



Dickensian Intemperance: The Representation of the Drunkard in ‘The Drunkard’s Death’ and The Pickwick Paper s

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One of the most significant causes of insanity in the nineteenth century was drunkenness. From the beginning of the century, and particularly with the rise of the temperance movement, alcohol abuse became almost synonymous with bodily and mental disease both in medical and popular culture. From *The Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield* to *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens’s novels contain a plethora of realistic descriptions of the detrimental effects of alcohol abuse on both mental and bodily health. Exploring the representation of the drunkard in Dickens’s ‘*The Drunkard’s Death*’ and *The Pickwick Papers*, this essay demonstrates Dickens’s familiarity with current medical debates concerning intemperance and how he utilised his extensive knowledge of psychopathology to create authentic, realistic and memorable characters. As will become evident, Dickens records the effects of both acute and chronic drunkenness with remarkable medical detail and accuracy.

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