

LIFE OF DICKENS.

CHARLES DICKENS was born in the little village of Landport, near Portsmouth, England, February 7, 1812. Four years later his parents moved to Chatham, and here in due time Charles was sent to a private school. He early developed a fondness for reading, and when only nine years old had read *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and several of the early English novels. About this time, too, he made an attempt at original writing, his first effort being a tragedy based on one of the tales from *Arabian Nights*. This early work has no literary value, and is only of interest as foreshadowing the future author.

When Charles was ten years old, his father, who was a clerk in the pay office of the Navy, lost his position, and was arrested and imprisoned for debt. The boy, though so young, was placed in a blacking factory, where he pasted labels on the bottles of blacking. His life at this time was cheerless and wretched in the extreme, and he could never bear in after life to refer to this early bitter experience. After a time his father was released from prison, and secured a position as reporter on the *Morning Herald*, but the family was still very poor. They now moved to Camden Town, and Charles was again placed at school. A few years later he left school and entered a lawyer's office as clerk, but he had not taste for this work, and taught himself shorthand, with the idea of becoming a journalist. At the age of seventeen he became a reporter at Doctors' Commons, a court building in London. When he was twenty-two years old he succeeded