

er of a marine-store, or "junk" shop, is capable of any absurdity.

During the ten years under review we have Charles Dickens at his best. It is the period of the *American Notes of Martin Chuzzlewit* and the early Christmas Stories of *Dombey* and *Copperfield*, and the establishment of *Household Words*—of the Italian and Swiss years, and a three months' sojourn at Paris.

Mr. Forster's critical remarks on the stories while in progress and when complete are welcome additions to the biography proper. On one point, however, we feel constrained to join issue with him. His advice to Dickens was, in the main, sound and valuable; but we are decidedly of opinion that the suppression of the introduction to the *Notes* was injudicious. So far from aggravating the original offence, this chapter would probably have tended to reconcile the Americans to the freedom of the author's criticisms. They are an over-sensitive people; but an appeal to their good sense in the characteristic style of Dickens would not have been without its effect. The truth seems to be that, as a nation, our neighbours bored him excessively; at all events he was at no pains to conceal his dislike in private letters. When he met them in detail, on the other hand, he was very friendly even when the recognition took the *outré* form—"I'm blam'd if it ain't Dickens." Whatever vexations he suffered in America, there can be no question that he returned from it "with wider views than when he started, and with a larger maturity of mind." Judging from his keen appreciation of scenery, and his entertaining sketches of individual character, his residence on the continent was of great benefit to him in a similar way.

As we have already hinted, the salient features of Dickens' character are vividly presented in this volume. That he was, above all things, a man of feeling and impulse, may be gathered from his works; but to how large an extent the "feminine side of our nature" held the supremacy in his opinions, his acts, and even in the minutest details of his method as an author, we may glean from this volume. The religious element formed an essential part of his character; but his faith was characteristically of the heart and not of the head. The preamble to his will shows at once the unwavering faith of the man, and his settled dislike for formulated statements of dogma. *The Life of Dr. Arnold*, as he remarked, was "the text-book of his faith"—in modern phrase he was a Broad-churchman. In politics he was, of course, a Liberal, but even here, as Mr. Forster remarks, as he had not made them a study, "they were always an instinct with him rather than a science." Earl Grey offended him, no

doubt, because he appeared disposed to shrink from entering upon the path of social reform; but his principal objection to the Whig premier appears to be summed up in a "dislike of his style of speaking, his fishy coldness, his uncongenial and unsympathetic politeness, and his insufferable, though gentlemanly, artificiality." On the other hand a simple touch of nature in the Iron Duke seems in a moment to have softened strong political dislike. In ethics he was an "intuitionalist" by nature, and with the hard and rigid maxims of political economy he was constantly at war, "Bear in mind," he writes to Mr. Forster, "that the *Westminster Review* considered Scrooge's presentation of a turkey to Bob Cratchit as grossly incompatible with political economy."

It used to be the fashion to denounce the novelist's appeals for the poor as the "mawkish sentimentalism" of a mere *litterateur*. His life shows that this sympathy was really "a passion of his life." In the noblest sense he had the poor always with him—in his heart. He "sympathized and sorrowed," and wrote for them, but he planned and worked also in manifold ways. Schemes of popular education and of emigration, the ragged schools, sanitary reform, baths, asylums, and plans by which the poor might learn providence and foresight constantly engaged his attention. It is to his credit that he diverted the liberality of Baroness Coutts into the channel of practical philanthropy. From the first he was the suggesting and directing spirit in all her generous schemes. His exertions for individual sufferers, especially those connected with his own profession, were indefatigable.

One curious feature of his character was his inveterate cockneyism. There is not an odd scene on the continent, which is not compared with some locality or other in London. Even the Swiss shooting ground is not measured by yards or *metres*, but as "extending about the distance across the ornamental ground in St. James' Park." During his residence on the continent, Dickens constantly complained of his "want of streets and faces"—not, as might be supposed, to suggest subjects to a faltering imagination, but to get rid of the crowd of beings he had created. They clung about him and clogged his progress, clamouring for recognition from the parent who had begotten them. The wearying effect of writing is often pathetically described—the despondency at commencing—the constant anxiety,—the difficulty in the selection of names and titles—and the poignant regret at parting with the creatures of his imagination, appear strange to us, who admired the apparent ease and facility with which he seemed to write. His peculiar temperament will, in some measure, account for this—it coloured every-