

Living and Working  
*in the Days of Charles Dickens*



NEW EDITION

## Jerusalem

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
In England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

William Blake  
(1757–1827)

### 3. “Dark Satanic Mills” and Coal-Mining

The cotton mills in the damp, shady Lancashire valleys were dark and noisy places to work in. In order to make large profits, mill-owners paid their workers as little money as possible. In these cotton mills, young children started to work at the age of six or seven. At four o'clock in the morning, they were pulled out of bed and then had to walk to the mills in the dark. The younger children were sometimes still asleep. They would be carried on the backs of the older ones. At five o'clock, work started, and the children had to work for fifteen hours, with only

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half an hour's break for dinner. At eight o'clock in the evening, they left the factories to walk back home. When they got there, they were almost too tired to eat and so exhausted after a long day of hard work that they fell into bed. They scarcely saw their parents at all, because they, too, were hard at work in the mills.

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On Sundays, before going to Sunday School, the children had to clean the machines at the cotton mills. Afterwards they often fell

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*Children winding cotton  
in an early textile mill*

asleep during the lessons because they were so tired. The children had no time to play outside in the fresh air. As a result of this and the lack of food and sleep, many of them became very ill.

But it was not only the mills where children suffered and fell ill. 5 Other children had even more dreadful work to do. Together with their parents, they worked underground in the mining districts, because more and more coal was needed to keep steam-engines running. A government report in 1842 said that children were taken into the mines “as early as four years of age, while from eight or nine is the ordinary age 10 at which employment commences. In some districts they remain in solitude and darkness during the whole time they are in the pit, and according to their own account, many of them never see the light of day for weeks during the winter season.”

A report from Yorkshire stated: “The chief employment of children in 15 the coal-mines of this district is in attending to the trap-doors. The trappers sit in a little hole in the side of the gates behind each door – with a string in their hands attached to the door, and pull it open the moment they hear the carriage for conveying the coal at hand, and the moment it has passed, they let the door fall to, which it does of its own weight. They are allowed no light, but sometimes 20 a good-natured collier will bestow a little bit of candle on them as a treat. Occasionally, they are posted so as to be near the shaft, where they can run and enliven themselves with a bird’s-eye peep at the daylight itself.”

John Saville, a seven-year-old collier boy from Sheffield, said about his work: “I stand and open and shut the door. I’m generally in the dark and 25 sit me down against the door. I stop in the pit for twelve hours. I never see daylight except on Sundays.”

Sarah Gooder, a girl eight years of age, described her work like this: “I pull the little trucks in the Gauber Pit. I have to pull them along without a light and I’m scared. I go there at four and sometimes half past three in the

covered the city. Seen through this smoke, the sun was only a disc without rays and there were no clear midsummer days. In this half-daylight, 300,000 people worked in the mills, which were dark and full of noise: the shriek of steam from the boilers, the heavy rumble of carts, the beating of the power-looms. No laughter could be heard in the streets. The workers' faces were always sombre. Only on Saturdays could the shouts of drunken singing be heard outside the pubs. 5

The warehouses, factories and mills stood on the banks of the blackened River Irwell. Beside them stood the wretched dwellings of the workers, the bricks of their houses black from the smoke and ashes. 10

Outside the city, in the green hills and fresh air, the rich factory-owners lived in their large mansions and on country estates. Of course, their children grew up in a very different way, and they had no idea of the misery that oppressed the poor.

## 5. What One Man Can Achieve

In 1801, Lord Shaftesbury was born into a rich upper-class family and was later sent to Harrow, one of England's best public schools. He became a Member of Parliament in 1826. One day, when he was in London, he saw a poor man's coffin being carried to burial by drunkards, who let the coffin fall. He thought it a disgrace that anyone should have such a burial and resolved there and then to spend his life helping the poor and making England a happier place to live in. He visited factories, where he talked to many of the factory workers and saw conditions for himself. 15 20

He soon found out about factory children, who were so tired that they fell asleep on the mill floors. If these children were caught sleeping they were beaten by the foremen or overseers. Lord Shaftesbury 25

was determined to shorten working hours for children and introduced the *Ten Hours Bill* into the House of Commons. His opponents were the factory-owners and their representatives in Parliament, who did not care about the children's welfare in the slightest. These men were  
5 afraid that they would make less profit. A child's life meant very little in those days. In the end, Lord Shaftesbury won the battle, but he had to wait for fourteen years until the Bill became law. 400,000 women  
6 and children were made happier as a result. And yet there was a long way to go before the gap between the "two nations" was bridged, the  
10 gap between the rich and the poor.

There was another great evil in Britain at that time. That was the way the young chimney-sweeps had to live. Many of these children were orphans or homeless, and they were made to climb up inside the tall and narrow chimneys in order to clean them. Sometimes they were  
15 blinded by the soot or burned by hot bricks in the chimneys, and often they fell and broke an arm or a leg. Here is an account of how one of them was treated:

### *The Climbing Boy*

*Early one morning in 1840, little James was trudging along a country road. He  
20 was crying, the tears were running down his black face and making pale streaks on it. The weary and sleepy six-year-old 'climbing boy' was trying hard to follow his master, who was walking along ahead of him. He had got James up from his straw mattress at half past four that morning. No wonder that, during breakfast, the boy's eyes had shut again as he swallowed his slice of bread, and  
25 that his head had dropped on the table. His master, the chimney-sweep, had beaten him with a brush handle to keep him awake. After that they had left the master's house and set off for the neighbouring village.*

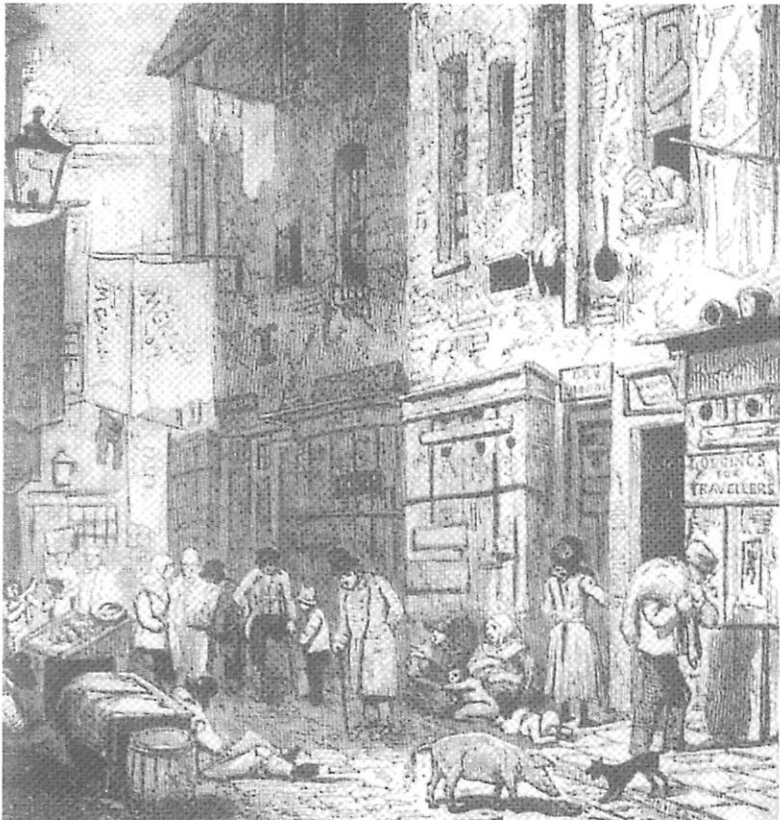
*At half past five, the master knocked at the back door of the first, big house, the chimneys of which were to be swept. It was so early that all the family were*

Thousands of people were homeless, searching through rubbish heaps for scraps of food by day and sleeping in the streets at night, covered by rags and sacking. If the police found them there, they were sent to a workhouse.

The *Poor Laws Amendment Act* was passed in 1834. There was to be no relief for the poor except in the workhouses. The unemployed and paupers could receive help, but only if they went to their own parish. Each parish had to support a workhouse of its own. People would

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*A street scene in the slums*



endure great cold and hunger rather than apply to the parish for assistance. This was because conditions in the workhouses were most depressing. Husbands and wives were separated from each other and their children. The inmates received a bare minimum of food and clothing. Meals consisted of gruel (broth), dry bread and potatoes. In return they had to do hard, boring work, and obey strict rules. Male paupers were given the hard task of breaking stones. Children were employed in grinding old bones for glue. Methods of education were very brutal. The teachers themselves came from the ranks of the paupers, and could often neither read nor write, so the children learnt only simple subtraction and addition. Adults could leave the workhouse when they wanted to, but they had to have employment. Otherwise they would be picked up by the police and sent to prison.

In those days, most businessmen did not care at all for their fellow

*"Conditions in the workhouses were most depressing."*





to go to school as well, and hoped they could learn to sew and read. So Elizabeth Fry brought them sewing materials and books from her rich friends. Soon their attitude to life had changed and they were busy all day instead of fighting or trying to drown their sorrows in cheap alcohol.

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The school at Newgate Prison became the talk of the day, and famous people, including even the Lord Mayor of London, visited it. They now wanted to learn how to reform the prisons, whereas previously very few people had thought that criminals could ever be made into good citizens.

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Many prisoners in Newgate Prison who were not sentenced to death, were transported by ship to Australia, to a place called Botany



Bay in New South Wales, where they had to stay for seven or fourteen years, or perhaps even for life. Each spring, Elizabeth Fry would go to say goodbye to her women prisoners on board the convict ship on the Thames. This was always a very sad moment for her. She went to the authorities and persuaded them not to have the women put in chains during the long journey. She also gave each woman a set of gifts: two aprons, a cap, a knife and fork, needles, pins, cotton, wool, a pair of scissors, pieces of cloth and some books. Before the convict ship sailed, she visited it to read to the prisoners and cheer them up before their long, sad voyage.

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Elizabeth Fry was called The Prisoners' Friend, because she believed that criminals were not wild beasts which must be tamed. If they were treated as human beings and taught properly, they could be transformed into responsible citizens.

*Elizabeth Fry – The Prisoners' Friend*



## FACTORIES WERE BUILT

to manufacture	to produce a great number of things with the help of machinery; <i>n.</i> manufacturer	erzeugen; herstellen; produzieren Unternehmer
coal	"black gold"	Kohle
coal-mine	where coal is dug out of the earth	Kohlebergwerk
factory	where many people work with machines	Fabrik
to invent	to find out how to build a new machine; <i>n.</i> invention	erfinden
businessman	He wants to make a profit.	Geschäftsmann
stream	little river	Bach
cheap	costing little money; <i>opp.</i> expensive	billig
steam-engine		Dampfmaschine
noisy	loud	laut
out of work	without a job	arbeitslos
employment	work; job	Anstellung; Arbeit
to employ s.o.	to give work to s.o.	jmdn. beschäftigen
employed	if you have a job; <i>opp.</i> unemployed	beschäftigt; angestellt
employer	the person who gives you a job	Arbeitgeber
employee	the person who gets the job	Arbeitnehmer
chimney	where the smoke comes out	Kamin
labour	work	Arbeit

## MANY CHILDREN WERE SUFFERING

exhausted	how you feel after a long day's work	erschöpft
to be scared	to be afraid	s. fürchten; Angst haben
to faint	when everything around you goes black	ohnmächtig werden
chimney-sweep	person who cleans chimneys	Kaminfeger
orphan	child whose parents have died	Waise
weary	tired and weak	matt; erschöpft
to care about	to think that s.th. is important	Anteil nehmen an
education	what school gives you	Bildung; Erziehung
adult	grown-up	Erwachsener
ragged	in torn clothes; <i>n.</i> rags	zerlumpt; zerrissen; Lumpen
to line up	to stand in a queue	sich in einer Schlange aufstellen

## LONDON

slum	where the poorest of the poor have to live	Slum; Elendsviertel
population	all the people living in one country	Bevölkerung

traffic	cars, carts <i>etc.</i> that move along the road	Verkehr
magnificent	wonderful	großartig; herrlich
office	where people sit behind desks and work	Büro
lane	alley; narrow street	enge Gasse
pickpocket	He steals from other people's pockets.	Taschendieb
rubbish	what you throw away because it can no longer be used	Abfall
heap	lots of things in one place	Haufen
crowd	a lot of people	Menschenmenge
overcrowded	when there are too many people together in one place	überfüllt; überfüllert

#### POLICE AND PRISON

riot	e.g. demonstration during which stones are thrown	Aufruhr; Krawall
to restore peace and quiet	to stop a riot	Ruhe und Ordnung wiederherstellen
punishment	what you get for having done s.th. wrong	Strafe
penalty	punishment	Strafe
death penalty	when s.o. is killed as a punishment	Todesstrafe
offence	a breaking of the law; <i>vb.</i> to offend	Gesetzesverstoß
to sentence s.o.	e.g. to send s.o. to prison	jmdn. verurteilen
treason	e.g. when you give away secrets to an enemy	Hochverrat
constable	policeman	Polizist
weapon	e.g. knife or gun	Waffe
prison	jail	Gefängnis
crime	a serious breaking of the law	Verbrechen
criminal	e.g. thief, robber or murderer	Verbrecher
convict	prisoner	Gefangener
freedom	<i>opp.</i> slavery	Freiheit
order	<i>opp.</i> chaos	Ordnung

#### POLITICS

government	The Queen and the Prime Minister form the <i>government</i> in England.	Regierung
Member of Parliament	He/She speaks for the people who voted for him/her.	Parlaments-abgeordnete(r)
to introduce a Bill	to bring in a Bill	ein Gesetz einbringen
Bill	Act; law	Gesetz(esvorlage)
House of Commons	the Lower House of the British Parliament	das britische Unterhaus

- B4. Why did these children often fall ill?
- B5. Why was work in the mines "still more dreadful" than work in the mills?
- B6. Describe Sarah Gooder's work in the Gauber Pit.
- C1. Write 6–8 sentences with the title "Children in the Cotton Mills".
- C2. Imagine that you are a 14-year-old girl or boy working in the coal-mines at that time. Write 8–10 sentences with the title "My Work Underground". You might begin: "I have worked in the mines for seven years." Continue in the Present Tense.

#### MAKING QUESTIONS

- D1. Mill-owners paid their workers as little as possible. (*How much ...?*)
- D2. In the cotton mills, children started to work at the age of six. (*When ...?*)
- D3. They were pulled out of bed at four o'clock in the morning. (*When ...?*)
- D4. They had to walk to the mills in the dark. (*Where ...?*); (*When ...?*)
- D5. The young children would be carried on the backs of the older ones. (*How ...?*)
- D6. Work started at five o'clock in the morning. (*When ...?*)
- D7. The children had to work for fifteen hours. (*How long ...?*)
- D8. They left the factories at eight o'clock in the evening. (*What ...?*); (*When ...?*)
- D9. They walked back home. (*Where ...?*)
- D10. Their parents, too, were hard at work in the mills. (*Where ...?*)
- E1. "A report from Yorkshire stated ..." Make questions for this paragraph.
- E2. "Ellison Jackson ... those females who were following." Make up questions for these two paragraphs.
- E3. "Helen Reid ... grasp had saved my life." Make up your own questions for these three paragraphs.

#### SHORT TALKS

- F1. "Young Children in the Mills."
- F2. "Children in the Mines."
- F3. "Dangerous Work Underground."

### Chapter 4 – Manchester – an Industrial City

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- A1. What had Richard Arkwright invented?
- A2. Who invented the steam-engine?
- A3. Where could cotton mills now be built?
- A4. Where were cotton mills built before this? (*See Chapter 2 – page 7, lines 10–18!*)
- A5. Why did Manchester grow larger and larger?
- A6. Where did the black smoke come from?
- A7. How many people worked in the mills?
- A8. What noises could you hear in the mills?
- A9. Were people very happy in this big city?
- A10. What could you hear on Saturdays?

- B1. Why could cotton mills now be built in cities?
- B2. Why was the Manchester Ship Canal built?
- B3. Why was the city full of smoke?
- B4. Why could you hear drunken singing on Saturdays?
- C1. "Manchester in the early 1800s." Imagine that you lived in Manchester in Charles Dickens' time. Write 6–10 sentences describing the city, using the *Present Tense*. You could start with: "Manchester is a very large city now."

#### MAKING QUESTIONS

- D1. James Watt invented the steam-engine. (*Who ...?*); (*What ...?*)
- D2. Cotton mills could now be built in cities. (*What ...?*); (*Where ...?*)
- D3. There was coal in the hills around Manchester. (*What ...?*); (*Where ...?*)
- D4. The Manchester Ship Canal brought in the raw cotton. (*What ...?*)
- D5. It carried out the finished cloth. (*What ...?*)
- E1. "One factory after another ..." Make up questions for this paragraph.
- E2. "The warehouses ... misery that oppressed the poor." Make questions for the last two paragraphs.

#### SHORT TALKS

- F1. "Manchester – a Terrible Place."
- F2. "Before the Days of 'Green' Ideas."
- F3. "Rich and Poor."

### Chapter 5 – What One Man Can Achieve

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- A1. What kind of family did Lord Shaftesbury come from?
- A2. What is Harrow?
- A3. Why was 1826 important for Lord Shaftesbury?
- A4. What did the overseers do if they caught children sleeping?
- A5. Why did Shaftesbury introduce the *Ten Hours Bill* into Parliament?
- A6. Who fought against Shaftesbury's Bill?
- A7. Who won the fight – Shaftesbury or his opponents?
- A8. How long did the fight last?
- A9. What was one of the other great evils in Britain at this time?
- A10. What dreadful things happened to the young chimney-sweeps in the chimneys?
- B1. Describe Lord Shaftesbury's family background.
- B2. What was the incident which made him decide to help the poor?
- B3. Why were long working hours for children a great problem?
- B4. Why were the factory-owners against the *Ten Hours Bill*?
- B5. What was the situation of the young chimney-sweeps?