

the exercise of our faculties, who prefer a mawkish sensibility and a strain of childish pathos to the strong, manly common-sense which ever distinguishes the self-reliant, large hearted man of intellect, are those who have built up for Mr. Dickens the reputation which he now wears so exultingly—can we say securely? Will not those who succeed us some fifty years hence, should our rugged old earth then be standing to shelter her children, marvel at the tastes of their forefathers, and ask if it were really possible that men in the boasted enlightenment of the nineteenth century could sit down and write calmly such reviews as may be found in many a periodical and newspaper of the works of Charles Dickens, ascribing to them unlimited humour, melting pathos, and intellectual grandeur! terming him a giant in literature—the mightiest scribe of a modern day? Mankind will grow weaker in mental as well as physical strength, if this is not their decision. Not that we would by this opinion detract from Mr. Dickens' real merit. We believe him to be a clever man, with considerable humour and a kindly nature. His first productions were written in a style very different from anything that had preceded them in his own age. There was a piquancy about them, an originality and drollery that opened up a new vein of ideas, and made 'Boz' immensely popular. 'The Old Curiosity Shop' has some bursts of genuine, exquisite pathos; passages that thrill the heart's purest feelings by their very truthfulness to nature. There is a comicality too, with which the commonest things of life are invested, a minuteness in speaking of every-day household affairs, which strikes us at the first recital as irresistibly droll and amusing. But it is only in the detail of these common-places that Dickens is natural. When he attempts character he fails miserably. True, he can draw a consistent imbecile, miser, or oddity; but, good or bad, they are all caricatures, mocking pictures of human nature. In each character that he depicts we may find one or more traits peculiar to some individual with whom we associate, but otherwise the picture is overdrawn, a phantom without any type of humanity. Indeed were mankind composed of such characters as those with which Mr. Dickens peoples his imaginary world, would not we who have known a better state of things shrink back in horror and dismay. His pattern people, his Cheerybles, and Noggys, and Peggottys, with all their immense good nature and unheard of love, say and do the silliest things that even 'Charles Dickens' brain can imagine, and that is saying a good deal; and then the monotonous moonstruck nonsense that his men and women talk, the pages of mawkish sentiment and moralizing, interspersed amid the story, the never ceasing recurrence to some sentence which his characters think fit to utter, such as Uriah Heep's 'I am 'umble,' and Mr. Jarndyce's idea that 'the wind was in the east,' grow more tiresome and disgusting, until at last they seem like an insult to the understanding and the good taste of his readers.

In *Nicholas Nickleby* more than in any of his other works, with the exception of *'Oliver Twist,'* and it may be his yet unfinished story of *'Bleak*