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The Personal History of David Copperfield.

By Charles Dickens. With Illustrations by H. K. Browne, all from the Original.

That this is in many respects the most beautiful and highly finished work which the world has had from the pen of Mr. Dickens, we are strongly of opinion. It has all the marks by which the author already owns a world-wide popularity; with some graces which are peculiarly his, and which he has enriched, as the reader will perceive, in his former creations. In no previous fiction has he shown so much gentleness of touch and delicacy of sentiment as in this work of his, in which the life of a sensitive, inarticulate, troubled child—what may be called the level part of the narrative,—so large an amount of refined and poetical yet simple knowledge of humanity. The Chronicler himself is one of the best heroes ever sketched or brought out by Mr. Dickens. Gentle, affectionate and trusting,—his fine observation and love of reverie make him a sentimentalist, which is by no means common. But this is the least of his qualities, and he is not only the best of the sentimental lovers or b lackening youths whose fortunes and characters are so often the subject of such a work. The novel is a triumph of story-telling, a work in which the author has given expression to his thoughts and feelings in a way which is both exquisite and touching. The novel is a triumph of story-telling, a work in which the author has given expression to his thoughts and feelings in a way which is both exquisite and touching.
have aimed,—all these are outlined, filled in, and coloured without one stroke awry or one exaggerated that mar the portraiture. Few authoresses can so finely combine the grace and the step-child’s mixture of awe and curiosity under the tyranny of that she-turnkey Miss Murdstone,—so far as the creature’s shadow, except the inextricable shrinking of the orphan when he makes one of the pleasure party of theerry and beneficent, Old and Young, and for which he could have so nicely indicated the relish which, in spite of their sorrow, their shabbiness, their difficulties, their fustion and their prosing, David could not help finding in the society of Mr. and Mrs. Micawber. In coarser hands this must have become a taste for bad company. —Then, after all these things that moves the sense of sentimentalism; but follows the narrative like a low, sweet—and true—music—beginning with the narrator’s first look out on his father’s old grave in the churchyard against which every night his mother’s door is barred, and only ending with the last line that chronicles the quitting of a life.—

To the lovers of higher excitement—who have no relish for these natural truths—the tale before me has been less pleasing than many other written by Mr. Dickens, exactly for the reason which makes us like it better. As an antithesis to the story of a life—Mr. Copperfield—proper—more than usually destitute of defined and artistic plot. The looseness of texture as a story, however, is, on the one hand, exactly, sought to be disguised by afterthoughts,—on the other, rendered more apparent by one or two strained incidents and forced scenes. For instance—the villany of Uriah Heep is made to crumble away like a bad genie in a fairy tale, whilst the Hour and the Man has the aspect of a giant—a陨etic torturer into a wreath of smoke.—In the interests of Art, too, we must ask what was the purpose of giving to Betsey Trotwood that phantom husband of hers, if he had no more significant part to play than is here allotted to him!—The moods of Miss Murdstone we fancy have nothing to do with the antithetical types. He is making a deep and serious wrong in this, we can only say—and so, our objection remains—a cheere, non e bene tronaro.—With regard to the fortunes of Dr. Strong, and his youthful wife, we suspect the author some relenting in the progress of his work. But be this notion—which we get out of the Symphony to which the reconciliation scene is The song—true or false, we have an objection to that scene so far at least as the wife’s elaborate orations are concerned.—Then, there is Essa Darlett again,—a creature the conception of whom is novel, bold, yet not unnatural. We can recognize her consuming passion, her ferocity, her vigilance and jealousy blended; but we are repelled—as by something painfully discordant, even in a nature like hers—by the tirades which she discharges against the rainy Emid, when she hunts out the lost girl for the purpose of terrifying her by a scene of sublime melodrama.

There is one other scene on which we have a remark in the way of objection to make. We make this with far more doubt than our other objections to a strong kind of suggestions—and it is sure, because of the great qualities of the scene itself, to find a less amount of acquiescence. The scene to which we alluded is one of the most elaborate, powerful and descriptive in the book;—that of the great storm in which the young lover and the seducer perish within a hand’s breadth of each other, close to the devastated home. That mortal calamity never takes the forms of such fantastic combinations, which shall dare to say? That Doon and Horror are never sympathized with as in the careful preparations made for the catastrophe by Mr. Copperfield, for he will be prepared to assert. But the novel is bound when wielding the thunderbolt to spare us the crucible and the laboratory.—or, as an artist, to conceal, not display, his recourse to forced expedients for the purpose of administering poetical justice upon that shape itself into the vengeance of annihilation or into the vengeance of forgiveness. In spite of the amazing descriptive power here exhibited—a power that deafens as it were with the wounds and the assaults of wave and wind—in spite of the wonderful force given by accumulation of detail—we cannot divest ourselves of an impression of stage-effect; of that of a punishment elaborately adjusted by Man—rather than bursting on us with the terrible unexpectedness of the thunders of retribution. Even when Fate has been visibly approaching in the tragedies of Scott, his simplicity of manner has enabled him to invest the expected terror with the character of a surprise. What reader is not thus shaken by the arrival of Rameswood in the midst of the contract-signers,—by the ghastly interception of the little man on the road,—by the strange wild incident of the hero’s final disappearance,—though woe and death and ruin have been distinctly foreshadowed to follow the ill-starred meeting of the lovers from the very first pages of the story? Mr. Dickens must announce his devices with more force, and arrange them in less artificially imposing forms, if he would enjoy among artists the full fame which his descriptive powers entitle him otherwise to claim.—In reference to a book which is so full of wholesome and beautiful things, we should scarcely have cared to urge this point of objection, were there not in it so many signs of the mellowing and ripening processes through which successful and experienced genius passes having already taken place under Mr. Dickens. We do not demand from him a sacrifice of that exaggregation in which his forte lies, so much as a distribution of it. We would not yield up any characteristics of so keen an observer, so capital a narrator as Mr. Dickens:—only bring them into greater harmony one with the other, and himself into a better agreement with himself.

To point out half the strong points, shrewd bits and exquisite passages in that tale, would be a superfluity. There is no one possible. Every reader has already by the disasters of little Dora’s housekeeping,—including Mary Anne and the Life Guardsman, the tearful page, the cat earth, the jam cake, the pagoda and balls, and that wasteful whole salmon, and those oysters locked fast in their shells of which the trysty Traddles made the best; but has every one sufficiently admired the unobtrusive skill with which we are made to allow for the child’s wine without grunting her a fool’s pardon,—to feel that she is a mistake in the hero’s fortunes, yet love her and weep for her early withering away.—Every body has revelled in Miss Betsey Trotwood’s racy eccentricity,—her donkey-phobia, her antipathy to Peggotty as one having a Pagan name,—but some of her most whimsical outbursts of old-fashioned womanly sophistries may have escaped the reader in the heat of first perusal. Hear her, for instance, like another Queen Bee, with herself up into high disdain on the subject of first and second marriages.—

44 Whatever possessed that poor unfortunate Baby, that she must go and be married again," said my aunt, "and what a great mistake, "I can’t conceive. "Perhaps she still in love with her second husband," Mr. Dick suggested. "Fell in love," repeated my aunt. "What reason had she to do it?" "Perhaps," Mr. Dick smirped, after thinking a little; "she did it for pleasure."

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As we turn again, for the purposes of this notice, over the pages that during their course of publication yielded us so much enjoyment, our eye rests, that these pages of the book are those which we cannot detach for extract in explanation of that delight. But our readers either have made, or will make, acquaintance with it, and this is our duty. Meanwhile, we must borrow one passage which to—so far, at least, as its moral is concerned—will need no introduction. It is this: 'As a man brings excellent satir in aid of truths which have long been gravely argued in the Athenæum. Copperfield is taken to see the Model Prison.'

"However, I heard so repeatedly, in the course of our going to and fro, of a certain number Twenty-Seven, who was the Favourite, and who really appeared to be a Model Prisoner, that I resolved to suspend my judgment until I should see Twenty-Seven. Twenty-Eight, I understood, was also a bright particular star; but it was his misfortune to have his glory a little dimmed by the extraordinary bustle of Twenty-Seven, of his pious admonitions to everybody around him, and of the beautiful letters he constantly wrote to his mother (where he was, I think, in a very bad way) that I became quite impatient to see him. I had to reside for some time, on account of Twenty-Seven being reserved for a concluding effect. But, at last, we came to the door of his cell; and Mr. Copperfield peeped through a little hole in it, reported to us, in a state of the greatest admiration that he was reading a Hymn Book. There was such a rush of excited feeling, to see Twenty-Seven reading his Hymn Book, that the little hole was blocked up, six or seven heads deep. To reconcile this inconvenience, and give an opportunity of conversing with Twenty-Seven in all his purity, Mr. Crankle directed the door of the cell to be unlocked, and Twenty-Six was invited out into the passage. This was done; and who should Tredles and I then behold to our astonishment, in this converted Number Twenty-Seven, but Urish Heep. He knew us distinctly, and as he came out with the old wife..."

"How do you do, Mr. Copperfield? How do you do, Mr. Tredles? This recognition caused a general admiration in the party, I rather thought that everyone was struck by his not being proud, and taking notice of us..."

"Well, Twenty-Seven," said Mr. Crankle, mournfully addressing him. "How do you find yourself today?..."

"I am very humble, sir," replied Urish Heep. "You are always so, Twenty-Sevens, and Mr. Crankle. Here, another gentleman abashed with extreme anxiety: Are you quite comfortable?..."

"Yes, I thank you," said Urish Heep, looking in that direction. For far more comfortable in every way I was outside. I see my follies now, sir. That's what makes me uncomfortable. The gentlemen were much affected; and a third questioner, forcing himself to the front, inquired with extreme feeling: 'How do you find the best of your companions?..." replied Urish, glancing in the new direction of this voice, it was tougher yesterday than I could wish; but it's my duty to bear. I have committed follies, gentlemen,' said Urish, looking round with a meek smile, 'and I ought to bear the consequences without repining. A murmur, partly of gratification at Twenty-Seven's celestial state of mind, and partly of indignation against the Contractor who had given him any cause of complaint (a note of which was immediately made by Mr. Crankle), having subsided, Twenty-Seven stood in the midst of us, as if he felt himself the principal object of this highly meritorious museum. That we, the neophytes, might have an we present in the excessive of light, or directly between, orders were not given to let out Twenty-Eight. I had been so much astonished already, that I only felt a kind of regained wonder when Mr. Crankle, in a tone of the greatest approval, reading a good book! 'What is your state of mind, Twenty-Eight? said the questioner in spectacles...' I thank you," said Urish Heep, and now, sir. I am a good deal better when I thought of the sins of my former companions, sir; but I trust they may find forgiveness because the happy young men of Twenty-Five," said the questioner, nodding encouragement. "I am much obliged to you, sir," returned Mr. Tredles. "Permit me..."

"...to make there anything at all on your mind, now?" said the questioner. "If so, mention it, Twenty-Eight... 'Sir,' said Mr. Littimer, without looking up, 'If my eyes have not deceived me, this gentleman present who was walking about with me in my former life. It may be profitable to that gentleman to know, sir, that I attribute my past follies and misfortunes to..."

"...the service of young men; and to have allowed myself to be led by them into weaknesses, which I had not strength to resist. I hope that gentleman will take warning, sir, and will not be offended at my freedom. It is for his good. I am conscious of my own past follies. I hope he may repent of all the wickedness and sin to which he has been a party..."

"...I observed that several gentlemen were shaking their eyes, each, with one hand, as if they had just come into church..." This does you credit, sir," said the person, who I should have expected it of you. Is there anything else?"

"Half-a-hundred more traits strike us each in its peculiar way marking the artist—as we are about to close these remarks. We could point to Mr. Spengel's lecture on will-making, followed by Mr. Spengel's death intestate, as a fine illustration of human self-cheatery—to the French butterflies in the Old Soldier's cap, as a wonderful satire of shrewdness and expeditionful, cheery Tredles, among many unlimited number of girls, his sisters-in-law, as a cordial illustration of rustic felicity—the outside of a well-fed pig is the best of the inhabitants of the old boat; though Pegotty's search for his niece—a bit of extravagance—nevertheless becomes poetical in its pathos..."Enough, however, has been noted and quoted to illustrate our honest judgment and our highest admiration of this best work of a genial and powerful writer.

*Anthology for the Year 1872—* [Anthology, &c.]


A few words will suffice to inform those who delight in German classics of the republication, after a pause of nearly seventy years, of Schiller's 'Anthology for the Year 1872.' In this volume they will recognize a document of some importance in the poet's history. He published it with a fictitious imprint while still fretting at Stuttgart under the stigma of the Duke's displeasure. Soon after 'The Robbers' came out—and it is said to have been the immediate occasion of that passage to Madame de Staël which marked a decisive turning point in his destiny. The Duke, it will be remembered, assumed the right of criticizing his subject's literary productions, condemned him, and, a year later, 'The Robbers,' to submit all future compositions to his judgment—an order which was not obeyed. The disobedience was aggravated in the sovereign's eyes by the style of some pieces in the Anthology; which was, in truth, sufficiently harsh and daring to alarm critics of the legitimate school. The Duke angrily forebade Schiller to publish anything in future except on the subjects belonging to his (medico) profession. Hereupon the poet fled;—it was, indeed, time.

The original of this *corpus delicti* has long been extremely scarce. The critics of Schiller's works have not hitherto paid sufficient attention to the poems in this volume which were excluded from the later collections; nor have they sufficiently noticed the alterations made by the author in those which are reprinted, among the compositions of his first period. Foreign biographers appear for the most part to have known this volume by name, and by some of them its existence even is not expressly mentioned. Thus, as some thirty out of the whole number of eighty-two poems which Schiller contributed to it have never since been