

place in a daughter's hand. While the kindly light of benevolence plays around all, morality and charity are reconciled, and toleration of error never sinks into unwholesome sentimentality. Great are the intellectual endowments of Dickens—marvellous his powers of observation—wonderfully captivating his narrative faculty and the artistic grouping of his characters; while his rare perception of the ludicrous element that underlies all human things—his unrivalled combination of wit and humour throw a charm around everything he has written. But underlying all, and giving an impulse to all his rich gifts, was the loving heart, the broad, genial sympathy that felt with and for all, and to which nothing human was strange or alien. This it was that inspired his pathos, and pointed the shafts of his wit, gave geniality to his humour and poetic insight into the subtlest workings of the human heart, and thus won his way to the great heart of humanity. After all, men can only be won permanently by truth, honesty, goodness and love.

The wonderful fertility of Dickens's genius is perhaps most apparent in the host of characters, all of them the creations of his fancy, to which he has given us a kindly introduction. I dare say most of my readers are familiar with a good number of them. Their names have become, long since, household words, and some of them we know far better than our next-door neighbours, or even our familiar friends. More especially is this true of his humorous characters, who seem to walk in and take possession of us, and lay themselves down on the soft couch of our esteem, whether we will or not. How they shake us with mirth—how they light up our world of thought with a beautiful facetiousness, shedding a warmth over our whole being,—how some of them tumble about in a perfect ocean of fun, raining their jokes and waggeries in a ceaseless stream of merriment. That single group—Tony Weller and his son Sam with Mr. Pickwick, have proved a positive benefaction to the world. Who has not laughed at the elder Weller's Anti-Confederate views in regard to matrimony, the result of dear-bought experience, and his dread of widows? He finds his son Sam despatching a valentine to Mary, and beholding the future in the present, he bursts out into that affecting lamentation,—“To see you married Sammy, to see you a deluded wictim, and thinkin' in your innocence it's all werry capital. It's a dreadful trial to a father's feels, that 'ere Sammy.” His horror of widows and railroads is summed up in his thrilling account of a journey by rail,—“I was locked up in a close carriage with a living widdur, and I believe it was only because we was alone, and there was no clergyman in the conveyance, that that 'ere widdur did'nt marry me, before we reached the half-way station.” “As for the ingen, as is always a pourin' out red hot coals at night, and black smoke in the day, the sensiblest thing it does, in my opinion, is when there's somethin' in the way, and it sets up that frightful scream vich seems to say, now here's 240 passengers in the werry greatest extremity of danger, and here's their 240 screams in run.” When as to that dear, delightful old gentleman, Mr. Samuel Pickwick, with whose figure, eye-glass, spectacles and gaiters we are