

**HINTS TO COLLECTORS OF
ORIGINAL
EDITIONS OF THE WORKS
OF CHARLES DICKENS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649332908

Hints to collectors of original editions of the works of Charles Dickens by Charles Plumtre Johnson

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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CHARLES PLUMPTRE JOHNSON

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DICKENS'S WORKS

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THE WORKS OF

CHARLES DICKENS

BY

CHARLES PLUMPTRE JOHNSON

" He will march in the great company—with rare Ben Jonson, with glorious John Dryden, with kind Molière, and patient Cervantes, with noble Walter Scott, with gentle William Thackeray—all great humorists, all great masters of pathos, all good and honest men."—*Charles Dickens*, by George Augustus Sala, p. 99.

LONDON

GEORGE REDWAY

YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN

1885

25029 D. c. 2. -



*Only five hundred and fifty copies printed, fifty of
which are on large paper.*

INTRODUCTION.

NOT only in Great Britain, America, Australia, India, the other Colonies and Dependencies of Great Britain and all parts of the world in which the English language is read ; not only in countries where foreign languages are read ;¹ but (thanks to the author's thoughtful generosity²) even among the blind who can as a rule read no language at all, the works of Charles Dickens are read, and being read, are loved.

Probably no author of our time has had so large and so miscellaneous a public, and no author has better deserved his success. Dickens's books were written *about* the people, and *for* the people, and are consequently read *by* the people.

As there are many readers of Dickens's works, so there are many collectors of them in original editions. The causes of the popularity of Dickens's books among collectors are not difficult to trace ; everybody can understand and appreciate them, they are illustrated by the greatest masters of the art of book-illustrating, and, finally, there are numerous subtle differences between the various editions, and even between various states of the plates in the same editions. It is these very differences that add so much zest and excitement to a collector's pursuit, and, at the same time, render a trustworthy guide absolutely necessary.

¹ The British Museum Catalogue contains translations of Dickens's works in twelve foreign languages.

² See Dolby's "Charles Dickens as I knew Him," pp. 299-300, where the production of "The Old Curiosity Shop," in raised type, is recorded.

Many volumes have been published on the subject of Dickens's books. The most useful of these are, perhaps, Mr. Shepherd's "Bibliography," Mr. D. C. Thomson's "Life of Phiz," and Mr. Dexter's chapter of "Hints to Dickens Collectors," in the "Dickens Memento." I know, however, of no volume that will enable a collector, or dealer, to tell, at a glance, whether any particular volume offered to him is of the genuine, first edition throughout, with the plates in the first state. This has been my object in preparing these "Hints to Collectors." For more detailed and special information, beyond the scope of this little book, I must refer the collector to the books mentioned above.

I would caution all collectors against the numerous dishonest tricks that have been resorted to, for the purpose of deceiving them as to the genuineness of some of Dickens's books. The great demand for, and consequent rarity of, many of his works, have made it worth while to use chemicals for the purpose of erasing the words "Second Edition" from title-pages, and to reprint title-pages, and even whole volumes, in *facsimile*. These *facsimile* reprints of rare volumes, though harmless in themselves, and even desirable when properly used, have often been the means of deceiving unwary collectors.

I must explain that I have adopted the same rule as in my "Hints to Collectors of Original Editions of the Works of Wm. Makepeace Thackeray," and have referred only to the first collected form of Dickens's writings, omitting all scattered papers, so as to avoid encumbering the collector's shelves with large volumes, for the sake of such papers. I have, however, admitted such works as "The Pic Nic Papers," "Memoirs of Grimaldi," and others, edited by Dickens, as most collectors desire to have these.

My general plan has been to compare with the greatest care several copies of every work (with the exception of No. XXVI.); to collate them; to note the smallest variations in

title-pages, or plates ; and to put the information thus gained in a compact and intelligible form. I have given, in each case, an exact copy of the title-page, a full collation of pages and illustrations, notes of differences in editions and states of plates, and other matters to be attended to by collectors, and finally the market value of the book. I must explain that I have added this last particular to give the collector some idea of the price he may expect to have to pay for a *clean, uncut* copy of the book. If he is satisfied with the same book, in the ordinary bound, or half-bound, condition, with margins, more or less, clipped, he should get it at a price from twenty-five to fifty *per cent.* less. For copies in fine bindings he will have to pay even larger prices.

The reader will find not only all the information as to Dickens's works, hitherto known to collectors, in a compact and easily accessible form, but also notes as to variations in editions and other peculiarities that have till now been unpublished, if not unknown ; a list of dramatized versions of some of the stories, and notes on more than seventy engraved portraits of Dickens. An interesting, unique copy of the "The Chimes" is also described, and the long list of *Dickensiana*, already known to collectors, is swelled by a hitherto unknown item.

A few general hints may be of use to young collectors. If you have a book with uncut edges and are sending it to be bound, keep the margins intact and have only the top edges gilt. If you have a book, issued in parts or otherwise, with an illustration on the cover, bind the cover in and thus preserve the illustration. Do not necessarily refuse a rare book because it is soiled, if perfect and not torn a good binder can clean it and make it into a fair copy. Don't go to auction rooms, and bid yourself, in the expectation of getting a bargain ; you won't succeed ! Dealers will be there, who know the market value of Dickens's books, and of other books too, better than you will ever know it, and

will take care that, if a book "goes cheap," it does not go to you. If you see that a book, which you want badly and cannot get elsewhere, is to be sold at auction, ask your bookseller to buy it for you; he will only charge you ten *per cent.* on the price, will take care it is perfect, and will not give more than its fair value, unless you insist on it. Go to a bookseller of position and ability; an ignorant bookseller is worse than a dishonest one, as the former, in ignorance, buys and sells *pseudo* first editions that the latter would not dare to deal in. Give your bookseller a list of your wants, and he will sell you genuine books at a fair profit. They will certainly be better worth what you pay for them than your "bargains" in the auction rooms.

I have to acknowledge the valuable assistance I have received from my friend, Mr. Loftus S. Long, in verifying title-pages and, generally, in researches at the South Kensington, and British, Museums.

In conclusion, I trust that these notes will prove useful to all collectors, experienced and inexperienced; that they may afford to the experienced collector, who has a complete set of Dickens's works, the pleasure of verifying the genuineness of his books, and may save the inexperienced collector the chagrin and disappointment that result from his being "taken in." I hope, at the same time, that the better class of second-hand booksellers, who so ably and cheerfully minister to the wants of collectors, may find that the issue of these notes will not only increase an intelligent demand for genuine first editions, but will also serve to protect their unwary customers from the ignorance, or dishonesty, of the less learned or less scrupulous members of the Trade.

11th February, 1885.