

2012 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 26

Commemorating the life of Charles Dickens.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 17, 2012

WHEREAS, Samuel Johnson well observed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors"; and

WHEREAS, to the English-speaking peoples there is a singular glory and also goodness to the writings of Charles Dickens; and

WHEREAS, as Philip Womack has observed, Dickens, "more than any other author, stands firmly entrenched in the lineage of English writing. He stretches back into the storehouse of the canon, drawing on the Bible and Bunyan for his morals and absolutes, reaching into Shakespeare for those bumptious personages like Pecksniff and Micawber. He is part of the genetic coding of the way that we think about books"; and

WHEREAS, it is to Dickens that we owe the great literary characters, embodiments of the virtues or vices—and often-enough the virtues *and* vices simultaneously—that define human nature generally, human nature in its social manifestations specifically, hence illuminating for us the path that leads away from, say, the injustice of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* into the large-hearted merriment of the irrepressible Sam Weller of *The Pickwick Papers*; and

WHEREAS, as Philip Womack again has observed, "Dickens gives us a sense of wholeness that we lack" in the hectic, superficial, and perilous days of the present era, because "Dickens doesn't merely mirror life, he improves it. We sit entranced at his feet, safe in his stories; and when we come out, we have tools to help us guard against the dark"; and

WHEREAS, an engagement with the works of Charles Dickens, including also *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *David Copperfield*, among others, is essential to that experience of literature as a mode of knowing, which is infinitely superior to the methods of science and subordinate in the quest of truth which characterizes the human pilgrimage only to the intuitive knowledge afforded by religion; and

WHEREAS, Charles Dickens was born near Portsmouth, England, on February 7, 1812, so that readers of Virginia are among the millions of readers worldwide who are commemorating the milestone of the 200th anniversary of the great author's birth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the House acknowledge with appropriate solemnity and also gaiety the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens and express its hope that Dickens' works will continue to inform the imaginations of the rising generations of Virginians; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this Resolution for presentation to The Chicken Breeders and Dickens Readers Club of Southside Virginia or to any other worthy association of the Commonwealth devoted to the experience of reading the works as the principal means of conserving the literary legacy of the inimitable Charles Dickens.

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