

OUR TABLE.

DEALINGS WITH THE FIRM OF DONKEY AND SON,
ETC. ETC.—BY CHARLES DICKENS.

What's in a Name!

THIS work reminds us of a story we remember having heard "long, long ago," about a celebrated blacksmith, and a horse-shoe he and his man were making. The master after having pointed a piece of the best *blister* into the toe of the said shoe, returned it again into the glowing coals, and then, after it had acquired the welding heat, brought it out hissing and sparkling upon the anvil. His man jumped round from the bellows to the other side of the stithy, seized the heavy sledge, and swinging it over his head, brought it down with a heavy thud upon the bright and burning steel to secure it in its place; but instead of accomplishing his object, off flew the steel to the farthest end of the shop. The journeyman dropped his hammer on the floor and looked enquiringly at his master, as much as to say, "Do you see that?"

The master replied "Never mind it; our name's up—fire away!"

So it seems to be with the author of "Nicholas Nickleby," the "Old Curiosity Shop," &c. The sparkling wit—the glowing fervour, and the deep pathos, with all the bright poetic fire of his pen, may be wanting, still he may write away—"his name's up."

What's in a name! Why, a great deal more than people think—a great deal more than we are willing to admit—but we do admit it all, and our mouths are wide agape for more. No matter what nonsense he may write, "his name's up" and we buy his works and read them too; ay, and what's better still, at least for Charles Dickens, we also pay for them; and thus a fortune, an independent fortune is secured, and that's what's in a name.

And yet, although we know not how it is or whence it comes, there is a powerful charm that throws a strange mysterious spell upon us as we read, and nothing can dispel or break it. A dozen or two pages of tiresome twaddle is not enough to disenchant us. On and on we read, and would not skip a line—no not for worlds, lest we should lose a single sparkling thought

that flashes out so often with such startling effect, because it comes upon us when we least expect it. It is here indeed the secret of his power lies concealed, hid as it were in the strange admixture, strange because apparently; though not in reality, without plan or method, of the solemn and the absurd, the grave and gay, together with the tragic-comic, and sudden transition from the pathetic to the ludicrous, that sometimes starts a tear, and then creates a laugh perhaps before it falls.

This is indeed a charm of rare and priceless value. And yet there is another and a greater still, and that consists in the minutiae of his incidents and characters, the filling up, as it were, of the broad outline of his pictures, with a thousand numberless little lights and shadows so true to nature that one cannot help mistaking his airy fictions "fancy formed" for the stern realities of life. They constitute indeed, a host of circumstantial evidence to elicit and confirm the truth.

As to the famous Blacksmith we have mentioned—and he was a real character in more respects, in his humble line of life, than as regards his own identity, there was no man in all the country round, steel or no steel, would shoe a horse with him. "His name was up," and so is that of Charles Dickens—up—up—up far, far above the reach of any puny critic like ourselves to alter or derange a single leaf, or add another to the wreath that decks his brow.

And yet after all, on second thoughts, this may be mock humility. We fain would hope that our opinion, in this little world around us here, at least, is something worth. But here, again, we're in a sad quandary, for, as to the work before us, we hardly yet can tell, ourselves, what our opinion is; in proof of this, if further proof than saying so be requisite—our beginning was in condemnation—our end in praise. The fact is, the little trille before us is the first and opening number of a new work, and we have determined to leave ourselves free and untrammelled, to give our opinion *ex-cathedra*, (our readers must pardon our assumption of such authority) when the work is completed.

The following are specimens extracted from