

CHARLES DICKENS, A CRITICAL STUDY

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Charles Dickens, a critical study by George Gissing

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GEORGE GISSING

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A CRITICAL STUDY**

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Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens

A Critical Study

By

GEORGE GISSING

LONDON

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1898

1812. Dickens born at Landport (Feb. 17).
 1821. Removal to London.
 1831-6. Life as Reporter and Journalist.
 1836. Marriage (Apr. 2).
 " *Sketches by Boz*, 2 vols.
 " " " Second Series, 1 vol.
 1837. *Pickwick*.
 1838. *Oliver Twist*, 3 vols.
 1839. *Nicholas Nickleby*.
 1840. *Old Curiosity Shop*.
 1841. *Barnaby Rudge*.
 1842. Dickens's first visit to America.
 " *American Notes*, 2 vols.
 1843. *Christmas Carol*.
 1844. *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
 " *The Chimes*.
 1845. Visit to Italy.
 " *The Cricket on the Hearth*.
 1846. *Pictures from Italy*.
 " *The Battle of Life*.
 1848. *Domby and Son*.
 " *The Haunted Man*.
 1850. *David Copperfield*.
 " *Household Words* (March 30, 1850,
 to May 28, 1859).
 1853. *Bleak House*.
 " *A Child's History of England*.
 1854. *Hard Times*.
 1856. Dickens purchases Gadshill Place.
 1857. *Little Dorrit*.
 1858-9. First Series of Public Readings.
 1859. *All the Year Round* begun (Apr.
 30).
 " *A Tale of Two Cities*.
 1860. *The Uncommercial Traveller*.
 1861-3. Second Series of Public Readings.
 1861. *Great Expectations*, 3 vols.
 1865. *Our Mutual Friend*, 2 vols.
 1866-7. Third Series of Public Readings.
 1867-8. Second visit to America.
 1868-70. Fourth Series of Public Readings.
 1870. *Edwin Drood*.
 " Death, June 9, at Gadshill.
 " Buried in Westminster Abbey.

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Charles Dickens.

Chapter I.

His Times.

More than a quarter of a century has now elapsed since the death of Charles Dickens. The time which shaped him and sent him forth is so far behind us, as to have become a matter of historical study for the present generation; the time which knew him as one of its foremost figures, and owed so much to the influences of his wondrous personality, is already made remote by a social revolution of which he watched the mere beginning. It seems possible to regard Dickens from the standpoint of posterity; to consider his career, to review his literary work, and to estimate his total activity in relation to an age which, intelligibly speaking, is no longer our own.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne Charles Dickens was twenty-five years old. To say that he was twenty in the year 1832 is to point more significantly the period of his growth into manhood. At least a year before the passing of that Reform Bill which was to give political power to English capitalism (a convenient word of our day) Dickens had begun work as a shorthand writer, and as journalist. Before 1837 he had written his *Sketches*, had published them in volumes which gave some