

Charles Dickens Museum

Audio transcript: Mamie Dickens on Dickens's Studies

His 'studies' were always cheery, pleasant rooms, and always, like himself, the personification of neatness and tidiness. On the shelf of his writing table were many dainty and useful ornaments, gifts from his friends or members of his family, and always, a vase of bright and fresh flowers. The first study that I remember is the one in our Devonshire Terrace home, a pretty room, with steps leading directly into the garden from it, and with an extra baize door to keep out all sounds and noise. The study at Tavistock House was more elaborate; a fine large room, opening into the drawing-room by means of sliding doors. When the rooms were thrown together they gave my father a promenade of considerable length for the constant indoor walking which formed a favourite recreation for him after a hard day's writing.

At 'Gad's Hill' he first made a study from one of the large spare sleeping rooms of the house, as the

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windows there overlooked a beautiful and favourite view of his. His writing table was always placed near a window looking out into the open world which he loved so keenly. Afterwards he occupied for years a smaller room overlooking the back garden and a pretty meadow, but this he eventually turned into a miniature billiard room, and then established himself, finally, in the room on the right side of the entrance hall facing the front garden. It is this room which Mr. Luke Fildes, the great artist and our own esteemed friend, made famous in his picture 'The Empty Chair,' which he sketched for 'The Graphic' after my father's death. The writing table, the ornaments, the huge waste paper basket, which 'the master' had made for his own use, are all there, and, alas, the empty chair!