

Charles Dickens Museum

Audio Transcript: 'A Preliminary Word' from 'Household Words'

These are Dickens's opening lines at the launch of his new weekly journal, *Household Words* in 1850.

A Preliminary Word

The name that we have chosen for this publication expresses, generally, the desire we have at heart in originating it.

We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look. We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in

Charles Dickens Museum

ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time.

No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh tone to our Household Words. In the bosoms of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellant on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out: - to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wild field, and mutually dispose them to a

Charles Dickens Museum

better acquaintance and a kinder understanding - is one main object of our Household Words...

Our Household Words will not be echoes of the present time alone, but of the past too. Neither will they tread of the hopes, the enterprises, triumphs, joys, and sorrows, of this country only, but, in some degrees, of those of every nation upon earth. For nothing can be a source of real interest in one of them, without concerning all the rest.