

URIAH HEEP.

THE most noteworthy feature of all Dickens' novels is their remarkable delineation of character. In reading them we are reminded of the immortal Shakespeare. Both these great writers, seem to have been possessed of a profound knowledge of men and human manners. The great point in all Dickens' characters is that they are always true to life, they are with certain limitations, the men and women we see moving about in the world; and this is perhaps why they appeal so forcibly to us. And certainly in none of the productions of his prolific pen is this more evident, than in his greatest work, "David Copperfield," of which he himself said:—"Of all my books I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child, and his name is David Copperfield." It is difficult to decide, which of the many characters in this novel Dickens has most successfully depicted. We might search in vain, through the whole of English fiction, to find a more beautiful female character than Agnes Wickfield, and equally vain would be our search, to discover a more despicable villain than Uriah Heep. Dickens has so cleverly drawn Heep's character, that when we lay down "David Copperfield" after we have read the book, we feel that there has been instilled into our hearts, a deep

hatred of the cringing, hypocritical wretch. Perhaps the character is a little far-fetched. It is scarcely possible that a being so base could be found in real life. Heep is a hypocrite to the very marrow; he is the very personification of hypocrisy. In him we fail to find the slightest redeeming feature. Milton in his "Paradise Lost" has painted Satan in the blackest dye. But even he has a grain of good left in him. He is faithful at least to the army of devils whom he commands, and in his designs upon our first parents, he is actuated by ambition and the spirit of revenge rather than pure hatred or mere selfishness. True it may be said that Heep loved his mother. But it is doubtful whether even this love was not hypocrisy. He saw in her a menial, one whom he might use as an instrument to further his selfish ends. Again he professed deep admiration for Agnes Wickfield. But was not this rather a mask, to keep from view his deep laid schemes to ruin her father? Scarcely could his love be true, when he knew that the least mention of it to her would be enough to render her unhappy for for the rest of her life.

Let us follow the career of this creature, who was "so umble," from the time where Copperfield first saw his cadaverous face through the window of Mr. Wickfield's office, to the time when he beheld him as "Number Twenty Seven," the model prisoner of his Worship, Magistrate Creakle's establishment in Middlesex.