The novels of Charles Dickens, a bibliography and sketch

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CHARLES DICKENS.

(From an Unpublished Photograph, circa 1861.)
THE NOVELS
OF
CHARLES DICKENS

A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SKETCH

BY
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PEN AND PENCIL," ETC.

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PREFACE.

It is said that the stories of England's favourite novelist owe their popularity mainly to the fact that they appeal to the "masses" rather than to the "classes." This is probably true, for it was that vast majority of the "world's workers" to which Dickens extended his sympathy, being prompt to recognise in its midst noble instances of worth, manliness, and humanity which are there so often manifested. He loved his fellow-men, and by means of his wonderful romances did more to increase the social happiness and morality of the humbler members of the community than any writer of his time. "If ever man left the world
better than he found it," remarks Mr. James Payn, "it was Charles Dickens." That being so, Thackeray's asseveration was a just one, when, on referring to his brother-novelist, he spoke of him in a most reverent tone as "the Jesus Christ of Literature."

It is difficult to realise to what extent Literature would have suffered if the novels of Dickens had never seen the light, or "to conceive" [quoting Mr. Andrew Lang] "how poor the world of fancy would be, 'how dispeopled of her dreams;' if, in some ruin of the social system, the books of Dickens were lost!" The principal characters he created are ever remembered as distinct types, while his phraseology constitutes part of our language; he is so eminently in request for fancies and general illustrations, that (as Professor Masson has pointed out) even those who are for writing him down find them indispensable, and are ever ready to avail themselves of some Dickensian touch of humour or pathos, the expression
of which flashes on the mind the thought which is intended to be conveyed.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes used to say of Dickens: "He is the greatest of all of them. Such fertility, such Shakespearian breadth—there is enough of him; you feel as you do when you see the ocean." The late Mr. William Morris considered that the author of "Pickwick" is immeasurably ahead of the novelists of our generation, an opinion fully endorsed by the Poet Laureate, when, in 1870, he wrote: "He is unquestionably as far above all other English novelists, as Shakespeare is above all other English dramatists." In Mr. Swinburne's "Studies in Prose and Poetry" we read: "Dickens, I am happy to think, can hardly have had a more cordial and appreciative admirer than Mr. Jowett" [the late Professor Jowett, of University renown]. "Tennyson, Browning, and Carlyle were all still among us when I once happened to ask him whom he thought the first of living English writers. He hesitated for a
minute or so, and then replied, 'If Dickens were alive, I shouldn't hesitate.' Seldom has a more sympathetic tribute been penned in honour of any author than that by Mr. Swinburne himself, whose lines addressed to Charles Dickens will be found in his volume of verse entitled "Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems":—

"Chief in thy generation born of men;
Whom English praise acclaimed as English born,
With eyes that matched the world-wide eyes of morn
For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
When thoughts of children warmed their light,
or when
Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
Or god-like pity fired with god-like scorn,
Shot through them flame that winged thy swift pen."

Note.—For much information contained in the following pages I am principally indebted to Mr. Forster's "Life of Charles Dickens" and "The Letters of Charles Dickens," while many interesting details have been obtained from other biographical and bibliographical sources. My
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FREDERIC G. KITTON.

ST. ALBANS.

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