

\$20. The highest real price any one has known a ram to sell for within two years, \$1100; the same for ewes, \$300. The wool of these sheep sells for twenty cents a pound. The wool itself does not pay for growing in the way in which these sheep are reared and cared for. The *wool* is a secondary object; the *bodies* are what they are bred for. * * * In the way sheep are kept on the large ranches south-west and west, the sheep soon deteriorate that they are obliged to have thorough-bred rams to keep up their flocks. This is particularly the case in warm climates. Nature gets rid of the superfluous clothing as soon as possible."

It is interesting to compare the portraits of the best Merinos of eighty years ago with the improved American Merinos of the present day, and see what a change has been wrought in the race without change of blood. It is not unlikely that to the uneducated eye the more natural and picturesque sheep of the old time would seem more comely than the bewrinkled, enfolded and aproned product of the many years of careful breeding. As a thing of beauty the modern Merino ram can hardly be called a success, but there are millions in this knight of the Golden Fleece.

Rowland E. Robinson.

HOW EDWIN DROOD WAS ILLUSTRATED.

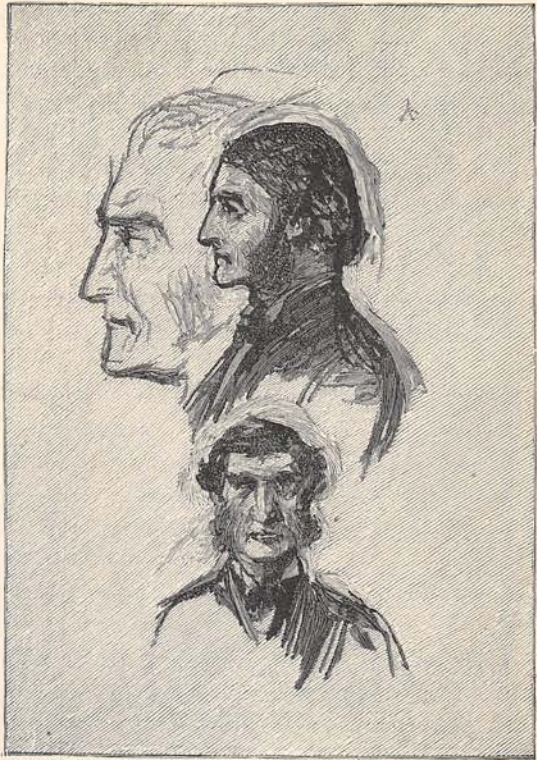
CHARLES DICKENS'S first intention when he projected "Edwin Drood" was to intrust the illustrations to his son-in-law, who had worked for many years in such desultory manner as his delicate health permitted, with both pen and pencil. It was with the pen-



AN OPIUM DEN.

cil that Dickens considered Charles Collins's best success might be made. His literary work, mostly confined to fugitive pieces, but not yet altogether forgotten, was generally distinguished by humor of a charming quality, but rather obviously caught from the quieter manner of his father-in-law. "A Cruise on Wheels," which was the story of a *lôte-à-lôte* drive through France, took its little place as a prominent example of that chatty literature, with its mitigated good spirits and its gentle ironies, which was less rife in that day than it has since become. For "The Eye Witness" we must generally seek in the old volumes of "All the Year Round," where its discursive banter suggests a shrug of the shoulders peculiar to light essayists, and that ambling mental gait and pace which tire neither writer nor reader. Though Dickens had no lively faith in Charles Collins's ultimate distinction in letters, he had great faith, as has been said, in his artistic future; and it was, no doubt, with the aim of encouraging that art of designing, which seemed in some danger of being set aside or neglected, that Dickens chose to give his last book to the illustrative interpretation of his son-in-law. Charles Collins, however, got no further than the cover—copies of which are now probably rare, as most readers had the separate parts of the novel bound up after its progress was cut short. The artist's health failed so decidedly that the enterprise which was intended as the beginning of a revival of his work in design was, perforce, suddenly abandoned. Before the appearance of the first number, Dickens found himself without an illustrator. It must be taken as a sign of the mobility of his mind that he went in search of a young artist to interpret the work of his own elder years. And his old book was in a sense his youngest; he had changed with the times, and had, moreover, bridged across in his life and career a period of great alteration in English men and manners. Being essentially modern, Dickens was bound to be developed and modified by his times—to be as modern in 1870 as he had been in 1840, for his vitality never failed; and he could not be fitly illustrated by work which reverted to former ways of thought and observation. In his search for an artist he was aided by Mr. Millais and Mr. Frith, and these painters united in emphatic approval of the final choice.

Mr. Luke Fildes was at that time a man of twenty-five, who had struggled, through sheer force of vocation, out of the narrow limitations of provincial conditions in the par-



STUDIES FOR JASPER'S HEAD.

ticularly provincial province of Lancashire. He had no artistic ancestry, and it is not easy to understand how his art found him out; but, as a young boy, he attended a local school with the hope of achieving a moderate distinction, in time, as a designer of carpets and tea-cups. The love of nature drew him to other aspirations, and at the age of nineteen he entered on his course of study at South Kensington, passing afterward into the Royal Academy schools. Then began his career as an artist in black and white, for as yet he had not touched oil-color; but, though he found plenty of employment, he was by no means famous when Charles Dickens engaged him to draw for "Edwin Drood."

Mr. Fildes's first fame synchronized with the original appearance of the "Graphic," on the front page of which appeared the "Casuals." The idea had not been inspired by any word of Dickens's; it was not until five years later, when the author had passed away, and when his illustrator had become an oil-painter, that Mr. John Forster gave to Mr. Fildes that sentence which accompanied the great picture of the "Casuals," in 1874: "Dumb, wet, silent horrors. Sphinxes set up against that dead wall, and none likely to be at the pains of solving them until the general overthrow." The words had been written by Dickens in a

letter descriptive of his night rambles in London, and the dreary scene of outcasts and wanderers waiting outside the work-house for their one night's lodging had impressed the minds of both author and artist, without communication between them; and no wonder that the subject suggested obstinate questionings to the one and a thoughtful and memorable picture to the other. During the years which elapsed between the appearance of the

commonly to be found in a painter of sentiment. His manner was, of course, very unlike that which interpenetrated Charles Dickens's earlier books; the insistent caricature—the art of high spirits—had passed out of date; it belongs to its time, and cannot alter in intrinsic value as a part of that time; but repetition is impossible in any art which is still—like the art of line—in a state of vitality. While derivation is, of course, essential to the



JASPER'S SWOON.

“Casuals” in black and white and that of the “Casuals” in oils, Mr. Fildes had won his entrance to the Academy Exhibition by a figure subject called “Fair, Quiet, and Sweet Rest,” showing a group of lotus-eating *jeunesse* of the last century in their boat among the water-lilies and the swans of the Thames. Of his subsequent pictures, “The Widower” and “The Penitent” have shown his powers of observation and of pathos at their best.

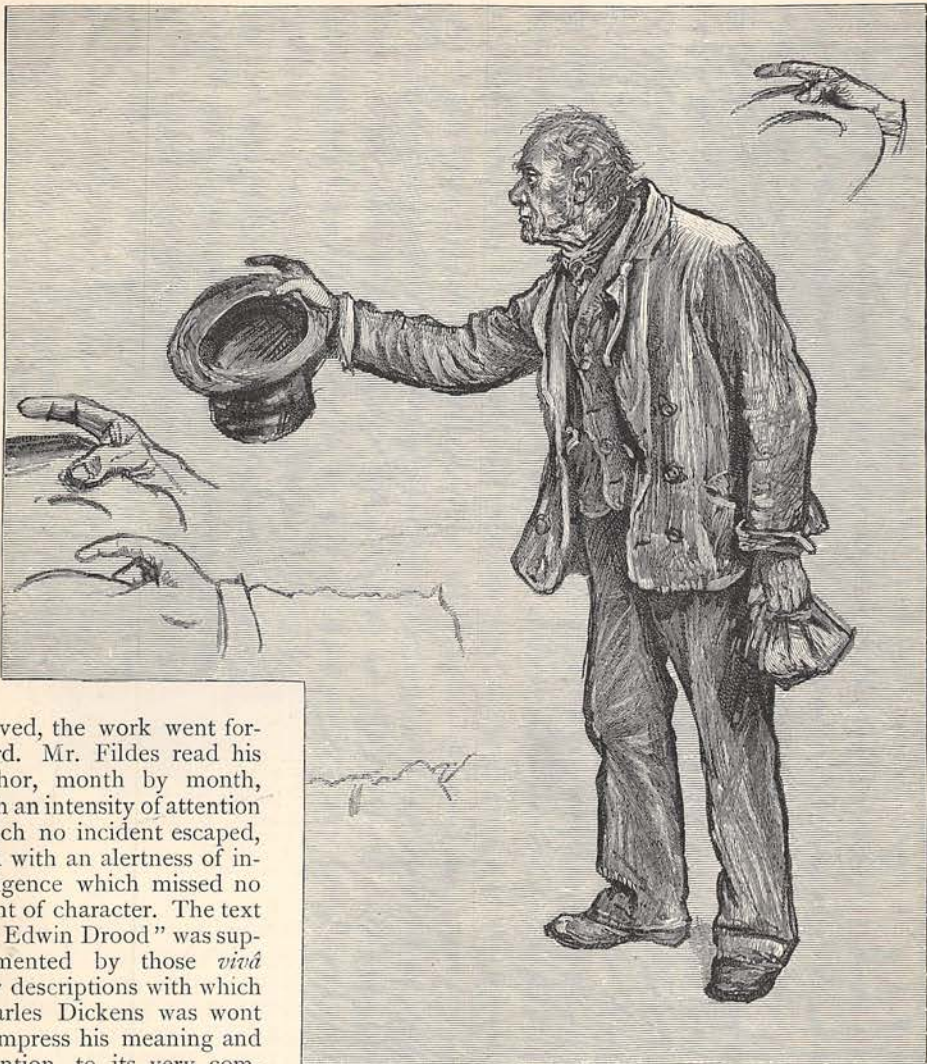
But to return to “Edwin Drood.” At twenty-five few men have begun to develop their capacity for humor; and though Mr. Fildes was ready to be impressed by his author's tragedy, he doubted greatly whether he could interpret such comedy as might appear in the book. He did himself the injustice—peculiar to his time of life—of thinking that he had no humor in him. But the designer of Sapsea and of Durdles must assuredly be credited with a quality of fun, and with a capacity for the finer burlesque, not

very life of all arts, reversion may be held to be distinctive of those which have passed out of the state of production into that of criticism; and, therefore, reversion belongs properly, in our time, to architecture and to a certain kind of poetry. These do not derive, but revert.

Charles Dickens wrote to Mr. Fildes, in the January of 1870:

“I beg to thank you for the highly meritorious and interesting specimens of your art that you have had the kindness to send me. I return them herewith, after having examined them with the greatest pleasure. I am naturally curious to see your drawing from ‘David Copperfield,’ in order that I may compare it with my own idea. In the mean while, I can honestly assure you that I entertain the greatest admiration for your remarkable powers.”

But the drawing in question contained no female figure, and Charles Dickens told his artist that the forthcoming story was adorned by two pretty heroines. A specimen of Mr. Fildes's power of rendering beauty was therefore required; and this being most satisfactorily



proved, the work went forward. Mr. Fildes read his author, month by month, with an intensity of attention which no incident escaped, and with an alertness of intelligence which missed no point of character. The text of "Edwin Drood" was supplemented by those *vivâ voce* descriptions with which Charles Dickens was wont to impress his meaning and intention, to its very completeness, upon his hearer.

He himself was surprised at the way in which his mind found itself mirrored in that of his artist, both as regards the pictorial exactness of inanimate things and the appreciation of individual human character. The two kinds of exactitude are distinct enough, but Mr. Fildes compassed them both. With regard to the first, he has assured me that he drew the opium-room from description, but that the author recognized it as the very portrait of the place. In the more valuable exactitude to character, his success was such that Charles Dickens exclaimed delightedly that the figures drawn for "Edwin Drood" were like photographs of the characters. Mr. Fildes was evidently as receptive as Dickens was impressive; and who was ever so impressive as he? His power

DURDLES. (A STUDY FROM LIFE.)

of carrying artistic conviction was so great that we wonder, as we read him and read of him, at his ever having consented to abdicate such a force for the sake of triviality or violence. He was able to convince a thousand people by his gesture, a world by his pen; and he convinced his artist so strenuously that author and draughtsman conceived the self-same thing. Vividly as Dickens saw the creatures of his brain, he saw them no otherwise than as they lived by this quick and sympathetic pencil. Over the type of Jasper there was some consultation. Mr. Fildes made three shots, and one of them proved to be a palpable hit. But as to the story itself and the mystery, no confidences were made by Dickens. The often repeated assertion that he told to no one his intentions

as to the intrigue is true in so far as he volunteered no such telling. But a part of the mystery was, as a matter of fact, surprised out of him by Mr. Fildes's keenness and care in taking up a suggestion. It happened in the following way: The artist had taken special note of a change in the description of Jasper's dress. Not only did the fact that Jasper wore in the last scenes a large black silk scarf,

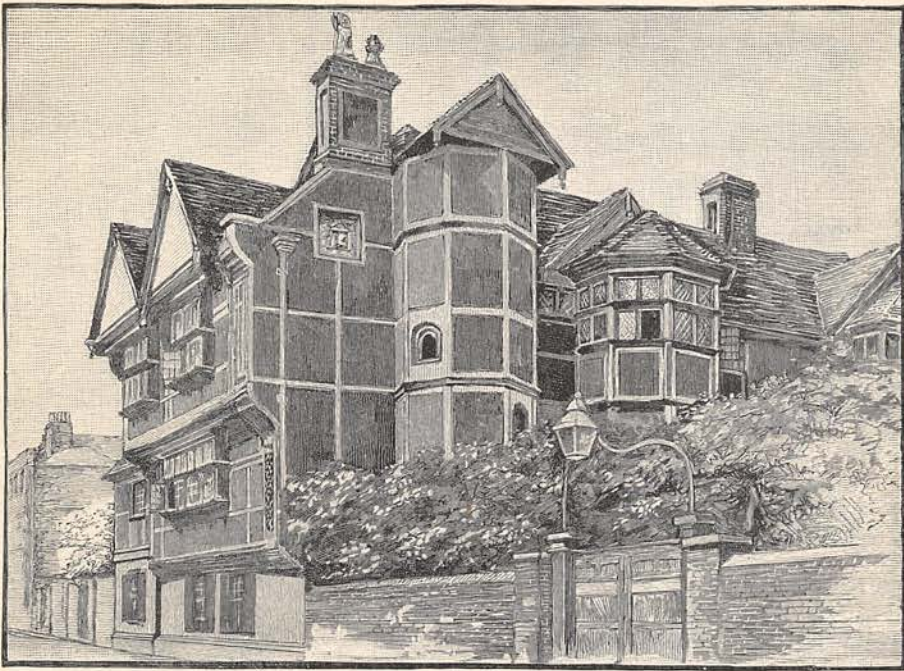
dered body in the cathedral tower, must have been obvious enough to every careful reader. The central crime of the book (and no fictitious wickedness was ever more fraught with powerful and penetrating horror than is this one) can never have been intended by the author to be a mystery; the secret that Charles Dickens intended to keep, and kept in effect, was the manner of the discovery. He



IN ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

muffling therewith his throat and keeping his beautiful voice from cold, appear duly in the drawing, but Dickens saw that the thing had been drawn with a kind of emphasis. Mr. Fildes confessed that he had divined its significance, whereupon Dickens was somewhat troubled with the misgiving that he was telling his story too fast. The scarf was, in fact, the instrument of murder. After fostering the notes of the even-song anthem, and hanging lightly about the throat of the murderer as he talked with his victim, it strangled the young breath of Edwin Drood on the night of the great gale. Charles Dickens was probably wrong, however, in supposing that too marked a point would be made of this by the reader; the dreadful use to which the thing was to be put has probably been guessed by few. It was, of course, otherwise with the clew of the ring given by Grewgious to Edwin. That this one indestructible piece of gold was upon the young man's person, unknown to the murderer, who had withdrawn the watch and the pin, and that it was to remain and bear witness after quicklime had destroyed the mur-

is a keen reader who has ever found out who and what was Mr. Datchery, and of this Mr. Fildes knows no more than does the public. Some commentators, more enterprising than attentive, hazarded the conjecture that this strange figure was a disguise of Edwin Drood himself, who had escaped death and was on the track of his would-be destroyer. This idea was childish, and might have been corrected by an ordinarily careful reading of the book. But finding that Mr. Fildes knew a great deal, Charles Dickens went on to make the principal revelation which concerned the central figure; he told his illustrator that Jasper was to be brought to justice in the end of the story. A drawing of this originally and most strongly conceived criminal locked up in the condemned cell (which was to have been studied at Rochester) was then planned between the two as one of the final subjects. By means of this design, the "condemned cells" of two generations of artists — Fagin's, as conceived by George Cruikshank, and Jasper's, as conceived by Luke Fildes — would have been



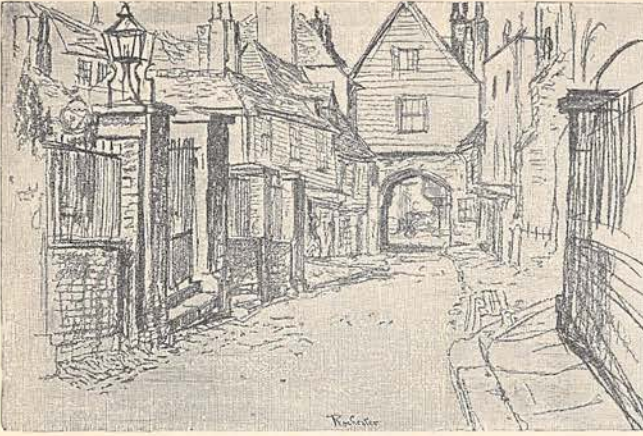
THE NUNS' HOUSE.

brought into interesting comparison. As to the pretty love-stories of the book, their inventor had implied their issues in their beginnings, the only fate left doubtful being that of the brave and unfortunate Neville Landless, whose Little Rosebud is clearly for the sailor. A painful book in its completeness "Edwin Drood" would certainly have been; the poor young hero is real enough—albeit by no means one of the most vital characters—and likable enough for his horrible taking-off to affect the reader with something more than a common fictional sensation. The most solid in construction of all Charles Dickens's stories it would undoubtedly have proved; and, as a character-study, at once intense and restrained, and rich in humor, although it is in a humorous character, that of the Billikin, that the only signs given in "Edwin Drood" of failure and effort are apparent; while the book promised to be free from that determined but doubtful pathos which, to the modern feeling, invests the Little Nell and the Paul Dombey of the old days with something of artistic insincerity. False in intention we would not pronounce these and their like to be, but there must be a growing conviction that they are false in art.

Of Mr. Fildes's work for Charles Dickens's book, our own opinion is that it is the best illustrative interpretation which has ever been made of the author, albeit old and fine reputations belong to the former associations of artists' names with the great series of the

Dickens novels. In addition to all those qualities of appreciation, apprehension, and intelligence, which must distinguish all really worthy work done—as is the work of an illustrator—in admiration of another mind, and which Mr. Fildes's designs possess so fully, these illustrations have a merit which present judgment is less prepared to dispense with than was the opinion of our fathers' time—that of serious and sound draughtsmanship.

In the several accounts which have been written of Charles Dickens's last days, it is noted that at the time of his death he was expecting the visit of his new illustrator, with whom he intended to ramble about the town of Rochester, so that the eyes in which he trusted so much might see what his own had in view as the setting of the scenes of "Edwin Drood." But Mr. Fildes had already made drawings in Rochester. The street and the cathedral were, of course, studied on the spot. The "Nuns' House" was a real house, and was carefully sketched from reality; but that drawing was not preserved, and the accompanying wood-cut is from a photograph. The study of Durdles is the original and happy idea for the best and most characteristic figure among the illustrations. The manner in which the man stands, the construction and expression of his limbs, and the action of his hand, are all passages of truth as subtle and restrained as they are vivid. When Charles Dickens went to see the Marionetti in Rome, he seized with delight the fine and intelligent

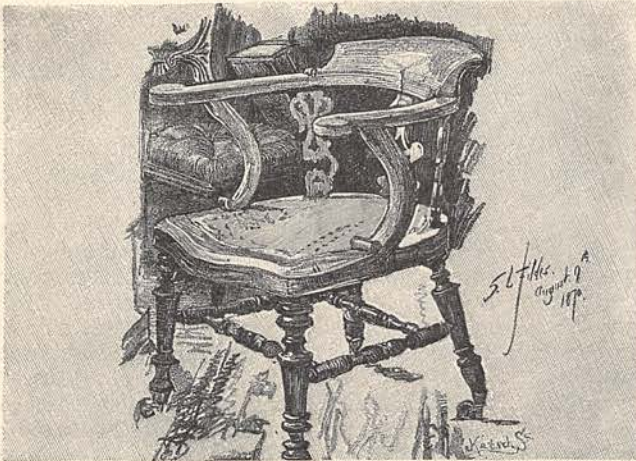


A STREET IN ROCHESTER.

merit of that curious performance when he wrote: "So delicate are the hands of the people who move them that every puppet was an Italian and did exactly what an Italian does. If he pointed at any object, if he laughed or if he cried, he did it as never Englishman did it since Britain first at Heaven's command arose," etc. In an equally national way does Durdles slouch; the attitude and habit of his knees and the manner in which he holds his dinner, the slovenliness and lack of precision and neatness of movement and intention, strike us as things impossible to any but an English Durdles, and exquisitely understood to be such by the draughtsman. This completeness shows itself in another way in the weight and abandon-

ment of unconsciousness expressed by the two prostrate figures — that of Jasper in his despair at finding that his murder had been done for nothing, and that of the opium-smoking woman. The drawing of the empty chair in the Gadshill library was afterward introduced by Mr. Fildes into his general study of the room published in the "Graphic." The present writer may be permitted a personal reminiscence in connection with the little bronze figure (a French grotesque) with dogs under its arms, and dogs' heads appearing out of the pockets, which appears in the drawing. It had kept that place on the writing table ever since Dickens, when walking with the writer's father, had been taken with one of his fits of inextinguishable laughter at seeing it in a shop. That evening the little bronze was sent by the shopkeeper to Dickens's hotel (this was, we believe, in Liverpool or Manchester), and the gift was so appreciated that, as has been said, it was one of the objects on his work-table until he died. The companion of his walk bought a duplicate, which he also kept during his life; and thus the fantasy of the modeler, who made the little figure as a caricature, it is said, of himself, has given to more than one household a much-prized remembrance.

Alice Meynell.



DICKENS'S CHAIR.