

A black and white portrait of Charles Dickens, showing him from the chest up. He has dark, wavy hair, a full beard, and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. The background is plain and light-colored.

***CHARLES
DICKENS***

***SCENES AND
CHARACTERS
FROM THE WORKS
OF CHARLES
DICKENS***

Charles Dickens

Scenes and Characters from the Works of Charles Dickens

**Being Eight Hundred and Sixty-six Pictures
Printed from the Original Wood Blocks**

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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THERE is one question upon which the critics and lovers of Dickens seem never able to get into agreement, and that is the question of the original illustrations to his works. To the thorough-going enthusiast Phiz and Dickens seem inseparable, and no edition which does not contain the old, familiar grotesques of Hablot Browne's imagination, or, in the earlier volume, the equally abnormal lineaments portrayed by Cruikshank or Seymour, would be deemed worthy of a place upon his bookshelf. But a younger generation is growing up, for whom the time-honoured pictures have not the charm of long association, and among them it is common to hear the complaint that the natural humour and pathos of the author's best works are spoiled to modern fancy by the violent caricatures of the illustrator. "Let us abolish these pictures altogether," they say: "and illustrate the books with pretty conventionalities by more fashionable artists." At the opposite pole stands yet another group of critics—the "Superior People" who have made up their minds that Dickens himself was a caricaturist, and that therefore the early illustrations, even if they do a little emphasise his exaggerations, are only conceived in fitting harmony with a world of fancy which drowns itself in excesses

of the grotesque. Among so many doctors, and all so emphatic, who shall decide? It is, at any rate, no easy task.

It happens, however, that there does exist a series of Dickens illustrations, now in some danger of being unduly neglected, in which the artists were wonderfully happy in preserving the original features of Phiz and Cruikshank's interpretations, while they toned down the more extravagant details and brought imagination into closer harmony with reality. These were the illustrations to the square-shaped "Household Edition," published in 1870, just after the great novelist's death—and now reissued in this Dickens picture-book, in the hope that those who love the stories may like to possess in separate form what is, perhaps, the best pictorial accompaniment that the novels ever received. At the time of its first publication, the "Household Edition" enjoyed an enormous success. At the moment the name of Dickens was on every one's lips, and the fact that this splendidly illustrated reprint was issued in penny numbers and sixpenny parts placed it within reach of even the most humbly stocked purse. Its sale was stupendous, and the familiar green-covered pamphlets percolated through every town and village where the English tongue is spoken. The original copies may still be met with, under many a country timbered roof, carefully treasured as one of the most cherished household possessions.

Undoubtedly, a great part of the success was due to the art of the illustrators. To begin with, there was

an unusually liberal display of pictures—the edition, as a whole, containing close upon nine hundred. But more important than the number were the truth and sincerity of the interpretations—qualities which helped to give a new life to characters already secure of immortality. First and foremost, of course, the edition will always be associated with the memory of Fred Barnard, whose pictures are the outstanding feature of the present volume. Barnard seemed destined by nature to illustrate Dickens; the spirit of "Boz" ran again in his veins. And nothing in his work is more impressively ingenious than the skill with which he took the types already created by his predecessors, preserved their characteristics, so that each was unmistakably himself, and yet by the illuminating touch of genius transferred them every one from the realm of caricature to that of portraiture. Not far inferior to him was that admirable draughtsman, Charles Green, who exactly adopted Barnard's attitude to the originals. The reader who will compare Green's illustrations to "The Old Curiosity Shop" with Phiz's, will scarcely fail to notice with interest how often Green has chosen the same subject as his predecessor, and all but treated it in the same manner, save that a twisted grotesque suddenly becomes, under the magic of his wand, a natural human being. His picture of Sally Brass and the Marchioness is a remarkable instance in point: but there are many others equally eloquent of his sympathetic and interpretative method. Nor should the work of Mahony, A. B. Frost, Gordon Thomson and others be forgotten, for each in his own way has

helped to make this volume, what its publishers confidently claim it to be, a collection of Dickens pictures unrivalled for humour, pathos, character, and interpretative skill. In the certainty that such a gallery of good work can hardly fail to find appreciators, the volume is now offered to all lovers of the most widely popular author of the Victorian Era.

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