideous archway" with its "deadly stains." From the mournful manner in which he writes of it we may conclude that it was associated in his memory with his unhappy childhood when he frequented this district, just as he makes David Copperfield do.

Across the Strand from the law courts are the extensive Temple courts and gardens, stretching down to the Thames embankment. Fountain court is little changed since the days when Tom Pinch used to meet his sister Ruth there. "Merrily the fountain leaped and danced, and merrily the smiling dimples twinkled and expanded more and more, until they broke into a laugh against the basin's rim and vanished." The fountain is sometimes shut off by some mysterious authority, but often it plays as merrily as of old. Sparrows bathe in it, and numerous pigeons strut fearlessly around

it. Not far from here is the old Roman bath, where David Copperfield was accustomed to take his morning plunge, reached through a narrow alley leading out of the Strand nearly opposite Kingsway. But let us turn toward Drury Lane again, through a wilderness of open plots, boardings and half demolished houses, marking the improvements of the county council. At the corner of Lincoln's Inn fields, Sheffield and Portsmouth streets is a little establishment proclaiming, in large letters, that it is "The Old Curiosity Shop, immortalized by Charles Dickens." Readers who remember how, in the commencement of his story, Dickens expressly states that the shop had been pulled down long previously will be inclined to smile at this pretension; but evidence must be manufactured when it is not in existence, this shop will do as well as any other shop; and no doubt when this, too, yields to the events of Time some other Curiosity Shop will supersede it.

But every turn in Holborn brings us back to one of the old Inns of court. Staple Inn, on the south side of Holborn, is the most picturesque of its kind in London. Hawthorne describes the sensation of stiffness and repose which he experienced in this quiet courtyard off busy Holborn. Here Johnston wrote "Barnes," "The front of the Inn, which faces the main thoroughfare of traffic between the city and West London, was erected in the first years of the seventeenth century, and the quaint, old-fashioned house, shown in the photograph, seem incongruous and out of place between the up-to-date modern buildings upon either side of them."

"Based on the most ancient part of Holborn," writes Dickens of Staple Inn in "Edwin Drood," "where certain gabled houses, some centuries of age, still stand looking on the public way, as if disconcerted, looking for the old Boorne that has long since run dry, is a little nook composed of two irregular quadrangles called Staple Inn. It is one of those nooks the turning into which out of the clashing streets imparts to the relieved pedestrian the sensation of having put cotton in his ears and velvet soles to his boots." It was in Staple Inn that "Mr. Greggerton himself occupied a set of chambers in a corner house in the little inner quadrangle, presenting in black and white over its ugly portal the mysterious inscription:

In which set of chambers, never having troubled his head about the inscription, unless to think himself at odd times on glancing up at it that haply it might mean 'perhaps John Thomas' or perhaps Joe Tyler,' sat Mr. Greggerton writing by the fire."

It was in Staple Inn, too, that the garret of Neville Landless was situated. "An air of retreat and solitude hung about the rooms and about their inhabitant. He was much worn and so were they, their sloping ceilings, their rusty locks and grates, with heavy wooden beds and beams slowly mouldering withal, had a prisonous look, and he had the haggard face of a prisoner. Yet the sunlight shone in at the ugly garret window and on the cracked and smoke-blackened parquet beyond some of the detested sparrows of the place rheumatically hopped."

In Kingsgate street, running from High Holborn to Queens Square, dwelled Mrs. Gamp, "twelfth her large beak, a pair of pattering and a species of grey umbrella, the latter article in color like a faded leaf, except where a circular patch of lively blue had been dexterously 'in at the top.'" On the north side of High Holborn, opposite to square building, is the house of Ralph Nickleby, or through the Minorities and Leadenhall street, looking for the wooden midshipman, or by the Thames, searching for Mordstone and Grinby's warehouse. Time weaves her bale of fiction round her horses, and the day will come when every haunt mentioned by Dickens will have a dozen claimants.

Up to date it costs an alien £35 in fees to become a naturalized Briton, and he must wait five years and then produce evidence as to character. A government bill is to be introduced to reduce the fees payable to £25.

Much in Little - Bits of Interesting Information Gathered from Various Sources.

Capt. Edward Howard, of Oakland, Cal., probably the oldest mariner in the United States, has retired after having sailed the seas for over 50 years. "Twelve Children," still made up to Jerry to try the case of Mrs. M. A. Snyder against her neighbor, Mrs. Mary Sawyer. It is for slander, and the judge

injury, if any. Justice Harlan, of the United States Supreme Court, 70, gigantic and healthy as a country boy, doesn't believe in cold bathing. "I never got cold water, on my warm skin in my life," he says. The first set of American Rhodes scholars will complete their three years' course at Oxford next June. Students

are to hold this month in the various states will start the third instalment of scholars on their fortune favored way. Disappearing paper is a novelty for use by those whose correspondents forget to burn the letters after their utility has ceased. It is steeped in sulphuric acid, dried and glazed, the acid being partly neutralized by ammonia water. It falls

to pieces after a given time. The campaign against child labor is at least making itself felt among the cotton mills of South Carolina. More than two-thirds of the spindle-stops in the state have agreed to reduce the working hours of employes from 68 to 66 hours a week, and to 63 hours in 1908 and 60 hours in 1909 - taken in strength as yet.

Two pink woollen petticoats of beautiful crochet work, made by the Princess of Wales for the Essex Needlework Guild, have been given as presents to two little girls at Havering-atto-Bow, Essex. The probable existence of a large planet beyond Neptune was pointed out by Prof. George Forbes a quarter of a century ago. His theory was based on the fact

of comets, but he has since noted perturbations of Neptune that seem likely in a few years to give good idea of the position of this unknown body. The Census government is saving the benefit of the rubber boom, states the London Commercial Intelligence. A big sale of crown land, suitable for rubber cultivation, has been held, and 27,000

acres were obtained. Altogether some 10,000 acres were put up for sale, and \$200,000 were realized. Up to date it costs an alien £35 in fees to become a naturalized Briton, and he must wait five years and then produce evidence as to character. A government bill is to be introduced to reduce the fees payable to £25.