

**THE RELIGIOUS
SENTIMENTS OF CHARLES
DICKENS, COLLECTED
FROM HIS WRITINGS**

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The religious sentiments of Charles Dickens, collected from his writings by Charles H. McKenzie

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CHARLES H. MCKENZIE

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BY

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PREFATORY REMARKS.



IN commencing the congenial task before me, I should state the reasons which stimulated me to undertake it, and eventually to give its results to the world, for the one, at the outset, was independent of the other.

In the fulfilment of my whilom functions as a lay preacher of the gospel, I happened, one night, to bring some of the sentiments of Charles Dickens to bear upon the subject under exposition, which led to some slight discussion between an estimable lady and myself, in which she emphatically denied, and I asserted, that the great author had sound Christian views. Although feeling justified in my position in a general mental review of his writings, yet I felt unprepared to give the proofs to substantiate my assurance, having, indeed, to

admit to myself that my opinion was formed by the general impression gained from simple reading, rather than from any passages retained in my memory sufficiently to the point to establish my conviction; yet that conviction was so strong, that, though a very distant chance of having to yield the battle to the fair may have qualified my assurances, I engaged to collect the evidence which would convince her.

It is needless to say, as an ardent disciple of him who has been termed the great master of his art, and as a humble but loving disciple of that Greater Master whom Charles Dickens delighted to honour, with what zest my voluntary task was entered upon. I have read the books many times in my life, and would have read them many times again, for mere gratification of myself and other people; but, naturally, the oft-told tale must lose the charm that once enhanced it, and I often thought, with regret, that the once almost boundless scope was becoming circumscribed to me, and that the keen relish must diminish with growing familiarity. How gladly, then, this motive was welcomed which enabled me once more to take up the beloved books, to read them all with a new and absorbing interest, in which I was gratified and astonished by the voluminous and positive evidence collected from every succeeding volume, and my original humble motive grew to be a more ambitious one.

Before much progress had been made I was

constrained to admit that, with all my admiration for these books, I had read them only superficially, and had, in that, done little short of an injustice to their writer. In my enjoyment of his mirth-provoking creations, and my admiration of his power of moving the heart by his pathos, I had been ever hurried breathlessly on in that enchanting whirl of excitement which he, of all men, possessed the power of surrounding his reader with, and had failed to mark those subtle touches by which the author, like the painter, establishes his genius. And I believe that most people do read them in the same spirit the first time, and carry away an imperfect, and, consequently, an unfair estimate of his real character, motives, and heart. So I was brought in my task to see that many admirers of the writings of Charles Dickens do not rightly appreciate the real worth of the man and his life-work, and, when they are anything more than amused and interested, do not often rise beyond the admission that he was a great social reformer and moralist, which a man may be, after all, without being a Christian, in its scriptural meaning.

The more clearly I saw this, and the more convinced I became of his true, clear, broad, and minutely-defined Christian views, the more the purpose that was forming in my mind grew, until it assumed the terms of a positive duty. This purpose was to do justice to the memory of Charles

Dickens by establishing, by those proofs which are so often overlooked, the fact of his vital religious character, which, though a fact, is so strangely ignored, misunderstood, and actually denied, in places.

I venture to dedicate the results of my pleasant task to my lady friend, for whose especial edification it was originally undertaken, and I offer it to the public with all its *demerits* upon its head, but with certainly *this* merit, of being a genuine Tribute to the Memory of Charles Dickens.

I beg to express my indebtedness to Messrs. CHAPMAN & HALL for their very generous permission to use the extracts which have been necessary to the completion of this volume.

C. H. MCKENZIE.

