



CHARLES DICKENS AT TWENTY-SIX

## Dickens in his Books

BY PERCY FITZGERALD

DICKENS'S best biography is in his books. Of his youth and childhood the impressions and recollections are especially vivid. As with Stevenson, the retrospect from manhood back to early days seemed inviting and all-important; the intervening years, by comparison, were uninviting and trivial.

We may begin our investigation with the Assembly at the Bull Inn at Rochester, in Kent, with which *Pickwick* opens. Dickens's father, as we know, was in the Navy Pay Office, and was sent to Chatham, a near-by Kentish town, in the year 1819. His position was no more than that of superior clerk, at a salary of two hundred pounds a year. But his son made his way every-

where; and it was probably due to his having friends in the garrison and in the towns of Rochester and Chatham that he was invited, *ex gratiâ*, to look in on the famous Pickwickian Assembly.

He recalls the most minute details. He remembers the music, and what instruments furnished it. The "elevated den" could not hold more than four musicians—two fiddles, a bass, and a harp. Then there was a great lady in blue satin, and her daughters—also in blue; whist tables; snuff-taking with everybody; gymnastic dancing; negus on trays handed about; waiters in striped jackets; and the rest. Boz even tells us something of the furniture—"cheval" glass—nothing less—token of high civ-

ilization that only "metropolises" can now boast. It is evident that Tracy Tupman must have been given a lady's room.

Among the notabilities of the place was an old and stout widow, of small stature, but wealthy, who dressed herself in rich attire and a profusion of jewels. She was followed assiduously by one at least of the officers of the garrison. Her name was "Budger." Such was the charm of reputed wealth that she could dance after her absurd fashion without exciting ridicule—"bobbing about"—while strangers even got themselves introduced by an M.C. of the ball. For Rochester, like Bath, had its M.C., no doubt the dancing-master of the place, who took his office quite seriously. Even Mr. Jingle, a gentleman of actual celebrity from London, had contended for her charms. And was not Mr. Tupman of the "Pickwick Club" one of her admirers? It was all very flattering to her ancient heart, but, curiously enough, it turns out to be a part of Dickens's own family history.

Dickens's mother was Miss Barrow, whose father had been in the navy. Her sister had married a Lieutenant Allen, and being left a widow, she had come to live in Chatham. Here she had attracted the amorous attentions of an army surgeon quartered there, whose name was Lammer—so it sounded, though spelt Lamert, while in *Pickwick* he became "Slammer." He had been married and had a son, a great friend and ally of the boy, bringing him to the theatre, and helping him to get up theatricals in the doctor's quarters.

Thus in the first chapters of his first famous work our author introduces his own relatives. The army doctor and his new wife were soon ordered to Ireland, taking with them a servant named Bomey from the Dickens household, a name Boz used in *Nickleby*. This was Dickens's way of conveniently registering family recollections and feelings.

It is not difficult to discover how Dickens attained so deeply ingrained a dislike of ranting and ranters, which he denounced in Stiggins and his followers. This antipathy is shown in the most hostile fashion, and clearly came from one who had suffered keenly. Next door to the house in St. Mary's Terrace

was a sort of Little Bethel, while his schoolmaster, Giles, was a minister of the Baptist persuasion. His mother, like Mrs. Weller, no doubt fell under the influence of these people, and it is likely that greasy, rum-drinking men, like the Shepherd, frequented her house. Though Mrs. Dickens was openly drawn in Mrs. Nickleby, she might figure again as Mrs. Weller, so far at least as regards devotion to her pastors. All the incidents described must have been noted by her boy at Chatham. But many years later he gave vent to a bitter complaint, bewailing all that he had suffered, and how he was forced to meetings and services. "I was," he says, "dragged by the hair of my head, as one may say, taken to hear too many [preachers]. On summer evenings, when every flower and tree and bird might have better addressed my young soft heart, I have been caught in the palm of a female hand by the crown and have been violently scrubbed from the neck to the roots of the hair as a purification for the temple, and have then been hurried off to be steamed like a potato in the hated breath of the powerful Boanerges Boiler and his congregation. I have been baled out of the place of meeting at the conclusion and catechised respecting his fifthly, his sixthly, and his seventhly. Time was when I was carried off to platform assemblages. I have sat under Boanerges when he has specifically addressed himself to us—us the infants—and I hear his lumbering jocularity, and I behold his big round face, and I look up at the inside of his outstretched coat sleeve, as if it were a telescope, and I hate him with a mortal hatred for two hours."

There is a tinge of sadness, indeed, in the *Pickwickian* description of the old town of Rochester. The author, at the time of writing, in the gloom and stress of London life, was no doubt recalling the happy days spent in the place, when he would wander into the enclosure by Rochester Bridge and gaze up and down the river. He may have been also, like the "dismal Jemmy," ruefully contemplating his sad prospects—an improvident father struggling with debt, with the poor chances of anything ever being done to put him forward in life. The strange fancies of "dismal Jemmy" are

so genuine in spirit that they seem to reflect a personal despondency.

It is curious to find how Dickens clung to favorite theories, such as the one that in childhood any local edifice seems gigantic and monumental, to be dwarfed later. In *Oliver Twist* he was surely thinking of the "Bull" when he wrote, "They drove straight to the door of the chief hotel, which Oliver used to stare at with awe and think a mighty palace, but which had somehow fallen off in grandeur and size." This applied especially to the Guildhall at Rochester, of which I have heard him make the same remark. On one of my visits to Gadshill, near Rochester, I recall one of his pleasant speeches or commentaries as we walked through High Street. "I remember," he said, "once thinking that town-hall one of the grandest of public monuments, and left the place with this impression. I never was so astonished as when I returned and was struck by its smallness and insignificance." I was amused some years after at seeing this notion worked up in his own happy vein: "I had entertained the impression that High Street was at least as wide as Regent Street. I found it little better than a lane. There was a public clock in it, which I had supposed to be the finest clock in the world, whereas it now turned out to be the most *inexpressive, moon-faced, and as weak a clock as I ever saw*. It belonged to a town-hall where I had seen an Indian swallow a sword." It had appeared to him quite "a glorious structure,"—"a mean little brick heap, like a demented chapel, with a few yawning persons in yellow gaiters lounging at the door and calling themselves a corn exchange."

Dickens, however, seems to confuse these two buildings, the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange, and he certainly attached the "moon-faced clock" to the former, whereas it really belongs to the latter. It is surprising, however, why he should have been so severe, as they were really two very quaint and original works, and would "hold their own" anywhere. The whole High Street is, indeed, one of the best things we have in England. The Corn Exchange he calls "a mean little brick heap"!

Inns, too, he always criticised severely.

He even mentioned their names in a way that must have brought him threats of actions. We know how he dealt with the "Great White Horse," when, it is said, proceedings were actually threatened.

We may wonder why he gave so bad a character to "Wright's"—next house—"dear, very dear,—half a crown if you look at the waiter,"—and where, if you dined out, they charged you for the dinner all the same. "Rum fellows, very." Wright's was a more pretentious house, with a higher clientèle than the "Bull," but of the latter Boz seems an ardent partisan. Perhaps Dickens senior, having run up a score at "Wright's," had been hardly treated by the proprietor. In an old print there is a view of Rochester Castle, and the flank of the inn is shown, with an inscription in large letters to be seen from a good way off by the traveller crossing the bridge. A fragment of Wright's still remains.

Of the streets of the four Kentish towns in that district—Rochester, Chatham, Stroud, and Brompton—Boz says that constant smoking, drunken men, and dirt were the chief characteristics. It is a curious change. There is not much smoking in the streets now, certainly not enough to produce the strong flavor complained of by Mr. Pickwick. The behavior of the military in the streets of Chatham, as noted by him, must have been observed by the young Boz—particularly that of the private who stabbed the barmaid with his bayonet because she refused to "serve" him more liquor. The fellow offered to pass it over, and we suspect that it was passed over and the matter accommodated, as the publican would naturally be afraid to offend his military customers. The drunken soldier, staggering through the street, was followed by the jeers and ridicule of the small boys. Boz noted also an officer arrayed in a cloak, carrying about with him a *camp-stool*—a cumbrous article in those days—and sitting down on it majestically while a duel was being fought. No doubt the little Boz had taken stock of this eccentric character in the streets of Chatham.

The review on "The Lines" made a deep impression on the lad. He recalled every item, even to the soldiers wearing

white "ducks"—as they donned them by regulation after May. No one has a chance now of seeing these displays, yet they used to be quite common. It was the usual method of celebrating a festival. Dickens certainly overestimates the garrison, for he says that in the "sham battle" one side consisted of six regiments, which implied as many on the opposing side. It would have been impossible for Chatham to find accommodation for so many. More extraordinary still, this huge army was under the command of a colonel—Colonel Bulder. This high officer went through many evolutions, caracoling his horse, shouting, and roaring. Everything now is done in much more gentlemanly fashion.

This power of acute observation in a mere child—Dickens at this time was not over eleven years old—may be illustrated by one other instance. The trench by the side of Fort Pitt seemed to Winkle, who was going to fight a duel, like a colossal grave. To one who has seen the original or its picture no comparison could be more appropriate. It is clear that the likeness struck the author when a child, and was recalled later in *Pickwick*.

The "Manor Farm" Christmas scenes, too, were reminiscences of these early experiences. The Wardles were certainly worthy country folks of his acquaintance, who held their revels in an old mansion to which he was bidden. That rather remarkable burst of his about lost and gone Christmas festivals points to this: "How many old recollections and how many dormant sympathies does Christmas-time awaken! We write these words now many miles distant from the spot at which year after year we met on that day, a merry and joyous circle. Happy, happy Christmas that can win us back to the delusion of our childish days." He is clearly thinking of his old Rochester times. I fancy he must have known hospitable Wardles at Maidstone. They have been tracked down to earth there by Pickwickian enthusiasts. Mr. Hughes, the Birmingham treasurer and an old friend, really discovered Manor Farm in Cob Tree, Sandling, not very far from Maidstone. The evidence for its identity is striking enough. If we compare it with the two sketches in *Pickwick* ("Mr.

Pickwick slides" and "The Arbour"), we shall recognize the likeness. Both houses are two stories high, and have wings and gabled roofs. But what settles the point is that there is a pond, as at "Manor Farm," exactly in front of Cob Tree.

In Dickens's time it would seem that the owners of the Farm were a family of "Spongs," and a modern commentator has contended that they were the originals of the hospitable Wardles. This may be so, and is certainly logical from the identification of Cob Tree with Dingley Dell. However, it may be assumed as a certainty from the genuine reality of the author's description that he had been a guest at the Manor Farm Christmas festivities. Two of the best ghost stories that we have ever found are in *Pickwick*, that of "Gabriel Grub," and that of the spectral Mail Coaches at the close of the book. An abbey, introduced into the picture of the pond, has caused some difficulty and confusion, as it clearly represents that of St. Albans in Hertfordshire. And old Wardle speaks of an old abbey church "down here"—that is, in Kent. There had been, as Mr. Hammond Hall notes, some abbeys near Maidstone, but this was an abbey "in being." One might suggest the abbey church of Minster, though that is a good way off. There is also Mayfield.

Dickens's knowledge of Kent in those days was certainly extraordinary. Even his most casual allusion is always correct, and he is constantly introducing something local, as a person in real life might do. Thus the clergyman at Dingley Dell, when giving the madman's story to Mr. Pickwick, spoke of "our county lunatic-asylum." As Mr. Hammond Hall points out, the asylum is only a few miles from Cob Tree—a further point in the identity. There is an extraordinary charm and power in Dickens's dealings with this topic. His heart was in every sentence he wrote of Christmas. There was a tender affection, a longing to diffuse comfort and happiness, and a thorough belief in the unique charm of the season. No one can read one of his many Christmas pieces without being filled with the feeling. It is impossible to resist. For myself, I can only say that for twenty happy years, as each recurring Christmas

arrived, it became—all owing to him—a delightful festival. One revelled in the picture papers, with their “Christmas at the Manor,” and “Going Home from the Christmas party.”

I well recall the sort of sadness with which the night of Christmas day came to an end, in the midst of some soft and tender regrets and memories of some gone before. There were all manner of touching stories based on this seasonable feeling—the wild brother who had run away and gone to the bad, and who, by a strange chance, returned exactly on Christmas eve; the snow thick on the ground; the family banqueting inside the Grange; he, the outcast, looking in through the mullioned panes. Some sound betrays him. He is brought in, to fall into his brother's arms, placed by the fire, filled with good things, and all is forgiven. How often have I seen this favorite topic treated most artistically in the pictures—the old Grange—the lights within—the black figure peering in! No one can read the *Christmas Carol*, however familiar it be, without being immensely interested, without being softened and affected, without wishing to be engaged in such scenes, and without being better for the perusal. Many must have smiled at his simple belief that the mere advent and pressure of the season compelled family reconciliations, caused angry brethren to “make it up,” and diffused an amiable and benevolent good-nature over all the parishes in the land. He amiably enforced all these themes with such conviction and in so picturesque a way that he persuaded everybody; and it must be said that his account of the hard “Scrooge” being softened in time gained the whole kingdom, and was one of the most persuasive agents of such philosophy that ever appeared. Indeed, for years it was fervently believed that the sight of abundant holly and ivy, contrasted with snow upon the ground, with the “Waits,” the Bells, and the modern imitation of Wassail, exercised a sort of holy and softening influence upon the sternest souls.

During his stay at Rochester, Dickens was put to school under charge of a Baptist minister—another illustration, it may be, of the “Stiggins” influence of

which he was a victim. In the playground he had been delivered from the dungeons of “Seringapatam,” and had been recognized by his affianced, one Miss Green—“second house in the terrace.” This school-boy affair he has often dwelt on. He transferred the locale to Canterbury in *Copperfield*. There Miss Green appears again under a fresh name. Over thirty years later, grown up and famous, he went down to the old place, and records his impressions in “Down at Dulborough.” On this visit he found that the Southeastern Railway had swallowed up the playing-field of his old school. I often pass by the site of his other school, in the Hampstead Road—Jones's Wellington House Academy—which is at the corner of Granby Street. At the time, Hampstead Road was open to the country, and the school was in grounds. This is described in *Copperfield* as Salem House, at Highgate, not very far away. Jones is described as an ignorant fellow and a tyrant, with a huge ruler in his hand, which he used on his pupils. There was also a rough and gruff serving-man.

On this visit to Rochester he recognized many familiar places, and went to call on an old school-fellow, now a flourishing doctor, whom he found married to Lucy Green, his old playmate and boy love, and with whom he dined. This lad and he had read *Roderick Random* together. It is astonishing indeed in what a number of places he furnishes little scraps and sketches of the old school-days—as in *Copperfield*. These are, of course, much varied and embellished. His official recollections are given in the humorous paper, “Our School.” The green-grocer who did not recognize him was to him “the town, the cathedral, the bridge, the river, my childhood, and a large slice of my life to me.” How distinct the emphasis here! He talks of Timpson, who used to run the coaches, and who was no doubt Simpson. He tells us that he left Rochester finally in the stage-coach, and was forwarded, carriage paid, to Cheapside. He was the sole inside passenger, a boy of eleven or twelve years old.

Dickens's first serious love-affair is a subject that must be interesting to everybody. Like everything of impor-



tance in his youth, it is minutely described in his writings. He was no more than nineteen, so the time was about 1831. It was so great a passion that, as he tells us, for a period of four years it excluded every other thought. He worked and strove with a view to earning sufficient to marry upon; and we may assume that Traddles's efforts in this way with the picking up of odd bits of furniture were recollections of what he did himself. After five-and-twenty years, as he told his friend Forster, he could not think of the episode without pain. "I never can see the face or hear the voice without all the old scenes being called up."

Now comes the interesting question, whose was this face and voice, and who was this prototype of "Dora" and "Mrs. Finching"—who was this youthful love of the thirties when Boz was not twenty years old? We can, indeed, only speculate, but the speculation is very close to certainty. Some years ago a well-known firm of autograph-dealers, who once had for sale the first receipt for the *Pickwick* copy money, were in possession of a number of early letters of Boz written at this time. They were twelve in number, and were addressed to a friend named Henry Kolle—a clerk in a city bank. The young men became very intimate, walked and rode together, and it was to Kolle that Boz confided his first contribution to a magazine, in a letter that is of extraordinary interest.

The two friends used to frequent the house of a family named Beadnell, where there were two attractive sisters, to one of whom Kolle became attached. The other was the object of Dickens's affection. Before 1833 Kolle had married. Dickens was not so fortunate. His suit was opposed by the parents—notably by the mother. As would seem from the following letter, the courtship was carried on clandestinely: "As I was requested in a note I received this morning to forward my answer by the same means as my first note, I am emboldened to ask you if you will be so kind as to deliver the enclosed for me when you practise your customary duet this afternoon."

This letter is undated, but it is clearly written when both were bachelors, the

favoring Kolle practising music with his *fiancée*, the poor youth Charles forbidden the house. If Miss Beadnell was like "Dora," as is said, she must have been a fascinating little creature; and this story quite accords with that of the fictitious maiden. The disagreeable Miss Murdstone, who kept guard over "Dora," may have been suggested by the hostile mamma.

Years later Dickens went to call on his old flame. He saw the stuffed Jip in the hall, and the interview so revived the old feelings that not long after he began the touching episode of "Dora." These feelings were of course independent of the rather grotesque ones which the changed appearance and flighty behavior of the heroine produced. And the embodiment of these he reserved for a later story—*Little Dorrit*—when his once fascinating "Dora" became "Flora Finching." Some cynics have dealt rather harshly with Boz for thus ridiculing what should have been sacred to him, but they forget that he had already enshrined all that was tender and romantic in the history in the exquisitely attractive Dora. He was fairly entitled to present this other view of the matter. And, alas! experience of life shows that it is all but certain that these dainty little creatures, when grown elderly and *passée*, do retain their old arts—which then appear to be only frivolous and foolish.

In his paper on "Birthdays" he again mentions this passion, describing how he gave a party to which he had invited her. She was older than he was, and "had pervaded every corner and crevice of his mind for three or four years." He used to compose long letters to her mother, none of which were ever sent. This shows the truth of "Mrs. Finching's" statement that the girl's mother was the opposing influence.

In *Little Dorrit* the attractive "Dora" appears as "Flora Casby"—now "Mrs. Finching." In the book she comes to see her old admirer. The author meets her in the character of "Arthur Clennam." "Clennam's eyes no sooner fell upon the object of his old passion than it shivered and broke to pieces." Our author then makes this apology, which is really one for turning his once idol "into copy": "Most men will be found

sufficiently true to themselves to be true to an old idea. It is no proof of an inconstant mind, but exactly the opposite, when the idea will not bear close comparison with the reality, and the contrast is a fatal shock to it. In his youth he had ardently loved this woman, and had heaped upon her all the locked-up wealth of his affection and imagination. Ever since, he had kept the old fancy of the past unchanged, in its old sacred place. Flora always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath; but that was not much. Flora whom he had left a lily had become a peony; but that was not much. Flora who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora who had been spoiled and artless long ago was determined to be spoiled and artless now—that was a fatal blow." We know her ridiculous style of chatter—words commaless, and running breathlessly into each other—"I am a fright — Arthur — Mr. Cleennam more proper," etc. There is something almost pathetic in her efforts to revive the old dreams.

But Dickens married neither the Miss Green of his boyhood love nor Miss Beadnell, the prototype of "Dora" and "Mrs. Finching." In 1836, as we know, he married Catherine, one of the three daughters of George Hogarth. His later attachment to Mary, Catherine's older sister, is one of the most interesting episodes in his life. Before his marriage he was well—even intimately—acquainted with her and with the family. We may well wonder, therefore, why her charms—she was the more attractive, and had always secretly loved him—did not appeal to him before his marriage with the younger sister.

Rose Maylie in *Oliver Twist* embodies Dickens's later appreciation of the striking character of Mary Hogarth. Oliver's love for her reflects the author's own feelings. He thus describes their first meeting: "The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and spring-time of womanhood, at the age when, if ever angels be for God's purpose enthroned in mortal forms, they may be without impiety supposed to abide in such as hers. She was not past seventeen [the exact age of Mary Hogarth]; cast in so slight and

exquisite a mould, so mild and gentle, so pure and beautiful, that earth seemed not her element, nor its rough creatures her fit companions. The very intelligence that shone in her deep blue eyes and was stamped upon her noble head seemed scarcely of her age or of the world; and yet the changing expression of sweetness and good-humor, the lights that played about the face and left no shadow there, above all, the smile, the happy cheerful smile, were made for home and fireside, peace and happiness. She was busily engaged in the little offices of the table. Chancing to raise her eyes as the elder lady was regarding her, she playfully put back her hair, which was simply braided on her forehead, and threw into the beaming look such an expression of affection and artless loveliness that blessed spirits might have smiled to look upon her."

Now no novelist's description of his heroine was ever given in this impassioned tone. It is clearly personal—a burst of grief in one recalling a living person—now lost forever! There is no pretence at the deliberate or sympathetic description of the novelist. Many a reader has no doubt been mystified by this passionate and excited outbreak of the writer over what seemed a mere creature of fiction. There cannot be a shadow of doubt that it was intended for Mary Hogarth. For the inscription which he wrote for her grave has the same reference to an angel "enthroned in mortal form."

As the time went on, Oliver is described as sitting and listening while the young lady read, "which he would have done till it grew too dark to see the letters." When it became quite dark, "the lady would sit down to the piano and play some pleasant air, or sing in a low, gentle voice some old song. There would be no candles lighted at such times—and Oliver would sit by one of the windows listening to the sweet music in a perfect rapture." These and other descriptions of the kind have nothing to do with the story, and do not advance it. The writer is clearly indulging his own feelings and recollections.

More is shadowed out in the account of Rose Maylie's sudden illness. They had been out on a walk that was

longer than usual, and taking off her simple bonnet, she sat down to the piano, and after playing a little, broke into tears. Mrs. Maylie was alarmed when Rose said, "I don't know what it is—I can't describe it—but I feel—" Then she broke down, saying, "I would not alarm you if I could avoid it, but indeed I have tried very hard and cannot help this—I fear I am ill." Then every symptom is described with a minuteness that had no connection with fiction. They said that the hue of her countenance had changed "to that of a marble whiteness. Its expression had lost nothing of its beauty; but it was changed; and there was an anxious, haggard look about the gentle face which it had never worn before. Another minute and it was suffused with a crimson flush; and a heavy wildness came over the soft blue eyes. Again this disappeared, and she was once more deadly pale."

Again, how wonderfully did he recall every phase and symptom of Mary's tragic death. By midnight Rose had grown worse. She was delirious. It would be little short of a miracle, said the doctor, if she recovered. The wretched night and its watching that followed, when all sat up, are surely reminiscences of the scenes in Doughty Street, where, as Dickens tells us in one of his letters, Mary Hogarth was seized with the sudden illness that finally resulted in her death.

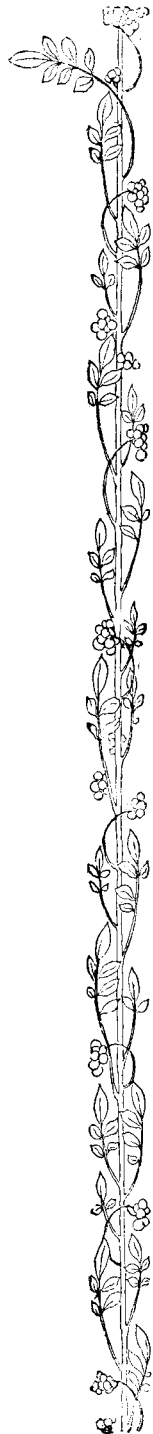

Rose Maylie was supposed to be il-

legitimate, and the author makes this the impediment which the high-souled girl found for declining to accept the suit of Harry Maylie. This, of course, cannot apply to Mary Hogarth, but it may indicate the obstacles which the author's marriage with Mary's sister put in the way, and which made the chance of their own union so hopeless.

Can it be that the real solution is to be found in that story of two sisters—"The Battle of Life"? There Marion and Grace were passionately attached, and Grace, the elder, thought only of Marion. The latter had a lover, Alfred, who was to go and seek his fortune, then return to claim her. Marion found out that her sister's heart was given to Alfred, and contrived by a sort of elopement to convey that she did not care for Alfred, and thus left the ground free. A new attachment grew up; they were married; and Marion returned to find her scheme successful. She was the sacrifice, and all the time it is conveyed that the lover had not altogether lost his first love. It might have been that Mary Hogarth, knowing her sister's feeling, wished to hide her love, and, according to the account of those that knew and loved her, she was of such an angelic nature that she was quite capable of making the sacrifice. Whether there be anything in this speculation or not, it seems the only one that will rationally account for Dickens not marrying the girl he so loved.







# The Bush-Sparrow

BY JOHN BURROUGHS

**I**N the bushy pastures  
Ere April days are done,  
Or along the forest border  
Ere the chewink has begun,  
Is Spizella trilling  
In notes that circling run  
Like wavelets in the water  
That go rippling in the sun.

A gentle timid rustic  
Who makes the dingle ring,  
Or round about the orchard  
Where bush and brier cling.  
Most tuneful of the sparrows,  
With little russet wing,—  
A joy in early summer,  
A thrill in early spring.

His coat has russet trimmings,  
And russet is his crown;  
Less bright and trim of feather  
Than chippy, near the town;  
A plainer country cousin,  
With plainer country gown,  
Who loves the warmth of summer,  
But dreads the autumn's frown.

He hides in weedy vineyards  
When August days are here,  
And taps the purple clusters  
For a little social cheer;  
The boys have caught him at it,  
The proof is fairly clear;  
Still I bid him welcome,  
The pilf'ring little dear;  
He pays me off in music,  
And pays me every year.