

**EVENINGS OF A  
WORKING MAN: BEING  
THE OCCUPATION OF  
HIS SCANTY LEISURE**

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Evenings of a working man: being the occupation of his scanty leisure by John Overs & Charles Dickens

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**JOHN OVERS & CHARLES DICKENS**

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EVENINGS  
OF  
A WORKING MAN,  
BEING THE OCCUPATION OF  
HIS SCANTY LEISURE:

By JOHN OVERS.

WITH A PREFACE RELATIVE TO THE AUTHOR,

By CHARLES DICKENS.

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LONDON:  
T. C. NEWBY, 72, MORTIMER STREET,  
CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1844.

**This Little Book**

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO

DOCTOR ELLIOTSON,

BY ONE

WHO HAS FELT HIS KINDNESS

TO THOSE

WHO HAVE NO OTHER CLAIM UPON HIM

(AND ON SUCH A MAN CAN HAVE NO HIGHER CLAIM)

THAN

SICKNESS AND OBSCURE CONDITION.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE indulgent reader of this little book—not called indulgent, I may hope, by courtesy alone, but with some reference also to its title and pretensions—may very naturally inquire how it comes to have a preface to which my name is attached; nor is the reader's right or inclination to be satisfied on this head, likely to be much diminished, when I state, in the outset, that I do not recommend it as a book of surpassing originality or transcendent merit. That I do not claim to have discovered, in humble life, an extraordinary and brilliant genius. That I cannot charge mankind in general, with having entered into a conspiracy to neglect the author of this volume, or to leave him pining in obscurity. That I have not the smallest



intention of comparing him with Burns, the exciseman ; or with Bloomfield, the shoemaker ; or with Ebenezer Elliott, the worker in iron ; or with James Hogg, the shepherd. That I see no reason to be hot, or bitter, or lowering, or sarcastic, or indignant, or fierce, or sour, or sharp, in his behalf. That I have nothing to rail at ; nothing to exalt ; nothing to flourish in the face of a stony-hearted world ; and have but a very short and simple tale to tell.

But, such as it is, it has interested me ; and I hope it may interest the reader too, if I state it, unaffectedly and plainly.

John Overs, the writer of the following pages, is, as is set forth on the title-page, a working man. A man who earns his weekly wages (or who did when he was strong enough) by plying of the hammer, plane, and chisel. He became known to me, to the best of my recollection, nearly six years ago, when he sent me some songs, appropriate to the different months of the year, with a letter, stating under what circumstances they had been composed, and in what manner he was occupied from morning until night. I was, just then, relinquishing the

conduct of a monthly periodical: or I would gladly have published them. As it was, I returned them to him, with a private expression of the interest I felt in such productions. They were afterwards accepted, with much readiness and consideration, by MR. TAIT, of Edinburgh; and were printed in his Magazine.

Finding, after some further correspondence with my new friend, that his authorship had not ceased with these verses, but that he still occupied his leisure moments in writing, I took occasion to remonstrate with him seriously against his pursuing that course. I pointed out to him a few of the uncertainties, anxieties, and difficulties of such a life, at the best. I entreated him to remember the position of heavy disadvantage in which he stood, by reason of his self-education, and imperfect attainments; and I besought him to consider whether, having one or two of his pieces accepted occasionally, here and there, after long suspense and many refusals, it was probable that he would find himself, in the end, a happier or a more contented man. On all these grounds, I told him, his persistence in his new calling

made me uneasy ; and I advised him to abandon it, as strongly as I could.

In answer to this dissuasion of mine, he wrote me as manly and straightforward, but withal, as modest a letter, as ever I read in my life. He explained to me how limited his ambition was : soaring no higher than the establishment of his wife in some light business, and the better education of his children. He set before me, the difference between his evening and holiday studies, such as they were ; and the having no better resource than an alehouse or a skittle-ground. He told me, how every small addition to his stock of knowledge, made his Sunday walks the pleasanter ; the hedge-flowers sweeter ; every thing more full of interest and meaning to him. He assured me, that his daily work was not neglected for his self-imposed pursuits ; but was faithfully and honestly performed ; and so, indeed, it was. He hinted to me, that his greater self-respect was some inducement and reward : supposing every other to elude his grasp ; and shewed me, how the fancy that he would turn this or that acquisition from his books to account, by-and-by,