

1

IT WAS A TOWN of red brick¹, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes² had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye³, and vast buildings full of windows where there was a rattling⁴ and a trembling⁵ all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness⁶.

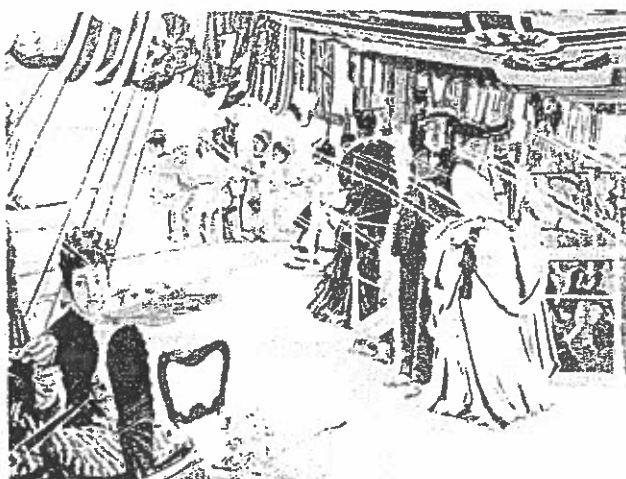
Charles Dickens describes an industrial city, in the novel Hard Times (1854).

3

"I HAVE A BELT ROUND MY WAIST⁹, and a chain passing between my legs, and I go on my hands and feet. The tunnel is very steep¹⁰ and we have to hold by a rope. I have pulled trucks¹¹ till I have the skin off me."

✶ "I work thirteen hours a day. I have to open and close a door for the coal. Sometimes I sing. But when it's dark, I can't sing – I'm too frightened."

A woman and an 8 year old child describe their work (Royal Commission on Coalmines, 1840).



2

IT IS A WONDERFUL PLACE – vast, strange, new and impossible to describe. Its grandeur does not consist in *one* thing, but in the unique assemblage of *all* things. Whatever human industry has created you find there, from the great compartments filled with railway engines and boilers, with mill⁷ machinery in full work, with splendid carriages of all kinds, to the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith, it is such a bazaar or fair as Eastern genii might have created. It seems as if only magic could have gathered⁸ this mass of wealth from all ends of the earth.

The novelist Charlotte Bronte describes a visit to the Great Exhibition in 1851.

4

THE MOST INTENSE CURIOSITY and excitement prevailed, and, though the weather was uncertain, enormous masses of densely packed people lined the road, shouting and waving hats and handkerchiefs as we flew by them. What with the sight and sound of these cheering multitudes and the tremendous velocity with which we were carried past them, my spirits rose to the true champagne height, and I never enjoyed anything so much.

The actress Frances Kemble describes the opening of the Liverpool-Manchester railway (1830).