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WHERE DICKENS FAILED.



WHEN by means of some extraordinary mental or moral endowments, a man has been raised above the common level of his kind ; when he has in some sort, become a friend, a teacher or a prophet to thous-

ands of his fellow-creatures, it surely behoves him, in fidelity to his high functions, and in correspondence with the trust he has won from his weaker brethren, to observe the most scrupulous exactness to truth and justice in all his utterances. The privilege which is enjoyed by men of mediocre intelligence of expressing their opinions and revealing their sentiments in an impulsive unguarded manner, cannot be assumed by the leaders of human thought and action, without detracting to an immense extent from that wonderful power which it is theirs to hold and wield over mankind for better, for worse,

There are few of us who have not had the painful experience of outliving the ascendancy which another's soul had gained over ours by its nobleness, and then, in an evil hour lost, by some unlooked for exhibition of paltry feeling or motive, utterly ungodlike, and therefore inconsistent with the character of the hero we once so reverently worshipped. There are likewise few of us who will not admit that such an experience is of a sorrowful nature, that it quenches one of the bright lights of our existence and engenders in our disappointed breasts an uneasy doubt of all

that we had hitherto most enthusiastically loved and trusted.

There is a time in the lives of all readers of English fiction, when the name of Charles Dickens evokes the most spontaneous and unqualified admiration. His patient and faithful delineation of human character in its never-failing variety ; his marvellous insight into the secret workings of the heart ; his quickness in seizing the ludicrous aspect of things ; his exhaustless flow of happy humor ; his tender compassion for the weak and unfortunate ; all these noble and lovable attributes, can not fail to win for a mind so rarely endowed the voluntary allegiance of the less gifted majority. Unfortunately, however, the enthusiasm of his Catholic readers is destined to suffer a severe shock when they turn from his delightful works of fiction to encounter in the "Pictures from Italy," and "Child's History of England," words that sting and insult them, false, cruel, and malicious interpretations of Catholic doctrines ; heartless and gross innuendoes against their revered expounders, and a low burlesquing of their solemn ceremonies of which the intense spiritual significance is completely ignored.

The profound knowledge of the human heart with which Dickens has always been credited surely fails him here. Even granting that, from his benighted point of view, the Church of Rome seems to encourage error and superstition, he was not yet justified in having recourse to the low expedient of insult, to expose what he ignorantly considered false or foolish in