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To  
Mr Serjeant Talfourd MP,\*  
etc., etc.

MY DEAR SIR,

If I had not enjoyed the happiness of your private friendship, I should still have dedicated this work to you, as a slight and most inadequate acknowledgement of the inestimable services you are rendering to the literature of your country, and of the lasting benefits you will confer upon the authors of this and succeeding generations, by securing to them and their descendants a permanent interest in the copyright of their works.

Many a fevered head and palsied hand will gather new vigour in the hour of sickness and distress from your excellent exertions; many a widowed mother and orphan child, who would otherwise reap nothing from the fame of departed genius but its too frequent legacy of poverty and suffering, will bear, in their altered condition, higher testimony to the value of your labours than the most lavish encomiums from lip or pen could ever afford.

Beside such tributes, any avowal of feeling from me, on the question to which you have devoted the combined advantages of your eloquence, character and genius, would be powerless indeed. Nevertheless, in thus publicly expressing my deep and grateful sense of your efforts in behalf of English literature, and of those who devote themselves to the most precarious of all pursuits, I do but imperfect justice to my own strong feelings on the subject, if I do no service to you.

These few sentences would have comprised all I should have had to say, if I had only known you in your public character. On the score of private feeling, let me add one word more.

Accept the dedication of this book, my dear sir, as a mark of my warmest regard and esteem – as a memorial of the most gratifying friendship I have ever contracted, and of some of the pleasantest hours I have ever spent – as a token of my fervent admiration of every fine quality of your head and heart – as an assurance of the truth and sincerity with which I shall ever be,

My dear Sir,

Most faithfully and sincerely yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

*48 Doughty Street, 27th September 1837*



## Preface

The author's object in this work was to place before the reader a constant succession of characters and incidents, to paint them in as vivid colours as he could command, and to render them, at the same time, lifelike and amusing.

Deferring to the judgement of others\* in the outset of the undertaking, he adopted the machinery of the club, which was suggested as that best adapted to his purpose – but, finding that it tended rather to his embarrassment than otherwise, he gradually abandoned it, considering it a matter of very little importance to the work whether strictly epic justice were awarded to the club, or not.

The publication of the book in monthly numbers, containing only thirty-two pages in each, rendered it an object of paramount importance that, while the different incidents were linked together by a chain of interest strong enough to prevent their appearing unconnected or impossible, the general design should be so simple as to sustain no injury from this detached and desultory form of publication, extending over no fewer than twenty months. In short, it was necessary – or it appeared so to the author – that every number should be, to a certain extent, complete in itself, and yet that the whole twenty numbers, when collected, should form one tolerably harmonious whole, each leading to the other by a gentle and not unnatural progress of adventure.

It is obvious that in a work published with a view to such considerations, no artfully interwoven or ingeniously complicated plot can with reason be expected. The author ventures to express a hope that he has successfully surmounted the difficulties of his undertaking. And if it be objected to the *Pickwick Papers* that they are a mere series of adventures, in which the scenes are ever changing, and the characters come and go like the men and women we encounter in the real world, he can only content himself with the reflection that they claim to be nothing else, and that the same objection has been made to the works of some of the greatest novelists in the English language.

The following pages have been written from time to time, almost as the periodical occasion arose. Having been written for the most part in the society of a very dear young friend who is now no more,\* they are connected in the author's mind at once with the happiest period of his life, and with its saddest and most severe affliction.

It is due to the gentleman whose designs accompany the letterpress\* to state that the interval has been so short between the production of each number in manuscript and its appearance in print that the greater portion of the illustrations have been executed by the artist from the author's mere verbal description of what he intended to write.

The almost unexampled kindness and favour with which these papers have been received by the public will be a never-failing source of gratifying and pleasant recollection while their author lives. He trusts that, throughout this book, no incident or expression occurs which could call a blush into the most delicate cheek, or wound the feelings of the most sensitive person. If any of his imperfect descriptions, while they afford amusement in the perusal, should induce only one reader to think better of his fellow men, and to look upon the brighter and more kindly side of human nature, he would indeed be proud and happy to have led to such a result.

## I

### *The Pickwickians*

The first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts into dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity and nice discrimination with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted.

12th May 1827. Joseph Smiggers, Esq., PVP MPC,\* presiding. The following resolutions unanimously agreed to.

That this Association has heard read, with feelings of unmingled satisfaction and unqualified approval, the paper communicated by Samuel Pickwick, Esq., GC MPC,\* entitled 'Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with Some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats',\* and that this Association does hereby return its warmest thanks to the said Samuel Pickwick, Esq., GC MPC, for the same.

That while this Association is deeply sensible of the advantages which must accrue to the cause of science from the production to which they have just adverted, no less than from the unwearied researches of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., GC MPC, in Hornsey, Highgate, Brixton and Camberwell, they cannot but entertain a lively sense of the inestimable benefits which must inevitably result from carrying the speculations of that learned man into a wider field, from extending his travels, and consequently enlarging his sphere of observation, to the advancement of knowledge and the diffusion of learning.\*

That, with the view just mentioned, this Association has taken into its serious consideration a proposal, emanating from the aforesaid Samuel Pickwick, Esq., GC MPC, and three other Pickwickians hereinafter named, for forming a new branch of United Pickwickians under the title of the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club.

That the said proposal has received the sanction and approval of this Association.

That the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club is therefore hereby constituted, and that Samuel Pickwick, Esq., GC MPC, Tracy Tupman, Esq., MPC, Augustus Snodgrass, Esq., MPC, and Nathaniel Winkle, Esq., MPC, are hereby nominated and appointed members of the same, and that they be requested to forward, from time to time, authenticated accounts of their journeys and investigations, of their observations of character and manners, and of the whole of their adventures, together with all tales and papers, to which local scenery or associations may give rise, to the Pickwick Club, stationed in London.

That this association cordially recognizes the principle of every member of the Corresponding Society defraying his own travelling expenses, and that it sees no objection whatever to the members of the said society pursuing their enquiries for any length of time they please, upon the same terms.

That the members of the aforesaid Corresponding Society be, and are, hereby informed that their proposal to pay the postage of their letters, and the carriage of their parcels, has been deliberated upon by this Association. That this Association considers such proposal worthy of the great minds from which it emanated, and that it hereby signifies its perfect acquiescence therein.

A casual observer, adds the secretary – to whose notes we are indebted for the following account – a casual observer might possibly have remarked nothing extraordinary in the bald head and circular spectacles which were intently turned towards his (the secretary's) face during the reading of the above resolutions. To those who knew that the gigantic brain of Pickwick was working beneath that forehead, and that the beaming eyes of Pickwick were twinkling behind those glasses, the sight was indeed an interesting one. There sat the man who had traced to their source the mighty ponds of Hampstead, and agitated the scientific world with his theory of tittlebats, as calm and unmoved as the deep waters of the one on a frosty day, or as a solitary specimen of the other in the inmost recesses of an earthen jar. And how much more interesting did the spectacle become when, starting into full life and animation, as a simultaneous call for "Pickwick" burst from his followers, that illustrious man slowly mounted into the Windsor chair, on which he had been previously seated, and addressed the club himself had founded. What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present! The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat-tails, and the other waving in air

to assist his glowing declamation, his elevated position revealing those tights and gaiters which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed them – if we may use the expression – inspired involuntary awe and respect; surrounded by the men who had volunteered to share the perils of his travels, and who were destined to participate in the glories of his discoveries. On his right hand sat Mr Tracy Tupman, the too-susceptible Tupman, who to the wisdom and experience of maturer years superadded the enthusiasm and ardour of a boy in the most interesting and pardonable of human weaknesses – love. Time and feeding had expanded that once romantic form: the black silk waistcoat had become more and more developed; inch by inch had the gold watch chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman’s vision; and gradually had the capacious chin encroached upon the borders of the white cravat, but the soul of Tupman had known no change – admiration of the fair sex was still its ruling passion. On the left of his great leader sat the poetic Snodgrass, and near him again the sporting Winkle, the former poetically enveloped in a mysterious blue cloak with a canine-skin collar, and the latter communicating additional lustre to a new green shooting coat, plaid neckerchief and closely fitted drabs.\*

Mr Pickwick’s oration upon this occasion, together with the debate thereon, is entered on the Transactions of the Club. Both bear a strong affinity to the discussions of other celebrated bodies, and, as it is always interesting to trace a resemblance between the proceedings of great men, we transfer the entry to these pages.

Mr Pickwick observed (says the secretary) that fame was dear to the heart of every man. Poetic fame was dear to the heart of his friend Snodgrass, the fame of conquest was equally dear to his friend Tupman, and the desire of earning fame in the sports of the field, the air and the water was uppermost in the breast of his friend Winkle. He (Mr Pickwick) would not deny that he was influenced by human passions and human feelings (cheers) – possibly by human weaknesses (loud cries of “No”) – but this he would say, that if ever the fire of self-importance broke out in his bosom the desire to benefit the human race in preference effectually quenched it. The praise of mankind was his Swing – philanthropy was his insurance office.\* (Vehement cheering.) He had felt some pride – he acknowledged it freely, and let his enemies make the most of it – he had felt some pride when he presented his tittlebatian theory to the world; it might be celebrated or it might not. (A cry of “It is”, and great cheering.) He would take the assertion of that honourable Pickwickian whose voice he had lust heard – it was



celebrated – but if the fame of that treatise were to extend to the farthest confines of the known world, the pride with which he should reflect on the authorship of that production would be as nothing compared with the pride with which he looked around him, on this, the proudest moment of his existence. (Cheers.) He was a humble individual. (No, no.) Still he could not but feel that they had selected him for a service of great honour, and of some danger. Travelling was in a troubled state, and the minds of coachmen were unsettled. Let them look abroad, and contemplate the scenes which were enacting around them. Stagecoaches were upsetting in all directions, horses were bolting, boats were overturning and boilers were bursting. (Cheers – a voice: “No.”) No! (Cheers.) Let that honourable Pickwickian who cried “No” so loudly come forward and deny it, if he could. (Cheers.) Who was it that cried “No”? (Enthusiastic cheering.) Was it some vain and disappointed man – he would not say haberdasher (loud cheers) – who, jealous of the praise which had been – perhaps undeservedly – bestowed on his (Mr Pickwick’s) researches, and smarting under the censure which had been heaped upon his own feeble attempts at rivalry, now took this vile and calumnious mode of—

MR BLOTTON (of Aldgate) rose to order. Did the honourable Pickwickian allude to him? (Cries of “Order”, “Chair”, “Yes”, “No”, “Go on”, “Leave off”, etc.)

MR PICKWICK would not put up to be put down by clamour. He *had* alluded to the honourable gentleman. (Great excitement.)

MR BLOTTON would only say then that he repelled the hon. gent’s false and scurrilous accusation with profound contempt. (Great cheering.) The hon. gent. was a humbug. (Immense confusion, and loud cries of “Chair” and “Order”.)

MR A. SNODGRASS rose to order. He threw himself upon the chair. (Hear.) He wished to know whether this disgraceful contest between two members of that club should be allowed to continue. (Hear, hear.)

The CHAIRMAN was quite sure the hon. Pickwickian would withdraw the expression he had just made use of.

MR BLOTTON, with all possible respect for the chair, was quite sure he would not.

The CHAIRMAN felt it his imperative duty to demand of the honourable gentleman whether he had used the expression which had just escaped him in a common sense.

MR BLOTTON had no hesitation in saying, that he had not – he had used the word in its Pickwickian sense.\* (Hear, hear.) He was bound to

acknowledge that, personally, he entertained the highest regard and esteem for the honourable gentleman – he had merely considered him a humbug in a Pickwickian point of view. (Hear, hear.)

Mr Pickwick felt much gratified by the fair, candid and full explanation of his honourable friend. He begged it to be at once understood that his own observations had been merely intended to bear a Pickwickian construction. (Cheers.)

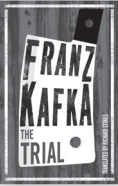
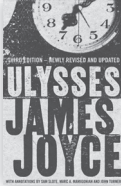
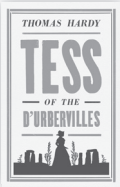
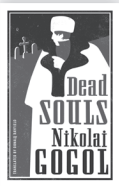
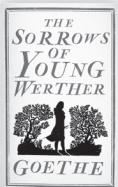
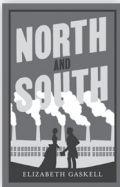
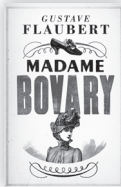
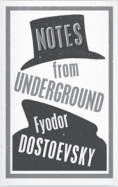
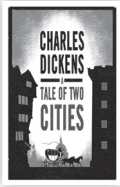
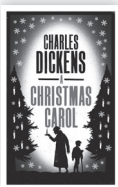
Here the entry terminates, as we have no doubt the debate did also, after arriving at such a highly satisfactory and intelligible point. We have no official statement of the facts which the reader will find recorded in the next chapter, but they have been carefully collated from letters and other MS authorities, so unquestionably genuine as to justify their narration in a connected form.

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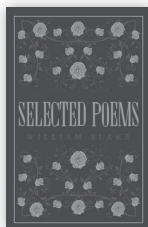
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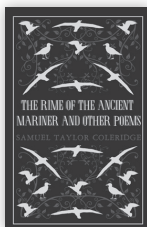


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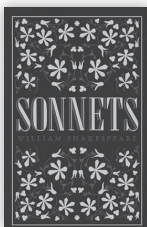
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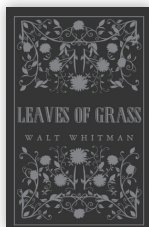
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