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The Posthumous Papers

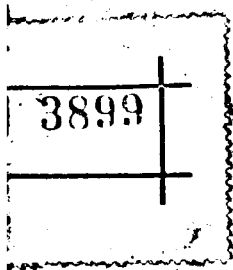
OF

THE PICKWICK CLUB.

BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

VOL. I.



& COMPANY, LIMITED:

PARIS, NEW YORK & MELBOURNE.

O111, 3M12, P.

A837

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Dedication

TO

MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD, M.P., *Etc.*

MY DEAR SIR,

If I had not enjoyed the happiness of your private friendship, I should still have dedicated this work to you, as a slight and most inadequate acknowledgment of the inestimable services you are rendering to the literature of your country, and of the lasting benefits you will confer upon the authors of this and succeeding generations, by securing to them and their descendants a permanent interest in the copyright of their works.

Many a fevered head and palsied hand will gather new vigour in the hour of sickness and distress from your excellent exertions; many a widowed mother and orphan child, who would otherwise reap nothing from the fame of departed genius but its too frequent legacy of poverty and suffering, will bear, in their altered condition, higher testimony to the value of your labours than the most lavish encomiums from lip or pen could ever afford.

Beside such tributes, any avowal of feeling from me, on the question to which you have devoted the combined advantages of your eloquence, character, and genius, would be powerless indeed. Nevertheless, in thus publicly expressing my deep and grateful sense of your efforts in behalf of English literature, and of those who devote themselves to the most precarious of all pursuits, I do but imperfect justice to my own strong feeling on the subject if I do no service to you.

These few sentences would have comprised all I should have had to say, if I had only known you in your public character. On the score of private feeling let me add one word more.

Accept the dedication of this book, my dear sir, as a mark of my warmest regard and esteem—as a memorial of the most gratifying friendship I have ever contracted, and some of the pleasantest hours I have ever spent—as a token of my fervent admiration of every fine quality of your head and heart—as an assurance of the truth and sincerity with which I shall ever be,

My dear Sir,

Most faithfully and sincerely yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

48, Doughty Street,
September 27, 1837.

PREFACE.

THE author's object in this work was to place before the reader a constant succession of characters and incidents; to paint them in as vivid colours as he could command; and to render them, at the same time, life-like and amusing.

Deferring to the judgment of others in the outset of the undertaking, he adopted the machinery of the club, which was suggested as that best adapted to this purpose; but, finding that it tended rather to his embarrassment than otherwise, he gradually abandoned it, considering it a matter of very little importance to the work, whether strictly epic justice were awarded to the club or not.

The publication of the book in monthly numbers, containing only thirty-two pages in each, rendered it an object of paramount importance that, while the different incidents were linked together by a chain of interest strong enough to prevent their appearing unconnected or impossible, the general design should be so simple as to sustain no injury from this detached and desultory form of publication, extending over no fewer than twenty months. In short, it was necessary—or it appeared so to the author—that every number should be to a certain extent complete in itself, and yet that the whole twenty numbers, when collected, should form one tolerably harmonious whole, each leading to the other by a gentle and not unnatural progress of adventure.

It is obvious that, in a work published with a view to such considerations, no artfully interwoven or ingeniously complicated plot can, with reason, be expected. The author ventures to express a hope that he has successfully surmounted the difficulties of his undertaking. And if it be objected to the "Pickwick Papers," that they are a mere series of adventures in which the scenes are ever changing, and the characters come and go like the men and women we encounter in the real world, he can only content himself with the reflection, that they claim to be nothing else, and that the same objection has been made to the works of some of the greatest novelists in the English language.

The following pages have been written from time to time, almost as the periodical occasion arose. Having been written

for the most part in the society of a dear young friend who is now no more, they are connected in the author's mind at once with the happiest period of his life, and with its saddest and most severe affliction.

It is due to the gentleman* whose designs accompany the letterpress, to state that the interval has been so short between the production of each number in manuscript and its appearance in print, that the greater portion of the illustrations have been executed by the artist from the author's mere verbal description of what he intended to write.†

* Some years after the above preface appeared, the author told in full the story of how the "Pickwick Papers" came to be written. Not long after the publication, in a collected form, of his "Sketches by Boz," and when he was a young man of two or three and twenty, Messrs. Chapman and Hall proposed his writing for them a new series of sketches to accompany illustrations by Mr. Seymour, then well known as a designer of humorous sporting subjects. They were to appear in monthly numbers of thirty-two pages each, and he was to receive for writing them £14 a month, "emolument" which Dickens, as he says, then thought "too tempting to resist." The first number appeared in March, 1836, and the first pages were written in Furnival's Inn, shortly before he and his fond young wife removed to 48, Doughty Street. The loss he so pathetically refers to above, was that of his wife's youngest sister, Mary, who lived with them, "and by the sweetness of her nature, even more than by graces of person, had made herself the ideal of his life." Speaking of Mr. Chapman's visit, he wrote: "When I opened my door in Furnival's Inn to the partner who represented the firm, I recognised in him the person from whose hands I had bought, two or three years previously, and whom I had never seen before or since, my first copy of the magazine in which my first effusion—a paper in the 'Sketches,' called 'Mr. Minns and his Cousin,' dropped stealthily, one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, up a dark court in Fleet Street—appeared in all the glory of print; on which occasion I walked down to Westminster Hall and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." The proposed title then was the "Nimrod Club," but the implied idea was set aside in favour of the author's, because he was not a sportsman. "Pickwick" himself was partly drawn from a real personage described by Mr. Chapman. In a later preface, Dickens, alluding to the change in Mr. Pickwick's character, which is very apparent as the story of his doings progress, says: "As in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man who has anything whimsical about him generally impress us first, the change ought not to be considered forced or unnatural."

Mr. Forster, in his "Life of Charles Dickens," says: "It was not until the fourth or fifth number of 'Pickwick' had appeared that its importance began to be understood by 'the trade,' and on the eve of the issue of its sixth number, he had signed an agreement with Mr. Gentry to undertake the editorship of a monthly magazine," and write for it a serial story. The magazine was the *New Monthly*, and the serial story was "Oliver Twist."

† The reader will, of course, understand that this paragraph was written to accompany the first edition.

PREFACE.

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The almost unexampled kindness and favour with which these papers have been received by the public will be a never-failing source of gratifying and pleasant recollection while their author lives. He trusts that throughout this book, no incident or expression occurs which could call a blush into the most delicate cheek, or wound the feelings of the most sensitive person. If any of his imperfect descriptions, while they afford amusement in perusal, should induce only one reader to think better of his fellow-men, and to look upon the brighter and more kindly side of human nature, he would indeed be proud and happy to have led to such a result.