

## DICKENS' CHRISTMAS STORIES.



HERE is a certain peculiarity in the writings of Charles Dickens, that even the most cursory reader cannot fail to notice. It seems to have been his delight to picture the life of the common people. In nearly all his novels he introduces individuals from that class, either as his heroes or as subordinate characters. Evidently he had an object in this. The memory of the misery and hardships, that fell to his lot in youth, remained indelibly imprinted on his mind. He seems therefore to have deemed it his duty to employ in behalf of the poor and the miserable, the great talent with which Providence had endowed him. Unlike many others who have striven towards the same end—to better the condition of the poor,—he knew by sad experience what the suffering of the objects of his solicitude really was. Many a long day had he spent as a poor, half-starved drudge labelling pots of paste-blackening while his father lay in a Debtor's Prison. Hence it was that this gifted author was unable to view joy and prosperity in one place, without thinking of the misery existing in another. The sight of one happy family would bring before him, the picture of thousands of homeless beings who never knew and never would know what enjoyment meant. This characteristic is especially noticeable in his *Christmas Stories*. In no one of these does he describe the pompous and extravagant Christmas feast of the wealthy. Even in the midst of rejoicing Dickens turns his sad eyes towards the dwellings of the lowly, there to contemplate, alas, a far different scene—a scene of misery and destitution.

After reading these stories we are not a little surprised at the standpoint from which Dickens views the great feast of Christmas. If we judge from them we are forced to admit that the truly Christian idea of Christmas is widely different from his. In the history of Venice we read that certain portions of the year were set apart by the government for carnivals and all kinds of gaiety. From Dickens' point of view Christmas is just such a time. The day on which it is celebrated might as well be the twenty-fifth of