

LITTLE DORRIT

In the time of the decline and death of Dickens, and even more strongly after it, there arose a school of criticism which substantially maintained that a man wrote better when he was ill. It was some such sentiment as this that made Mr. George Gissing, that able writer, come near to contending that Little Dorrit is Dickens's best book. It was the principle of his philosophy to maintain (I know not why) that a man was more likely to perceive the truth when in low spirits than when in high spirits.

REPRINTED PIECES

The three articles on Sunday of which I speak are almost the last expression of an articulate sort in English literature of the ancient and existing morality of the English people. It is always asserted that Puritanism came in with the seventeenth century and thoroughly soaked and absorbed the English. We are now, it is constantly said, an incurably Puritanic people. Personally, I have my doubts about this. I shall not refuse to admit to the Puritans that they conquered and crushed the English people; but I do not think that they ever transformed it. My doubt is chiefly derived from three historical facts. First, that England was never so richly and recognisably English as in the Shakespearian age before the Puritan had appeared. Second, that ever since he did appear there has been a long unbroken line of