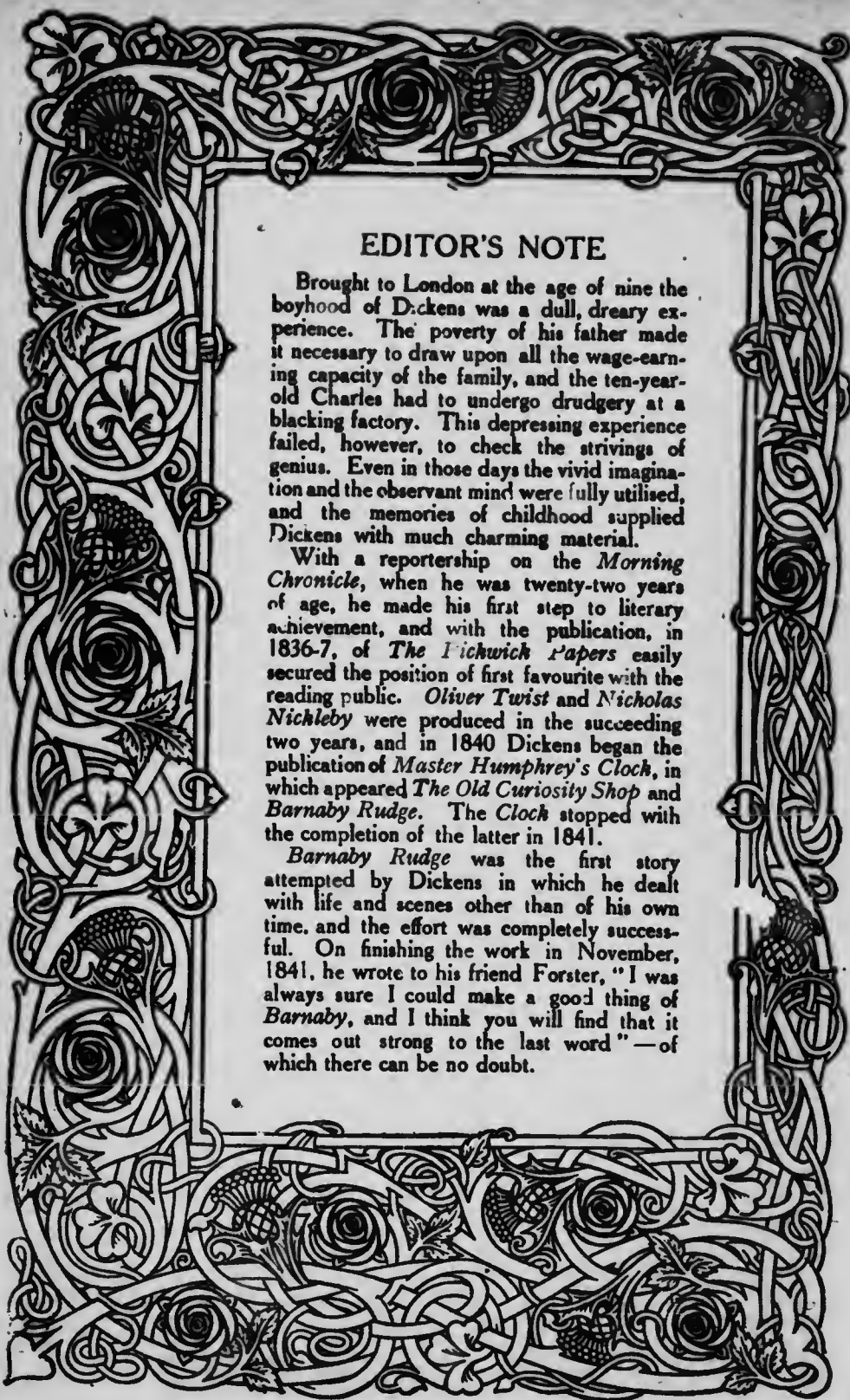




EDITOR'S NOTE

Brought to London at the age of nine the boyhood of Dickens was a dull, dreary experience. The poverty of his father made it necessary to draw upon all the wage-earning capacity of the family, and the ten-year-old Charles had to undergo drudgery at a blacking factory. This depressing experience failed, however, to check the strivings of genius. Even in those days the vivid imagination and the observant mind were fully utilised, and the memories of childhood supplied Dickens with much charming material.

With a reportership on the *Morning Chronicle*, when he was twenty-two years of age, he made his first step to literary achievement, and with the publication, in 1836-7, of *The Pickwick Papers* easily secured the position of first favourite with the reading public. *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* were produced in the succeeding two years, and in 1840 Dickens began the publication of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in which appeared *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*. The *Clock* stopped with the completion of the latter in 1841.

Barnaby Rudge was the first story attempted by Dickens in which he dealt with life and scenes other than of his own time, and the effort was completely successful. On finishing the work in November, 1841, he wrote to his friend Forster, "I was always sure I could make a good thing of *Barnaby*, and I think you will find that it comes out strong to the last word"—of which there can be no doubt.