Mr. | Dickens' Moral Services to Literature.

We wish it were possible to do real justice to those of our men of genius who still remain among us with less of exaggeration, and we might almost say caricature, that seems to characterize those feasts which we give in their bonor. Few of Mr. Dickens heartlest, if discriminating. admirers could have felt much pleasure in read-ing the report of the Liverpool banquest, and of-Lord Dufferin's very able and eloquent but unmodulated panygeric. No one can help feeling that in all respects but one, namely, that Mr. Dickens fortunately is still with us, speeches of that kind are much more 'like a funeral sermon than truth." The maxim 'De mortuis nil nisi conum" is only true of men of literature while the grave is still green above them; "De presen-tibus nil nisi bonum" would be not only true, but much less the truth;-"De presentibus nil nisi optimum" would be nearer the mark. The panegyrists of such really great writers as Mr. Dickis are apt to speak as if the lights could be sufficiently appreciated without the shadows. and by so doing seem to us to pay but a poor compliment to the literary insight of an author who can swallow so much glaring intellectual culogy without being re-volted by its singular uniformity of tone and deficiency in delicacy of appreciation, 'We do not blame Lord Dufferin or any other speaker at the Liverpool banquet for this; the fault lies with our false general tone of social morality on such matters, which always expects and demands oral compliment to be undiluted and broad, and therefore entirely deficient in artistic flavor. Still it is simply the fact that any man knowing Mr. Dickens' works would find no sort of reflection of their specific characteristics in such speeches as those of the Liverpool banquet. He would learn only the raw public opinion of Mr. Dickens' literary merits; and the public opinion of literary merits, though it is almost sure to have something of substantial foundation, is also pretty sure to be shapeless and rague and a little coarse. We are not going now to attempt any general

estimate of that genius, but on one point, on

which Lord Dufferin dilated, the great moral services Mr. Dickens' works have rendered to England and all the English-speaking races, we should like to define his true position; and we do not think it will lose-indeed, we believe it will gain-by a little discrimination and preeision, in place of that very general and compre-hensive panegyric that he has rendered us "brighter and more gladsome by the reproduction and distribution of that kindly spirit of domestic affection which has been the main pur-port of his teaching," and that he has made us wiser and better, more loving and more human, taught us the duty of gayety and the religion of mirth, while yet the lambent play of his wit, humor, and fancy has only revealed more distinetly the depths of passion in his nature, as the laughter of the sea along its thousand shining shores is but another expression of those immeasurable forces which lie latent in its boson." That is a fine image of Lord Dufferin's, but to our apprehension a singularly misleading one. No appreciate more highly the wonderful and inex-haustible humor of Mr. Dickens' creations than we do. We doubt if there ever were so great a humorist in the world before, Aristophanes and Shakespeare not excepted. But to speak of Mr. Dickens' humor as only revealing more distinctly the depths of passion in his nature, seems to us a singular misunderstanding of his genius. There is passion—no doubt deep passion—in the greatest of his efforts at imaginative portraiture, the picture of Nancy in "Oliver Twist;" some passion in her profound pity for the child, a vast deal in the mixture of love and terror which she feels for Sykes. There is very real and true pathos in the death of little Paul Dombey and one or two other pictures of a like kind-not, we think, in the picture of little Nell, which, with great deference to Lord Dufferin, we cannot help regarding as one of Mr. Dickens' many overstrained and consciously indulged and petted bits of sentimentalism. constantly passing the verge of maudlin emotionalism. But take his great and wonderfully productive genius all in all, and we scarcely know any genius approaching his in richness so utterly devoid of passion, so almost certain to be theatrical and falsetto in its tone whenever it attempts passion. And as for saying that Mr. Dickens' humor is another aspect. an indirect expression-of his passion it is impossible, in our minds, to conceive a more erroneous analysis. That is often true of other humorists, as of Carlyle's humor almost invariably, and often of Thackeray's, for both of these great writers in their highest touches of humor seem to register the highest wave of scorn or pity in their nature. But run over Dickens' greatest feats of humor, Mrs. Gamp's richest idioms, Elijah Pogram's eloquence, Putnam Smif's epical alligator, the transcendental idides' dissertations on the sublime, Mr. Weller, senior's, letter on the Shepherd, Mr. Lillyvick's and Miss Snovellicci's amour, Miss Squeers' spite, the Dodger's relations to Charley Bates, Noah Claypole's genius for "the kinchin' lay," Mr. Bumble's designs on the matron of the work-house, Mr. Toots' waistcoats, Mr. Feeder, B. A.'s, conversation with the dancing-master on the political economy of raw materials, Captain Cuttle's note-book, Peggotty's buttons, Traddles' 'dear girl.' Mrs. R. Wilfer's four copperplate engravers, Silas Wegg's poetry, Mr. Venus' hopeless love—and can you say of one of them that the humor, rich and inimitable as it is, is the index of any deep passion lying beneath? The truth about Mr. Dickens seems to as to be that, looking to the greatness of his achievements as a humorist, it is singular how very little of passion there is in him. There is

the whole, healthy and good we heartily believe. It has been certainly profoundly humane. The hatred of cruelty diffused through the wonderful picture of Dotheboys' Hall is alone sufficient to earn him the gratitude of all English-speaking peoples. The feeling expressed towards a different kind of cruelty, that of Steerforth the seducer, in "David Copperficid," is equally sineere, though less effective. And the hatred of cruelty is not more keen than the contempt for hypocrisy in the narrower sense-such hypocrisy as Pecksniff's, or even mere pompous humbug like Podsnap's—but here the humorist not unfrequently swallows up the moralist, and his delight in the grand incoherency of human nature often overpowers his scorn for falsehood. Still, the last moral service we should think of ascribing to Dickens' literary influence would be the diffusion of a genuine reverence for absolute sincerity and realism. The great writer himself falls into the most mawkish and unreal senti-mentalism. Half the geniality which is supposed to be Mr. Dickens' great merit is the most vulgar good-humor of temperament-a strong disposition to approve the distribution of punch and plum-pudding, slap men heartily on the back, and kiss pretty women behind doors. Mr. Wardle in Pickwick," and to a considerable extent Mr. Pickwick himself, represents the sort of generosity which is elevated into a gospel in the "Christmas Tales," the "Christmas Carol," and the others. The melodrama of Scrooge's couversion from miserliness to generosity contains a thoroughly vulgar and poor moral. the gospel of genfality is better than the caressing sort of praise lavished on spoony young men

the fountain in the Temple, is in love with John Westlake, and makes a rumpsteak pie with some definess. Mr. Dickens has brought people

to think that there is a sort of plety in being gushing and maudlin, and this is anything but a

useful contribution to the morality of the age.

His picture of the domestic affections, which

Lord Dufferin calls the strong point of his teach-

ing, seems to us very defective in simplicity and

more passion in Charles Lamb, there is infinitely more passion in Dr. Johnson, than in Dickens. It is true that his melodramatic efforts are often

very effectively worked up—that the murder of Mr. Tigg in "Martin Chuzzlewit," for instance, and the craven panic of Jonas Chuzzlewit, show

considerable power, but it is anything but the

power of true passion; it is the power of melo-drama consciously adding stroke after stroke to

That Dickens' moral influence has been, on

the desired effect.

reserve. It is not really English, and tends to modify English family feeling in the direction of theatric tenderness and an impulsiveness wholly wanting in self-control.

In spie word, it seems to us that Mr. Dickens' highest and lowest moral influences arise from the same cause, his wonderful genius for caricature. All vices arising from simple motives he makes contemptible and bideous—avarice, makes contemptible and hadcous—avarice, cruelty, selfishness, hypocrisy, especially reli-gious hypocrisy. But then he has a great tendency to make the corresponding virtues ludierous too by his over-colored sentiment. brothers Cheeryble always seem to be rubbing their hands from intense brotherly love; the selfabandonment of Tom Pinch is grotesque; the elaborate self-disguise of Mr. Boffin as a miser in order to warn Bella Wilfer of her danger, is an insult to both the reason and conscience of the reader; and Mr. Dickens' saints, like that Agnes in "David Copperfield" who insists on pointing upwards, are invariably detestable. His morality concentrates itself on the two strong points we have named, a profound horror of cruelty and a profound contempt for humbug; but Mr. Dickens has no fine perception for the inward shades of humbug—relaxed and cosseted

His greatest service to English literature will, after all, be not his high morality, which is altogether wanting in delicacy of insight, but in the omplete harmleseness and purity of the immeasurable humor into which he moulds his enormous stores of acute observation. Almost all creative humorists tend to the impure-like Swift and Smollett, even Fielding. On the other hand, there are plenty of humerists who are not creative, who take the humor out of themselves and only apply it to what passes, like Charles Lamb and Sydney Smith. But Dickens uses his unlimited powers of observation to create for himself original fields of hi mor, and crowds grotesque and claborate detail around the most happy conceptions, without ever being attracted for a moment towards any prurient or unhealthy field of laughter. Thus as by far the most popular and amusing of all English writers, he provides unlimited food for a great people without infusing any really dan-gerous poison into it. In this way, doubtless, he has done us a service which can scarcely be over-estimated. Nor do we see that his fame is likely to gain by making for him any false claim on our gratitude. His true claim, if correctly stated, scarcely can be over-stated; but still it is very easily misstated, and is usually grossly misstated, as it seems to us, in those solemn acts of public idolatry by which we are ticulately endeavoring to express our pride in his fame and our ambition for its permanence.

RENAN ON EDUCATION. Lecture at the Theatre du Prince Imperial in Paris.

Paris (April 21) Correspondence London Times. I have more than once noticed the attractions at the Theatre du Prince Imperial, of the lectures, or conferences, as they are called, of popu-lar professors or writers. There was one annonneed for Saturday last by M. Renan, on "The State and the Family." The theatre is capable of holding 2500 persons, and on this occasion it was nearly full. The prices of admission ranged from five france to ten sous. About onetenth of the audience were women, and among the occupants of the higher benches of the amphitheatre were a good many men in blouses. The meeting was convoked by the Society for the Professional Education and Instruction of Women. The chair was taken by M. Car-not, for a short time Minister of Public Instruction under the Republic, and son of the celebrated Conventionist and member of the Committee of Public Safety, who used to be called 'the organizer of victory." On his entrance into the hall on Saturday evening, M. Renan was accompanied by M. Carnot, M. Ernest Picard (both deputies for Paris), and others, who were received with clapping of hands and loud cheers. The audience were evidently prepared to applaud to the echo all that M. Renan said, if they could only hear it. Unfortunately, scarcely a sentence was audfible, even to those in the immediate neighborhood of the lecturer. He sat at a table in front of the stage, and occasionally endeavored to make up for the insufficiency of as voice by the vehemence of his gesticulations. Long before the lecture was over the remoter seats had been evacuated by their occupants. very few persons among the audience really eard what M. Renan said, the address is lished at full length in the Journal des Debats, to which he has for a long time been a con-It fills nearly six columns of paper. I extract one or two passages. After describing the system of instruction as practised y the republics of ancient Greece and in the dille ages, coming down to modern times, he

"I will not recount the struggles which fol-

lowed, and which belong entirely to contemporaneous history; it is sufficient to say that a sort of concordat seems to be established between those who wish the State to be the sole instructor and those who wish that instruction should be entirely left to private action. In this new system the State takes the part of principal promoter of studies. It makes pecuniary sacrifices for that object, and so do the towns. Finally, society occupies itself actively in a matter which t deems to be of superior interest to it, but it orces no one. It does not punish the father who is guilty of not giving an education to his son. The father who does not wish for the schools of the State has others at his choice. I do not examine whether that ideal is carried out in practice, or whether the State carries into the direction of public instruction the liberal and solid spirit requisite in such matters. I occupy myself with the general system; and this system, for my part, I adopt as reconciling well enough, if properly practised, the rights of the family with the rights of the State. It is quite clear that a system of education analogous to that of Greek antiquity, uniform, obligatory on all, removing the child from his family, sub-jecting him to a discipline which may wound the conscience of the father-such a system, far from being a machinery of education, would be sure to produce brutish ignorance and stupidity. The conceptions of the time of the revolution (excepting Talleyrand s plan), and especially the University of Napoleon I, were marked in this respect by an incurable defect. Read the reguation of studies in 1802 and you will find the yords:-"All that is relative to meals, to regula tions, to exercise, and to sleep shall be companies. In each Lyceum there shall be library containing 1500 volumes. All the libraries shall contain the same works, and no other work can be placed in them without the authorization of the Minister of the Interior." And this is what M. Thiers calls "the finest work, perhaps, of the reign of Napoleon I. I take the liberty of not being of his opinion. That uniformity of education, that official spirit, would be the in-tellectual death of the ration. No; such is by no neans our ideal. The State should maintain level, and not impose it. Even on the question whether the State shall make a certain minimum of instruction obligatory, I hesitate. That there is a moral obligation on a father to give his son necessary instruction, that instruction which makes the man, is too evident to be insisted upon. But I hesitate when asked whether this obligation should be made a law, and the neglect of it punishable. It a father or a mother will take upon themselves to give or cause to be given at home to their child an education which appears have to their child an education which appears best to them, how can it be ascertained that this education is equivalent to that which is given in a primary school? Must the child undergo an examination? It is this examination which disquiets me. Who is to be the examiner? And on what sub-ject is it to take place? Certainly, if practica persons assure me that a law of the kind is necessary to remove this load of ignorance which crushes us, I would consent to it; but I do not believe such to be the case. It is not the same, and women simply because they are spoony, in those multitudinous passages tending to excite nausea, of which the type is the blessing pronounced over Ruth Pinch because she frequents perhaps, with gratuitous primary instruction; that is desirable; and it is necessary that the father who does not give instruction to his son should be held inexcusable. Let the public blame fall upon him, well and good; but I want nothing more. The real sanction in this, as in all things of moral order, is to allow a strong public opinion to be freely formed against mis-

deeds which the law can never reach."
In conclusion, M. Renan said:--- 'In all things

let us revert to the traditions which an enlight-

ened Christianity and a sound philosophy agree in teaching us. The most glorious characteristic of France is that she knows better than any other nation how to perceive her defects and to criticize herself. In this we resemble Athens, where intelligent men passed their time in speaking ill of their own city and exalting the institu-tions of Sparta. Let us believe that we badly continue the brilliant and intellectual society of the two last centuries by being only frivolous. We do but little honor to our ancestors by imi-tating them only in their defects. Let us avoid taking them only in their defects. Let us avoid pushing to an extreme the dangerous game of using without remission the living forces of the country; in acting like the Arab horsemen, who urge their horses do the gallop up to the very edge of the precipice, believing they can at any moment stop them. The world is not maintained but by virtue; and ten just men often obtain pardon for a whole society that is cupable. Selfishness and the greedy search after riches and enjoyment can found nothing. Let each one, then, do his duty. Each one in his situation in life is the guardian of a tradition which concerns the continuation of the divine work here below. Strange, indeed, is the situation of the man placed between the imperious dictates of conscience and the uncertainties of a destiny which Providence has been pleased to cover with a veil. Let us listen to conscience, and believe it. If, which God forbid! duty be a snare laid for us by a deceiving genius, it is noble to have been deceived. it is no such thing; and for my part I hold the truths of natural religion as certain, after their manner, as those of the material world. Such is the faith that saves; the faith which makes us regard otherwise than a foolish part of please few days which we pass on this earth-th faith which assures us that all is not vain in the noble aspirations of our heart; the faith strengthens us, and which, when now and then clouds gather in the horizon, shows us beyon the storm happy regions where humanking drying up their tears, will be one day consoled for their sufferings."

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City of Antwerp, Saturday, May 25, at 5 A. M.
City of Antwerp, Saturday, May 25, at 5 A. M.
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