THE NOBLE SAVAGE.

To come to the point at once, I beg to say that I have not the least belief in the Noble Savage. I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition. His calling rum fire-water, and me a pale face, wholly fail to reconcile me to him. I don't care what he calls me. I call him a savage, and I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilised off the face of the earth. I think a mere gent (which I take to be the lowest form of civilisation) better than a howling, whistling, chucking, stamping, jumping, tearing savage. It is all one to me, whether he sticks a fishbone through his visage, or bits of trees through the lobes of his ears, or birds' feathers in his head; whether he flattens his hair between two boards, or spreads his nose over the breadth of his face, or drags his lower lip down by great weights, or blackens his teeth, or knocks them out, or paints one cheek red and the other blue, or tattoos himself, or oils himself, or rubs his body with fat, or crimps it with knives. Yielding to whichever of these agreeable eccentricities, he is a savage— cruel, false, thievish, murderous; addicted more or less to grease, entrails, and beastly customs; a wild animal with the questionable gift of boasting; a conceited, tiresome, bloodthirsty, monotonous humbug.

Yet it is extraordinary to observe how some people will talk about him, as they talk about the good old times; how they will regret his disappearance, in the course of this world's development, from such and such lands where his absence is a blessed relief and an indispensable preparation for the sowing of the very first seeds of any influence that can exalt humanity; how, even with the evidence of himself before them, they will either be determined to believe, or will suffer themselves to be persuaded into believing, that he is something which their five senses tell them he is not.

There was Mr. Catlin, some few years ago, with his Ojibbeway Indians. Mr. Catlin was an energetic earnest man, who had lived among more tribes of Indians than I need reckon up here, and who had written a picturesque and glowing book about them. With his party of Indians squatting and spitting on the table before him, or dancing their miserable jigs after their own dreary manner, he called, in all good faith, upon his civilised audience to take notice of their symmetry and grace, their perfect limbs, and the exquisite expression of their pantomime; and his civilised audience, in all good faith, complied and admired. Whereas, as mere animals, they were wretched creatures, very low in the scale and very poorly formed; and as men and women possessing any power of truthful dramatic expression by means of action, they were no better than the chorus at an Italian Opera in England—and would have been worse if such a thing were possible.

Mine are no new views of the noble savage. The greatest writers on natural history found him out long ago. BUFFON knew what he was, and showed why he is the sulky tyrant that he is to his women, and how it happens (Heaven be praised!) that his race is spare in numbers. For evidence of the quality of his moral nature, pass himself for a moment and refer to his "faithful dog." Has he ever improved a dog, or attached a dog, since his nobility first ran wild in woods, and was brought down (at a very long shot) by POPE? Or does the animal that is the friend of man, always degenerate in his low society?

It is not the miserable nature of the noble savage that is the new thing; it is the whimpering over him with maudlin admiration, and the affecting to regret him, and the drawing of any comparison of advantage between the blemishes of civilisation and the tenor of his swinish life. There may have been a change now and then in those diseased absurdities, but there is none in him.

Think of the Bushmen. Think of the two men and the two women who have been exhibited about England for some years. Are the major-
ity of persons—who remember the horrid little leader of that party in his festering bundle of hides, with his filth and his antipathy to water, and his straddled legs, and his odious eyes shaded by his brutal hand, and his cry of "Qu-u-uu-aaa!" (Bosjesman for something desperately insulting I have no doubt)—conscious of an affectionate yearning towards that noble savage, or is it idiosyncratic in me to abhor, detest, abominate, and abjure him? I have no reserve on this subject, and will frankly state that, setting aside that stage of the entertainment when

{Page 338 in the original}

he counterfeited the death of some creature he had shot, by laying his head on his hand and shaking his left leg—at which time I think it would have been justifiable homicide to slay him—I have never seen that group sleeping, smoking, and expectorating round their brazier, but I have sincerely desired that something might happen to the charcoal smouldering therein, which would cause the immediate suffocation of the whole of the noble strangers.

There is at present a party of Zulu Kaffirs exhibiting at the St. George's Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, London. These noble savages are represented in a most agreeable manner; they are seen in an elegant theatre, fitted with appropriate scenery of great beauty, and they are described in a very sensible and unpretending lecture, delivered with a modesty which is quite a pattern to all similar exponents. Though extremely ugly, they are much better shaped than such of their predecessors as I have referred to; and they are rather picturesque to the eye, though far from odoriferous to the nose. What a visitor left to his own interpretations and imaginations might suppose these noblemen to be about, when they give vent to that pantomimic expression which is quite settled to be the natural gift of the noble savage, I cannot possibly conceive; for it is so much too luminous for my personal civilisation that it conveys no idea to my mind beyond a general stamping, ramping, and raving, remarkable (as everything in savage life is) for its dire uniformity. But let us—with the interpreter's assistance, of which I for one stand so much in need—see what the noble savage does in Zulu Kaffirland.

The noble savage sets a king to reign over him, to whom he submits his life and limbs without a murmur or question, and whose whole life is passed chin deep in a lake of blood; but who, after killing incessantly, is in his turn killed by his relations and friends, the moment a gray hair appears on his head. All the noble savage's wars with his fellow-savages (and he takes no pleasure in anything else) are wars of extermination—which is the best thing I know of him, and the most comfortable to my mind when I look at him. He has no moral feelings of any kind, sort, or description; and his "mission" may be summed up as simply diabolical.

The ceremonies with which he faintly diversifies his life are, of course, of a kindred nature. If he wants a wife he appears before the kannel of the gentleman whom he has selected for his father-in-law, attended by a party of male friends of a very strong avor, who screech and whistle and stamp an offer of so many cows for the young lady's hand. The chosen father-in-law also supported by a high-flavored party of male friends—screeches, whistles, and yells (being seated on the ground, he can't stamp) that there never was such a daughter in the market as his daughter, and that he must have six more cows. The son-in-law and his select circle of backers, screech, whistle, stamp, and yell in reply, that they will give three more cows. The father-in-law (an old deluder, overpaid at the beginning) accepts four, and rises to bind the bargain. The whole party, the young lady included, then falling into epileptic convulsions, and screeching, whistling, stamping, and yelling together—and nobody taking any notice of the young lady (whose charms are not to be thought of without a shudder)—the noble savage is con-
considered married, and his friends make demoniacal leaps at him by way of congratulation.

When the noble savage finds himself a little unwell, and mentions the circumstance to his friends, it is immediately perceived that he is under the influence of witchcraft. A learned personage, called an Imyanger or Witch Doctor, is immediately sent for to Nooker the Um targartie, or smell out the witch. The male inhabitants of the kraal being seated on the ground, the learned doctor, got up like a grizzly bear, appears, and administers a dance of a most terrific nature, during the exhibition of which remedy he incessantly gnashes his teeth, and howls:— "I am the original physician to Nooker the Um targartie. Yow yow yow! No connexion with any other establishment. Till till till! All other Um targarties are feigned Um targarties, Boroo Boroo! but I perceive here a genuine and real Um targartie, Hoosh Hoosh Hoosh! in whose blood I, the original Imyanger and Nookerer, Blizzerum Boo! will wash these bear's claws of mine. O yow yow yow! " All this time the learned physician is looking out among the attentive faces for some unfortunate man who owes him a cow, or who has given him any small offence, or against whom, without offence, he has conceived a spite. Him he never fails to Nooker as the Um targartie, and he is instantly killed. In the absence of such an individual, the usual practice is to Nooker the quietest and most gentlemanly person in company. But the nooking is invariably followed on the spot by the butchering.

Some of the noble savages in whom Mr. Catlin was so strongly interested, and the diminution of whose numbers, by rum and small-pox, greatly affected him, had a custom not unlike this, though much more appalling and disgusting in its odious details.

The women being at work in the fields, hoeing the Indian corn, and the noble savage being asleep in the shade, the chief has sometimes the condescension to come forth, and lighten the labor by looking at it. On these occasions he seats himself in his own savage chair, and is attended by his shield-bearer: who holds over his head a shield of cowhide— in shape like an immense muscle shell—fearfully and wonderfully, after the manner of a theatrical supernumerary. But lest the great man should forget his greatness in the contemplation of the humble works of

{Page 339 in the original}

agriculture, there suddenly rushes in a poet, retained for the purpose, called a Praisar. This literary gentleman wears a leopard's head over his own. and a dress of tiger's-tails; he has the appearance of having come express on his hind legs from the Zoological Gardens; and he incontinently strikes up the chief's praises, plunging and tearing all the while. There is a frantic wickedness in this brute's manner of worrying the air, and gnashing out "Oh what a delightful chief he is! O what a delicious quantity of blood he sheds! O how majestically he laps it up! O how charmingly cruel he is! O how he tears the flesh of his enemies and crunches the bones! O how like the tiger and the leopard and the wolf and the bear he is! O, row row row row, how fond I am of him!"—which might tempt the Society of Friends to charge at a hand-gallop into the Swartz-Kop location and exterminate the whole kraal.

When war is afoot among the noble savages— which is always— the chief holds a council to ascertain whether it is the opinion of his brothers and friends in general that the enemy shall be exterminated. On this occasion, after the performance of an Umsebeuza, or war song,— which is exactly like all the other songs— the chief makes a speech to his brothers and friends, arranged in single file. No particular order is observed during the delivery of this address, but every gentleman who finds himself excited by the subject, instead of crying "Hear, hear! " as is the custom with us, darts from the rank
and tramples out the life, or crushes the skull, or mashes the face, or scoops out the eyes, or breaks the limbs, or performs a whirlwind of atrocities on the body, of an imaginary enemy. Several gentlemen becoming thus excited at once, and pounding away without the least regard to the orator, that illustrious person is rather in the position of an orator in an Irish House of Commons. But, several of these scenes of savage life bear a strong generic resemblance to an Irish election, and I think would be extremely well received and understood at Cork.

In all these ceremonies the noble savage holds forth to the utmost possible extent about himself; from which (to turn him to some civilized account) we may learn, I think, that as Egotism is one of the most offensive and contemptible littlenesses a civilized man can exhibit, so it is really incompatible with the interchange of ideas; inasmuch as if we all talked about ourselves we should soon have no listeners, and must be all yelling and screeching at once on our own separate accounts: making society hideous. It is my opinion that if we retained in us anything of the noble savage, we could not get rid of it too soon. But the fact is clearly otherwise. Upon the wife and dowry question, substituting coin for cows, we have assuredly nothing of the Zulu Kaffir left. The endurance of despotism is one great distinguishing mark of a savage always. The improving world has quite got the better of that too. In like manner, Paris is a civilized city, and the Théâtre Français a highly civilized theatre; and we shall never hear, and never have heard in these later days (of course) of the Praiser there. No, no, civilized poets have better work to do. As to Nookering Umtargarties, there are no pretended Umtargarties in Europe, and no European Powers to Nooker them; that would be mere spymdom, subornation, small malice, superstition, and false pretence. And as to private Umtargarties, are we not in the year eighteen hundred and fifty-three, with spirits rapping at our doors?

To conclude as I began. My position is, that if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense. We have no greater justification for being cruel to the miserable object, than for being cruel to a WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE or an ISAAC NEWTON; but he passes away before an immeasurably better and higher power than ever ran wild in any earthly woods, and the world will be all the better when his place knows him no more.
Article:  ‘The Noble Savage’ by Charles Dickens

Dickens was provoked into writing this article by the renewed public enthusiasm for the eighteenth-century concept of 'the noble savage', of a 'purer' moral nature to be found in dark-skinned races who had not been 'corrupted' by civilisation. This enthusiasm was given a focus by the latest show presenting native Africans to be staged in London, a party of 'Zulu Kaffirs' brought over by A. T. Caldecott, a merchant from Natal, which had been annexed to Cape Colony by the British in 1843. The troupe consisting of eleven men, one woman and a child, appeared at the fashionable St George's Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, and performed scenes illustrative of daily life in their native environment enlivened with 'characteristic dances'. The Times announced the event (18 May 1853) as 'a novel and most interesting exhibition with appropriate scenery and moving panorama painted expressly by Mr Charles Marshall'.

Berth Lindfors in his 'Charles Dickens and the Zulus', in M. van Wyk Smith and D. MacLennan (eds), Olive Schreiner and After: Essays on South African Literature (David Philip, Cape Town, 1983), notes that Caldecott's son 'served as interpreter and master of ceremonies, lecturing briefly on Zulu customs and traditions before they were enacted on the stage'. Caldecott Junior also wrote a pamphlet called Descriptive History of the Zulu Kaffirs, Their Customs and Country, sold during the performances, and Lindfors shows that Dickens's grotesque accounts of the scenes enacted by the Zulus were closely based on the descriptions given in this document. The show was a huge success, with crowds flocking to the Gallery twice daily to see the Zulus perform their repertoire (see further the essay by Lindfors already cited and R. D. Altick, The Shows of London [1978], pp. 282-3). Punch (23 July 1853) ridiculed the 'Belles from Belgravia 'who came to gush over the Kaffirs' dancing:

Their stampings and kickings are done with such grace, That ladies of title e'en make the confession That they in the Savage - nobility trace!

Dickens was always exasperated when preoccupation with black slaves in America or exotic 'savages' from either America or Africa deflected the public's attention from the desperate poor in the slums of London and other great cities. When he actually met 'one Pitchlynn, a chief of the Choctaw tribe of Indians' on an American steamboat in 1842, he was clearly impressed, finding him 'as stately and complete a gentleman of Nature's making, as ever I beheld' (American Notes, Ch. 12), but it was Pitchlynn's 'remarkably handsome' person and apparently 'natural' ability to comport himself like an English gentleman ('another kind of being' from his white American fellow-passengers) that impressed Dickens. He seems, however, to have taken a melancholy satisfaction in Pitchlynn's belief that 'unless they [the Indians] tried to assimilate themselves to their conquerors, they must be swept away before the strides of civilised society'. Dickens had in his library George Catlin's Letters on...North American Indians (1842), but hardly shared Catlin's belief in the evident 'simplicity and loftiness' of man's nature when 'unrestrained and unfettered' by civilisation (ibid., p. 2). Whether it was the Ojibwa Indians exhibited in London by Catlin and Rankin during 1843-4, or what Dickens called 'the grim, stunted, abject Bush-people', shown in 1847 and recalled here, who were captivating London audiences, all such races were, when in their native state, in Dickens's view - and in the view of many of his contemporaries - uniformly inferior and ignoble specimens of humanity (see "The Amusements of the People [II]", HW, Vol. I, 13 April 1850, p. 58) Vol. 2 of [the Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism], pp. 70-1 and 196, and his comments on the Inuit, "The Lost Arctic Voyagers", HW, Vol. X, 2 December 1854]). When revolving ideas for his projected new journal (HW) in October 1849, he contemplated 'A history of Savages, showing the singular respects in which all savages are
like each other; and those in which civilised men, under circumstances of difficulty, soonest become like savages' (Pilgrim, Vol. V, p. 622). And in the figure of Mrs Jellyby in Bleak House (1852-3) he had memorably satirised those who were more concerned with improving life for dwellers on 'the left bank of the Niger' than with tackling the poverty on their own doorsteps. Characteristically, Dickens rounds on his European readers at the end of the piece (compare the end of 'The Chinese Junk' [in the Examiner], Vol. 2 of [the Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism], pp. 98-102) with sardonic allusions to London society's marriage market, the eulogies poured out in praise of Napoleon III both before and after he had been proclaimed Emperor of France (December 1852), and the current craze for spiritualist seances and table-rapping (see 'Well-Authenticated Rappings', [HW, Vol. XVII, 20 February 1858]).

Literary allusions
[Title]: John Dryden, Conquest of Granada (1670), Part 2, Act 1, Sc. 1 ('When wild in woods the noble savage ran'): Dickens alludes to this line twice during the course of the essay; 'BUFFON knew what he was...': see Buffon's Natural History (1797), Vol 4, pp. 87 ('the savages of hot countries...are tyrannical to their women, beyond any other classes of men') and 312 ('the multiplication of the human species depends more on society than nature'); 'his faithful dog': Pope, An Essay on Man, Epistle 1, 1. 112 (final line in a passage about 'the poor Indian whom 'simple Nature' has taught to believe in an afterlife in which 'his faithful dog shall bear him company'); 'fearfully and wonderfully': Psalm 139, V. 14; 'when his place knows him no more': Psalm 103, V. 16.

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Author(s):
- Charles Dickens


In the partnership agreement under which H.W. was set up, Dickens was, with the publishers Bradbury & Evans, with Forster and with Wills, one of the joint proprietors; he held an interest of one-half share. On Forster's relinquishing his one-eighth share in 1856, Dickens divided that one-eighth between himself and Wills. Dickens's salary as editor was £500 a year; he was to
receive payment also for what he wrote in the periodical (Lehmann, ed., Charles Dickens As Editor, pp. 19, 195-97). (In the Office Book, Wills did not record the payments made or credited to Dickens for his H.W. writings.)

Dickens set the editorial policy of H.W. and supervised its being carried out. He had, in Wills, a capable and efficient subeditor on whose judgment he came more and more to rely; yet, especially in the early years of H.W., he concerned himself with every detail of its production. Before the first number appeared, he wrote to friends and acquaintances asking them to become contributors. He read - especially during the early years of H.W. - hundreds of MSS, some submitted directly to him, others referred to him by Wills for final acceptance or rejection. When possible, he conferred weekly, sometimes more often, with Wills on editorial matters. When personal conference was not possible, he sent his instructions and suggestions by letter - instructions and suggestions ranging from matters of editorial policy to matters of typography and punctuation. He revised - sometimes almost entirely rewrote - contributed papers; he read proofs - sometimes revises of proofs that he had in the first place altered or emended. He suggested subjects for articles; he sent to the office materials to serve as the basis for articles. On occasion, he made excursions in company with a staff member to gather material for articles. He wrote much for the early volumes of H.W., comparatively little for the later volumes. Morley's writings in the periodical exceeded his by some 300 pages. Nevertheless, as he stated when he brought H.W. to a close ("A Last Household Word"), his name had been, "as his pen and himself" had been, "inseparable from the Publication" throughout its entire existence.

Most of Dickens's writings in H.W., like almost all contributions of other writers, appeared anonymously. Only Hard Times, the one of his novels that he serialized in the periodical, carried with the title of the work in each installment the ascription "BY CHARLES DICKENS." Four weeks before the serialization of that book began, it was announced: "NEW TALE by Mr. CHARLES DICKENS"; thereafter, each week's H.W. number announced the portion of Hard Times by Charles Dickens that was to appear the following week; before the appearance of the final chapters, as also after the completion of the serialization, H.W. published advertisements for the novel in book form as a Bradbury & Evans publication. A Child's History of England, Dickens's only other extended work in H.W., appeared in the various installments without Dickens's name after the title, but, during the serialization, advertisements in H.W. for the History in book form as a Bradbury & Evans publication stated Dickens's authorship.

Of various other of his H.W. writings Dickens also made his authorship known. "Personal," his statement concerning the "domestic trouble," bore his name as signature. "Curious Misprint in the Edinburgh Review," his reply to J. F. Stephen's article "The License of Modern Novelists," announced: "the hand of Mr. Dickens writes this paper." In "A Nightly Scene in London," it was "I, the Conductor of this journal," who told of coming upon the poor souls crouched before a Whitechapel workhouse. The footnote that Dickens added to "Three Graces of Christian Science" he signed "C.D." Writing in first or third person, Dickens also made clear that he was author of the introductory and closing comments in H.W. ("A Preliminary Word," "All the Year Round," "A Last Household Word"), as of "Pet Prisoners," the detective police articles, "The Guild of Literature and Art," "The Late Mr. Justice Talford," and "To Working Men." In bold type, the words "CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS" appeared on the H.W.
masthead; in small type they spanned the verso and recto of facing pages. In the first five years of *H.W.*'s publication, Dickens's name appeared in more than seventy-five *H.W.* advertisements and announcements in connection with the periodical and one of its supplementary publications, and in connection with *A Child's History* and *Hard Times* (in some advertisements and announcements his name appeared as many as three times). In the last year of *H.W.*'s publication, readings by Mr. Charles Dickens were announced in forty-one *H.W.* numbers. Dickens was omnipresent in his periodical.

In view of this fact, as also for other obvious considerations, Dickens naturally wanted in *H.W.* stories and articles no laudatory references to himself - or references that might be so construed. Thus, in "Our Society at Cranford," he substituted mentions of Hood and Hood's writings for Mrs. Gaskell's mentions of Boz and Boz's *Pickwick* and Christmas Carol: "... with my name on every page of *Household Words*," he wrote to Mrs. Gaskell (Dec. 5 [4], 1851.), "there would be - or at least I should feel - an impropriety in so mentioning myself." In a letter to Cunningham, June 24, 1853, he referred to his "usual precaution" in deleting from articles references that "unmistakably" applied to himself. An exception to this policy was the publication in *H.W.* of a personal letter from John Pascoe Fawkes, in which Fawkes stated that Dickens's writings had "beguiled many an hour of my life," and wished Dickens "many years of healthful employment in the highly useful manner" in which he had been so long engaged ("A Colonial Patriot").

But the observation of a reader (a reader of "a quick wit and a happy comprehension," as Dickens characterized him) that Dickens's writings had the tendency "to hold up to derision those of the higher classes" also found a place in *H.W.* pages ("Ready Wit").

Impersonal references to himself and to his books Dickens had no objection to. Mention of "Mr. Dickens" appeared of necessity in Morley's "Our Wicked Mis-statements"; in occasional articles by non-staff writers mention of Dickens was appropriate and unobtrusive. References to his novels - *Pickwick*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nickleby*, *Chuzzlewit*, *Dombey*, *Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit* - their characters, place-names, distinctive phraseology - appeared in one or more items by Stone, Dodd, Capper, Oxenford, Miss Lawrance, Payn, Morley, Costello, the Rev. James White, Samuel Sidney, Kent, Percy Fitzgerald, Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Linton, and Thornbury. (The reference to Mrs. Gamp in "Railway Waifs and Strays" could be by either of the joint authors - Wills or Hill.) Of these references, the most extended was Fitzgerald's recital, in "My Long Lost CheeyId!", of the plot of a melodrama based on Dombey; the most amusing was White's depiction, in "Fiction Crushing," of a Dora-like wife who comes to despise her Copperfield prototype. In at least seven of his own articles, and in one by him and Wills, Dickens referred to characters in his novels. In a footnote to "Pet Prisoners" he mentioned American Notes, and in "That Other Public" he quoted from the book.

Various of Dickens's *H.W.* writings elicited praise from contemporaries. Among his articles in the early volumes, for example, "A Child's Dream of a Star" seemed to Percy Fitzgerald written with Dickens's "most delicate touch"; and nothing, thought Fitzgerald, could be "more witty or sarcastic" than "Red Tape" (*Memories of Charles Dickens*, pp. 137, 155). Crabb Robinson found one of the "Raven" articles "a witty paper," "a capital satire" (*On Books and Their Writers*, II, 704). The *Quart. Rev.* (June 1856) mentioned Dickens's "excellent papers" on the London detective police. Mrs. Cowden Clarke wrote to a friend: "The 'Christmas Tree'
paper is charming, is it not?" (Letters to an Enthusiast, p. 32). Among Dickens's articles that antagonized certain readers were "Frauds on the Fairies," "Pet Prisoners," and "Whole Hogs." Dickens's remonstrance, in "Frauds on the Fairies," against George Cruikshank's rewriting "Hop-o'-My-Thumb" to serve propaganda purposes provoked a reply from Cruikshank, in which he justified his treatment of fairy tales and set Dickens right "upon one or two points" (George Cruikshank's Magazine, Feb. 1854). Dickens's comments on prison chaplains, in "Pet Prisoners," resulted in his being "severely mauled at the hands of certain Reverend Ordinaries" ("Small-Beer Chronicles," A.Y.R., Dec. 6, 1862). "Whole Hogs" aroused the indignation of temperance advocates (Kitton, "Introduction" to Old Lamps for New Ones and Other Sketches and Essays, by Dickens; also, Dickens's H.W. article "Sucking Pigs"). Dickens's statement, in H.W., concerning his domestic affairs was generally condemned as in poor taste.

Dickens's relationship with most of his contributors was amicable. To some who were newcomers in the field of writing he at times wrote detailed criticisms of their submitted MSS, with words of advice and encouragement. Among H.W. writers who, at one time or another, showed their regard for him by dedicating to him a book were Marston, the Rev. James White, Wickenden, Forster, Prince, Landor, Charles Knight, Samuel Sidney, Wilkie Collins, Marguerite Power, Duthie, Spicer, Wills, Yates, Lever, Kent, Percy Fitzgerald, Payn, and Thombury. Hans Christian Andersen, who was technically not a contributor, but one of whose stories appeared in H.W., dedicated three books to Dickens.

Of the items included by Dickens in Reprinted Pieces, "A Plated Article," recorded in the Office Book as by Dickens and Wills, was reprinted by Wills in his Old Leaves: Gathered from Household Words, 1860, there indicated as written in part by Dickens. Wills's Office Book ascription of the item to Dickens and to himself is more authoritative as to its authorship than is Dickens's reprinting.

As Dickens's letters and as occasional comments by contributors indicate, Dickens made changes - deletions, additions, emendations - in more items than those for which the initials "C.D." appear in the Office Book jointly with the name of a contributor. Thus, it is not inconceivable that he might have written the hymn, sometimes attributed to him, that concludes "Poor Dick's Story" in the 1856 Christmas number (see identification note on Harriet Parr). The attribution, however, seems to be in error.

Harper's reprinted, in whole or part, seventeen of Dickens's H.W. articles and stories (including "A Plated Article," claimed by both Dickens and Wills), three acknowledged to H.W., nine to Dickens personally, and five unacknowledged to any source. Harper's reprinted as by Dickens eight items not by him (see Elizabeth Gaskell, Home, Sala, Morley, the Rev. James White, Harriet Martineau, Wilkie Collins, Eliza Lynn Linton). Two of Dickens's items were included in the Putnam volumes of selections from H.W.: Home and Social Philosophy, 1st and 2nd ser. The collection of Dickens's H.W. items published in 1859 by the Philadelphia publishing firm T. B. Peterson, Dickens' Short Stories. Containing Thirty-one Stories Never Before Published in This Country, contained no items that Dickens had not included in Reprinted Pieces. D.N.B.

Author: Anne Lohrli; © University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Dickens served a full newspaper apprenticeship, beginning as a teenage penny-a-liner for The British Press (1826). Having taught himself shorthand in the late 1820s, Dickens practised the
craft in the antiquated courts of Doctors’ Commons before moving up to join the select band of parliamentary reporters, working first for his uncle’s voluminous Mirror of Parliament, then for the radical True Sun during the stormy passage of the Reform Bill through parliament (1832), and finally securing a coveted reporter’s job on the newly-reorganised Morning Chronicle, under veteran Benthamite editor John Black (1783-1855). There he undertook varied work - theatre reviewing, election reporting, express reporting of extra-mural political events, as well as enduring the daily grind of parliamentary debates. Given the fluctuating demands for space which the latter placed on a 7-column broadsheet like the Chronicle, room was soon found for Dickens’s witty sketches employing, amongst a wardrobe of other styles, the rhetoric of political journalism to narrate the world of everyday Londoners. These came to be signed ’Boz’, and between 1836 and 1839, together with tales from the Monthly Magazine and Bell’s Life in London they were republished to extensive acclaim, overlapping with the monthly release of ’Boz’s next great success, The Pickwick Papers (1836-37).

Thereafter, Dickens’s writing ventures all self-consciously straddled the permeable frontier between journalism and popular literature. He left the daily press for the more genteel world of monthly magazines, with the editorship of Bentley’s Miscellany (1837-39), but sought to reconnect with satirical weekly journalism through editing Master Humphrey’s Clock for Chapman & Hall (1840-41). This was something of a misfire, in journalistic terms, though it bequeathed Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge to literature. So too was Dickens’s involvement with the Daily News (1845-46); critics point to the fact only 17 issues of the new Liberal broadsheet were published under his watch. Yet Dickens’s effectiveness, as celebrity launch editor, should not be underestimated; his newsgathering and recruiting arrangements stood the test of time, and he led from the front with a series of inventive contributions on social and cultural issues.

Even while seeking to reposition himself as a serious novelist with Dombey and Son (1846-48), Dickens returned to newsprint, with around 30 anonymous reviews and irony-laden leaders for the Examiner under John Forster (1848-49). These were a prelude to his return to full-time editing and leader-writing, with Household Words and All the Year Round - hugely successful enterprises in weekly magazine journalism which, however, did not prevent Dickens from writing a further eight serial novels and undertaking punishing tours as a public reader in Britain, France, and America. Dickens is now widely recognised - and was during his lifetime - as a crucial contributor both to the popular appeal and the respectability of the mass-market newspaper and periodical press.


Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Genre(s):

- Prose: Essay

A ’short prose composition on any subject’ (OED), which may be characterised by an attempt to deal abstractly, objectively, and/or scientifically with its theme, in the classical/Baconian tradition, or by the more personal, familiar and speculative approach (as famously adopted by Montaigne).