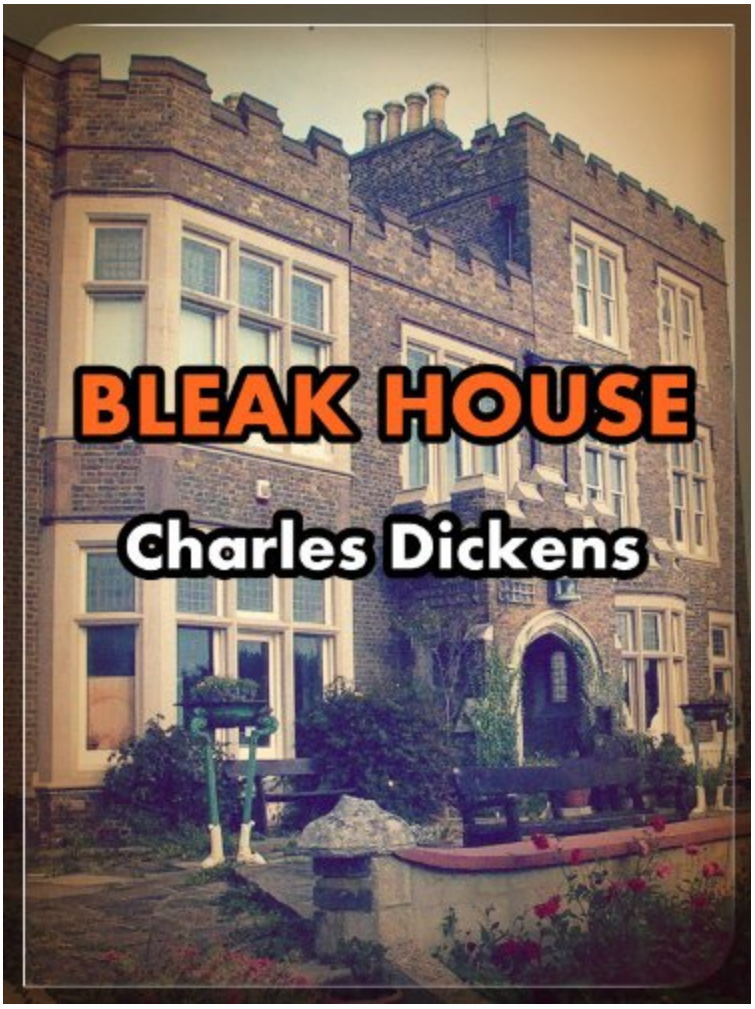
Bleak House (Illustrated) (English Edition)



Par Charles Dickens
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(Free pdf) Bleak House (Illustrated) (English Edition)

Par Charles Dickens : Bleak House (Illustrated) (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bleak House (Illustrated) (English Edition):

Description : Description du produitThe plot concerns a long-running legal dispute (Jarndyce and Jarndyce) which has far-reaching consequences for all involved. Dickens's assault on the flaws of the British judiciary system is based in part on his own experiences as a law clerk. His harsh characterisation of the slow, arcane Chancery law process gave voice to widespread frustration with the system, and is often thought of as having helped to set the stage for its eventual reform in the 1870s. In fact, Dickens was writing just as Chancery was reforming itself, with the Six Clerks and Masters mentioned in Chapter One abolished in 1842 and 1852 respectively: the need for further reform was being widely debated.

Prsentation de l'diteur The book includes 10 unique illustrations that are relevant to its content.Bleak House is a novel by Charles Dickens, published in twenty monthly instalments between March 1852 and September 1853. It is held to be one of Dickens's finest novels, containing one of the most vast, complex and engaging arrays of minor characters and sub-plots in his entire canon. The story is told partly by the novel's heroine, Esther Summerson, and partly by an omniscient narrator. Memorable characters include the menacing lawyer Tulkinghorn, the friendly, but depressive John Jarndyce, and the childish and disingenuous Harold

Skimpole, as well as the likeable but imprudent Richard Carstone.At the novel's core is long-running litigation in England's Court of Chancery, Jarndyce v Jarndyce, which has far-reaching consequences for all involved. This case revolves around a testator who apparently made several wills, all of them seeking to bequeath money and land surrounding the Manor of Marr in South Yorkshire. The litigation, which already has consumed years and sixty to seventy thousand pounds sterling in court costs, is emblematic of the failure of Chancery. Dickens's assault on the flaws of the British judiciary system is based in part on his own experiences as a law clerk, and in part on his experiences as a Chancery litigant seeking to enforce his copyright on his earlier books. His harsh characterisation of the slow, arcane Chancery law process gave memorable form to pre-existing widespread frustration with the system. Though Chancery lawyers and judges criticized Dickens's portrait of Chancery as exaggerated and unmerited, his novel helped to spur an ongoing movement that culminated in enactment of the legal reform in the 1870s. In fact, Dickens was writing just as Chancery was reforming itself, with the Six Clerks and Masters mentioned in Chapter One abolished in 1842 and 1852 respectively: the need for further reform was being widely debated. These facts raise an issue as to when Bleak House is actually set. Technically it must be before 1842, and at least some of his readers at the time would have been aware of this. However, there is some question as to whether this timeframe is consistent with some of the themes of the novel. The great English legal historian Sir William Holdsworth (see below), set the action in 1827..comBleak House is a satirical look at the Byzantine legal system in London as it consumes the minds and talents of the greedy and nearly destroys the lives of innocents--a contemporary tale indeed. Dickens's tale takes us from the foggy dank streets of London and the maze of the Inns of Court to the peaceful countryside of England. Likewise, the characters run from murderous villains to virtuous girls, from a devoted lover to a "fallen woman," all of whom are affected by a legal suit in which there will, of course, be no winner. The first-person narrative related by the orphan Esther is particularly sweet. The articulate reading by the acclaimed British actor Paul Scofield, whose distinctive broad English accent lends just the right degree of sonority and humor to the text, brings out the color in this classic social commentary disguised as a Victorian drama. However, to abridge Dickens is, well, a Dickensian task, the results of which make for a story in which the author's convoluted plot lines and twists of fate play out in what seems to be a fast-forward format. Listeners must pay close attention in order to keep up with the multiple narratives and cast of curious characters, including the memorable Inspector Bucket and Mr. Guppy. Fortunately, the publisher provides a partial list of characters on the inside jacket. (Running time: 3 hours; 2 cassettes)ExtraitChapter OneIn ChanceryLondon. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus,forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn-hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes-gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwalesof barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time-as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.Never can there come fog too thick, never

can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth.On such an afternoon, if ever, the Lord High Chancellor ought to be sitting here-as here he is-with a foggy glory round his head, softly fenced in with crimson cloth and curtains, addressed by a large advocate with great whiskers, a little voice, and an interminable brief, and outwardly directing his contemplation to the lantern in the roof, where he can see nothing but fog. On such an afternoon, some score of members of the High Court of Chancery bar ought to be-as here they are-mistily engaged in one of the ten thousand stages of an endless cause, tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities, running their goat-hair and horse-hair warded heads against walls of words, and making a pretence of equity with serious faces, as players might. On such an afternoon, the various solicitors in the cause, some two or three of whom have inherited it from their fathers, who made a fortune by it, ought to be-as are they not?-ranged in a line, in a long matted well (but you might look in vain for Truth at the bottom of it), between the registrar's red table and the silk gowns, with bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, masters' reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them. Well may the court be dim, with wasting candles here and there; well may the fog hang heavy in it, as if it would never get out; well may the stained glass windows lose their color, and admit no light of day into the place; well may the uninitiated from the streets, who peep in through the glass panes in the door, be deterred from entrance by its owlish aspect, and by the drawl languidly echoing to the roof from the padded dais where the Lord High Chancellor looks into the lantern that has no light in it, and where the attendant wigs are all stuck in a fog-bank! This is the Court of Chancery; which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance; which gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearying out the right; which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart; that there is not an honorable man among its practitioners who would not give-who does not often give-the warning, "Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!"Who happen to be in the Lord Chancellor's court this murky afternoon besides the Lord Chancellor, the counsel in the cause, two or three counsel who are never in any cause, and the well of solicitors before mentioned? There is the registrar below the Judge, in wig and gown; and there are two or three maces, or petty-bags, or privy-purses, or whatever they may be, in legal court suits. These are all yawning; for no crumb of amusement ever falls from Jarndyce and Jarndyce (the cause in hand), which was squeezed dry years upon years ago. The short-hand writers, the reporters of the court, and the reporters of the newspapers, invariably decamp with the rest of the regulars when Jarndyce and Jarndyce comes on. Their places are a blank. Standing on a seat at the side of the hall, the better to peer into the curtained sanctuary, is a little mad old woman in a squeezed bonnet, who is always in court, from its sitting to its rising, and always expecting some incomprehensible judgment to be given in her favor. Some say she really is, or was, a party to a suit; but no one knows for certain, because no one cares. She carries some small litter in a reti-cule which she calls her documents; principally consisting of paper matches and dry lavender. A sallow prisoner has come up, in custody, for the half-dozenth time, to make a personal application "to purge himself of his contempt;" which, being a solitary surviving executor who has fallen into a state of conglomeration about accounts of which it is not pretended that he had ever any knowledge, he is not at all likely ever to do. In the meantime his prospects in life are ended. Another ruined suitor, who periodically appears from Shropshire, and breaks out into efforts to address the Chancellor at the close of the day's business, and who can by no means be made to understand that the Chancellor is legally ignorant of his existence after making it desolate for a quarter of a century, plants himself in a good place and keeps an eye on the Judge, ready to call out "My lord!" in a voice of sonorous complaint, on the instant of his rising. A few lawyers' clerks and others who know this suitor by sight, linger, on the chance of his furnishing some fun, and enlivening the dismal weather a little.Jarndyce and Jarndyce drones on. This scarecrow of a suit has, in course of time, become so complicated, that no man alive knows what it means. The parties to it understand it least; but it has been observed that no two Chancery lawyers can talk about it for five minutes, without coming to a total disagreement as to all the premises. Innumerable children have been born into the cause; innumerable young people have married into it; innumerable old people have died out of it. Scores of persons have deliriously found themselves made parties in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, without knowing how or why; whole families have inherited legendary hatreds with the suit. The little plaintiff or defendant, who was promised a new rocking-horse when Jarndyce and Jarndyce should be settled, has grown up, possessed

himself of a real horse, and trotted away into the other world. Fair wards of court have faded into mothers and grandmothers; a long procession of Chancellors has come in and gone out; the legion of bills in the suit have been transformed into mere bills of mortality; there are not three Jarndyces left upon the earth perhaps, since old Tom Jarndyce in despair blew his brains out at a coffee-house in Chancery-lane; but Jarndyce and Jarndyce still drags its dreary length before the Court, perennially hopeless.Jarndyce and Jarndyce has passed into a joke. That is the only good that has ever come of it. It has been death to many, but it is a joke in the profession. Every master in Chancery has had a reference out of it. Every Chancellor was "in it," for somebody or other, when he was counsel at the bar. Good things have been said about it by blue-nosed, bulbous-shoed old benchers, in select port-wine committee after dinner in hall. Articled clerks have been in the habit of fleshing their legal wit upon it. The last Lord Chancellor handled it neatly, when, correcting Mr. Blowers the eminent silk gown who said that such a thing might happen when the sky rained potatoes, he observed, "or when we get through Jarndyce and Jarndyce, Mr. Blowers;"-a pleasantry that particularly tickled the maces, bags, and purses.How many people out of the suit, Jarndyce and Jarndyce has stretched forth its unwholesome hand to spoil and corrupt, would be a very wide question. From the master, upon whose impaling files reams of dusty warrants in Jarndyce and Jarndyce have grimly writhed into many shapes; down to the copying clerk in the Six Clerks' Office, who has copied his tens of thousands of Chancery-folio-pages under that eternal heading; no man's nature has been made the better by it. In trickery, evasion, procrastination, spoliation, botheration, under false pretences of all sorts, there are influences that can never come to good. The very solicitors' boys who have kept the wretched suitors at bay, by protesting time out of mind that Mr. Chizzle, Mizzle, or otherwise, was particularly engaged and had appointments until dinner, may have got an extra moral twist and shuffle into themselves out of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. The receiver in the cause has acquired a goodly sum of money by it, but has acquired too a distrust of his own mother, and a contempt for his own kind. Chizzle, Mizzle, and otherwise, have lapsed into a habit of vaguely promising themselves that they will look into that outstanding little matter, and see what can be done for Drizzle-who was not well used-when Jarndyce and Jarndyce shall be got out of the office. Shirking and sharking, in all their many varieties, have been sown broadcast by the ill-fated cause; and even those who have contemplated its history from the outermost circle of such evil, have been insensibly tempted into a loose way of letting bad things alone to take their own bad course, and a loose belief that if the world go wrong, it was, in some off-hand manner, never meant to go right.Thus, in the midst of the mud and at the heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.