

**DICKENS**

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Dickens by Adolphus William Ward

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**ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD**

**DICKENS**



**English Men of Letters**

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY



CHARLES DICKENS

# Dickens

*by*

ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD, LL.D., LITT.D.

AUTHOR OF

"HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRAMATIC LITERATURE"  
"CHAUCER" ETC.

## English Men of Letters

EDITED BY

JOHN MORLEY



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## PREFACE.

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AT the close of a letter addressed by Dickens to his friend John Forster, but not to be found in the English editions of the *Life*, the writer adds to his praises of the biography of Goldsmith these memorable words: "I desire no better for my fame, when my personal dustiness shall be past the control of my love of order, than such a biographer and such a critic." Dickens was a man of few close friendships—"his breast," he said, "would not hold many people"—but, of these friendships, that with Forster was one of the earliest, as it was one of the most enduring. To Dickens, at least, his future biographer must have been the embodiment of two qualities rarely combined in equal measure—discretion and candour. In literary matters his advice was taken almost as often as it was given, and nearly every proof-sheet of nearly every work of Dickens passed through his faithful helpmate's hands. Nor were there many important decisions formed by Dickens concerning himself in the course of his manhood to which Forster was a stranger, though, unhappily, he more than once counselled in vain.

On Mr. Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, together with the three volumes of *Letters* collected by Dickens's eldest daughter and his sister-in-law—his "dearest and best friend"—it is superfluous to state that the biographical portion of the following essay is mainly based. It may be superfluous, but it cannot be considered impertinent, if I add that the shortcomings of the *Life* have, in my opinion, been more frequently proclaimed than defined; and that its merits are those of its author as well as of its subject.

My sincere thanks are due for various favours shown to me in connexion with the production of this little volume by Miss



Hogarth, Mr. Charles Dickens, Professor Henry Morley, Mr. Alexander Ireland, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Britton. Mr. Evans has kindly enabled me to correct some inaccuracies in Mr. Forster's account of Dickens's early Chatham days on unimpeachable first-hand evidence. I also beg Captain and Mrs. Budden to accept my thanks for allowing me to see Gad's Hill Place.

I am under special obligations to Mr. R. F. Sketchley, Librarian of the Dyce and Forster Libraries at South Kensington, for his courtesy in affording me much useful aid and information. With the kind permission of Mrs. Forster, Mr. Sketchley enabled me to supplement the records of Dickens's life, in the period 1838-'41, from a hitherto unpublished source—a series of brief entries by him in four volumes of *The Law and Commercial Daily Remembrancer* for those years. These volumes formed no part of the Forster bequest, but were added to it, under certain conditions, by Mrs. Forster. The entries are mostly very brief; and sometimes there are months without an entry. Many days succeed one another with no other note than "Work."

Mr. R. H. Shepherd's *Bibliography of Dickens* has been of considerable service to me. May I take this opportunity of commending to my readers, as a charming reminiscence of the connexion between *Charles Dickens and Rochester*, Mr. Robert Langton's sketches illustrating a paper recently printed under that title?

Last, not least, as the Germans say, I wish to thank my friend Professor T. N. Toller for the friendly counsel which has not been wanting to me on this, any more than on former occasions.

A. W. W.

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