
A Note on the Text

The Genesis of *Hard Times*: A History of the Text

Hard Times was first published as a serial in Dickens' own weekly magazine, *Household Words*, over a five-month period from April 1, 1854, through August 12, and shortly afterward as a single volume of 352 pages. As Dickens stated, in a letter to Carlyle, his novel had been "constructed * * * patiently, with a view to its publication altogether in a compact cheap form." His patience had, in fact, been severely stretched by the challenging difficulties of telling his story in short weekly installments, a mode he had not used since writing *Barnaby Rudge* thirteen years earlier. After he had remastered this art of weekly serialization in the process of writing *Hard Times*, he did return to it again in two of his later novels, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, but in 1854, he had lost the habit of the strict limits imposed; he found them, as he said, "crushing."

One result of this mode of publication is the relative shortness of *Hard Times* (approximately 117,000 words as compared with the 350,000 words of *Bleak House* or *David Copperfield*, the two novels preceding *Hard Times*). There are some seventy-nine characters in *Bleak House*, as against only twenty-five in *Hard Times*.

The proposal to publish *Hard Times* as a weekly serial was not initiated by Dickens himself but by the printers of *Household Words*, who were concerned about the magazine's sagging sales. It was they who argued that the inclusion of a novel by Dickens in its pages would provide the transfusion necessary to restore the magazine's circulation. Their prediction was sound. As Dickens' friend and biographer John Forster reports, the serialization of *Hard Times* "more than doubled the circulation of his journal."

When his publishers made their proposal to him, late in 1853, Dickens was somewhat reluctant to accept, partly because of the restrictions imposed by weekly serialization, partly because, at that time, he had hoped to enjoy a year's rest. In August 1853, after completing *Bleak House*, he had felt unusually tired and therefore resolved to write no more full-length fiction

until the following summer at the earliest. *Rest* never meant for him what it means for most people: he went on editing his magazine, writing articles, taking part in amateur theatricals, reading his works in public, lending his energy to philanthropic enterprises, and looking after the education and welfare of his nine children. His idea of *rest* was simply an interruption of novel-writing. And the temptation to shorten the period allotted to rest was often vivid. His printers' suggestion provided the necessary incentive, and by January 23, 1854, he had written the first page of *Hard Times*.

The student of Dickens' fiction is in a privileged position to follow the history of the text, for valuable documents about no fewer than six stages of the novelist's work have been preserved:

1. The number plans or Memoranda, i.e., notes Dickens made while writing *Hard Times* that concern the arrangement of his story in serial form.

2. The original manuscript in its entirety.

3. Corrected proofs. For parts of Chapters XI and XII (Book I) two sets of proofs have been preserved. Most of the proofs are galley proofs, in long slips, but for Chapters XI and XII of Book II, and Chapters I and II of Book III they are page proofs, already set in the *Household Words* format.

4. The text as it was published in *Household Words* (April 1 through August 12, 1854). Unlike *A Tale of Two Cities* later, *Hard Times* was not reprinted in monthly parts, illustrated, in a green cover, immediately after the appearance of each batch of four consecutive weekly numbers.

5. The text as it was published in the first edition in book form (one volume, 352 pages, 1854). Unlike the first edition of *Bleak House* and Dickens' other full-length novels, the 1854 *Hard Times* had to be reset, since it had not appeared in monthly parts that could be simply stitched and bound together.

6. The text as reprinted in several popular editions brought out in the author's lifetime: the Library Edition of 1858, the Cheap Edition of 1860, the People's Edition of 1865—which used the text of the Cheap Edition—and, finally and more significantly, the Charles Dickens Edition of 1867–68, proudly reproducing, on both title page and hard cover, the author's signature with its well-known sensational flourish.

The general history of the text is interesting and sufficiently clear. The *Working Plans* or *Mems.* (reprinted below, pp. 225–35) show how the book gradually took shape. The second and third stages (manuscript and proofs) can best be traced by reading the textual notes. Meanwhile, the reader can examine the organization of the story through its fourth and fifth stages by looking at the calendar on p. 237, which shows the correspondence between the two printed forms of 1854, the weekly serial and the one-volume version.

As regards the text proper, there is evidence of considerable work on the manuscript itself, extensive revision at proof stage, further revision (still of some significance) before publication in book form, and only minor, perhaps perfunctory, revision in 1867–68 for the Charles Dickens Edition.

Detailed comparison has shown, and even a cursory examination of our textual notes makes abundantly clear, that one and in some cases two sets of proofs, besides those we possess, must have existed, but have not been preserved. In many cases, there are substantial differences between manuscript and proof (other than excusable misreadings by an overworked compositor of an excruciatingly difficult manuscript); and in many other cases, changes not made at proof stage are incorporated into the *Household Words* text; chapters III, IV, and V of Book I contain evidence that there must have been an earlier proof; chapter VI, that there must have been both earlier and later proofs than those we have.

The text as first written and published in *Household Words* had no chapter titles; the division into three books, although conceived while Dickens was working on the early section (as is shown by the Working Plans), and also the chapter titles were first introduced in the one-volume edition of 1854.

Dickens' Working Plans

From the time of his writing *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), it became Dickens' practice to jot down on loose sheets of paper a series of briefly worded suggestions for his own guidance about his work in progress; the suggestions were about plot and theme, names of characters, significant phrases to be used in narrative or dialogue, and more particularly about how his story might best be divided into installments for periodical publication. These sheets of working memoranda (or *Mems.* as he called them) provide us with exceptionally interesting glimpses of a novelist at work.

The *Mems.* for *Hard Times* occupy six handwritten pages,¹ but because each of these pages was folded down the center to provide for two columns of entries, we have, in effect, twelve pages. At the top of the opening page (which contains speculations about length and suitable titles for the novel) the entries are written from one side across to the other, but later the division into separate columns is consistently maintained. As a rule, Dickens seems to have used the left-hand side of each page for one kind of note and the right-hand side for another. On the left-hand side are lists of incidents, key phrases, and queries (not always in chronological order), which would seem to constitute the raw material of the "number" in the making. On the right-hand side the same material is more methodically divided into chapters, which suggests that it represents a later stage of Dickens' planning. Some points, however, remain unclear, and one among the many queries that the *Mems.* can raise is whether their function was entirely prospective; was it not also, and at the same time, retrospective? Did not the novelist occasionally record in the *Mems.* work that he had already done? And is it not likely that he sometimes added to both sides of his sheet while already at work on the current number?

1. They are available in facsimile, thanks to Harry Stone's splendid edition of *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 246-61.

A specially intriguing aspect of the memoranda for *Hard Times* is that they are written in the same form as those of the long "monthly" novels, although *Hard Times* was never published or conceived as a monthly serial. This form seems to have been adopted by Dickens for half-technical, half-sentimental reasons. In any case, the division of *Hard Times* into five "numbers," corresponding neither to the twenty² weekly intallments of *Household Words* nor to the three-book division of the first edition in volume form, is a purely artificial one.

[Page 1—Left-hand side]

Friday January 20th 1854

Mems: Quantity

One sheet (16 pages) of Bleak House, will make 10 pages and a quarter of Household Words. Fifteen pages of my writing, will make a sheet of Bleak House.

~~A line or two more than a~~ A page and a half of my writing, will make a page of Household Words.

—
The quantity of the story to be published weekly, being about five pages of Household Words, will require about seven pages and a half of my writing.

[Page 1—Right-hand side]

Friday January 20th 1854

Mr Gradgrind
Mrs Gradgrind

Stubborn Things
Fact
Thomas Gradgrind's facts
~~George~~ John Gradgrind's
facts
Hard-headed Gradgrind
The Grindstone
Hard heads and soft hearts
The Time Grinders

2. The chapters described in the *Mems.* as *Weekly No. 20* and *Weekly No. 21* were in fact published in the same number (no. 229) of *Household Words*.

	Mr. Gradgrind's grindstone
	The Family grindstone
	Hard Times
	The universal general grindstone
	Hard Times
	Heads and Tales
	Two and two are four
	Prove it!
	<u>Black and white</u>
	According to Cocker
	Prove it!
	Stubborn things
	Facts are stubborn things
	Mr. Gradgrind's grindstone
The real times days	facts
There's no	
No such thing Sir.	The John Thomas Thomas Thomas
Extremes meet.	Mr. Gradgrind's
Unknown quantities	grindstone
Simple arithmetic	Hard Times
A mere matter of	Two and two are four
calculation	Calculations
A mere question of figures	According to Cocker
	Damaging Facts
	Something tangible
	Our hard-headed friend
	Rust and dust

[Page 2—Left-hand side]

Mem: write and calculate the story in the old monthly Nos

—
Mr Gradgrind. Facts and figures. "Teach these children nothing but facts. Nothing but facts."/

—
M'Choakumchild. If he only knew less, how much better he might have taught much more!

—
Dolly Jupe
Sissy

Bitzer—Pale winking boy.

—
Louisa Gradgrind
Young Thomas

Mrs. Gradgrind— or Miss? Wife or sister? Wife

Any little Gradgrinds? Say 3

Adam Smith
Malthus
Jane

} No parts
to play

Circus

“Horse-riding”/

Sleary

The man who by being utterly sensual and careless comes to very much the same thing in the end as the Gradgrind school?

Not yet

[Page 2—Right-hand side]

Hard Times

N° 1

Chapter I

“Teach these children nothing but facts”

Chapter II

Mr Gradgrind.

/

Marlborough House Doctrine

/

Cole
Sissy
Bitzer

/

N° 1 weekly

Chapter III

Mrs. Gradgrind badly done transparency, without enough light behind. No not yet. Mr. Gradgrind take

Tom and Louisa home.

“What will Mr. Bound say?” Bounder—

Bounderby

Chapter IV

Mr. Bounderby. The Bully of humility

Now, Mrs. Gradgrind The Children’s study

Dawn of Bounderby
and Louisa

N° 2 weekly

Chapter V

“Let us strike the keynote Coketown”

Take them to Sleary’s headquarters—

N^o 3 weeklyChapter VI

The Pegasus's Arms. The circus company. Sissy's father has deserted her. Over-"goosed".

Chapter VII

Mrs. Sparsit. Without whom Bounderby's glory incomplete.

N^o 4 weeklyChapter VIII

Indication of Louisa's marrying Bounderby bye & bye.

[Page 3—*Left-hand side*]Man of N^o 1?—Not yet

Law of Divorce

John Prodge?

Stephen?

George?

old Stephen?

Mill PicturesStephen Blackpool Rachael

Turtle and Venison & a gold spoon

"That's what the Hands want Sir!"—

Bounderby's mother? Yes

/

Bitzer's father and mother? No

/

children grow up and Louisa marriedCarry on Tom—selfish-calculations all go to N^o 1.Carry on Louisa—Never had a ~~child~~ child's belief or a child's fear.Carry on Sissy—Power of affection

Republish in 3 books?

1. Sowing
2. Reaping
3. Garnering

[Page 3—*Right-hand side*]Hard TimesN^o IIWeekly N^o 5Chapter IX

Present Sissy in her simple & affectionate position—low down in the school—no arithmetic—Interests Louisa—tells her story.

Chapter X

Open Law of Divorce. Stephen Blackpool and Rachael.
(Wolverhampton black ladder)

Finds his bad wife at home "Come awa' from
th'bed!

'Tis mine! Drunk agen? Ah! why not?"

Weekly N° 6

Chapter XI

Mill Picture. Interview with Bounderby and Mrs
Sparsit. "I mun' be ridded o' her. How? Law to punish
me. What law to help me!"

Goldspoon

Chapter XII

Bounderby's mother / Mill Picture, Stephen goes home,
wrathful.

Weekly N° 7

Chapter XIII

"Quiet and peace were there. Rachael was there, sitting
by the bed." Poison bottle. "Thou hast saved my
soul alive."

Chapter XIV

Children grow up. Time, a manufacturer. Passes them through his
mill.

/Time for Mr Gradgrind "to talk to" Louisa. /

Tom

Weekly N° 8

Chapter XV

Scene between Mr Gradgrind and Louisa, in which he
communicates Bounderby's proposal. Force of figures.
Bounderby accepted.

Chapter XVI

Mrs Sparsit Great intelligence conveyed to her /
To keep the bank / Happy pair married /
and Bounderby's speech

[Page 4—Left-hand side]

Mrs. Sparsit's life at the Bank? Yes

Bitzer light porter Yes

Tom's progress Yes

Louisa's married life — Dawn of knowledge of her immaterial self. Too late. Scarcely yet

Man dropped in N° 1? Yes.

Percy Harthouse

Jem

James

A sunny day in Coketown? Picture? Yes

Popular leader? Yes

Lover for Sissy? No. Decide on no love at all.

Sissy and Rachael to become acquainted? No

[Page 4 — Right-hand side]

Hard Times

N° III

Weekly N° 9

Chapter XVII

Mrs. Sparsit & Bitzer — Bank description — Fire buckets

Introduce Mr. James Harthouse

/"Ugh — You — Fool!" said Mrs. Sparsit.

Weekly N° 10

Chapter XVIII

James Harthouse's antecedents.

Bounderby explains Coketown "And now you know the place."

sees Louisa for the first time. — and Tom.

Chapter XIX

Tom goes home with James Harthouse to smoke — Genteel demon.

Tom shews him everything — and had better have drowned himself.

Weekly N° 11

Chapter XXWorking men's meeting—Slackbridge the orator

Stephen won't join—and is sent to Coventry.

Chapter XXI

Scene at Bounderby's/Stephen's exposition of the Slackbridge question. "Ill-conditioned fellow—your own people get rid of you—well then—I'll get rid of you too."

Weekly N° 12

Chapter XXII

Bounderby's old mother again—and Rachael.

Scene at Stephens. Louisa

and Tom (with his Bank scheme)

in the dark

Morning picture of Stephen going away from Coketown out of the coal ashes on to the country dust.

[Page 5—*Left-hand side*]Tom to rob Bounderby? YesLouisa to be acted on by Harthouse through Tom? YesLouisa's danger slowly drawn about her. YesSissy? No

Rachael?

—

Bring her with Louisa again? || No

=

Stephen?

—

No

To shew Louisa, how alike in their creeds, her father and Harthouse are?—How the two heartless things come to the same in the end?

Yes. But almost imperceptibly

Louisa

"you have brought me to this, father. Now, save me!"

Weekly N° 13

Chapter XXIII

Country house. Bounderby has foreclosed a mortgage on it. James Harthouse undermines her through Tom
Scene with Tom.

Plucking rosebuds. Tom softens to his sister. "So much the less is the whelp the only creature she cares for."

Weekly N° 14

Chapter XXIV

Take up from last chapter Account of the robbery

Bitzer and Mrs. Sparsit: Bounderby made by that good lady to feel "as if he had been crossed in something, though he has no idea in what."

Scene with Tom and Louisa. Tom in bed. Dogged and hard.

∅ "What can I say? I don't know what you mean."

Weekly N° 15

Chapter XXV

Take up Mrs Sparsit again. Mrs Gradgrind dies.

"Mr Gradgrind must have forgotten some Ology. Can't have had them all taught. Something wanting in Louisa surely."

Chapter XXVI

Mrs Sparsit's Giant staircase. Louisa always coming Down, Down, Down.

Weekly N° 16

Chapter XXVII

Mrs Sparsit watching her staircase. Overhears them together—Follows Louisa. Loses her.

Wet night picture

She seems to have eloped.

Chapter XXVIII

The National Dustman in his study—Another scene between them. Companion to the former.

☛ "You have brought me to this father. Now save me!"

[Page 6 — *Left-hand side*]Weekly N^{os} to be enlarged to 10 of my sides each—about.Sissy and Louisa/Sissy with James Harthouse/Stephen Blackpool to disappear/Rachael/Stephen Blackpool to be foundHis wife? NoSlackbridge/Bounderby and Mrs Sparsit/

(Bitzer)
Mrs Pegler

Tom, and his discovery

Slery's Horsemanship and Sissy's father—Merrylegs

[Page 6 — *Right-hand side*]Hard TimesN^{os} V & VIWeekly N^o 17Chapter XXIX

Sissy and Louisa. Head and heart—"O lay your head here my dear, lay it here!"

Chapter XXX— Sissy and James Harthouse
Goes in for camels

He goes away. One of the best actions of his life, quite a silent sorrow to him afterwards.

Weekly N^o 18Chapter XXXI

Bounderby and Mrs Sparsit together— Separation scene with Mr Gradgrind.

Chapter XXXIIPursue the robbery— disappearance of StephenRachaelTom plucking up a spirit because
still no Stephen.

Weekly N° 19

Chapter XXXIIIStill no Stephen Mrs Sparsit fearfully energetic.

Mrs Pegler Bounderby's mother—Excellent woman. Brought him up capitally

Still no StephenThe great effectChapter XXXIV

coal pit & death

"I leave 't to yo to clear my good name. Ask yor son Sir."

Stephen and Rachael

Stephen found and Tom vanishes.

Bear and forbear

The star that leads the way.

Weekly N° 20

Chapter XXXVSissy and ~~Rachael~~ Louisa pursue Tom

"Comic Livery"

Find him with travelling riders/ and so work round Sissy's own story.

Chapter XXXVI

Bitzer true to his bringing-up. Tom saved by Sleary. Finish Sissy here.

Weekly N° 21

Conclusion

Dispose of Mrs Sparsit

Wind up

The ashes of our fires grow grey and cold